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## PILGRIMAGE IN KAZAKHSTAN: THE GRAVES OF THE SUFI SHEIKHS

Places of pilgrimage in Sufism are shrines dedicated to various Sufi saints – spiritually elevated ascetics from various mystical orders in Islam. The purpose of the pilgrimage (ziyarat) to the graves of saints is to receive grace and protection from the saint. When making ziyarat to the saints, Muslims read suras from the Koran near the grave, make a ritual circumambulation around it (tawaf), and make sacrifices. In some countries, the local shrine is the center of the community. The tombs erected over the graves of the saints become the centers of the “sacred” cities (al-Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, Mashhad in Iran, Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan, the Mausoleum of Najimetdin Kubra in Turkmenistan, the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan). This article is devoted to the consideration of the traditions associated with the burial monuments of Sufi sheikhs in Kazakhstan. Sufism has gained widespread popularity since the time of the Golden Horde. To date, archaeological evidence testifies to the early spread of Sufism, mainly in the southern and western regions of the country. The southern regions are traditionally centers of pilgrimage. More than 300 auliya graves are located in the western region. Ethnographic studies of the graves of Sufi sheikhs in the Ak-mola region testify to the spread of Sufi teachings in the northern regions of Kazakhstan.

**Key words:** graves of Sufis, ziyats of Sheikhs, pilgrimage, auliya, mausoleum.

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### Қазақстандағы қажылық: сопылық шейхтердің қабірлері

Суфизмдегі қажылық орындары – бұл әртүрлі сопылық қасиетті адамдарға арналған қасиетті орындар – исламдағы әртүрлі мистикалық бұйрықтардан рухани биік аскеттер. Қасиетті қабірлерге қажылықтың (зияраттың) мақсаты – әулиеден рақым мен қорғауды алу. Қасиетті адамдарға зиярат жасағанда, мұсылмандар қабірдің жанында Құраннан сүрелер оқып, оны айналып өтіп (тауаф), құрбандық шалады. Кейбір елдерде жергілікті қасиетті орын қауымдастықтың орталығы болып табылады. Әулие-әмбиелердің қабірінің үстіне орнатылған қабірлер «қасиетті» қалалардың (Ирактағы әл-Наджаф пен Кербала, Ирандағы Мешхед, Ауғанстандағы Мазари Шариф, Түркіменстандағы Наджиметдин Кубраның кесенесі, Түркістандағы Қожа Ахмет Ясауи кесенесі) орталықтарына айналады. Бұл мақала Қазақстандағы сопылық шейхтардың жерлеу ескерткіштерімен байланысты дәстүрлерді қарастыруға арналған. Сопылық Алтын Орда дәуірінен бастап кең танымал болды. Бүгінгі күнге дейін археологиялық дәлелдемелер сопылықтың негізінен елдің оңтүстік және батыс аймақтарында кең таралғаны туралы куәландырады. Оңтүстік аймақтар дәстүрлі түрде қажылық орталықтары болып табылады. Батыс аймақта 300-ден астам әулие қабірлері орналасқан. Ақмола облысындағы сопылық шейхтардың қабірлерін этнографиялық зерттеу жұмыстары сопылық ілімнің Қазақстанның солтүстік аймақтарында таралғандығын айғақтайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** сопылардың қабірлері, шейхтардың зияраттары, қажылық, әулие, кесене.

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### Паломничество в Казахстане: могилы суфийских шейхов

Местами паломничества в суфизме являются святыни, посвященные различным суфийским святым – духовно возвышенным аскетам из различных мистических орденов в исламе. Ключевой целью паломничества, или зиярата, к могилам святых является получение благодати

и покровительства от святого. Во время подобного паломничества посетители-мусульмане читают вблизи могилы Коран. Совершаются ритуальные обряды, например, хождение вокруг могил (таваф). Также практикуют совершение жертвоприношений. Примечательно, что иногда зарубежом местная святыня со временем становится центром сообщества. Так, гробницы, построенные над могилами святых, становятся центрами «священных» городов, например, ан-Наджаф и Кербела в Ираке, Мешхед в Иране, Мазари-Шариф в Афганистане, Мавзолей Наджиметдина Кубры в Туркменистане, Мавзолей Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави в Туркестане. Данная статья посвящена рассмотрению традиций, связанных с могильными памятниками суфийских шейхов в Казахстане. Суфизм получил широкую популярность со времен Золотой Орды. На сегодняшний день археологические данные свидетельствуют о раннем распространении суфизма, преимущественно в южном и западном регионах страны. Южные регионы традиционно являются центрами паломничества. В западном регионе локализованы свыше 300 могил аулия. О распространении суфийских учений в северных регионах Казахстана свидетельствуют этнографические исследования могил суфийских шейхов в Акмолинской области.

**Ключевые слова:** могилы суфиев, зираты шейхов, паломничество, аулия, мавзолей.

## Introduction

The tradition of pilgrimage (ziarat) to the graves of saints was widespread among the nomadic Kazakhs and had such a feature as the cult of saints. The veneration of graves, worship of them and the performance of ritual rituals near them at the very beginning of the spread of the religion of Islam was forbidden and condemned.

For Muslims there was prohibition for veneration of graves by Prophet Muhammad. It was strictly. Muhammad ordered to level all high graves to the ground. Also he bans the building of mosques over the graves, and makes any sacrifices near them. In addition Prophet forbade Muslims to turn their grave into a meeting place (Sakhikh Muslim: 672). The first followers of Islam (companions and theologians) observed these precepts of the Prophet. They also condemned the pilgrimage to the grave of Muhammad himself, as well as to other graves. The construction of structures over the graves was condemned. Despite this, over time, the practice of pilgrimage to the graves of saints arose and spread; construction of mausoleums and even mosques over the graves.

Moreover, places that are affiliated with biblical and Koranic prophets become objects of pilgrimage. Initially, the graves of the “saints” called mashhads. Mosques and monasteries sometimes appear around graves (mazars). Often, they become the nucleus of entire cities (Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan, Najef in Iraq, Yasawi Mausoleum in Turkestan, etc.)

The cult of saints in Central Asia appeared in pre-Islamic times, when the Turks worshiped the ancestral ancestral spirits (aruakhs). At the same time, there may no longer be any material remains of the graves. Moreover, in the early Islamic tradition it was not customary to install a tombstone. Most often, a tree became a marker of the grave, which,

according to legend, was the staff of the saint, stuck in the place of his burial.

During the period of the Golden Horde, most of the large Sufi tariqats emerged and developed – Yasawiya, Naqshbandiya, Kubraviya, Suhrawardiya, etc. The Golden Horde khans: Berke, Uzbek, Kutlug Timur, Gazan supported the spread of Islam in the Sufi direction, in this regard, with the financial support of the rulers, mosques, madrasahs, Sufi abodes (khanaks), which gave impetus to the development of Islamic science, architecture, literature and poetry. As the scientist Yu. V. Seleznev writes, the reason for the rise of the sheikhs was the “sacralization of power”; they also performed cultural and educational functions among the population of the Horde.

People still remember these places, and reverence is expressed in caring for them and in the system of taboo (you cannot cut trees, collect brushwood, litter, etc.). Moreover, these traditions were not interrupted even during the years of the most intense atheistic propaganda of the Soviet period.

## Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

The purpose of this article is to examine the pilgrimage in Kazakhstan through the prism of ziarat to the graves of Sufi sheikhs. In this regard, the objectives of this article are to consider the burial monuments of Sufi sheikhs that have survived in the modern period. It should be noted that field research opens up new aspects for the study of Sufism.

## Scientific Research Methodology

The methodology of this article is based on the analysis of the current religious situation in modern Kazakhstan, the established spiritual tradition and anthropological researches of the authors. Also, authors used descriptive, historical, hermeneutics and comparative research methods.

## Main part

### *Sacred monuments*

According to the history since the 11th and 12th centuries the Sufi graves began to achieve social significance. The reason was when the Seljuk Turks began to build whole mazars over the graves of the Sufis. For example, the tombs of Abu Said ibn Abi al-Khair (died in 1049) and Bayazid Bistami are known among them. It should be noted that the graves of Sufis can be found in different parts of the world. In general, the graves of Sufi sheikhs are a place of pilgrimage for members and followers of the Sufi community. Modern researcher of Sufism A.D. Knysh notes that the centers of the Yasawi tariqah were most often located around the graves of the famous sheikhs of this school. These schools are scattered throughout Central Asia (southern regions of Kazakhstan, the Kipchak steppe, the cities of Turkestan and Shymkent (Knysh, 2004: 313).

Scientists distinguish several groups of shrines:

- places which associated with pre-Islamic pieces of worship (most of them associated with the nature, but Islamized afterwards);
- graves of secular persons and their relatives, which were revered mainly due to the fact that they were located close to the tombs of saints;
- sanctuaries of great religious leaders (clergy or Sufis);
- tombs of different magicians and fortune-tellers;

The concept of cult of saints mixed the pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals of the nomadic people. It is need to point that in this concept includes graves, tombs and sanctuaries, no matter size or type, also local or world prominence.

Legends and traditions of the pre-Islamic period became the basis for the further spreading the Islamic practice and venerating saints.

The rich folklore material evidences in legends and traditions, but there are overall points which often repeats – “a wonder dream”:

- in such dreams, the saint says that it is necessary to build a tomb in the place of a forgotten burial;
- about incredible miracles performed by the saints;
- about the different fabulous travels of the saints through the countries of the Muslim East;
- various legends about the incredible abilities of the saint / saints to heal diseases.

Thus, Muslim saints began to be perceived among the people as the spirits of ancestors, patron spirits or owners of the area, that is, a kind of incarnation.

So, the Saints became some kind of mediators between the God and People. They help meet

the sensory needs of humans in relation to the supernatural, conveying hopes, expectations of childbirth, clans, and communities. At the same time, a certain gradation appeared, some saints or their tombs became some places for prayers for healing and other petitions. Over time, such places became steppe mosques, where people came, including during the holidays, to perform rituals.

So, the Pilgrims ask the saints to send rain, harvest, as well as health and children, and etc. A trip to a local saint is also part of the funeral process. Wednesday, Tuesday are visiting days in general. Previous to the pilgrimage, firstly it is need to take ritual ablution also spiritually cleanse which means: pray, stay away from bad thoughts, take the traditional Muslim ablution, etc.).

Praying on local saints' graves at holy Muslim holidays Kurban Ait, Oaza Ait, Mawlid becomes an obligatory element of festivity.

Thus, the cult of veneration of Muslim saints began to form, which included various components of archaic rituals, ceremonies and beliefs rooted in the pre-monotheistic period. A connection is traced between clan shamanism and the images of some saints. Thus, it can be noted that the veneration of saints became the prototype of the tradition of the archaic cult of ancestors.

By the legends and traditions, the individual signs of an individual saint, his miracles, etc. are revealed, which, in combination with the image of a Muslim saint with his inherent plots and motives, creates the auliye ritual.

Almost all pre-Islamic rituals and beliefs have become simplified over time, getting rid of archaic elements.

Islam, which spread to Central Asia, was tolerant to folk customs and contribute to develop the cult of saints in the Sufi tradition. At the same time, there were and remain opponents of visiting and venerating saints, so the ritual of visiting the tombs is associated with the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad – visiting the graves of parents or ancestors, great people for their remembrance, reading the Koran in order to save their souls, which is considered a godly deed. It is important to note that the true meaning does not include calling for help from a saint.

### **Places of pilgrimage in Kazakhstan**

The most important Sufi landmark known all over the world, which is rightfully included in the UNESCO heritage – the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, is located in Kazakhstan. This is a sacred place for the entire Turkic world. Currently,

the place of religious and tourist pilgrimage is the Spiritual and Cultural Complex of the international level. The mausoleum is also the site of a Muslim ziarat.

The Great Silk Road stretched through the Kazakh cities of Sairam and Yassy (now Turkestan), which were the most important points along the way. There was a large exchange of goods took place between nomadic communities and Central Asian traders. These cities were a place where representatives of sedentary agricultural and nomadic cultures met, also met adherents of different religious beliefs.

In addition, during that period, the practice of burials began to form, which manifested itself in the desire to be in close proximity to the source of spiritual grace and to be under its patronage even in another world. So, the tradition of burying noble, great people next to Kh.A. Yasawi in and around the mausoleum. An interesting fact is how much people believed this, that the bodies of the dead people, despite the season, were brought to Turkestan, and the path at that time was not easy and could take up to a month or more. Facts have survived that the body was placed in a leather case, in the summer, moving at night, and during the day they kept this leather case at the bottom of wells or mountain rivers.

Another place of pilgrimage is the «Khilvat» – underground mosque located approximately 100 meters southwest to the mausoleum. When Ahmed Yasawi reached 63 years old (the age of the Prophet Muhammed), he descended into this mosque in order to spend the remaining days of his life underground, in prayers, sermons and spiritual conversations with his followers and pupils.

There is also a shrine “Kumchik ata” nearby, which is a small brick house. An underground road leads to the house, its height is about human height. Kh.A. Yasawi came here to pray and read a dhikr.

Another underground structure in the city of Turkestan is Shill-i khan. There are caves in the Sairam and in the Kazy-Gurt mountains. So, the structure of sanctuaries has developed in the form of underground khilvet, since that time. In the West of Kazakhstan the same tradition also takes place. That region famous of its underground mosques and necropolises. All of them are very popular among tourists, pilgrims and Sufis.

Near the mausoleum of Kh.A. Yasawi, about 50 meters away is the tomb of the famous woman of Islam – Rabiya Sultan Begim. She is the daughter of the famous Ulugbek and the granddaughter of Tamerlane, as well as the wife of Khan Abulkhair, who was the head of the State of nomadic Uzbeks in the 16th century.

It is a great history and for a more complete study of that period pilgrims and tourists can visit other shrines of South Kazakhstan, for example: the graves of relatives of Akhmed Yasawi’s parents – Ibrahim Ata and Karachach ana, his daughter – Gaukhar ana. Also, people revered ancestors of Kh.A. Yasawi (mausoleums of Khorasan ata, Iskhak-bab) in that region.

Many travelers want to visit the grave of Ukash ata or another name of Khakash in order to try to pass the test with the “magic” sump. There is a legend that Saint Ukash was an associate of the Prophet Muhammad. His goal was to message Islam in Central Asia, but he died in battle and became martyrs for the faith. So, travelers let down a bucket into the sump and, when they lift it back, look at its fullness, this is done about 3 times. A full bucket testifies to the purity of the thoughts and deeds of the pilgrims. It is believed that as the bucket is filled with water is good sign. It should be noted that the pilgrims are really worried about passing this test.

There is no exact data on how many graves / burials of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions are located in Kazakhstan. According to some information, about 19, some of which belong to the Caliphs. Residents of the southern region can lead to the fictitious graves of Caliph Ali and his son Muhammad Hanafi in the town of the Sozak. In addition, the locals can lead to the place on Mount Kazy Gurt, where in ancient times the ship of the Prophet Nukh, better known as Noah’s Ark, may have moored.

There are also shrines that are popular with women and lovers, such as:

– burial place of Domalak Ana (Nurilya). She was the granddaughter of the famous medieval Sufi sheikh Mahdum Agzam and the wife of the progenitor of the Kazakhs – Baidibek ata;

– mausoleums of Aisha-bibi and Babadzha Khatun. Legend says that the princess, not receiving the blessing of her father-khan, went to her lover, but died from a snakebite on the way. Babaja Khatun was her nanny.

According to some sources, these incredibly beautiful mausoleums date back to the 11th century and located near the ancient city of Taraz. These women were directly or indirectly associated with the Sufi sheikhs and therefore we are considering their burials.

Pilgrimage or ziarat has its own rules, and of course, over time, the rules have changed, for various reasons, some elements have been lost. However, the folk tradition managed to preserve the key routes, the main rules and the meaning of the rituals

performed. Word “ziarat” means “trip” or “journey” in translation from the Arabic language. There is the same word in Turkic people languages. The meaning in religious aspect is a relation to pilgrimage to holy places. For example, a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is called “Hadj”. Moreover, such phrases are used as: “tauap etu”, “tau etu”, which from the Arabic language means “tauaf”, that is, the custom of worship, which consists in circling around the revered object, touching with palms, forehead. Note that in orthodox Islam this is only permissible during the pilgrimage to the Holy Kaaba in Mecca.

In modern times, there are various tourist organizations and individual guides who are ready to take pilgrims and tourists to places of worship, and in ancient times the guide was “shyrakchy”, that is, the keeper of the shrine. Usually, this is a person who lived near the tomb, who knows local legends, either a mullah or a Sufi ishan. Often this shyrakchi was a genetic or spiritual descendant of a saint. Thus, the pilgrims listened to their guide and followed him in everything, followed all his instructions. In the end, the pilgrims gave him gifts. Even before the pilgrimage and departure on the road, it was necessary to make “niet”, that is, tell God about your “intention” and make a vow to sacrifice a certain number of rams, etc. It was important to focus on the benefits of ziarat. But the purpose of the trip, both now and before, was most often associated with receiving blessings and miraculous help in overcoming life’s difficulties, healing from diseases, and receiving long-awaited children.

Thus, the Shyrakchi began to single out the aulic caretakers and keepers of shrines as a separate social group. Their responsibilities are:

- leadership of public prayers at the saint’s grave;
- sending of sacrifices;
- keeping the graves in order and looking after them.

Moreover, they have the right to use monetary offerings, which are left by pilgrims in order to renovate or partially repair the grave, distribute to the poor, etc. Sometimes they are sent to the mosque.

Previously, it was a hereditary obligation, inherited only by men. However, over time, some of the male lines disappeared and therefore, gradually the duties of the Shyrakchi began to be performed by authoritative residents of the nearby auls. They were chosen among aksakals and respected people. It should be noted that sometimes women became them – the descendants of traditional lines, where there were no men left, or their husbands (women were forbidden to be in the cemetery). (Nurtazina, 2009: 118).

People used to say: “Spend the night at Arystan Baba and ask Kozha Akhmed” (Mavzoley Arystanbab). This rule is observed by pious pilgrims to this day. “Bab” – from Arabic translates “gate”, ie the gate of divine revelation. This is the title of the Sufi saints in the region. Arystan-bab is considered the main figure in the hierarchy of the saints-babes of Central Asia.

### **Pilgrimage Tradition and Sufism**

Ziarat in the traditional sense necessarily to stay overnight, which means to spend the night near the mazar (tomb) of the saint. In a dream pilgrim see the “revelations” or became a healing. In some pilgrimages were a ritual of ablution, the slaughter of sacrificial animals, and collective meals. Often pilgrims spend 3 nights in holy place. According to the Sufi tradition man should pray only to Allah and ask the Almighty to fulfill the request of a pilgrim thirsting for a miracle “in honor of the memory of his beloved servant.” Such a fulfillment of requests was considered as if the spirit of the deceased saint himself was asking God. It can be traced that this is essentially a departure from monotheism. But at the same time, many people, often women, pronounced the word “Allah”, but nevertheless they pinned the hope for fulfillment on a certain saint (aruach).

The pilgrimage ritual includes these actions:

- prayer at the grave of the saint / sheikh;
- go around the sanctuary;
- on the fence of the saint’s grave wearing multi-colored clothes, flags, ribbons, scarves;
- gifts to the spirit of saint (sacrificial animals, money, etc.).

Sufis were engaged in Islamic missionary among the native Turkic peoples. This contributed to a change in their worldview. By the sermons of dervishes – Sufis the Turkic nomads of Kazakhstan became Muslims. At the same time, they became personal admirers of the Sufi sheikhs, whom they saw as miracle workers and intercessors.

The appeal to the deceased saints for patronage and benefits has become an integral part of the life of many Muslim communities. It was believed that in the graves of the saints there is “bereke” (from the Arabic “baraka” – grace), i.e. some spiritual energy emanating from the relics. At the same time, deeply religious people, Sufis and healers went to Turkistan in order to receive religious inspiration, answers to intimate questions regarding their own spiritual and healing practices. Khans and sultans, batyrs and biys of antiquity expressed their respect through such a trip and also wished to enlist the support of holy spirits in military battles or other noble field.

Mazar is the burial place of the Muslim “saint” (auliya). At the end of the IX<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of mausoleums (maqams) and mosques over the graves of the Prophet’s companions (ashab) and revered Islamic theologians (ulema) was recorded. The cult of “saints” and their graves has been developing rapidly since the end of the 10th century. Sufism played an especially important role in this, in which there is a veneration of spiritual mentors (murshids, sheikhs) and the tradition of visiting their graves (ziarat). Sufis believed that prayers transmitted through intermediary sheikhs are more effective than those that are addressed directly to Allah.

The history of the development of Islam and the Islamic world shows that free thought, literature, music existed in Sufi cells and opposed the fanaticism of ascetics. Such Sufi abodes for many centuries have concentrated intellectuals in themselves, contributed to the development of art and were a spiritual refuge for seekers. Among the Turks, the Mevlid communities enjoyed particular success – meetings for the performance and listening of “Mevlid” by Suleiman Chelebi (written in 1409). Suleiman Chelebi himself was an Ottoman Sufi poet and follower of the Khalwatiya tariqa. “Mevlid” was a synthesis of religious poetry and music, popularity at that time came from the corresponding needs of people who longed for ancient rituals. The Sufi abodes became a place where, in contrast to the ascetic and pious fanaticism of the madrasah, one could freely “breathe the air of beauty and intelligence”.

Culture and art developed thanks to Sufism. Orthodox religious tradition did not encourage this. Sufism formed an atmosphere that sanctioned and stimulated the development of literature and other arts in society. First of all, it is poetry, music, visual arts. M. Kara notes: “The Sufi monastery, in order to spread its ideas, needed to create the necessary environment, used the means of fine arts for this, starting with music. The only meeting place for word, sound and writing – calligraphy – is the abode. Therefore, it is impossible to consider the history of our literature and music in isolation from the monasteries” (Abdul’vapov, 2006: 61).

### Graves of Sufis in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, the Sufi tradition has deep historical roots and, first of all, is associated with the name of Khoja Akhmed Yasawi (Temirbayev, 2019: 113). He was the founder of the Turkic school of Sufism. It should be noted that the tariqat of Kh. A. Yasawi has undergone significant changes, intended from the moment of its appearance for the preparation of sheikhs; it has transformed into a broad teaching ac-

cessible to a large audience, which numbered tens and hundreds of thousands of people united by the immortal ideas of Kh.A. Yasawi about love for God.

In the city of Turkestan in the south of modern Kazakhstan, there is a mausoleum complex at the place of his burial. During the construction of the mausoleum, the architects used a number of innovative architectural and construction solutions that were used in the construction of Samarkand, the capital of the Timurid empire. During the Kazakh Khanate, the mausoleum was the residence of the Kazakh khans. During the Soviet period, an anti-religious museum was located in the building of the mausoleum complex. Today the mausoleum is one of the most significant and well-preserved structures of that era.

The graves of the Sufi guides – sheikhs have long become the holy places of believers. Each area has its own differences in their appearance. A feature of the graves of Sufi sheikhs in Central Asia and Kazakhstan is that there are corresponding marks on the gravestones, in addition to the inscription about the deceased in Arabic. There are two types of marks on the stones, namely lightning or a star – notches with a sharp object. Lightning means that the Sufi sheikh had no students, and the number of star-shaped notches indicated the number of students of the deceased teacher.

Sufism mainly gained its distribution in Kazakhstan in the southern and western regions, as evidenced by the numerous graves of Sufis (for example, in the west there are more than 300 graves), but modern anthropological data indicate that in the north of the country there are graves of Sufi sheikhs, and they have their own distinctive features that are reflected on the gravestones.

As part of field research, authors visited a cemetery in the Akmola region, where he established that there is a Sufi sheikh in the burial place after a gravestone with a star with notches on it. In addition, the grave of a Sufi teacher with a lightning bolt on a stone was also found in the Kyzylorda region.

In addition, the tradition of the Naqshbandiya tariqat (mujaddidiya-khusainiya) has been preserved and continues in Kazakhstan. To the southeast of the city of Turkestan is the village of Kussy-Ata (Kushata), which is the Center of this community. The followers of the leader, Abd al-Wahid-Ishan Mamatshukurov, periodically twice a year, approximately 1.5 thousand people gather in the house of his sons during the celebration of maulid and at the beginning of the month of Ramadan (Muminov, 2014).

In the Sufi group Qadiriya, which mainly includes the deported Ingush and Chechens, there are a num-

ber of features. Researcher Kamarova R.I. In 2015, she conducted field studies of the Sufi practices of Chechens deported in 1944 in the Atbasar district of the Akmola region, in the village of Krasnaya Polyana. The surviving Chechens and Ingush, far from their historical homeland, recreated their loud vird “visk-hodzha”. During the research Kamarova R.I. established the grave of the Chechen sheikh of this village. The gravestones are the same in color, shape and height throughout the cemetery. Inscriptions on stones in Arabic and Chechen. The grave of the sheikh and his wife is separated by a low fence and is a place of pilgrimage for his followers. The grave of Sheikh Qadiri Tariqat in the Akmola region of Kazakhstan is a place of annual pilgrimage for deported Chechens and Ingush (Temirbayev, 2021: 107).

As noted by the Russian scientist, A. Yarlykapov, based on his own field research, collective pilgrimages to holy places are arranged on the days of religious holidays. For pilgrims, a bench is often placed to the left of the grave. The ritual of ziyarat is quite simple and, as a rule, is limited to reading a prayer. Interesting fact that, sometimes, after reading a prayer, pilgrims can roll on the grave of saint several times. The reason is believing that the power of the saint will magically affect to the pilgrim. Before leaving the holy place (grave, tombs), pilgrims usually leave different offerings (money, food, or belongings). In addition, A. Yarlykapov writes that the graves of saints, as a rule, are distinguished from others by a low pole, tied with a piece of colored cloth and scarves. Pilgrims also tie handkerchiefs to the gravestones themselves. Over some shiikhs, believers build small houses to protect them from the weather. Usually the graves of the Nogai Shiikhs are located in the old part of the cemetery, usually on an elevation, which is a mound or hill (Volkonskiy, Yarlykapov, 2020: 68).

In 2017 started the project “Geography of the Holy Places of Kazakhstan”. According to the project, scientific experts have compiled a list of 100 sacred places of the Republic. (Pokidayev, 2019) Most of the places in this list were taken by architectural monuments affiliated with religion, and Sufism also. The most ancient city of Kazakhstan – Turkestan was given the status of a regional center in 2018, and an international airport is planned to be built in the region. These conditions will development tourism, also pilgrimage. Field data indicate a great pilgrimage interest on the part of Turkish citizens in Turkestan.

In 2018, 2019, tourist festivals of the Naqshbandiyya order were organized in Uzbekistan, where more than 250 followers of the Sufi Naqshbandiyya

tariqat from all over the world, in particular from Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Great Britain, New Zealand, China, India, Australia, USA, South Africa and other countries. As part of this festival, pilgrimage tours to shrines and memorials were organized. (Festival’ «Nakshbandiya» proydet v Uzbekistane, 2018) It is also known that some Sufi sheikhs emigrated to America and continued to spread their teachings there. Some of them died in America, and the disciples made their graves a place of pilgrimage.

### Results and Discussion

In modern Kazakhstan, after seventy years of atheism, the name of Yasawi and the shrines of Turkestan become symbols of spirituality and patriotism.

Nowadays, in several Islamic states Sufi groups continue to be the part of political and religious life. Sufism’s flexibility and “openness” to outside influences made it extremely heterogeneous.

In the modern world, there is a tendency towards weakening religious tolerance. Islamophobia is being whipped up in Western society. In Islam itself, the struggle between representatives of various religious movements is intensifying, which leads to various conflicts, including military ones.

Recently, some mosques and shrines also Sufi graves destroyed or damaged. It is found all over the Islamic world. Followers and supporters of Sufism were also killed.

This provokes protests from prominent representatives of the intelligentsia and clergy. Ali Gomaa – famous Sufi scholar and Grand Mufti of Al-Azhar University, criticized the destroying of shrines and graves. He dedicates that damaging public property as inadmissible (Ali Gomaa, 2011) In Kazakhstan, the issue of religion is regulated by law and any attempt to infringe on religious rights is punishable by law.

### Conclusion

Today, despite the fact that many auliya are forgotten, the growing interest of the Muslim community in the graves of saints is obvious. In recent years, under the program “100 sacred places of Kazakhstan”, large events have been held throughout the country to revive the spiritual heritage of the people. The process of restoration of sacred monuments is underway, cult activity is intensifying at the most famous sanctuaries, and many of them are being restored and updated. The cult of Muslim saints with graves, shrines, mosque and etc. are interesting phenomenon. It has a long history where

was development, recession, transformation also renaissance (tendencies to revival or traditions of veneration).

Turkestan is reborn and begins to occupy its historical place as the spiritual center of the Muslim world.

The state is investing in the project “100 Sacred Places of Kazakhstan”. Several international projects (including with Uzbekistan and Turkey) have been created to unite the Muslim shrines of Central Asia.

The graves of political leaders, socially significant personalities in the memorial complex of Ahmed Yasawi in Kazakhstan have always been significant and gives spiritual and ideological significance to the pilgrimage to ancient Turkestan. The burial places of political leaders, socially significant personalities in the cult-memorial complex of Ahmed Yasawi in Kazakhstan have always been significant and gives spiritual and ideological significance to the

pilgrimage to ancient Turkestan. So, for believers and religious people, this cultural complex is an opportunity to worship the deceased saints, as well as to “turn” to the spirit of Yasawi and other Aruakhs honorable for national history. Many saints have even been elevated to the rank of patron saints. For tourists or ordinary citizens, this is an opportunity to see cultural and historical features, to touch the ancient history of the region.

Of course, over time, some aspects of the rules for performing ziarat have been lost. In ancient times, the traditions were slightly different. However, the folk tradition has preserved the key routes, basic rules, and most importantly the meaning of the actions and rituals performed, passing it on from generation to generation. In general, it is necessary to continue a comprehensive study of the burial monuments of the sheikhs, which will expand knowledge regarding the cultural and religious landscape of our country.

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