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PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN AND WOMEN VISITING HOLY PLACES (using the example of holy places in Southern Kazakhstan)

The work examines psychosocial differences between men and women making pilgrimages to holy places, using the example of holy places in South Kazakhstan. The study aimed to identify the beliefs, psychological factors and characteristics underlying the visit to sacred sites. The main directions of scientific research are religious studies and psychosocial research. The study's primary purpose is to conduct a comprehensive, scientifically based analysis of the psychosocial characteristics of people visiting sacred places and mausoleums and discover their place in society. Therefore, the article examines the social characteristics of pilgrims, the frequency of visits to holy places, their purposes, background and factors influencing them. Attention is also paid to the gender characteristics of people visiting holy places, examining which men and women visit holy places more frequently, for what purposes and under what circumstances. The research was conducted at the 17 most visited sacred sites in South Kazakhstan. The research utilised scientific methods such as surveys, observations and interviews. The data were statistically analysed using SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. The study demonstrated the psychosocial characteristics of men and women visiting holy places. The study revealed that female pilgrims visit holy places more frequently and, when necessary, fulfil their religious needs that are lacking in traditional religious rituals and that the prayers and wishes said at holy places differ according to the gender of the visitors. The fact that this topic is still insufficiently studied from a psychosocial point of view in domestic religious studies shows the value of the work.

Key words: religion, mausoleum, pilgrimage, man, woman.

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Киелі орындарды зиярат етуші ерлер мен әйелдер арасындағы психо-әлеуметтік ерекшеліктер (Оңтүстік Қазақстандағы киелі орындар мысалында)

Бұл мақалада киелі орындарды зиярат етуші ерлер мен әйелдер арасындағы психо-әлеуметтік ерекшеліктер Оңтүстік Қазақстандағы киелі орындар мысалында қарастырылады. Зерттеуде киелі саналатын орындарға барудың астарындағы наным-сенімдік әрі психологиялық факторлар мен ерекшеліктерді анықтау мақсат етілді. Ғылыми зерттеудің басты бағыттары – дінтанулық және психо-әлеуметтік зерттеулер. Ал зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты, киелі жерлер мен кесенелерді зиярат жасаушы адамдардың психо-әлеуметтік ерекшеліктерін ғылыми негізде жан-жақты талдау, оның қоғамдағы орнын айшықтау. Сол себепті мақалада зиярат жасаушылардың әлеуметтік ерекшеліктері, киелі жерлерге бару жиілігі, мақсаттары, алғышарттар, әсер еткен факторлар зерттеледі. Сондай-ақ киелі жерлерге баратын адамдардың гендерлік ерекшеліктеріне мән беріліп, ерлер мен әйелдердің қайсысы киелі жерлерге жиі баратындығы, қандай мақсаттарда баратындығы, қандай жағдайда баратындығы қарастырылады. Зерттеу Оңтүстік Қазақстандағы адамдар ең көп баратын 17 киелі орында жүргізілген. Зерттеу барысында сауалнама, бақылау, сұхбат секілді ғылыми әдістер қолданылды. Алынған мәліметтерге SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) бағдарламасы арқылы статистикалық талдау жасалынды. Зерттеудің нәтижесінде киелі орындарды зиярат етуші ерлер мен әйелдердің психо-әлеуметтік ерекшеліктері белгілі болды. Зерттеуде зияратшы әйелдердің ерлерге қарағанда киелі жерлерге жиірек әрі қиындыққа

қа душар болған кезде баратындығы, дәстүрлі діни рәсімдерде кемшін қалған діни қажеттіліктерін қанағаттандыратындығы және киелі орындарда жасалған дұға-тілектердің де келушілердің жыныстық ерекшеліктеріне байланысты түрленетіндігі анықталған. Тақырыптың отандық дінтану саласында психо-әлеуметтік тұрғыдан әлі де аз зерттелуі жұмыстың құндылығын көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: дін, кесене, зиярат, ер, әйел.

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Психосоциальные особенности мужчин и женщин, посещающих святы места (на примере святы мест Южного Казахстана)

В статье рассматриваются психосоциальные различия между мужчинами и женщинами, совершающими паломничество к святым местам, на примере святы мест Южного Казахстана. Целью исследования было выявление верований, психологических факторов и характеристик, лежащих в основе посещения священных мест. Основными направлениями научных исследований являются религиоведческие и психосоциальные исследования. Основная цель исследования – провести комплексный научно обоснованный анализ психосоциальных характеристик людей, посещающих святы места и мавзолей, и выяснить их место в обществе. Поэтому в статье рассматриваются социальные характеристики паломников, частота посещений святы мест, их цели, предпосылки и факторы, влияющие на них. Также уделяется внимание гендерным особенностям людей, посещающих святы места, рассматривается, какие мужчины и женщины посещают святы места чаще, с какими целями и при каких обстоятельствах. Исследование проводилось на 17 наиболее посещаемых священных местах Южного Казахстана. В ходе исследования использовались такие научные методы, как опросы, наблюдения и интервью. Полученные данные были статистически проанализированы с использованием программы SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). В результате исследования были выявлены психосоциальные особенности мужчин и женщин, посещающих святы места. Исследование показало, что женщины-паломники посещают святы места чаще и, когда это необходимо, удовлетворяют свои религиозные потребности, которых не хватает в традиционных религиозных ритуалах, а также что молитвы и желания, произносимые в святы местах, различаются в зависимости от пола посетителей. Тот факт, что данная тема до сих пор недостаточно изучена с психосоциальной точки зрения в отечественном религиоведении, свидетельствует о ценности работы.

Ключевые слова: религия, мавзолей, паломничество, мужчина, женщина.

Introduction

In addition to traditional religion, some beliefs have spread among people. These include beliefs related to holy places and the rituals performed there. No matter how influential traditional religion may be, these beliefs continue to have a following among the population. Many people continue to visit holy places, such as graves of saints and natural features like trees, mountains, and springs.

The history of the appearance of some of the shrines is unknown. Only legends about them have been passed down through stories and have survived. Therefore, they can be considered witnesses to many historical events and eras.

Even places that were previously considered holy have been transformed by Islam and given new character. They have become part of the religious landscape and continue to play an important role in

people's lives (Temirbayev, Temirbayeva, 2021: 50-58).

We can point to many holy places from pre-Islamic times to support our argument. Islamic educational institutions and places of worship have been established around these sites, reviving and popularizing them (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 16-17).

After the Turkic peoples adopted Islam, their ideas about the spirit of their ancestors changed. Furthermore, the legends associated with mausoleums and sanctuaries have been revived following Islam (Altan, 2007: 16-18).

It is said that some of the rituals performed at the head of the Tomb originated from the shamanic faith. One of the most significant similarities was also the similarities between the faith of shamanism and the cult of saints in Islam (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 19). Shamans, in turn, were also considered to predict the future, control the weather, prevent

evil, heal diseases, fly, do not burn in fire, and help people after death (Yılmaz, 2012: 15).

The ancient Turks believed that mountains, stones, hills, rocks, trees and water had souls, so they would ask them for help and healing. They considered these natural elements holy and believed they had special powers (Zatov and others, 2023: 65). This is probably due to the fact that trees, water, springs, wells and other natural features located near the tombs of saints are now considered holy (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 20).

Despite the lack of clear instructions in Islam on the construction of mausoleums, these structures have continued to be built in Muslim countries for the burial of honourable individuals. Mausoleums have become not only buildings but also places of pilgrimage and prayer. Some traditions have traces of ancient beliefs, such as the veneration of ancestors (Yazar, 1999: 427-428). People settled around the graves, and the names of these villages were associated with the people who rested in the mausoleums (Demir, 1999: 471-472). In addition, people who were considered honorable by the people were buried near the graves of saints (Zhandarbek, 2006: 236).

Firstly, by visiting holy places, people can satisfy their religious feelings (Askhat and others, 2020: 189). Secondly, they feel overwhelmed by the beauty and significance of these places, as if they are understanding metaphysical and abstract concepts. They can freely approach these places, touch them, admire them, and share their feelings without any obstacles (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 39). A connection is established with a mysterious world. The daily bustle of this world gives way to tranquillity. Visitors to the mausoleum feel their souls have been cleansed; they understand the meaning of life, look at difficulties in a different light, and everything seems fine. They feel a sense of peace and piety (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 47).

Some studies have shown that more women visit tombs. This is due to several factors, according to researchers. Firstly, women's religious beliefs often include mysticism and sensuality, which may lead them to be more interested in visiting tombs. Secondly, traditional religious practices play a role as well. For instance, in Islam, it is often believed that it is better for women to worship at home rather than in mosques, so they may choose to visit tombs instead. Conversely, Tombs do not impose similar restrictions (Köse, Ayten, 2010:51; Çelik, 2013:122).

There is a significant amount of research on visiting tombs and mausoleums. This likely highlights

the significance of exploring these holy places, which people often visit. The pilgrimage to shrines dates back to ancient times and continues today. Most beliefs among the Kazakh people are directly linked to these locations. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore holy places where folk beliefs reside, such as mausoleums and tombs (Özkan and others, 2019: 215).

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

Since the reasons and peculiarities of visiting holy places, considering gender differences and psychosocial aspects, have not yet been scientifically studied in domestic religious studies, this article attempts to examine this topic in more depth, based on scientific methodologies. Therefore, the necessity and importance of the chosen topic is undeniable. In the work, we conducted the study experimentally using domestic and foreign scientific research, such as direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires, to achieve the objective. To achieve the desired priority, we focused on the following aims and objectives:

- to identify psychosocial factors and reasons for people to visit holy places;
- to limit the study to the 17 most visited sacred sites in South Kazakhstan;
- to analyse the relationship between sacred places and people from the point of view of the psychology of religion;
- identify the goals and desires of people visiting a sacred place, as well as the expected outcomes;
- to identify specific differences between men and women visiting sacred places.

Scientific research methodology

The main problem considered by the research work is the psycho-social features of the pilgrims of sacred places and mausoleums in Kazakhstan and the differences manifested during the pilgrimage between men and women. During the research, observations, surveys, and interviews were used, and several objects were selected as samples. In addition to distributing questionnaires, external monitoring of participants and face-to-face interviews were carried out. Some of the questions in the questionnaire itself were supplemented during the interview. The methods used in this way, in the course of the study, complemented each other. Many studies have been analyzed that are directly or indirectly related

to the article's topic. The research was carried out in the sacred places of the South Kazakhstan region, where people often visit. People who came to the pilgrimage were chosen at random, and they were monitored. We interviewed and took a survey. These works were carried out in three months (from July to September 2018), and all stages of the study covered three years.

Results and discussion

The Kazakhs' veneration of holy places dates back to the times of the ancient Turks. If we look closely at the rituals and actions there, we can easily see the echoes of that time. These holy sites, which have experienced many historical and cultural events over the centuries, have retained the features of that era to the present day. Even during the period of Islamization of the Turks, these cultures and beliefs did not disappear.

"Islam, for its part, thanks to the efforts of its supporters, has spread widely and united various cultures under its roof. Given this tolerance, people easily converted to Islam. People who believed in the spiritual powers of the pious dervishes respected them. This respect contributed to the fact that their graves became holy places – mausoleums" (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 16). In addition, the proximity of religious centres to old churches, monasteries, and mausoleums contributed to the rapid spread of Islam. The gathering of representatives from different cultures and religions further increased the significance of these mausoleums (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 16-17).

Even in ancient times, the Turks believed that it was necessary to seek help from the spirits of their ancestors. They thought these spirits were looking out for them and would help if necessary. These beliefs were linked to the idea of an afterlife in Islam and led to customs such as visiting graves, covering them, lighting candles and spending time there. When we look at the customs associated with graves in Central Asia, we see elements of shamanism, magic, and animism. This includes the cult of ancestors, mountains, trees, water, and fire (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 18).

We can attribute the mounds to the burial culture of the Turks. They consisted of rooms with wooden or stone interlacing inside and a mound of soil or shrubs buried on top of the outside. Subsequently, the ancient Turks had graves. The deceased was placed in the first yurt and then eventually placed in the mausoleum. "There are also records that the

Turks built structures over the grave, reminiscent of the wars of the deceased" (Aday, 2013: 21).

After the Turks converted to Islam, the worship of ancestors was replaced by that of saints. Myths and legends were also adapted to fit within the framework of Islam, and ancient structures were reinterpreted in light of Islamic beliefs (Altan, 2007: 16-18). The origins of some of the beliefs connected to the mausoleum pilgrimage can be traced back to Christianity. In Christianity, it is common for people to visit holy sites (Özkan, 2009: 25). It is known that the Nestorian branch of Christianity strongly influenced the Turks. In some periods, Christians and Muslims even made pilgrimages to the same tomb together (Yılmaz, 2012: 15). For example, the candle-lighting ceremony in mausoleums may be connected with Christianity and the ancient Turkic faith. According to the Old Turkic beliefs, the deceased's spirit would remain in the house for forty days. It was believed that lighting candles during the funeral would help them find their way (Özkan, 2009: 24). Thus, we can say that the history of pilgrimage to holy places has its roots in the distant past. Even after the adoption of Islam, many pre-Islamic beliefs and customs continued to exist, and over time, they adapted to the new religion. In some cases, they even became an integral part of Islamic practice.

Psychosocial factors underlying visits to holy places

The phenomenon of pilgrimage has been an ancient tradition, as has the history of humanity. Throughout history, people have been fascinated by mysticism and have performed various rituals to connect with the mysterious world and protect themselves from its dangers. Even today, many people still hold holy beliefs in particular objects, such as the tombs of saints and influential figures, making them popular destinations for pilgrimages (Yılmaz, 2012: 1). The functions performed by places considered holy can be described as follows:

1. A connection is being created with one world that humanity did not know about or see mysteriously. A bridge is being formed between the two worlds. A person, saving himself from daily monotonous activities, feels as if he has opened the door to a new world, discarding the influence of negative feelings such as depression and stress. Taking care of the cleanliness of his body, he washes his face, sprays perfume gets rid of bad words and shows polite behaviour. Every change makes an indelible impression on someone, as if they see themselves differently.

2. Under the influence of the holy land, holy powers begin to manifest. Touching walls and objects, kissing, drinking water from a well or spring, bathing, holding a stone, throwing money, and tying cloth create a sense of connection with the holy. These actions provide spiritual comfort for the person performing them.

3. Religious values are being revived thanks to holy sites. Life takes on a new meaning. Events that may have seemed hostile are viewed differently; their meaning changes, and they begin to seem optimistic. When an aimless life is filled with a holy place, a person experiences a sense of well-being and often returns to such a place. As the spiritual values at the sanctuary grow, people become more zealous, striving to be good people and followers of religion. Performing rituals, making sacrifices and cultivating kindness strengthen confidence in the future (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 47).

During our observation of visitors at the sanctuary, we noticed that most were women. Women also attached more importance to the rituals performed. Those who led by example and taught others what to do were also women. When bringing their families, we noticed that men most often performed only the role of a head next to them.

In sanctuaries, the presence of women may be explained in the following way. In most cases, women's religiosity is more mystical and sensitive than men's. Female religiosity reflects a penchant for tradition, solemnity, and magic. From this perspective, holy places can be seen where women's religious beliefs are expressed. This is evident when a woman places importance on solemn ceremonies, such as praying at the mausoleum, reading the Koran, or performing rituals. Even in prayer, women have different needs and desires than men, and women often outnumber men in their desire to pray (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 47-49).

The reasons why women frequently visit shrines can be linked to traditional religious practices. In daily life, women may not be free to attend mosques (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 51). And, of course, concepts such as the ratio of women to men in Islam and so on show their influence. "Women feel much freer if they are in a sanctuary. Their exits from home are "legalized" (Çelik, 2013: 122).

Socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants randomly selected during the survey in holy places were as follows.

Table 1 – Gender identity of participants

GENDER	N	%
Male	116	39.2
Woman	180	60.8
TOTAL	296	100.0

The number of male and female participants, the percentages of which are given in Table 1. Of the 296 total respondents, 39.2% (N=116) were men, and 60.8% (N=180) were women. During our observations, we noticed that women were more prevalent among visitors.

Table 2 – Age characteristics of participants

AGE	N	%
13-21	38	12.8
22-35	140	47.3
36-65	117	39.5
65-...	1	0.3
TOTAL	296	100.0

Table 2 shows that 12.8% of the participants (N=38) were between the ages of 13 and 21, 47.3% (N=140) were between the ages of 22 and 35, 39.5% (N=117) were between the ages of 36 and 65, and 0.3%, that is only one person was over 65 years old. According to our observations, the vast majority of visitors are middle-aged people. Those under 18 often came with adult relatives, while middle-aged and older people came alone or with their families. Furthermore, the older ones often came with someone's help. It can be assumed that the age of visitors to the holy places is getting younger over time because many visitors bring their children.

Table 3 – Family status of the participants

FAMILY STATUS	N	%
Family	165	55.7
Single	131	44.3
TOTAL	296	100.0

In Table 3, 55.7% of participants (N=165) are married, and 44.3% (N=131) are single.

Religious position and results associated with the fulfilment of religious requirements

As already mentioned, visiting shrines is a requirement of traditional religion. Therefore, it is quite natural that there is a close connection between them. Religious beliefs and actions of visitors lead to the following consequences.

Table 4 shows that 27.7% of the participants (N=82) said they fully comply with all religious

requirements, 47.0% partially comply, 18.9% very little comply, and 6.4% do not comply at all with religious requirements.

In general, it has been noted that among visitors to holy places, there is a predominance of people who fully or partially fulfil the requirements of their religion. Studies report that those with strong religious beliefs also tend to have higher levels of popular religiosity (Arslan, 2004: 279).

Table 4 – Indicators related to meeting the requirements of religion

STATE OF ADHERENCE TO RELIGIOUS PRACTICE	N	%
I follow all religious precepts.	82	27.7
I only partially fulfill the requirements of religion.	139	47.0
I do not pay due attention to the observance of religious norms	56	18.9
I completely disregard my religious obligations.	19	6.4
TOTAL	296	100.0

Table 5 – Results of the relationship between gender and frequency of visits to the holy places

Gender		The frequency of visits to the holy place			TOTAL
		My first visit	I visit from time to time	I often come	
Man	N	13	90	13	116
	%	11.2%	77.6%	11.2%	100.0%
Woman	N	18	129	33	180
	%	10.0%	71.7%	18.3%	100.0%
TOTAL	N	31	219	46	296
	%	10.5%	74.0%	15.5%	100.0%

$$X^2 = 2,737 \text{ sd} = 2 \text{ P} = .254$$

Table 5 shows that 11.2% of men and 18.3% of women reported frequent visits to holy sites; 77.6% of men and 71.7% of women reported irregular visits; 11.2% of men and 10% of women reported their first visit. Although the frequency of visits by women to the holy place in the table seems to be high, the difference between them does not reach the degree of significance. $X^2 (\text{sd}=2, n=296) = 2.737, p>0.050$. In other words, there is practically no significant relationship between the sex characteristics of the participants and the frequency of visits to holy places.

As a result of Semra Yılmaz's research, the spiritual benefits obtained also varied depending on the participants' gender. Female participants were found to experience more spiritual comfort than male participants (Yılmaz, 2012: 171). In addition,

visiting the mausoleums provided women with an opportunity to feel a little bit more relaxed and free from household responsibilities (Çelik, 2013: 122).

It has been known that women are more prone to folk beliefs and customs than men. Some studies have found that women have a high degree of religiosity. While most men go to holy places without violating the requirements of traditional religion and without going to extremes, most women go to holy places considering their own needs and wishes or those of their relatives. This is also probably because women spend most of their time at home, in close contact with other family members (Arslan, 2004: 203-204).

A study conducted by Turkish researcher Asiye Altan did not reveal a direct relationship between the frequency of visits to the mausoleum and the gender of visitors. However, it has been noticed that men

come here more often on Fridays and holidays. In general, women visited the mausoleum more often. However, this ratio varied depending on the location of the building: the further away from the city, the more often women came there, preferring to come with their husbands (Altan, 2007: 72-73).

Emre Yılmaz's study also found no significant relationship between the frequency of visits to holy sites and gender. The researcher explained this by the fact that the mausoleums were far from the city (Yılmaz, 2009: 45). A similar result is stated in the study of Semra Yılmaz (Yılmaz, 2012: 132). At the same time, although there is no significant difference between visiting holy places and a person's gender identity, the goals of visiting these places by women and men may differ. While men can visit mosques at shrines on Fridays for prayer and at other times with their families, research has shown that this does not apply to women (Çelik, 2013: 121-122). The lack of participation of women in the rituals of the Islamic religion encourages them to come up with folk religious rituals for themselves (Arslan, 2004: 63-64).

The priority of the need for holy places in women is also emphasized in other studies. In a study by Ali Köse and Ali Ayten, 62% of visitors to the holy places were women, and 38% were men. In addition, given that men came as companions to female visitors, and the location of the mausoleums is long away from the places of residence, there is another increase in the number of female visitors. Research-

ers attribute the reasons for this to the fact that female religiosity is much more impressionable and mystical than that of men. It should be noted that such rituals as touching the walls of the mausoleum, white binding, opening a key, reading the Koran, making a wish, etc., which are usually performed in holy places, are some of the characteristics of women. In addition, the author notes that behind this is the need for holy places. Women cannot freely visit mosques in everyday life. However, visiting mausoleums they satisfy their religious needs (Köse, Ayten, 2010: 47-51).

Religious feelings make them much happier because women are stronger in sensitivity and weaker in physical terms, and they have a feeling of relying on a mysterious force that they cannot bear to endure in the face of adversity. Conversely, men do not like to be under someone else's authority or to be limited (Yapıcı, 2013: 250). In this way, women compensate for all their weaknesses by being at the centre of attention of one powerful force, satisfying the feeling of relying on another in the holy places.

Even during our observations, it was noticed that women are much more inclined to come to the holy place. Women living nearby came to the mausoleums or with children, while young girls came in groups or with friends. There were usually men among those who came with family or from afar.

The relationship between gender and the purpose of visiting holy places

Table 6 – Indicator of the relationship between gender and the purpose of visiting the sanctuary

THE PURPOSE OF VISITING THE SANCTUARY		GENDER		TOTAL
		Man	Woman	
Have children	N	2	17	19
	%	1.7 %	9.4 %	
Finding a suitable partner	N	3	14	17
	%	2.6%	7.8%	
Getting rid of disease (treatment)	N	8	41	49
	%	6.9%	22.8%	
Finding a job	N	4	5	9
	%	3.4%	2.8%	
Solving life's problems	N	8	12	20
	%	6.9%	6.7%	
Success in trade or activity	N	10	15	25
	%	8.6%	8.3%	
Successfully passing exams	N	7	13	20
	%	6.0%	7.2%	

Continuation of the table

THE PURPOSE OF VISITING THE SANCTUARY		GENDER		TOTAL
		Man	Woman	
Improving academic performance	N	5	5	10
	%	4.3%	2.8%	
Overcoming daily challenges	N	5	9	14
	%	4.3%	5.0%	
Well-being, safety of family members	N	10	72	82
	%	8.6%	40.0%	
Improving the relationship between couples	N	2	8	10
	%	1.7%	4.4%	
Preventing jinx	N	11	21	32
	%	9.5%	11.7%	
Getting rid of bad habits such as drunkenness, ludomania	N	5	7	12
	%	4.3%	3.9%	
Accident protection	N	10	34	44
	%	8.6%	18.9%	
Getting rid of sins	N	26	49	75
	%	22.4%	27.2%	
Protection from witchcraft	N	11	17	28
	%	9.5%	9.4%	
Gratitude for a wish fulfilled	N	29	71	100
	%	25.0%	39.4%	
Without any goals, intentions	N	11	15	26
	%	9.5%	8.3%	
Another	N	31	23	54
	%	26.7%	12.8%	
TOTAL	N	116	180	296
	%	39.2%	60.8%	100.0%

One of the most important reasons to visit the sanctuary is the desire to have children. When we look at sexual characteristics, 9.4% of women and 1.7% of men came with the intention of having children, and 7.8% of women and 2.6% of men came with the intention of getting married.

The largest proportion of those who came to get rid (treatment) of diseases. For this purpose, 22.8% of women and 6.9% of men came.

3.4% of men and 2.8% of women desire to find a job, 6.9% of men and 6.7% of women desire to eliminate problems with existence, 8.6% of men and 8.3% of women desire to succeed in trade or in the service.

During the observations, many young people visiting holy places were also observed. Many of them strive to excel in educational tests. Many people want to go to university in the summer season. 7.2% of women and 6% of men came with the in-

tention of successfully passing exams, 4.3% of men and 2.8% of women with the intention of improving academic performance.

5% of women and 4.3% of men visited shrines to overcome everyday difficulties.

40% of women and 8.6% of men attended for the well-being and safety of their family members. 4.4% of women and 1.7% of men visited to improve their relationships with their spouses. As expected, more women attended for this purpose, with 11.7% of men also attending to improve their marital relationships. Additionally, 9.5% of women and men visited holy places to protect themselves from the evil eye.

9.5% of men and 9.4% of women came to protect themselves from Magic, 4.3% of men and 3.9% of women came to get rid of bad habits, such as drinking and gambling. 18.9% of women and 8.6% of men came to the holy place to protect themselves

from disaster and trouble, 27.2% of women and 22.4% of men came with the intention of getting rid of sins and spiritual impurities.

39.4% of women and 25% of men came to give thanks for fulfilled desires, and 9.5% of men and 8.3% of women came without any goals or intentions.

In addition, 26.7% of men and 12.8% of women indicated an unwritten goal/intention in the list. Many wrote that they came with the goals of honouring the memory of the dead, reading the Koran, getting closer to God, and so on.

Analyzing the results, it turned out that most women who visit holy places come with such goals/intentions as having children, getting married, seeking healing from their ailments, overcoming everyday difficulties, successfully passing exams, wishing for the well-being and safety of family members; improving relations between spouses; avoiding the jinx; avoiding disasters and troubles; to get rid of sins; to thank for fulfilled desires.

Moreover, now, when we look at the goals/intentions of men, it becomes clear that many come to find a job, get rid of life difficulties, succeed in trade or in the service, take a position, succeed in studies, get rid of bad habits such as drunkenness, gambling. Thus, it was found that visitors to the sanctuaries also have different goals depending on gender. It turns out that while women often seek to solve family problems, men often set themselves financial achievements and solving their family's financial problems as the goal of visiting holy places.

Conclusion

In our study, a psychosocial review of the holy sites of the Southern region of Kazakhstan was conducted. Depending on the scope of our work, we have included only changes related to the gender

characteristics of visitors to holy places. As we have already noted, foreign studies have been widely used due to the lack of research in the country from the point of view of the psychology of religion of holy places.

As a result, it turned out that beliefs related to holy places are widespread among the population. It even became clear that they had become man's last hope when, instead of being destroyed by the passage of time, they, on the contrary, remained without destroying their "popularity". In addition, the holy places bear the features of many religions that have existed in history.

Shrines satisfy the religious needs of the population to some extent. In general, among the visitors to holy places, the number of those who fully or partially comply with religious requirements prevails. Women are especially closely associated with shrines, as is known.

During our research, we collected data on the gender characteristics of sanctuary visitors. We found that women are more likely to visit holy sites than men when distressed, seeking to satisfy their religious needs through traditional religious ceremonies. In addition, we have found that the prayers and intentions expressed in sanctuaries vary depending on the gender of those who visit them.

Since our research does not cover the entire territory of Kazakhstan, we will need to consider some regions separately in the future to obtain more accurate data. It is also possible to conduct comparative studies between different regions. Additionally, we can delve deeper into the features of certain holy localities, as each sanctuary has unique characteristics that differ from others. Identifying these differences is an important issue that we hope to address in the future. However, we believe that this initial study will serve as a valuable starting point for future work on this subject.

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