

## Tatar-Bashkir Ethnocultural Centers of Kazakhstan: History, Identity and Religion

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### Abstract

The origins of the Bashkirs as a tribal group date back to the ancient sources of Herodotus and Ptolemy, and references to them are found in Chinese, Arabic, and Persian chronicles. Their formation occurred amid complex ethnic and migratory processes across the Eurasian steppe, the Volga region, and the Urals. The first mentions of the Tatars date back to the 6th-9th centuries. Bashkirs and Tatars belong to the Turkic peoples of Eurasia and have close historical and cultural ties. Their ethnogenesis is complex. The ties of the Bashkirs and Tatars with Central Asia have deep historical roots (migration, cultural exchange, trade, education, and religious activity). After Kazakhstan's joining to Russia, Tatar merchants, scholars, and religious figures played an important role in the development of cities, culture, education, and Islam. Tatars are one of the largest ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. Bashkirs are also represented, but in smaller numbers. The country has a network of ethnocultural centers that maintain the traditions of their peoples. In this regard, this article will examine the activities of Tatar-Bashkir ethnocultural centers, their identity, and religious affiliation. It concludes that Tatars and Bashkirs are active participants in state-confessional relations in Kazakhstan, identify with Sunni Islam, and make a valuable contribution to the country's ethnocultural landscape and the development of their ethnic group.

**Keywords:** Bashkirs; Tatars; cultural landscape; Islam; religious identity.

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## Қазақстанның татар-башқұрт этномәдени орталықтары: тарихы, бірегейлігі және діні

### Аңдатпа

Башқұрттардың тайпалық топ ретіндегі шығу тегі Геродот пен Птолемейдің ежелгі дереккөздерінен бастау алады, және олар туралы сілтемелер қытай, араб және парсы шежірелерінде кездеседі. Олардың қалыптасуы Еуразия даласы, Еділ бойы және Орал бойындағы күрделі этникалық және көші-қон процестері аясында болды. Татарлар туралы алғашқы деректер VI-IX ғасырларда кездеседі. Башқұрттар мен татарлар Еуразияның түркі халықтарына жатады, олар тарихи және мәдени байланыстарға ие. Олардың этногенезі күрделі. Башқұрттар мен татарлардың Орталық Азиямен байланысының терең тарихи тамырлары бар (көші-қон, мәдени алмасу, сауда, білім беру және діни қызмет). Қазақстан Ресейге қосылғаннан кейін татар саудагерлері, ғалымдары және дін қайраткерлері қалалардың, мәдениеттің, білім берудің және исламның дамуында маңызды рөл атқарды. Татарлар – Қазақстандағы ең ірі этникалық топтардың бірі, ал башқұрттар аз санда кездеседі. Елде өз ұлттарының дәстүрлерін сақтайтын этномәдени орталықтар желісі бар. Осыған байланысты, бұл мақалада татар-башқұрт этномәдени орталықтарының қызметі, олардың бірегейлігі және діни тиесілілігі қарастырылады. Мақалада татарлар мен башқұрттардың Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік-конфессиялық қатынастарға белсенді қатысушылар екендігі, сунниттік исламмен бірегейлігі және елдің этномәдени ландшафтына және өз этникалық тобының дамуына құнды үлес қосатыны туралы қорытынды жасалған.

**Түйін сөздер:** башқұрттар; татарлар; мәдени ландшафт; ислам; діни бірегейлік.

## Татари-башкирские этнокультурные центры Казахстана: история, идентичность и религия

### Аннотация

Образование башкир как племенной группы уходит в древние источники Геродота, Птолемея и данные о них упоминаются в китайских, арабских, персидских хрониках. Их формирование происходило в условиях сложных этнических, миграционных процессов на территории Евразийской степи, Поволжья и Урала. Первые упоминания о татарах восходят к VI-IX вв. Башкиры и татары относятся к тюркским народам Евразии и имеют близкие историко-культурные связи. Их этногенез является многокомпонентным. Связи башкир и татар с Центральной Азией имеют глубокие исторические корни (миграция, культурный обмен, торговля, образование, религиозная деятельность). После присоединения Казахстана к России татарские купцы, ученые и религиозные деятели играли важную роль в развитии городов, культуры, образования и ислама. Татары являются одним из крупных этносов в Казахстане. Башкиры также представлены, но в меньших показателях. В стране действует сеть этнокультурных центров, которые поддерживают традиции своих народов. В этой связи, в статье будет рассмотрена деятельность татаро-башкирских этнокультурных центров, идентичность и религиозная принадлежность. В статье делается вывод, что татары и башкиры являются активными участниками государственно-конфессиональных отношений в Казахстане, идентифицируют себя с суннитским исламом, вносят ценный вклад в этнокультурный ландшафт страны и развитие своего этноса.

**Ключевые слова:** башкиры; татары; культурный ландшафт; Ислам; религиозная идентичность.

## Introduction

In a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society such as Kazakhstan, religion and ethnicity are two significant factors that profoundly influence social processes. Religion and ethnicity are resources for identifying individuals and social groups, and forms of organizing social relations. Moreover, religion and ethnicity are ideological foundations through which people perceive the social world, evaluate it, and give it meaning. Religion and ethnicity shape the culture of ethnic groups, promote their self-preservation, and prevent assimilation (Zharkynbekova et al, 2025).

The history of the Tatars and Bashkirs in Kazakhstan has deep historical roots, reflected in the works of these ethnic groups themselves. Various historical contexts of their emergence and contributions to the country's development are noted. Among the main characteristics that unite Kazakhs, Tatars, and Bashkirs are their shared Turkic heritage and religion – Islam (Lewis, 1997, p. 219). However, the focus is primarily on representatives of the Tatar and Bashkir ethnic groups, who have not assimilated or blended with other peoples through intermarriage (and there are many of these), but have managed to preserve their ethnic identity (Makhmutov, 2023, p. 130). The desire to preserve their ethnic identity and roots was historically expressed in the pre-Soviet period through compact settlements in certain territories, as, for example, a Tatar settlement could always be found in any city in Kazakhstan. In modern conditions, ethnocultural centers play a significant role in uniting the Tatars and Bashkirs.

The 20th anniversary of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in 2015 was accompanied by another important date for the Tatars and Bashkirs of Kazakhstan: the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the first Tatar-Bashkir community centers. According to the latest census 218 653 (1,1 %) Tatars and 19,834 Bashkirs live in Kazakhstan (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021, p. 11).

Currently, there are 26 Tatar and Tatar-Bashkir national and cultural organizations in Kazakhstan. The largest national association of Tatars and Bashkirs is the Association of Tatar and Tatar-Bashkir Public and Cultural Centers of Kazakhstan “Idel”, which unites 18 national and cultural centers in 15 regions of Kazakhstan and is one of the co-founders and a full member of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (Plenipotentiary Representation of the Republic of Tatarstan in the Republic of Kazakhstan, n.d.). All these organizations were created in different organizational and legal forms (republican public association, center for humanitarian development, association, cultural center, etc.).

## Materials and Methods

In the context of the study of ethnicity and religion, the ethno-symbolic approach is, in our opinion, the most relevant, since cultural codes, myths, and collective memory, to a greater or lesser extent, contain a religious component.

The first approach views ethnicity and religion as analogous phenomena. Ethnicity and religion represent fundamental resources and forms of social and cultural identification, meaning they are ways of identifying oneself and others and constructing similarities and differences between social groups. Ethnicity and religion also serve as ways of framing and organizing social relations, serving as a source of societal segmentation based on ethnic and religious criteria.

The second approach examines the influence of religion on the formation and strengthening of ethnic groups, as well as the ideologies of nation-states. Religious motives, narratives, and symbols, having been transferred to the political sphere, have been actively used and continue to be used to construct both ethno-national and national ideologies.

The third approach views religion as intertwined with ethnicity. The first type of intertwining of religion and ethnicity is represented by the coincidence of religious and ethno-national or national boundaries.

The fourth approach to the relationship between religion and ethnicity, as well as nationalism, focuses not simply on the use of religiously charged language and religious imagery that frame ethnic (national) discourse, but on the phenomenon of religious nationalism, where religion defines the content of ethnicity. Religion produces a total order capable of regulating every aspect of life. Religious nationalism unites the state, territory, and culture primarily through a focus on the family. It defends the traditional family as a key aspect of social reproduction and moral socialization against economic and cultural forces that weaken their power and socializing force. It adheres to the traditional gender division of labor within and outside the family.

The empirical material is based on fieldwork conducted by the author in Kazakhstan between 2017 and 2025, including interviews, observations, content analysis and archival notes.

All approaches represent promising areas of research and outline a wide range of questions that can be raised regarding the relationship between such multidimensional phenomena as “religion”, “ethnicity”, and “nationalism”.

### **Results and Discussion**

Research into the historical role, ethnogenesis, and cultural and religious contributions of the Bashkirs and Tatars in Central Asia is relevant for this multiethnic region. The results of such research are reflected in the scientific articles of the following scholars: Makhmutov Z. A., Razhepaeva F. Z., Sultangalieva G. S., Shabley P., Karpov D., Safiullina R., Filatov S., Imamutdinova Z. A., Yemelyanova G., and others. These studies cover both regional and local aspects:

- the formation of Tatar communities in the region, including in Kazakhstan (Makhmutov, 2020, p. 97–98);
- contribution to socio-economic development (Makhmutov, 2021, p. 68);
- deportation, numbers and geographical distribution (Razhepaeva, 2021, p. 93);
- a the administrative and educational role of the Tatar mullahs in the Kazakh steppe (Sultangalieva, 2020, p. 485);
- the role of Tatar madrassas and charitable organizations in some cities of Kazakhstan (Shablei, 2020, p. 80);
- comparative studies of Turkic languages and cultures, digital linguistics (Karpov, 2026);
- Turkism: identity, ideology and politics (Yemelianova, 2025, p. 8);

The activities of Tatars and Bashkirs in Kazakhstan are manifested through the work of various organizations and centers.

The Association’s work in Kazakhstan is focused on the revival and promotion of Tatar and Bashkir cultures, the preservation of traditions, customs, and rituals, and the study of history and languages. The promotion of Tatar and Bashkir cultures is aimed at ensuring intercultural dialogue and developing interethnic cultural relations.

Two independent ethnocultural associations work in Astana: the Tatar-Bashkir Ethnocultural Center “Tan” and the Tatar Educational and Cultural Center “Duslyk”. These were the focus of our research over the three years of the project.

The ethnocultural centers pay special attention to the history of the Tatars and Bashkirs in Kazakhstan. Historical ties with Kazakhstan are linked with events of Ivan the Terrible’s capture of Kazan, when Tatars were forced to flee the bloody policies of the Russian Tsar, marked the beginning of the Tatar-Bashkir migration. The next wave of active migration to Kazakhstan dates to the 18th and

19th centuries and is attributed to various reasons, such as fleeing conscription and the heavy tax burden of the Russian Empire. Another reason for the migration of Tatars and Bashkirs during this period is the development of trade and economic relations, which contributed to the development of Kazakhstan's culture, including the construction of mosques, the opening of madrassas, and literacy education.

A major wave of migration during the Soviet era is associated with the 1950s and 1960s, the period of development of virgin and fallow lands.

As noted above, respondents and the reviewed material note the influence of Tatars and Bashkirs on the development of Islam and Muslim education in the history of Kazakhstan. Although the websites of Tatar-Bashkir ethnocultural associations do not specifically mention or emphasize religion, and only generally acknowledge the importance of reviving spiritual values, the importance of religious elements as an integral part of culture is still present. In September 2015, seven materials dedicated to Qur'an Bayram, the main Muslim religious holiday, were posted on these websites. These included materials on a charity event run by the Tatar-Bashkir Cultural Center "Tan", congratulations from the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Tatarstan, congratulations from the Supreme Muftis of Kazakhstan and Tatarstan, a summary and description of the holiday itself, and material on the opening of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque. Interestingly, along with the material on Kurban Bayram, a general description of the holiday, Unysh Bayram, is provided – a harvest festival, the so-called autumn Sabantuy. The material states that Unysh Bayram is associated with the autumnal equinox, which falls on September 23rd, and has been celebrated since ancient times, before the Tatars adopted Islam. This year, Unysh Bayram was supposed to fall on the eve of Kurban Bayram, but we did not specifically note its celebration, perhaps due to the greater significance of the Muslim holiday.

A content analysis of the collection "Tatars in the North of Kazakhstan (history and modernity)", compiled from various press materials, allows us to see that, starting around 1999, references to events related to religious themes began to appear, such as, for example, charity during the month of Ramadan, restoration work in the Din-Muhammad mosque (Bikmukhametova, 2004). The work of Z. Makhmutov, published in 2017, "History of the Tatars of Astana", contains much more material related to the religious context (Makhmutov, 2017, pp. 195–196). The introduction itself begins with the words: "Bismillah irrahman irrahim". The appendices of the book note many important events in the history of the Tatars of Astana related to religion, as well as memorable religious sites and famous religious figures. Thus, we can notice an increasing interest in religion year after year.

Today, it's worth noting the increasingly active work of the centers related to religious aspects. One example is the international scientific and practical conference held in September 2016 in Semey on the topic: "The Defining Role of Islam in the Preservation and Development of the Tatar Community. The Role of Tatars in the Spread of Islam in Eurasia." This conference was initiated by the Irtysh Union of Tatars and Bashkirs "Khak" Association in Semey. The conference was dedicated to the memory of Shakirzhan Gilfanovich Sabitov (1913-2001), popularly known as Kari Abzyi. The conference program described him as "Imam-Khatib, a public figure, Muslim scholar, and expert on the Holy Quran, who brought the light of Islam to the city's oldest mosque, the Blue Wooden Mosque – Agach Mchet. Kari Abzy was known, respected, and loved not only in Semipalatinsk but also far beyond its borders" (Safiullina, 2016). The conference was attended by scholars, public figures, and religious figures from Kazakhstan and Tatarstan. The wide range of topics presented for discussion is also noteworthy.

The turn of representatives of ethnocultural centers to the historical past is not simply a tribute to memory, but also an attempt to revive and reconstruct glorious deeds and traditional norms that would serve as the basis for the preservation of diasporas.

One common thread among Tatar-Bashkir centers in various cities of Kazakhstan is their attempt to collect historical information about the activities of prominent individuals who contributed to the development of Kazakhstan. In fact, all sources mention both their contribution to the economy and the development of education, which historically primarily included religious education through the construction of mosques, and maktabs and madrassas attached to them. For example: “With the revival of trade, starting in the 18th century, permanent trading posts began to appear in Kazakh settlements, followed by mosques with mullahs. Maktabs and madrassas were opened at the mosques, where both Tatar and Kazakh children were educated” (Khairullin, 2015, p. 6).

Historical references and interviews with representatives of Tatar-Bashkir ethnocultural centers attest to the importance of restoring mosques destroyed during the Soviet era. In cities with a large Tatar diaspora, such as Semey, Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar, and Uralsk, many mosques were built in the pre-Soviet period. According to respondents, the construction of a separate mosque by one person was considered a Tatar specialty, and it was a matter of honor for a successful merchant to build a mosque with a madrasah. In Semey, according to various sources, there are between 11 and 18 mosques built before the October Revolution of 1917. In Petropavlovsk city, it is believed that the first Tatar Mosque was built in 1795. In total, there were up to 12 mosques here. Moreover, in three of them, the initial only girls were educated. Historical records also indicate that an eight-grade girls’ school operated here.

The history of mosques, madrassas, and maktabs during the Soviet era appears roughly similar, as described, for example, in Fail Shaygatarov’s article, “The Din Muhammad Mosque - 150 Years”: “During the Stalinist repressions, the minaret was demolished from the ancient mosque. The building was rebuilt as a dormitory. During the war, it served as barracks for soldiers, then as a gymnasium, and before being handed over to the faithful, it was used as an entertainment venue. Only on March 31, 1996, by decision of the regional Akimat (local executive body of state power), the building and its adjacent land were transferred to the Petropavlovsk Tatar-Bashkir Muslim Community. Much credit for this goes to the late war veteran and local historian Rashid Tyncharov and the community elder, the renowned lawyer Khamit Safimov. Today, the mosque is thriving. A classroom has been opened here, where mugalim (teacher) Rauza Davletgireeva teaches women how to read namaz and verses from the Koran. We hope that this monument from distant antiquity-the mosque-will, with the help of the townspeople, be preserved for posterity and fulfill its purpose: to introduce parishioners to spiritual life and a knowledge of Islam” (Khairullin, 2015, pp. 138-139).

I use this lengthy quotation to illustrate a couple of other general points. First, issues of religious revival are of a selfless nature when leaders are found who consider it their life’s work to revive a mosque, the traces of which were carefully erased during the Soviet period of militant atheism.

Another example of this is the work of Yannat Nizamutdinova, chair of the Tatar educational and cultural center “Duslyk” in Astana, aimed at recreating the Tatar Green Mosque, which she has been working on for the past three years. Second, I would like to note the frequent reference in biographical narratives of Tatars and Bashkirs to the role of women in the transmission and dissemination of religious knowledge and practices. While historically the main religious actors were Tatar male mullahs, now women are taking the forefront. Yannat Nizamutdinova even enrolled in the Kazan Higher Muslim Madrasah Muhammadiyah. The main goal of her studies, she says, is to gain knowledge of the intricacies of religion and help resolve religious issues in society.

Our three-year field research on the interaction of ethnic and religious factors in the life of Tatar-Bashkir centers was closely linked to the Tatar Educational and Cultural Center “Duslyk” in Astana (Tatar Educational Cultural Center “Duslyk”, n.d.). The center’s director and ideological inspirer is the Yannat Askhatovna Nizamutdinova. She has extensive experience in community work. In 2010, she opened the NGO “Center for Women of the World”, and in 2013, she founded “Duslyk”. She is the

Chairperson of the Mothers' Association under the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and Vice President of the Association of Tatars and Bashkirs of Kazakhstan. In 2017, she was elected Chairperson of the women's organization "Ak Kalfak". Religion is a spiritual component of Yannat Nizamutdinova's personal life; she prays, fasts, and has made the Hajj to Mecca four times. He is currently memorizing the Surah Yasin, which, according to our field observations, occupies a special place in the spiritual practice of Tatar Muslims.

The activities of the Duslyk Center are diverse and a significant place is occupied by issues of promoting ethnic and religious – Muslim culture. This turn to religious roots is connected to the common processes of spiritual revival in the post-Soviet space, as well as attempts to restore and reconstruct traditional values and rituals. Among these, we have highlighted the Salavat and Shamail practices associated with Tatar Islam in Duslyk's work.

Salavat is a blessing and greeting to the Prophet. During fieldwork, we witnessed Tatar grandmothers singing Salavat during iftar – the breaking of the fast during the month of Ramadan. This seven-fold chant is performed during celebrations of Mawlid, Ayt, and Ramadan. There are many different Salavat chants among different peoples. We recorded the following text sung by Tatar grandmothers: "Allahumma salli 'ala sayyidina Muhammadin wa 'ala ali Muhammadan wa sahabihi wa sallim". The performance of Salavat was banned during Soviet times, but this tradition is currently being revived. There has also been a revival of munajat chants – songs with religious and ethical content.

Another tradition being revived is the art of Shamail among Astana artists, supported by Duslyk. The word "Shamail" is originally of Arabic origin and literally means "qualities, virtues". It can be assumed that the term "Shamail", meaning "sacred picture", has also become established in the culture of the Kazan Tatars.

Unlike Arabic popular prints and Persian Shamails, Tatar Shamail images fundamentally rejected (and still reject) images of living beings and the religious and worshipful functions associated with them. Shamail in Sunni Tatar culture is a religious symbol based on the art of Arabic calligraphy, executed as an easel painting. Arabic-graphic text, mainly of religious content or images of religious buildings, presented in Shamails, can be made on various materials – ink or printing on paper, in the form of embroidery on fabric, oil paints on glass or canvas.

In its public activities, "Duslyk", paying tribute to history, studies the contribution of Tatars to the development of Astana (Makhmutov, 2017, p. 194). One of the projects being promoted is the restoration of the Green Mosque, of which only the walls of an ancient fence remain. It is in the old center of the capital, at the intersection of Republic Avenue and Abay Street. The mosque itself was built in the late 19th century; some sources date its opening to 1887. The wooden mosque was named "Tatar" because it was built with his own funds by one of Akmola's wealthiest Tatar merchants, Nurkei Zabiroy, and "green" because it was painted with green oil paint. According to some reports, merchants Baimukhamet Koshchegulov, Mursalim Mirkamalov, and Khusain Begishev also donated money for the mosque's construction.

After the mosque's closure and reconstruction, it housed the House of Pioneers for a long time. When it was moved to the square, the mosque was demolished, and a three-story residential building was built in its place.

Yannat Askhatovna and "Duslyk" held a special roundtable discussion on "Islam: Traditions and Modernity" during the month of Ramadan, July 10, 2015. Among the invited guests were Baimukhambet Koshchegulov's great-granddaughter, Lyudmila Ganievna Sukhray, her younger sister, Irina, and Dilyara, Khusain Begishev's great-granddaughter. The main topic of the roundtable was the history of the Green Mosque. According to Yannat, "According to legend, the sacred spirit of the city resides here, bestowing good luck and fulfilling one's deepest desires. Today, only a fence remains as a reminder of

this religious building”. Marat Absetmetov, Director General of the National Archives of the Republic of Kazakhstan, recounts an interesting legend in his book, “A City with a Thousand-Year History”. According to the renowned scholar, while laying the wall around the mosque, builders from Bukhara inscribed the name “Allah” into individual bricks.

The idea of restoring the Green Mosque, according to Yannat Askhatovna, is not new; several attempts were made back in Soviet times. And she is actively trying to implement this idea. This very location has been chosen as the starting point for a tour of Tatar sites organized by the Duslyk Tatar Educational Cultural Center in Astana. From the fence of the former mosque, visitors are led to the darkened log structure of a Tatar school from the late 19th century, then shown a modern gymnasium, which now houses a Tatar Sunday school.

Then they are taken to the site of Sabantuy celebrations and to the monument to the victims of the Holodomor and repressions. According to the tour guide, this monument is directly connected to the Akmola camp for the wives of traitors to the homeland, where 70 Tatar women were imprisoned.

The need to revive religious practices is also linked to life-cycle rituals. During an interview with Yannat Nizamutdinova, a high demand for funeral rites according to Tatar canons was noted. To address this “problem of passing into the other world” (as the respondent put it), a network of women and grandmothers has been organized to assist with the funeral arrangements, deciding what to purchase, how to perform the ablution, and much more.

The activities of “Duslyk” are one example of the work of Tatar-Bashkir ethnocultural centers, which promote not only the culture, traditions, and language of the Tatars and Bashkirs, but also strengthen interethnic and interfaith harmony.

The Soviet period of religious denial had different impacts on the lives of different people. The collected materials from numerous interviews demonstrate different trajectories of religiosity. As a rule, people from rural areas or from environments where most diaspora representatives were present, or with stable family positions, were able to maintain and convey their religious identity even during the Soviet era, albeit secretly from the prying eyes of a harsh society.

City dwellers, or those from families where parents were highly educated and career-oriented, found it more difficult to maintain religiosity. I will provide the most striking examples from the interviews. A Tatar respondent recounted how she nearly had to give up her party card because someone reported her for circumcising her son. When summoned to the district party committee, she was forced to declare that since the party only cared about her party card and the endangered health of her child, which required circumcision, was of no importance, she was forced to leave the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. She had circumcised her second son in a village far from the city, while on vacation.

But to be fair, it should be noted that Soviet atheist propaganda also had a strong influence on consciousness and identity. For example, a respondent, also a Tatar, came from a family of atheist party workers and described how awkward it was for her to raise her hands while reciting dua.

Today, Islam is actively reviving in the practices of ethnocultural centers. Native languages, as well as the fundamentals of Islam, are studied in Sunday schools, and traditional values are being revived. For example, in Semey, there is a Tatar children’s art school under the direction of G.G. Akhunjanyov. He also organized the annual Tatar and Bashkir song festival “Irtys Monnary” (“Melodies of the Irtys”). Beginning in 1989, the Petropavlovsk regional television station aired a weekly program, “Isyanmesez”, hosted by R.G. Bismukhametova. These are reports from holidays and charity events that were held jointly with the Din-Muhammad Mosque, stories about Muslim traditions, famous fellow countrymen, the Tatar class of the School of National Revival, and poetry compositions, as well as musical programs dedicated to the poets and writers of Tatarstan.

G. Tukay's song-hymn, and suddenly one of the participants said, "Why don't we ever sing the fourth verse, connected with our religion?" and began singing herself.

Since then, Tukay's anthem has been performed in its entirety in Astana. I think it's appropriate to quote his words here in translation:

"Oh, how good is my native language, the language of my father and mother,  
Through you, I have forever understood so many things in this world!  
First, my mother sang in this language, rocking the cradle,  
And then, my grandmother tried to soothe me with fairy tales.  
Native language, you helped me understand both joy from a young age,  
And the pain of the soul, when my eyes darken, the clear light fades.  
You, my native language, helped me utter my first prayer:  
Forgive me, my father and mother, be generous, my God!" (Tukay, 1999, p. 2).

Thus, although the primary activities of Tatar-Bashkir ethno-cultural centers are socio-cultural in nature, religion also plays a significant role. Most events are associated with the great sons of the Tatar people – in honor of Kayum Nasyri, Gabdulla Tukai, and Musa Jalil. For example, in Astana, many events are associated with the name of the outstanding Tatar poet Gabdulla Tukai, to whom a project dedicated to the 130th anniversary of his birth, "Tukayev Spring", was dedicated. The project was implemented from April to June 2016. Rinat Dusumov was the project's author. The series of events included the first Tukay Dictation in Astana, the first Tukay Film Week in Astana, a children's performance based on the poem "Shurale", a poetry evening by Gabdulla Tukay, the "Min Tatarcha Seyloshom" campaign, a literary and musical evening "Tukay's Eternal Spring", a video flash mob "Astana Reads Tukay" (YouTube, Facebook, VKontakte), an exhibition of Tatar literature and applied arts "We Think of You Day and Night, My Native People!", a book exhibition "Gabdulla Tukay", and a photo exhibition "Tukay Spring 2016". In August 2016, "Tukay Spring" was presented at the Alley of Projects of the World Forum of Tatar Youth in Kazan and was recommended for use by ethnocultural associations in Central Asia.

Much of their time is also taken up by everyday issues related to the life of an individual. Issues related to the natural life cycle often arise, including those related to birth, joyful events such as weddings, and sad events such as illness and death. All rituals are also fundamentally linked to religion. The Tatars and Bashkirs of Kazakhstan support and celebrate all events of the Muslim calendar cycle. These include Ramadan, Eid al-Adha, Ashura, and Mawlid. Secular holidays, such as New Year's, March 8, and Victory Day, are actively celebrated. As Nizamutdinova says: "Our activities are not religious, but rather socio-cultural in nature, but at their core lies our religiosity, a faith that calls for goodness, education, and the upbringing of the younger generation" (Author's fieldwork, 2017–2025).

## Conclusion

Research shows that Bashkirs and Tatars have made a significant contribution to the development of many cities in the country. Historical and cultural monuments, such as Tatar settlements, have been preserved in many cities across Kazakhstan, and Tatar mosques are still active. Descendants of Tatar mullahs remained in the country and continue to contribute to Kazakhstan's development.

In general, Bashkirs and Tatars are full citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Their rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and protected by the country's legislation. Several ethnocultural centers operate throughout the country to preserve and develop their identity, cultural, and religious affiliation. These centers also collaborate within the Central Asian region. Religious affiliation is predominantly Sunni Islam. Among these ethnic groups there are Sufis. Some Sufis from Bashkortostan and Tatarstan come to make a pilgrimage to the Mausoleum of H.A. Yasawi and other historical sites in Turkestan (Temirbayeva et al, 2021, p. 109).

Tatars and Bashkirs consider themselves part of Kazakhstani society. While recognizing their historical homelands, they also pay profound respect to Kazakhstan and the Kazakh people, as evidenced by field research. Rashida Gazizovna Davletkildieva, an honorary citizen of Petropavlovsk and an honored teacher of Kazakhstan, says: “Tatars are not guests in Kazakhstan; this is our common home, which we built together” (Bikmukhametova, 2004, p. 114).

In the modern world, we are witnessing a global process of politicization of religion and ethnicity, where political goals are achieved through the manipulation of religious and ethnic sentiments, exploiting the enormous symbolic mobilization potential of religion and ethnicity. In this regard, it is important to maintain harmony and interethnic accord to build spiritual security and peace.

### Conflict of interests

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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