



Research Article

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A Psycho-Sociological Study of Converted Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The fact that the subject of conversion is a very comprehensive and complex psycho-social event leads to different results in each study. According to Western studies, the topic of conversion has become a topical issue with the emergence of new religious movements and as a result of intensive missionary activities. In this study of Kazakh converts, the problem of conversion is addressed with a sociological approach. With the revival of Islam after Kazakhstan's independence, Christian missionary activity has also increased. Today, Kazakhs who have converted to the religion are more present in society as a result of missionary activity. This study, from a sociological point of view, deals with the Kazakhs who changed their religion as a result of missionary studies that emerged after independence. Conversion is not a sudden event. Therefore, when studying the conversion event, the lives of the people concerned should be considered as a whole and the effective psychosocial factors should be reviewed. In our study, 25 subjects were interviewed and personal information about them was recorded. The subjects' childhood and adolescence before conversion and their relationships with religion were studied. The process of changing religion and the reasons why they changed their religion are discussed.

Keywords: Kazakhstan; Conversion; Christianization; Missionization; Sociology of religion

1. Introduction

In this study of converted Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, the problem of conversion is treated with a sociological approach. Conversion is understood as leaving the religion of the family or nation in which a person was born and religiously socializing in another religion.

Topics such as conversion and conversion to religion are now the common curiosity of sociologists and psychologists, theologians and historians. Studies on the phenomenon of religious conversion were first conducted by psychologists in the West. Another study on the subject was done by E. T. Clark (The

Psychology of Religious Awakening) in 1929. E. T. Clark (1929) found that factors such as depression, moral disturbance, fear of death, and a sense of sinfulness were significantly effective in these people who experienced conversion. The psychoanalyst Freud, in his article "Religious Conversion," saw the conversion process as a defensive reaction to the outbreak of "Oedipal hatred." He emphasized that the aggressive impulses against the actual father are connected through God. Oedipal conversion, he said, is a defensive reaction to the escalation of anger (Choul, 2003).

It can be observed that this issue has changed after 1960. One of the most important factors for this change is the emergence of new religious movements. It was observed that the number of religious conversions increased with the emergence of these movements. After these events, people began to look at the phenomenon of conversion differently. After these experiences, it was understood that it is not enough to study such a complex phenomenon as conversion from the religious and psychological point of view. It was realized how important it is to approach the issue of religious conversion with a sociological approach. With the emergence of new religious movements, theories such as brainwashing emerged and sociologists began to focus on conversion. In particular, the emergence of new religious movements has brought this topic up to date.

John Lofland and Rodney Stark's "Becoming a World Savior, the "Heretic Perspective" Theory of Conversion" is one of the most popular and controversial studies from a sociological perspective. These two researchers studied the new religious movements in the West from a psychosocial perspective and created sociological models of the bonding processes involved in conversion. They are (process model), which we will analyze below: Tension, type of problem-solving perspective, search, turning point, effective cultic bonds, intense interaction (Lofland & Stark, 1965).

L. R. Rambo (1993) has been working on conversion for more than ten years. L. R. Rambo (1993) has put forward many theories on conversion.

We see that the technical possibilities also have an impact on the conversion of religion. For example, today the missionaries who use technological means such as social media and internet sites convey information about their religion to the whole world. There are also people who change their religion by listening to different radio programs, following online chats or watching different videos on YouTube. In short, as people search for meaning, they become emotionally attached to the environment that meets their needs, whether virtual or real. This example shows how religion can be learned and lived online with the developments of technology (Ayten et al., 2019).

In recent years, the impact of religion on social identity has become one of the most important issues. Converts lose their cultural identity. For this reason, some states have banned conversion to protect their cultural identity (Zhaksybaeva et al., 2021).

In Central Asia, as far as we can determine, there has been no remarkable research on this topic (conversion). Only studies on new religious movements and missionary work are available. In particular, the fact that no study of conversion to religion has yet been conducted in Kazakhstan increases the importance of our research.

2. Method

Several techniques were used to collect data in this study of conversion. The method of indirect observation, document scanning, and interview techniques from the field of qualitative research methods were used to examine current and complex religious conversion events. Occasionally, personal observations were also included. The research was largely based on documents that we had available and that we produced ourselves through interviews. As part of the research, 25 people were interviewed and personal information about them was recorded. The names of the interviewees were kept confidential and pseudonyms were used. A variety of questions were used so that the individuals who participated in our research could provide effective and appropriate responses. While some questions were open-ended, some were indirect and hypothetical. Subjects were allowed to go into detail about the topic they wanted, and the researcher attempted to open the topic with additional questions during the interview. The subjects' childhood and adolescence before conversion and their

relationships with religion were explored. The process of changing religion and the reasons why they changed their religion were discussed. Finally, their changes after conversion were examined.

The study is spatially limited to the city of Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), the capital of Kazakhstan. We chose this region because it is a city where Russian Christians have lived in the past, because it is close to the northern Kazakhstan region with the highest Russian population, and because it is socially and culturally favourable to the phenomenon of religious conversion. The majority of the sample consists of Kazakhs born in Northern Kazakhstan. The individuals participating in the study belong to Russian Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant denominations of Christianity. The study is limited to Kazakhs of Muslim origin who embrace Christianity and are citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These experiences of those who converted to Christianity in Kazakhstan were examined from the perspective of the sociology of religion.

3. Results

3.1 Converted Kazakhs (field research)

The society in which the individual was born and raised is a very important factor in conversion. Conversion to Christianity is a rarer phenomenon in a non-Christian society. Religious pluralism has a positive effect on religious conversion. Based on our personal observations, we can say that in villages where there are no churches, there are no converts to Christianity. Therefore, Christianization is also an important dynamic in the research, whether you were born in the regions where Christians live, and whether you live in these regions or not.

Since the capital Nur-Sultan is located near the North Kazakhstan region and the North of Kazakhstan is the region where most Christians live, the number of Christian Kazakhs in this region is high. 44% of our subjects were born in the North Kazakhstan region. The South Kazakhstan region is the most densely populated region of Kazakhstan. 32% of the subjects were born in South Kazakhstan. The proportion of those born in East Kazakhstan is 12%. The proportion of subjects born in the West Kazakhstan region is 8%. The number of subjects born abroad is only 4%. In particular, the fact that 44% of the sample was born in North Kazakhstan reminds us of the theory of social interaction based on geographical proximity. Living in geographical proximity also increases social interactions and cultural exchanges. It also shows the effect of Christianization that people live face to face. Although technology and science reduce the impact of geography, it can be said that geographical proximity is important in our field of research.

56% of converts grew up in the city. While the rate of those growing up in the village is 28%, the rate of those growing up in the city is 16%. Today there are not many churches in the villages of Kazakhstan. The missionaries work in the densely populated cities. For this reason, those who live in villages are less likely to change their religion. Those who grew up in villages and cities change their religion after coming to the city.

92% of our subjects emphasized that they did not receive information about religious matters from their families during their childhood. Only 8% stated that they received religious knowledge from their families in their childhood. It can be seen that those who converted in Kazakh society do not have serious knowledge about religious issues.

Mr. Ruslan: *Our father was an atheist who worked in the Communist Party of the Soviets. He even taught us that those who believe in a religion live in a dark world and are uneducated. My mother was also an atheist. No one at home talked about religion. Even when he did speak, my father supported atheism and wanted us to become atheists. We also had an atheism class in school. Based on Charles Robert Darwin's famous theory, it was explained that human beings came into existence by evolving from apes.*

- **What if you ask why apes do not become human beings right away?**
- *Today's apes are different. You answered that there were human-like apes in the past, but now they have disappeared like dinosaurs.*

Ms. Gulnur: *In my childhood, religious issues were not discussed in the family. Perhaps no one*

had any education in religion. However, when relatives passed away, someone who could read the Koran would come and read from the Koran. Otherwise, our relatives in northern Kazakhstan did not know how to read the Koran. Even in Soviet times, mosques and churches were very rare in our regions. My parents also had no free time. They worked every day. Our childhood was different from the life of children today, as it was in the Soviet era. We had to buy everything from the state. Food, bread, even the house we lived in was the house of the state. Therefore, no one could oppose the state.

Lack of religious knowledge in the family may be regarded as an effective factor in conversion. This is because it was found that almost everyone in the sample had not passed on any religious information in the family. If they had received some level of religious knowledge in the family, the question of whether they would have changed their religion would be open. In this study, however, there seems to be a strong link between the inability of the family to provide religious education and conversion. On the other hand, when one considers that families acquired their religious culture during the period of USSR, it becomes understandable that they brought up their children as they are. If religion is not considered a very important and valuable element, it is easy to change religion. Ruslan Bey, confirming this situation, stressed that religion is not an important issue when he said, "Religion was not talked about at home". A religion that is ignored should not be such a big change.

Ms. Gulnuer similarly emphasizes that religion is not a topic that is talked about. Only during rites of passage like death is religion thought of, or rather religion is needed. Very few people knew how to read the Quran (in Arabic). In an environment where there are no institutional religious services, religious ceremonies can only be held in the company of older people. They are also likely to be bearers of a cultural folk piety rather than a bookish piety. In other words, they have a religiosity that consists of what they have seen from their grandfathers. Of course, they are sincere, but their religious knowledge is too cultural. They cannot be expected to satisfy the coming generations in matters of religion. When parents' busy schedules are added to this gap, as Guelnuer Hanim said, religious identity is greatly suppressed by secular life. This lays the foundation for conversion.

As can be seen above, it was found that our subjects did not receive any information about religious matters from their families during their childhood. The other question is whether he had sufficient knowledge about the religion of Islam before conversion, if so, where they got this information from, how they related to the religion of Islam, whether they fulfilled the worship of the religion of Islam and what religion the parents had.

70% of Kazakhs describe themselves as Muslims. However, the majority of society does not have sufficient knowledge about the religion of Islam. The level of religiosity, as in Turkey, is lower than in countries that are Muslim but also secular. Parents do not even have enough knowledge to teach their children the basics of Islam. Since the youth of today's parents lived through the Soviet era, they know the religion of Islam only by hearsay. Kazakh society is a secular state where many religions coexist; a particular religion is not supported and taught by the state in the country. On the other hand, it is seen that other religious movements affect the society that does not have enough of its own local religion.

76% of our subjects answered "no" and confirmed that they did not have enough knowledge about their own religion (Islam). To this question, 24% answered "partly". None of the respondents answered "yes". It has been shown that Kazakhs who have converted do not know enough about the religion of Islam.

Based on the sample, we can say that religious ignorance is effective in changing religion. In fact, none of the respondents has sufficient knowledge about Islam. So, there is a correlation between conversion and religious ignorance. Moreover, missionaries in particular can more easily reach people who have no religious knowledge. It is easy to fill the empty mind. Those who have knowledge are naturally more difficult to persuade.

Mr. Ruslan: *Before I became a Christian, I had no idea about the religion of Islam. The religion was not taught in my family. My father is an atheist and my mother is a Christian. They knew nothing about Islam. I never had the opportunity to learn about Islam from my family.*

As mentioned in the interviews, those who converted are under the influence of atheism or they have adopted the traditional understanding of Islam only in parts, mostly as a childhood memory,

under the influence of their elders. As in the case of Mr. Ruslan, mixed marriages, especially the fact that the "main person" is a Christian, already introduce a cultural break in the family.

If 4% of Kazakh converts, when asked about their connection to Islam, answered: "There was a close connection to Islam", 20% said: "I was a Muslim in name", and 76% said: "There was no connection at all".

In studies conducted in Turkey, the proportion of those who say "there was a close connection" is high among converts. According to a study by Peker, for example, 51.7% of the subjects said they were attached to their former religion (Hüseyin, 1979, p. 114). In Zavalısz's study, 46.9% of the subjects answered, "There was a close attachment." He answered as (Zavalısz, 2014, p. 182).

Mrs. Nurgul is the only person who has a close attachment to the religion of Islam among the subjects participating in our study. After giving us a "sermon" about Jesus, she went on to talk about her affiliation to the religion of Islam.

- *I spent my childhood and youth in South Kazakhstan. After marriage, my relationship with my husband did not go well. My husband drank alcohol and went around with other women. When I asked him why he was doing that, he said, "It looks like the devil to me". If I disobeyed him, he would beat me. That's why I prayed every day. I even started praying. These are the things I experienced 15 years ago. I am 45 years old now. At that time there were many Islamic sects in South Kazakhstan. So, I started going to one. But they took my money for sacrifice, then they took money again and said, "You have to visit the city of Turkestan with us." They cheated me and took my money. My relationship with my husband was not good either. My husband started bringing the women he meets with to our house. Then, at the age of 35, I divorced my husband and moved to the capital.*
- **Mr. Arman:** *I did not have a close connection to the religion of Islam. The Islamic religion was only a tradition in our house. Only on certain holidays, when relatives die or when a child is born, etc. Therefore, I was a Muslim in name.*
- **Were you circumcised? (laughing)**
- *Yes, I was circumcised. My grandfather had me circumcised in the mosque when I was 5 years old. That is my last memory of Islam. (laughing)*
- **Mrs. Zhanna:** *We had no attachment to Islam. There was no talk about religion in our family.*
- *Did not they have any Muslim traditions, holidays or anything?*
- *No, my father is an atheist. He studied philosophy in Moscow. He was very educated. I was also an atheist. That's why we had nothing to do with Islam. Maybe there were holidays with relatives, but there was nothing like that at home.*
- **Did not your Muslim relatives come to your house?**
- *They would not come. Most of my father's friends were Christians. Our neighbors were also Christians.*

As can be seen from the interviews, the attachment to Islam is on a semi-traditional level and limited only to special occasions such as holidays and weddings. Arman Bey's grandfather had him circumcised in the mosque at the age of 5. Obviously, the most symbolic parts of the connection with religion could be established through "grandfathers". But these basic religious symbols are not enough to protect religious identity. "Nevertheless, circumcision remains the last memory of Islam". This last memory will emphasize throughout life: "you were a Muslim". It seems that it is hardly possible to get rid of the memories of the old religion. Ali Kose, who has done a study on Christians who converted to Islam in England, has found similar situations. We can cite the British Muslims who miss pork as an example (Kose, 1996). For this reason, the old religion keeps remembering them.

On the other hand, Mrs. Nurgul turned to some religious groups because of the bad marriage she had. In particular, the phrase "I was cheated" is evidence that she had a bad experience in her old religion. People who do not yet have religious knowledge can also turn away from religion when they have bad religious experiences. Bad religious experiences, which can be experienced on the axis of politics, business and friendship, are not the main reason for conversion, but they appear as triggering events. Such negative experiences can be had in any religion. However, religion should not

be made an instrument of politics, commerce and group interests. Obviously, bad representations are to blame for the belief system.

While 84% (21) of our subjects said they had no idea about Islam before becoming Christians, 8% (2) answered "I loved Jesus more". The ratio of those who think positively and negatively about Islam is the same.

Our youngest respondent, Ms. Dinara, states that she has no bad opinion about the religion of Islam and that she even has a positive opinion about Islam:

- *I have no bad opinion of Islam. I have relatives who are Muslims. We have a good relationship with them. We do not have any problems. Every person has the right to choose a religion. Christianity is my choice. We are the XXI. We live in the 21st century in a democratic state. We have freedom of religion in our country. No one has the right to denigrate or hate another religion. Some people may not know God, may misunderstand religion. But in my opinion, there is no negative religion.*

Ms. Zhanna: *Before I accepted Russian Orthodoxy, I did not like any religion. I considered myself an atheist. After 9/11 in America, I started to see Islam more negatively. Today, when I see men with long, lousy beards, I feel like I have seen terrorists. It seems that there is no freedom in the religion of Islam. Especially when it comes to women. They do not give freedom to women. Women must be covered. They cannot wear the clothes they want. They can not eat or drink what they want. Sounds like a strict religion to me.*

- **Your father and you became atheists, but your grandfathers were Muslims?**
- *Yes, but the Kazakhs have never been very religious. They only used religion as a tradition in their lives.*

Ms. Altyn: *I spent my youth in the Soviet era. At that time, we read religious books in secret. I secretly read the book Kiyeli (meaning the Bible) that I had at home. I knew Jesus when religion was still forbidden.*

- **Did you become a Christian at that time?**

No, I only got to know the Bible in my youth and learned about Jesus. But I did not know how to pray. In difficult situations, I simply prayed "Jesus help". That's why I loved Jesus more. Sometimes I dreamt about Jesus. Even though I was not a Christian, I felt close to Jesus.

Although the majority of respondents say they have no idea about Islam, we also see that Islam is sometimes interpreted as a "hard" religion against freedom. It is worth noting that the image of Muslims in the media was particularly influenced by this after September 11. The definition of "men with long, lousy beards" shows how Muslim identity is perceived, based on radical elements in the Islamic world. Apparently, Muslims with jihadist Salafist and takfiri Salafist identities trigger anti-Islamic thoughts in some circles.

It is also noteworthy that during the time of USSR, Ms. Altyn met the Bible but not the Qur'an. Obviously, missionaries were active during these times, albeit in secret. In the era of USSR, when there was no Kazakh translation of the Qur'an (in Cyrillic script) and Kazakhs could not read Arabic, people could obtain Bibles.

An important pattern is that the parents of 60% of the respondents are not Muslims. The conversion of Christian parents to Christianity took place on an appropriate social basis as a process of cultural transfer and socialization. Example: In the Dilliria regions of north-eastern Cyprus, Christianization and Greekization of some Turkish families who could not maintain their local culture in the Greek upper culture occurred as parallel processes (Aydinalp, 2018, pp. 120-121). Thus, if the family has no Islamic memory, the transitions are easy. The religiosity of those who state that their parents are Muslims is either a more traditional religiosity or a Muslim identity, but they tend to be cosmopolitan Muslims who are open to all kinds of influences. In this regard, our subjects made the following statements:

Mr. Arman: *My father is a Muslim. Although he tries to be a good Muslim when he gets old, he does not perform all his prayers. On Fridays he goes to the mosque. On holidays, he sometimes drinks a little alcohol. My mother, on the other hand, says she is Muslim, but she also believes in Jesus.*

- **How so? Does she believe in Jesus as God?**
- *I do not know exactly, but she was happy when we talked about Jesus. It's quite a mess. My*

mother's mother was German, she was Lutheran. So, Christianity is not a foreign word to my mother. She has the Bible at home and sometimes she reads it.

Ms. Gulnur: I do not have a father. I never saw him after my mother left my father. I do not know where he is today. After my mother and I moved to Russia, my mother converted to Christianity. When I was a child, I went to the Russian Orthodox Church with my mother. Then I was also baptized. After we returned to Kazakhstan, we continued to go to church. There are big Russian Orthodox churches in Kazakhstan. I do not think there is a big city without a Russian Orthodox church.

Ruslan Bey: My parents are atheists. As my mother gets older and is Belarusian, she sometimes feels close to her Christian identity. However, it is difficult to call her a Christian because she does not go to church, does not pray and is not baptized.

Ms. Zhanna: My father and mother consider themselves atheists. Sometimes my father misses the Soviet era. After all, there were no religious problems then.

- **Do not you invite your father and mother to the Christian religion?**

- I want to invite them, but my father is very angry. My mother will not let me either. My father is a man who studied atheist philosophy during the Soviet period. He understands and evaluates issues related to religion differently. He believes that powerless, uneducated people are close to religion. "No one has ever gone in that direction (speaking of life after death), so do not speak so confidently. Holy books are books written by human beings."

Those who say they come from a Muslim family come from cosmopolitan families, as the example of Mr. Arman shows. A religious cosmopolitanism stands out in the interviews. His mother is Muslim but reads the Bible, her mother is a German Lutheran. This religious cosmopolitanism hinders the construction of a holistic religious identity. This is also true for Mrs. Gulnur's mother. With immigration, she becomes Orthodox. The new socialization based on immigration and the acquisition of a new identity seem to prepare a suitable ground for future conversion.

The survey found that the events that are effective for a change of religion are different. 24% of respondents said that the most important factor in conversion and the factor that is effective in decision-making is "reading the Bible and getting to know the God". 44% say they decided to change religion after getting to know Christians. The percentage of those who say they have experienced dreams and miracles is 12%. 8% said that there was no event. According to the pattern recorded in the sample, the Holy Bible and social interaction factors with Christian people are prominent in Christianization in the study region.

People who have no knowledge about religion and are searching for it can be influenced by reading religious texts. The influence of religious texts can lead directly to conversion. For this reason, distributing Bibles on the street is an important activity for missionaries.

Mr. Arman: God made me read the Bible and set me on this path. I did a lot of research beforehand. I read the holy book. I did research on Jesus. But I think it was God who made me do it.

- **But you made the decision?**

Of course, I made the decision. After reading the Bible, I decided to become a Christian. People are not all the same. We all sin. But it is Jesus who will forgive our sins. In our opinion, the way to salvation can only be through Jesus. I learned that when I researched why Jesus died.

- **When you researched Jesus, did not you first research Islam? So, you have not read the Koran?**

No, I did not read it. The Christians did a lot of research on Jesus, so I researched the Bible first. I read the Bible. After I became a Christian, I looked at the Quran.

Mrs. Balym: After I read the Bible, I decided to become a Christian. Because the words of God were true and heavy. They made my body tremble when I read them. He was just describing the events in my situation. We knew nothing because we were ignorant. When I read the Bible, I became enlightened. I realized how beautiful life is. I wanted to live in a Christian way. Before, I could not get along with people. I was very angry. There were always problems. I could not solve the problems. My financial situation was not good either. I found the solution in the Bible.

- **What does the Bible say?**

- *The Bible says: "Evil does not come from the earth or from heaven, all evil comes from within man", he said. You should look for evil within yourself, not outside. If a person's inner soul is pure, evil does not come to him from outside. Why are people not pure? Why do people sin? Because the first Adam did what God forbade him to do and sinned. That is why we are all born sinners. Because our grandfathers were sinners. The Bible, on the other hand, shows us how we can be cleansed from these sins.*

Those who go to the Bible are those who go in search. They are the ones who seek God or the meaning of life. Perhaps he would have become a Buddhist if his inner circle had led him to read what the Buddha taught. Here we see that the encounter with a particular holy book is also related to the socio-cultural environment. The things in the Bible that seem interesting, meaningful, or touching to them are things that can be found in more or less any religious teaching. Here, then, "readiness" seems to take precedence over Scripture. Encountering an appropriate religious text at the right time and place can move a person to conversion. However, the rate within the sample is still 2.4%. Therefore, the influence of the Bible on Kazakh Christians is limited.

- **How did you accept Christianity?**

Then I married a Russian friend who was studying at the same university. My husband was not very religious. However, he went to church on religious holidays and on Sundays. Then a new church was opened in our capital. We went to the ceremony together. The church was huge and very beautiful. The pictures there were all beautiful.

Among those who converted after meeting Christians, some of our subjects changed their religion to marry a Christian, while others said they changed their religion after marrying a Christian. In this example, marriage seems to be an effective means of conversion. Why do not they take their husbands to the mosque and go to church themselves? It is easier to fill the empty glass. If these people knew about Islam, it would probably not be so easy for them to change their religion.

Marriage has an important meaning and effect in conversion. Those who belong to different religions want their own religious identity to be the same as their spouse's after marriage. Some transform after marriage, some transform to get married. But does a man convert to his wife's religion? Or does the wife convert to her husband's religion? American Researcher Salisbury explores this question in his own research. When examining the effects of three factors, such as religious identity, gender roles, and social status, on conversion in marriage, W. S. Salisbury (1969) concluded that women are more likely to convert to their husbands' religion because they play a lesser role in society than men.

4. Conclusion

In order for a person to change religions, it is important that there be religious diversity or cultural options in the society in which they live. Religious pluralism and multiculturalism in the country of residence have a calming effect. Nations of Christian culture such as Russians, Germans, Koreans, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Armenians were brought to the territory of Kazakhstan. Religion in Kazakhstan after independence Kazakhstan has become a country of pluralism, multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. Therefore, religious pluralism and multiculturalism are very important in this context.

Of the 25 subjects in our study, 15 were female and 10 were male. The research showed that 60-70% of those who go to church are women. 76% of Christian Kazakhs are in the age of first adulthood (22-40). From the observations we made in the churches, it was concluded that young people between 22-35 years old are strongly represented. Missionaries are not for older people either; focusing on young people is effective in these outcomes. Consequently, early adulthood is a time when issues such as having a job, finding a job, getting married, getting divorced, being widowed, losing parents are particularly intense. In general, the study found that Christianization is a common phenomenon in early adulthood.

The impact of missionaries sent by Western countries to help the poor in Africa on conversion is a well-known fact in the relevant literature. The Christianization activities of the missionaries who came to help after the 1999 earthquake in Turkey are well known. The Central Asian countries, which

gained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union after 1990, experienced enormous social and economic crises. After independence, however, Soviet-era atheism gradually began to lose its effect; people learned about individual religious freedoms. With the expansion of this freedom, Christian missionaries began to operate in the Central Asian countries. Some missionaries tried to use the religious freedoms and the economic and social crises in the country in their favor. Thus, conversion is not only through personal coincidences and spontaneous social relations, but also with institutional and organizational support, in line with Christian "mission theology" and tradition.

The survey revealed that the lack of religious knowledge is very high. 92% of our subjects emphasized that they did not receive information about religious matters from their families during their childhood. Only 8% said that they received religious knowledge from their families during their childhood. It turned out that our hypothesis that converts in Kazakh society do not have serious religious knowledge was confirmed by the results we obtained in the sample. While 76% (19 people) of our subjects who participated in our research stated that they did not have enough knowledge about the religion of Islam, 24% (6 people) answered "partially". Therefore, it was concluded that Kazakh converts did not have sufficient knowledge about the religion of Islam.

Due to the settlement of Russian peasants in Kazakhstan, Russian Orthodoxy had the opportunity to spread. Later, when Germans and Koreans went into exile in Kazakhstan, other Christian sects also entered the country. After 1991, American and European missionaries (Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Baptists, Adventists, etc.) began to develop.

Today, especially the Protestant movements show more intensive missionary activities than others. 72% (18 people) of the subjects who participated in our research became Christians through people belonging to the Christian religion. In the research, as a result, it has been found that Christianization took place largely at the hands of Christians.

As a general result of our research, we can list the two most influential issues in the conversion of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan as follows: (I) Ignorance about Islam is very high, 92% of converts know nothing about Islam. (II) Missionization is also a very important element. There are also people who converted through the active work of missionaries from countries like America. (III) The experience of crisis, stress and traumatic events due to deprivation and lack of social contacts is the third theme. This situation is especially common among Protestant Kazakhs.

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