

From the history of orthodox proselytism in Northern Kazakhstan

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In the second half of XIX century, the accession process was completed by the violent capture, the contest and administrative subordination of Kazakhstan by the Russian Empire. At this time, in addition to military approaches methods of reforming administration by province, attempt of breaking up traditional forms of governance and imposition of new above were widely used. The establishment of “Resettlement Committee” in 1868 contributed to the strengthening of missionary activity. “Therefore, along with the administrative reorganization of the Kazakh steppes, missionary-colonialist work was provided for the assimilation and russification of the region,-wrote famous local historian S.D.Asfendiyarov. Likewise, this activity should instill “the principles” of autocracy as among the conquered people and Cossack and migratory peasantry”.

The imperialist policy of tsarist Russia in Kazakhstan was broad-based and relied on all state and public structures, including the Orthodox Church represented by Department of Spiritual Affairs.

To the 60s-70s of XIX century, there was a reorientation of the Russian Empire in public-confessional relations. Tsarism committed to the promotion and support of the Russian Orthodox Church in the work of converting Kazakhs to Orthodoxy. The theoretical and ideological justification for the implementation of the large-scale policy of Christianization of the indigenous population of Kazakhstan by both state officials and clergymen belonged to that period. In 1872, priest I.Sotnikov proved the possibility of establishing a mission among Kazakhs of the Middle Zhuz in the magazine “Orthodox observer” and also believed that “for the first time, mission stations should be established in those places, where Islam is somewhat weaker”. He determined an in-line village as such place. It was mandatory to clearly identify some rights and benefits regarding young Christians in the legislation, such as any guarantees from the new Christians by Muslims, the

right of choice to sultans, biys, aldermen and others. Another important detail emphasized by the priest is a settled placement of baptized Kazakhs, dissociation and approval a few acres of land for them. “But this matter is moving extremely slowly forward, as experience shows. Thus, we will wait settlement of the Kyrgyz for a long time, if they do not listen to the preaching of the Gospel. The only way, as evidenced by the century-old experience, there is a transition to Christianity between the nomadic people for a settled life”.

These statements were in the capacity of informal programme of action for evangelization of the nomads. Further developments have shown that regulatory environment and activity of the central and local authorities implemented a phased plan described above in order to protect Islam and in Christianization of Kazakhs.

Systematic missionary work among Kazakhs starts in 1875, when on November 21 of the same year was established Orenburg Diocesan Committee of the Orthodox Missionary Society (abolished in 1918). It acted on the territory of the Ural and Turgay regions. In 1882, Kirgiz mission was opened in Tomsk diocese for Semipalatinsk region and finally, by the decree of Synod from 30 April 1894, the Kyrgyz mission of Tobolsk diocese was established. In 1895, with the formation of an independent Omsk diocese of the Kyrgyz mission of Tomsk and Tobolsk dioceses were united into one under administration of the Omsk diocese. Semipalatinsk became its residence.

Since 1883, 15 missionary camps were established on the initiative of Orenburg Eparchial Committee of the Orthodox Missionary Society and “Kyrgyz Ecclesiastical Mission” in three large regions, 17 missionary schools were opened for Kazakh children.

Activities of missionary camps mentioned above was directed at carrying out of the Russian-Orthodox principality in the steppes in order to merge with Russian population and was carried out by: a) missionary travelling to the Kyrgyz steppes, villages and hamlets with a short sermon and b) by the missionary church schools and through the Russian population living in the region.

Central diocesan authorities made up detailed instruction, which defined functions of the regional missionary, missionaries who headed camps and employees to whom belonged all the priests in the towns and villages of Northern Kazakhstan under the regional missionary. It was done in order to regulate the missionary activity of the people serving in the Kyrgyz missionary.

So the instruction to the activity of missionaries who managed the economic side of young Christians was as follows: a) he annually made an estimate of income and expenditure of local money from the land lease of Russian settlers and through the regional missionary presented it for approval of the Diocesan Committee; b) carried out the construction of dwellings and was engaged in the improvement of the economy of settled young Christians in the village; c) elected a superintendent to oversee the work of young Christians; d) independently made an expenditure of sums of money; e) led credit and debit books; e) represented a documentary report to the regional missionary-decent at the end of the year.

Besides fulfilling of acolyte duties, members of the mission travelled with the Christian sermon to the steppes and villages inhabited by baptized. In general, the field of missionary activity was very extensive: they do everything possible to “save at least some”.

In the project of instruction for Turgay regional missionary in the Kazakh steppes and report of teachers, the following is emphasized for mandatory implementation by church ministers on missionary part:

1. Missionaries had to make frequent travelling to the steppes with a sermon, visiting small Russian settlements and Kazakh villages;
2. After each visit, the missionary presented short diary to Diocesan Missionary Committee through the regional missionary, depicting what he had done in the parish in the missionary attitude;
3. In the beginning of the year at the general meeting of the priests, a schedule of people was drawn up, who made missionary trips and places, where they should be directed.

4. Missionaries and staff provided semi-annual and annual summary reports to the regional missionary by Jun 20 and December 15: a) by mission b) schools c) by missionary parish brotherhoods d) by parish temperance societies. The regional missionary made a general report and presented it to the Orenburg Diocesan Committee of the Orthodox Missionary Society;

5. Missionaries and staff paid special attention on missionary schools, both religious and religious centers of the Russian Orthodox Church during the missionary trips to the steppes.

Ordinary conducting of the Christian principles to the people's lives inhabiting the territory of Northern Kazakhstan was made by:

1) Raising the religious-moral level of the Russian population of the steppe, designed to attract foreigners into the bosom of the Russian civilization and culture related to Orthodoxy;

2) the project was made according to the local circumstances, missionary parish brotherhoods for fight against Islam.

3) religious-moral people's readings were conducted in the buildings of the missionary schools every Sunday and festive day with participation of the missionaries, teachers of missionary schools and their assistants. These measures were applied in the location of missionary camps and other major centers of the Russian population of the region.

The main tasks of church schools were both education of orthodox population of the region and teaching Russian literacy to Kazakh people, uniting them with Russians by familiarizing with the customs and worldview of the Russian people. According to the officials: "Constant school intercourse of children perceiving quickly the general direction of the Russian public life also contributes to the reduction of Muslim fanaticism and counteracts to the separative beginning of the Kyrgyz population".

Translations of the New Testament, lives of the saints, morning and evening prayers, various liturgical chants were made by the efforts of the missionaries. They adopted the experience of the Altay mission for creation of men's and

women's monasteries, who took young Christian novices and taught them Christian faith.

From the mentioned above, we conclude that the number of baptized Kazakhs and returned to the Church did not increase compared with the period when missionary work was not carried out. By the early XX century, in connection with the rise of revolutionary movement in Russia, activity of tsarism on Christianization of Kazakh people considerably weakened. It is explained due to the following circumstances. Since 1906, appropriations for missionary activities had sharply reduced, the government ceased to provide financial assistance to young Christians. In the memorable book of Akmola region for 1907 is said that accounting year could not be regarded as favorable in the life and activity of the missionary society. The society was in need, as all fees and donations that constituted the funds of the society continued to decrease. Therefore, the Council of the society reduced appropriations for mission and missionary institutions and refused to satisfy requests that could not respond negatively on the mission.

A substantial slowdown of Christianization among Kazakh people could be explained by several reasons: 1) regional organizations involved in the Christianization of the Kazakhs had some difficulties in the shortage of skilled personnel. Training of missionary personnel was made outside the territory of Kazakhstan. 2) Since 1906 the funding of missionary activities reduced. 3) Newly baptized remained in worse position before the adoption of Christianity. 4) one has to agree that Orthodox Russian population of the region did not show the best example in the veneration of their faith. 5) Inconsistency of the religious education proposed by the Russian Orthodox Church to the spiritual needs of the majority of Muslim population led to the fact that the nature of its distribution obtained the character of imposition, introduction into consciousness against the will. Therefore, the policy of Christianization was not implemented in social practice.

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