

## **ANNOTATION**

of dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)  
on specialty «6D020600 – Religious studies» for  
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### **Sacred places of Kazakhstan: religious analysis**

The dissertation research is aimed at revealing the theoretical and methodological foundations of Holy places in Kazakhstan, its manifestations and features in the field of social, spiritual and socio-cultural life by conducting a religious analysis.

#### **Relevance of the research topic:**

Due to the fact that today the state program of spiritual modernization is relevant in the country, the study of the sacred places of Kazakhstan is one of the main steps in the implementation of this policy of the state. It should be noted that the program article of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Leader of the Nation N. A. Nazarbayev “Looking to the future: modernization of public consciousness” became a fertile impetus for research. Previously, our society raised issues related to “Kazakh Eli”, “Mangilik El”. Today we can see that all these issues are the beginning of the revival of our national code as a whole. The national code is a national idea that unites the people. In this regard, the program article “Looking to the future: modernization of public consciousness” contributed to the revival of this national idea. It says: “every nation, every civilization has Holy places that are national in nature, which are known to every representative of this people. This is one of the foundations of the spiritual tradition. We are a huge country with a rich spiritual history and a rich spiritual heritage. However, over the entire history, we have not created a single field, a single chain of these important places from the point of view of culture and spiritual heritage. It is not even a question of restoring monuments, buildings, or structures. The question is to link together in the national consciousness the complex of monuments around Ulytau and the mausoleum of Kozhe Akhmet Yasawi, the ancient monuments of Taraz and the burial of Beket-Ata, the ancient complexes of East Kazakhstan and the sacred places of the Semirechye, and many other places. All of them form the framework of our national identity. The cultural and geographical belt of Kazakhstan’s shrines is a symbolic protection and source of pride that invisibly carries us through the centuries”.

Currently, local history, archaeological, ethnographic, historical and cultural studies on the Holy places of Kazakhstan are conducted separately in the country. According to these studies, the list of Holy places of Kazakhstan is systematized and classified. In this regard, the relevance of this research is: firstly, to reveal the theoretical and methodological structure of the concepts of “Holy” and “sacred” to define the concepts of Holy and sacred places; secondly, to study the basic principles of defining sacred places and determine by what criteria it is possible to study sacred places; thirdly, to classify the sacred places belonging to the category of “religious and cult places” proposed by the research center “Sacred

Kazakhstan”, and to systematize them in a religious-phenomenological way, i.e. to give a unique classification of this research in the process of religious analysis; fourthly, to consider the role and place of Holy sites in strengthening and preserving national identity, and pay attention to the importance of preserving global values. From here, we can get unambiguous answers to questions such as understanding the Holy places. In the course of the research work, such issues as the role in the understanding of the sacred concept in the cultural and historical meaning or in the religious meaning will be considered.

In accordance with this, religious studies analysis of domestic and foreign historical data and legends preserved on the Kazakh land, studied in connection with burials and mausoleums on the territory of Kazakhstan. The result will be a religious and phenomenological analysis of the origin, life and activity of the saints, and their burial places. They are considered from the point of view of the category of a sacred person, a sacred place, a sacred space, a sacred action, which are the basis of the phenomenology of religion.

On the vast steppes of the Republic, from ancient times to the present day, about 30 thousand historical, cultural and religious monuments have been identified. However, not all of these historical legacies are taken under the protection of the government, while, unfortunately, the people do not know some of the Holy places. Because not all such historical riches have been fully explored and our search for peace is endless. One of the most important issues is to take into account this remarkable heritage of our people, protect it and consolidate it with scientific research. In addition, it is necessary to analyze the scientific significance of these historical monuments, which testify to the centuries-old cultural identity of our people.

The fact that in the heart of the vast Kazakh land there are beautiful masterpieces of architecture that have stood the test of time for centuries and have survived to this day, testifies to their noble value. For example, the best examples of medieval architecture are the complex of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Arystan Baba mausoleum, Aisha Bibi mausoleum, Karakhan mausoleum, Jochi Khan and Dombaul mausoleums, and many others. The secret of these monuments is closely connected with the history of our people. For many centuries, these monuments, including those of the Saks, Usuns, and Turks, require special attention, comprehensive study, and further use for the benefit of posterity. In this regard, the work on the revival of consciousness should be based on cultural memory, symbols, saints and cultural and historical things. Sacred places or spiritual shrines are the mainstay of the spiritual traditions of the people.

The research work “Sacred places of Kazakhstan: religious analysis” is aimed at a comprehensive study of the Holy places in the Kazakh steppes, in order to show the world and the people that we have not only a great land, but also a rich historical and spiritual heritage. In scientific work, Holy places are considered not only as a sign of religion and a sign of faith, but also as a tool for forming the national identity of the state, glorifying and clearly reflecting our culture and traditions. The territory of Kazakhstan is rich in Holy places. This can be considered as a form of forming the national identity of the people and as a tool for

shaping the popularity of the territory. Currently, historians, archaeologists and ethnographers compile a state list of sacred sites and determine their status at the international, national and local levels. The question of whether there are any criteria for choosing a sacred place still remains unanswered and little studied. Within the framework of this problem, the methodological basis of the research work will determine the meaning of the concept of a Saint, give a definition of a Holy place, and conduct a religious analysis of the country's sacred places.

**The degree of research on the topic of the dissertation.** The concept of sanctity has been the subject of research by Western scholars since the middle of the last century. One of the first to begin the scientific study of the concept of Holiness as a phenomenon of religious and socio – cultural life in Western society - the German religious scholar and sociologist Otto R. Otto has written many works on religious studies that are of particular interest to religious studies. One of his famous works in this field is the book “Saint. On the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational”. Also in the study of the concept of sacredness, the books of Eliade M. “Sacred and profane”; Becker G. “Modern Theory of the Sacred and Secular and its Development”; Burckhard T. deserves special attention “Sacred Art of the East and West. Principles and Methods”; Girard R. “Violence and the sacred”; Kaywa R. “The Myth and the Man. Man and the sacred”; Tarot C. “Le symbolique et le sacré: Théones de la religion, Édi tions de la Découverte”. These studies are the basis for analyzing the concept of Holiness, as well as offering categories and classifications. In foreign studies, in addition to the conceptual approach, guides and reference books have been developed that contain sufficient grounds to recognize Holy places and study their geographies: Park C. “Religion and Geography”; Eade J. and Sallnow M. “Contesting the Sacred”; Gaustad E. “Historical atlas of Religion in America”; Gay J. “Geography of Religion in England”; Kong L. “Geography and Religion: Trends and Prospects”; Nolan M. and Nolan S. “Religious Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe”; Park C. “Sacred Worlds: an Introduction to Geography and Religion”; Woodward S. “Faith and Tourism: Planning Tourism in Relation to Places of Worship”.

These studies of scientists from near and far abroad, despite their high concentration and scale, are only a methodological basis for research.

This issue has been studied and systematized in the works of many Russian scientists. In particular, we can name A. P. Zabiako, her works “Sacred” and “The Category of Holiness. A comparative Study Languorously Traditions”; Zenkin S. “The Undivine Sacred: Theory and Artistic Practice”; Toporov V. N. “Holiness and saints in Russian Spiritual Culture”; Lugovsky G. “On the Nature of the Sacred”; Pylaev M. “The Category ‘Sacred’ in the Phenomenology of Religion, Theology and Philosophy of the XX century”; Mirolyubov Yu. P. “The Sacred of Russia”; Gorbatovsky V. V. “Sacred Places of Russia”. Russian scientists have studied the concept of Holiness, as well as specific facts about the Holy places of Russia. Interesting and important reference books about the Holy places of Russia have been compiled, and these studies can serve as a methodological basis for the study of this research work.

As for Kazakhstan's research, domestic Humanities still conduct large-scale research of the Holy places of Kazakhstan. Scientists such as Kabibola Sydykov, Abish Kekilbayev, Andrey Astafyev, Zeynolla Samashev, who conducted many studies and excavations, found many historical monuments and settlements. Archaeological, ethnographic, and historical studies of the Holy places of Kazakhstan are published separately in Kazakhstan studies that are important. Among them are the works of Karl Moldakhmetovich Baypakov: "Islamic Archaeological Architecture and Archeology of Kazakhstan"; "Medieval Cities of Kazakhstan on the Great Silk Road"; "Outstanding archaeological monuments of Kazakhstan", Baypakov K. M., Ternovaya G. A. "Religions and Cults of Medieval Kazakhstan (based on the materials of the kuyryktobe settlement)"; Smagulov E. "Essays on the History and Archeology of Medieval Turkestan. Collection: Monuments of History and Culture of Kazakhstan"; Orynbekov M. "Genesis of Religiosity in Kazakhstan"; Mamraimov A. "Sacred Places on the Great Silk Road". Also, Mikhail Masson made a great contribution to the study of sacred places, who conducted the first architectural study of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (1930). He also studied the graves of Kazakh khans buried there and left detailed information about these burials, one of which was "On the construction of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan" from a religious and philosophical point of view, the approach of Dosai Kenzhetai, who wrote books about the moral philosophy of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi and his system of thinking, stands out. The work of Margulan A. is of great importance in the study of sacred places. "Architectural monuments in the Kengir river valley"; the work of Seidimbekov A. "Singing Domes" was also considered. Researcher Muminov Ashirbek Kurbanovich conducted field research in the program "Cultural heritage" in the Mangistau region "Epigraphy, Petroglyphs, Historical and Cultural Monuments of the Mangistau region" (2008-2009), "Spiritual Values of the Kazakh People: the role and significance of Holy places in the preservation of traditional culture" (2012 -2014). In 2018-2019 under the guidance of Professor Begalinova Kalimash Kapsamarovna a group of researchers conducted field research of sacred places throughout the territory of Kazakhstan, made numerous videos to promote the sacred lands. Cultural analysis of sacred places is given in T.H. Gabitov's encyclopedia "Monuments of Culture of Kazakhstan", developed within the project "The Place and Role of Cultural Monuments in the Process of Modernization in Kazakhstan in the Context of the Strategy 'Kazakhstan-2050'".

The research of the above-mentioned authors of sacred places in Kazakhstan is of an archaeological, ethnographic, local history, architectural and cultural nature, which is a powerful basis and methodological basis for the study of sacred places. However, theoretical and methodological explanations of sacred concepts, the definition of signs and principles for the recognition of sacred places do not have comprehensive scientific religious studies. Therefore, at present, a systematic comprehensive study of the sacred places of Kazakhstan requires a deep scientific religious, cultural and historical analysis.

**The purpose and objectives of the study:**

The purpose of the research is to study the sacred places of Kazakhstan taking into account the theoretical and methodological foundations, conduct a religious analysis of the Holy places through religious phenomenological categories, consider their place and role in strengthening the foundations of national identity and preserving the national code. To achieve this goal, the following tasks must be completed:

- determine the theoretical and methodological foundations of the concept of the Saint in the field of modern religious studies and social and humanitarian sciences;
- define the classification and basic principles for identifying Holy places;
- conduct religious studies and religious-phenomenological analysis of national religious and religious places of worship in Kazakhstan;
- show the role of sacred places in Kazakhstan in strengthening the national code;
- determine the importance of Holy places in preserving the national identity of Kazakhstan in the process of globalization.

**Object of research:** national religious and cult sacred places of Kazakhstan.

**Subject of research:** the role and significance of Holy places in modern Kazakh society.

**The theoretical and methodological basis of the research** is the theories and approaches obtained in the field of religious studies and social and humanitarian Sciences. The dissertation widely used methods of historical and logical, system-structural and comparative-hermeneutical, religious studies analysis, allowing a comprehensive study of the sacred places used for the spiritual revival of modern society and the formation of national consciousness. Considering Holy places as a spiritual and social fact occurring in modern social life, the method of objectivism contributed to the disclosure of its essence and reasons for service. Phenomenological analysis allowed us to reveal the features of Holy places, to identify the corresponding categories and classifications.

**Scientific novelty of the research:**

For the first time, a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual study of the Holy places of Kazakhstan was conducted. Taking into account the fact that the Holy places have not yet become a full-fledged subject of religious research by Russian scientists and religious scholars, the study comprehensively considered the clear content and direction, functions and characteristics of Holy places as an important aspect of modern religious consciousness and social spirituality. As a novelty of scientific work on the basis of historical, religious phenomenological, religious studies of Holy places in Kazakhstan, it is proposed:

- a meaningful analysis of the concept of the Saint was determined based on the General Outlook of the traditional Kazakh people, the features of religion and traditions, primarily due to the religious belief of the ancient Kazakhs-the cult of ancestors, respect for the spirit of ancestors, faith in the aruakhs;
- classification and basic principles of determining the Holy places in Kazakhstan are defined;

- conducted analysis of the religious of the sacred places of Kazakhstan, labeled as religious and cult, and shows the continuity;
- in the course of religious studies analysis of Holy places, a separate classification was proposed, compiled as a result of research work;
- in the process of spiritual modernization, the importance of Holy places in strengthening the national code is highlighted;
- the place and role of Holy places in preserving the national identity of Kazakhstan in the process of globalization is determined.

**The main provisions to be submitted for defense:**

1. The concepts “Holy”, “sacred”, “sacral” are closely related to each other, but have different meanings, although they are close synonymous words. Sacred are, as a rule, the objects and rituals used in religious rituals, is intended for God. The concept of sacred most often characterizes purification procedures. The Holy is an attribute of God, in the sense that it is divine and dedicated to God, the Almighty. Sacral (English ‘sacral’ and Lat. ‘sacrum’ – Holy, powerful) - a worldview category that gives a certain object a unique meaning, turns it into a special value, gives an irrational, mystical meaning, in contrast to everyday concepts and objects. In contrast to the two concepts, the sacred is a concept that arose in a scientific lexicon rather than in a religious context and is used to describe all religions, including primitive religions, paganism, and mythology. The phenomenology of religion considers the emergence of Holiness in matter, space, time, texts, actions, and the relationship of man and society. From this, follow the categories: Holy space, Holy time, Holy place, Holy action, Holy object, mystics, and prophets. Sacred categories from the point of view of classical religious phenomenology, which has developed in the world, are determined by the General Kazakh worldview, religion and mentality, based on the connection of these concepts, first of all, with the religious beliefs of the ancient Kazakhs – the cult of ancestors, the spirit of ancestors.

2. To highlight the main principles and classifications in identifying the concept of sacred places, we first give definitions of the concept of a sacred place. Based on interpretation - it is a place with unique forms that have a special meaning. The concept of sacred places can be interpreted from an ideological and everyday point of view. Ideological are sacred places that have state significance, and everyday places that are associated with the ancestors of a particular generation, which are in demand among the population in everyday life. Based on the classification and basic principles of determining sacred places, sacred places in Kazakhstan can be divided into three types: the first – sacred places created by people associated with various religions; the second – formed by natural factors – medicinal waters, medicinal mud, dolmens and others. The third is the Holy places that have arisen due to the intervention of two types. When determining the classification of Holy places, studying the legends of saints in the country, there are four main types: 1) unidentified saints and those who did not have their own names and common places of residence; 2) biblical and quranic characters, including figures of early Islamic history; 3) medieval Sufis - early, famous and local; 4) representatives of local authorities, whose graves became the object of

inertial worship. Another classification is proposed depending on the possessions of Holy places: 1) ancient warriors; 2) prophets, heroes in the Koran; 3) followers of the prophet Muhammad; 4) Sufis; 5) totems of the family; 6) “new generation” of saints. Mazars are divided into several groups depending on their popularity: 1) they are popular throughout Central Asia; 2) they are popular in one region or in the entire region; 3) known only in a limited place.

3. The research paper examines the main Holy places of Kazakhstan, where religious and religious buildings were divided into two groups: 1) places of worship of a religious character; 2) places of worship of a national character. According to these two groups, they are considered from a religious, religious-phenomenological point of view in the following categories: first, it is the definition of the sacred place where they lived, that is, from the point of view of the category of sacred space, sacred time; second, the definition of their origin is considered through the category of a sacred person; third, through the category of sacred activity, the justification of life principles of religious, moral, and philosophical orientation will be given; fourth, in the context of the category of Holy objects, for example: why did the people pray for them? These questions were answered. And through these categories were identified natural Mazars and created as monuments of culture.

4. In the course of religious studies analysis of sacred places, as the results of research work, in addition to those listed above, you can group and give the following classification: 1) Holy objects erected in the period before Islam; 2) Holy objects for persons associated with the emergence of Islam, including those who contributed to the spread of Islam; 3) Holy objects associated with the establishment of Islam, including the spread of Sufism; 4) The image of a Holy woman. There are more mausoleums dedicated to Holy women in Kazakhstan than in other countries. Because in the Kazakh tradition, there is a special respect for women, which is characteristic of our national identity. Our Holy women and mothers have played an important role in society, as well as in the upbringing of children. That is why their mausoleums are still revered and visited; 5) Holy places built for non-religious persons who contributed to the formation of khanates on the Kazakh land and ruled the country; 6) Holy places built during the period of citizenship of the Russian Empire; 7) Architectural complexes built in the twentieth century.

5. A more detailed study of the Holy places was determined in conjunction with the changes taking place in modern society that affect the formation of public consciousness and national identity, its revival and spiritual search of the people, as they have a social relevance. The role of Holy places in the revival of the national code and the importance of national identity formation were considered here.

6. Scientific results of the research can also be used for the development of the domestic and foreign tourism industry. The peculiarity of this type of tourism is that it will be valuable not only for people to see nature, see the country and have fun, but also for educational purposes and get acquainted with the history of their native land, in the formation of national identity, a sense of patriotism and pride in

their history. In addition, a digitization system will be implemented with the creation of textbooks, films, videos, and interactive maps for secondary school and university students.

**The theoretical and practical significance of the research** is a systematic comprehensive study of the sacred places of Kazakhstan, a conceptual analysis of its role and place in the religious, spiritual, socio-cultural life of modern society. Since the Holy places of Kazakhstan are one of the most important components of the national spiritual culture, which belongs to the national code, today there is a need for comprehensive religious studies and systematization of Holy places. Given that the dissertation research is one of the first works aimed at scientific and theoretical research of Holy places in the country, the results of the research can be used in special elective courses and research in the field of religious studies, cultural studies, philosophy, local history, and sociology. Also, as theoretical and practical results of the dissertation work, they can be used by religious and Islamic scholars in special courses for training in such specialties as tourism, in the development of various programs on sacred places, in order to develop and strengthen patriotism, recognize sacred places as a national code in the revival of national consciousness, strengthen national identity, and develop domestic tourism in Kazakhstan.

**Testing of research results and publications:**

The results of the dissertation research were discussed at scientific and methodological seminars of doctoral students and at meetings of the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

The results of the dissertation research are reflected in 16 research articles, including journals which publish the main results on Philosophy, Political science, Cultural Studies and Humanities, recommended by Committee on Control in Education and Science of MES of RK - 3; in the collections of international scientific conferences - 5; in the journal with impact factor indexed in the Scopus database - 1.

**Structure and scope of the dissertation work:** the dissertation research consists of an introduction, three sections, each of which consists of two subsections, a conclusion and a list of references. The total volume of the dissertation research is 130 pages.