



**INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA: COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF ZOROASTRIAN AND KAZAKH TRADITIONS, RELIGIOSITY, AND CULTURE**

**CONEXÕES INTERCULTURAIS NA ÁSIA CENTRAL: ESTUDO COMPARATIVO
DAS TRADIÇÕES, RELIGIOSIDADE E CULTURA ZOROÁSTRICA E
CAZAQUISTA**

YENGLIK KASSABEKOVA

Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science,
Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Kazakhstan. E-mail:
kasabekova1978@mail.ru

SERIK SEIDUMANOV

Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science,
Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Kazakhstan. E-mail:
Seydumanoff@gmail.com

SERIK NURMURATOV

Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science,
Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Kazakhstan. E-mail:
s.nurmuratov@mail.ru

ALMASBEK SHAGYRBAY

Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science,
Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Kazakhstan.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9146-1408> E-mail: almasbek85@gmail.com

KASSYMKAN KURMANBEK

Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science,
Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Kazakhstan. E-mail:
qqasymhan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the cultural, religious, and linguistic connections between Zoroastrian tradition and Kazakh culture, as well as to identify common elements in language and worldview. Special attention is given to analyzing the historical roots of these connections and their impact on the formation of national identity.

Methods: The study employs an interdisciplinary approach, including methods of linguistic analysis, comparative-historical method, and principles of philosophical reflection. An analysis of lexical parallels between Avestan and Kazakh languages was conducted, examining common elements of religious practices and worldview concepts.

Results: A significant number of lexical correspondences between Avestan and Kazakh languages were identified, indicating the existence of stable linguistic and cultural ties. The preservation of several Zoroastrian elements in traditional Kazakh culture was established, particularly in ritual practices associated with fire worship and ancestor cults. The role of





Zoroastrian heritage in shaping the concept of "traditional Islam" in Kazakhstan was determined. The influence of these factors on the contemporary cultural identity of the Kazakh people was analyzed.

Conclusion: The study confirms the multifaceted cultural connections among the peoples of Central Asia. The identified parallels between Zoroastrian and Kazakh cultures reflect the complex nature of national identity formation and highlight the importance of studying historical heritage for preserving cultural diversity in the context of globalization.

Keywords: National identity; Ancestor cults; Linguistic analysis; Kazakh culture.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Estudar as conexões culturais, religiosas e linguísticas entre a tradição zoroastriana e a cultura cazaque, bem como identificar elementos comuns na linguagem e na visão de mundo. É dada atenção especial à análise das raízes históricas dessas conexões e seu impacto na formação da identidade nacional.

Métodos: O estudo emprega uma abordagem interdisciplinar, incluindo métodos de análise linguística, método comparativo-histórico e princípios de reflexão filosófica. Foi realizada uma análise dos paralelos lexicais entre os idiomas avestânico e cazaque, examinando elementos comuns de práticas religiosas e conceitos de visão de mundo.

Resultados: Foi identificado um número significativo de correspondências lexicais entre os idiomas avestânico e cazaque, indicando a existência de laços linguísticos e culturais estáveis. A preservação de vários elementos zoroastrianos na cultura tradicional do Cazaquistão foi estabelecida, especialmente nas práticas rituais associadas à adoração do fogo e aos cultos aos ancestrais. Foi determinado o papel da herança zoroastriana na formação do conceito de "Islã tradicional" no Cazaquistão. A influência desses fatores na identidade cultural contemporânea do povo cazaque foi analisada.

Conclusão: O estudo confirma as conexões culturais multifacetadas entre os povos da Ásia Central. Os paralelos identificados entre as culturas zoroastriana e cazaque refletem a natureza complexa da formação da identidade nacional e destacam a importância do estudo do patrimônio histórico para a preservação da diversidade cultural no contexto da globalização.

Palavras-chave: Identidade nacional; Culto aos ancestrais; Análise linguística; Cultura cazaque.





1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, linguistic and historical factors confirming the existence of intercultural contacts among peoples can be observed in official sources, ways of life, customs, and cultures. In the era of globalization, preserving national identity and further developing worldviews without losing spiritual values is one of the key tasks for the future of the country.

Research confirms that the term “Turks”, encountered in some sources, is a common name for several tribes inhabiting modern Central Asia. As noted by U.I. Abdullaev, A.S. Sagdullaev and J.E. Togaev (2021), migrations played an important role in the mixing of ethnic groups and changes in the material and spiritual culture of the peoples of Central Asia. Notably, in the context of this research, the similarity in the spiritual world of Zoroastrians and the Kazakh people manifests itself in tradition and religiosity. This similarity can serve as a vivid example of the scale of intercultural connections present in the culture of the Kazakh people.

Zoroastrianism, which emerged in Asia around the 4th-3rd centuries BC and spread across modern-day Turkmenistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, significantly influenced the formation of cultural and religious identity among the Kazakh ethnic group. The sacred book of the Zoroastrians, the Avesta, consisting of 21 books and describing the way of life and traditions of nomadic peoples, is a shared heritage of Turkic peoples. The sacred symbol of Zoroastrians is fire. A particular reverence for fire is also manifested in Kazakh culture - elements of fire worship, such as lighting oil for the newlyweds and illuminating the house with fire. Such parallels can be seen as expressions of common structures of “folk narratives”, which, according to some studies, reflect deep aspects of worldview (Bekbenbetova et al., 2022). In other words, one of the religious beliefs in the spiritual world of the Kazakh people, intertwined with Kazakh mentality, is the ancient Zoroastrian religion and its sacred book, the Avesta. Kazakh scholar Manash Kozybayev, in his article “The History of Kazakhstan as an Integral Part of Steppe Civilization”, examines divinity and Zoroastrianism together. Tokbolat Yensegenuly, based on this, hypothesizes the likelihood of the Avesta being written in the Turkic era (Wikipedia, n.d.-b; Yensegenuly, 2018).

The aim of this study is to investigate Zoroastrian words and elements from the perspective of their phonetic harmony between the Avestan language, now a dead language, and their correspondences in Turkic languages. Special attention is given to analyzing cultural, spiritual, and kinship connections among tribes inhabiting the same





territory.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of Zoroastrianism on the cultural identity of the Kazakh people is further explored in Rakhman Alshanov's book, "The Secrets of Twenty Thousand Years: Searches and Discoveries", which investigates natural disasters caused by ecological catastrophes and presents initiatives for recognizing the Kazakh spiritual national code. The Avesta occupies a significant place in analyzing natural cataclysms of the 6th to 4th millennium BC (Alshanov, 2019). Alshanov emphasizes the phonetic correspondences and cultural similarities between Avestan and modern Kazakh, examining translations of Avestan concepts in Kazakh. He notes that cultural excavations of the Botai culture, which existed in Northern Kazakhstan between 3700 and 3000 years ago, revealed hundreds of thousands of animal bones, predominantly from horses. Furthermore, the role of tribes living between the Ural and Irtysh rivers in shaping Botai culture is highlighted, confirming that horsemeat and milk were the main food sources for the Botai people. Thus, the correspondence between the cultural centers of Zoroastrians in ancient Kazakh steppes and the land of Kazakhstan is proven from a territorial perspective (Alshanov, 2019).

Professor V. F. Zaibert confirmed that horses began to be domesticated around 5500 years ago as a result of excavations he conducted in northern Kazakhstan (Alshanov, 2019). Alshanov also points out the long-standing tradition of horse husbandry and pastoralism, which has continued since the Turkic period. The Avesta mentions the interaction of Zoroastrians with horse breeding culture, as seen in the verses: "Keep your word, Darhan – the owner of the deposit, He gifts a horse" (Avesta: Izbrannyye gimny, 1993, p. 117).

English researcher Kimberly Brown, referencing the Los Angeles Times, suggested in the magazine Horse that horses were domesticated in Asia much earlier than previously believed. Excavations near the Botai settlement found evidence supporting this claim. National Geographic News stated, "The inhabitants of the steppe region now known as Kazakhstan were the first to ride horses and drink their milk" (Kayratuly, 2021). Horse breeding and livestock were the primary sources of livelihood for the Kazakh people.

An analysis of the confessional structure of the population of Kazakhstan indicates that the majority are adherents of Islam, making up 80% of the total population. The remaining 20% identify as followers of other religious traditions or adhere to atheistic views. Among the non-Muslim population, the largest group consists of Christians, predominantly of the





Orthodox faith. Additionally, there are communities practicing Judaism and Buddhism within the country.

Results from a recent census indicate a high level of religiosity in Kazakh society: 97% of respondents identify as believers, while only 3% consider themselves atheists or refrain from answering questions about their religious affiliation (Wikipedia, n.d.-b). Notably, the overwhelming majority of respondents (89.3%) perceive Kazakhstan as a multi-confessional state, dominated by two major religious traditions (72.8%) – Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, 64.1% of respondents tend to categorize Kazakhstan as part of the Islamic world, influenced by the demographic characteristics of the population (Burova et al., 2023).

A fundamental condition for the peaceful coexistence of representatives of different religious denominations is mutual respect and recognition of the right to freedom of religion. The constitutionally enshrined principle of secularism serves as a guarantee of these rights and freedoms. Secularism in the context of the Kazakh model of state-religious relations implies openness, tolerance, and respectful attitudes toward all ethnic groups, religions, and cultural traditions. According to survey results conducted by Kazakh scholars, religious norms are an important factor regulating youth behavior alongside family upbringing (Togaibayeva et al., 2021). This confirms the significance of religious elements in shaping legal culture.

The normative-legal foundation for implementing the principle of secularism in the Republic of Kazakhstan consists of provisions from the Constitution and specific legislation. Thus, paragraph I of Article I of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan states: “The Republic of Kazakhstan affirms itself as a democratic, secular, legal, and social state, with the most valuable treasure being a person and human values” (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995, p. 1). This provision is developed in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations”, which recognizes Kazakhstan as a democratic, secular state that respects everyone’s right to freedom of religion, guarantees equal rights for citizens regardless of their religious beliefs, and acknowledges the cultural and historical value of religions that constitute the spiritual heritage of the people of Kazakhstan, emphasizing the importance of interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, and respect for citizens’ beliefs (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1992, p. 152). Thus, this model of state-religious relations ensures the peaceful coexistence of representatives of various ethnicities and denominations within a single multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state.





In writing this article, the works of foreign and domestic researchers on the indicated topic were used.

Kazakh scholar and philosopher M. S. Orynbekov, who contributed to the emergence of written data about the Avesta in Kazakhstan, notes that various peoples, including Turks, Persians, Sogdians, and Mongols, lived in the territory of modern Kazakhstan in ancient times. The unification of these tribes under the aegis of the Turkic Kaganate facilitated their cultural mutual enrichment and development (Orynbekov, 2013).

A special interest lies in analyzing the influence of Zoroastrianism on the formation of the cultural and religious identity of the Kazakh people. Researchers of the Zoroastrian religion believe that it originated in Central Asia. English scholar Mary Boyce fundamentally formulated this perspective in her work "Beliefs and Customs". According to her, Zoroastrianism was the state religion of three powerful Iranian empires for many centuries and significantly influenced the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Boyce, 1987, p. 4).

Building on this thesis, I.S. Braginsky states that the end of the 2nd to the beginning of the 1st millennium BC is characterized by the development of military democracy in Central Asia, coinciding with the period of the disintegration of primitive communal relations and the emergence of class society. Many features of this social structure are reflected in the sacred book of Zoroastrianism - the Avesta (Braginsky, 1956, p. 80).

Professor Prods Oktor Skjarvo, a specialist in Iranian history and culture, emphasizes that Zoroastrianism, which arose among Iranian tribes in Central Asia in the second millennium BC, remained the official religion of the Iranian empires until the spread of Islam in the 7th century AD. Zoroastrian teaching, based on the worship of Ahura Mazda, relies on the traditions and rituals established by the prophet Zoroaster. "Zoroastrianism, as one of the greatest religions in the world, has a rich heritage of texts and cultural practices" (Daryaei, 2015, p. 874).

As previously mentioned, the majority of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan are representatives of the Islamic religion. Although priority is given to Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school, the nature of Islam in the country is more traditional. The phenomenon of "traditional Islam" in Kazakhstan represents a unique occurrence that encompasses elements of various beliefs, particularly Zoroastrianism, Shamanism, and Tizism.

Many customs and rituals associated with fire worship, baking ritual flatbreads, and venerating the spirits of water, the moon, and the sky are legacies of the aforementioned religious practices. Although from the perspective of orthodox Islam such practices may be





seen as manifestations of “shirk” (polytheism), in the context of Kazakh realities, they are perceived as part of “traditional Islam”.

“Traditional Islam” represents a harmonious application of Islamic directions and Kazakh customs and traditions. Elements of folk culture, such as the veneration of fire, ritual pouring of oil into the fire, and others that do not fall within the dogma of Islam but are an integral part of the daily life of the Kazakhs, are classified as spiritual values playing a key role in preserving national identity. Recognizing the importance of studying and preserving spiritual heritage, the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan pays special attention to issues of national identity and cultural code. The President of the country, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (2021), in his conceptual article dedicated to the historical significance of the independence issue in the current historical period, places special emphasis on the fundamental spiritual values mentioned above. Consequently, programs aimed at exploring cultural heritage and delving into the history of the country, such as “Spiritual Revival” and “Seven Faces of the Great Steppe”, are being implemented.

Special attention is given to studying the connections between ancient Aryan tribes and the culture of the Great Steppe. As noted in the article “Seven Sides of the Great Steppe”, published in the newspaper “Ana Tili”, the spiritual roots of the Kazakh people extend far beyond the current borders of Kazakhstan, reaching the shores of the Indus, Nile, Volga, and Don Rivers. “The Aryans are the tribes that once headed to India to create great cultures and great states” (Nazarbayev, 2019). The main conclusion drawn from this is that the roots and history of Turkic peoples are very deep.

In his monograph “The Secrets of Twenty Thousand Years: Researches and Discoveries”, R.A. Alshanov, relying on the work of Anatoly Klesov and modern achievements in DNA genealogy, traces the migration routes of Aryan tribes. According to the provided data, the Aryan tribes began their movement from the lower reaches of the Volga through western Kazakhstan and the Southern Ural eastward, reaching the Altai and the foothills of Alatau about 5000 years ago. Approximately 4500 years ago, they mastered the territories between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya (Alshanov, 2019).

Arish Dastur (2024), in his work on Zoroastrianism, touches upon the issue of Gautama's Turanian identity, allowing parallels to be drawn between Aryan and Turanian cultures (the idea of competition described as the contest between the Avestan poet and the Turanian poet). Based on the information provided, it can be concluded that the Aryans pertain to the territory of modern Iran, while the Turanians relate to the Turanian steppe. This also shows that the cultural connection between the Aryans and Turanians has deep roots.





It is important to emphasize that many elements of ancient beliefs have been preserved in the language and culture of the Kazakh people. This is confirmed, in particular, by the analysis of the development of writing in the territory of modern Kazakhstan (Ybyraimzhanov et al., 2019). As noted in the research by A.B. Amirbekova et al. (2013), language helps us to comprehend and understand the culture of different peoples, serving as a true treasure trove of national spirit and culture. Thus, R.A. Alshanov also conducts a deep analysis of cultural and linguistic parallels between events described in the Avesta and Kazakh culture. The author, based on the works of researchers, identifies numerous lexical correspondences between Avestan and Kazakh languages, such as “Zarathustra” – grieving, “bearer of the great fire” or “man riding”, “yellow camel”; “karshvar” – country, literally in Kazakh – “is a neighbor”; “Akhun Vairi” – poet, native poet; “Ahura Mazda” – god of evil – “Akiroshi”; “Siruis” – “Sumbile”; “Div” – “Diyu”; “Peshanye” – fate – “peshené”; “Aireu Tau” – “Ayrtau”; “Iyma” – “Uyme”; “Var” – stables for livestock, which were made of clay mixed with straw; “asman” – “sky”; “hafté” – week; “asha” – “open and say”; “man” – sheep and large cattle.

At the same time, similarities of other traditions linking the two cultures are highlighted, including animal herding, sacrifices, burial rites, fire worship, the March holiday, the Amal holiday, beliefs about stars, and the process of building barns. According to Rakhman Alshanuly, although the Avestan language belongs to the category of dead languages, it can be noted that some of its elements have been preserved in the Kazakh language, sometimes in a literal sense, and in other cases connected with sound harmony.

3 METHODOLOGY

The scientific analysis of the historical phenomenon and contemporary context of the traditional worldview of the Kazakh people, along with changes and trends in the spiritual image of modern society, is based on an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, the methodology of this article includes principles and methods of philosophical reflection as well as general scientific methodology. Traditional research methods and integral philosophy were employed in this work. This approach allows for the use of a variety of basic and alternative principles and methods, including historical-logical unity, ascending from the abstract to the concrete, principles of development, integrity and specificity, consistency, complementarity, and concrete-historical context, among others. It should be noted that the comparative analysis of historical phenomena is closely linked to the principle of



consistency, defining historical objects and processes as a systemic whole. In our view, this research represents a unified conceptual basis for further studies, and its practical significance lies in the potential for using the results in modeling the continuity of cultural and worldview objects.

4 RESULTS

By studying the elements common to Turkic peoples, we achieved the following results:

The Avesta is a shared cultural heritage of the peoples of Central Asia and Iran from the 8th century BC. It is the sacred book of the Zoroastrian religion, the content of which includes a code of rules for the life, customs, and traditions of Zoroastrians. Alkey Margulan (1984), one of the first Kazakh scholars to study the history of the Avesta, notes:

The Avesta is a common heritage of the ancient Turks. It reflects the life of the Turanian field, based on this sacred book. It is evident that the breath of the era, the essence of life, and the chain of events are connected with the worldview and culture, traditions, and customs of the modern Kazakh people. (p. 46)

The analysis of the etymology of the word "Avesta" revealed a variety of interpretations of its meaning in different linguistic traditions: in Kazakh, it means "abasta", while the word "Avesta" itself is understood as "beginning". "Avesta" signifies "beginning", and "au beginning" means "beginning". On the name "Avesta", Doctor of Philosophy Sapar Ospanov (2003) stated:

In the ancient Turkic language, most words did not exceed 2-3 sounds. They are called 'root words' or 'monosyllabic words'. The root of our words does not change, while the endings change according to the root. To avoid changing the root, endings -s are added. Thus, we need to delve into the archaeology of language. The sound 'A' in ancient times signifies 'infinite', 'long'. The first of 'Abasta,' about which we speak, is 'A,' which starts with 'anooo'. The title 'Start'. Now, the last of 'Abasta' means 'infinite time'. Thus, 'Abasta' is a concept of something created from time immemorial, something that exists now, something that will be infinite. Tajiks say not 'Avesta,' but 'Abasta'. (p. 50)

This means it begins eternally and continues eternally.

During the study, it was established that the "Avesta" is regarded as a common cultural heritage of the peoples of Central Asia and Iran, as evidenced by data from the history of Uzbek literature (Khaitmetov & Kedrina, 1987). According to E.E. Bertels (1960, p. 46), the



“Words of the Avesta” (from ancient upasthi) means only “the main text”, which aligns with the translations mentioned above. The analysis of the content allowed us to highlight the key components of Zoroastrian teaching, including rituals, legends, and hymns. Central to this religious-philosophical system are three fundamental principles: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. In Islamic tradition, an example of this is the hadith about good speech:

The honorable Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said in a hadith: 'Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent,' and in another hadith, it is stated: 'A sign of a person's good adherence to Islam is that he renounces what does not concern him'. (Chief imam Abilakhan Irsal, 2023)

The mission of any religion is to create good people who do good deeds.

T. Yensegenuly (2018) asserts:

Since the divine religion of the ancient Turks is based on the work 'Avesta,' studying the emergence, development, meaning, and era of this sacred heritage proves that the traditions, beliefs, religion, and literature of the ancient Turks were formed from ancient times; it has long been equated with the national values of the Turkic-Kazakh people and taken into account to verify its authenticity. (p. 13)

Zarathustra or the Creator is the founder of the Zoroastrian religion, a prophet who preached the dependence of man on the cosmic order and justice, and his active struggle for good. Zarathustra calls for being a seeker of justice, a preacher of goodness, and fighting against evil. According to the teachings of Zarathustra, life consists of black and white, symbolizing good and evil. The god of evil is Angra Mainyu, and the god of goodness is Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda celebrates the good qualities of a person, while Angra Mainyu encourages evil and vices. An analogy can be drawn here with the representation of an angel on the right shoulder, recording a person's goodness in the religious beliefs of the Kazakh people, and a devil on the left shoulder, inciting evil. This is mentioned in Surah Al-Kahf: "On his right and left, there will sit two observers. As soon as a word leaves his mouth, a stalker is ready before him" (Surah Al-Kahf, verses 17-18). At this stage, one can understand the harmony between Islamic religion and Zoroastrian elements.

The concept of Ahura Mazda is interpreted by scholar Alma Kyraubaeva – where Mazda represents the process of fire burning. Angra Mainyu is considered “Dark Gray”, “the minor sheep”, “the bewildered flock of sheep” (Alshanov, 2019, p. 31). This means burning. The





term “Mazdau” signifies an unquenchable flame.

The following verses describe the environment in which the Zoroastrians lived:

Gentleness, beautiful horses,
Has golden and silver possessions,
Perfect elasticity of the throat,
Runners rush with the wind,
A horse, tied to a cart,
He held a falcon in his hand,
With a bow at his waist,
He drove away his enemy,
Have mercy on the people,
Fulfill your desires! (Yensegenuly, 2018, p. 345)

In these lines, one can see a reflection of elements of Kazakh lifestyle.

Let us once again emphasize that fire is a sacred symbol and a revered attribute of the Zoroastrians, as confirmed in the Avesta. If we pay attention to the word “Ot” in Kazakh, it translates to Persian as “otash” (Ovchinnikova et al., 2005, p. 510). It can be concluded that they share the same root. Of particular interest are the meanings of the word “otashgir” or “atoshgir”, used in the everyday life of the Kyzylordians. For example, the term “fire clamp” or the colloquial word “kysqash”, which is used to extinguish fire. Notably, the explanation of the word “kysqash” provided in Wikipedia (n.d.-a) states:

It is a tool used by blacksmiths to extract moving metal from the furnace, compress it, and place it on the chest, turning it upside down. Metal can be gripped and washed using pliers. The handle of the pliers should be comfortable and flexible. When using a large, heavy metal knife, a pulley is placed on the handle of the knife. Depending on the convenience of the work performed, the tip of the mill, that is, the mouth that grips the metal, varies. This will be referred to as 'flat beak,' 'bird beak,' 'we beak,' 'imek beak,' etc.

These examples testify to the commonality of the cultural and linguistic substrate.

Another sacred belief of the Zoroastrians is “farvahar” or “arva”, which in Kazakh translates to “ghost”. This finds material embodiment in rituals such as the worship of ghosts and veneration of spirits. “Farvahar” translates as the ghost, spirit of a deceased person. Zoroastrians express satisfaction with the arrival of Farvahars by lighting a fire on the roof of the house. The Arabic word “arvak” is the plural form of the Arabic word “ruh”. The tradition of reading the Quran in memory of the deceased and distributing ritual food reflects





continuity with Zoroastrian rituals. The practice of Zoroastrians sacrificing several animals for food is one of the unique rituals preserved in the life of the Kazakh people. In homage to the spirits, the day before the March holiday, the matriarch brings prepared wood with red coals taken from the hearth to the roof of the house. Additionally, they bring out water, greens, vegetables, an oil lamp, or wax, and fruits in a bowl. All family members go out onto the roof and perform rituals in honor of sending off the Farvahar. They read “Avesta drun”, which is recited before dividing the fruit, thereby making a sacrifice to the path of the Farvahar and sharing it equally among family members. During this ceremony, they sing hymns praising the Avesta.

Similar parallels are observed in the rituals associated with the celebration of Nauryz. On the day of the holiday, “mabeds”, the guardians of the eternal fire in the Avesta, light torches and announce the arrival of the new year to the people. While the burning fire does not extinguish, the Zoroastrians pray to their gods, take the remaining coals away from their homes, and bring the others to the local “unquenchable flame” or “atashkade”. Thus, they burn their homes with fire on one side while using aromatic bundles of wood for fragrance on the other (Koutlaki, 1999, p. 52). From this perspective, one can notice the mutual harmony between the preparation of the Kazakhs' seven flatbreads, dedicated to the spirits, their inhalation, the recitation of the Quran dedicated to the spirit of the deceased, and the Zoroastrians' reading of texts from the Avesta, as well as their ritual of igniting the house with fire.

Such parallels between ancient beliefs and modern cultural practices are also noted by other researchers as an important factor in shaping national identity (Alimova et al., 2023).

Zoroastrians are required to read the prayers of the Avesta to the Creator five times a day. Such prayers must be repeated several times by the supplicants, including the commands of God Ahura Mazda and the hymns of the Avesta. The garment or shirt that Zoroastrians wear during puberty is called “kushti”, which phonetically corresponds to the word “strong” in Kazakh. In other words, coming of age has the following meaning: to be strong and to come into power. Zoroastrians had to repeat these prayers again in the morning and evening when entering and leaving the house, removing the “kushti”, cleaning, and performing other rituals. According to the tenets of Zoroastrian faith, prayers can be offered anywhere: in a church, by the hearth at home, in nature, etc. Furthermore, Iranian Zoroastrians must look to the south while praying, while Indian Zoroastrians look to the north. It is noted that worship events leave a strong impression on those present, preserving many traditional elements (Rak, 1997, p. 80).



A similar influence of religious elements on the formation of culture and language is also observed in other Turkic languages. For instance, the study of Tatar terminology shows significant influence from Arabic-Persian borrowings that came through Islam (Gabidullina et al., 2020). As evidence of intercultural connections, the following common words for Turkic peoples have been identified:

The words used come from the articles by scholars from the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ikram Abdullaev and Mahmoudov Raufzhan, titled “Etymology of Some Avestan Words Related to Culture and Faith in Old Uzbek”. Overall, the following lexical similarities and correspondences in linguistic harmony were identified:

1. **Pashiman** (پشیمان) – A word used in the Avesta; in Persian, it translates as “pushayman”; in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik, and Uyghur, it means regret or despair, and in Russian, it translates to “to regret”.

2. **Baradar** (برادر, **нирадар**) – In Persian, it means brother; in the Avesta, it is used as “bratar”, derived from Sanskrit; in Kazakh, “piradar” means being a religious brother, belonging to the same religious organization or brotherhood; in Russian, it means “brotherhood”.

3. **Fragard** (فراگرد) – In Kazakh, it is used as the phrase “paruardiger” – God, relating to archaisms; in literary language, it is used in the meaning of God-Creator; in Uzbek, Persian, Tajik, and Kyrgyz, it means “creator”, and in Russian – “creator”.

4. **Zendegi** (زندگی) – In Kazakh, Persian, Tajik, Uzbek, and Uyghur, it means “life”. Interestingly, this word is also used in India and Pakistan, where Zoroaster is believed to have traveled.

5. **Sil sel**– In Persian, it means “to flood”; in Kazakh, Uzbek, and Tajik, it refers to flooding, taking in water, or deluge; in Russian, it translates as “deluge”.

6. **Dzhahangir** – In Persian, it means “the world conqueror”; in Kazakh and Uzbek, “zhihanger” means traveler, someone who travels the world, and it is often used for personal names; in Russian, it means “traveler”.

7. **Pishane** – Used in the Avesta, it appears in Rakhman Alshanov's book; in Persian, it is “Peshan”; in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik, it means fate; “written on the peshene”, meaning predetermined fate; in Russian, it translates to “destiny” or “predestined by fate”.

8. **Fravarh** (فراورخ) – In the Avesta, Persian, and Arabic, it is “Aruvah”; in Kazakh, it means the spirit of a deceased person; in Russian, it refers to the souls of the deceased.

9. **Aseman**– It means “blue sky” in Avestan, Persian, Uzbek, Tajik, and Uyghur, while in Kazakh, it also means “blue sky”; in Russian, it is “sky”.



10. **Guna** (غنا) – In Persian, it means “sin”; in Kazakh, Arabic, Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Uyghur, it means to commit many bad deeds; the Russian translation is “sin”.

11. **Bidava bi dua d** – Means “without air”; in Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Persian, it denotes an incurable person or incurable disease; the second meaning is “free”; in Russian, it means “incurable” or “free”.

12. **Dzhal** – In Persian, it is “ajjal”; in Kazakh, Arabic, Kyrgyz, and Tajik, it refers to the arrival of death, and in Russian, it means “death”.

13. **Fereshte** (فرشته) – In the Avesta; in Persian, it means “angel”; in Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz, it signifies “innocent”; in Russian, it is “angel”. One of the names associated with the concept of an angel is the word “אנחלק”, which represents a strip of an element formed from the word “prophet”, found in the word “אנחלפרישטה”. In Sanskrit, the word for “angel” is used as “preshita”, which has the structure एष+प्र and means “to inform”, “to deliver a message”.

14. **Amanat** – In Persian, it means “to entrust”; in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Arabic, it means “to trust”; in Russian, it translates as “to entrust”.

15. **Prorok** – This refers to a prophet in the Avesta, Persian, Kazakh, and Uzbek languages, and it is “prorok” in Russian. The word prophet historically originated from two parts: “paygom” (message) and “barbr”. “Paygom” means “message” and is used as “pegam” in Shikhaki and “peigam” in Gilaki. This form shares the same root as “payom” and is synonymous with it. In the Avesta, the message is transmitted as “paytigama”; in Pahlavi, it is “petam”.

16. **Post** – In Kazakh, Persian, Tajik, Arabic, and Uyghur, it refers to abstaining from food and drink from dawn to sunset, as well as from satisfying other needs.

17. **Duzah** (دوزخ) – As a religious term, it defines the concept of a place where the unfaithful are tormented. In the Avesta, this word is used in the forms “дуджангха” or “дуджангху” and means a bad world, an ugly, unclean world, a bad life; it translates to “hell” in Russian.

18. **Uzhmag ojmak** – It means “paradise”. In ancient Turkic, “учмак” has been used since the 12th century, and in the form “уштмак” since the 12th-13th centuries. In modern Turkic languages, this word has become widespread, and in Russian, it translates to “paradise”.

19. **Zendan** – It means “prison”; “зандан” translates to “prison” in Persian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, and Uyghur; in Russian, it is “prison”.

20. **Haft** – It translates to “week” in Avestan, Kazakh, Persian, Tajik, and Uyghur; “haft” means 7, i.e., 7 days of the week; in Russian, it translates to “Sunday”.



5 DISCUSSION

The conducted research confirms I. E. Zabelin's assertion that archaeology and related disciplines are called to study not only Greek or Roman cultures but any ancient cultures (Kokorina et al., 2023). The identified parallels between Zoroastrian and Kazakh cultures reflect the depth and complexity of cultural connections among the peoples of Central Asia.

During this study, it was established that the cultural, religious, and linguistic ties between the peoples inhabiting the territory of modern Kazakhstan and neighboring states have deep historical roots. The analysis of linguistic material, particularly the comparison of lexical units from the Avestan and modern Kazakh languages, leads to the conclusion that there is a significant number of common or semantically close concepts, indicating a long-standing and intense intercultural interaction.

Particular attention should be drawn to the fact that many elements of Zoroastrian religious tradition are reflected in the spiritual culture of the Kazakh people. This is manifested, in particular, in the preservation of several ritual practices related to fire worship, ancestor cults, and beliefs about the afterlife. This circumstance allows us to speak of the complex and multilayered nature of the traditional worldview of the Kazakhs, in which elements of various religious systems are organically combined.

In the context of contemporary processes of globalization and cultural unification, the data obtained acquire special relevance. They can serve as a basis for developing effective strategies for preserving national identity while simultaneously fostering intercultural dialogue.

6 CONCLUSION

Summarizing the findings of this research, it should be noted that cultural-religious and linguistic ties between peoples have deep historical roots. Through a comprehensive analysis of a vast body of domestic and foreign scientific literature, it has been established that the connection around concepts such as Turan and Iran has not yet been severed.

The research conducted allowed for the identification of a significant number of lexical parallels between ancient Avestan and modern Kazakh languages, which indicates the existence of stable linguistic and cultural ties in the historical continuum. This fact supports the hypothesis of the continuity of cultural traditions and the preservation of fundamental elements of worldview over a long period.



It is especially important to emphasize that despite the achievements of modern civilization, there is a trend towards rethinking the historical experience and cultural heritage of previous eras. This is reflected in the growing interest in studying ancient languages, religious practices, and philosophical systems.

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