

ISLAM AS A PART OF THE KAZAK IDENTITY AND CHOKAN  
VALIKHANOV

A Master's Thesis

by

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

October 2004

145720

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VALIKHANOV

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
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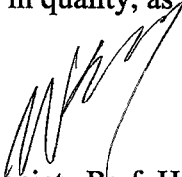
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

October 2004

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.



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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis will deal with the first Kazak intellectual, i.e. Chokan Valikhanov. He was among the Kazak intellectual elite which emerged due to interconnections with Russian education and culture. This elite holds an important place in the Kazak people's history. Although being mostly pro-Russian, for the reason that they considered Russia as the only and shrewd power, able to bring progress to the backward Central Asian peoples, these people raised and discussed important for the Kazak society issues.

Chokan Valikhanov will be discussed here in view of his harsh anti-Islamic statements and opposition to the role, played by the Volga – Ural Tatars in the Kazak steppes. Valikhanov came to regard that Islam represented by the Tatars and Maveranunehr was detrimental to enlightenment of the Kazak nomads, since it was alien to Kazak culture. Moreover, this Islam symbolized for him not only a threat to Kazak culture, as Valikhanov understood it, but also fanaticism and intolerance which would be a barrier to the gradual integration of the Kazaks into the Russian Empire. Such integration, Valikhanov believed, would open to the Kazak people the way to civilization.

## ÖZET

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Master tezi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Doçent Dr. Hakan Kırımlı

Ekim 2004

Bu tez ilk Kazak entellektüeli Çokan Velihanov'u incelemektedir. Çokan, Rus eğitimi ve kültürünün ekisinde oluşan ve Kazak içtimaî tarihinde ehemmiyetli bir rolü haiz Kazak entellektüel elitinin bir üyesiydi. Rusya'yı geri kalmış Orta Asya'ya ilerlemeyi getirebilecek tek güç olarak düşündükleri için genel itibariyle Rus taraftarı olmakla birlikte, sözkonusu entellektüel kesim, Kazak içtimai meselelerini gündeme getirmiş ve tartışmıştı.

Çokan Velihanov, bu çalışmada sert İslam karşıtı açıklamaları ve Volga-Ural Tatarlarının Kazak steplerinde oynadıkları role karşıtlığı bağlamında ele alınacaktır. Velihanov, Tatarların ve Maverâünnehir'in temsil ettiği İslam'ı Kazak kültürüne yabancı olması hasebiyle göçebe Kazakların aydınlanması önünde bir tehlike olarak algılamaktaydı. Bu İslam, onun için sadece Kazak kültürüne tehlike olmakla kalmıyor, dahası Kazakların Rusya İmparatorluğu'na tedricî entegrasyonu önünde bir engel olabilecek fanatiklik ve toleranssızlık manalarına geliyordu. Çokan'a göre, böyle bir bütünleşme Kazak toplumuna medeniyetin yolunu açacaktı.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many peoples have assisted and encouraged me throughout the process of the preparation of this M.A thesis.

First and foremost, my teacher Associate Prof. Hakan Kırımlı for his enduring support and guidance all the way through my study and writing of this thesis at Bilkent University. He in many ways made my study much easier to undergo.

I would also grateful for Prof. Norman Stone and Dr. Hasan Ali Karasar, whose recommendations helped me to significantly improve this work. I am also very grateful to Diane Grabowski for her assistance with proofreading of this thesis.

I also owe very much to a lot of friends at Bilkent University; I am especially thankful to İbrahim Köremezli, Dündar Akarca, and Chong Jin Oh, their constant support has been indispensable for me.

Last but not least, my greatest thanks are to my family members for their undying and unconditional support during my life and academic studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about one of the first representatives of Kazak intellectuals in modern sense, namely Chokan Valikhanov. The mid-nineteenth century was a period of strengthening of Russian colonial rule over the territory of present day Kazakhstan. At the same time a Kazak intellectual elite appeared as a result of interconnections with Russian culture and education. Three figures were the most remarkable ones among this elite: Abay Kunanbayev, Ibray Altynsarin, and Chokan Valikhanov, the subject of this work. These three figures are considered as being the first who were responsible for driving Kazak society towards modernization by paying attention to its own culture, language, and history.

Chokan Valikhanov holds a place in the history of the Kazak people that is both distinctive and crucial. Chokan is the first modern scientist and intellectual of the Kazaks. He had been acknowledged as such to some degree already by pre-revolutionary scholars, but Soviet scholars raised him to the peak place among Kazak intellectuals in view of his “pro-Russian” orientation and anti-Islamic statements. As a historian, ethnographer, geographer, archeologist, explorer, folklorist, and even as a painter Chokan has made contributions to the field of Central Asian studies of large and enduring importance. Like his scholarly accomplishments, his role as a thinker and intellectual has received a lot of attention. Thanks to this attention a large bibliography on his life and deeds was compiled in the Soviet period. The main lack of this

bibliography is that owing to ideological reasons, some aspects of his life and deeds received more attention while other aspects were neglected, or sometimes those of his characteristics, which were convenient for the official ideology were praised.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze several aspects of his life as a thinker, which have accordingly not been elaborated, and to draw some preliminary conclusions about them. The work is presented here in three main parts.

Chapter 1 reviews the colonization of the Kazak nation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This part aims to give some historical background. It describes the nature of Russian colonization itself and the development of the Russian colonial administration. Another important issue that is described is what place in this colonial administration Kazak traditional rulers have occupied. Russian colonization and resettlement of the Russian peasants and the Cossacks on the Kazak land brought economic impoverishment and disintegration to the traditional fundamentals of Kazak society and became the main catalyst of change, raising very important questions concerning the future of the nation.

Chapter 2 discusses Islam and its effect upon Kazaks. Islam among Kazaks, or broadly speaking among nomads of Central Asia, has never been studied thoroughly partly due to ideological reasons of the previous regime, partly due to unavailability of adequate resources. As it will be later claimed in this part, Islam has had a profound impact on Kazaks' culture, religion, and identity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide important background on socio-cultural effects that Islam has had on the Kazak way of life, which will have profound implications for the understanding of Chokan's views presented in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 can be divided into two parts. The first part describes Chokan's life and deeds, paying more attention to aspects considered to be more important for this work. The Russian education he received and his acquaintance with the Russian intelligentsia had a very important impact on his worldview and thoughts. Chokan befriended some of them and shared their ideals. The second part discusses his three central works, expressing his views on Islam's role among the Kazaks and Russian colonization and its pluses and minuses for the future of the Kazaks.

The conclusion part offers some additional remarks on Chokan's thoughts, scholarly accomplishments and his instrumental role as a Kazak intellectual.

Following a comprehensive analysis of the period, nineteenth-century Russian politics and ideology, culture of the Kazak intellectuals embodied or did not embody in their printed words, can the historian understand the nature of the changes occurred then in the steppe. This work as a part of this analysis intends to shed light on those features of Chokan that were neglected previously.

## CHAPTER 1

### RUSSIAN COLINOZATION OF THE KAZAK STEPPES

The history of the Kazaks<sup>1</sup> of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was full of events of a fateful character. During 1731-1770, a significant part of the Kazak rulers officially recognized the supremacy of the Russian Empire that resulted in a loss of independence and in a process that transformed the Kazak lands into a Russian colony. From the first days of recognition of the Russian authority the Kazak people began a series of revolts to regain their former independence. Frequently such flashes of national discontent were due to various oppressions.

Colonization of the Kazak Steppes was a very long process. Having begun in the middle of eighteenth century and ended in the late sixties of the nineteenth century, it stretched to more than a hundred years. The colonization policies of the Russian administration in essence were the same as in other regions: the cooption of elites, the building of military outposts, the settlement of Cossacks and Russian peasants on the Kazak pasturelands, trade, setting Kazak, Bashkir, and Kalmyk peoples against each

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<sup>1</sup> In historiography before the 1920s all Kazaks of the Great (Ulu), Middle (Orta) and Little (Kışı) Hordes were referred to as "Kirghiz" or "Kirghiz - Kaisak", while the nomadic Kyrgyz peoples of present-day Kyrgyzstan were called "Kara-Kirghiz" [black Kirghiz] or "Dikokamennyi Kirghiz" [wild mountain Kirghiz]. Kazak [Qazaq] was a self-appellation not recognized by the Russian administration. In this work where "Kirghiz" is found in quotations or translation of official documents from the pre-Soviet period, reference is being made to Kazaks.

other,<sup>2</sup> and using the same alienation policy to create division among Kazak tribes and leaders.

Acceptance of Russian rule by Abulhayr<sup>3</sup> Khan in 1830s facilitated the drive of imperial Russia into the Kazak steppes<sup>4</sup>, but this drive in the Kazak steppes developed on a full scale only later.

The first governor of Orenburg, Ivan I. Neplyuev, directed over this offensive. On the military side, Neplyuev's action was to concentrate regular armed forces on the Yayik (later Ural) River. In addition to this, he constructed a fortified line of fortresses and redoubts connecting these fortresses. Such a line was constructed on Yayik River; there was also a fortified line along the Irtysh River, and together they constituted a continuous line, which effectively controlled the Kazak steppes from the west up to the east, thus creating jumping - off place for the future moves towards the steppe.<sup>5</sup> This unbroken line also controlled the adjacent regions of Ural, Siberia, and Altay; the continuous line of fortresses and advanced posts from a mouth of Ural up to Ust-Kamenogorskaya fortress, 3.5 thousand *versts*<sup>6</sup> in length and mostly inhabited by the Cossacks, came into life. With functioning of this line, the Kazak pasture territories were cut down by approximately 70 thousand sq. *versts*<sup>7, 8</sup>. The fortified line not only

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<sup>2</sup> For more see S. D. Asfendiiarov and P. A. Kunte, ed., *Proshloe Kazahstana v istochnikakh i materialakh* (Almaty: Qazaqstan Press, 1997), Vol. 1, pp. 319-320 (Hereafter cited as *Proshloe Kazahstana*).

<sup>3</sup> For transliteration of Kazak words Turkish alphabet will be used here with an addition of q letter for hard Kazak [k]. For sake of simplicity no distinction will be made in transliteration of several Kazak letters [u], [n], and [i]. As for transliteration of Russian words current Library of Congress conventions will be followed.

<sup>4</sup> For a good account of his acceptance and reasons behind see Allen Bodger, "Abulkhair, khan of the Kazak Little Horde and his oath of allegiance to Russian of October 1731," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 58, no. 7 (January 1980), pp. 40-57.

<sup>5</sup> For full list of fortresses and redoubts of Ural, Orenburg and Siberian lines see V. I. Lebedev and B. A. Badetskii, ed., *Materialy po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR* (Leningrad: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1940), vol. 4, p. 510-511.

<sup>6</sup> Old Russian unit of measurement equals to 1.0668 kilometers.

<sup>7</sup> Old Russian unit of measurement equals to 1.138 sq. kilometers.

constricted Kazak pastures, but also created a base for military "searches" in the steppe. Under Governor Neplyuev and his successors Kazaks were exposed to many such attacks. These military attacks were made under a pretext of punishing Kazaks who made *barımta*<sup>9</sup>. Usually Kazaks that attacked Russian settlements on the line, were unreachable for Tsarist troops. Deep intrusions into the steppe were still impossible up to the 1820s. However, the real purpose was not punishment, it was actually the capture of Kazak cattle pasturing near the line. Frequently such "attacks" were invented or greatly exaggerated by linear officials and officers to create a pretext for incursions into the steppe.

As a rule, the capture of a very large number of livestock, giving an opportunity to Russian officials to make a fortune, accompanied such attacks. Such attacks rendered huge material damage to the Kazaks and weakened the Kazak *auls*,<sup>10</sup> which had not yet fully recovered from the time of *Aqtaban Şubırındı* 1723-1727 (Great Retreat).<sup>11</sup>

One of the most effective means of colonization and strengthening of imperial administrative influence among Kazaks was using and coopting the ruling Kazak elites. The imperial government aimed to lean on the elites, and tied them to itself with expensive gifts, salaries, landholdings and military ranks. At the same time it prevented the ruling elites from becoming too strong, so that their need for and interest in support of tsarism would never disappear. This was achieved by exploiting and, when needed, igniting the internal rivalries among the ruling Kazak families. The imperial

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<sup>8</sup> K. S. Aldajumanov, M. H. Asylbekov and others, ed., *Istoriya Kazahstana* (Almaty: Atamura, 2000), Vol. 3, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> The Kazak word *barımta* means, "that which is due to me". It is defined as driving away of goods, usually livestock in revenge for caused damage, theft, murder, stealing of bride, insult etc. See Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), pp. 140-155.

<sup>10</sup> Aul is a nomadic encampment, consisted of a few related, extended families.

<sup>11</sup> The time when the Kalmyks attacked the Kazak Khanates in 1723. The Kazaks were caught unprepared and fled, leaving most of their property and livestock.

administration skillfully balanced between the Kazak khans and sultans, never enabling a single family or khan to become stronger than was desirable. Although all Kazak khans were successors of Canibek Khan (1460-1480), descendant of the elder son of Chingis Khan, Juchi Khan, the Kazak ruling clique was not a uniform group; it was composed of two genealogical branches, the senior and the junior. The seniors, who were descendants of Cadige Khan, the elder son of Canibek Khan, ruled over the Great and Middle Horde. The juniors, who were descendants of the younger son, Osek Khan, ruled over the Little Horde. Abulhayr Khan was from the junior branch and this did not give him a chance of supremacy over all Kazaks. Therefore, for a majority of them, he was an upstart. From here came his domestic difficulties, which was one of the main reasons for his acceptance of Russian rule. He and the sultans who supported him desperately needed powerful support to counterbalance to the descendants of Cadige Khan.

The Russian colonization of the Kazak Steppe began with the seizure of the best grazing lands soon after the annexation of the Little Horde in 1730s. The seizure was “facilitated” by the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazaks, who had neither fixed borders nor a well-organized army capable of rendering resistance. The colonization of the Kazak lands by Russians can be divided into two main periods: colonization by “individual” (*samovolnoe*) colonizers, and official colonization by governmental authorities after them. “Individual” colonization was done by the Cossacks, peasants, criminals, sectarians and others, who fled to the steppe to escape punishment or the difficult conditions of those times, or for the sake of an opportunity to exploit naive *inorodets*. Colonization of the Ural River region began earlier. However, colonization of the Irtysh River region was completed faster, due to the rich natural resources. The governmental

colonization followed “individual” colonization and, so to speak, legitimized it; in some cases officials simply needed to recognize a known parcel of land as Russian, because it had already been seized by “individual” colonizers. “Individual” and governmental colonization were two sides of the same coin. The empire was interested in “individual” colonization. Firstly, it was a forward force and an important basis for the further successful colonization; secondly, it contributed to solving Russia’s own internal problems.

### **The Colonial Apparatus and Its Evolution**

The emergence and development of the Russian civil and military administration system in the Kazak Hordes had its local territorial features. First, they were tailored to suit the special features of the local economy and a traditional way of life. In the Kazak steppes nomadic and half-nomadic ways of life prevailed. The special nature of the administrative arrangement was also caused by the long period of incorporation into the empire. The Kazak Hordes, being included in the structure of Russia, initially kept many elements of sovereignty: there was a vertical type of the traditional government - khan authority, institute of sultans, system of *aqsaqal*,<sup>12</sup> court of *biys*<sup>13</sup> and nomadic *aul* community. Khans supervised (though with restrictions) foreign policy issues, had their own armies and during periods of military danger could gather a militia.

Forms of administration changed continuously during the whole period of Russian colonization. Introduction of the Russian administrative system in various modifications

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<sup>12</sup> *Aqsaqal* literally “white beard”, means respected elder, *aul* leader.

<sup>13</sup> *Biy* is a nomadic judge, clan leader.

during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the certain measure depended on the experience gained in the previously seized territories, mainly in the Volga region, Siberia and in Caucasus.

The administrative structure of the Kazak Steppe and Central Asia traditionally included both eastern (local), and European elements, as in the governing of indigenous population and newcomers. Taken as a whole, this system was rather complex. No single system of Russian administration existed for the entire Kazak territory, or even for the smaller administrative areas. Generally Kazaks were divided into two: Orenburg Kirghizs, which were Kazaks of the Little Horde, second, Siberian Kirghizs, which were Kazaks of the Middle Horde and later for a short period Kazaks of the Great Horde.

The Cossacks were the driving force in colonization of the Kazak Steppe, participating in suppression of local revolts, and serving as the main support and protection of the colonial apparatus in the region. Out of eleven Tsarist Cossack Hosts,<sup>14</sup> four participated in the colonization of the Kazak steppe. The Cossacks formed settlements and fortresses in strategic locations (along rivers or on lakeshores) within the steppe, and these settlements became the administrative centers for the “outer” *okrugs* of the steppe as they were formed.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, it is necessary to note that the Cossack population, as well as Russian peasant settlers, having taken over the Kazak lands, brutally sped up the process of settlement and economic development among the Kazaks.

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<sup>14</sup> Considered as integral parts of the regular Russian army, the Cossack hosts in the Russian Empire were bodies of compulsory service with their own equipment and weaponry. They consisted of two contingents: a constant service contingent (*shujilyi*) and a militia, called upon during extreme circumstances.

<sup>15</sup> S. G. Agadjanov and V. V. Trepavlov, ed., *Natsionalnye okrainy Rossiiskoi Imperii: Stanovlenie i razvitie sistemy upravleniya* (Moscow: Slavyanskii Dialog, 1998), pp. 310-311 (Hereafter cited as *Natsionalnye okrainy*).

The greatest credit for the radical reorganization of the whole system of political-administrative management in Siberia must go to Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii, the renowned reform-minded bureaucrat of the early nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> As of July 1822, two decrees, “the Charter (*Ustav*) concerning the Siberian nomadic *inorodets*” and “the Charter concerning the Siberian Kirghizs”, were in power. In Siberia, two central administrative boards, Western and Eastern, were created, the management of which was entrusted to the governor - general. The residence of one was in Tobolsk, and the other in Irkutsk. Management of the provinces entrusted to them was conducted temporarily under the special order of 1803, but management of separate areas, including the “territories of the Siberian Kirghizs”, was based on the statute accepted in 1822.<sup>17</sup>

On January 31, 1824, the Asian Committee ratified the change of administration in the Little Horde. After the reforms the Special Border Administration, which included three branches, was created: the Orenburg Asian Board and two executives subordinated to it: linear and steppe. The steppe executive "supervised" the Little Kazak Horde.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Governor-general of Siberia (1819-1821). For more on him see Marc Raeff, *Michael Speransky: Statesman of Imperial Russia 1772-1839* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> S. Z. Zimanov, *Politicheskii stroi Kazahstana kontsa XVIII i pervoi poloviny XIX veka* (Almaty, 1960), pp. 144-147.

<sup>18</sup> A. V. Remnev, *Samoderzhavie i Sibir. Administrativnaya politika v pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Omsk, 1995), pp. 79-85

## The Little Horde in the Structure of Orenburg “*Oblast* of the Kirghizs”

The first instance of the introduction of political-administrative division on the territories of the Little Horde dates to the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Orenburg general – governor baron Osip A. Igelstrom decided to take advantage of a crisis of authority among the khans of the Little Horde and in 1786 changed administration of the Little Horde. His aim was to extend proper Russian administrative establishments to the Western part of the Kazak steppe, and by that liquidate khan power in the Little Horde. Therefore, in Orenburg the Boundary Court, where the representatives of Kazak elites and imperial administration gathered, was created. In 1787, the Little Horde was divided into three parts or administrative units, each headed by an administrative body: a special district court (*rasprava*<sup>19</sup>) consisting of six persons, including both officials sent from Orenburg and appointed Kazak elders.<sup>20</sup>

However soon it became clear that these administrative bodies proved impractical. The courts (*rasprava*) never actually gathered. The actual authority still was in the hands of khans, sultans and tribal chieftains.<sup>21</sup> The reform encountered active resistance from the Kazak aristocracy, which considered in it a threat to its authority. In June 1804 the courts were revoked in the Little Horde.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The name of court in Russian Empire in 1775-96 for the state peasants. The lower ones (in districts) solved small criminal and civil cases; in the higher ones (in provinces), these decisions were appealed.

<sup>20</sup> T. T. Dalaeva, “Politicheskie novovvedeniya v Kazahskikh stepyah Orenburgskogo Vedomostva v 80 - 90-e gody XVIII veka”, *Vestnik KazNU*, seriya istorii, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2003), pp. 81-82.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>22</sup> *Istoriya Kazahstana*, Vol. 3, pp. 229-230.

In 1822, the Orenburg governor - general Petr K. Essen set forth “the Charter concerning the Orenburg Kirghizs”<sup>23</sup>. With the new reorganization the khan authority was actually liquidated in the Little Horde, since all officials in the Little Horde from *aul* leader up to the sultan - governor were now appointed by the military governor of Orenburg. Also, from the viewpoint of the tsarist officials, separating the Little Horde into three parts would be more convenient for counting the population, collecting taxes and allocating of seasonal migration routes.<sup>24</sup> In 1842, the Little Horde received the status of an inner province of Russia.

### **The Bokey Horde**

In 1801 several Kazak tribes of the Little Horde, at the decree of Emperor Paul I, went to the lower reaches of the Ural and Volga Rivers and formed the Bokey (named after the first khan Bokey) or Inner Horde. The imperial government’s purpose was to make a horde an “exemplary” part of the Kazak steppe in sense of management and colonial trusteeship benevolence. This was easy to achieve because the Bokey Horde was compact and easy to control, surrounded by regular army forces or by the Cossacks.

The Bokey Horde was largely dependent on the imperial government and was under its tight control, and as time passed this situation only amplified. The Khan was supported on the one hand by tribal leaders and *biys*, and on the other hand by a Russian

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<sup>23</sup> According to this new project, the Little Horde was to be divided into three parts, without paying attention to the migration routes of the Kazak tribes. Each of three parts was headed by the sultan - governor, or the senior sultan, to be chosen from successors of Abulhayr Khan. N. Musabekova, “Problemy territorialnyh otnoshenii i zemlepolzovaniya v Zapadnom Kazahstane s vvedeniem Ustava 1824 goda”, *Vestnik KazNU*, seriya istorii, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2003), p. 77.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

armed squad. The Khan enjoyed a significant freedom in the affairs of internal administration. The administrative, legislative and judicial authority was concentrated in his hands. He allocated land for seasonal migrations and winterings to tribes and branches, transferred land lots to the Kazak elites' ownership, exempted separate categories of elites from carrying out the common duties and payment of state taxes, and dealt with court proceedings.<sup>25</sup>

During the reign of Jangir Khan (1824-1845) this system of management was replaced with the Russian bureaucratic system. Now tribal leaders were more often appointed by the tsarist administration. Thus, innovations began to take root in the traditional Kazak society. The number of private landowners considerably increased. The Khan himself was the largest of them. He encouraged the permanent settlement of the Kazaks (he himself constructed the first permanent center of khan administration), the erection of huts, the opening of *mektebs* and mosques, and trade activities. He hired Tatar *mollas* to serve in the Kazak *auls*. The first schools on the European model were built in the Kazak Steppe during his reign.<sup>26</sup> The former institute of tribal leadership and *biys* was transformed into a bureaucratically organized apparatus of management under the centralized authority.<sup>27</sup>

Cangir Khan died in 1845. By this time the khan authority had been abolished in all parts of the Kazak steppes, and the government decided not to appoint a new khan. The running of the horde passed to the Temporary Council led by the Russian officials.

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<sup>25</sup> *Natsionalnye okrainy*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>26</sup> *Istoriya Kazahstana*, Vol. 3, pp. 238-240.

<sup>27</sup> All these innovations did not meet approval from Kazak peoples. These grievances resulted in the revolt under the leadership of Isatay Taymanuli and Mahambet Otemisuli, one of the largest revolts of Kazak people during the period of Russian domination. This revolt was largely based on protection of interests of a traditional Kazak social system. For more on this revolt see V. F. Shakhmatov, *Vnutrennyaya orda i vosstanie Isataya Taimanova* (Almaty, 1946).

## **The Middle Kazak Horde in the structure of Siberia**

Russian colonization of the territories where the tribes of the Middle Horde lived started in the eighteenth century with erection of the line of forts and redoubts along the Irtysh River operated by the Cossacks.

Although many rulers of the Middle Horde accepted the Russian protectorate in the 1730-1740s, their submission remained nominal. Only with the death of the two khans of the Middle Horde in 1819 and 1821, was Russia able to liquidate the khan authority and carry out the administrative reforms that deprived the Kazaks of sovereignty and made the Middle Horde a proper Russian colony.

Development of the new form of governance in the region was entrusted to M. Speranskii as a part of reforming the administration of Siberia.<sup>28</sup> The basis of his reform were the legislative acts, which were intended to approximate the local management system to the Russian provincial type.

On 22 June 1822, Alexander I ratified ten legislative acts: "Establishments for the Siberian provinces", the "Charter concerning management of *inorodets*", the "Charter concerning management of the Kirghiz – Kaisaks", the "Charter concerning Siberian Kirghizs", etc.<sup>29</sup> According to the new legislation the Middle Horde territory was

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<sup>28</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), pp. 157-158.

<sup>29</sup> A. V. Remnev, p. 79; For the full text of these statutes see *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 1<sup>st</sup> series (Saint Petersburg, 1830), Vol. 38, pp. 342-565.

incorporated into the Omsk *oblast*.<sup>30</sup> Now it was called the “Oblast of the Siberian Kirghizs”, divided into internal and external (located beyond the Irtysh) districts<sup>31 32</sup>

A new order of governance of district divisions and new posts were founded to rule the administrative units: the “*aul* elders” (*starshiny*) for *auls*, the *volost* sultans for the *volosts*, and the senior sultans (*aga* sultan) for the districts (*okrug*).<sup>33</sup>

An elective system was established in the steppe for the first time. The senior sultans and the *volost* sultans were selected only from the Chingisids and only by them.<sup>34</sup> Although sultans were selected from among the Chingisids, the right to appoint them to a post was in the hands of governor-general of Siberia, moreover each sultan was controlled by two Russian officials attached to him.<sup>35</sup>

As a man who believed in the civilizing power of Europeanized Russian culture, Speranskii saw Russification as the key to a better life for the Kazaks. To transform these onetime nomads and herders, “stepchildren of the Empire”, into civilized settled farmers, became one of his main aims.<sup>36</sup> He therefore offered the Kazaks greater access to education and economic opportunities.<sup>37</sup> Kazaks were given permission to trade without any restrictions inside and outside of their districts, even in inner regions of Russia. New Russo-Kazak schools were opened, although they served mainly to prepare translators (*tolmach*) and low-lever clerks (*pisar*) for the local colonial apparatus. As a measure to encourage agriculture among the Kazaks, the Siberian administration allocated land lots to Kazaks who adopted the settled way of life. The most important

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Districts were composed of *volosts* and *auls*. Districts consisted from 15 up to 20 *volosts*, *volosts* - from 10 up to 12 *auls*, *auls* - from 50 up to 70 tilt carts

<sup>32</sup> *Istoriya Kazahstana*, Vol. 3, p. 299.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>35</sup> *Natsionalnye okrainy*, p. 325.

<sup>36</sup> Lincoln, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> Raeff, p. 255.

result of all these reforms was that now for ordinary Kazaks the Chingisids were not the only rulers in the steppe. The *Aq Patşa* (white tsar) was now above all khans and sultans, and Kazaks now had the right to complain about their former rulers to the Russian authorities.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1830-1850s with the acceptance of a series of new legal acts, the imperial government aspired to achieve greater centralization of authority and strengthening of control over the local administration.<sup>39</sup> With these reforms the imperial government incorporated tribal chieftains into the structure of the local administration. Thus, it started to liquidate the privileges of the descendants of the Kazak khans

After the introduction of all these charters, the Chingisid sultans started to lose their importance and authority among the Kazaks. From then on they were representing not themselves, but rather Russian colonial rule; they were collecting taxes on behalf of Russians, sometimes using this power excessively. A Cossack squad with an officer was attached to every senior sultan; the sultans very often used these squads to punish disobedient Kazaks, and these punitive raids caused serious harm to *auls'* economies. Soviet historian Bekmahanov cites several archival documents to illustrate the unpopularity of sultan-rulers (rulers of districts and *volosts*) and claims that "Although the sultan-rulers had Russian support they did not have outstanding significance... The rebellious Kazaks did not respect the sultans' authority, moreover they were simply

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<sup>38</sup> The new policy of tsarism met fierce opposition from aristocracy and ordinary people. All discontents were poured out into the revolt under Kenesary Kasimuli, which was the most significant in the history of the Kazak emancipating movement. The revolt that lasted for ten years (1835-1845) progressively spreaded to all three Kazak Hordes. On this revolt see, E. T. Smirnov, *Sultany Kenisara i Sadyk* (Tashkent, 1889); A. Kenesarin, *Kenesary i Sadyk. Khan Kenesary* (Uralsk, 1992) and E. Bekmahanov, *Kazakhstan v 20 – 40 gody XIX veka* (Alma-Ata, 1947).

<sup>39</sup> For more see N. E. Bekmahanova, "Zakonopolozheniya tsarskogo pravitelstva v 30-50kh godakh XIX v. v Srednem Kazahskom Zhuze", *Istoriya*, No.1 (1970), pp. 22-29.

killing them..."<sup>40</sup> Illegal requisitions from the population became usual practice among sultans. In addition, some individuals of non-Chingisid origin started to be illegally selected for the position of sultan. Thus the *biys* and the tribal chieftains were now the only Kazaks who possessed some sort of real authority in the Kazak nomadic society.<sup>41</sup>

What was left of the authority and privileges of the Chingisid sultans was consistently annulled by a series of successive acts and legislation. In 1861, the imperial government incorporated ordinary Kazaks who had received officers' ranks or other signs of merit into the structure of local administration.

### **The Results of Russian Colonization**

The Russian takeover of the Kazak steppes had a very profound effect on all aspects of Kazak life. The middle of nineteenth century was a very hard time for the Kazaks. This was reflected in the examples of the oral literature of that period, the main theme of which were the desperate situation of the Kazaks, Russian plunder, etc. The nomadic Kazaks lost their best grazing ground as a result of the Cossack and Slavic peasant resettlement. Initially, the seizure of Kazak lands was an individual practice of the Cossacks and their officers, which was overlooked if not outright approved by the imperial administration. Later it became the official policy, legitimized by a decree that which announced that the Kazak lands were the property of the Russian state and were *temporarily* granted to the Kazaks' usage. The Kazaks who had lost their pasturelands began in despair to take up agriculture, fishing, and other such occupations.

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<sup>40</sup> Bekmahanov, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> Zimanov, p. 172.

During the colonization process the Russian government extensively cooperated with; and utilized the traditional authority of, the Chingisid khans and sultans. Initially the Russians hardly interfered with their authority at all. This is not to say that they were genuinely favored by the Russian rule, but rather that they were indispensable until a proper Russian administration could be established. To make the khans and sultans more controllable and loyal, they were gradually deprived of their ruling rights and exposed to assimilation through education, awards of Russian military ranks, salaries, and medals, and the like. Eventually the khans' authority was totally liquidated, since as long as it existed it preserved to some extent the trappings of the lost independence of the Kazaks. Of course, this angered some of the Chingisids, who then tried to defend their authority and sovereignty. In due course, when the Russian government incorporated the tribal chieftains and ordinary Kazaks into the districts' administrations, the Chingisids became more and more dependent on the Russians, gave up their hopes to live as their predecessors had, and began to be coopted into the Russian aristocracy, to the point that they were sufficiently Russified, and incorporated into the Russian bureaucracy and military ranks.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the imperial government started to open the so-called "Asiatic Schools" (*Aziatskoe Uchilishche*). The aim of these schools was to prepare translators in order to establish communication with the natives of the region. Military schools were also opened in Orenburg and Omsk. The curriculum of these schools was designed to train people for administrative work. They were modeled on the Cadet Corps of Russia proper, the aim of which was to offer a service career to

the lower ranks of noblemen.<sup>42</sup> In 1846, one of these schools, the Siberian Cossack War School, was transformed into the Omsk Cadet Corps. Only children of the Kazak upper class were admitted to this institute of higher education. One of its earliest graduates, and certainly the most renowned one, was Chokan Valikhanov (Kazak form, Şoqan Valihan). He was the most outstanding example of the Kazak intellectuals educated by Russians in the European style, one of the first pleiad of Kazak intellectuals who were most responsible for modernizing Kazak society and at the same time reviving interest in their native history, culture and language. He was the opposite of the traditional Kazak men of letters, representatives of a literary style known as *Zar Zaman* (time of grievance or sorrow). These men were educated in Bukhara and Samarkand *medreses* and propagated the idea of a return to true Islam and traditional beliefs, and to come under the authority of the Khokand Khanate rather than that of Russian Empire in order to ease the heavy burden of the Russian colonialism.

Another important phenomenon among the Kazaks during the nineteenth century was the dramatic change in nature of Islam. The Russians were now also participating in and influencing the Islamization process by controlling the Tatar *mollas*. On the other hand, as a result of the confrontation with the Russians, Islam was now much more significant for the Kazaks as means of maintaining their survival and identity. Previously the role of Islam as the common denominator was not so important since the Kazaks had used kinship, based on tribe – clan genealogy connected with attachment to a certain territory, as the basis defining their identity. Islam was the link that connected Kazaks to other Muslim communities, so that the Kazaks perceived themselves as

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<sup>42</sup> A. Deniz Balgamiş, "The Origins and Development of Kazak Intellectual Elites in the Pre-Revolutionary Period", Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000), p. 95.

belonging to a large group of Muslims. This became more important when the Kazak nomads came into contact with the Russians.

Together with tribal affiliation, Islam, over the centuries, became one of the core elements of the Kazak identity. Understanding the importance and persistence of folk Islam among the Kazaks is essential to comprehending the Kazak identity. As a result of their nomadic lifestyle and the fact that they never lived under the authority of a fully institutionalized Muslim state (the Kazaks did not have a professional religious elite and developed institutions of religious learning until the late nineteenth century), the Kazaks developed a distinct variety of folk Islam essentially adapted to their lifestyle. This folk Islam was to a certain degree combined with previous shamanistic - tribal customs and religious practices. However unusual it seemed to the outsiders or orthodox Muslims, even to the neighboring Uzbeks, this folk Islam turned out to be the part of the Kazak identity that surpassed tribal identity in connecting the Kazaks to the rest of Muslim world.

## CHAPTER 2

### KAZAK UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF ISLAM

The aim here is to talk about the Kazak understanding and practice of Islam, and how the Kazaks or Central Asian nomads in general came to “create” their own kind of “folk Islam”. As Kemal Karpat explains, this variety “is found predominantly among nomads, whose contact with the established Islamic centers was superficial: here the dogmas of the faith were therefore known to only a very few select members of the group. This latter type of folk Islam incorporates much from the old religious belief, predating Islam, and is manifested in a variety of apocryphal stories, mythological tales, and legends.”<sup>43</sup>

The research and study of Islam among the Central Asian Turks, especially the nomad Kazaks, is in its infancy. First, there is a lack of substantial and serious studies of Islamization in Central Asia, and second, there is misunderstanding of the process of conversion of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia. As a result of this situation, a continuous litany of uncritically accepted statements emerged on Islamization in Central Asia, with a standard argument: Islam “slightly park itself” among the Central Asian nomads - their “conversion” was superficial and failed to have any serious impact on

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<sup>43</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “The Roots of Kazakh Nationalism: Ethnicity, Islam or Land?”, *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* (1992), pp. 314-315.

their lives, consciousness or identity. Such a view is obviously defective, due to a remarkable misunderstanding of both the nature of Islam and the pre-Islamic indigenous religion and its concepts. Soviet scholarship has added its own misunderstandings to this issue. Due to the Soviet “nationalist” ideology that existed in each of the Central Asian republics, local scholarship due to the ideological reasons has largely dismissed or underestimated or intentionally ignored the Islamic component of their “national” culture. Instead, they made apparent and stressed the specifically “Turkic” component, such as Kazakness or Uzbekness, of the civilization of which they were the current bearers. These practices still affect the post-Soviet scholars of Central Asia.

Western and Soviet scholars had used accounts and surveys from the eighteenth and nineteenth century researchers-travelers to Central Asia to illustrate and prove the “superficiality of Islam” among nomads. However, these travelers were themselves handicapped by their misunderstandings of the specific native form of Islam and pre-Islamic native religion in the region. For them, proper Islam meant regular mosques, the performance of *namaz* (salat) five times per day, attire similar to the Arabic style, etc. Thus, when these travelers did not encounter the generally accepted symbols and traditions of Islam or what they knew about Arabic states, or when they encountered native practices and traditions which were not in line with those of theirs, they usually reached the judgment that the Central Asian nomads were still “pagans” and were Muslims in name only. (For example, nomadic women participated more and were more in everyday life than, say, their, Arabic or urban counterparts). In addition, these researchers exaggerated the role of so-called “shaman” (or more properly, the *baqsi*) among the Central Asian nomads. They overlooked the fact that the *baqsi*’s specialist services were called upon primarily in times of individual crisis, such as illness or

collective imbalances. Moreover, the vast realm of people's ordinary religious lives that did not involve shamans was ignored or neglected. The Central Asian nomad's religious life is much richer and diverse than the terminology of shamanism can describe. Fortunately, there exist several more objective accounts of Islam among the Kazaks. Wilhelm Radloff, when writing about the effect of Islam on the Kazaks, claimed in 1884 that: "Despite the fact that the Kazaks were nomads, different from shamanic Altay peoples, the fact that their life is more cultural is solely due to Islam. Their clothes, neatness in their homes, cleanness, perfect family relations, higher morality, of course, are certain results of Islam. Several centuries have passed since the Kazaks accepted Islam. Just looking at the fact that there are some shamanistic leftovers among the Kazaks, it would be wrong to assume that they became Muslim only now. The reason that Kazaks' Islam is rather different from others is only because of their different lifestyle."<sup>44</sup>

Since the Kazaks are the true representatives of Central Asian nomadic culture, it has been commonly said that the Islamic influence among them was limited, and that they were converted recently. In addition, it has been commonly accepted that the mass Islamization of the Kazaks was done mainly by the Tatar *mollas* during the period of the Russian domination under the official supervision of the Russian government. This view is a misinterpretation that does not adequately explain the true Kazak association with Islam.<sup>45</sup>

Islamization in Central Asia was a long process that started with the Arabic conquest of the sedentary city-states of Central Asia. This process continued with the

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<sup>44</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili (Türkistan) ve Yakın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Enderun Yayınları, 1981), p. 534.

<sup>45</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, pp. 313-333, p. 314.

conversion of the entire Transoxania into one of the major centers of Islamic civilization, and the subsequent penetration of Islam into the nomadic regions of Central Asia. Of great importance in the Islamization of the region was the fact that the Seljuk Turks had during their presence in Turkestan already become fanatical adherents of Islam and the Hanafid School, the domineering *mezheb*<sup>46</sup> in the region.<sup>47</sup> The Karakhanids' "imperial" conversion strengthened the position of Islam in the region. The spread of Islam was temporarily halted by the Mongol invasion. The Mongol conquest at first dealt a number of serious blows to the position of Islam in Central Asia. The Islamic Bulghar state on the upper banks of the Itil (Volga) River and the powerful Khorezmian Empire were destroyed, thereby temporarily removing the growing cultural and religious ties between the Turkic nomads of the Desht-Kipchak and the urban Islamic civilization of Central Asia.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Islam rose soon, and this time even more dynamically, in the western part of Chingisid Empire in 1257 when Berke Khan, the Khan of the Golden Horde, became a Muslim, the first Chingisid monarch to rule as a Muslim. It is difficult to judge the extent of "genuine" adoption of Islam in Berke's period, but Arabic sources report that Berke's *amirs* had converted to Islam, with each maintaining a *muezzin* and *imam* in his service, accompanied by a portable tent-mosque.<sup>49</sup> Within a century of its appearance, the Golden Horde became definitely and consciously an Islamic Empire. Thus, Central Asia was "re-Islamized" from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, in the late Chingisid and early Timurid era. Islamization on the individual scale continued among the peoples of the steppe and forest zones of

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<sup>46</sup> The most widespread one of the four schools, sects of Sunnite Islam. The fundamental sources of it are the Koran, the Sunna, then coordinated decisions of Muslim law scientists and Judgment by analogy with what is present in the Koran and the Sunna.

<sup>47</sup> T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Darf Publishers Limited, 1986), p. 216.

<sup>48</sup> Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 82

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Western Siberia, even during the Russian imperial rule, a process continuing down to the early twentieth century and involving not only Turkic peoples, but also Finno-Ugric groups.

Usually, a thorough conversion of any people to a new religion lasts for years, if not centuries. No newly accepted religion is free from the leftovers of the previous religion(s). One way or another, previous traditions and faiths which conformed to the law of the new religion make the conversion easier to undergo. Conversion to Islam or Islamization was in reality a dual process that unavoidably operated in two different directions: “on the one hand the introduction of Islamic patterns into Central Asia involves the imposition of Islamic norms in a new setting, an alien environment; on the other hand, nativization of Islamic patterns involves their incorporation and assimilation into indigenous modes of thought and action.”<sup>50</sup> It can be said that Islam did matter in the region, and in a fundamental way that was transformative both for the traditions and faiths of the nomads and for Islam itself, which was characteristically attuned to the pre-Islamic traditions.

The Hanafi *mezheb* of the Sunnite Islam contributed to the successful spreading of Islam among nomads. This rite was relatively more tolerant towards non-believers and dissidents, and utilized, in an adapted fashion, local common law (orf, adat) and traditions. Although Islam included many elements in the spheres of ideology, culture, law, and morale absent in the traditional life and culture of nomads, due to its tolerant nature the Hanafi *mezheb* was “willingly” accepted by nomads, keeping ancient customs relatively unchanged.

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<sup>50</sup> DeWeese, p. 51.

The specific approach within the Islamic tradition is the sanctioned existence of the new “superficial” converters as was the case in certain parts of Central Asia. When Abu Hanifa (699-767) was asked about “the status of a Muslim in the territory of polytheism who affirms Islam as a whole but does not know or affirm the Koran or any of the religious duties of Islam,” he affirmed that such person could still be counted as a “believer” (*mūmin*). The dominant theological school in Central Asia, that is the Samarkand school of Hanafism, at the time of the conversion of the Turks no doubt intentionally “misread” part of this passage, turning “in the territory of polytheism” (*fi ard al-shirk*) into “in the territory of the Turks” (*fi ard al-Turk*).<sup>51</sup> Therefore, with a “slight graphical change” of letters, Abu Hanifa’s judgment was readily applied to the situation of Islam in the territory of the Turks at the time of their early conversions. In this way a nomad Turk who knew little about the depth and details of Islamic law and rituals might well be considered as a full member of the Muslim community.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the most “tolerant” school of Sunnite Islam did play the major role in the conversion of the Turks, becoming the generally accepted *mezheb* in Central Asia.

The pastoral nomads of Central Asia generated their own folk version of Islam, most probably in the tenth century. In addition to the foreign Muslim missionaries and traders the main agents of conversion to Islam among the nomads were those who represented the pre-Islamic religion and oral literary traditions; sometimes it was very hard to distinguish them from the former. The almost complete nonexistence of literacy among the nomads made oral literature the sole mode of communication among the nomads, thus making the *baqsi* simultaneously a religious and a literary man.

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<sup>51</sup> Wilferd Madelung, “The Spread of Maturidism and the Turks” in Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), pp. 109-168, p. 122

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

The most important religious focus in the nomad' lives was spirits of their ancestors. Ancestors were regarded as protectors and promoters of family and community well-being. So they were a central focus of the most common and most sacred religious practices among nomads; religious life was not a recourse to shaman or the worship of some deity, but was manifested by showing respect and giving periodic offerings to the ancestral spirits in their various forms, and asking them to preserve the health and continuity of the family and community.<sup>53</sup>

The new native preachers of Islam, bards and *baqsıs* who accepted Islam, preached the basic doctrines of Islam among the nomads using the native oral literature, thus making the new religion more acceptable; sometimes the nomads did not even realize that their faith had changed. The native preachers masterfully combined the fundamental Islamic principles with their own native knowledge and traditions, and preached in a language understood by the common people. The consequent folk religion was comprised of the major Islamic tenets expressed in the native language and with motifs derived from the native culture and forms of expression.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Turkic nomad who became a Muslim was very much attached to his new faith and became a member of a new community of believers. However, many tribal rituals and customs were also preserved, either intact or with a change of name or details.<sup>55</sup> The new faith, consisting of shamanistic and Islamic traditions, was practiced in a manner in which it was hard to separate one from the other. The nomadic Turk's new identification was a Muslim one; Islam became inseparable from the native culture. Even though the Turks were insufficiently aware of Islamic law and rituals, they acquired a new Islamic

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<sup>53</sup> DeWeese, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> Karpat, p. 315.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

identity and stubbornly insisted that they were good Muslims. The world was now seen to them divided into two parts: believers and nonbelievers.

These native Moslem bards and *baqsıs* laid the groundwork for the successful spread of the Yasaviya religious order of dervishes. This Sufi order was established in the twelfth century by Sheikh Ahmet Yesevi (d. 1166), the student of Sheikh Yusuf Hemedani.<sup>56</sup> Ahmet Yesevi himself was a disciple of another very important Sufi sheikh, Arslan Baba,<sup>57</sup> who was believed to be a descendant of Ali the Caliph. Arslan Baba lived and preached mainly among the nomadic Turks of the Syr Darya basin, the area that was to become the foundation of the Kazak Khanate in the sixteenth century. His tomb is located near the city of Turkestan (Yesi) and it has been a major shrine of pilgrimage for contemporary Kazaks and other Turkestan Muslims second only to the mausoleum of *Hoca* Ahmet Yesevi. It can be said that at the time when Ahmet Yesevi was born, Sufism had already taken strong roots among the settled Turkic population of Transoxania, and to some extent among the nomadic Turkic population, since there were dervishes named *ata* or *baba* in Fergana, Samarkand, and Bukhara, who replaced the previous bards and praised Allah in their ballads.<sup>58</sup> After Ahmet Yesevi was educated in a Bukharan medrese, he returned to Yesi (now Turkestan) and preached Islam among the nomadic Turks. He died and was buried in Yesi, where, Timur later ordered the building of a mausoleum to commemorate him.<sup>59</sup> The mausoleum still stands and is considered to be a sacrosanct shrine throughout the Turkic world. Especially for the

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<sup>56</sup> Fuad Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1966), p. 59-60; Muhammetrahim Carmuhammetulı, *Hoca Ahmet Yesevi ve Türkistan* (Ankara: Yeni Avrasya Yayınları, 2001), p. 26

<sup>57</sup> Name *bab* or *baba* was given by Central Asian Turks to their sheikhs of those who preached Islam.

<sup>58</sup> Köprülü, p. 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> There is a legend that Timur built the tomb so that common people forgave him for atrocities done on his way to power. And people forgave him, Timur lived in memories as the one who erected the Hoca Ahmet Yesevi mausoleum

Kazaks, it is something of a place of pilgrimage; visiting the tomb thrice is considered as sacred as traveling on Hajj to Mecca once.<sup>60</sup>

The first feature of Yesevi Sufism was its national character or reference to the Turkic population. This implies its second feature: distribution in the Turkic language. Yesevi, for the first time in the Islamic world, used the Turkic language during *zikr*,<sup>61</sup> though the main rituals of Islam, such as the *namaz*, were performed, as before, in Arabic. Yesevi in fact preferred to address the native people in their native language. Thus, his version of Islam, which was especially adapted to the lifestyle and beliefs of the nomadic Turks, guaranteed the popularity of the Yasaviya order in Turkestan. To the nomadic Turks who could not read Arabic, and even to those who were able to read by rote but could not understand, *Divan-i Hikmet* was the most important literary work for learning the basic tenets of Islam. With Yesevi's *Divan-i Hikmet*, the Turkic literary language and philosophical terminology begins. In many examples of the Kazak oral literature up to twentieth century, especially those that pertained to religion, the effect of *Divan-i Hikmet* can be clearly seen.<sup>62</sup> Another feature of the Yasaviya order distinguishing it in a significant way from orthodox Islam was participation of women in *zikr*; women were performing religious rites on an equal basis with men. This drew an extremely negative reaction from the Islamic clerics of Khorasan and Maverannehr. They accused Yesevi of immorality and perversion, but Yesevi convincingly proved the

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<sup>60</sup> The most prominent Kazak khans were buried in this mausoleum. The richest Kazaks bought a parcel of land near the mausoleum to be buried there in the future, even if they died in winter bodies were wrapped in felt, and stored to be buried near the mausoleum. The site of the mausoleum became a place for praying of all unhappy, destitute and childless Kazak women. Animals were sacrificed to honor the spirit of Yesevi. Köprülü, p. 70-71.

<sup>61</sup> *Zikr* or the remembrance is the essential and foundational practice of a Sufism. This practice consists of simply remembering Allah, usually by repetition of Allah's names or qualities, in group or alone.

<sup>62</sup> Carmuhammetulı, p. 97-98.

acceptability of the joint *zikir*.<sup>63</sup> The fourth feature of the Yasaviya order was the wide use of music in the *zikrs*. This loud musical *zikir*, with its ritual dances, very much resembled the old shamanistic rituals.

The wanderers, missionaries, and preachers, called *baba*, spread the doctrine of the Yasaviya order in Central Asia among Kazaks, Turkmen and Kirghiz, in the Volga basin, in Khorasan, in Azerbaijan, and in Asia Minor. The Sufi sheikhs of Central Asia also played important roles in the acceptance of Islam by the Golden Horde khans.<sup>64</sup> It was the first Turkic order that spread only among the Turks. A group of *tarikats* appeared after it. Yesevi determined a national channel of development in the Islamic civilization of Turks. It was important to connect the new religious ideology with the consciousness of the nomadic masses. Yesevi's movement, which borrowed numerous elements from "shamanism", played an outstanding role in this process: transforming faith in *Tanrı* into the monotheistic culture of Islam, and animistic beliefs into adoration of the Islamic saints and other, pre-Islamic persons, who were now considered as Islamic saints. The basic Islamic rituals entered into almost all spheres of the Kazaks' everyday life. From the birth of a child, to name-giving, circumcision, marriage, and death all traditions took an Islamic form. As archeological excavations have testified, the Kazaks started to bury their dead according to Islamic rituals in the fourteenth century; the personal belongings of dead man were not put in his tomb, his head was turned to the west, and the structure of a tomb itself was Islamic one.<sup>65</sup> All family ceremonies were shaped according to Islam. The most significant of them was - *Bata*

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<sup>63</sup> Köprülü, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> V. V. Barthold, *Orta Asya Türk Tarihi Hakkında Dersler* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1975), pp. 241-242.

<sup>65</sup> V. N. Basilov, J. H. Karamysheva, *Islam u kazakhov* (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 1997), p. 10.

(blessing before the important business or departure). *Bata* was accompanied by the reading of a sura from the Koran or a fragment from the *Divan-i Hikmet*, or some religious verse.

This "Turkic Islam" found a very warm and long-lasting response in the souls of Turkic people, especially nomads. In the lexicon and images of Yesevi, Kazaks met the realities of their nomadic life. Yesevi's teachings have never gained popularity among the settled Muslim population of Bukhara, Samarkand, etc, as they did among the nomads of Central Asia. It is possible to judge how far and strongly the spiritual searches of the poet - thinker were integrated into the Turkic consciousness by looking, in particular, at the Kazak bards' works of arts.

As demonstrated by the sustained survival of Yasaviya up to the present, even if not in its original form, and the presence of numerous sacred Sufi preachers' tombs, which became places of pilgrimage for Kazaks, Yesevi's folk Islam has never lost its impact among the Kazaks. His principles, collected in *Divan-i Hikmet*, have been considered a masterpiece of Turkic literature and generated a whole movement in the Kazak oral literature, which imitated the *Divan-i Hikmet*. In today's Kazakhstan Yesevi's heritage is considered as the foundation of Kazak Islam.

The folk Islam of the nomadic Turks was essentially different from the one that was practiced by the settled population in Maverannahr. An orthodox Islamic state and society can exist only in a settled community. The nomadic Turkic or (later Kazak) type of Islam was essentially adjusted to the nomadic lifestyle and traditions, to such a degree that it created doubts among the orthodox Muslims. For them the Kazaks were superficially touched by Islam and had preserved their shamanistic traditions. Accusations that the Kazaks were less than Muslims were heard even in the sixteenth

century. In the beginning of that century, the Uzbek khan Muhammed Sheybani asked the religious authorities of Bukhara for a *fetva* to fight against the Kazaks. A minority among the clerics held that Kazaks were Muslim, but majority decided that they were pagans.<sup>66</sup> Curiously, Ruzbihan, one of the clerics who participated in the meeting during which the question of sacred war against the Kazaks was discussed, doubted the correctness of the *fetva*: "I have expressed in the sense that war against the Persians is more sacred, than against the Kazaks professed the Muslim creed".<sup>67</sup> His opinion was not accepted, and together with other religious authorities he declared that the Kazaks were "unbelievers", but, probably feeling himself awkwardly placed, Ruzbihan considered it necessary to justify his position. He characterized the Kazaks thus: "On the basis of the last authentic messages it became known that among the Kazaks some attributes of disbelief still remain; for example, the fact that the image resembling an idol that they worship is still kept, that is incompatible with Islam. Therefore there is a basis to consider the Kazaks as unbelievers, notwithstanding the fact that they perform *namaz*". Further to support the *fetva*, he, in essence, admitted that among the Kazaks, Islam had gained strong roots: "the Kazaks together with their khans and sultans consider themselves believers; read the Koran, perform divine service, send children to schools, fast, men and women do not have intercourse before marriage. All this shows that they have accepted Islam as their religion and have accepted all its rules. So darkness and ignorance cannot excuse them and the sacred war against them is lawful".<sup>68</sup> Contradictions in his reasoning may indicate that during his epoch ranking the Kazaks as "unbelievers" would have been very controversial, to say the least. It is quite

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<sup>66</sup> Abdülkadir İnan, *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 206.

<sup>67</sup> *Proshloe Kazakhstana*, Vol. 1, p. 103.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

probable that the clergy was compelled to give the *fetva* declaring the Kazaks "unbelievers" under the pressure of Muhammed Khan.

### **The Russian Empire's "Islamization"**

The so-called "Islamization" propaganda of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was undertaken mostly under the patronage of Catherine the Great, with the aim of "civilizing" the savage Kazaks.<sup>69</sup> Its aim was not to Islamize the Kazaks in reality, but to take control of or to make use of the already established close Tatar-Kazak socio-economic relations. The main role in this policy was assigned to the "loyal" Tatars from Kazan, Astrahan, and Siberia. The Volga – Ural Tatars had for a long time already been used by Russia as its trading agents in Central Asia. In addition to the Tatar traders, there was a mass Tatar migration caused by the violent conversion to Orthodoxy, which was accompanied by the destruction of the religious establishments, especially when the Christian proselytizing campaign of tsars amplified in the beginning and the middle of eighteenth century. Many Tatars flew to the Kazak - Kirghiz steppes and to the Central Asian Khanates.<sup>70</sup> The second wave of the Tatar migration to the Kazak steppe took place during Catherine the Great's epoch. Partly because of widespread Tatar and Bashkir participation in the Pugachev revolt Catherine changed state religious policy in

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<sup>69</sup> For more see Alan Fischer, "Enlightened Despotism and Islam Under Catherine II", in Alan Fischer, *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade, and Diplomacy on the Russian – Ottoman Frontier* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1999), pp. 13-25.

<sup>70</sup> Ravil Bukharaev, *Islam in Russia: The Four Seasons* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 285-304.

relation to the Kazan Tatars.<sup>71</sup> Moreover she directed them to ward the “cultivation” of the nomad Kazaks.<sup>72</sup> As Litvinov claims, Catherine considered Orthodox Christianity as “high” religion and Islam as plain and graceless, suitable for the “backward” nomads.<sup>73</sup> She supported “Islamization” among the nomad Kazaks, anticipating their transformation into loyal peasants and merchants like Muslims elsewhere in the empire. The imperial authorities, who considered that the Kazaks were a different type of Muslim than the Volga Tatars, were sure that if the Kazaks were given access to mosques and Islamic schools, they could, with the assistance of the Tatars, possibly adopt a more “civilized” way of life, turning to trade and agriculture<sup>74</sup> and thus becoming more controllable and proper tax-paying subjects of the Russian Empire. The Russians thought that Islam would act as a civilizing and unifying force, drawing the Kazaks together and by this means facilitating the establishment of the Russian administration.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it was a political choice that the cultivation of Islam would be more effective in imposing discipline than other more severe measures.

For some time, the control and support of Islam was one of the central elements of Russian policy in the steppe until such time as the empire took full control of the region. In 1788, the Russian government established the Muslim Assembly (the Muftiate) in Ufa, whose function was management of all Muslim clergy within the borders of Empire except for the Tavrida *guberniya*.<sup>76</sup> The Russian government hoped that the Tatars could become a barrier against the penetration into the steppe of more

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 306-308.

<sup>72</sup> P. P. Litvinov, “Antitatarskaya politika tsarizma v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane”, pp. 367-388 in S. H. Alishev ed., *Materialy po istorii tatarskogo naroda* (Kazan: Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 1995), p. 368

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Robert D. Crews, “Allies in God’s Command: Muslim Communities and the State in Imperial Russia”, Unpublished PhD thesis (Princeton University, 1999), p. 275.

<sup>75</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London: KPI Limited, 1986), p. 289.

<sup>76</sup> *Islam u Kazakhov*, p. 13.

fundamentalist and dangerous Islamic preachers from the Central Asian Khanates. The Tatars were preferred to the Bukharan and Samarkand *mollas*, since they were seen as representing a lesser evil; after all, the Kazan Tatars were Russia's own "loyal subjects", and their actions were always under strict control in a specified direction.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, in accordance with Catherine's decree of 1785, Baron Igelstrom was instructed to build schools and mosques, to print the Koran and other religious literature, and to "send from among loyal Kazan Tatars *mollas*" for service in the steppe.<sup>78</sup> Soon the Kazan Tatar missionaries started to open mosques since the government released generous sums of money for the construction of mosques, and by the end of eighteenth century the number of these mosques was already quite high. In addition, Catherine's government spent significant amounts of money for the construction of religious schools, publication of Islamic literature, and preparation of *mollas* and teachers from among the Kazan Tatars to serve among the Kazaks. From the late 1780s until at least the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Orenburg Frontier Commission made salaried appointments to mosques and schools "founded for the instruction of Kazak children" in borderland towns and settlements.<sup>79</sup> On the territory of the Bokey Horde, Cangir Khan created the post of *ahun* - the main religious preacher - built mosques and literally forced the Kazaks to attend them, and in 1841, opened the first school for Kazaks. In addition, he employed *mollas* from among the Tatars of Kazan, Ufa, Orenburg, and Astrakhan.<sup>80</sup> The *mollas* had significant privileges; they were exempt from corporal punishments, taxes and many other duties. In addition to the official

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<sup>77</sup> Alan Fischer, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> *Materialy po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR*, Vol. 4, pp. 76-77; Crews, p. 281.

<sup>79</sup> Crews, p. 280.

<sup>80</sup> For more see, Allen Frank, "Tatarskie mully sredi Kazakhov i Kirghizov v XVII – XIX vekah", *Kultura, iskusstvo tatarskogo naroda: istoki, traditsii, vzaimosvyazi* (Kazan: Institut yazyka, literatury i istorii im G. Ibragimova, 1993) 124-128.

*mollas*, many students of the Kazan *medreses* preached among the Kazak children and trained them in literacy during their summer holidays. Also, the Russian administration encouraged the trading activity of Volga Tatars among the nomadic population.<sup>81</sup>

In due course numerous Tatar communities appeared in cities in the Kazak steppe, such as Torgay, Kostanay, Kokshetau, Pavlodar, and Semipalatinsk. The primary activities among the Tatars were trade and agriculture.<sup>82</sup> Along with teachers and *mollas*, Tatar traders played an important role in the cultural and religious development of the Kazak population. The similarity of language and religion as well as the fact that Kazaks saw Tatars as their “own” people and trusted them (it should be noted that such an attitude was solely a result of the Kazaks considering themselves and Tatars as fellow Moslems), resulted in the success of the Tatars’ “Islamization” among the Kazaks. The Kazaks readily admitted Tatars into their communities, and if a Tatar married a Kazak, which was a very frequent practice, the Tatar was regarded as a full member of the *aul* or tribe. It would be wrong to say that the Tatars actually converted the Kazaks. The role of Tatars was actually in bringing the Kazaks closer to classical Islam, teaching them the proper Islamic traditions, removing some of the “shamanistic” traditions from Kazak folk Islam, and making the Kazaks “purer” Muslims. In addition, they prepared the ground for what occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the classical Muslim institutions spread rapidly and were gladly accepted by both the settled and the nomadic Kazaks.

The Russian Empire’s utilization of the Tatar clergy and merchants which aimed to assist Russia’s economic and administrative penetration into the steppe by letting

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<sup>81</sup> Litvinov, p. 369.

<sup>82</sup> G. S. Sultangalieva, “Chislennost i rasselenie tataro-bashkirskogo naseleniya na territorii Zapadnogo Kazakhstana (XIX- nachalo XX vv.)”, *Vestnik KazNU*, seriya istoriya, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2002), p. 47-48.

them preach Islam freely among the Kazak nomads, resulted in the consolidation of Islam in the steppe. Therefore, in this period the Tatar *mollas* were not only part of the Islamization process in the Kazak lands, but were also, to some extent, representatives of the Russian colonial rule. In addition, the Tatar clergy were now using the Tatar language and books printed in Kazan in the *mekteps* established by them. As a result, the Kazaks now more often regarded the Tatars as the agents of the Russians and started to get anxious about the type of Islam preached and the methods used in the *mekteps*. This led to discussion among the Kazak educated men and men of letters as to whether the Tatars were the friends or the foes of the Kazak society.

On the other hand, Islam itself was also under discussion among the Kazak educated men beginning in the 1860s. Whether Islam was a part of the Kazak culture, and if it was, then which Islam, was the question. It can be said that the vast majority of Kazak intellectuals thought that the Kazak form of Islam was distinct from the Tatar or Bukharan types, and wished to preserve it in that way. Eventually the Kazak intellectuals ended up regarding the Tatars as “foes” of Kazak society. This division was strengthened by Russian propaganda in the late nineteenth century.

In this respect, one Kazak intellectual in particular, Chokan Valikhanov, was the first to come to the fore. He was educated according to European standards and as a descendant of the Chingisids, considered the Tatars and their type of Islam as detrimental to the development of the Kazaks, since they estranged the Kazaks from the Russians. Valikhanov, among the first of the Kazaks who joined the Russian army, regarded Russia as a superior and shrewd force, which could bring enlightenment and order to the Kazak steppe.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHOKAN VALIKHANOV**

#### **His Family and Childhood**

Chokan (Muhammed Hanafiya) Chingisulu Valikhanov (1835-1865) was born in the small fort of Quşmurın (in today's Kostanay oblast). He was the great-grandson of Ablay Khan, the last khan of all three Hordes, and grandson of Vali Khan, last khan of the Middle Horde. Ablay Khan was a legendary figure revered by the ordinary Kazaks long before he became the khan in 1771, and his descendents occupied an exceptional place among all Kazak khans and sultans. After the death of Vali Khan, his senior wife Ayhanım became the leader of the family. She was the one who realized that it was time to choose between collaboration with, or resistance to, the Russian Empire. She decided to cooperate with the Russians, rather than to stand up against their intensive drive to conquer. She also understood that cooperation with the Russian administration would help her to gain advantage vis-à-vis other sultans in the struggle for authority in the steppe. She realized that she needed this help, since she was, as a woman considered weak. Another important fact was that the migration routes of her subject tribes were in

the vicinity of the Russian fortresses, so this choice to some extent was an imperative one. She definitely was a very far seeing and insightful politician who adopted a firmly pro-Russian course. Her relations with the Russian officials and merchants were extensive; she was interested in Russian literature; she collaborated with the Russian scientists.<sup>83</sup> Her “loyalty” to the Russian Empire was recognized and rewarded by the Siberian administration, that granted her a large amount of money to build an estate (with a mosque on it) on the Russian model, the first European-style estate in the steppe inhabited by the Kazaks.<sup>84</sup> She also tried to protect the interests of her people, appealing to the Siberian administration to relieve the Kazaks from the Cossacks’ claims and asking the Russian administration to send Cossacks and Tatars to help her to teach agriculture and spread sedentarism among the Kazaks.<sup>85</sup> Ayhanım understood that in the future, only persons with a Russian education would be rulers in the steppe, so she sent one of her children, Chingis, the future father of Chokan, to the Siberian Cossack War School in Omsk. After graduating Chingis became an officer and *aga* sultan in the newly formed Aman-Karagaiskii district. He was “reselected” several times, reached the rank of colonel, and was awarded by admission into the hereditary nobility. He also received a special medal for his exemplary service against his cousin Kenesari’s revolt.<sup>86</sup> Chingis was regarded as one of the few Chingisids collaborating with the Russians whose example might encourage others. Chingis’s wife and Chokan’s mother, Zeynep, was also Russified to some degree. She was a sister of Musa Chormanov, who

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<sup>83</sup> A. H. Margulan, “Ocherk zhizni i deyatel’nosti Ch. Ch. Valikhanova”, pp. 9-77 in *Sobranie Sochinenii Ch. Ch. Valikhanova* (Almaty: Akademiya nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, 1984), Vol. 1, p. 11. Henceforth will be shown as *SSV*. All biographical data on Chokan was taken from this source unless it stated otherwise.

<sup>84</sup> S. Oteniyazov, *Şoqanmen qaita kezdesu* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1990), pp. 12 - 13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 27; Sarbas Aqtaev, “Hanşa Ayhanım”, *Aqiqat*, No. 12 (1994), pp. 33 – 34.

<sup>86</sup> Chingis helped Russian forces only after Siberian administration sent him an ultimatum saying to assist imperial troops or be regarded as Kenesari collaborator in J. Beysenbaev, *Casin-tagdır carqılı* (Almaty: Calın, 1987), pp. 26-29.

also had received his education at a Russian military school, and had an officer's rank and occupied the post of *aga* sultan in another district. Chingis and Musa were members of the delegation of the few loyal Kazak sultans who went to offer congratulations at the coronation of Alexander II.

Although Chokan's childhood was significantly affected by the Russian culture, His household continued to observe the Kazak traditions. He lived a traditional nomadic life with its religious observances, went together with his family to the seasonal pastures of their livestock herds, participated in hunting with falcons, and lived in a *yurt* drinking mare's milk. His milieu was imbued with Kazak traditions and folklore. Ayganım was a woman with a comprehensive knowledge of Kazak folklore and songs, who patronized traveling bards, singers, and musicians.<sup>87</sup> Chokan was surrounded by the Kazak oral literature, so we can say that his interest in folklore was aroused very early. His father also greatly interested in Kazak culture. He willingly assisted Russian academic organizations and individual scientists on their field trips to the steppe. He collected for them examples of Kazak oral literature, clothes, and home commodities. Chokan also helped his father during the recording of some songs.<sup>88</sup>

He received his primary education at home, from his parents, grandmother and the *aul molla*, before continuing his learning in the school recently opened by his father. It was a school based on the nomadic *mekteps*. The curriculum and method of education in these *mekteps* was fairly uniform, aiming to teach basics of Islam and literacy. Also in accordance with an old tradition of the khans, children who were descendants of sultanic

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<sup>87</sup> Margulan, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> Beysenbaev, p. 43.

families had to learn several languages, so therefore, in these *mekteps*, a central place was given to learning the Chagatai language and elementary Arabic and Persian.<sup>89</sup>

### Education in Omsk

In 1847, when Chokan was 12 years old, his father took him to Omsk to study in Omsk Cadet Corps. Although Omsk was a small town, it was an administrative center of the region, and for a nomadic boy it must have been the most astonishing experience of his life up to that point. Omsk Cadet Corps had been recently reorganized from the Siberian Cossack School, and its quality of education significantly improved thanks to the assignment of new teachers from the central regions and improvement of the Cadets' living conditions. After the reforms it became the best military school in Siberia, with a very wide range of subjects taught.<sup>90</sup> Chokan graduated in 1853 (without actually studying military subjects, since the Russian government still did not trust fully even its henchmen among the *inorodtsy*), with a rank of cornet in cavalry.

This period of his life, that is, his education and residence in Omsk, profoundly affected his view of life, thoughts and identity. Even though Chokan's knowledge of Russian was at most a few words when he was enlisted in the military academy, he

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<sup>89</sup> R. B. Suleymenov, V. A. Moiseev, *Chokan Valikhanov: vostokoved* (Almaty: 1985), p. 13. All Chokan's letters to parents were in Chagatai.

<sup>90</sup> The education was eight year; two preparatory years, five fundamental and last was a special course where military sciences (Tactics, Field Fortification, and Artillery) were taught. The Kazak children were exempted from this last year courses. The curriculum included a wide range of subjects. Subjects taught during five year education period were: World Geography, Geography of Russia, World History, Russian History, West European Literature, Russian Literature, Basics of Philosophy, Botany, Zoology, Physics, Math, Geodesy, Basic of Construction and Architecture, General Principles of Natural History, Plotting, Drawing, Calligraphy, Russian, French, German, and special class of Arabic, Persian, Tatar, Kazak, Chagatai, Mongol languages. In addition Gymnastics, Singing, Swimming, Dancing, Fencing, Riding lessons were included.

graduated very successfully, as one of the best students in his class. As a graduate, he was keen on the social sciences, anticipating his future as a researcher. In any case, he could not become a full-fledged officer and most probably would become a low- or mid-level official in the Russian administration. The understanding of the commanders of the Corps and some of his teachers contributed to his natural interest in the folklore and history of the Kazaks and allowed him to learn appropriate matters. For example, the “fundamental” library of the Corps was open to Chokan, while other students were denied access. The uniqueness of the library was that it was one of the richest in Russia in terms of its holdings of scientific and other literature about Central Asia.

The Cadets of the Corps were divided into companies and squadrons. Children of high-level officials and officers were in the company, and lived in special apartments. The children of the Cossacks were admitted into the squadron, which ranked below the company. Chokan was enlisted into the squadron. Although pupils lived separately, they studied in the same classrooms. Such blatant discrimination in the treatment of students could not help but affect Chokan’s attitude to high-ranking officials and officers. Throughout his life after his years at the military academy, Chokan always felt more comfortable in the environment of the Cossacks and plebes, and when possible avoided the community of Omsk bureaucrats and officers. His best friend was Grigorii N. Potanin, the son of a Cossack officer. Potanin was to write one of the most informative of the biographies of Chokan just after the latter’s death, and we know Chokan’s life in the military academy only from his writings.<sup>91</sup> In Potanin’s memoirs, it is pointed out that this absolutely plebeian environment contributed to the formation of Chokan’s

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<sup>91</sup> G. N. Potanin, “Biograficheskie svedeniya o Chokane Valikhanove”, “Vstrecha s S. F. Durovym”, “Pisma N. I. Veselovskomu”, “V yurte poslednego Kirghizskogo tsarevicha” in A. Ahmatova, ed., *Chokan Valikhanov v vospominaniyakh sovremennikov* (Almaty: Kazgosizdat, 1964).

democratic character.<sup>92</sup> The Kazak princeling slept and ate with the children of common Cossacks. Potanin also pointed out that he and Chokan admired some of the academy's instructors, which also played a very substantial role in Chokan's personal formation. The instructors defined what he studied, and which books he read, sometimes even outside of the curriculum. They also predetermined his circle of friends outside of the military academy.

So, Chokan's life in the Cadet Corps is known to the extent that Potanin wrote about it: "He developed quickly, in two years he outstripped fellow students and many of the senior ones. Besides his native wit, he had other talents. Already, when Chokan was about 14 -15 years old, the Corps administration began to look at him as a future researcher and potential scientist. He was also very proud, by all means acting as he thought, convincing others to do what and how he wanted. Also, Valikhanov very much loved to read the classics of Russian literature; among western literatures he most liked English."<sup>93</sup>

Chokan's years of training in a military school coincided with a period of unrest in the minds of the Russian intelligentsia. New ideas of a democratic character and concerning the radical transformation of Russia had appeared and quickly developed in Russian society. Many of the intellectuals who were deemed dangerous by the monarchy were deported to Siberia. Many had gathered in Omsk. A number of teachers were themselves exiles, or sympathized with them. According to Potanin's numerous writings, Chokan communicated very closely especially with such teachers of the Cadet Corps.<sup>94</sup> In addition, on Sundays pupils were released to their relatives, but since

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<sup>92</sup> Potanin in Ahmatova, p. 35

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, pp. 37-42.

<sup>94</sup> *SSV*, Vol. 5, pp. 350-360.

Chokan did not have any relatives in Omsk, thanks to his teachers he very often visited Russian families that were also sympathetic to reform. Chokan continued to have warm relations with some of these families during his subsequent life.

It would be necessary to go into a little more detail about this Russian milieu. Already during his third and fourth years in the Cadet Corps, Chokan's interest in Kazak national culture and Eastern studies developed into a genuinely comprehensive study and research of the history and culture of Central Asian Turks and other peoples of Asia. The opportunity of pursuing a career in military was not an option for him and becoming a bureaucrat in the civil administration was no longer particularly attractive to him. The most significant of several reasons for this decision was the democratic environment with which he was closely acquainted with during his studies in Omsk.<sup>95</sup>

The strongest of the influences on Chokan's development was Nikolai F. Kostyletskii. One of the most advanced teachers of the Cadet Corps, Kostyletskii was an ardent supporter of Russian revolutionary – democratic ideas. Kostyletskii had been educated first in the Omsk Army School, and then studied at the faculty of Eastern studies at Kazan University, from which he graduated with a master's degree in Eastern philology. In 1865, he was sentenced in the affair of “the Siberian separatists”, and dismissed from the Cadet Corps. It can be said that Kostyletskii set Chokan on the path of studying Kazak folklore and history. In the military academy they already studied the Kazak national epic together. They translated into Russian for the first time one of the most complete variants of the “Kozı-Korpeş” and “Bayan-Sulu” poem. Also thanks to

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<sup>95</sup> R. B. Suleymenov, V. A. Moiseev, pp. 15, 20.

Kostyletskii, Chokan got acquainted with Ilya N. Berezin.<sup>96</sup> Chokan wrote his first scientific work on history of Central Asia for Berezin.<sup>97</sup> Among other instructors who had close relations with Chokan were the exiled scientist Petr. V. Gonsevsii, who taught the course, "History of Civilizations", and the writer Vasilii. P. Lobodovskii, a childhood friend of Nikolai G. Chernyshevskii.<sup>98</sup> Other influential figure was Igor V. Zhdan-Pushkin, an inspector in the academy, who introduced Chokan to the popular literary journal *Sovremennik*<sup>99</sup>. As is known from Chokan's subsequent life, he was always interested in this periodical, which expressed the thoughts of the leading progressive Russian democratic intelligentsia.

On Sundays, Chokan visited the families of some of the teachers of the Corps and also of some of the high-ranking officials. During his first years in Omsk he frequently visited the house of the orientalist Sotnikov and the instructor Gonsevsii. Both of these teachers were in rather tense relations with the command of the Cadet Corps, as they frequently lectured outside the curriculum and taught things unacceptable to the official censorship.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ilya Nikolaevich Berezin is a Russian orientalist, since 1846 the professor of Kazan university, and since 1858 of Petersburg university. The author of numerous works on a history and philology of East peoples, mainly Turco-Mongolian.

<sup>97</sup> Chokan decyphered some names and terms, specified meanings of others, and gave new meanings to a bunch of Turkic phrases for Berezin from Toktamyskh Label; "Zametki pri chtenii knigi prof. I. N. Berezina *Hanskii Yarlyk*", *SSV*, Vol. 1, pp. 104-114.

<sup>98</sup> Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii (1828-89) - the Russian writer, the publicist, the literary critic. In 1856-62 one of the leaders of literary periodical *Sovremennik*; in the field of literary criticism developed Vissarion G. Belinskii's traditions. He was one of the main ideological inspirers of revolutionary movement in 1860s, one of the founders of *narodnichestvo* (populism) movement.

<sup>99</sup> *Sovremennik* literary periodical; 1) During 1836-46 was published in Saint Petersburg, 1 issue in 3 months. It was founded by Aleksandr S. Pushkin. After death of the poet it was issued by group of his friends led by poet Vasilii A. Zhukovskii. After 1838 it passed to Petr A. Pletnev who in 1846 transferred its rights to Nikolai. A. Nekrasov and Ivan I. Panaev. 2) The monthly magazine, 1847-1866 (the same editors issued). During 1848 ideological leader of *Sovremennik* was Vissarion G. Belinskii. He also cooperated with Aleksandr I. Gertsen, Ivan S. Turgenev, Lev N. Tolstoi, Mikhail E. Saltykov-Schedrin, Nikolai G. Chernyshevskii, and Nikolai A. Dobrolyubov.

<sup>100</sup> Potanin in Ahmatova, p. 37.

During last years of his education in the Cadet Corps, Chokan often visited the families of Karl K. Gutkovskii and Yakov F. Kapustin. According to Potanin: "In Kapustin's house young people with a liking for literature and art gathered. It was a small club of the elite of the Omsk intelligentsia, whose mentor was Karl Kazimirovich Gutkovskii<sup>101</sup>, the encyclopedist, and an admirer of Cuvier<sup>102</sup> on philosophical issues. The best of the Omsk youth gathered here".<sup>103</sup> It was there that Chokan for the first time met with the members of the so-called *Petrashevskii*<sup>104</sup> circle, Fedor M. Dostoevskii and Sergei F. Durov. His acquaintance with Dostoevskii and Durov was important for the formation of his political beliefs. Dostoevskii was at that time a convinced opponent of the regime of Nicholas I regime and of the tsarist regime in general. Durov was also a determined enemy of the tsarist regime, who had already served time in prison and been exiled for spreading anti – tsarist propaganda. Chokan's friendship with them was to develop into a very close relations and like-minded relationship.

Frequent and close dialogue with the outstanding intellectuals of the region had a serious influence on the intellectual development of young Chokan. Conversations on politics, on the administration of Siberia and the Kazak steppe, and about the political exiles, who during this period fled in large numbers, were frequently conducted in

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<sup>101</sup> Gutkovskii had close relations with Chokan later too. He always supported Chokan even if it harmed his career in Siberian Governor-generalship. After Chokan's death Gutkovskii participated in collecting and publishing of Chokan's manuscripts.

<sup>102</sup> Georges Cuvier (1769-1832): French utopian socialist, anatomist, paleontologist, and geologist

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 38

<sup>104</sup> Petrashevskii circle - *Petrashevtsy*: the name in the historical and memoir literature of the persons visiting "Fridays" of Mihail V. Petrashevskii (the end 1844 - the beginning 1849) where problems of Russia's domestic situation and theories of the West-European socialists (François Mari Charles Fourier, etc.) were discussed. Petrashevtsy takes an outstanding place because in none of Russian political processes did so many scientists and men of letter participate. In circles of brothers Ippolit M. and Konstantin M. Debu, Nikolai S. Kashkin, Sergei F. Durov, Nikolai A. Mombelli, etc. plans of creation of a secret society, an illegal printing house, the propaganda literature for people were considered. All *Petrashevtsy* were arrested on a denunciation of the provoker on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1849 (under investigation 123 persons). 22 persons were trialed in a military court, 21 (among them Fedor M. Dostoevskii) were sentenced to execution (it was replaced with penal servitude or exile).

Chokan's presence. Not surprisingly, his world view was more advanced than that of his fellow students in the Cadet Corps, and he became a "window to Europe" for them.<sup>105</sup>

The democratic circle of intellectuals, which Chokan joined, made a permanent impression on him with its lofty ideals, and it imbued his mind with, first of all, the idea of whole-hearted service to the motherland. This milieu aroused in him love for his fellow tribesmen, and this developed into the idea of doing something for his kinsmen. Suleymenov, an expert on Valikhanov's life, describes this impact: "As a representative of a backward and oppressed people, Chokan had reached the peaks of civilization and culture, and he understood that his kinsmen needed enlightenment, that is, that his first duty was to help them to comprehend their own history."<sup>106</sup> He, therefore, began dedicating himself fully to the study of the history and culture of his own people, the Central Asian and other people neighboring the Kazaks. According to Potanin's memoirs, Chokan had already collected legends of the Kazaks and written down variants of poems, heroic legends, and historical events during summer vacations from the Cadet Corps. His dream was to write the history of Asia based on the oral literature of these peoples.<sup>107</sup> Potanin also wrote that among their favorite hobbies was reading the accounts of travelers to Asia. Chokan very often spoke to Potanin of his future plans for their joint travels to Asia, since it was mostly unknown and waiting to be explored.<sup>108</sup> "First," said Chokan, "we should go to study in Saint Petersburg to prepare for expeditions." He wished to study at the faculty of Eastern studies.<sup>109</sup> In 1853, when he graduated from the military academy, Chokan did not have the right to choose where to

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<sup>105</sup> Potanin in Ahmatova, p. 37.

<sup>106</sup> R. B. Suleymenov, V. A. Moiseev, p. 20.

<sup>107</sup> "Kirghizskoe rodoslovie", *SSV*, Vol. 1, p. 210.

<sup>108</sup> Potanin in Ahmatova, p. 44.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

serve, since he was considered to belong to the Cossack estate; so, like any other Siberian Cossack, his place of service could only be a Cossack Army unit located in Siberia.

Upon his graduation from the military academy, even though he had close contacts with several intellectuals who were opponents of the regime, he and his fellow students were, by and large, still under the strong influence of the predominant official ideology and respected the personality of Tsar, believing that flaws and deficiencies in the Russian administration were due to some individual bureaucrats who abused their positions. Zimanov and Atishev come to the following conclusion about their attitude: “On the one hand, they [the students of the military academy] from habit and in [respect to] the tradition and the laws, believed in the benevolence of the autocracy; on the other hand they rejected it, [their commitment was] to something exactly the opposite.”<sup>110</sup>

Evidently, education at the Omsk military academy contributed a great deal to Valikhanov's intellectual formation. In addition to the acquisition of knowledge at a sufficiently high level, he had the opportunity of acquaintance, and contact with certain open – minded intellectuals. Moreover, though in a limited fashion, he was pulled into the progressive intelligentsia and into politics.

### **Serving Empire and People**

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<sup>110</sup> S. Z. Zimanov and A. A. Atishev, “Ideino-politicheskoe probuzhdenie Chokana Valikhanova”, *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, seriya istoriya*, Vol. 3 (1965), p. 10

Upon graduation Valikhanov, with the rank of a cornet, was enlisted into the Siberian Linear Cossack Host.<sup>111</sup> After some time, Gustaf H. Gasfort, governor – general of Western Siberia and the “Siberian Kirghizs”, appointed Chokan his own aide-de-camp. This appointment opened to him the way for the realization of his scientific plans.

In the summer of 1855, Chokan accompanied the governor-general on an inspection trip to the Semipalatinsk, Semireche (Jetisu), and Tarbagatay (territories recently taken from Khokand) districts that were part of the structure of the Western - Siberian province. The task of the mission was to prevent the influence of the Khokand Khanate among the Great Horde Kazaks, and to carry out a cautious policy directed toward annexation of the region to Russian Empire by more peaceful means. The imperial administration desperately needed educated people from among the indigenous population. Besides possessing these qualifications, Chokan also enjoyed a deep – seated respect among his people due to his genealogical roots, in that he was a Chingisid sultan. Thus, he was, for the time being irreplaceable. This journey was his first scientific expedition; also it was the beginning of his deep scientific study of the history and lifestyle of the Kazak people. He successfully combined his official assignments with his scientific activities; he gathered diverse information on the geography, genealogy, history, and customs, and jotted down the oral poetry of the Kazaks and Kirghizs.<sup>112</sup> Since some of this information had value as reconnaissance data, military authorities permitted him to do such seemingly such superfluous work.

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<sup>111</sup> Chokan was the first Kazak graduate of Omsk Cadet Corps. In total three Kazaks finished the Cadet Corps up to 1865. In 1865, the Kazaks were forbidden to enter any military school.

<sup>112</sup> As a result of this trip Chokan wrote several scientific articles; “Geograficheskii ocherk Zailiiskogo kraya”, pp. 173-179, “O Kirghiz-kaisatskoi Bolshoi orde”, pp. 180-181, “Predaniya i legendy Bolshoi Kirghiz-kaisatskoi ordy”, pp. 273-279 in *SSV*, Vol. 1.

Upon his return from the expedition, Gasfort proposed to the higher authorities that Chokan be awarded and gave a very flattering portrayal of him, emphasizing the fact that Chokan knew the local language and customs. Gasfort also stated that the encouragement of such an example as Chokan, the descendant of the Kazak khans, in the Russian military would influence other Kazaks and would contribute to a more sympathetic attitude of the latter toward Russia.<sup>113</sup> Soon Chokan was promoted to the rank of a lieutenant [*poruchik*].

In 1856, he participated in a large military scientific expedition directed by Colonel Mikhail M. Khomentovskiy. The purpose of the expedition was to gather information about the Kirghiz people and to make a topographic survey of the reservoir Issyk-Kul. After staying about two months among the Kirghiz, he as before recorded native legends, stories, fairy tales and poems. Chokan paid special attention to the remainders of the ancient urban culture in the Lake Issyk-Kul region during this expedition. He studied the remnants of the ancient settlements there and collected legends and other oral history materials about them. His intention in doing so was to prove that Kazaks had once developed urban culture and agriculture.<sup>114</sup>

In 1857, again upon Gasfort's order, Valikhanov went to the Alatau Kirghizs. His assignments included; observation of the events in Western China (that is, concerning the development and suppression of the anti-Chinese uprising in Kashgar), and inquiry about the disposition of the Kirghiz on the matter of annexation to Russia. The scientific aspects of these expeditions were reflected in his travel accounts and in

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<sup>113</sup> *SSV*, Vol. 4, pp. 333-335.

<sup>114</sup> For more on this see Chokan's "Dnevnik poezdki na Issyk-Kul" *SSV*, Vol. 1, pp. 306-358.

several periodical articles.<sup>115</sup> He also wrote down, for the first time ever, some fragments of the Kirghiz epos *Manas*.<sup>116</sup>

Owing to Petr P. Semenov-Tyan-Shanskii<sup>117</sup> the scientific researches of the young Chokan became known in the scientific circles of St. Petersburg. Also upon Semenov's recommendation, the Russian Imperial Geographical Society accepted Chokan as a full member.

### **The Kashgar Expedition**

In 1858, Gasfort sent Valikhanov on what was to become his most celebrated journey, to Kashgar in Eastern Turkestan. This expedition lasted approximately for six months. At that time Kashgar was a place of tense political conditions and a blank on the map as far as the rest of the world was concerned. The whole of Eastern Turkestan was at the war due to uprisings of local peoples against Chinese rule. Chokan was selected as the most appropriate and able figure to gather information about the contemporary situation for the Russian imperial authorities. Although the Russian Geographical Society participated in the preparation of this expedition, its control was fully in the hands of the military administration. Chokan was assigned to this mission as

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<sup>115</sup> "Zapiski o Kirghizakh", pp. 7-89; "Smert Kukotai – Khana i ego pominki (otryvok iz geroicheskoi sagi dikokamennykh Kirghiz *Manas* )", pp. 90-147; "Kirghizskoe rodoslovie", pp. 148-165; "Zapadnaya provintsiya Kitaiskoi imperii i g. Kuldzha", pp. 174-247, *SSV*, Vol. 2,

<sup>116</sup> For more see Alkey Margulan, *Shoqan cane Manas* (Almaty: Cazuşı, 1971).

<sup>117</sup> Petr Petrovich Semenov (1827 - 1914): One of the most known Russian geographer, statistician, botanist, and zoologist. Since 1873 a vice-chairman and the actual head of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society. Semenov was an organizer and participant of numerous expeditions to Inner Asia. Semenov patronized Chokan for many years. It his assistance that made possible Chokan's expedition to Kashgar; A. Aldan – Semenov, *Semenov – Tyan – Shanskii* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1965), pp. 132 – 133.

a military officer and his status was essentially that of a secret service agent. He was disguised as a Tatar merchant in a caravan, which was covertly organized by the military, heading to Kashgar.

In Kashgar, while extracting intelligence data for the military, Valikhanov managed to compile a wealth of material on the geography, history, language, state system, and ethnography of the region.<sup>118</sup> Because of the widespread circulation of rumors about the presence of a Russian spy, Valikhanov and his caravan were expelled from Kashgar. Only a number of fortunate circumstances on the return journey saved the life of the scientist-scout.

All in all, the expedition's cost was very high for Chokan; his health was irreparably damaged and he never fully recovered from tuberculosis, which eventually led to his early death in 1865.

In St. Petersburg, the Russian officials and scientists awaited his report on the expedition with impatience. However, when he arrived in Omsk, his health worsened. He spent approximately six months preparing his report in Omsk, and arrived in St. Petersburg, the city where he had dreamed of studying, in late 1859. Chokan was greeted by both scientists and bureaucrats in the Russian capital. His report was "acknowledged as being very useful for the government and science". He was awarded with a promotion in rank, a medal, a monetary reward, and most importantly by receiving an audience with the Emperor Alexander II.<sup>119</sup>

After the Kashgar expedition, Chokan Valikhanov became a well – known figure to scientists and officials as an authority on the issues concerning Central Asia, and

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<sup>118</sup> The main result of trip was Chokan's capital work "O sostoyanii Altyskhara ili shesti vostochnykh gorodov Kitaiskoi provintsii Nan-Lu (Maloi Bukharii) v 1858-1859 godakh", *SSV*, Vol. 3, pp. 97-218.

<sup>119</sup> S. Z. Zimanov and A. A. Atishev, *Politicheskie vzglyady Chokana Valikhanova* (Almaty: Nauka, 1865), p. 87.

owing to this recognition he enjoyed a “special favor treatment” from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the General Staff of the Russian Army. As both of these offices were looking for such experts, Valikhanov was allowed to remain in Petersburg, and was attached to the Asian department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, although he maintained his military post and salary so that if the military needed him, he could be called back. According to Margulan, Chokan was occupied with issues related to the annexation of the Great Horde Kazak lands and Central Asia to the Russian Empire, and with the arrangement and development of trade relations with the frontier Chinese provinces.<sup>120</sup> Chokan was also occupied with drawing maps of Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan for the Army.<sup>121</sup>

In the Imperial Geographical Society, he participated in the editing and publication of Karl Ritter’s book on Central Asia, prepared materials on the geography and ethnography of the Kazak steppes and Central Asia, and gave lectures to Society members on Eastern Turkestan, Tien-Shan, and the Kirghiz. One of his lectures for the Society was on the importance of studying the nomadic peoples in Russia because, he pointed out, such people “doubtless have an impact on the Russian people”.<sup>122</sup> Chokan’s plan to enter the faculty of Eastern studies did not work out, however. Due to his heavy workload, he was only able to attend some of the lectures, but he also continued to learn foreign languages.<sup>123</sup> During a lecture at St. Petersburg University he met Huseyin

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<sup>120</sup> Margulan, “Ocherk...”, p. 52.

<sup>121</sup> Under Chokan’s edition several maps were prepared; “Karta prostranstva mejdu ozerom Balkhashom i khrebtom Alatau”, “Rekognostsirovka zapadnoi chasti Zailiiskogo kraya”, “Plan goroda Kuldzhi”, “Karta Zapadnogo kraya Kitaiskoi Imperii”, etc.

<sup>122</sup> E. A. Masanov, “Nekotorye novye materialy o Ch. Ch. Valikhanove”, *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, seriya istoriya*, Vol. 1 (1964), p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> N. M. Yadrintsev, “Vospominaniya o Chokane Valikhanove”, *SSV*, Vol. 1, pp. 96-98.

Feyizhan<sup>124</sup>, a Tatar from Simbirsk province. They became very close friends, attending the university lectures together and spending time in the library reading books, especially those on geography and archeology. Feyizhan introduced Chokan to many books and manuscripts written in Arabic, Persian, and the Turkic languages, and acquainted him with his studies of the works in Turkic.<sup>125</sup> Valikhanov frequently sought advice from Feyizhan on such matters.<sup>126</sup>

In St. Petersburg, Chokan communicated mostly with the Russian scientists and men of letters. He had close personal and business relations with the vice-president of the Society, Semenov. Also he got acquainted and subsequently remained in close communication with professors Andrei N. Beketov,<sup>127</sup> Aleksandr K. Kazem Bek<sup>128</sup>, and Vasilii P. Vasilev<sup>129</sup>. He cooperated closely with Egor P. Kovalevskii<sup>130</sup>, Feodor R. Osten-Saken<sup>131</sup>, and Ivan I. Zaharov<sup>132</sup> of the Asian Committee.<sup>133</sup>

An important feature of the St. Petersburg period of Chokan's life was his connection with certain Russian men of letters. In St. Petersburg he frequently

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<sup>124</sup> Hüseyin Feyizhan (1821-1866); Kazan Tatar orientalist. He received his primary education from *medreses* of Kazan and Bukhara. In 1857, he was invited to St. Petersburg University to be a lecturer of the Turkic and Arabic languages. There he studied under Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov. His important works are; *Kratkaya uchebnaya grammatika tatarskogo yazyka* (1862), "Tri nadgrobykh bulgarskikh nadpisi".

<sup>125</sup> Balgamiş, p. 184.

<sup>126</sup> Alkey Margulan, "Şoqannın canadan aşılğan dosı – Husain Faizhanov cane onın Peterbordan cazgan hattarı", *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, seriya obschestvennyh nauk*, Vol. 3 (1965), pp. 12-24.

<sup>127</sup> Andrei Nikolaevich Beketov (1825 - 1902); botanist, professor in ordinary of St. Petersburg University. Beketov was one of editors of 82-volume the Brockhaus-Efron's "Encyclopedic Dictionary".

<sup>128</sup> Aleksandr Kasimovich Kazembek (Mirza Muhammed - Ali) (1802-1870); A Persian convert to Christianity, orientalist and linguist, since 1827 professor at Kazan University, since 1849 at St. Petersburg University.

<sup>129</sup> Vasilii Pavlovich Vasilev (1818-1900); Russian Sinologist-linguist, since 1851 professor at Kazan University, since 1855 at St. Petersburg University.

<sup>130</sup> Egor Petrovich Kovalevskii (1811 – 1868); the writer and statesman. In 1856 - 1862 Kovalevskii was the assistant to chairman of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

<sup>131</sup> Feodor Romanovich Osten-Saken (1832- ); baron, the scientist and statesman. He had made trip across Central Asia, almost reached Kashgar.

<sup>132</sup> Ivan Ilich Zaharov (-1885); professor in ordinary of St. Petersburg University, the expert on China. He was a consul in Kuldzha, a member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

<sup>133</sup> G. N. Potanin, "Biograficheskie svedeniya...", p. 50; Margulan, "Ocherk...", pp. 58-59.

communicated with F. M. Dostoevskii, and with the brothers Vasilii S.<sup>134</sup> and Nikolai S. Kurochkin.<sup>135</sup> As Valikhanov was a subscriber to the periodical *Sovremennik*, and frequently visited its editorial office, he met with the Kurochkin brothers there. Later, in 1861, the Kurochkin brothers became members of the *Zemlya i volya* society<sup>136</sup>. Other literary figures in Chokan's environment were the poets Apollon N. Maikov<sup>137</sup> and Yakov P. Polonskii<sup>138 139</sup>.

According to Potanin, Chokan arranged several special evenings for his friends, among them Siberians and poor students. Usually about ten persons attended these evenings.<sup>140</sup> Zimanov writes that these evenings were in fact gatherings of a small political coterie, *Sibirskoe zemlyachestvo*<sup>141 142</sup>. Since many of the Siberians were

<sup>134</sup> Vasilii Stepanovich Kurochkin (1831 - 1875) – A Russian popular satirical poet in 1860s. During 1859-1873 he published satirical journal *Iskra*, where also cooperated A. N. Maikov and Ya. P. Polonskii.

<sup>135</sup> Nikolai Stepanovich Kurochkin (1830 - 1884) – A Russian poet, writer and journalist.

<sup>136</sup> *Zemlya i volya* - the secret revolutionary society formed under ideological influence of A. I. Herzen and N. G. Chernyshevskii influence in the beginning of 1860s, during the revolutionary situation arisen after country reform in 1861, totaled about 200 persons. Organizers and management of a society: Nikolai A. and Aleksandr A. Serno-Solovevich, Nikolai N. Obruchev, Aleksandr A. Sleptsov, Vasilii S. Kurochkin, N. G. Chernyshevskii, Nikolai I. Utin. Representatives abroad were A. I. Herzen and Nikolai P. Ogaryov. At the first stage of activity the society was guided by Ogaryov's article in *Kolokol* journal "Chto nujno narodu". The program: convocation of classless national assembly, the right of everyone on his own land, self-management of country communities, voluntary federation of areas, the elective government. Later members participated in the Polish revolt. With recession of revolutionary activities *Zemlya i volya* broke up itself in 1864.

<sup>137</sup> Apollon Nikolaevich Maikov (1821 - 1897) - One of most outstanding Russian poets of after Pushkin period.

<sup>138</sup> Yakov Petrovich Polonskii (1820 - 1898) – Another one of the most wonderful Russian poets of the after Pushkin period.

<sup>139</sup> H. N. Bekhocin, "Traditsii russkoi demokraticheskoi publitsistiki v tvorchestve kazakhskikh prosvetitelei", *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, naychnye zametki i soobscheniya*, Vol. 5 (1962), pp. 21-22; Margulan, "Ocherk...", pp. 59-60. Margulan claims that Maikov wrote several verses under the effect of conversations with Chokan.

<sup>140</sup> G. N. Potanin, "Biograficheskie svedeniya...", p. 50.

<sup>141</sup> "*Sibirskoe zemlyachestvo*" was a political coterie organized by G. N. Potanin of a few "patriots" of Siberia. All members were from Siberia, the peasants and the Cossacks, malcontent with class discrimination and malfeasance, who defended interests of the region protesting that Siberia was place of exiles and the colony of proper Russia. They sought for the end of cruel Russian colonial policy concerning the native peoples of Siberia. It can be said that they all agreed on one; to get proper education and new ideas in the capital then go to Siberia, to struggle for its progress and enlightenment.

<sup>142</sup> S. Z. Zimanov and A. A. Atishev, pp. 117-118; S. Z. Zimanov and A. A. Atishev, "Chokan Valikhanov v Peterburge", *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, naychnye zametki i soobscheniya*, Vol. 6 (1964), pp. 16-25

students and usually in a bad financial situation, Chokan supported them while he was in St. Petersburg.

It is rather probable that Chokan, as well as his many Siberian friends, was a strong admirer of the revolutionary-democratic ideas of the 1860s. He was not only under the impression of these ideas, but was also personally familiar with some of the outstanding figures of those times. Unfortunately, details of these meetings, and especially the contents of these conversations, are unknown. And it is understandable, considering the strict censorship of those times. Neither Chokan nor any of his friends wrote anything about these evenings, and as far as is known, he did not keep a diary. But through the analysis of those who were part of this circle it is possible to shed some light on this subject.

One of the most important figures among the Siberians was Grigorii Nikolaevich Potanin (1835 - 1920), the traveler, ethnographer, and researcher of Siberia and Central Asia. He was born in a small village to the family of a Siberian Cossack-officer. After receiving his education in the Omsk Cadet Corps, where he got acquainted with and became one of the closest friends of Valikhanov, Potanin served for a several years as a field officer. In 1856, he came back to Omsk to serve in a control department of the Cossack Host administration.<sup>143</sup> There he met Chokan who already had other views about tsarism and tried to bring Potanin around to his way of thinking. But even after several intense debates Chokan was not able to succeed. Potanin still believed that everything was all right within the system, except for a few rotten elements. Recollecting this period of his life, Potanin later wrote: "In Omsk I went through two spiritual crises. First, after the appointment with *petrashevets* Durov, to whom Chokan

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<sup>143</sup> P. Kosenko, *Skreschenie sudeb* (Almaty: Cazuşı, 1981), pp. 24-25.

introduced me, I changed my political convictions; up until this meeting I revered Emperor Nicholas I, in whom I saw Peter the Great, the advocate of progress and of the European ideas, and a person that could bring political freedom to Russia. After this meeting with Durov I became *petrashevets*.”<sup>144</sup> In 1859, Potanin went to St. Petersburg, and there, while a student, he was imprisoned for three months for participation in the student disturbances of 1861's. After his imprisonment, he was exiled to Siberia. Also while in St. Petersburg, Potanin organized *Sibirskoe zemlyachestvo*, and later became a member of the *Zemlya i volya* society. In 1865, Potanin was again arrested, together with Nikolai M. Yadrintsev<sup>145</sup>. He was accused of *sibirskii separatizm*<sup>146</sup>, and as the main culprit was sentenced to fifteen years of penal labor.

The members of *Sibirskoe zemlyachestvo* were very well educated young men, Siberian patriots, and strongly influenced by the democratic-reformist ideas of the 1860s, but yet not professional politicians with a clear cut political program. For all of them, living in St. Petersburg was an opportunity to get a proper education and learn something from those who stood high in the ranks of the Russian democratic intelligentsia. Also, it should be noted here that members of this coterie supported a policy of rendering assistance to the “junior” native peoples of Siberia on the part their “big brother” Russians in such issues as the transition of nomads to settled way of life, education, etc. They also wanted tsarism to stop its policy of simply plundering Siberian natural resources, and hoped for a more humanistic Russian attitude to the local peoples.

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<sup>144</sup> Potanin, “Vstrecha s S. F. Durovym” pp. 65-66.

<sup>145</sup> Nikolai Mihailovich Yadrintsev (1842 - 1894); the well - known Siberian publicist, public figure and traveler-archeologist. He also was member of “*Sibirskoe zemlyachestvo*”, worked in “*Iskra*” journal, spent three years in prison convicted of “*Sibirskii separatizm*”. He was one of the closest Valikhanov's friends. While in prison, he wrote the necrologue on Chokan's death published in “*Sibirskii vestnik*” newspaper. Later Yadrintsev actively participated in collecting and publishing of Chokan's manuscripts .

<sup>146</sup> Case of “*Sibirskii separatizm*” – named by Siberian administration a case “of separating Siberia from Russia and formation of a republic similarly to the United States”, several peoples supporting autonomy of Siberian were convicted on this charge.

It can be said that they did not even dream of political independence for Siberia, but rather, at most, some kind of autonomous administration that would concentrate specifically on local interests. For Chokan, it was largely the same story.

Life in St. Petersburg appears to have been intellectually very rich and useful for him, since after it Valikhanov started to express his thoughts about the social, economic, religious, judicial and administrative issues of the Kazak steppe in his official memorandums and journal articles. His collected writings show the transformation overtime from a mere ethnographer – historian to an intellectual who became a representative, interpreter and defender of the Kazaks' interests, history and culture. It was mainly on the basis of his works and deeds during his presence in the steppe in the last years' of his life Chokan became one of the most venerated figures in Kazak history.

In spring of 1861 Chokan returned to his parents in the steppe. There are different opinions about why he left Petersburg. Some scholars claim that it was his intention of “going to the people”, as many educated peoples did then.<sup>147</sup> Other scholars say that that due to humid climate and heavy work load of his St. Petersburg life his illness progressed, so doctors advised him to return to the dry air of the steppe and a diet including mare's milk. This version is the most likely, since because in official documents and in his letters to friends worsening health was given as the reason of departure.

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<sup>147</sup> See for example, Irina Strelkova, *Valikhanov* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1983), p. 222.

Several friends accompanied him on his way home: Huseyin Feyizhan, Işmurat Ibragimov<sup>148</sup> and an unidentified person whom Strelkova claims to be a spy attached to Chokan by his seniors.<sup>149</sup>

Valikhanov's returning to the steppe was a very significant event for his relatives. Valikhanovs' *aul* migrated to a new pasture especially for Chokan. Many Kazaks met him on the way to greet the one who had personally met with the "White Tsar". His father, Chingis, prepared a feast in his honor. During the feast Chokan rebuked one of Kazak singers. He told to the singer not to mix Tatar words into the Kazak language, and that he could express more with the Kazak language than with the Tatar.<sup>150</sup>

In the *aul*, Chokan started to collect examples of Kazak oral literature again. He devoted himself completely to listening to native legends and songs and recording the best examples. Chingis invited the best singers and storytellers to give his son an opportunity to write down their songs and stories. Ibragimov wrote that Chokan sometimes listened to them until dawn.<sup>151</sup> And within a month of his return, Chokan showed signs of recovering.

In a letter to Dostoevskii, Chokan wrote that he wanted to become the Russian consul in Kashgar (probably in order to continue his scientific works), or otherwise to retire and to serve in his Horde as an elected sultan. He further wrote in his letter, "In the steppe I will be engaged in economy and trade; if I should be selected, I will be a just bureaucrat, probably will be more useful for my kinsmen than their illiterate and

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<sup>148</sup> Işmurat Mirasovich Ibragimov (-1891), The author of numerous works on history and ethnography of Kazaks and Turkmens, Chokan's friend and fellow countryman, also received his education in the Omsk Cadet Corps. Later Ibragimov occupied some low rank posts in the Siberian and Turkestan administration.

<sup>149</sup> Strelkova, p. 225.

<sup>150</sup> I. M. Ibragimov, "Vospominaniya o Chokane", in Ahmatova, pp. 111-112.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

savage sultans. In a year or two we will go to Petersburg, collect new books and ideas and go back to the Horde to the Kazaks. It would be good, really, my dear Fedya.”<sup>152</sup>

Wishing to advocate the interests of the ordinary Kazaks before the Russian officials and sultans, Chokan put forward his candidature for a post of senior – sultan in the Atbasar district at the beginning of 1862. In the election he collected 24 votes, and his opponent 14 votes. His opponent was a ~~non~~ – Chingisid illiterate Kazak. Chokan was confident that the governor – general would appoint him, an educated officer who had been awarded a medal, as a senior sultan. Even when the news reached him that his opponent had gone to Omsk to bribe the officials, he did nothing, believing that the governor - general would feel ashamed not to appoint him. But the result was different - the governor gave the post of senior – sultan to his opponent. This news greatly shocked him. This is clearly illustrated in another of his letters to Dostoevskii:

I thought somehow to become a sultan, to devote myself to work for the benefit of my compatriots, to protect them from the officials and despotism of the rich Kazaks. I think about it thus, I want to show my fellow countrymen by my example, how an educated sultan-governor could be useful to them. They would see, a truly educated person - not a Russian bureaucrat, on the basis of whose actions they had made up their opinion about Russian education. With this purpose I had agreed to be chosen as the senior-sultan in Atbasar district, but the elections were not conducted without the usual official tricks. Suddenly I received news from Gutkovskii that the governor – general does not want to ratify me for the post in any way. It is true, that our laws, in Russia, still are not written for the generals, it is also known to me that the generals love *natural*<sup>153</sup> Kazaks because they find more of the oriental servility in them. However in any circumstances, I have to admit, I did not expect such an outcome. What, my friend? You imagine our position (I speak about Kazaks, educated in Russia). Fellow countrymen consider us as turncoats and infidels because, you have to agree, it is difficult without belief, only for the sake of politics, to praise god five times a day, and generals do not like me because I have a little of this oriental servility. Hell knows, what is this? Should I [leave everything] and to go the steppes? Please, advise me what to do. To ask for justice, in my opinion,

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<sup>152</sup> “Pismo Chokana Dostoevskomy ot 14 yanvarya 1862” in *SSV*, Vol. 5, p. 147.

<sup>153</sup> Chokan means illiterate and savage.

it is the same as to ask for the constitution: you will be imprisoned and then sent to nowhere.<sup>154</sup>

As it is clearly visible from this letter, Chokan was seriously disappointed in the Russian administration. In addition, Chokan very seriously quarreled with his parents. His democratic point of view and willingness to use his knowledge and influence to help his people soon alienated him deeply not only from the officials and officers in Omsk, but also from his relatives, including his father and mother.<sup>155</sup>

In a letter to Maikov, Valikhanov wrote:

My relatives ... have many prejudices and qualities, both national and class. Unreasonable persistence and vanity especially stand out. Clearly, after that, they have too high an opinion of themselves, of [their own] intellect, etc. I live among them but am disconnected from them due to some insurmountable [barrier]. As I try to be closer to them, it becomes more and more impossible. Sometimes all goes well but as soon as the issue comes to some belief, opinion, serious conversation, we again separate.<sup>156</sup> With local sultans and rich men of the *black bone*<sup>157</sup> I also do not get on well, because they badly treat their former slaves who are now seemingly free, but live near them, not knowing how to leave. I demanded many times that they pay them a salary and treat them as humans, otherwise I threatened them with the law. As for the steppe proletariat<sup>158</sup> I am in great friendship with them, and we quickly understand each other.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> "Pismo Chokana Dostoevskomu ot 15 oktyabrya 1862 g.", *SSV*, Vol. 5, pp. 150-152.

<sup>155</sup> Suleymenov and Moiseev, p. 51.

<sup>156</sup> The final reason of the split between Chokan and his parents was the wish of his father and mother to marry him with a daughter of his friend sultan. But the bride intended for him was in love with his younger brother; therefore Chokan refused to marry and informed his parents. This horrified his parents; his mother started talking about her milk, which had been spent vainly on Chokan. His father was afflicted with this circumstance that he solemnly declared that he would not bring up his children in an European way because they would be spoiled. Moreover Chokan told to them that he intended to marry his servant – girl and leave his father's *aul*. It was an unprecedented impudence on his side. According to the Kazak *adat* it was a very serious offence deserving severe punishment. His father declared that he would not let out Chokan alive. The crisis was resolved only due to the intervention of his uncle and brothers. First the girl, then Chokan was released. But soon he split up with her; most likely he did it so that not to marry the sultan's daughter. In Ibragimov, pp. 112-114.

<sup>157</sup> *Black bone* means those of non-Chingisid origin.

<sup>158</sup> Chokan here means poor Kazaks.

<sup>159</sup> Margulan found letters of such servants addressed to Chokan asking for his help.

I see now, that is difficult for one to struggle with everything, I see that the truth, though it is bright, cannot get rid of the most incorrect errors when they are time-honored.<sup>160</sup>

The disagreements with his relatives led Chokan to leave for Omsk and never come back. There, he decided to leave the military and to work as a correspondent.<sup>161</sup> It did not work out. He was invited to the legal commission of the Siberian administration and was occupied in issues related to the judicial reform planned to be carried out in the steppe. The Russian government had decided to bring the legislation of the steppe closer to the Russian standards, and for this purpose the commission was constituted. Chokan was invited as the expert on the Kazak *adat*. He spent several months with the commission traveling in the steppe, and visited many sultans, *biys*, and ordinary Kazaks asking for their opinions. As a result he wrote one of his most elaborate works expressing his thoughts, which were highly critical of the Russian administration, sultans, and rich Kazaks.<sup>162</sup>

Living in Omsk between 1863-1864 Chokan dreamed of going to Petersburg again, but due to his weak health and some other reasons he could not do so. In March 1864 he joined a military expedition under the command of Colonel Mikhail G. Chernyaev. The task of the expedition was to take several Khokand fortresses in South Kazakhstan. He planned to go to St. Petersburg after the end of this expedition.<sup>163</sup> Before the expedition Chernyaev was advised by the general – governor not to reject peace

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<sup>160</sup> "Pismo Chokana A. N. Maikovu ot 6 dekabrya 1862 g.", A. H. Margulan ed., *Izbrannye proizvedeniya. Chokan Valikhanov* (Almaty: Kazgosizdat, 1958), pp. 566-567. Henceforth will be shown as *IPV*.

<sup>161</sup> *IPV*, p. 567. He requested Maikov to talk with editor of *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti* newspaper or another newspaper close to Maikov, if he could work as its correspondent in Central Asia.

<sup>162</sup> "Zapiska o sudebnoi reforme", *SSV*, Vol. 4, pp. 77-104; *IPV*, pp. 196-235.

<sup>163</sup> "Pismo Chokana K. K. Gutkovskomu ot 24 marta 1864 g.", *SSV*, Vol. 5, p. 161; *IPV*, p. 580.

proposals and to make preliminary negotiations with the local population. Chokan was assigned to participate in such negotiations.<sup>164</sup>

During the campaign to capture of the Avliyeata fortress, Valikhanov was angered by a number of atrocities committed against the population of the city, which were permitted by Chernyaev. Unhappy with such actions, he left the expedition (initially, his military superiors wanted to prosecute him for desertion, but they changed their mind in view of the delicate situation there) and set off towards Vernyi.<sup>165</sup> From Vernyi he went to the *aul* of Tezek, the senior sultan of the Great Kazak Horde, and there he married Tezek's sister Aysari, a simple illiterate girl whose background was very distant from Chokan's previous life. Although Tezek was a senior sultan, he lived in a very primitive manner, away from all of the "fruits of civilization".

Living in the *aul*, Chokan again continued to record the historical legends of the Great Horde Kazaks. He was also in contact with his friends in Petersburg and Omsk. He closely watched the events in Western China after the revolt of the Dungans and conveyed information about these events to the Siberian administration.<sup>166</sup> He passed away due to tuberculosis in April 1865, just short of his thirtieth birthday.

### **Chokan and Islam**

Chokan Valikhanov with his knowledge of languages, his Russian military education, and his familiarity with the achievements of Russian oriental studies, was the

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<sup>164</sup> Margulan, "Ocherk...", p. 64.

<sup>165</sup> Z. V. Togan, pp. 548-549.

<sup>166</sup> Irina Strelkova, "Poslednii god Chokana", *Molodaya Gvardiya*, No. 4 (1996), pp. 226 – 227.

first and one of the most important native researchers and interpreters of Kazak history and culture. He collected valuable ethnographic information along with intelligence data about his people and the settled population of the Central Asia for the Asiatic Department and the Russian military. Being a descendant of the Chingisids, the rulers of the steppe for centuries, and the recipient of a European education, Valikhanov, in his own way, struggled for a comprehensive transformation of the imperial colonization policy towards the Kazaks.

In a communication intended to give information to the Siberian officials written in late 1863 or early 1864, he asked for direct state intervention and official dedication to spreading European enlightenment in the steppe. He advised the Siberian officials to stop the long-standing state support for the Islamic institutions and personnel among the Kazaks. He argued that “Islam cannot help the Russian or any other Christian government, and one cannot count on the loyalty of the mercenary Tatar clergy (*tatarskoe prodazhnoe dukhovenstvo*)”.<sup>167</sup> This was a continuation of the themes of his previous work, *Sledy shamanstva u Kirghizov* (Traces of Shamanism among the Kirghiz), in which he claimed that Islam was and remained an alien and marginal force, which “has still not eaten into our flesh and blood”.<sup>168</sup> The real Islam came only with the Russians, and “the Kirghiz children, educated by the fanatical Tatars, turned away from their ancestors’ customs, and started to persecute wherever they found old customs”.<sup>169</sup> The main argument of his work was that the Kazak religion was some kind of a mixture of both shamanism and Islam, but the fundamental basis of this belief was shamanism. The only visible effect of Islam was the giving of Islamic names to the previous

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<sup>167</sup> “O musulmanstve v stepi”, *SSV*, Vol. 4, p. 71.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> “Sledy shamanstva u Kirghizov”, *SSV*, Vol. 4, p. 49.

shamanistic concepts. He did, however, admit that the monotheistic culture of Islam had affected to some extent the shamanistic fundamentals, and that the religion of Kazaks was freed from idolatry, although not from the worship of nature, i.e. the sun and the moon.<sup>170</sup>

Valikhanov argued that even though Islam was yet marginal, it would cause “the division of the people in the future.” He elucidated this by stating that a “period of dual faith (*dvoeverie*)” still prevailed in the steppe, “like that in Rus’ during the time of the venerable Nestor.”<sup>171</sup>

Under the influence of the Tatar *mollas* and the Central Asian *ishans*, as well as our own proselytes, the Kazak people are becoming more and more Muslim... In general, a disastrous prospect of going through the Tatar period awaits the Kazak people on their way to European civilization, just as the Russians have had to pass through the Byzantine period. Moreover, what the Kazaks accept from the Tatars, except for a dead scholasticism, is capable only of impeding the development of thoughts and feelings. The Russian government should help us to get past the Tatar period.”<sup>172</sup>

Chokan was always a determined opponent of the Tatar *mollas*, considering them more dangerous than the Bukharan *mollas*, since they were more fanatical in proselytizing Islam.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, he called on the Russian government to cease its protection of Islam and *mollas*. He expressed his disappointment at the official policy of “affirming Islam, where it was not fully accepted by the people itself.” He repeated his argument that the Kazaks had been Muslims “in name only” and had formed a “particular Sunni schism in the Muhammadan world” before becoming subjects of the Russian Empire. They had never accepted the “Muslim laws,” which “were introduced

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> This also seen in his other works, for example in a work about Kashgar, he wrote that the Tatar version of Islam was more scholastic and reactionary. Also he accused Tatar *mollas* of barbaric attitude to Central Asian historical and cultural heritage.

to the steppe by the government's initiative."<sup>174</sup> He accused "the great Speranskii" of acting as the "apostle of Muhammad" in the Siberian steppe because he appointed the *mollas* and proposed the construction of mosques and Tatar schools in the districts' administrative centers. Amazed that such a figure as Speranskii had become the "spreader of such an ignorant and savage teaching," Chokan assumed that the only possible explanation lay in fact that it had been unseemly in Speranskii's days to recognize as Russian subjects a people that had no religion or to acknowledge "officially a group of schismatics, even if Muslims," and at the same time had not been "politically correct to convert the Kazaks to Christianity".<sup>175</sup>

In the meantime, Valikhanov indicated that the Orenburg administration had already started to take measures to curb the "development of Islam" among the Kazaks and had prohibited Tatars from being *mollas* or residing for an unlimited periods of time in the steppe. In Siberia, in comparison, the Russian administration had continued to promote Speranskii's "protective system" in relation to Islam; thanks to this policy, Islam had made "gigantic steps" among the Kazaks of the region. He believed that the "half-literate *mollas* from among the Tatars and fanatic emigrants from Central Asia, who presented themselves as saints," had engaged in "our moral corruption" (*rastlenie*) with the support of the Russian government. "We must know," Chokan warned, "what kind of people among us in the steppe occupy priestly offices, to whom is entrusted the moral state of the Kazak people, and their legal proceedings with respect to such a difficult social question as marriage." Inveighing against the Tatars who made up the

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<sup>174</sup> "Zapiska o sudebnoi reforme", SSV, Vol. 4, pp. 77-104, p. 99

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-100.

majority of these *mollas* (“swindlers without exception, swine”<sup>176</sup>), he condemned the “dark reign” of a “people ignorant in the highest degree, hardly able to read and write, but infected with dark fanaticism and savage superstition,” whose aim was to “convert Kazaks to that blind religious hypocrisy, so that the Tatars themselves will live freely.”<sup>177</sup>

Expressing his views about the education among the Kazaks, he wrote: “now it lies uncontrolled in the hands of the Tatar *mollas*.” Referring to the authority of one of the most renowned Russian orientalists in the nineteenth century, he noted that Professor Ilya N. Berezin had shown, through the study of the Qur’an and the traditions, that “Islam and education are incompatible, even hostile notions, one supplanting the other.”<sup>178</sup> According to Chokan, the reformation of Islam was impossible, since it was a “religion formed on the wild barbaric prejudices of the nomadic Arabs of the sixth century, the traditions of spiritualists, Yids, and the assorted hocus-pocus of the Persian magicians of the same period.”<sup>179</sup>

Worse than the Islam of Turks or the Persians, he insisted, was “the Tatar Islam [which] represented a form of “Puritanism”. “Tatars reject poetry, history, mathematics, philosophy and all natural sciences,” Valikhanov claimed, “regarding them as temptations for the weak human mind, and confine themselves to Muslim scholastics and casuistry alone.”<sup>180</sup> Another of his claims was that the Kazaks had learned from the Tatars to read books and poems written in the Tatar and Chagatay languages. This

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<sup>176</sup> Chokan wondered, “Whether there are such greedy extortionists anywhere on the earth like our Russian Muslim clergy,” adding that the *mufti* in Orenburg also demanded bribes.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

exposed the Kazaks to the teachings of Shamil, the formidable opponent of the Russian rule in the North Caucasus, and other kinds of “fanatical chaos”.<sup>181</sup>

Valikhanov urged the Russian government to turn away from concerning themselves only with *barimta* and “generally disciplining the Kirghiz people” to the education of the Kazaks and to scrutiny of the *mollas* and dervishes corrupting them.<sup>182</sup> To curb the harmful Islamic influence, he proposed several measures, and also warned the government not to undertake any kind of repressive actions against Islam or any other means to promote Christianity. These measures would be: first, excluding Kazaks from the Tatar *muftiate* administration and appointing a Kazak as the *mufti* in the steppe; second, appointing only local Kazaks as *mollas* in the districts; and third, forbidding all proselytizers coming from Central Asia to preach Islam among the Kazaks.<sup>183</sup> In the area of education, he advised opening Russian schools instead of Tatar *medreses*. As a result of such measures, the Kazaks would of themselves come closer to Russia rather than under compulsion.<sup>184</sup>

In addition, Valikhanov suggested the practice of administration through “customary law” (*obychnoe pravo*) as a possible alternative to the government’s promotion of Islam. According to him, this practice had potential as a medium for the gradual integration of the Kazaks into the mainstream life of the Russian Empire.

The official practice of relying on customary law had a long history in Siberia as well as in the steppe. Speranskii had included the Kazaks in the category of *inorodtsy* (“people of other stock”) in the 1822 statute. The statute allocated a separate legal status to *inorodtsy* that gave them the “right” to use their traditional legal norms and custom.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

Among the Kazaks, however, there was disagreement as to whether the *sharia* (Islamic law) was a part of Kazak customary law. The Russian officials were inclined to agree with the opponents of the Islamic law because the tsarist administrators and the ethnographers considered that the *sharia* was alien to Kazak customs.<sup>185</sup> Therefore Islamic law was not placed on the same level as the Kazak customs, and the majority of the Kazaks were forced to go without Islamic law courts during the period of Russian administration. However, the practice was somewhat different: the local Russian officials themselves were to interpret to what extent the customary law should be applied for every single local community.

Valikhanov claimed that in the interests of impeding the “harmful influence of any ultra-clerical direction on the social development of peoples” and combating the *mollas* and their “fanaticism,” the state should remove marriage and divorce issues from the control of the Muslim authorities and “in accordance with the people’s demand, leave [such] cases as previously to the court of the *biys*”.<sup>186</sup> According to the opinions of the sultans and *biys* concerning the projected judicial reforms that Chokan collected, all of them desired “to preserve the customs of our ancestors, which completely satisfy our kin-based way of life (*rodovoi byt*), intact”.<sup>187</sup> The sultans and *biys* of Bayan-Aul also requested the tsarist law-makers to intervene on their behalf and render assistance against the *mollas* since the current practice challenged the authority of the *biys*.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> The primary point of reference for imperial administration was Aleksei Levshin’s, *Opisanie Kirghiz-kazachikh, ili Kirghiz kaisatskikh ord i stepei* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Karla Kraiya, 1832) which claimed that Islam was too weak and could easily die out among Kazaks.

<sup>186</sup> “Zapiska o sudebnoi reforme”, p. 103.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-130.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

## CONCLUSION

The educated Kazaks, wishing to improve the situation of the ordinary Kazaks, wrote articles in newspapers and journals aimed to draw attention to such matters. Some of them contributed to the Russian policy, confirming the views about Kazak society already held by the tsarist officials. With the establishment of Russian schools in the frontier settlements in the early 1840s and the permission granted to the Kazaks to enter the regular tsarist army, the sons of the Kazak sultans emerged as both intermediaries and allies of the Russian proponents for change in the state policy in the steppe. Also a mediator between the indigenous elites and tsarist officialdom, Chokan presented evidence of the local religion and customs that made Islam appear alien to the Kazaks.

Kazak society and the Kazak intellectuals who spoke for it were divided on the issue of the role of Islam among the Kazaks. The Kazaks who had advanced through the Russian education system and military service were also split on the question of Islam. Some expressed the idea that Islam as represented by the Tatars or orthodox Islam was alien to the culture of the Kazak nomads, while others thought that Islam endangered the Russian rule in the steppe, as the authority gap left after the Chingisid sultans was filled by the Tatar *mollas*.

Muhammed Salih Babacanov, an ethnographer and military officer,<sup>189</sup> discussed the situation in the Bokey Horde. In an article published in the St. Petersburg daily *Severnaya pchela*. Babacanov wrote that “every Kirghiz is a Muhammadan of the Sunni sect in his soul”. This fact went unnoticed, according to Babacanov, because of the Kazaks’ “shaky knowledge of the rules of religion, which they combined with the popular habits.”<sup>190</sup> Since the 1830s, however, the Tatar *mollas* had introduced literacy and knowledge to the Kazaks. Although he claimed that “Islam brought enlightenment to the Kirghiz” and made them better Russian subjects, he remained very critical of the Tatars and their “brutality of pedagogy”. He considered them as outsiders to Kazak society who were “corrupting the Kirghiz by adding superstitious beliefs and legends to Koranic doctrines”<sup>191</sup>.

Similarly to some of the Kazak intellectuals of the later period, Valikhanov held a very negative opinion of the mediating role assumed by the Tatars. It can be said that to a great extent Chokan Valikhanov shared stereotypes disseminated in the Russian press about the cunning and predatory nature of the Tatars, who were exploiting the naïve Kazaks.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, like the Kazak Muslim activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he insisted that the Kazak style of Islam was distinct from the Tatar one and remained distinct from Tatar or Bukharan influence.

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<sup>189</sup> Muhammed Salih Babacanov: Kazak ethnographer from Bokey Horde. He graduated from Orenburg Cadet Corps in 1851. He worked for years as a translator and clerk in the Bokey Horde administration. Several of his ethnographic and archeological works were published in the journal of Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

<sup>190</sup> “Zametki Kirghiza o Kirghizakh,” *Severnaya pchela*, 5 January 1861, quoted in D. Crews, p. 292; N. P. Ivlev, *Nakhodka kraevedy* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1977), pp. 11-12.

<sup>191</sup> Ivlev, p. 12.

<sup>192</sup> In the official newspapers of the Kazak steppes around that time, there were significant number of articles accusing Tatar merchants, *mollas* and settlers in socio-economic manipulation and corruption of the Kazaks (charging high prices, distributing hashish and opium among Kazaks). So according to the press the Tatars were causing impoverishment and degradation of the Kazaks.

Chokan's period coincided with the fundamental restructuring of the imperial policy and institutions in the Great Reforms after the Russian defeat in the Crimean War. Together with the proposed major judicial reforms that were to follow the abolition of serfdom, the Russian government planned to make judicial reforms in native regions so that the imperial law would exist on a more uniform basis throughout the empire. Valikhanov opposed the encroachment of the imperial administration into the steppe through use a long-standing principle in the imperial borderlands, which left all matters to the local officials and ignored the interests of the ordinary people. According to him, a Russian administration, which made use of the Kazak customs and customary law, could be a good alternative and would counter the influence of Islam, as it would not alienate the Kazaks and would bring them closer to the way of life of Russia proper.

Chokan's life also coincided with the period when the local Russian officials in Siberia and Orenburg started to realize that the Tatar Muslim men of religious learning were more of detriment than benefit to Russian rule in the steppe. Although St. Petersburg had used the Volga – Ural Tatars in Central Asia as intermediaries, merchants, missionaries, and sometimes even as spies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the 1850s this situation started to change, as imperial authority in the region was by now unquestionable. Therefore, the need for Tatar “collaboration” was not as great as before. Moreover, the presence of the Tatars and their religious activities was turning out badly for Russian interests in the Kazak steppe.

Chokan's harsh opposition to Islam and particularly to the Tatars and their preachings, and his consideration of the Tatars as outsiders to the steppe, became increasingly influential among the local bureaucrats. Following the Russian ethnographers, Valikhanov provided scholarly evidence to the Siberian officials, which

supported the allegations about the predatory nature of the activities of the Tatar *mollas* who exploited the simple Kazaks. It would be seriously dangerous for someone to write something to the Russians that criticized their policy; such a critic would be liable to encounter harsh countermeasures, or at best would be neglected. In order to make his commentaries appear authoritative to the Siberian officials, Valikhanov referred to Russian scholarly works in making his assessment of Islam and Tatar *mollas* and added this to his criticism of Russian policy in the region.

Valikhanov stressed the essential irreligiosity of the Kazaks and the detrimental effects of the Tatar influence. According to him, as Kazak society became more and more Islamized by the Tatars, its development would be halted. Chokan claimed that the “Orthodox” or Tatar Islam would alienate the Kazaks from the Russian Empire by bringing religious fanaticism and intolerance to the Kazaks. As a result, the Kazaks would not integrate into the Russian Empire, which represented, according to him, civilization, education and, to the great extent, westernization. As Chokan was a student of Russian orientalism, he shared the latter’s misunderstandings of Kazak folk Islam, and he unjustly claimed that the Kazak religion was shamanistic. It would have been very difficult for Chokan to analyze what was actually intrinsic to the “Kazak religion” and what was a result of Tatar influence, since the Tatar *mollas*, tolerated by the Russian government, had already been preaching for more than a half century. Moreover, there were cultural - economic relations between the Kazaks and Tatars before the Russians came. The Volga-Ural Tatars, as a rule, had served as religious preachers (these preachers did not have to be *mullas*, because in general an ordinary Tatar knew the doctrines of Islam far better than an ordinary Kazak) to the nomadic Turks in the northern parts of the steppe since the times of the Golden Horde. The only sources

available to Chokan were the accounts of the Russian travelers like Levshin, who themselves could not properly understand the nature of Kazak Islam. Chokan repeated their mistakes by arguing that the Kazaks were not Muslims, although they claimed to be. According to him, the Kazaks' conscious identity as Muslims was not sufficient for them to be considered Muslims since they were largely unaware of the Islamic law and rituals; moreover some shamanistic leftovers still existed among them. His second mistake was confusion in the way he distinguished between Islam and shamanism. Of course, Chokan was quite knowledgeable about Islam, but this knowledge was too confined to works written in Russian, French and German. It would be inaccurate to argue that Chokan had an expert understanding of the laws and rituals of Islam, since he sometimes confused certain traditional Kazak beliefs that were practiced alongside Islam with Islamic ones and treated them as traditions introduced by Islam.

His personal association with Islam was very loose. It appears from the memoirs and letters about him that Chokan did not perform any Islamic duties. Chokan once told Potanin: "I could not marry a Russian girl because I want to serve my people, and for this purpose I should remain a Muslim."<sup>193</sup> Religion was a part of culture, and Chokan accepted Islam to the degree he considered it as a part of Kazak culture. Nonetheless, according to him, Islam was a marginal element among the Kazaks, and one that was a barrier to the development of the Kazak society.

In a majority of the academic literature, especially the Soviet, Chokan Valikhanov was claimed to be devoutly pro-Russian, because he served in the Russian army and even spied for it, wrote only in Russian, and was critical of both the Kazakh traditional society and the missionary role of the Tatars who were promoting Islam in

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<sup>193</sup> Potanin, "Biograficheskie svedeniya..." in Ahmatova, p. 55.

the steppe. He was in the main critical of the Russian administration, which gave priority to the interests of the sultans and tribal chieftains. For him, the planned judicial reforms were anti-populist, hostile to the interests of the masses, and a reactionary policy of tsarism aimed only at promoting the Russian rule among the Kazaks. Insofar as he expressed, such thoughts, he could hardly be considered a Russophile.

Valikhanov was convinced that the Kazak people were in dire need of development. For him, this development could be provided only by Russian assistance, and not by the Kazan Tatars or the preachers from Maveranuehr. Although he referred to Asia as the cradle of the human being and held a very high opinion of the Timurid period's achievements (which, according to him, were destroyed by the Bukharan inquisition and Tatar negligence), he considered Central Asia's current situation as "...very sad, some kind of pathological crisis of development." So, for him, the only option for Kazak development was cooperation with the Russians.

In Chokan's approach to Russian colonialism in Central Asia two aspects should be considered. On the one hand, he believed that Russia's colonization played a progressive role in the histories of backward Central Asian peoples. Convinced of such a Russian role, he worked to bringing these people under the Russian rule. (He held a negative opinion of his uncle Kenesari Kasimuli's, anti-Russian struggle because, for him, it was a reactionary and anti-populist movement aimed only at promoting Kenesari's personal interests.) He did not object to the use of military measures when it was impossible to subjugate these nations peacefully, but he recommended to the Russian authorities that they treat the native people humanely. However, once Valikhanov actually witnessed cases of cruel treatment, he became indignant and refused to participate in brutalities against his people. On other hand, he was a very

serious opponent of the Russian colonial methods in the borderlands. Chokan several times told his Russian friends that the *inorodetsy* were treated like dogs in Siberia, and that the Cossacks were engaged in plundering and were free to do anything to punish Kazaks. In his official memoranda, he criticized Russian policy's ignoring of Kazaks' needs. In this sense, Chokan was not merely an academic, but also an authentic patriot of his people who raised his voice against oppression of the Kazaks.

To some extent Valikhanov remains an enigmatic figure. He clearly loved his people and intended to serve them. Only twelve years old when he entered the Omsk Cadet Corps, he was exposed at an early age to the influence of both military – bureaucratic officials and revolutionary reforms inspired by Western liberal ideas. This close association with the Russian westernizers continued throughout his life, leaving clear traces on his way of thinking. Chokan was to a great extent motivated by the Russian intelligentsia and was highly interested in their reformism and acceptance of the western democratic ideals. As reflected in his writings and in the memoirs of his Russian friends, Valikhanov saw progress only in rational – materialistic modern science and western democratic society, which he believed could be achieved in Central Asia only through Russia. Therefore, he worked as a Russian spy in Kashgar and participated in the capture of several cities in which the majority of the population was Kazak, although later he left the Russian army because he was dismayed by the kind of treatment his co-religionists received from Russian troops. Considering Chokan's love for his people and other nomad peoples under Russian rule, it is interesting to consider the question of whether he ever thought of becoming an open enemy of tsarist rule in the steppe. Probably, seeing the futility of such actions, Valikhanov decided that the best way to serve his people would be to be a scholar who enlightened the Russians about the

real conditions in the steppe, wrote critical accounts, and researched, protected and promoted the Kazak culture as he himself understood it. As was obvious in several of his articles, the aim of his study was to change the perception of the Russians, and for that matter that of the whole world, that nomads were barbaric people with no knowledge of civilization. On the contrary, he claimed that the Kazaks were a peaceful people possessing their own distinct civilization with a very rich oral literature, and, most importantly, that they were open to learning from Russia or from the West. Moreover, he believed that the Kazaks occupied “the first place among the non-Russian peoples of the Russian Empire.”<sup>194</sup> Therefore, his studies were aimed at proving these features of the Kazak nation. Perhaps Chokan’s preoccupation with the history and culture of the Central Asian peoples was a result of his interest or academic career in oriental studies. As Balgamiş claims, whatever his reasons were early in life “his return to Kazakhstan and his willingness even to alienate his own family by working against Russian influence in the region both seem to indicate that his persona as a Kazakh patriot won out in the end.”<sup>195</sup>

Chokan Valikhanov was without a doubt the first Kazak intellectual who raised important issues about the Kazak nation, culture, and identity. The value of his scholarly works to the field of Kazak culture and history is unquestionable, as his contribution to the formation of a Kazak national consciousness. Valikhanov did not live to the early twentieth century, when all of the Kazak intellectuals turned against the Russian Empire. They were bitterly disappointed in the face of the massive resettlement of the Russian and Ukrainian peasants to the Kazak steppe, which was organized by the Russian government, and which resulted in the nomadic Kazaks being driven to semi-desert and

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<sup>194</sup> Suleymenov and Moiseev, p. 75.

<sup>195</sup> Balgamiş, p. 199.

desert regions. The Kazak nationalist intellectuals of the early twentieth century claimed Chokan's legacy as the one that started the development of a written national literature and awakened the consciousness of the Kazaks to their own native culture and history.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> See Mir Yakup Dulatuli, "Şoqan Şingisuli Velihan", *Qazaq*, No. 71, 73, 76, 77 (1914) in *Qazaq Tarihi*, No. 6 (1994), pp. 27-32.

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