

The Alash movement and the question of Kazakh ethnicity

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This paper considers how the Alash movement, the Kazakh national movement led by Russian-educated Kazakh intellectuals in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, redefined Kazakh ethnicity into the Kazakh nation. Aimed at modernizing Kazakh society by declaring itself a nation, the movement used the myth of common descent. It is not surprising, then, that the movement took on the name of Alash, a mythical figure believed to have been the father of all three Kazakh *zhuz* (tribal confederations). This paper examines the discourse around Kazakhness and its distinction from its Muslim neighbors with respect to five factors; the “true” myth of common descent of Kazakhs, Kazakh history as one of common fate, a nomadic way of life, the weak links to Islam among Kazakhs, and, finally, the legitimization of the Alash leaders as the legitimate speakers for the Kazakh nation. This analysis, in turn, may provide a better understanding of the ways in which social and intellectual movements can redefine belonging, depending on historical circumstances and opportunities and constraints in the social sphere.

Keywords: Nationalism; ethnicity; Kazakhstan; Alash Orda; empire

Introduction

National history-writing, mainly driven by indigenous intellectuals, is an evident part of the nation-building process, helping to shore up the emerging nation’s legitimacy. I argue that it also provides the indigenous intellectuals involved in this process a method for building social legitimacy. Hutchinson argues that the inner strategy of social transformation is to transform the accepted concept of the past so that it takes on a new activist meaning. The external strategy, on the other hand, looks at “the creation of a cult of sacrifice for the nation by a revolutionary elite whose moral authority would then enable them to override existing myth structures and systems of authority” (Hutchinson 2004, 110). The result, he argues, is an overlaying of ethnic traditions rather than their obliteration (Hutchinson 2004).

Cultural nationalism (Hutchinson 1987), whereby elite intellectuals were involved in the formation of a Kazakh “national community” in the course of an ethno-historical revival (Hutchinson 1999, 392), was an important element in the practices of the Alash Ordists. This revival is recurring, according to Hutchinson, who argues that “[t]he process of national identity construction [...] is frequently a long drawn-out process of trial and error of fierce contestation” (1999, 397). Furthermore, he argues that “[t]he primary aim of cultural nationalists is to revive what they regard as a distinctive and

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primordial collective personality which has a name, unique origins, history, culture, homeland, and social and political practices” (Hutchinson 1999, 394). Seen this way, it is a rediscovery, rather than invention, of national culture, as elites look to their past and find lessons for the present. They also look to the past to legitimize new policies and innovations (Smith 1986, 174).

In this paper, I show that the Alash Ordists utilized the myth of Alash for both external and internal strategies (Hutchinson 2004). I will start by analyzing the field in which the Alash Ordists found themselves in the pre-revolutionary era in the Kazakh steppe, a field in which their social position was questioned. They differed not only with the approach of the Russian imperial administration, but also with the Muslim elites and their understandings of nationhood. This difference stemmed from social, historical, and, most importantly, political factors. I analyze the different positions of the indigenous elites in the non-Russian, Muslim, and mainly Turkic political field. I use a comparative analysis to highlight the similarities in interest and social position of both Bashkirs and Kazakhs vis-à-vis the Russian All-Muslim and the Kokand autonomous movements. I also analyze the first conceptualization of the boundaries of the Kazakh nation initiated by the Alash Ordists, which served to legitimize not only Kazakh nationhood, but also the elite’s position as the true leaders of the Kazakh nation. This was accomplished by their rewriting of the story of the mythical progenitor of the Kazakhs, Alash. In the final section of the paper, I look at the way in which the separation from other Central Asian movements, in particular the Kokand Autonomy movement, took place in practice.

The Alash Orda movement has been thoroughly studied in Kazakhstan, especially in the works of Dina Amanzholova (1994, 2013) and Mambet Koigeldiev (1995). Amanzholova’s monograph *Kazakhskii avtonomizm i Rossiia: Istorii dvizheniia Alash* (1994) and her more recent *Alash: istoricheskii smysl demokraticeskogo vybora* (2013) provide excellent background on the emergence of the Alash Orda movement as part of the intellectual and political modernization of the Kazakh elite. This paper covers a subtle aspect of the movement that involves a closer look at the self-definition of the Kazakh nation. In other words, it looks at the “contents” of Kazakh nationhood.

Between nomads and settled peoples

As the political dividing line between the Alash Ordists and other movements in the region in the early twentieth century ran along the nomadic and sedentary line, it is important to look first at the differences between these peoples. The system of identification is also an important aspect, which I outline below. The main difference between the nomadic and agrarian Central Asian peoples is highlighted by Eitzen (1998, 437):

While settled Central Asian ethnicities (Uzbek, Uighur, and Tajik) largely identify themselves regionally, Kazak clan affiliations trace out continuity with specific or more general ancestral lines. The regional linkages that emphasize spatial proximity rather than generational continuity or change over time are identified with the agrarian, village, or urban locality.

As such, there was an overriding dividing line between the Kazakhs and the southern Central Asian people. This was since the southern Central Asian people were more influenced by their Arabic and Persian neighbors in religious and linguistic terms. Uzbeks, Uigurs, and Tajiks were settled peoples, whereas Kazakhs followed a pastoral mode of life, which meant that social identification worked differently too. The intergenerational and genealogical structure of identification was a typical trait of Kazakhs, whereas regional identification was much more important for the sedentary peoples. Moreover, the differences in practices meant that the nomadic peoples of the steppe and mountains had

weaker religious affiliations than their sedentary and urban counterparts (Hayit 1971, 186). As such, through Islamic teaching and practice, the argument could be made that sedentary Central Asians had a capacity to imagine solidarity with fellow Muslims as part of the Ummah.

Anderson has argued that the Ummah can be understood as a classical community linked by a sacred language and symbolism of, for instance, Quranic Arabic:

Take only the example of Islam: if Maguindanao met Berbers in Mecca, knowing nothing of each other's languages, incapable of communicating orally, they nonetheless understood each other's ideographs, because the sacred texts they shared existed only in classical Arabic. In this sense, written Arabic functioned like Chinese characters to create a community out of signs, not sounds. ([1991] 2006, 13)

It can be argued that if a religion pervaded the social practice of a group of people, as with the case of the sedentary Central Asians, there would be a deeper appreciation of this "classical community." In contrast, this imagination of the "classical community" of the Ummah would be weaker among the Kazakhs, for whom Islamic practice was of marginal importance.

The term "classical community," however, must be used with caution, as it does not form part of the modern nation as we have come to accept it. As Anderson writes,

But even though the sacred languages made such communities as Christendom imaginable, the actual scope and plausibility of these communities cannot be explained by sacred script alone: their readers were, after all, tiny literate reefs on top of vast illiterate oceans. ([1991] 2006, 15)

In other words, the imagination of the Ummah was strong among sedentary Central Asians, but it did not constitute an imagined community as modern nationhood does.

Land issues

The land issue was especially pressing for the Kazakhs. The legalization of peasant migration into Kazakh lands with the Resettlement Act of 1889 by the Tsarist government quickly led to the economic decline of nomadic Kazakhs.

Spurred by a shortage of land in eastern Russia, peasants started moving illegally onto Kazakh steppe lands in the eighteenth century. The Resettlement Act legally had been meant to allocate only lands that nomads deemed unnecessary to peasants for agriculture. But the allocations did not consider the migration routes of pastoral nomads, who upon returning from summer or winter pasturelands found them occupied by peasants. In addition, most of the land reallocations were good pasturelands that the nomads needed for cattle breeding (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56).

The Bashkirs had a similar problem as, according to Bokeikhanov, much of their land had been sold. He writes:

The Bashkirs are, like the Kazakhs, lazy. They are losing their land to sales. Moreover, the settler peasants have bought it. The land in Turkestan is being traded, like children trading *asyq*:¹ those who profit from these trades are not the local indigenous people, but the more civilized sly people.² (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 58)

This was considered a scandal, as high-ranking ministry staff had put up state property for public sale and illicitly profited from these sales (Masoero 2010, 12). Traditionally, the Bashkirs in the northwestern Ufa province were considered an ethnic group and estate (*soslovie*), thanks to a royal decree from the sixteenth century that gave the Bashkirs special land-owning privileges in their territory. In the late nineteenth century, reform of the estate system put all members of all ethnic groups on an equal footing (Gorenburg 1999, 560–561). The consequences of colonization and land purchase and distribution

were made public only during the years 1905–1907, after Duma representatives raised these issues in parliament (Noack 2000, 398–399). As a result, the reappropriation of these lands became one of the main concerns for both the Bashkirs and the Kazakhs.

This land problem led to the emergence of the Bashkir autonomous movement. It began as a reaction to the All-Russian Muslim congress, in which the leading Tatars did not wish to consider the land problems that both the Bashkirs and the Kazakhs were experiencing. According to Zeki Velidi Togan, the leader of the Bashkir movement:

The people of Kazan [the Tatars] rejected the Kazakh and Bashkir proposals regarding the land issues by stating, “These are issues that only concern Kazakhs and Bashkirs” and reiterating that the Russian Muslim Congress was only concerned with religious matters; i.e. the establishment of a mufti office, Sheikh ul-Islam and education.³ (1969, 156)

Frustrated, the Bashkirs and Kazakhs set up a commission of three people to discuss the land issues (Togan 1969). Togan himself was a member, following an agreement with the Kazakhs.

Discrimination

The Tatar intellectuals had no sympathy for the Bashkirs’ cause. On the contrary, in their publications based in Kazan or Orenburg, the Tatar intellectuals presented stereotypes of Bashkirs.

The papers denounced the Bashkirs as lazy drunks who lacked agricultural skills and so sold their lands without any further thought, spent their money far too hastily, and sank into poverty in the cities. This negative picture of the Bashkirs would quickly be reinforced in the following years.⁴ (Noack 2000, 399)

As we can see, educated Tatars’ derisive views of the Bashkirs, as well as their disagreements over land issues (Noack 2000, 516), led to the Bashkirs being isolated from the All-Muslim national movement.

Moreover, certain Tatar intellectuals frowned upon the dispersal of Russian Muslims into separate nations and national movements. For instance, Dzhamaletdin Validov criticized and delegitimized the Bashkirs’ call for autonomy and nationhood. He argued that if they wanted to be regarded as a special nation because of their modes of life, the Kazakhs would also need to become a special nation. He further argued that the word Tatar referred not only to those from Kazan, but also to all Muslims in the Russian Empire, among them the Bashkirs. The aspiration of the people to separate themselves and establish their own nations would ultimately lead to the death of the Muslim people (Noack 2000, 518). However, this understanding does not seem to have been shared by the Kazakhs or the Bashkirs, who appeared to be more oriented toward nationalism than toward an All-Muslim movement.

Social position of Kazakhs and Bashkirs

As a result of these adverse positions, the Kazakhs and Bashkirs enjoyed less political clout than the Tatars. The Tatars had had close relations with the Russian Empire for decades, and the administration accepted the All-Muslim Movement. The Kazakhs were considered ignorant people who did not deserve a seat in the State Duma (Bokeikhanov 1994, 101), and the Bashkirs were put in the same category as the Tatars. The need then arose for the Kazakhs to distinguish themselves from other movements, beginning with the creation of a national history to delineate the boundaries between the Kazakhs and their neighbors. In the following section, I show how this was accomplished in the Kazakh context.

The tradition of *shezhyre* among Kazakhs

The tradition of the genealogic register, *shezhyre*, provided the main form of nomadic organization. Economically it determined the division of pasturelands and annual migration routes, and politically it helped clans form political alliances (Esenova 2002, 16). Therefore, the loss of one's genealogy meant a loss of status and material resources. The *shezhyre* not only determined the knowledge of one's own property, but also provided "knowledge of the ecological environment and the skills necessary to be a successful nomad" (Dave 2007, 33). Naturally, the *shezhyre* was not set in stone. For instance, some clans rewrote their genealogies in order to band together with a stronger khan or ruler, as the Kangly, Chaichkly, and Kereit clans did when they separated from the Uly zhuz (Greater Horde) and joined the Orta zhuz (Middle Horde) (Sabol 2003, 16).⁵

Dave (2007) argues that the genealogy was the most precious possession of nomads, since they lacked material markers or written chronicles of group identity (Dave 2007, 33). In addition to encompassing the genealogy of the tribes, it explained historical events, beliefs, and personal reminiscences. In this way, although it was mainly a genealogical reference, it was also used as an oral history by the Kazakh tribes. It was an important chronicle of group identity, and differentiated them from the other Turkic and Muslim groups who were linguistically, religiously, and culturally close to them but radically different in their modes of life as well as their habitus (Bourdieu 1990, 52–65).

They were accustomed to this habitus (Bourdieu 1990) through which they made sense of the world. The habitus is both structured and structuring, and it becomes an unconscious practice: "The 'unconscious' is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces in the second natures of habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, 78–79). The *shezhyre* was, in the imagination of the Kazakhs, the way in which they made sense of the social world, and they did not question it. This was the social structure through which the nomads understood social organization, and it was up to the secular intellectuals to bring about the discontinuity of this habitus. Smith (1986) offers useful insights as to the emergence of this discontinuity.

If Kazakhs are to be understood as an *ethnie* (Smith 1986), then they are to be understood as a would-be nation. As Smith writes,

As a result of changes in commerce and trading patterns [...], and in the rise of secular intelligentsia and mass culture and education [...] more and more *ethnie*, or their intelligentsia, began to see their often-declining communities as would-be nations. (1986, 155)

The would-be nation had to be conceptualized scientifically, delegitimizing the traditional understanding of the continuity of kinship and blood lineage. Smith explains:

But the rise of science, utilitarian philosophies and acquisitive materialism has eroded traditions and promoted a secular conception of history. With the waning of beliefs in heaven and hell, the privatization of beliefs and the reaction against "meaningless rituals," the ethnic past of the community has been sundered from its religious anchorage; and men and women have had to look elsewhere for that immortality which so many desire. Many have found it in the idea of posterity. (1986, 176)

On the power of blood relations among Kazakhs, Alikhan Bokeikhanov, who would later become the leader of the Alash movement, said:

[The idea of] Blood relations among the Turkic tribes of the Greater, the Middle, and the Small Hordes [sic] is very strong. Kyrgyz [Kazakh] people call themselves "children of the three *zhuz*." If the question [about identity] comes from a Kyrgyz, then he names his Horde and lineage. Every Kyrgyz [Kazakh] lineage has a unique military cry, which is usually the name of the most popular person [who] lived among them. The cry of all Kyrgyz [Kazakh] is Alash, which is the name of their mythical ancestor. (Bokeikhanov 1910, as cited in Esenova 2002, 17)

As we see here, even in his scientific work on the Kazakhs, Bokeikhanov emphasized the power of the belief of common descent, even though the tribal separations caused much competition and animosity among Kazakhs.⁶

The name of the government established in 1917, the Alash Orda Autonomous Government, shows how instrumental this belief was in creating solidarity within, and gaining mass support of, the groups of nomads who were faced with Russian imperial power. Not only did it serve as a myth of common action, but it also provided the two types of strategies that Hutchinson (2004) identified. The first, “inner,” strategy looked to transform the accepted concept of the past to take on an activist meaning. This would form the discontinuity of the habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and the transformation of power “from God (or his representatives) to originating peoples and their mythos. History replaced religion as the guide to collective identity and destiny” (Hutchinson 2004, 112). In the absence of strong religious affiliations among the Kazakhs, power had to be transformed from tribal ties and belief in blood lineage into a belief in the Kazakhs as a people and a nation. The second strategy is “external;” it creates a cult of sacrifice that can enable the elite to overcome the existing systems of authority (Hutchinson 2004, 110). It is supposed to work by “transferring authority from state to a national community animated from below, encouraging an upsurge of populist energies” (Hutchinson 2004, 115). This upsurge from below did not take place in the Alash Orda Autonomy due to historical contingencies and the difficulty of reaching the illiterate masses. However, these initial steps the intellectuals took paved the way for this to happen in the future, as it created a national cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997).

In the power field of the colonized and the colonizer, the imperial administration had more capital than the colonized people. This imbalance was exacerbated through the categorization of the Kazakhs as *inorodtsy*, resident aliens, who had no political representation and were exempt from military duty. Kazakh intellectuals attempted to improve their social position in the Russian Empire by establishing a national cultural capital. To do so, they sought to demonstrate that they possessed the hallmarks of a full-fledged nation, including a national history, whose development first entailed the rewriting of the *shezhyre*. In establishing the first national cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997), Kazakh intellectuals laid the first foundations of Kazakh nationhood.

Use of the myth of Alash

The importance of the *shezhyre* lies in its appropriation and rewriting, as the oral histories of the Kazakh genealogy became fixed with the first recording of the *shezhyre* in various publications between 1900 and 1925. Esenova argues that there are at least three consistent versions of the unified *shezhyre*, which were compiled by Meshhur Jusyp Kopey-Uly in 1873, Shäkarim Qudaiberdiuly (1911), and Mukhamedzhan Tynyshbaev in 1925, the last two having been affiliated with the Alash movement.

Each of the three *Shezhyre* versions is a 100-page genealogical account of the Kazakh historic tribes which focuses on the lineages that gave birth to Kazakh historic figures, political leaders, warriors, thinkers, and intellectuals, as well as distinguished citizens of the time the *Shezhyre* was written. Esenova (2002, 17)

Obviously, the written accounts of the *shezhyre* differed from one another. For a comparative analysis of these narratives, I will begin with an article published in the Kazakh journal *Aiqap*. I will then look at Bokeikhanov’s introduction to Kazakh history, published in 1913 in the *Qazaq* journal, and I will follow up with Shäkarim’s *shezhyre*.

Aiqap

In the first publication of the Kazakh journal *Aiqap* in 1911, contributor Kärım Bätishuly laid out the Kazakh *shezhyre*, *Qazaq shezhyresi*, as he heard it from his elders. Formally, the *shezhyre* was “known as a segmentary lineage system, in which a patrilineal unit traces its descent from a single progenitor, while a larger unit is subdivided into smaller components from parent lineages through a process of branching or segmentation” (Dave 2007, 33). Bätishuly’s *shezhyre* precisely follows this form. He argued that there was a man named Alash who lived under a certain Alasha Khan’s rule. The Turkic peoples originate from Alash, who was a happy man and had many children. He had two sons, Seyilkhan and Zheyilkhan, the second of whom had a son who would become Mayqy bii, who was also the father of Özbek and Sybiyan. Sybiyan was the father of Ayirqalpaq, who in turn had two sons, Qazaq and Sozaq. This is the point where the Kazakhs split into three hordes, as Qazaq had three sons: Ayqarys, Zhanarys, and Bekarys. They three ruled one each of the three hordes; the eldest ruled the Large Horde, the middle child the Middle Horde, and the youngest ruled the Small Horde. He concluded the article by stating that this is the proof that Alash was the progenitor of all Kazakhs and that any arguments among Kazakhs can be ended with one mention of Alash, as a reminder that they all come from one progenitor. He finished by stating that “these are the words heard from our elders. If there is anyone who knows more, we hope that they won’t hide their knowledge, but write it and share it with the people”⁷ (Bätishuly [1911] 1995, 57).

Shäkarim

Shäkarim Qudaiberdiuly (1858–1931) was a poet, translator, and historian who was one of the first to attempt to write a complete *shezhyre* of the Kazakhs. He was also Abai Kunanbayev’s nephew (Auezova 2014, 210). Although he was not actively engaged in the politics of the Alash movement, he was ideologically affiliated with it. He starts his *shezhyre* by first tracing all humankind to Adam, and from there he divides the people, with the Turkic stemming from Noah’s son Yafas. He argues that he uses genealogies from different peoples in the world, including Chinese as well as Turkic sources. However, his narrative about Alash is very different from Bätishuly’s. According to Shäkarim, the Kazakhs originate from the rule of one of Chingis Khan’s sons, Zhoshy (Juchi). Some of his people settled down, whereas others – ancestors of the Kazakhs – remained nomadic. Alash was a name given to Akhmet Khan by the Kalmyks, who had been threatening the Kazakhs for a long time. Akhmet Khan had previously divided the Kazakh horde into three military confederations:

Shakarim associates the division of the Kazakhs into three parts (zhuz) [...] with the rule of Akhmet Khan, called Alashy, who introduced the division of Kazakh troops into three wings, (Great, Middle and Little), to fight against the Kalmyks in the sixteenth century. (Auezova 2014, 23)

According to Shäkarim, Alash meant *the one who takes lives* in the Kalmyk language, and after Akhmet Khan heard this, he commanded all his warriors, when fighting together, to use *Alash* as their war cry to intimidate their opponents (Qudaiberdiuly [1911] 2015, 28). This is a prime example of Shäkarim’s use of written history, as this account of the name Alash for Ahmet Khan can be found in Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat’s *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, written in the mid-1500s.⁸

Bokeikhanov

In his multipart article on Kazakh history, *Qazaqtyng tarikhi*,⁹ Bokeikhanov refers to the *shezhyre* as the Kazakhs' oral history that had been passed down for generations. But he complains that people had not been careful in their recounting of past events and the genealogy itself. He praises history in contrast to the *shezhyre*. With the *shezhyre*, in trying to demonstrate their knowledge, people have altered and spread lies about the past (Bokeikhanov [1913] 2009a, 22). Bokeikhanov's account of Alash is different from that of Bätishuly and is generally in line with Shäkarim's version, except for some small differences.

In proving that the Kazakhs were not related to the Arabs (which was a common misconception among some Kazakhs, according to Bokeikhanov), he briefly explained his understanding of the myth of Alash in the fourth part of his article. Like Shäkarim, he traces the Kazakhs back to Chingis Khan and his son Zhoshy, to whom Chingis Khan had given six tribes and six war cries for each tribe. This is where the term "Six Alash," *Alty Alash*, comes from. The word *alash*, according to Bokeikhanov, meant of the fatherland, or else the father of the land (he translates it as *otechestvennik* in Russian). As such, he argues that the term *alash* means the person who pertains to the fatherland or homeland. Since that day, Zhoshy Khan was also known as Alash, and this is where the old Kazakh proverb "Alash is Alash, when Alash is Khan"¹⁰ comes from (Bokeikhanov [1913] 2009b, 77).

As we can see, the origins of the myth of Alash were somewhat contested. Bätishuly presented a narrative that was perhaps the most widespread among the people, whereas both Shäkarim and Bokeikhanov based their claims on historical research and dismissed these myths. By doing so, they positioned themselves as the legitimate sources for the origins of the Kazakhs as a nation. The reference to the golden age of the Kazakhs occurring when they were members of the Golden Horde under Zhoshy Khan's rule is important. This is typical of national narratives and is aimed at giving the narrative an activist meaning for the masses (Hutchinson 2004). Hutchinson argues that the intellectuals established a new national myth that was an overlay of existing myth structures (Hutchinson 2004), similar to the Alash Ordists. Moreover, he contends that this myth was aimed at igniting a cult of sacrifice, which would override established mythologies (Hutchinson 2004, 119). Such symbolisms were created with the heralding of national heroes or warriors, known as *batyrs*, who were written into the Kazakh national history through poetry in later years (Magzhan Zhumabayev's poem *Batyr Bayan* is a case in point).

The erosion of tradition and promotion of a secular conception of history that Smith (1986, 176) mentions are evident in the Alash Ordists' rewriting of the Kazakh *shezhyre*. Furthermore, the contestation of the *shezhyre* is typical for the Kazakh *ethnie*, as Smith remarks that there is no "single" past of the *ethnie*: "Very rarely is it possible to speak of a 'single' past of any *ethnie*; rather, each *ethnie* possesses a series of pasts, which modern secular intellectuals attempt to interrelate in a coherent and purposive manner" (1986, 179).

One important commonality among all narratives is that Alash was a war cry used by Kazakh warriors when they joined tribes to fight a common enemy. In most other cases, the war cry was the name of the progenitor of the fighting tribe. Considering Fredrik Barth's (1969) theory that ethnic boundaries are found where the "other" is present, it seems natural that the Kazakh elite distinguished themselves from their sedentary coreligionists and Turkic-speakers. Moreover, the nationalist hypothesis that sentiments of nationalism increase radically when there is a common threat is retold through the myth of Alash. In this sense, the myth of Alash, though it may not necessarily provide the narrative of a mythical father figure for the Kazakhs, nevertheless unifies the Kazakhs against a common enemy.

The importance of history-writing is reiterated by Bokeikhanov in his article, and it forms an important part of the nation-building process. It not only legitimizes the elite's position vis-à-vis the masses through their use of scientific or European methods of writing history (and inter alia, providing a veritable history of a common glorious past), but also legitimizes them with those contesting Kazakh nationhood. This includes both the imperial administration and representatives of the All-Russian Muslim movements. As such, although it did not promote a cult of sacrifice, it provided a tool to override the power structures in the Central Asian steppe.

Shezhyre among Bashkirs

Interestingly, the Bashkir movement was also ethnicity-based, with a population who possessed a strong genealogical identity and many members who lived a pastoral, nomadic life. As such, the Bashkirs were like the Kazakhs, as they were part of the Bashkir Horde and they derived their identity from genealogical tribes. In the seventeenth century, the phenomenon of "Bulgharism" emerged, which attributed the origins of the Volga-Ural Muslim community to the last khan of Bulghar and not Chingis Khan (Frank 1998; Uyama 2002). In an attempt to incorporate the Bashkirs into the genealogy of the Tatars, Taj ad-Din Yalchighul oghli wrote his family *shezhyre* and tied the Ayla tribe, to which he belonged, to that of the Bulgars. A scholar named Muhammad Salim Umetbaev first published the *Tarikh Nama-yi Bulghar* in 1897 in a collection of Bashkir literary materials (Frank 1998, 99). This is a prime example of the tradition of rewriting genealogies. Unlike with the Kazakh *shezhyre*, there had not been any early concerted efforts to write a version of Bashkir history. Bashkir identity was relatively unstable as groups identified with Tatars or reidentified with Bashkirs in the early twentieth century (Gorenburg 1999, 562). There was a weak belief in common descent from the Bashkir Horde, but this did not translate into a sense of national solidarity.¹¹

Differentiation from sedentarized Central Asians

Traditionally, the Six Alash included the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Bashkirs, Qaraqalpaqs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmens.¹² The Alash Ordists were wary of including any of the settled peoples within the Alash Orda Autonomy (I elaborate upon the reasons for this below); however, they were open to the idea of the Kyrgyz joining their efforts. The pastoral nomadism of the Kyrgyz and the consequences of the 1916 revolt, for both the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh, meant that in political terms they had similar interests. This was particularly evident with the incorporation of Kyrgyz committees into the Alash Orda's general oblast work. The Kyrgyz nevertheless were not included in the narrative of the "children of Alash." Rather, the readers of the journal *Qazaq*, that is, the "children of Alash," were simply asked to help the Kyrgyz in their struggles (Koigeldiev 1994, 72). An example of the differentiation between the Kyrgyz, who were in a position to join the Kazakh political movement, and the sedentary population can be seen in the political and social relationships the Kazakh intellectuals had with the Kokand Autonomy, which emerged in the region of Turkestan.

Region of Turkestan and the General-Governorship

The region of Turkestan went through a war lasting 42 years (1853–1895), before it was annexed by the Russian Empire. Parts of the region had belonged to sections of the Small Horde (Kishi Zhuz) and Middle Horde (Orta Zhuz) before the annexation of all

three hordes by the Russian Empire. The southern parts of Turkestan, widely populated by settled peoples, were ruled by the khanates of Kokand and Khiva and the emirate of Bukhara. The Russian Empire fought an active war against these and was successful in establishing its power base in Central Asia by 1895.

The Kokand leaders and Jadidists, in common with previous religious modernizers, often spoke of the *millat* as the Muslim people of the Russian Empire. However, this understanding of solidarity was not as specifically defined as the Alash movement's "children of Alash," which was ethnicity-based and had previously been derived from the nomadic mode of life. Roy (2000) writes that some historians' view of pan-Islamist movements of the Muslims in general (i.e. those of Gasprinskii, Muslim Congresses, and of the Muslim faction) as national movements is misleading because "it defined a 'nation of Muslims' on religious and cultural criteria without reference to a state or a given territory" (Roy 2000, 37). He further discusses the meaning of the term *millat* in this sense, differentiating from the direct translation that Khalid (1998) provides as "nation:"

The word used to describe this community was variously *millat*, *mellat*, or *millet* in the Iranian or Turkish pronunciations, from which derives the adjective *melli* (milli). Today this word means "national" through the Turkic-Persian area, but before 1914 it referred essentially to a community defined in religious terms, as in the Ottoman *millet*. (Roy 2000, 37)

It can be argued that the main identity marker for the Kokand Autonomy was a common religion, Islam, even though there were wide disparities and disagreements among the political groupings within it. The leaders of the Kokand Autonomy were propagators of a reformist, liberal statehood and new methods of education, incorporating both Russian-language education and sciences, and not the rote learning of Islamic teachings: "The basic principles of the Kokand Autonomy were largely inherited from the Jadidist-inspired educational, cultural, and nationalist ideals of the National Centre" (Bergne 2003, 37). The members of the *Ulema Jamiati*, on the other hand, came from a more conservative strand of political Islam and teachings, whose leader was the Kazakh Sher Al Lapin. In this sense, the strongest cultural and social capital the Turkestanis had was a common religion, regional identity, mode of life, and the strong Russian rule they wished to overcome.

The Turkestan General-Governorship had laid the territorial foundations for the short-lived Kokand Autonomy, which was established by reformist indigenous intellectuals. Kazakhs, who had been educated in the Jadidist method, also numbered among them. The indigenous population had severe issues with the mainly Russian organizations that had replaced Tsarist rule after the February revolution. The main clashes for power were fought by the Tashkent Soviet for Workers, Peasants, etc., and later the Provisional Government Committee, to which indigenous elites had also been elected, but which had been rendered powerless through the Soviet government. Petrograd refused to help the indigenous elites preserve their power.

Despite Lenin's official statements promoting self-determination for the non-Russian peoples of the empire, they faced more or less blatant racist attitudes amongst members of the Soviet – staffed overwhelmingly by Russian workers from the railway, post and telegraph industries – who even advocated sending separate delegations to the Constituent Assembly in St Petersburg. (Bergne 2003, 36)

Moreover, although the Alash leaders had called for cooperation in their weekly journal *Qazaq*, the native people had developed a deep Russophobia since the 1916 revolts against the mobilization decree issued by the tsar during World War I, which had been violently crushed in some parts of Central Asia, especially among Kazakh nomads.

Land dispute (Syr-Darya and Zhetisu)

Despite the issues of Russian nationalism and exclusion of indigenous elites that the leaders of the Kokand Autonomy were struggling with, the Alash Ordists were reluctant to fully commit to the aims of the Kokand Autonomy. To understand the nature of the dispute between the Alash Orda and the Kokand Autonomy, it is important to understand how the administration of land traditionally understood to be owned by the Kazakhs changed. After parts of the Khanate of Kokand had been conquered, the General-Governorship of Turkestan, which incorporated the regions of Syr-Darya, Zhetisu (Semirech'e), and Samarkand, was established in July 1867. In 1874, an Amu Darya department was also incorporated into the Syr-Darya administration. The area of Transcaspia was also integrated into the Turkestan administration in 1890. Following this, two oblasts, Zhetisu (which had been part of the West-Siberian and later the Steppe General-Governorship) and Syr-Darya, were included in 1899. As we can see, the gradual conquest of the Turkestan regions led to the replacement of indigenous power structures with imperial administrative structures. The Turkestan General-Governorship's first statute, introduced in June 1886, expanded the powers of the administration and abolished all remaining indigenous power structures (Hayit 1971, 152).

The Fourth Extraordinary Congress of the Muslims of Turkestan took place in Kokand on 9 December 1917, where all anti-Bolshevik and indigenous groups met upon the call of the Jadidist group, the Council of Islam (*Shura-i-Islam*). They chose Kokand as the center of the autonomous government, as the Soviets and the provisional government had already occupied Tashkent. The delegates passed a resolution establishing the government of the autonomous Turkestan as a territorial autonomy within a democratic and federal Russia (Hayit 1971, 240). The Kokand government was violently crushed in February 1918 by the Tashkent Soviet with help from Moscow.

However, a dispute between the Alash and the Kokand governments over the reintegration of the traditionally Kazakh lands of the Kokand Autonomy into the Alash Orda illustrates how the Kazakhs separated themselves from the south. The dispute concerned the Syr-Darya and Zhetisu oblasts, from which Bokeikhanov summoned deputies to the second all-Kazakh Congress in December 1917 to consider integrating these regions into the Alash Orda government (Koigeldiev 1995, 345–349). The Kokand Autonomy had reserved three seats for representatives of the Alash Orda, in anticipation of their unification (Hayit 1971, 241). But instead of uniting with the Kokand Autonomy, the members of the Alash Autonomy insisted on unifying the Kazakh lands, especially since more than half of the Kazakhs lived in the Turkestan General-Governorship, according to the authors of the journal *Qazaq* (Koigeldiev 1995, 338). Bokeikhanov's dislike for the Kokand Autonomy was clear in a 1917 article in *Qazaq*, in which he argued:

Turkestan should first become an autonomy on its own. Some of our Kazakhs argue it would be correct to join the Turkestanis. We have the same religion as Turkestanis and we are related to them. Establishing an autonomy means establishing a country. It is not easy to lead a country. If our own Kazakhs leading the country are unfortunate, if we make the argument that Kazakhs are not enlightened, then we can argue that the ignorance and lack of skill among the people of Turkestan is 10 times higher than among Kazakhs. If the Kazakhs join the Turkestan autonomy, it would be like letting a camel and a donkey pull the autonomy wagon. Where are we headed after mounting this wagon?¹³ (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56)

Thus, politically speaking, they were opting for an ethno-national and territorial nation-state. Kazakh intellectuals felt that the incorporation of these two oblasts into the Kokand Autonomy was a division of the natural habitat of the Kazakh nation.

Bokeikhanov's objections

Although the Kokand Autonomy was interested in encompassing all Turkic and Muslim peoples (as they based their solidarity on a common religion and “Turkicness”), the members of the Alash movement divorced themselves from this ideology. According to a close party member, Myrzhaqyp Dulatov, Bokeikhanov considered the Turkestanis backward, fanatical in their religious views, and, most importantly, settled people who did not understand the Kazakhs' needs (Koigeldiev 1995, 34). The following quote from Dosmukhammedov, who was opposed to a centralist Russian statehood as well as a pan-Islamic one, highlights the prevalent understanding of national statehood among the Alash leaders:

Do you have any idea what a nationality is? It is a unity of blood, spirit, culture, traditions, language, customs, and territory. You cannot create a “Muslim” nation on the basis of a non-territorial and centralized autonomy. Are you, by the way, not a Pan-Islamist? We know that sometimes there are machinations behind Pan-Islamism, aiming at the domination of one nationality by another. (Zenkovsky 1960, 148; as cited in Kendirbay 1997, 501)

Bokeikhanov's objections to pan-Islamism become more evident in his article regarding the All-Siberian Congress and the Alash Orda's involvement in the Siberian Autonomy movement (which they later abandoned due to disagreements over the extent of Kazakh autonomy). They had agreed to join the Siberian Autonomy with the precondition that the Kazakh nation would later separate and have its own autonomy. Other Turkic peoples, such as the Buryats and Yakuts, had agreed to this as well. This cooperation shows that Bokeikhanov was inclined toward a pragmatic policy that guaranteed Kazakh autonomy for the Kazakhs. He also viewed the land issue as the most important factor in establishing nationhood: “In practice, the autonomy of our Kazakh nation will not be an autonomy of kinship [i.e. ethnic], rather, it will be an autonomy inseparable from its land”¹⁴ (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56). He said this in reference to the Russian settlers who were already residing in the Kazakh lands within the boundaries of the autonomy (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56). This, again, shows the pragmatism of Bokeikhanov's ideology, which not only emphasizes an ethno-territorial autonomy, but is also pragmatic about the constraints of the imperial structures and historical contingencies.

Conclusion

The importance of the discourse regarding the myth of Alash is twofold: first, it served as a means to raise the intellectuals' status as the legitimate historians of the Kazakh nation and, second, it served as a means of legitimizing the Kazakh nation. This was a contentious issue, not only in the imperial administration but also for the members of the Russian All-Muslim Movement. Moreover, the transformation of the narrative from a myth to a scientific historical narrative suggested a change in the mental structure of the Kazakh elite. They attempted to bring about this change in society as well, from one based on oral history (to be treated almost as rumors) to a scientific study of history (to be introduced to the Kazakh steppe as part of modernization). It must be noted that not all Kazakhs supported the Alash Orda, and the political situation on the ground was very complex, as there were many rival groups and Kazakhs who were in favor of Bolshevik power. However, this paper has looked into one of the defining moments of Kazakh nationhood by indigenous intellectuals. It has also demonstrated the ways in which the modes of life in the non-Russian lands made a difference in the delimitation of the people inhabiting them. There was a stronger split between the sedentary and nomadic peoples. These differences were demonstrated in both the narrative of the origins of the nomadic peoples and the pragmatic

policies of the Alash Orda, which, while open to ruling non-Kazakhs, was not ready to be ruled by anyone else.

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Notes

1. *Asyq* is a game played with bones by Kazakhs. It may be compared to marbles.
2. “Bashqurd, biz syqyldy zhalqau, bar satatyn zherinen ayirilip otyr. Muny taghy muzhyq alghan. Türkistanda zher, balalar asyghyndai auisady: zher faydasyn zhergilikti zhurt körip otyrghan zhoq, mädeni därezhesi artyq qular körip otyr” (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 58; author’s translation).
3. Kazak ve Başkırtların arazi meselelerine ait teklif olunan kararnamelere karşı Kazan’lılar “Bu Kazak ve Başkırtlara has bir meseledir” diye itiraz ettiklerinden ve umumiyetle Kazan’lı mümessiller Rusya İslamları Konferansını bir dinî mesele, müftülük, şeyhülislâmlık ve maarif meseleleri konuşulacak bir toplantı addettiklerinden [...]. (Togan 1969, 156; author’s translation)
4. Die Blätter denunzierten die Baschkiren als Faulpelze und Trunkenbolde, denen jegliche Einstellung zu Land und Ackerbau fehle und die deshalb unüberlegt ihr Land verkauften, das wenige Geld rasch durchbrächten und in den Städten verelendeten. Dieses Negativbild der Baschkiren sollte sich in den folgenden Jahren fest etablieren. (Noack 2000, 398–399; author’s translation)
5. The tripartite *zhuz* or “horde” system in the Kazakh Steppe was linked to tribal confederation, loosely based on territory and khans who ruled the *zhuz*, albeit very loosely based, as local leadership was more important.
6. It is worth considering whether Bokeikhanov’s statement was an attempt at legitimizing Kazakh nationhood based on ethnicity for the imperial audience, as his article was published in Constitutional Democratic (Cadet) publication on the different nationalities in the Russian Empire in 1910.
7. “Bul sözder – bizding buryngy kârilerden estigen sözder. Munan artyq bilushiler bolsa, bilgenin ishine saqtamas, khalyqqa zhazyyp bildirer dep ümit etemiz” (Bätishuly [1911] 1995, 57; author’s translation).
8. [...] [N]o one in Moghulistán dared to oppose [Ahmad Khan]. He made several successful inroads on the Kálmák, and put a number of them to death [...] The Kálmák stood in great awe of him, and used to call him Álácha Khán; Álácha, in Moghul, means kush-ánda [the slayer], that is to say, “the slaying Khán.” This title adhered to him. His own people used to call him Álácha Khán. He is now spoken of by the Moghuls as Sultán Ahmad Khán, but all the neighboring peoples call him “Álácha.” (Dughlat [1898] 2009, 122)

The author then points out that one finds the name Alacha written also in the histories of Mir Khwand of Herat and others (Dughlat [1898] 2009, 122).

9. The original article’s author used the pseudonym Türik Balasy, which Zhusyp Sultankhan Aqqululy (2009) has attributed to Bokeikhanov (Aqqululy 2009 in Bokeikhanov 2009a, 21).
10. “Alash Alash bolghanda; Alash khan bolghanda” (Bokeikhanov [1913] 2009b, 77; author’s translation).
11. For a detailed account of the Bulghar issue and the Soviet science of ethnogenesis among the Tatars and Bashkirs, see Frank (1998) and Uyama (2002).
12. This is a part of oral history and there are ongoing contentions regarding the Turkic tribes that belong to the Alty Alash.
13. Türkistan öz aldy avtonomiia bolar. Bizding qazaqtyng Türkistangha qosylghanz ong degen piker bar. Biz Türkistanmen dindes, tuisqanbyz. Avtonomiia bolu – öz aldy memleket bolu. Memleket bolyp is atqaru ongay emes. Bizding qazaq is atqaratyn azamatqa

zhutap otyrghan bolsa, bizding zhalpy qazaq qaranghy bolsa, Türkistan khalqynyng qaranghylyghy häm sheber adamnyng zhoqtyghy bizden on ese artyq. Qazaq Türkistanmen bir avtonomiia bolsa, avtonomiia arbasyna tüye men esekti par zhekken bolady. Bul arbagha minip, biz qayda baramyz? (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56; author's translation)

14. "Bizding qazaq ultynyng avtonomiiasy endi turmys khalda tuisqan avtonomiiasy bolar emes, zherge bailauly avtonomiia bolmaq" (Bokeikhanov [1917] 2013, 56; author's translation).

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