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THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PHILANTHROPY IN KAZAKH SOCIETY IN THE 19th – EARLY 20th CENTURIES

Abstract. The article analyzes the historical evolution of philanthropy in Kazakh society in the 19th – early 20th centuries within the broader socio-economic and cultural-political context of the modernization of the Steppe region. It traces the origins of philanthropy to traditional institutions of mutual aid and collective solidarity and examines its key dimensions – religious, educational, cultural, and socio-political.

Special attention is given to bai entrepreneurs, who functioned not only as economic actors but also as agents of modernization and social leadership. Their philanthropic activities fostered the emergence of a national intelligentsia, the development of educational infrastructure, the strengthening of civic initiatives, and the growth of public self-awareness under Russian imperial rule.

Based on extensive archival and published sources, the article demonstrates the gradual transformation of philanthropy from customary communal support practices into more organized and institutionalized forms of charitable engagement. Over time, philanthropy assumed a distinctly educational and socio-political character, ranging from the construction of mosques and madrasas to the establishment of secular schools, libraries, and cultural centers, the financing of periodicals, and support for the “Alash” national movement, ultimately serving as a significant factor in social consolidation.

Keywords: patronage, Kazakh society, the 19th – early 20th centuries, philanthropic practices, education, culture, national revival, bai-entrepreneurs.

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Introduction

The relevance of the topic is determined by several interrelated factors – historiographical, socio-cultural, and applied. The study makes it possible to reconsider the place and role of Kazakh elites in the modernization of steppe society, where, on the basis of specific practices from widespread forms of mutual assistance (*asar, zhylu, zhurtshylyk*) to institutionalized charity – one can trace the continuity between traditional solidarity and the professionalizing patronage of the late 19th–early 20th centuries. This closes a significant gap in historiography, where modernization processes are often described primarily through the prism of imperial administration, leaving the agency of local communities and philanthropists “behind the scenes”. The topic is also important for understanding the genesis of the Kazakh

intelligentsia and the national movement, since private donations ensured the establishment and maintenance of secular schools and madrasahs, the development of print media and the public sphere (support for the newspapers *Qazaq, Ayqap*, etc.), as well as direct assistance to the leaders of Alash – including bail payments, funding congresses, and supporting deputies. This demonstrates how economic capital was transformed into cultural and political capital, being converted into projects of education, enlightenment, and national consolidation.

The source base on Kazakh patronage makes it possible to describe in detail the mechanisms of social capital: the creation of charitable societies and boards of trustees in the cities of the Steppe region, the participation of entrepreneurs in regional aid

committees (for migrants, tuberculosis patients, etc.), and the financing of public infrastructure – hospitals, boarding schools, libraries, and museums.

This kind of “social engineering” of the late imperial period expanded the horizon of civic participation, institutionalized volunteerism, and fostered trust between groups, which is fundamentally important for comparative studies of civil society in Central Asia. The rich geography and personalist nature of the material – Kunanbai Uskembaiuly, the dynasties of the Nurekeiulys, Koshshyguliulys, Mamaniulys, Chormaniulys; patrons in Semei, Pavlodar, Verny, and other centers – create a basis for prosopographic and network analysis, allowing researchers to map the connections of patrons with religious institutions, educational establishments, the press, and political initiatives, as well as to trace the transregional routes of philanthropy – from Akmola to Mecca and Istanbul. This approach opens opportunities for a more nuanced periodization of the evolution of patronage and demonstrates how local practices were integrated into all-imperial and trans-Islamic contexts.

At the same time, the topic has clear applied significance for contemporary Kazakhstan – from historical and cultural heritage and museum narratives to policies in the field of philanthropy and patronage. The analysis of historical models – religious, educational, and political patronage – helps in shaping modern practices of corporate philanthropy, educational endowments, and boards of trustees that take into account local traditions and their evolution. Moreover, the study contributes to comparative research on philanthropy: comparing Kazakh practices (with their strong ties to Islamic institutions, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and specific forms of solidarity) with Russian merchant patronage reveals the unique features of the “steppe model” – a balance of religious, educational, and socio-political dimensions of philanthropy and their consistent institutionalization in the late imperial period.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical evolution of patronage in Kazakh society in the 19th–early 20th centuries, identifying its origins in traditional forms of mutual assistance, its main directions (religious, educational, cultural, and political), and to show how the philanthropic activities of Kazakh bais-

entrepreneurs contributed to the modernization of society, the formation of the national intelligentsia, and the development of civic initiatives within the framework of the Russian Empire.

Materials and methodology

The study is based on a wide range of sources, including both written monuments of the 19th–early 20th centuries and modern historiographical works. Key primary sources include the *Diaries and Letters* of A. Yanushkevich, which recorded the features of social life and the activities of Kunanbai Uskembaiuly, as well as the ethnographic notes of Vl. Gern, describing the moral guidelines and customs of steppe society. These materials make it possible to reconstruct the context in which the first philanthropic initiatives emerged. Of particular importance are publications in the *Kirgiz Steppe Newspaper*, the *Akmola Regional Newspaper*, and other periodicals, where information regarding donations by bai entrepreneurs, the construction of schools and mosques, and the activities of charitable societies was regularly published.

The research also draws upon the collections of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (f. 64, f. 369) and the State Archive of the Omsk Oblast of the Russian Federation (f. 3). These documents contain the statutes of charitable societies, administrative records of donations, and financial reports of boards of trustees. Additional information is drawn from the encyclopedia *Pavlodar Priirtyshye*, works by local historians and scholars, as well as digital resources (e-history.kz, *Kazpravda*, Caravan, Inform.kz, etc.), which conceptualize the phenomenon of Kazakh patronage and its role in national revival and cultural memory.

The methodological framework is based on the principles of historicism and systemic analysis, allowing for the evolution of patronage to be traced within the context of socio-economic and political change. A comparative-historical method, a prosopographic approach, and elements of socio-cultural analysis are employed to reveal the relationship between patronage and the processes of modernization and the formation of national identity.

Discussion

The historiography and source base on Kazakh patronage of the 19th–early 20th centuries make it possible to identify both traditional and new research approaches. The earliest evidence



is found in memoirs and ethnographic texts of contemporaries – the diaries of A. Yanushkevich and the notes of Vl. Gern – where the social role of *bais*, their concern for their fellow tribesmen, and their support of traditional institutions are emphasized. These observations are valuable because they record living practices of philanthropy within the context of steppe life.

Modern research (Sydykov, 2020; Nenasheva, 2007; Kereibaeva, 2016) expands the understanding of patronage, demonstrating its multidimensional nature – from religious to educational. These works emphasize that the activities of *bai* entrepreneurs extended beyond local communities, including the construction of mosques, schools, and madrasahs, and the support of print media and charitable societies.

Local history literature (Pavlodar Priirtyshye, 2003; Akhmetov, 1999; Ozganbai, 2006; *Altai's Golden Necklace*, 1998) provides valuable data on regional specificities: in Semei, Pavlodar, Akmola, and Verny, patrons actively invested in cultural and social infrastructure, reflecting the diversity of forms of philanthropy across regions.

Recent publications in the media and popular science outlets (Nurakhmet, 2021; Srazhadinkysy, 2018; *Steppe Patrons*, 2022; Bilyalova, 2021; Khasan, 2016; Rakhmetullin, 2015) actualize the memory of patrons, highlighting their role in national revival. These works are not only historical-descriptive but also culturally identificational, showing the continued relevance of the topic in contemporary public discourse.

Particularly noteworthy are studies of figures such as Kunanbai Uskembaiuly (Sydykov, 2020), the Koshshygulov family (Nurakhmet, 2021), Medeu Pusrmanuly (elim.kz), and Khasan Akaiuly (Popov, 1992), whose activities illustrate the transformation of traditional leadership into public service and a national-educational mission.

Thus, the body of literature used demonstrates the evolution of the perception of Kazakh patronage – from ethnographic descriptions and local chronicles to modern academic interpretations and media narratives. This confirms the significance of patronage not only as a social phenomenon of the 19th–early 20th centuries but also as an element of historical memory and national identity.

Results

The analysis of sources and literature made it possible to identify several key directions and

stages in the development of Kazakh patronage in the 19th–early 20th centuries, which become particularly evident when compared with Russian practices.

The first direction can be conditionally defined as the legacy of traditional forms of mutual assistance.

The phenomenon of patronage in Kazakh society has deep roots and goes back to the customs of collective support: *asar* (joint construction of houses and agricultural works), *zhylu* (aid to those affected by *zhut*), *kyzyl köteru* (provision of food to families in need), *zhurtshylyk* (repayment of debts). These forms contributed to strengthening solidarity within the clan and the aul, forming networks of trust and mutual obligations, which became the basis for the transition to more institutionalized practices of charity and patronage.

In Russia at the same time, archaic forms of collective support also existed, primarily in the peasant environment: *toloka* (joint work on harvesting, construction, haymaking), communal mutual assistance within the village community (*mir*), and the collection of “communal” funds for fire victims or impoverished families. However, unlike the Kazakh aul, where such practices were tied to a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle and closely linked with ecological and climatic risks (e.g., *zhut*, a term denoting a mass livestock die-off caused by severe natural conditions, such as harsh winters or droughts, which prevent animals from accessing pasture and fodder), in the Russian village collective help was more stable and dependent on the agricultural calendar, reinforced by the institution of the peasant commune.

The comparison of these two traditions shows that in both cases mutual assistance served as an important mechanism of survival and regulation of social relations, but in the steppe context it had a more mobile and situational character, responding to the challenges of the nomadic economy, while in Russian peasantry it was more permanent and ritualized. For Russia, *toloka* and communal assistance became a natural “growth point” for merchant and industrial philanthropy of the late 19th century (the activities of the Morozovs, the Tretyakovs, the Mamontovs), while in Kazakhstan the practices of *asar* and *zhylu* served as the cultural foundation for donations to schools, madrasahs, newspapers, and public initiatives.

Thus, already at an early stage it can be observed that similar forms of mutual assistance

evolved in different institutional contexts: in Russia – into merchant philanthropy connected with the growth of capitalism and urbanization; in Kazakhstan – into elite patronage closely linked to the tasks of education, preservation of cultural identity, and national consolidation under colonial policy.

The next pronounced direction in Kazakh and Russian society was religious. One of the most widespread manifestations of patronage in Kazakhstan in the 19th–early 20th centuries was the construction of religious buildings and the support of religious practices. Bai-philanthropist Kunanbai Uskembaiuly in 1851 financed the construction of a mosque in Karkaralinsk, and in 1874 performed the Hajj and built a hotel for pilgrims in Mecca (Sydykov, 2020: 137–192). A. Yanushkevich, who visited the Middle Zhuz in 1846, noted: “...Kunanbai is a great celebrity in the steppe, ... a prudent man, caring for the welfare of his tribesmen...” (Yanushkevich, 1966: 62). The Nurekenov family and their descendants, particularly Temirgali Tuyteuly, donated funds for the construction of mosques and madrasahs, and their activities were known not only in Kazakhstan but also beyond its borders – as far as Istanbul and Medina (Pavlodar Irtysh region, 2003: 435). In Pavlodar, the Bizhan mosque built with the funds of entrepreneur Bizhan Shokybasuly has been preserved, while in Kyzylorda the Aitbai mosque (1878), built by merchant Aitbai Baltabaiuly, remains a landmark. These examples show that religious philanthropy remained a dominant direction, strengthening the Islamic identity of the Kazakhs and simultaneously becoming a form of social recognition for wealthy bais and merchants.

In Russia of the same period, religious philanthropy was no less significant, but it was expressed primarily in the Orthodox context. Large merchant dynasties – the Morozovs, the Ryabushinskys, the Demidovs, the Mamontovs – actively financed the construction of churches, bell towers, monasteries, and chapels. For example, Savva Mamontov donated funds for the restoration of churches in Yalutorovsk and paid for the construction of a church in Abramtsevo (Heritage, 2017: 9). Another Russian entrepreneur and philanthropist, Pavel Tretyakov, in addition to his artistic projects, participated in the work of the Orthodox Missionary Society, which indirectly supported parishes through educational and social projects (Nenarokomova, 1978). Merchants

often undertook the upkeep of parishes and the construction of parish schools, which provided not only religious but also educational influence.

The comparison of these practices makes it possible to identify both similarities and differences. In both societies, religious philanthropy functioned as a mechanism of social legitimization: through the construction of mosques or churches, patrons consolidated their status, demonstrated their belonging to the community, and sought to immortalize the memory of their families. However, in the Kazakh context, religious donations were closely tied to transregional Islamic routes – the Hajj, connections with Mecca and Istanbul – which emphasized the inclusion of steppe society into the wider Muslim world. In Russia, the emphasis was placed on strengthening parish life, the Orthodox community, and the role of the Church in education and upbringing, which was part of imperial state policy.

From the second half of the 19th century, the focus of patronage in Kazakhstan gradually shifted to the sphere of education and culture. Bais and merchants began to view education not only as a religious, but also as a socio-political resource, capable of strengthening identity and preparing a new generation of national intelligentsia. Musa Chormanuly in Bayanaul Okrug a madrasah and a mosque, and also financed the education of Kazakh children in Russian schools. His family actively participated in the erection of a monument to Chokan Ualikhanuly. Researcher VI. Gern emphasized the nobility of the Chormanulys, noting: “...to this day there are still a few persons and families among the Kirghiz who would rather pay another’s debt than swear an oath for someone. For example, the Chormanuly family of Pavlodar uезд of Semei oblast” (Gern, 1899: 13).

The Koshshygulov dynasty played a special role: Baimukhambet built the first Kazakh-Muslim school in Akmola, and his son Shaimerden financed an agricultural school and supported the youth organization *Tirshilik*. In addition, the Koshshygulovs contributed to the development of musical culture by organizing competitions of akyns and kuishi (i.e., traditional Kazakh folk musicians representing vocal and instrumental oral musical traditions) (Akmola Regional News, 1902).

Equally important was the *Mamaniya* madrasah in Jetisu, founded by the Mamani family, which became one of the centers of Jadid education. At the initiative of the patrons, Akhmet Baitursynuly and



other leading pedagogues of that time were invited there, which turned the madrasah into a key center for the formation of educational and national ideas (Steppe Patrons, 2022).

In Russia of the same time, the educational direction of philanthropy was also gaining strength, though it developed somewhat differently. Merchant families such as the Tretyakovs, the Morozovs, the Ryabushinskys, the Shchukins, alongside church construction, actively financed gymnasiums, schools, and universities. Moscow merchants Rakhmanovs and Shchukins supported Moscow University. The leading Russian financier Stieglitz sponsored many educational projects of cultural figures, the most significant being the establishment in St. Petersburg of the Central School of Technical Drawing (Patrons, 2025). Pavel Tretyakov invested money in educational institutions and scholarships for talented students. By the end of the 19th century, in Russia a sustainable practice of philanthropy in the cultural sphere had taken shape – theaters, libraries, and museums existed thanks to private donations.

A comparative analysis shows that in both societies education and culture became major areas of private investment, but with different emphases. In Kazakhstan, the initiatives of the Chormanuly, the Koshshygululy, and the Mamanuly were aimed at combining traditional Islamic education with Jadid modernizing practices, shaping a national intelligentsia and supporting the Kazakh language and culture under colonial dependence. In Russia, patrons operated in a more urbanized and institutionalized environment, where philanthropy in education and culture became part of the broader state strategy of modernization.

By the end of the 19th century, philanthropy in Kazakhstan had acquired increasingly organized forms. Kazakh entrepreneurs actively participated in city and regional societies. Since 1890, they supported the Omsk Charitable Society. Its Charter stated: “The Society aims to provide means for improving the moral and material condition of the poor” (Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan. F. 64. Inv. 1. C. 499. L. 1 and ob.). A similar Poor Relief Society was opened in Pavlodar in 1896 (Central State Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan. F. 369. Inv. 1. C. 2740, L. 1). Kazakh entrepreneurs also financed resettlement aid committees. Indicative is the contribution of Kazakh bays to the Omsk Resettlement Committee fund: in 1900 it amounted to 733 rubles out of a total

of 1,942 rubles (Akmola regional news, 1900: 29). This demonstrates their significant involvement in interethnic charitable initiatives. In steppe towns and county centers, boards of trustees were also established at schools and hospitals: for example, the Khalfins, the Zabirulys, and the Koshshygululy in 1898 founded the “Society for the Care of Primary Education”, which provided funding for teachers and schools.

In Russia of the same period, the process of institutionalizing philanthropy had a much larger scale. Already by the 1850s–1860s, the Moscow and St. Petersburg Poor Relief Societies, as well as the “Imperial Philanthropic Society”, were active; by the 1890s, a whole network of charitable committees and philanthropic unions had formed. Large merchants and industrialists did not limit themselves to individual donations: they systematically financed hospitals, orphanages, and vocational schools. The Bakhrushin brothers founded the Society for the Assistance of Needy Artists, the Morozovs supported the Moscow Merchant Mutual Aid Society, and the Ryabushinskys established educational societies. At schools and universities, boards of trustees were formed, funded by merchant dynasties, ensuring sustainable financing of education and science.

At the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, patrons actively engaged in socio-political life. They financed newspapers and journals – *Serke*, *Ayqap*, *Qazaq*, *Saryarqa*. The assistance of patrons was invaluable in organizing All-Kazakh Congresses. In the history of the Second All-Kazakh Congress, special mention must be made of Oraz Tattiev, Shakarim Kudaiberdiev, Nurlan Kiyashev, Turmukhamed Sagynaev, who assumed the main financial burden (Akkuly, 2023).

Material support was also provided to the leaders of the Alash party: for Mirzhakyp Dulatyuly, a bail of 2,500 rubles was paid by patron Karazhan Ukibaiuly, and later Khasen Akaiuly contributed 5,000 rubles. Akhmet and Mustafa Orazauuly donated funds to support Alikhan Bukeikhanuly and Mustafa Shokaiuly in the State Duma. Mukhamedkhan Seitkululy offered his house in Semei as a cultural center where Kazakh theater was born.

The activities of patrons left a deep imprint on the cultural and educational life of Kazakhstan. The mosques, schools, and libraries they built, their support of poets and musicians (for example, the contest organized by Yesengul Mamanuly,

where Sultanmakhmud Toraigyryly won with the novel Kamar Sulu), and their financing of sports events (such as supporting wrestler Kazhymukan Munaitpasuly) formed the basis for modernization and the preservation of national identity.

Thus, the results of the study show that patronage in Kazakh society of the 19th–early 20th centuries developed from traditional practices of mutual assistance into organized forms of philanthropy and acquired an educational and political character, becoming an important factor in social development and national revival.

Conclusion

The conducted research makes it possible to conclude that patronage in Kazakh society of the 19th–early 20th centuries underwent a consistent transformation from archaic forms of collective mutual assistance to institutionalized models of philanthropy, encompassing religious, educational, cultural, and socio-political spheres. This evolution reflects the ability of traditional practices to adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, acquiring the features of deliberate social engineering.

The particular importance of philanthropic activity lay in its role as a factor of national consolidation and the formation of a modernized

intelligentsia, as well as in its contribution to the development of educational practices and the public sphere. The support of schools, madrasahs, periodicals, as well as the financing of public initiatives, created the preconditions for the emergence of civic institutions, ultimately making patronage one of the instruments of national revival.

A comparative analysis with Russian material demonstrates both general patterns - the use of philanthropic activity as a mechanism of social legitimization and symbolic capital - and differences determined by the specifics of the socio-cultural environment: in the Russian Empire, merchant philanthropy was organically integrated into the institutional framework of state modernization policy and urban infrastructure, whereas in Kazakhstan it acquired the function of preserving Islamic identity and national-cultural distinctiveness under colonial conditions.

Thus, the patronage of the Kazakh elites of the late 19th–early 20th centuries appears not only as an important element of the socio-cultural history of the steppe region, but also as a significant factor of social development, integrated into the comparative context of studying philanthropy in the post-imperial space.

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ХІХ–ХХ ҒАСЫРДЫҢ БАСЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ ҚОҒАМЫНДАҒЫ МЕЦЕНАТТЫҚТЫҢ ТАРИХИ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯСЫ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада ХІХ ғасыр – ХХ ғасырдың басындағы қазақ қоғамындағы меценаттықтың тарихи эволюциясы дала өңіріндегі модернизациялық трансформациялар кезеңінің кең әлеуметтік-экономикалық және мәдени-саяси контекстінде кешенді түрде талданады. Зерттеудің мақсаты меценаттықтың генезисін дәстүрлі өзара көмек пен ұжымдық ынтымақтастық институттары аясында айқындау, сондай-ақ оның негізгі бағыттарын – діни, ағартушылық, мәдени және қоғамдық-саяси қырларын жүйелі түрде талдау болып табылады. Ерекше назар тек экономикалық факторлар ғана емес, сонымен қатар модернизациялық серпін мен әлеуметтік көшбасшылықтың тасымалдаушылары ретінде көрінген бай-кәсіпкерлердің қызметіне аударылады. Олардың филантропиялық белсенділігі Ресей империясының отарлық саясаты жағдайында ұлттық интеллигенцияның қалыптасуына, білім беру инфрақұрылымының дамуына, азаматтық бастамалардың нығаюына және қоғамдық өзіндік сананың кеңеюіне ықпал етті. Кең ауқымды архивтік және жарияланған дереккөздер негізінде меценаттықтың қауымдық қолдаудың дәстүрлі формаларынан анағұрлым ұйымдасқан әрі институционалданған қайырымдылық тәжірибелеріне қарай біртіндеп трансформацияланғаны туралы қорытынды негізделді. Нәтижесінде меценаттық айқын ағартушылық және қоғамдық-саяси сипатқа ие болып, мешіттер мен медреселер салудан бастап зайырлы мектептер, кітапханалар мен мәдени орталықтар ашуға, мерзімді баспасөзді қаржыландыруға және «Алаш» ұлттық қозғалысын қолдауға дейінгі ауқымды қамтып, қоғамдық консолидацияның маңызды факторына айналды.

Кілт сөздер: меценаттық, қазақ қоғамы, қайырымдылық тәжірибелері, білім беру, мәдениет, ұлттық жаңғыру, бай-кәсіпкерлер.

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ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ МЕЦЕНАТСТВА В КАЗАХСКОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ ХІХ – НАЧАЛА ХХ ВВ.

Аннотация. В статье представлен комплексный анализ исторической эволюции меценатства в казахском обществе ХІХ – начала ХХ вв., рассматриваемого

в широком социально-экономическом и культурно-политическом контексте эпохи модернизационных трансформаций степного региона. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении генезиса меценатства в традиционных институтах взаимопомощи и коллективной солидарности, а также в системном анализе его ключевых направлений – религиозного, просветительского, культурного и общественно-политического. Особое внимание уделяется деятельности баев-предпринимателей, выступавших не только экономическими факторами, но и носителями модернизационного импульса и социального лидерства. Их филантропическая активность способствовала формированию национальной интеллигенции, развитию образовательной инфраструктуры, укреплению гражданских инициатив и расширению общественного самосознания в условиях колониальной политики Российской империи. На основе широкого круга архивных и опубликованных источников обосновывается вывод о поступательной трансформации меценатства – от традиционных форм поддержки общины к более организованным и институционализированным практикам благотворительности. В результате меценатство приобрело выраженный просветительский и общественно-политический характер: от строительства мечетей и медресе до открытия светских школ, библиотек, культурных центров, финансирования периодической печати и поддержки национального движения «Алаш», став важным фактором общественной консолидации.

Ключевые слова: меценатство, казахское общество, благотворительные практики, образование, культура, национальное возрождение, бай-предприниматели.

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