

**Reestablishing roots and learning to fly: Kazakh church planting between contextualization and globalization.**

by

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# Statement of Authorship

**Student Number: 4182-695-7**

I declare that

*Reestablishing roots and learning to fly: Kazakh church planting between contextualization and globalization.*

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Fort Worth, United States of America, 18-02-2013

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Johnson", is written in dark ink on a light background.



## Summary

Reestablishing roots and learning to fly: Kazakh church planting between contextualization and globalization

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Degree: Doctor of Theology

Subject: Missiology

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The Kazakhs of post-Soviet Central Asia have been in the process of re-discovering their cultural heritage and establishing their own national identity. Profoundly affecting this process is that they live in a world that is becoming more and more globalized, with increasing degrees of interaction with other cultures. During Soviet times there was a large degree of isolation from cultures outside of the Soviet Union and their lives were mostly impacted by a Russian dominated system. After the collapse of the Soviet system they were suddenly exposed to a world of ideas, influences, and opportunities. Part of re-establishing their cultural roots involved consideration of their Islamic heritage. They were caught between trying to discover this for themselves and in doing so include cultural beliefs and practices that are blended into an orthodox expression of Islam, or allowing themselves to be told by outside practitioners of Islam how they should believe and act. Seventy plus years of communism had weakened the commitment and expression of Islam, and this as well as the forces of globalization has made them cautious and even suspicious of any radical expressions of religion. With the post-Soviet openness and exposure to other cultures came the opportunity for Christianity to present itself as a valid system of belief for Kazakhs. This began as an expatriate dominated exercise as individual Kazakhs embraced Christianity and the first churches were started. As the years progressed Kazakh church planting faced the challenge of having a foreign image and as a result needed to consider how to contextualize Christianity so that it could develop a Kazakh identity. At the same time church planting as with the Kazakh culture as a whole, was confronted with the impact of globalization. This meant that church planting had to not only consider Kazakh cultural factors but also what changes globalization would bring that impacted how church planting would be done. This study seeks to examine this church planting context that finds itself caught between the effects of contextualization and globalization, and by means of the principles of Grounded Theory discover principles for effective church planting

Key terms:

Globalization, contextualization, church planting, cultural heritage, identity, post-Soviet, beliefs and practices, grounded theory, Kazakh Christianity, effects of change.



## Curriculum Vitae

### **Personal Information**

- Dean Frederick Sieberhagen
- Born in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 7 July 1964.
- South African citizen
- Married to Sandra and have 4 sons

### **Educational Background**

1. Matriculated with a High School certificate in 1982 from Graeme College, Grahamstown, South Africa.
2. Graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1986 from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
3. Graduated with a Higher Diploma in Education in 1987 from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
4. Graduated in May 2001 with a Master of Divinity (with languages) from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. My area of specialization was International Church Planting.

### **Work Experience**

- I served in the South African military from January 1987 to December 1988.
- I was a partner in a handcrafts retail and manufacturing business from 1989 to 1995.
- I was a staff member in the Accounting Department of Rhodes University and a member of the Commerce Faculty from 1992 to 1995.
- From 1997 to 1999 I worked as the People Link Coordinator for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The primary purpose of this work was to facilitate partnerships between Southern Baptist churches and the Mission field.
- From 1999 to 2001 I worked for Senim humanitarian aid company in Shymkent, Kazakstan. I started a small business development program and taught small business development courses.
- From 2002 to current I work as the director of Senim in the Almaty, Kazakstan head office.





## Preface

My family and I moved to Kazakhstan in 1999 where I took up a position as a Small Business Teacher/ Trainer with a humanitarian organization called Senim Central Asia. We were both fascinated and challenged by our new lives in an area of the world we knew very little about. Learning the language and understanding the culture were high priorities, and we found the local Kazakhs to be very patient, friendly, and helpful to us. We are very committed to our Christian faith and the impact it has on other religions and cultures and so tried to understand the complex religious environment in which we found ourselves. The Kazakh people had just come through seventy plus years of Communism and were trying to rediscover their Muslim roots. They also lived amongst people such as Russians and Koreans who practiced their own religions, with everyone having to adjust to a world that was becoming more global and causing interactions with outside cultures and religions. We ourselves were evidence of such interaction.

We began to meet Kazakhs who called themselves believers or followers of Jesus the Messiah and helped them with the development of Kazakh Christianity and the starting of churches. All of this stimulated a strong desire in me to research church planting in this unique and complex context and so upon meeting Dr Johannes Reimer at a conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan, I discovered the opportunity to undertake such research through the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Although the post-soviet Kazakh church was still very young, I was able to talk directly with Kazakhs about the church planting they were doing which led to me to study and apply the social science method known as Grounded Theory.

I am so blessed by and grateful to my Kazakh believer friends who were prepared to be open and honest about their experiences and my prayer is for their perseverance and joy in

the Lord. I am also grateful to my family who loved me through all the highs and lows, in particular Sandra who defines what a wonderful wife and mother should be. Thank you to Dr Keith Eitel for all his years of encouragement, I look forward to many years of us reaching the edge together. Thank you to Arthur Rempel and GBFE for your administrative assistance and in particular to Dr Johannes Reimer for believing in me and being patient when I was struggling through the writing process. Thank you for the pointed advice in helping to guide my thoughts and deal with my shortcomings. Finally, thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for without you my life is chasing after the wind.



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## **Introduction**

*Kim biledi?* (Who knows?), is the most common response I have heard when asking Kazakhs to explain all that is happening in their country. They had seventy plus years of communism where, despite all the shortcomings, they could count on life being relatively routine and predictable. The end of the Soviet era caught them by surprise and suddenly everything began to change. Some changes seemed for the good such as the freedom to openly express ideas and beliefs, and the ownership of property. Other changes seemed onerous such as the burden to pay for services that had previously been state sponsored and perhaps hardest of all, the shutdown of many avenues of previously guaranteed employment. The first ten years after communism represent years of difficulty for most Kazakhs with a focus on just trying to survive and look after one's own. Economic hardships overshadowed concerns for other aspects of culture and life. In particular, the re-establishment of religious observance was continually compromised by the need for financial security.

Applying the distinction between believing Muslims and believing/practicing Muslims, Kazakhs mostly fall into the former category. Kazakh scholars Chokan and Murat Laumulin (2009) coin their own phrase to describe this by saying that Kazakhs are *not yet Muslim*. To even call them believing Muslims in the classical sense does not seem appropriate as many are unable to articulate even the basic tenets of formal Islamic belief. As Bruce Privatsky (2000) points out however, we must consider what those Kazakhs who are serious about their religion mean by their Islamic beliefs. Even if they do not follow orthodox Islam, is their practice not valid for their particular form of Islam? The Laumulins (2009) argue that historically Kazakhs have not made a strong commitment to the teachings of orthodox Islam but rather given stronger attention to Shamanism, ancestor spirits and holy places. This atmosphere they argue was then well suited to the introduction of the Sufi form

of Islam with its mystic influence.<sup>1</sup> In the last ten years going back to the turn of the century there has been growing stability and less of the post-communism desperation so that Kazakhs are able to look beyond basic needs towards a revival of cultural pride and practice. Accompanying this is a consideration of religion involving what it means to be Muslim within a Kazakh context. The result has been a stronger rejection of those who seek to impose a different religious view, including Christianity and some of the stricter forms of Islam such as Wahhabism.

Kazakhstan is a vast and mineral rich country with very large oilfields. Coming into the new millennium these resources began to inject life into the economy and signs of growth and rebuilding began to be seen and felt everywhere. Foreign companies began to flood in and foreign embassies opened with the primary purpose of establishing trade relations. From the beginning there has been much controversy about the inequitable distribution of profits and resources that have flowed abundantly from this trade, but an analysis and commentary along those lines is not within the scope of this study. Despite this controversy, most Kazakhs now see the future as one of cautious hope and growing economic prosperity. They look at their fellow former Soviet neighbors and are satisfied that despite the challenges, life is much better for them. There is a growing middle class and a general pride that Kazakhstan is beginning to grow up and take its place on the world stage. Active participation on a global stage is a course that is proudly chartered by the current government (Nursultan Nazarbaev 2010). The question is whether postmodernism with its philosophy of compromise will have as much of an effect on the Kazakh worldview as it has had on the worldview of the West?

The Western world relative to Central Asia has had years to adjust to the various tides of change that have taken place over the last century, whereas the Kazakh world has been

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<sup>1</sup> Western scholars such as Steven Filbert (1999) and Martha Olcott (1995) who have made detailed studies of the Kazakhs would point to a culture willing to undertake a lot of compromise.

thrust into much of it overnight. Change has been rapid and only seems to be increasing in pace. A case in point is that they are transitioning from a cash system to a debit/credit card system with automatic teller machines popping up everywhere. The checkbook system has been completely bypassed. Further evidence can be found on neighborhood streets where there are homes that do not yet have indoor plumbing, but have satellite dishes. Not to mention that everyone seems to have a cell phone. In urban settings music and fashion have become eclectic so that anything a person wears or listens to have a place where they are appropriate.

On a socio-political level, the Kazakhs seem to favor the example set by Turkey where a secular government is accommodated by a majority Muslim population. Echoing the sentiments of the Laumulins (2009), there does not seem to be a desire for a strong religious tradition that makes demands on life, but rather a general Islamic identity that each family can work out on their own. Whilst they may honor those who seek after a serious practice of Islam, they do not in turn feel guilty that they are not engaged in such a pursuit. If they do not seem serious about Islam then, is there evidence to support an argument that the true pursuit of many Kazakhs is not God, but material gain? This pursuit then lines them up with what describes this new religion of materialism. In other words, the more modern and wealthy a family becomes, the more it is like America/ the West. The equation then reads that modernization/materialism equals westernization. Kazakhs do however look to heroes such as Abai Kunanbaev (1845 to 1904) who despite his promotion of a modern way of life, in *Word Thirteen* describes Islam as being at the heart of Kazakh identity (1995). To be a Kazakh and a Muslim then is one and the same thing for virtually all Kazakhs and they do not want to be seen as betraying this heritage. The celebrated historian and ethnographer Chokan Valikhanov (1835 to 1865) despite his misgivings towards Islam, shows how for Kazakhs a change from Islam is a change of nationality (Chokan Valikhanov 2009:142). Kazakhs then

face the tension of how to pursue material gain without being seen as selling out their own cultural heritage to become more like the West. The strain of this tension ranges from those who feel no tension and willingly seek westernization, to those who are highly opposed and would rather sacrifice modern ways and wealth to stay pure to their heritage. Few Kazakhs actually fall into either of these two extremes but rather have a strong leaning to one side or the other.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show how the post soviet world of the Kazakhs has changed and how church planting amongst Kazakhs needs to change in order to be effective. Kazakhs face a tension between the re-establishment of their Islamic past and their ambitions for the future within a globalized world. Church planting must examine this tension and discover what an effective and appropriate church looks like.

The use of the term *church planting* in this dissertation is restricted to that within an evangelical perspective and therefore does not address that from an Orthodox, Catholic, or other non-evangelical position. Certainly there is merit for a broader understanding to be developed from others who would undertake research into the other church planting positions. As a result the purpose of this dissertation then is to inform evangelical church planting. Larry Eskridge in attempting to define the term evangelical as used in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, considers three ways in which it is used (2012). Firstly, to describe those who affirm certain doctrine and practice as explained by British historian David Bebbington:

four specific hallmarks of evangelical religion: conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and “crucicentrism,” a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (: 2)

A second way in which Eskridge defines evangelicalism relates to its broad identity as a movement in which various groups or denominations feel as if they belong. Thirdly, in the

areas where Christianity has been established for some time, in particular the West, the term evangelical has been embraced as an alternative to the term Fundamental, due to the negative perceptions and impressions of the latter term. Within the Kazakh context only the first two of Eskridge's definitions apply and so by evangelical this dissertation understands the term as referring to churches and church planters who hold to the Bible as authoritative for a person's life and the need to accept Jesus Christ as personal lord and savior. As the evangelical theologian Alister McGrath puts it, "a movement which places special emphasis on the supreme authority of Scripture and the atoning death of Christ" (1995: 398).

The term *effective* in this study refers to whether the church planting that takes place produces the desired result. Within an evangelical context this would mean that individual Kazakhs accept Jesus Christ as lord and savior and then come together to form churches. These churches are characterized by a commitment to Scripture, a commitment (covenant) to each other and a common faith, a practice of communion and baptism, and a desire to share the gospel. In looking at the idea of church in Matthew's gospel, Bosch describes it "where disciples live in community with one another and their Lord and where they seek to live according to the will of the Father" (1991: 83). *Disciples* and *Lord* express the personal commitment to Jesus and *according to the will of the Father* a commitment to Scripture, within which we discover the will of the Father. *Seek* is also relevant as it implies that there is a growing towards. That effective does not mean perfect but rather an attempt to do and be the best we can.

The term *appropriate* refers to the churches that are planted being suitable for the Kazakh context. Are Kazakhs able to identify such churches as their own? This introduces the concepts of contextualization and indigenization which need to be defined and applied to the Kazakh church planting context. Appropriate must also address the issue of globalization which is having an impact on the Kazakh context.

*Contextualization* has been a popular idea in missions and it has helped missionaries to become students of the people they serve by examining the people's historical, cultural heritage and all that has gone into making them uniquely who they are. Its goal is for the missionary to so plant a church amongst a people group that the members of that people group recognize and claim it as their own. In a world of change however, in addition to looking back and discovering what has made the people group who they are, but must also look forward to who the people are becoming and how they are embracing new lifestyles and ambitions. So enter the concept of *globalization* which has become a new phenomenon in this world of change. Globalization brings together cultures and nations so that they impact each other at various levels of ideas and activities. The result is change and new ways of thinking and doing. Globalization is having a major impact on the Kazakh way of life as a catalyst for economic development, broader social interaction, and a blending of ideas. Globalization however is not a panacea for all of life's issues and there are negative effects and reactions to it. Church planting amongst Kazakhs must take into account issues that both contextualization and globalization raise.

My reason for choosing this topic is that I believe evangelical church planting amongst the Kazakhs is at a crucial stage. As mentioned before, in the desperate years of the nineties many Kazakhs were open to new ideologies, especially those that gave a sense of hope, and it seemed as if any method of starting a church had a reasonable chance of success. With the rapid growth of economic prosperity and a growing confidence replacing the sense of desperation, Kazakhs are becoming more discerning and their preference is for people to be accommodating of each other's beliefs whilst doing business with each other. At a conference of expatriate church planters September 27/ 28, 2005 in Almaty, a number of church planters expressed concern with what seems to be a slowing down in the growth of the

Gospel compared to previous years.<sup>2</sup> They were concerned that the first generation, missionary involved churches are not actively reproducing second generation churches that in turn reproduce. Some of them were concerned that the types of churches that have been planted remain ‘foreign’ to the Kazakh way of life. The time therefore is ripe to evaluate those methods of church planting that have worked amongst the Kazakhs, decide what needs to change, and discover what is missing.

This study has four main objectives. Firstly, to look at the religious identity that Kazakhs are trying to establish after communism. The simple answer is that Kazakhs are Muslims, but as we have seen, the opinions of those who have made detailed studies of the Kazakh religion are diverse, as are the opinions of Kazakhs themselves. We cannot simply impose the stereotypical models of Islam on the Kazakhs. Effective church planting must take into account the unity and diversity expressed by various Kazakhs in describing what they believe. Secondly, to analyze the effect that globalization has had on the Muslim world generally and the Kazakh worldview specifically. How are changes in values, lifestyle and ambitions challenging the way Kazaks see themselves? How does the church need to change to remain relevant? Thirdly, to evaluate what methods and models of church planting have been used since the fall of the Soviet Union. If the Kazakhs of today are undergoing a worldview change then which if any of the previous church planting methods are still relevant? Church planting has been undertaken by internal church planters, meaning by churches and organizations that have their origins and identity in Kazakhstan; and by external church planters referring to those who would use the traditional ‘missionary’ title, defined here as having entered Kazakhstan with a foreign identity. All of this has led to diverse church planting methods whose results need to be analyzed and evaluated. Fourthly, within a climate of change and globalization, to recommend principles which need to be taken into

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<sup>2</sup> This is an annual conference that aims to evaluate the progress of church planting amongst the Kazakhs. This concern with a slowdown in church planting was re-iterated at the conference in 2008 (December 10<sup>th</sup>) during a workshop entitled “Church planting in the context of globalization and modernization”.

account when planting effective, relevant Kazakh churches.<sup>3</sup> From an evangelical perspective, this would need to be conditional on the freedoms and boundaries found in Scripture.

There are a number of excellent studies of the Kazakhs and their religious heritage going back to their beginnings as a nation. Whilst some of these will be referred to for insight, it is not the purpose of this study to do detailed anthropological or historical religious research on the Kazakhs. Rather, the primary focus is the post Soviet era and current issues facing church planters. The primary research method will be through the interviewing of ten Kazakh pastors using the methodology of a qualitative semi-structured interview, and the application of Grounded Theory to the resulting data.

The Grounded Theory approach will be detailed in chapter two, however in summary it does not begin with a stated hypothesis to prove, but rather with a research idea or question out of which data is gathered and analysed. In this study then we do not begin with a thesis statement but rather with the idea of Kazakh church planting that is both effective and appropriate. The study then develops as follows:

- Chapter one explains the research methodology chosen and examines the current debate to do with contextualization, globalization, and church planting.
- Chapter two looks at the historical religious identity of the Kazakhs, primarily through a literature review.
- Chapter three applies Grounded Theory to the gathering of research data.
- Chapter four describes the emerging theory related to Kazakh church planting.
- Chapter five reflects on the missiological implications of the theory.

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<sup>3</sup> Vinoth Ramachandra (2006:229) chastises the Western missionary approach in saying that it has walked hand in hand with global capitalism which has caused a focus on results based on statistics and church growth strategies, with the outcome being that it has lost its credibility to speak into a global society. As expatriate church planters pursue cross cultural church planting they need to be very aware of how insiders like Ramachandra perceive them.



The Grounded Theory process of analysis allows the data to reveal theory. So the theory is grounded in the data itself. Based on the data, constant comparative analysis then allows the categories within the theory to be validated and expanded on by insights from other sources. It is all very well for an expatriate church planter to develop a thesis statement, however I prefer the Grounded Theory approach so that by means of interviewing the Kazakhs pastors themselves the resultant theory can come from their experiences of church planting, grounded in the interview data.

I realize that as a participant in Kazakh church planting there will still be a challenge in avoiding my own bias and I will need to reflect on this throughout. As the author/researcher I am an evangelical and have been involved as an expatriate church planter amongst the Kazakhs since 1999, working with other expatriate church planters as well as local church planters, within the evangelical church planting context. Our goal has been to use a Biblical blueprint for church with the basic concept that it is a community of *believers* (those who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior). The post soviet period has seen a variety of church planting methods where we have tried to discover as much as possible about who the Kazakhs are and where they have come from with the goal of starting churches that within this *context* are as *Kazakh* as possible. At the same time church planting is being challenged by the way Kazakhs are being impacted by *globalization* and how it is producing change at all levels.

There are many potential sources of data such as missionary reports and interviews; however this study seeks to prioritize the views of the Kazakh pastors themselves. Many of the missionaries have come and gone and will continue to do so, but the Kazakh pastors are proving to be the consistent influence by which the Kazakh church is being established. As a result this study places a high value on their ideas and opinions.

## **Chapter 1: Research Methodology and introducing the concepts of Contextualization, Globalization, and Church Planting**

### 1.1 Research Methodology

A qualitative approach is often mentioned when speaking of research in the social sciences. In comparing *quantitative* with *qualitative* research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 8) describe qualitative as placing an emphasis on “the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency”. As a result the qualitative researcher is concerned with issues such as value, meaning, assumptions, processes and interpretation. Quantitative research by contrast emphasizes “the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (: 8). Mouton and Marais attempt to move qualitative social science research towards the quantitative realm in their description “social sciences research is a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it” (1990: 7). Their primary distinction between the two is where they see quantitative research in the social sciences as highly formalized, with stricter controls and clear definitions; as opposed to the less formalized, less defined, and more philosophical approach of qualitative research.

Creswell (1994: 4) explains how quantitative research often uses terms such as positivist, experimental, and empirical. These refer to researching an independent, objective reality where the researcher maintains their distance and removes as much bias as possible. Whatever values and assumptions the researcher may bring do not play a part in the research, and therefore personal involvement does not form part of the research. Creswell explains how quantitative methodology uses “a deductive form of logic wherein theories and hypotheses

are tested in cause-and-effect order”(7). Quantitative research methods can be summarized by terms such as *experiment* and *survey*.<sup>4</sup>

Qualitative research prefers terms such as constructivist, interpretative, and postpositivist (: 4). Reality is not separate and objective but rather constructed by those involved in the research environment. So there may be more than one reality in a given situation and the researcher tries to be true to each of these. The researcher is not separated from the study but rather “admits the value-laden nature of the study”(6), taking into account their own values and biases. A qualitative approach favors inductive logic so that data and categories are allowed to emerge from the research environment rather than being imposed by the researcher. Examples of qualitative research methods include case studies, ethnographies, phenomenology, and grounded theory.

The need for a literature review to form part of qualitative research is an important consideration. In this study the empirical approach of interviewing of ten pastors in their natural setting provides the base data upon which grounded theory is applied. Why then the need for outside literature? Creswell explains three important reasons (: 20):

1. There are likely to be other studies which relate to the current one, and the results of these can be studied for additional insight.
2. The study can be related to a broader frame of reference to do with the topic.
3. The study can find its place and importance within it the broader framework.

In the case of grounded theory care must be taken that the literature review does not impose itself on the study and so diminish the empirical effect of the interview data. In this study it is used as a separate chapter at the beginning, as well as in the theory and reflections chapters (four and five) as a way to inductively compare and contrast.

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<sup>4</sup> Creswell (1994: 10-11) defines both true (random design) and quasi (nonrandom design) experiments. He also explains surveys using structured questionnaires and interviews.

## 1.2 Grounded Theory

In examining what is meant by grounded theory for this study we need to begin with a discussion of the role of theology in empirical research. This introduces the idea of practical theology and its emphasis on the here and now, an approach that seeks to address the needs and questions of today's people (Hermans 2004: 3). It is all very well for the researcher to hold to certain theological ideas which inform church planting practice, but are they "tested in order to make the results verifiable, repeatable, and generalizable" (: 4). If theology is to have empirical validity then it must enter the public domain and join in the debate on issues facing society.

Van Der Ven speaks of an empirical cycle as theology interacts with real life (: 23). Firstly, the researcher must become personally involved in the research context as theology (theory) develops. The researcher then brings in readings from theological literature that connect closely with the research context, and out of this flows a theological research question which aims to transform religious practice. A conceptualization phase then follows to produce a model that is both theoretical and practical. There then follows a testing phase where empirical data is gathered and analysed in terms of the research questions, and finally in the theological evaluation phase consideration is given as to how practices can be transformed, and to how valid the theological framework is. The idea is to maintain a detailed and complex relationship between theology and practice.

Van Der Ven speaks of the four tasks of practical theology (Osmer 2004: 149):

1. The descriptive-empirical task. In this study it asks the question: what is the Kazakh church planting that is going on? It strives for a full and accurate description.
2. The interpretive task. Its function is to ask the question: why is this going on? It

looks for explanations as to patterns of behavior, attitudes, and ideas.

3. The normative task seeks to provide “theological and ethical norms that can guide and reform some form of contemporary religious praxis” (: 151). It asks the question: what ought to be?
4. The pragmatic task. It addresses the question of how to apply new religious practice.

As theology gives consideration to the need to be practical then it is able to become “action-guiding” and thereby play a valid role in empirical research. Grounded theory seeks to keep theology practical by embedding it in the real and natural data of a research context before the imposition of a hypothesis. Research in the Social Sciences most commonly involves the postulating of a theory and then a gathering and analysis of the research data as it interacts with the theory, so that the theory’s validity can be established. Grounded Theory takes a different approach where research does not begin with a defined hypothesis to be validated, but rather a research problem that leads directly to the gathering of data out of which theory flows. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss define Grounded Theory as “the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analyzed in social research” (1999: 1). The starting point is the research data out of which theory then flows as the data is analyzed, with the idea that because the data is real, it validates the theory. The argument then is made that because the theory is so closely linked to the data it has lasting significance. It may be modified or reformulated with insights from new data, but it cannot be replaced because it is grounded in the original data itself.

Some epistemological assumptions then of the grounded theory approach are:

1. That the theory that emerges is reliable in helping to explain other situations and provide new applications and interpretations because it is not merely something that has been conceived of in a vacuum, but rather

its validity has emerged from actual empirical data.

2. It approaches reality as closely as possible by gathering primary data from its natural setting through inductive inquiry rather than imposing a thesis framework. Mouton and Marais (1990: 15) explain how research in the social sciences involves so many complex variables that complete certainty is not possible, but rather the goal is research that approximates reality as much as possible. Grounded theory then argues that by means of constant comparison, the data and resultant theory are able to maintain a high degree of validity.
3. Glaser and Strauss (2009: 24) explain how as a result of theory being grounded in the data, is both valid and reliable in explaining and predicting situations with related data. In other words the findings are able to be generalized to other research situations that are similar in nature.
4. An integral part of generating theory from the data is the use of comparative analysis (:21). This helps to validate the facts arising from the data through comparison with other facts from other data. Such comparison also helps to establish how generally applicable a specific fact might be and consequently how generally applicable the resultant theory may be. The theory can also continue to live on as it is modified by the discovery of new facts as they are assimilated into the theory and then generalized for additional application. Theory then is not a perfectly completed task but a process that continues to develop as new data is revealed, thereby keeping the theory up to date and relevant.

As part of applying grounded theory to this study the primary method of data collection is by means of a semi-structured interview of ten Kazakh pastors. Establishing rapport with the interviewees to facilitate open and detailed discussion can be a challenge to how 'rich' the data will be. In this study the interviewees (pastors) are known to the interviewer outside of the research and some are close friends and ministry colleagues. Part of the data's richness relates to its usefulness and a challenge in the interviews is to avoid the interviewees sharing what they think the interviewer wants to hear for the sake of relationship.

Gathering relevant interview data that will be useful for analysis is a basic step in grounded theory. Charmaz contends that such data must be 'detailed, focused and full' (2006:14). The choice of the most appropriate method for gathering this kind of data must be decided on and it is here that grounded theory offers flexibility and avoids trying to be prescriptive. The method and even combination of methods will be driven by the research problem as well as adjustments that need to be made as the data is gathered and theory begins to emerge. This type of qualitative research unavoidably involves the researcher as a participant and thereby the assumptions they bring to the gathering of data. Charmaz proposes that it is the researcher's obligation to reflect on how they are involved and what influence they have on the process (:15).

The research problem in this study has to do with effective methods of church planting within a Kazakh context. As a church planter within this context, and at the same time the researcher, the interviewer has had to reflect on how they are influenced by their own experiences and pre-conceived ideas, by which they run the risk of overly directing the interviews and so bias the data that is gathered. The interviewer has had to be open to the pastors providing them with new data that had not been anticipated and then allowing this to create new discussion in succeeding interviews.

Some of the open-ended questions used in the interviews were generated using what Herbert Blumer calls sensitizing concepts (cited in Charmaz 2006:16). The idea is that as a participant, the interviewer begins with some general concepts and interests which they use to develop certain kinds of questions to do with the topic. These help to provide a place to start and a guide to keep the interview discussion relevant to the topic.

Other questions arose from what Glaser and Strauss call ‘anecdotal comparison’ (1999:67). Here in addition to the researcher’s own knowledge and experiences, they also reflect on relevant literature and the experiences of others. This also provides a means of saturating a particular category of data for better comparison.

In-Vivo codes are applicable to this study as they involve the use of terms which carry significant meaning. These terms may be used in a question with the assumption that everyone knows the meaning behind them. In the interviews time was taken to ‘unpack’ these terms in order to produce a common understanding. For example, ‘burial ceremony’ in the Kazakh language is a term full of specific meaning, its depth dependant on whether the person is a Traditional, Modern, or Russified Kazakh. ‘Globalization’ and its accompanying terms do not exist in the Kazakh language and so in the interviews their meaning had to be discussed and at times a term ‘borrowed’ from Russian or English. Each pastor’s experience and life-setting influenced the breadth and depth of their understanding of globalization. Some confined the understanding to economics, some added cultural adjustments, and a few linked the concepts of worldview and philosophy. To promote the detailed gathering of data from each pastor, the questions to do with globalization were designed using the ideas proposed by Tobias Faix (2007:113-129) in his model of the Empirical - Theological Praxis cycle. The processes of deduction, induction, and abduction he argues can be applied to the data generation process and produce questions that will result in detailed and diverse data. In deduction then, a question proposes a general idea with the resultant discussion applying this



to specific situations within the interviewee's experience. Induction results in a question that poses a specific case with the discussion then moving to the general principles that arise from it. Abduction attempts to look at a situation and allow the discussion to reveal new knowledge without any pre-conceived ideas as to what will result. Inferences are then made from this new knowledge. By definition this agrees with the basic premise of grounded theory which is allowing theory to emerge from the data without a pre-conceived hypothesis.

In Ground Theory as categories are refined and compared, again inductive and deductive reasoning are used so that theory begins to emerge from the data. At this stage of Grounded Theory, as Charmaz (2006:188) suggests, by means of induction the researcher looks at the range of concepts and categories, looking for patterns that will help to form theory. Deduction here involves looking at some of the general categories that have emerged and then considering how they inform the development of theory as they are applied to specific situations. Glaser and Strauss (1999:38) point out that the concepts have two essential features. They must be general enough so that they can be used for analysis outside of the specific context in which they arose, but at the same time meaningful enough that they can be usefully applied to a specific situation.

Additionally, as Charmaz (2006:103) also proposes, this 'reasoning about experience for making theoretical conjectures and then checking them through further experience' is known as abductive reasoning and is integral to this stage of the Grounded Theory analysis. Abduction helps to keep all possible explanations of the concepts and categories in mind. Various theoretical explanations are considered in analyzing the data so that the most reliable emerge and are then pursued even further. Paradoxically, this broad analytical pursuit is constrained by relevancy in terms of the core concepts which in this study involve Kazakh church planting, globalization, and contextualization. This relevancy however is provided by the analysis of the data and not the preconceived hypotheses of the researcher.

Constantly comparing concepts and categories leads to theoretical interpretations that begin to build theory. Variation emerges as the experiences and opinions of the interviewees differ, so that one Kazakh pastor has a different view of an issue to that of other pastors. The emerging theory then reflects the variances that have arisen from the data. Glaser and Strauss (1999:35) speak of two elements of the theory that is generated. Firstly, there are the conceptual categories and their properties and then the resultant hypotheses that come from the relations between the categories and their properties. This then results in theory that has both emerged, and remains open to development through new perspectives.

#### 1.4 The Limitations of Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory whilst offering much potential in social research, nevertheless has to deal with what are seen as its limitations. Firstly, it is seen as being too positivistic. As Charmaz (2000: 510) explains it suggests that there is somehow an objective, external reality from which a neutral researcher gathers data and does research. In a postpositivist world where conflicting views of reality exist does this make grounded theory redundant? Charmaz argues for a constructivist grounded theory that “ assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims towards interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (: 510).

Conrad (in Charmaz 2000: 521) argues that grounded theory limits the understanding of a situation by breaking it down into small data components and thereby ignores the overall meanings that may be present, as well as the perspective that the subject brings. In essence it makes the research situation too clinical, reducing the people being interviewed to subjects rather than participants. In an interview discussion, both the specific words and terms that are used carry meaning, but so does the discussion as a whole.

Charmaz (2000: 521) points out an additional limitation where grounded theory presents the researcher as an expert observer so that their observations in the gathering of data overwhelm all else. How sensitive the researcher is to the complexity of the research context and the diverse viewpoints within it, will then determine how limited grounded theory is in terms of this critique. The researcher needs to be self-conscious about the assumptions and attributions that they bring and how these may differ from others involved in the research context.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.5 The Missions and Contextualization Debate

*Contextualization* has become both such a widely used and controversial term in Christian missions, that Hesselgrave describes it as “already been defined and redefined, used and abused, amplified and vilified, coronated and crucified” (Moreau 2012: 35). It seems inconceivable that anyone engaged in missions would not try to be contextual, as the corollary suggests an approach that is irrelevant and inappropriate. After all missions begins with God turning towards the world (Bosch 1991: 426), and if Jesus would leave heaven and enter our context then how can we do any less. Careful consideration then must be given to how this term is defined and used.

Pocock defines Christian contextualization as follows:

Christian contextualization is the process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content, and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith *as a whole* – not only the message but also the means of living the faith out in the local setting – understandable. (2005:323)

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<sup>5</sup> In this study the theory produced by grounded theory is limited by the evangelical worldview that the researcher/ author brings to it.

Such a definition is full of implication for the church planter. Darrell Cosden (2002:321) explains that contextualization can be used to describe the total re-invention of Christianity within a receiver culture or the mere translation of a specific form of Christianity into another culture. Paralleling some of the approaches used in Scripture translation, contextualization as used in church planting does not seek a literal translation of the New Testament church into another culture, but rather a dynamic equivalent so that the timeless, universal elements are embedded into a culture in such a way that the church is seen as relevant. In this study, the implication is not that the majority of Kazakhs will therefore quickly embrace Christianity, but rather that it appears Kazakh, even if they reject it.

Louis Luzbetak states that “contextualization assumes there is a God-purposed basis in the culture that is available for the growth of the Gospel” (1988:72). Ruy Costa (1988) believes that in a world of change there is no set context and so the Gospel can never be fully contextualized but must continually be involved in the process of contextualization. Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989: 128) argue that in any definition of the term, contextualization must consider both the study of the message and the audience with whom it is shared. Martin Gannon (2001) describes culture as a framework of norms and values and so to contextualize the gospel is to lay aside our expatriate framework and examine the framework of the culture we have moved into.

Schreiter (1997:26) suggests that in today’s globalized world we need to think of three ways in which the idea of context has changed and therefore impacted the way we do theology in a new culture. Firstly, challenges or boundaries with other cultures were seen as being related to geographic distance whereas now they are more related to cultural differences and how to do theology where such difference exists. Secondly, globalization has led to one culture going through various degrees of blending and intrusion with other cultures. The result is that individuals within a culture have a sense of belonging to multiple cultures.

The third effect is that *pure* cultures no longer exist but rather hybrid ones, even if at a very low level. It is therefore fair to say that both church planting and its aspect of theology are becoming increasingly complex in the cultural contexts of today.<sup>6</sup>

Theology without contextualization is no longer valid argues Bevens (2002:15). It is important that Theology “takes seriously human experience, social location, particular cultures, and social change in those cultures” (Bevens 2002:15). In the light of contextualization, theology involves a multi-interaction with traditional culture, the changes the culture experiences, the new identities that develop, and the tension that globalization brings. It is not just looking back, but also forward and all around as the church planter tries to make the Gospel relevant. Harley Talman argues for a contextual theology that moves out of the classroom:

Perhaps the most crucial issues of a contextual theology would be identifying and confronting unbiblical worldview assumptions, values and allegiances, as opposed to items of doctrinal belief. Theologizing in Islamic contexts also demands that we speak to issues of social relationships. (2004:11)

An examination of Stephen Bevens’ models of contextual theology will help to expand on the ideas and definitions involved in contextualization. Bevens suggests six models of contextual theology that are summarized briefly as follows:

- a. The Anthropological model seeks to establish and preserve as much of the receiving culture’s identity, including the religious aspect. The Gospel message is seen as already present in the culture even though it may be hidden and so the primary task is to uncover it within the culture. Robert Hood, a theologian in the Episcopal tradition, has raised the issue that by and large theology has been developed from a Western (and Greco-Roman) point of view, ignoring the rich contribution that the local culture has to make (:62). An illustration of this is his contention that the rich presence of the

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Priest (2006:195) argues that as churches are planted the believers need a systematic theology that is universal in nature but that to that must be added a “missional theologizing”. He describes this as being context sensitive and experience-near so that it is able to have a relevant voice into each culture.

spirit world in African tradition is able to help with a deeper understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Using this argument we would then propose that the traditional Kazakh culture with the religious priority on ancestor spirits can be used as a reference point and analogy to develop Kazakh theology regarding the Holy Spirit as well as the concepts of angels and demons. This model shows how the local Kazakh context must be the priority and starting point in developing theology and becomes even more significant if we consider the sub-cultures of the Russified, Modern, and Traditional Kazakhs.

- b. The Praxis model emphasizes that theology arises in the receiving culture through a constant dialogue between Christian truth and its being acted out in the culture. God is alive and active in the local culture and it is the job of the church to join him. Theology is not theory alone but theory lived out in practice, transforming the negative aspects of the culture.<sup>7</sup> In fact, action takes place and then it is reflected on to produce a point of theology that is then relevant to the context. An example of this model that has a point of contact with the Kazakh context is found in the theology of Virginia Fabella, a Catholic sister in the Philippines (cited in Bevans 2002:84). As with Kazakh women, she lives in a context that is dominated by the male point of view and so seeks to portray the Gospel and in particular the person of Jesus as playing a major role in freeing women from oppression and abuse. Examples from the life of Jesus show how women should be valued and treated so that “The more one believes in Jesus, the more one will commit oneself to living like Jesus; the more one does that, the more one will come to understand who Jesus is” (:85). This model urges that Kazakh Christianity must make a

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<sup>7</sup> Rolf Zwick (2004:138) argues that we need a theology of transformation in response to all the negative influences of the globalized world in which we live. He sees promoting the message of the gospel as intimately linked to social change. In the overall Kazakh context this is a challenge on the macro level where the church is yet to gain full recognition as a valid expression of religion. Influence however can be made on the micro level, engaging the negative elements in a specific context and so effecting a more grassroots transformation.

difference in society, seeking out the marginalized and offering them a faith, hope and love that are seen in action.

- c. The Synthetic model sees God's activity in one context has making a valuable contribution to his activity in another context. Theology arises by constantly comparing God's activity in one culture and context with that in other cultures and contexts. There are then universal, common elements in the Christian faith shared by all cultures, and at the same time unique aspects to each culture. Both the message and the local context are important even to the point that the message may need to be shaped by the context as much as the context is shaped by the message. The two are synthesized with each other as well as with other situations where this has taken place. Each context has something to give to another, as well as something that can be transformed by the other. Bevans uses the example of Asian theologian Koyama who has lived and taught in various countries and cultures (:96). Koyama begins with the details of the context in which he finds himself, so that when he calls the Gospel into this context it is able to come alive. His experiences in the Thai context have led him to propose that the cyclical view of life held by Asian cultures need to be synthesized with the West's linear view so that both are held in tension by a new spiral view. In the Kazakh context an example of this model would be the need to synthesize the expatriate church planter's view of revelation with that of the importance of dreams for Kazakhs (see chapter one), so that within the established authority of the Bible the church develops a theology of revelation that takes dreams into account.

- d. The Transcendental model proposes that theology must be done on an individual basis through personal experience and self-reflection on that experience. This requires the person to undergo a type of enlightened, conversion experience so that they are able to think authentically about their existence. Individuals are then able to share these personal reflections with others and discover aspects that are common as well as different. The theological principles found in the Bible are then incomplete until the individual lives them out personally and then within their immediate cultural context. This then becomes an example to other individuals and their cultures so that they can then do the same. Justo Gonzalez illustrates aspects of this model (cited in Bevans 2002:113). Reflecting on his life in Cuba and within the Hispanic world, he argues that the Gospel only applies to his context when it is seen completely through Hispanic eyes. But, this does not mean a universal, prescribed understanding by means of various beliefs and practices. Rather, it is the individual and their community living out the Gospel as Jesus did when he became man and lived it out in his and his community's lives. For Gonzalez in the Hispanic context, it is the understanding of the pain and suffering of people and living a life on their behalf. The Sufi influence on the beliefs of the Kazakhs has influenced them towards a more individual, personal experience of God, enabling them to develop a folk Islam as explained in the first chapter. The transcendental model would propose building on this and allowing a conversion experience that is not universal but worked out in the specific Kazakh context.
- e. The Countercultural model sees the Gospel message as entering the culture as a means of judging and purifying the culture. This is needed because all cultures are



fallen and at the core opposed to the Gospel message. Cultures are not replaced, but transformed by the offer of alternative beliefs and practices that will counter some of their own. Prior to the transforming power of the Gospel, all human cultures are neither trustworthy nor reliable for the development of God's truth. Individuals who have been transformed make up a transformed church that then transforms society. The challenge to this model is to avoid becoming (whether real or perceived) an outsider with a superior image looking down on all others.

f. The Translation model

The Translation model as Bevens describes it begins with trying to discover the original, flexible core of the Gospel message, what may be referred to as something that is "supracultural or supracontextual" (Bevens 2002:40). This is the first task in theology as the Gospel core has always encountered people within their context and so has been covered over with layers of cultural belief and practice. Carefully peeling away these layers will eventually produce the original core. An example of the core that is layered over by individual cultures would be the expression of Romans 3: 23 which states "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (New American Standard Bible). Sin is universal, but is emphasized in unique cultural ways so that dishonesty is particularly sinful in one whereas if we consider the emphasis on hospitality as described, to be inhospitable in the Kazakh culture would be a great sin.

The receiving culture is then studied with the belief that it shares common aspects with other cultures which can be used to embed the Gospel message. The receiving culture is appropriately wrapped around the Gospel core so that we can say that the message has been translated into the receiving culture. This model always holds up the supracultural core as being of the greater importance so that if changes are needed then it is the cultural wrapping that changes and not the core. By

implication the culture will in fact have to change as it receives this core Gospel message as something new and superior. In the Kazakh context for example, the folk Islamic practice of praying to the ancestor spirits is not compatible with the Gospel core in terms of the precept that God declares his people are to have no other gods before him (Exodus 20: 3). This practice of praying to the ancestor spirits then has to change.

Part of self-theologizing is for the church planter to assist the local church in discovering the Gospel core and then wrapping culture around it. The greatest challenge to this model is to come to a clear understanding of the core Gospel message. Critics argue that all of the Gospel message is contextual and that no supracultural core exists (Bevans 2002:43). The idea of common cultural aspects is also challenged by those who see each culture as completely unique.

Related to the translation model and recognizing the challenge of doing theology in a changing, globalized world, Schreiter (1997:128) argues for a *new catholicity* described by its three aspects of wholeness, fullness, and exchange and communication. By wholeness he refers to the idea that all cultures have a proportionate basis for the acceptance and communication of the Gospel which by implication means that they share something in common despite other differences. This basis then means that there must be a strong focus on the receiving culture and how to make the Gospel message relevant to them. As Schreiter puts it “..the concerns of the speaker about the integrity of the message have to be met by equal concerns of the hearer about identity” (:129). A Kazakh’s identity as Traditional, Modern, or Russified, and even the sub-cultures within these, is therefore of great importance when the Gospel is received. The reality of hybrid and even fragmented cultures means that the church planter needs to be especially sensitive to the particular context that the hearer

lives in. Differences must be acknowledged as legitimate and the church must be prepared to get its hands dirty as it helps people struggle through the impact of globalization.

As we have seen, a Modern Kazakh in particular has the challenge of living in a rapidly changing world and yet showing loyalty to the life and belief of the ancestors. The church planter must understand how this person is pulled in various directions whilst trying to chart their own course for the future. For the Gospel message to be relevant, particular attention must be made to the “widows and orphans”, the marginalized, of Kazakh society. They risk being left behind and overwhelmed by the advancement of society, becoming a discarded fragment. The church must offer them an identity that brings dignity and a sense of belonging, part of what Schreiter (:130) refers to as the fullness of faith.

Schreiter refers to fullness in terms of the accepted theory, doctrines and practices, or orthodoxy, of the Christian faith. The issue being how the Gospel is communicated so that an orthodox Christian identity can be established. He makes an important point in showing how too often miscommunication is seen as a problem with the receiver and argues that equal attention needs to be paid to how well the message was sent. There is also no determinate way in which the message is always expressed, and it is actually this indeterminacy which allows for the Gospel to find its way into a new culture. If globalization has caused a splintered, pluralistic world then part of the fullness of faith is for it to offer some kind of unified goal or purpose. Schreiter (:131) suggests goals such as the dignity of all human beings, peace, and reconciliation with others as a new creation. This offers the Kazakh church great potential in showing a unifying alternative to the fragmentation that globalization can bring. Furthermore, the fullness of faith offers a depth of relationship that seems unattainable under globalization. Dignity, peace and love can be offered unconditionally, whereas outside of the church and family, acceptance is based on what a person brings to the table.

Exchange and communication comprise the third aspect of a new catholicity. If both the speaker and the hearer determine how the message is received then “...there is a need for intense dialogue and exchange to ensure the transmittal of meaning in intercultural communication” (:132). But even beyond this is the need to incorporate an understanding of how the message will be worked out in practice, an existential understanding or orthopraxis. Knowledge and faith must be accompanied by action, where the Gospel impacts a Kazakh’s daily life for the better.

Exchange and negotiation must also be part of the development of a goal or purpose, keeping in mind those things that are the same and those that are different. By implication then, the speaker influences the hearer and in turn is influenced by the hearer. The church planter does not enter the particular Kazakh context with a “listen to me, I know best” attitude, but rather takes a humble, learner position. The result is that the church planter’s theology is enriched even as they try to embed the Gospel in the new context.

Contextualization must take into account the pre-understanding that the Scriptures were not given in a cultural vacuum, but within the Hebrew worldview. Consequently, as Scripture is studied to see how the Gospel was made relevant for the Hebrew culture, so insights can be gathered as to how to make it relevant to the Kazakh culture. At the same time there needs to be an acknowledgement that God had a particular purpose in selecting the Hebrew culture which makes its context unique.

Contextualization in this study is pursued as an in-depth consideration of who the Kazakhs are as a people group. This includes their historical roots as well as the values, beliefs and ideals that have shaped their lives. Another way of putting it would be to talk of understanding the Kazakh worldview. Charles Kraft sees the components of worldview as the assumptions which underlie behavior, and these assumptions involve values and allegiances (cited in Ralph Winter and Stephen Hawthorne 1999:385). So, we need to know more of the

high value placed on hospitality and other aspects of the culture, as well as allegiances such as the commitment to one's family and clan. Kraft further contends that the assumptions are learned and passed down from the elders so that they have strong acceptance by the ongoing generations. With the high honor traditionally given to elders in Kazakh culture, but now under challenge from globalization, this is an important issue.

Schreiter (1985:19) argues for a significant role in contextualization on the part of the expatriate church planter, despite his contention that the expatriate church planter has dominated the development of a local theology and created ongoing dependence. The expatriate's experience of living in other communities can help to enrich and challenge the local context, helping the church to avoid becoming overly introspective with the idea that the world revolves around them. The expatriate is also able to see things from a fresh perspective that is not possible for an insider. Through dialogue and exchange these new insights can help to make the local church more effective.

Due to the presupposition of evangelical church planting in this study, contextualization as defined from this point of view is important. Moreau (2012: 56) explains that at the heart of the issue is the normative nature of the Bible. Describing the evangelical position he says "we believe that Scripture has all we need ... to determine how to live in a godly fashion in any circumstance of any culture at any time" (:57). The Gospel as contained in the Bible is reliable and so the goal of contextualization is not to change it but rather to express it in a way that is relevant. Amongst evangelicals there may be debate as to this *how?* of contextualization so that various models are applied, but "all do agree that determining whether a model or application of a model is congruent with the Scriptures is critical" (: 61).

Moreau explains the current debate in evangelical contextualization as centering on the approach known as critical realism (: 79). In essence this approach holds that there is a Biblical truth relevant to all cultures, but because we are fallen human beings our ability to

fully grasp this truth is limited. One side of the debate, which Moreau attributes to Hiebert, is that we begin with a less than perfect understanding and working together with the receiving culture this understanding grows, being continually checked against Scripture. Another side to the debate is exemplified by Kraft who sees God already working ahead of the church planter so that the Bible is brought alongside the cultural forms and practices in a way that uses these forms and practices, rather than trying to replace them. Underlining the debate is then the relationship between form and meaning.

As grounded theory is applied to the interview data, insights from the various approaches to contextualization will be considered, however with this study's evangelical approach to church planting, the description of contextualization offered by Hesselgrave is particularly applicable:

Missionary contextualization that is authentically and effectively Christian and evangelical does not begin with knowledge of linguistics, communications theory, and cultural anthropology. It begins with a commitment to an inerrant and authoritative Word of God in the autographs of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture. (2005:274)

The usual application of the term contextualization is to look at a culture from the situation of the present, going back through history to decide how and why they have certain beliefs and practices. Because we live in a world of constant change, there is also an aspect to contextualization that needs to consider the future. What is the culture becoming? This brings in the concept of globalization and the need to consider its effects on the process of church planting in another culture.

## 1.6 The Missions and Globalization Debate

In chapter one the concept of globalization was introduced, including its impact on Islam as a whole and the Kazakh context specifically. Given that background there is now a need to look at globalization within missions. Schreiter (1997:26) shows how globalization has had a threefold effect on the way theology is done in context. Firstly, the boundaries that separate people have changed from geographic to those of differences in cultural identity. The places where Kazakhs live are now easily accessible from a physical point of view so that the church planter's challenge is now to understand how a particular Kazakh sub-culture sees the world differently. The second effect is that many people now interact within more than one culture and end up with a sense of belonging to multiple cultures. Thirdly, all cultures are at various stages of being influenced by other cultures so that it is no longer possible to speak of a pure, isolated cultural identity. The implication for theology is that as the cultures continue to change so theology will need to continually adapt in terms of how it is communicated.

Kevin Vanhoozer (2006:101) laments the homogenizing effect of globalization on the church. He argues that we must distinguish between world Christianity and globalized Christianity. In world Christianity there is room for individual cultures to give their own responses to the gospel whereas in globalized Christianity everything is reduced to a general, generic experience. This leaves two choices for the Kazakh church, either it will be swallowed up in a general globalized Christianity, or it will take its unique place in, and contribution to world Christianity. Implied in this is an intentionality.

Bob Roberts looks at the opportunities globalization gives Christianity in saying "globalization has the potential to take the idea of God's kingdom farther than ever before as it relates to our understanding of how we use all the domains of society to operate" (2007:34). All of this means that consideration must be given to how globalization is influencing both

the Kazakh worldview and their way of life. There are now new ways of doing things, in particular in how we interact with others. The Kazakh church has the opportunity to take advantage of this.

Day (1996: 119) argues for three responses to the global world in which missions exists. Firstly, the redemptive message of the Gospel must be taught in a context that the missionary has carefully sought to understand in terms of past and current social and global trends. Secondly, any people or programs that no longer have a relevant voice in a changing world need to be discarded. Thirdly, the missionary must walk in humble, yet confident obedience to the God who is in control of a global world. Church planting in the Kazakh context must include all three responses.

Galadima (2003: 194) argues that not only has globalization created a new environment for religion, but it also created values that if adopted will seek to change religion. Specifically he points out the values of relativism and pluralism which thrive in the global village. These present a significant challenge to both the traditional religious beliefs of the Kazakhs, as well as to the planting of Kazakh churches. For Christianity to remain relevant, Galadima proposes that it apply itself to the problems that people in a globalized world face, such as HIV/AIDS and racism. This is relevant to the Kazakh church in light of the many issues in Kazakh society such as HIV/AIDS, economic instability and injustice, poverty, and ethnic tensions.

Araujo (2003: 230) presents what is possibly the greatest tension between globalization and evangelical missions. He speaks of the pressure that globalization exerts on Christianity to live at peace and co-exist with other religions, so that convictions need to be compromised for the common good. He argues that for this to happen Christianity in essence would deny its very nature and purpose for it can only hold to one worldview. Globalization in the Kazakh context may cause the Kazakh expression of Islam to compromise and



accommodate others, leaving the Kazakh church with the challenge of remaining ideologically distinct yet culturally relevant. As Araujo puts it “This question of being **in** but **not of** the world is at the root of how we understand the church’s relation to the world’s globalizing process” (: 231).

Kazakh church planting that is both effective and relevant must give detailed consideration to the many challenges and opportunities that globalization brings. In the interviewing of Kazakh pastors, issues in globalization need to be raised and discussed so that the research data is able to reflect the impact of globalization on Kazakh church planting. In light of this current theories in church planting need to be examined.

### 1.7 Church Planting Theory

Church planting in and of itself is a broad topic ranging from a macro (movement) level to a micro (individual church) level. In this study the term is used to describe the starting of a community (congregation) of believers. In the introduction this community of believers was defined as a church that is characterized by a commitment to Scripture, a commitment (covenant) to each other and a common faith, a practice of communion and baptism, and a desire to share the gospel.

Within the evangelical church planting community there would be general agreement with the definition above, with perhaps a few variations. Debate enters in when consideration is given as to *how* these churches need to be planted, and what they should *look like*. Charles Brock (1994: 90) offers what remains a widely used paradigm for answering how churches should be planted. He refers to it as the *five “selfs”* as follows:

- a. Self-governing – the local church makes its own decisions under the Lordship of Christ.

- b. Self-supporting – the local church has adequate resources to take care of its needs.
- c. Self-teaching – the local church involves its members in ministry, in particular as regards the Bible.
- d. Self-expressing – the local church is able to have its own personality in expressing its faith.
- e. Self-propagating – the church shares its faith and starts new churches.

Expatriate church planters run the risk of dominating the Kazakh church planting or at least causing a significant delay in allowing Kazakh believers to be the primary church planters. Certainly there are inherent problems in throwing a Kazakh believer into church planting before they are ready, but Brock's self paradigm helps to drive church planting towards that which is by and for Kazakhs, what he calls indigenous.

Related to the idea of an indigenous church is an approach that goes farther and advocates for a community of believers that remains within its previous religious tradition. Coleman (2011) gives a detailed description of this position called Insider Movement, some the ideas of which will be discussed in the analysis of the codes and categories arising from the research data. In summary it would advocate for Kazakh church planting that allows Kazakh believers to keep a Muslim identity and much of their Muslim practices.

John Travis (1999: 658) describes a spectrum of communities of believers found across the Muslim world. His description has drawn praise for helping to delineate the complexities of starting churches amongst Muslims, and at the same time criticism from those who see the spectrum as being too wide and straying outside the Biblical mandate for church. The spectrum in summary is as follows:

C1 – A traditional church separate from its Muslim community in form and language.

C2 – A traditional church that is separate in form but tries to use insider language.

C3 – Contextualized Christ-centered Communities that use insider language and cultural forms that are religiously neutral.

C4 – Same as C3 except that Biblically permissible cultural and Islamic forms may be used.

C5 – Christ-centered communities of “Messianic Muslims” who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. They call themselves Muslims and remain within the community of Islam with the hope of having a messianic mosque.

C6 – Small Christ-centered communities of secret believers. They live under extreme persecution and so worship secretly and are seen as Muslims by the community.

C1 and C2 approaches in Kazakh church planting run through denominations such Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Russian Baptist, Korean Presbyterian, to name a few. C3 through C5 appears to be widespread, and by its nature C6 is not evident. The research data should reveal church planting ideas that expands on this spectrum.

*Emerging church* is a term that has gained both increasing significance and controversy. Facing declining numbers and a growing disinterest in the church by the younger generation, there is a movement in church in the West known as the Emerging Church. Carson (2005: 12) explains that at the heart of the emerging church movement “lies the conviction that changes in the culture signal that a new church is emerging”. Broadly speaking it is characterized by a willingness to challenge traditional views and beliefs about what it is to be church and experiment with new forms that range from being more creative to a radical re-invention. Whether some of these more radical forms are Biblically valid is up for debate, but this movement does raise an issue that the Kazakh church needs to face. That is, if there is nothing about its character that attracts unbelievers then it has lost its impact and ability to grow.

Because of the relative novelty of Kazakh church planting, it can be said that all forms of church are emerging. Church planters need to look at the comparison of the three models

of Traditional, Cell, and House church. Two specific marks of the Traditional church is that it is building-based and has full-time, trained clergy. In the Kazakh context it is usually registered and has a public presence in the community. The cell church model is the same as the traditional with the significant difference that all the members are committed to a smaller group that usually meets in a home separate to the large weekly meeting. Amongst Kazakhs this model is largely propagated by the Korean church planters.

The House Church model is not tied to a dedicated building but rather believers meet in homes as the church. Leaders are trained but mostly bi-vocational as the church is too small to support them. House churches in close proximity get together occasionally for combined worship and ministry. In the Kazakh context a number of house churches may register together as one traditional church to satisfy the requirements of the religious laws.

*Community* seems to be a significant term when speaking of Kazakh church planting. Whatever form or model of church planting is used, it must offer a Kazakh believer a place to belong and find safe haven from the challenges that a believer in the Kazakh context faces. This and the other issues that have been raised to do with church planting should feed into the pastor interviews so that the emerging theory can apply itself to how they are worked out in the Kazakh context.

A previous study that gives insight into the evangelical church planting that was done in the 1990s is that by Filbert: *A historical study of evangelism and contextualization of the Gospel among the Kazak people of Central Asia* (1999). Whilst the next chapter will refer to some of his research into Kazakh religion, some of his conclusions related to church planting are:

- The initial conversions came mostly from Russified Kazakhs but that there was a shift towards Traditional Kazakhs (:142).
- There was a shift from the expatriate to Kazakh as the primary evangelist (:142).

- The Gospel was beginning to move from a beginning in the cities to include the villages as well (: 143).
- The cell church model is having success in the Kazakh context and must be pursued (: 181).
- The future of the church will depend heavily on adequate and contextual theological and leadership training (: 196-7).

## 1.8 Conclusion

Qualitative research using the Grounded Theory approach is what this study uses in looking at Kazakh church planting. Key concepts that influence the research are firstly that it focuses on *evangelical* church planting with the primary data coming from the interview of ten evangelical Kazakh pastors. Secondly, the Kazakh context is where the church planting is done and so defining and applying what is meant but the *contextualization* of the Gospel is important. Thirdly, the Kazakhs live in a world of globalization that imposes all kinds of influence on their lives and church planting must understand and adapt to this changing environment. Finally, church planters must decide on what they mean by a Kazakh church, critically reflecting on what has already taken place and looking to what is relevant for the future. Before beginning with grounded theory and the research data, some groundwork needs to be laid by looking at the historical religious identity of the Kazakhs.

## **Chapter 2: The Historical Religious Identity of the Kazakhs**

### 2.1 The Growth of an Islamic Identity

Balzhan Gabdina, Galina Emelina, and Svetaslav Galikov (2002) in their account of the history of the Kazakhs describe how before the Kazakh people came into being as a distinct group, there were various Turkic nomadic people groups living in Central Asia. These nomads took up a nominal embrace of Islam around 1050 AD and added to its previous practices of Shamanism, Animism, and ancestor worship. In the immediate centuries that followed, Sufi saints roamed throughout the Central Asian steppe and maintained Islam's momentum. Within this religious environment the Kazakh people came into being around 1500 AD.<sup>8</sup> Gabdina, Emelina, and Galikov (:29) argue that it was at this time that the Kazakhs had developed a language, culture, and economic existence of their own. The process leading up to this point however had been going on for two to three centuries prior to this and a good argument can be made that the Kazakhs came into being in the earlier years. As pointed out by Edward Schatz (2004), since their origins, genealogy has been foundational to the Kazakhs' identity and beliefs. All Kazakhs trace their ancestral heritage to one of three tribes; the Great, Middle, and Small tribes (also referred to as clans or Zhuz) (Valikhanov 2010:151). These are said to have come from the three sons of the first Kazakh ruler, Alash, although his existence has not been proved as fact. Seit Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:76) explains how when asked, a Kazakh should proudly state their clan heritage and from this much can be understood about their geographic origins, their unique accent when speaking Kazakh, and specific cultural practices that are emphasized. The Laumulins (2009:69) explain how a priority for every Kazakh is to name their forefathers to the seventh

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<sup>8</sup> Erengaip Omarov (2005) details a number of theories as to when the Kazakhs came into existence, some going back to the time before Christ. There is widespread agreement however that the Kazakh nation was distinct by 1500 AD.

generation, and to not be able to do so is a shame. So it becomes important to remember the previous ancestral beliefs and practices and how they shape the religious expression of the current generation.

Whilst some Kazakhs lived in cities and practiced a more orthodox mosque-based Islam, most Kazakhs were nomads and therefore had very little attachment to a mosque or seminary. Privratsky (2000:56) points out that these nomads placed a higher importance on shrines and cemeteries which was a natural result of the emphasis on ancestors. This was given further validity by the presence of the Sufi saints traveling throughout Central Asia. These holy men did not condemn the Kazakhs' practice of Islam, but rather gave it credibility as a more mystic expression of Islam. With the Kazakh identity firmly established, the end of the seventeenth century began a period of conflict with other nations and the consequences were so severe that their very existence was threatened (:54). Whatever the intention of the nations that sought to invade and control the Kazakhs, part of the package was the religion of the invading nation. Firstly, the Mongolian Jungars with their Buddhist beliefs managed to exterminate up to two thirds of the Kazakhs, and then the Russians with their Christian background over a long period of time oppressed and killed many Kazakhs (Gabdina et al, 2002:34). Significantly, this only strengthened the Kazakhs identity with Islam and their resistance to these other religions.

Andreas Kappeler (1994) describes how under Peter the Great and Katherine II, Russia embarked on an intensive course of modernization. Russia was being left behind by the other European countries in terms of modern progress and changes had to be made in order to catch up. There needed to be a stable and unified approach throughout the areas of Russian rule and the Muslim religion was seen as a hindrance to this. Thus began a period of Russia dominance that used a variety of methods to achieve its aims. Valikhanov (1985:181)

details how Central Asia established trade relations with Russia and as a result came under the influence and control of Russia.

As the Russians gained control of the Central Asian steppe, they began to settle their own people and set up secular schools for the education of their children mostly to the exclusion of the Kazakhs. Michael Khodarkovsky describes how by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Russians considered the Kazakhs as inferior and uncivilized (Khodarkovsky cited in Brower and Lazzerini 1997:10). The challenge for the Russians was how to improve the culture and understanding of the Kazakhs and thereby make them more useful and manageable. This would also help Kazakhs to see the clear superiority of all things Russian and thereby accept the new situation. It was decided that Kazakhs and other Muslim people groups should be educated separately from Russians in their own Islamic schools and so both Tatar teachers from the North and Islamic teachers from the South were brought in to instruct the Kazakhs. The result was that the Kazakhs were strengthened in their Islamic beliefs, learning about the more orthodox teachings and practices, and in addition also became less accepting of Russian culture and rule (Filbert 1999:14, 47). This was not the outcome that the Russians had desired and so they tried to impose control over the religious establishment, but the result was that it merely went underground. There seems to be a lack of historical data to accurately describe how seriously Islamic the Kazakhs had become, but by the mid nineteenth century there were Kazakhs making pilgrimages to Mecca, poems and songs with Islamic themes, and Islamic practices relating to marriage, burial, circumcision, and the seclusion of women (Olcott 1995:104). In some cities Quran schools were established and in certain sections of society, the Russian authorities for a time allowed the influence of Sharia law in the courts (Khalid 2007:37).

A change of tactic by the Russians saw them trying to control the Kazakhs through conversion to Christianity. They used both coercion, through the threat of imprisonment and



the destroying of mosques, and enticement, through the giving of money and possessions. David Brower and Edward Lazzarini (1997) show how all of this made good sense on paper, but in practice the conversions were nominal with no credible evidence that the converts understood and practiced true Christianity. Contrary reports began to come in that the Kazakhs were in fact converting to a stronger form of Islam (Khodarkovsky 1999:8). The Russian authorities decided that their missionaries needed to change to a focus on the quality of conversions. There needed to be a more detailed assessment of how deeply the supposed converts had embraced Christianity. Methods were used that called on converts to freely express their true conversion and this required that the missionaries employ serious teaching of what the Gospel meant before people converted. This new approach produced very disappointing results and it became clear that large scale conversions were not realistic. Khodarkovsky (1999:7) shows how Central Asians used the pretension of conversion to Christianity to further their political ambitions.

Brower (1997:116) explains how the influence of the enlightenment in the nineteenth century caused the Russians to work with the Kazakhs under a new paradigm. No longer were the Central Asian cultures seen as negative in nature, but rather they were all in the process of becoming more civilized. The argument was that they were simply behind Russia in their stage of development and with the proper guidance would develop as they should. Ethnic differences should be accepted and studied for a greater understanding. As before, the hope was that this approach would be more acceptable to the Kazakhs and so endear the Russian culture to them. Over time the Kazakhs would come to see the great benefits of becoming more 'Russian' in their culture and worldview. The belief in their own Russian culture and religion was so strong that they believed it could be put alongside any other and still be superior. Despite the inherent flaws in this new approach, it did have some success as evidenced in the writings of Abai Kunanbaev (1845 to 1904). In Word Twenty Nine he writes

“One should learn to read and write Russian. The Russian language is a key to spiritual riches and knowledge, the arts and many other treasures “(Abai 1995:146).

Under this new approach, a distinction was made between the private religious life of Kazakhs and the public Islamic institutions. Any potential opposition was seen as coming from the public institutions and so they needed to be carefully governed and controlled. A Kazakh’s private religious life however was seen as insignificant and could be ignored.

With the increased access to education and a broadening of their worldview, there arose a group of Kazakh intellectuals such as Abai and Valikhanov who began to advocate the future success of the Kazakhs as lying in the areas of education and a modern worldview. They did not seek to create a secular Kazakh society but one in which the Muslim faith, Kazakh culture and education could be blended together. However, as Valikhanov (2009:140) explains, orthodox Islam had not fully entered the Kazakh blood and so if followed too seriously it would divide the Kazakh nation into those who decide to become stricter Muslims and those who remain as folk Muslims. Peter Rottier (2003:75) shows how this Kazakh intelligentsia held to the linear development of nations where a country such as Kazakhstan needed to move forward from a nomadic tradition to that of one based on settlements which then allowed for more advancement. So, this was not something anti-Kazakh but rather the next step in developing the great Kazakh nation.

Kazakh became a literary language by the 1860s and gave rise to more and more intellectuals who began writing about the Kazakh way of life and often criticized the influence of the Russian rulers (Olcott 1995:108). Many of these writers strongly promoted the cause of Islam as a uniting force for the Kazakhs against Russian rule and as a means to survive the desperate times facing those on the steppe due to famine and land seizures.

## 2.2 The Jadid Movement

Jadidism describes a modernist movement that had as its goal the cultural and educational reform of the Islamic faith in Central Asia (Laumulins 2009:18, Khalid 2007:41). The term Jadid is Persian in origin and means 'new method'. The movement began in the late nineteenth century through the influence of Central Asian intellectuals and was seen by Russia as a negative influence set on making Central Asians more Islamic. Olcott (1995:110) describes how a conflict arose between the secular educational system proposed by Russia and that of the Jadids which was religious. The Russians tried to take over control of all Muslims schools and thereby use modern education as a means of breaking down Islam. This played into the Jadids' hands as they began to develop a compromise that combined the Muslim faith with a modern, organized education. The results alarmed the Russians as they witnessed schools that were not producing the russified Central Asians they hoped for, but rather began to give intellectual validation to a separate Islamic identity. Consequently there arose the unlikely alliance between the Russian rulers and the conservative Muslim leaders who both sought to oppose the Jadids. The conservative Muslim leaders were opposed to the modernist ideas of the Jadids especially the inclusion of any kind of secular education.

The Jadids were concerned with the risk of the Islamic culture being left behind and then ultimately disappearing in a modern, developing world (Adeeb Khalid 2000:138). In *Word Twenty Five Abai* (1995) addresses this concern by extolling the value of education and encouraging Kazakhs to learn as much as possible from others. Rather than work against the controlling presence of the Russians, the Jadids sought to use it as a means of bringing Central Asians up to date in the modern world (Laumulins, 2009:18). Ignorance as a result of the lack of a modern education was the great issue to be dealt with. They attributed health, economic, moral and other problems to this issue. They held that knowledge enables a culture

to distinguish between good and evil and so avoid corruption and the breakdown of society. This echoes much of Abai's writings. Holding onto specific cultural forms and practices was far less important than the benefits of modern progress and education. The blessing of modern development and progress was seen as god's gift for all people and so could be embraced by the Central Asians without having to fear the loss of their ethnic cultural identity. Under their leader Ismail Gasprinsky (1851 to 1914) the Jadids had far reaching aspirations which can be summarized by his statement "I believe that sooner or later the Muslims, educated by Russia, will become the intellectual leaders in the development and civilization of the rest of the Islamic world" (Mark Batunsky 1994:218). As idealistic as this seems, it would have been interesting to see its development had it not been for the communist revolution. How effective the Jadid movement was amongst the Kazaks needs to be judged in the light of the Alash Orda movement.

### 2.3 The Alash Orda Movement

Gulnar Kendirbay (1997:487) shows how the years of Russian influence led to two groups of intellectuals that sought to lead the Kazakhs into the future. There were those who advocated a return to the traditional nomadic way of life with a strong emphasis on Islam. These were known as the writers and poets of 'Zar Zhaman' (Time of Trouble). The second group consisted of the modernizers and their leader was the Kazakh intellectual Akmet Baitursynov (1873 to 1937). He and other leaders sought to awaken the Kazakhs to their significance as a distinct and valid ethnic people group. Azamat Sarsembayev (1999:323) points out how the three main elements to this were a renewed interest in Islam, identification with a Turkic heritage, and an emphasis on the clan-tribal history. They used the publication of newspapers, books, and magazines to get their ideas out and also promoted organized forums for the

discussion of their ideas. Baitursynov and other leaders were often arrested and at various times publications were banned by the Russian authorities (Mambet Koigeldiev 2007:176).

Koigeldiev describes how these Kazakh intellectuals had no faith in the Russian representative system as providing Kazakhs with a means of protecting their own rights and interests:

Progressive forces in Kazakh society, first and foremost the emerging national intelligentsia, understood perfectly well the sinister implications of colonial dependency and saw as a way out of the situation the reinstatement of national statehood. (:157)

The uprisings and resultant backlash by the Russians that this movement provoked caused great hardship for many Kazakhs and they found themselves facing famine and a Russian rule that seemed bent on their extermination. As all this was developing, Russia and its territories experienced dramatic change with the overthrow of the Tsarist rule and what appeared to be new opportunities for freedom. The Kazakh leaders seized upon this opportunity and began to advocate for an All-Kazakh Congress which took place in July of 1917 (:157). Out of this congress the Alash political party was proposed and its leaders began to advocate for Kazakh autonomy within a Russian federation. It also favored a separation of religion from the state. The rise of Soviet rule prevented the formal founding of the party but its ideas and the issues it aroused were carried forward by the Alash Orda movement. Its leaders negotiated at various times with the Soviet leaders and were both encouraged and disappointed. Ultimately, the Soviet authorities saw the movement as having a destructive influence on the spread of Soviet philosophy and under Stalin's purges in the 1930s, the movement collapsed and its leaders were executed. As with the Jadids, this movement may have had lasting success had it not been for communism.

Koigeldiev (2007:159) shows how the Kazakh cultural identity prior to communism seemed to exist as a paradox. As described, there was much about them that seemed Russian and from all appearances they were content with this situation and its promises of progress.

And yet the years of interaction with the Russians had caused them to become more committed to the Islamic basis of their religion. This does seem to suggest that the Muslim identity (even if not practiced) is so essential to Kazakh identity that they are willing to compromise and change in all areas but this. In a later chapter we will discuss the implications of this for the growth of evangelical Christianity amongst the Kazakhs.

#### 2.4 Kazakh Religion under Communism

With Stalin's rise to power and the lack of tolerance for any other expressions of allegiance other than to the Communist ideal, the Kazakhs' identity with Islam came under serious threat. This threat was expressed through two initiatives (Enders Wimbush 1985:72). Firstly, there would be the complete breakdown of all of the Islamic institutions. Secondly, there would be the promotion of a new Soviet identity to replace the previous Islamic one. The Russian culture and language was promoted to the exclusion of all things Kazakh. Wimbush argues that the Soviets greatly underestimated the strong identification that a nation has with Islam. Being a Muslim is ultimately what defines you, whether you want to or are able to practice your faith or not. He says "One is born a Muslim; unlike the Christian, he is not 'baptized' into the church. To be Muslim is a fact of existence, not a choice of affiliation. To cease to be Muslim, logically one must cease to exist" (:75). So, communism did not do away with the Kazakhs' Muslim identity, but rather superimposed itself on top of it. Dilip Hiro (1994:110) describes Kazakh religion during communism as moving from doctrinal expression to ritual practice within the home and family. Rites of passage such as birth, circumcision, marriage, and death retained their religious character and were mostly overlooked by the communist rulers. In fact, even amongst these rulers were Kazakhs who participated in family-based religious practices. Tazmini agrees and says that Islam in the

Soviet era was ‘de-intellectualized’ and left to live on in the form of ritual and tradition (2001:67).

As the Laumulins (2009:22) point out, the Soviet attack on the Kazakh culture and religion did alter the worldview of many Kazakhs and many did assimilate a Russian way of doing things into their lives.<sup>9</sup> The extent to which this happened was not consistent and varied according to factors such as which part of the country a person lived in and whether they were from the city or the village. Even if the Kazakhs maintained their Muslim identity and cultural practices, the Laumulins (2009) show that the atheism that came along with communism did much harm to the doctrines of Islam so that succeeding generations became mostly ignorant of the teachings of Islam as described in the Quran.

Under Khrushchev the Kazakhs found relief from Stalin’s aggression but not much else to help them in their desire to openly practice their religion (Michael Rywkin 1987:27). Under Brezhnev however they found a leader who had some personal background in Kazakhstan and his attitude seemed much more accommodating. Although Kazakhs still lived in a communist environment as long as they showed themselves to be good Soviets, they were able to express their religion within limits. Rywkin writing in the decade prior to the fall of communism says “Total denial of their Islamic heritage is practically unheard of among Soviet Muslims” (:32). Rywkin points out that the modernizing influence of communism on the Kazakhs changed their Islamic worldview so that they no longer practiced polygamy, most women discarded their veils, and the consumption of alcohol increased.

Valikhanov (2009:140) and Privratsky (2000:281) use this background to help us understand why Kazakhs oppose any extreme or fanatical expressions of Islam. Under communism religion was shown to be against modern scientific progress, and thereby against a more developed and civilized society, and for many Kazakhs this made a lot of sense. As

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<sup>9</sup> Filbert (1999:21) agrees and sees significant effects still lingering years after communism.

the Kazakhs have tried to re-establish their Islamic identity in a post-Soviet society, they are largely resistant to Muslims from outside trying to impose other forms of Islam on them. A good question to ask is in this new, open Kazakhstan, is orthodox Islam gaining ground so that in the future Kazakhs will better harmonize with their more Islamic brothers to the South?

## 2.5 Kazakh Religion Post-Communism

The Laumulins (2009:26) and Ashirbek Muminov (2007:249) explain how the fall of communism brought Kazakhstan into contact with the wider world of Islam and expectations were that Kazakhstan would see itself as part of the broader movement. This also introduced new streams of Islam into Central Asia so that the Kazakhs had to deal with new religious philosophies within their traditional Islamic worldview. Cengiz Surucu (2002:393) shows how the collapse of the Soviet communal structures caused Kazaks to withdraw to their ethnic and tribal connections as both a means of survival and of coping with all the new ideas being thrown at them. At the same time there began to emerge a market economy that promised advancement for the individual as they worked with others outside of the tribe or clan. Surucu believes this has caused an identity crisis for most Kazakhs and along with Schatz (2004) would argue that there is now in place a clan competition for the control of national resources and the profits that flow from them. At the center of all of this is a government controlled by its president Nursultan Nazarbaev and his strong tribe/clan connections.



### 2.5.1 The Nazarbaev Era

The end of communism saw a period of political instability and unrest, but when all was said and done, the leadership of the country lay strongly in the hands of the current president, Nursultan Nazarbaev. As an outsider looking in, Filbert points out that as a shrewd politician, he gave credence to the revival of Islam amongst the Kazakhs (1999:31).<sup>10</sup> The way he orchestrated this enabled him to keep control of its development and in particular to ensure that it was free from any radical influence. In 1990, he established a separate Muftiate for Kazakhstan and thereby reduced the fundamentalist influence of Kazakhstan's more radical neighbors (Ghonchen Tazmini 2001:71). Tazmini explains how the first mufti, Ratbek Nisanbaev supported Nazarbaev's view that there should be no Islamic political parties as these would have a negative effect on the harmony between the many ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. In addition, a Council for Religious Affairs was established to guarantee religious freedom and ensure that religious institutions stayed in check.

Beatrice Manz (1994:177) argues that Islam for Nazarbaev and his government leaders is merely a means to achieve the end of political power and economic prosperity. Both of these are better attained if the Nazarbaev government seems to be pro Islam. Compared to the other former Soviet countries of Central Asia and because of the multi-ethnic makeup of the population, Nazarbaev has allowed significant freedom of religion, even to Christians. This does however seem to change from year to year depending on the current political climate. Kazakhstan is still in a fragile stage of development as an independent country and Nazarbaev will oppose any religious influence that threatens this. Radical Islam represented by the modern Jihad movements does not seem to be native to Kazakhstan, but as explained by Ahmed Rashid (2002:10) it is usually imported from Kazakhstan's more radical

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Eaton (2001:107) describes 4 ways in which a people group converts to Islam. Through coercion, for political gain, for social liberation, and by reforming religious beliefs so that they conform to Islam. The Kazakh context post communism seems to be the latter three in combination.

neighbors. With a Sufi and Jadid-like background, the Islam of Kazakhstan seems more tolerant and peace-loving. Within this situation of freedom of religion and a favorable disposition towards Islam there is some evidence of an orthodox Islamic revival.

### 2.5.2 Orthodox Islamic Revival

The revival of orthodox Islam amongst the Kazakhs needs to be evaluated on two levels. The reason for this is that communism did away with the *teachings* of Islam leaving most Kazakhs ignorant of what the Quran required. Firstly therefore, an orthodox Islamic revival must be evaluated at the knowledge level to see how Kazakhs are engaged in the study of Islamic norms and values and how they apply to the creation of an orthodox Islamic community. A second aspect of evaluation must take place at the level of practice, where any visible changes to religious practice can be observed, such as adherence to the five pillars and a mosque-based worship. Under communism, the private practice of Islam was tolerated but it was more cultural than orthodox, and so with new freedom is there a turning to more orthodox practices?

#### 2.5.2.1 A Knowledge Revival

Ayshegul Aydingun explains “People in Kazakhstan have witnessed a striking competition among Muslim countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan, which are attempting to introduce their interpretation of Islam” (2007:1). She goes on to describe how there have been the two diverging influences where Turkey has sought a moderate influence in line with a modernizing society and on the other hand Saudi Arabia has sought a more

radical influence in line with Sharia law.<sup>11</sup> At this more extreme end is an attempt to shift the Kazakh paradigm from a separation of religion and state to one that sees all things as Islamic. The success of this seems to reflect a phenomenon in many other cultures, namely, that when a belief system is in the minority its intensity and development intensifies as a means of defense against the ruling majority. Once a religion becomes that of the majority, there is no longer a need to hold on to it as intensely. As the Kazakh majority now matures, is this intensity still growing amongst the general population? Now that the Kazakhs no longer have the communist threat against their religion, have they lost the desire to pursue it as intensely?

The answers to these questions are not simple; however two specific attitudes are evident. Firstly, as argued consistently by the Laumulins (2009), the average person in the street is opposed to any radical religious influence. Their attitude would rather be to live and let live, to accommodate on a religious level and co-operate on other levels. A second, minority attitude would be a reaction to outside non- or even anti- Islamic influences. Khalid (2007:116) describes the renewed interest in Islam after communism and whilst the general population remains at the interest level, there are the minority few who seek to pursue a purer Islam that is not as influenced by outsiders.

Abai (1995: Word One, Two, Three, Five, Eleven, Sixteen) throughout his Book of Words laments the negative image people have when they think of Kazakhs, much due to their own attitudes and activities. Do the signs of a religious revival amongst the Kazakhs have to do with the need for a positive national image? No-one wants to be identified as a 'loser' and so many Kazakhs embrace their identity as Muslims more closely as a substitute for the failed Soviet identity (Aydingun 2007:70). They would say that they have always

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<sup>11</sup> Yuri Bregel (1991) explains how Central Asia has historically been a significant frontier region for Turks. As a result the Turks have had a strong influence in seeing a consistent Sunni expression of Islam. Somewhat undermining this was the Sufi influence of saints such as Yasawi. Yasawi was a Sufi saint born and raised in Central Asia who came to be honored as the one who brought Islam to the Kazakhs. The Sufi emphasis on mysticism and the importance of shrines will be expanded on later, but suffice to say that through Yasawi and other Sufi saints this did seem to dilute the more doctrinal tradition of Sunni Islam.

been part of the Muslim tradition and that their commitment to communism was largely surface for the purposes of survival. Kazakhs echo Rashid (2002) and propose that there are two roads in Islam, the road of violence and that of peace. They do not want to be identified with the one of violence but rather that of peace where we can all work together and leave matters of religion in the background. Tazmini (2001:70) suggests that Kazakh Islam could become more radical as a protest against the ruling regime if this regime becomes more oppressive and negligent in meeting people's needs. The Nazarbaev regime however seems to be very shrewd in balancing its power with an improvement in the general lifestyle of most Kazakhs as well as proposing a vision of future growth and prosperity (Nazarbaev 2010:3).

#### 2.5.2.2 A Practice Revival

Are there some clear outward signs of revival? The rapid construction of mosques has been made possible by the funding of countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Khalid 2007:119, Cummings 2005:88). The practice of some of the five pillars, such as pilgrimage to Mecca and Ramadan (the period of fasting), have increased (Akzhol 2009, pers. interview, 24 March).

The question is does this apply to all Kazakhs? In understanding the answer to this question we need to consider issues such as geographic location, social class, village versus urban, and fringe versus mainstream. These issues are best taken into account if we describe the Kazakhs in terms of three identities: Traditional, Modern, and Russified. Although this may seem simplistic in purely anthropological terms, I believe it will nevertheless help to inform the issue of church planting which is the main topic of this dissertation. This distinction also helps in understanding the context within which others have researched and written regarding what the Kazakhs believe and how church planting needs to take place.

After briefly describing each of these, I will describe some of the key elements that make up the Kazakh religion.

## 2.6 Traditional, Modern, and Russified Kazakhs

Mahmood Monshipouri (2002:99) describes three types of Muslims that exist in the modern world. There are the conservatives that look to the past for the pure practice of Islam. They are not open to the ideas and influences from the West and see globalization as the way in which the West tries to dominate the rest of the world. Modernists are those that see Islam as something that can be revived and renewed by modernization. They are open to globalization but not secularization and as such will not pursue globalization where it runs the risk of breaking down their Islamic culture. Liberals are those that embrace globalization, insisting that Islam actively participate in order to have a legitimate say in a modern and changing world. They would even go so far as to say that Islam must adapt to internationally accepted rights and practices. Whilst these descriptions seem very appropriate when looking at Islam as a whole, we need to adjust them to the specific Kazakh context and so for the purposes of this study we will consider the categories of Traditional, Modern, and Russified Kazakhs.

### 2.6.1 Traditional Kazakhs

Ancestral beliefs and practices are very important for the Traditional Kazakh. The ancestors were good Muslims and therefore the way that Kazakh ancestors lived and worshipped is the authority for how life and worship should occur today (Kenzheaxmetuli 2004:256). Privratsky (2000:83) describes this ‘taza zhol’ (pure way of the ancestors) as the key to understanding the form of Islam that Kazakhs call their own. He explains how in Islam we

have the 'great' and 'little' traditions, with the little tradition representing the local expression of the universal religion of Islam (:8). For Traditional Kazakhs then this little tradition is the way of the ancestors which becomes known and understood through what Privratsky calls collective memory. Collective memory is "a processing mechanism by means of which people reach back into their past, idealizing and criticizing it, and articulating a future for themselves" (:21). Those closest to the past and with the clearest memory are the elders within a family or village and it is to them that Traditional Kazakhs turn for guidance in religion. These elders are the ones who are more disciplined about keeping the orthodox pillars of the Islamic faith such as the fast and the daily prayers. But even more than this they also take the lead in practices such as memorial meals for the ancestor spirits and pilgrimages to the city of Turkestan as an alternative to Mecca. The elderly are much closer to joining with the ancestor spirits and so need to take the Muslim faith more seriously, and, when the elders practice Islam they gain a level of vicarious credibility for the whole family (:92, Khalid 2007:103).

If then it is left up to the elderly to demonstrate a commitment to Islam where does that leave the majority of Kazakhs? Are these Traditional Kazakhs practicing Muslims at all prior to retirement? Abdul El-Zein (1977:227) gives a compelling argument for the fact that a formal, universal Islam does not exist. It has no inherent meaning, but meaning comes about as it is practiced on a local level and this then makes all local expressions valid, even if this changes over time. Manz (1994:165) concurs by arguing that a people group's religion needs to be studied in terms of that practiced by the common person. It is all good and well to study history and read the writings of intellectuals, but what does the person in the street believe? Schatz (2004:47) makes good application of this to the Kazakhs with the following analogy: "when does a red sock continually darned with green yarn become a green sock?". Regardless of what others may call it, for the person who bought it, it remains a red sock. The

Kazakh expression of Islam has been darned with communism, secularism, shamanism, and various other ideas, and yet for the Traditional Kazakh it remains valid. If the common person in the street sees it as acceptable that a serious practice of Islam is left to the elderly, then this becomes valid in their local expression of religion. From an insider perspective then all Traditional Kazakhs can claim to be Muslims, whereas from an outside perspective, other than the elderly, Traditional Kazakhs do not seem to be Muslims when measured with the scale of practice.

Despite this emphasis on the local Kazakh expression of Islam, Traditional Kazakhs are also characterized by identification with the worldwide movement of Islam, and as Khalid (2007:22) explains they see saints as shrines as their link. Traditional Kazakhs then are proud of their own way of Islam, but also proud that from their insider perspective it finds a home within the greater Islamic tradition. Teachers and missionaries from the greater tradition are generally looked upon favorably as those who help to strengthen the Islamic faith amongst the Kazakhs, with the condition that the underlying motives are peace-loving and not violence-seeking.

Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) shared how the Kazakh language is the first language for Traditional Kazakhs and many openly take pride in their fluency over against other Kazakhs who struggle with fluency and revert to Russian. The Russian/communist influence is seen as an unwelcome invasion by Traditional Kazakhs with the result that priority is given to all things Kazakh. With the central role that ancestors play, in the south it is common to find a Traditional Kazakh who is able to recite their forefathers to the seventh generation and they are highly critical of other Kazakhs who cannot do so.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bisenbaev (2008:111) explains that by remembering seven generations of ancestors, the Kazakh is able to keep the spirits of these ancestors alive.

### 2.6.2 Modern Kazakhs

Benjamin Barber (2004:32) argues that most countries are or are moving towards a multicultural society and Kazakhstan is no exception. This is the daily life for a Modern Kazakh as they rub shoulders with many other people groups and cultures. The Modern Kazakh is a person who represents the ideals expressed by the Jadids and Alash Orda movement, specifically how to hold in balance an acknowledgement of tradition whilst at the same time pursuing modernization. The Laumulins demonstrate this in saying “The ancestral remnants of the Kazakhs should be sought in such customs as respect for one’s elders and an affinity with like-minded people” (2009:29), and then later

Kazakhstan was very fortunate in that the foreign policy authority and other structures, responsible for national security, were peopled by a generation of specialists, Eurasian in spirit and patriotically-minded, who were enthusiasts for their cause, accepted an open view of their world and, most importantly were loyal to the interests of their country. (:36)

Modern Kazakhs are proud of Kazakh traditions and usually speak both Kazakh and Russian well. They are supportive of almost all the practices of the Traditional Kazakhs, but are open to all the new ideas and developments that other cultures bring through globalization. They like to be characterized as progressive with a bent that looks forward to the future rather than backwards to the past. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) explained how materialism is high on the agenda in the way life is lived and as such identification with Islam is more important than actively practicing its teachings. Modern Kazakhs would be offended by anyone doubting their identity as a Muslim even if their lives have very little to show for it. On significant occasions such as births, weddings and deaths, they would take on a traditional Kazakh identity and this would provide convincing evidence that they really are good Muslims.



Even though the Modern Kazakh may appear secular, because of close family ties, they retain their Islamic identity. As Bill Musk (1995:45) points out, family for Muslim cultures is often what defines a person. The blood allegiance takes precedence over all other allegiances and with the strong ancestor emphasis this is especially true for Kazakhs.<sup>13</sup> A Modern Kazakh then would be willing to sacrifice some of the fruits of a modern lifestyle for the sake of family.

Geography and urbanization are significant in understanding the Modern Kazakh. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) says that the Modern Kazakh who has a family heritage in the northern areas closer to Russia are likely to have less distinction between their way of life and that of their elders in that the elders are not as traditional as those in the south. The same is true for those whose families for generations have lived in the city. Urbanization tends to cause cultures to blend with each other and compromise some of their traditional beliefs and practices.

### 2.6.3 Russified Kazakhs

Russified is a term that can be used of the Kazakhs that have been highly influenced by the Russian way of life. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) lives in a Russified Northern city and shares that these Kazakhs have a very limited ability to read, speak, or write in the Kazakh language. Their spoken and chosen language is Russian and many feel threatened by the new emphasis on the Kazakh language. This has left them feeling like second-rate Kazakhs when it comes to language, and yet they can also exhibit a superior attitude in that they tend to be the strongest Russian speakers, which compared to the Kazakh language has a longer heritage and a greater status as a world language. Russian was the dominant language

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<sup>13</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen (1984) describes how Central Asians have the three allegiances of tribal (extended family), national (Kazakh) and supranational (Islam). In the daily life of a Kazakh it is the tribal that dominates.

of the Soviet Union and a Kazakh's level of education depended on their mastery of Russian. Consequently, many Russified Kazakhs see themselves as intellectually superior to Kazakhs who do not have a good command of the Russian language. They take comfort in Abai's (1995, Word Twenty Five) support for the Russian language and culture, for after all he is considered by most as the model Kazakh.

Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) leads a Russian speaking Kazakh church and argues that Russified Kazakhs do not desire to become Russians, but rather borrow all that is good about Russian culture and by combining it with elements of Kazakh culture, result in a blend that for Russified Kazakhs is uniquely Kazakh. As English has become native to many Americans even though it began in England, so Russian can become native to Kazakhs even though its roots are in Russia. All of this also supports the idea that Kazakhstan should be on good terms with its large and powerful neighbor. Russified Kazakhs see much greater merit in an alliance with Russia as opposed to that with the more Islamic countries to the south. A good relationship with Russia would result in progress and development in Kazakhstan in the wake of that in Russia and also provide a strong ally in times of trouble.

Religion is not absent in the lives of Russified Kazakhs, but similar to Modern Kazakhs, they would like to keep it in the background and bring it out when needed. The Laumulins explain how for Russified Kazakhs, an emphasis on Islam means a return to old ways and an inferior system of education (2009:38). They would say they are Muslims by virtue of being born Kazakhs, but would practice their religion as a last resort. They would fear embarrassment if they were seen to be partaking in traditions that are primitive relics of an uneducated past, when modern science and education have superior options to offer.

## 2.7 Key elements of Kazakh Belief and Practice

Understanding that emphasis will vary across the Traditional/ Modern/ Russified spectrum, the key elements of Kazakh belief and practice must be examined. Observing as closely as possible to the stance of an insider, we look to Privratsky's premise which helps to frame an understanding of this section:

Like other world religions, Islam is more likely to be strengthened than weakened when it is contextualized in local forms and thought-processes. Without this departure from positivist, doctrinal understandings of Islam, Islam in Kazakhstan cannot be understood or even properly identified. (2000:272)

If there are certain beliefs and practices that for Kazakhs makes Islam appropriate to them, whether they resemble orthodox Islam or not, then these must be carefully considered. As has been shown, Kazakhs attach great importance to saints and their shrines and so this needs to be examined. The involvement of the ancestors is key to understanding Kazakh belief and practice and so rituals such as remembrance meals for the dead and the importance of hospitality needs consideration. Ancestors are said to appear in dreams with an impact on normal life and so the importance of dreams must be looked at.

If Kazakh Islam is not seen as pure Islam then the impact of Shamanism, Tengrism, and healers needs to be evaluated. The evil eye as a negative presence seems to be very real for Kazakhs, and how they deal with it is a significant part of their religious expression. Certain rites of passage are more than just a move from one stage of life to the next, but carry religious significance and so need close examination. The role the Quran plays in Kazakh religion must be looked at in order to not simply dismiss it as unimportant in that Kazakhs do not seem to read it. The idea of purity is significant for Kazakhs and as a result there are beliefs and practices that accompany it. Finally, there are special celebration days that carry religious significance.

### 2.7.1 Sufi Saints and Shrines

Svat Soucek (2000:36) explains how the Sufi expression of Islam seems to have grown out of Sunni Islam as a means to close the gap between a distant and holy god and people's need for a god who is close by and involved in daily life. This gave rise to religious leaders who traveled the Muslim world establishing their religious orders. Julian Baldick (1993:5) explains how in Central Asia Islam existed within communities and not a church structure such as exists in Christianity. Consequently, these communities were very open to a religious authority that could help them in the understanding of their religion. The Sufi focus was on the more personal and compassionate aspects of god and Soucek explains the practice of their religion as follows

The method was to think of god to the exclusion of anything else, and could consist of a seemingly unending repetition of the first part of the shahada, *La Ilaha illa Llah* ("There is no god but Allah"), or of God's name in its many variants such as the pronoun *Huwa* ("He" in Arabic), meaning God. This ritual often was an elaborate process that included a special manner of breathing and affected the Sufi's physical state. (:37)

This ritual could be carried out in a group or alone and could be very vocal or in silence. For Kazakhs, the most important of these religious leaders is Akhmet Yasawi (1093 to 1166) and his tomb has become a central focus in Kazakh religious belief and practice. The Laumulins (2009:110), (Khalid 2007:121), and Privratsky (2000:179) explain the great importance of Yasawi in that he is seen as the one who brought the truth of Islam to the Kazakh ancestors even though he died in 1166 AD before the Kazakh nation came into being. He is honored and remembered as the one who connects Kazakhs to the larger Islamic tradition (Khalid 2007:22). Modern Kazakh currency notes are decorated with images of his shrine and a Kazakh can make a serious show of practicing religion by making a pilgrimage to his shrine

in the city of Turkestan.<sup>14</sup> There is a sense in which the special blessing of god on Yasawi is somehow still present in and around the shrine. This is also true for other saints and their shrines of which Yasawi is the most well known and respected. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004: 242) explains the ceremonies that are undertaken at the shrines and these include the reading of the Quran, the dedication of food, the tying of white fabric, and the offering of money.

As Musk(1989) explains, throughout the Muslim world there is the official mosque-based expression of Islam and then the unofficial, folk expression which often involves saints and their shrines. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:242) shows how for Kazakhs the pilgrimage to the shrine is not merely to fulfill a ritual requirement, but may involve seeking the answer to a problem, needing physical healing, and enhancing a woman's chances of having a child. Even certain trees and bushes around a shrine or ancestral tomb are seen as have spiritual power, especially as regards infertility, and they are often covered with strips of cloth that have been tied around them as a symbol of hope.

Reynold Nicholson (1989:28) describes the Sufi search for god as a path that a person travels throughout their life, the various stages of which help to draw the person closer to god. This falls right in line with the way Kazakhs refer to their own faith, namely, *taza zhol* or *kudai zhol*, meaning the pure way or god's way (Privratsky 2000:83,87). As described before, this pure way is known through the ancestors in the way that they traveled this path and these ancestors are now part of the near spirit world. The spirits of the saints and ancestors are very important as they serve as mediators between people and god (183). For the normal person it is difficult to communicate directly with god and so the spirits can more easily do so on that person's behalf. Where this all becomes controversial is when the person becomes so focused on the saint or ancestor that their devotion to this saint or ancestor diminishes their devotion

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<sup>14</sup> Nasyrov (1993) details the history of Turkestan and how prior to the life of Yasawi it was a farming community along the Syr Daria river on one of the branches of the Great Silk Road. He explains how it grew and flourished with Yasawi's presence as a Sufi saint and even after his death as a mausoleum was erected in his memory which became a place of pilgrimage for the Muslims of Central Asia.

to god. The Laumulins (2009:6) describe how at this point orthodox Islam with its Arabian base would say they have crossed the line, become pagans, and consequently are no longer Muslims. Orthodox Islam and the teachings of the Quran would anyway be disturbed with any focus on a spirit other than god, but devotion to these spirits is definitely unacceptable. As Musk (1989:174) correctly points out however, the normal Muslim in the street, across the Muslim world, finds something to fill the near-spirit world between themselves and god. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:253) explains the importance of the word/ ritual called *Siyenu* (prayer). It is a belief in and appeal to intermediary spirits to help face the difficulties and challenges of life.<sup>15</sup>

Due to the effect of communism where the public display of religion was not prudent, the Kazakhs are less emotional in their Sufi practices than their pre-Soviet ancestors would have been. Also contributing to this is the fear of being shamed by others for not doing it the proper way. But this does not mean that they have no emotional involvement in the process. Privratsky (2000: 200) puts it well when he explains that before performing a certain religious practice, Kazakhs describe themselves as feeling a heaviness. Afterwards, they describe a feeling of lightness, of a burden having been lifted. This is especially true when undertaken at the shrine of Yasawi. For traditional and even many other Kazakhs, Islam is most exemplified by the following statement: “For Kazakhs the most Islamic of all buildings is the Yasawi Shrine, the most Muslim of all figures is the saint buried there, and the most meaningful of all ritual movements is the recital of the Quran on the occasion of pilgrimage” (Privratsky 2000:193). Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:275) and Privratsky (2000:193) would argue

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<sup>15</sup> Privratsky describes it as follows “The saints bridge two gaps: first, between the Kazakhs and the powers of the spirit world, and, secondly, between today’s Muslim identities and the Muslim identities of the past” (2000:185).

that the importance of ancestors and intermediary spirits is the way in which Kazakhs have contextualized Islam and made it their own.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.7.2 Remembrance Meals and the Hospitality Virtue

Gabdina, Emelina, and Galikov (2002: 229) explain that as with many Muslim cultures hospitality is one of the Kazakh's highest virtues, especially when expressed towards the ancestor spirits.<sup>17</sup> There are elaborate and costly preparations that go into a meal when a guest is invited to a Kazakh's home. The obvious time and effort spent on the meal communicates the honor given to guests. A Traditional Kazakh will usually not accept an invitation to a meal in a visitor's home until they have first had the opportunity to be the host. This may take time as significant money needs to be saved for this event. Hospitality becomes an important expression of Kazakh religion as it plays out in the remembrance meal for the ancestors.

Privratsky (2000:161) explains how the remembrance meal for the ancestors should take place every week on a Thursday or Friday. The spirits of these ancestors visit the home on these two days and it is the responsibility of the home to welcome and please them.<sup>18</sup> Part of the meal must include the frying of meat or pastry in fat or oil so that the aroma pleases the spirits.<sup>19</sup> They are further pleased by the reciting of the Quran and a prayer in Kazakh at the end of the meal. Whilst most Kazakhs may be aware of this ritual, it is usually the Traditional Kazakhs that show any diligence in keeping it. A Modern or Russified Kazakh on visiting a

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<sup>16</sup> Rabban Sauma (2002:323) explains it as follows: "Transcendent monotheism without mediation in this world tends to leave a spiritual vacuum in the lives of believers; so the ritual life of the Muslim household and neighborhood is inevitably more complex than the monotheistic stereotype of Islam suggests".

<sup>17</sup> They describe devotion to the ancestors as follows: "The Kazakhs as well worshipped the soul of their ancestors, aruakhs, revered the holy places, and offered scarifices to them" (2002:89).

<sup>18</sup> Zhosipova (2004:136) and Kaliev (1994:192) explain the importance of food in the life of a Kazakh beyond the physical need. Certain foods carry significance and so the way guests are hosted, and in particular ancestors remembered, through the preparation and presentation of food, is an important part of both the culture in general and the belief system in particular.

<sup>19</sup> Valikhanov (2006:77) gives an account of how Kazakhs fry bread called *baursak* as an offering to the ancestor spirits. This is one of the practices that for him causes Kazakh religion to lean towards Shamanism (:85).

traditional relative or friend may willingly partake at that time and see it as a good thing, but back in their own homes do not see the need to continue for themselves. The practice of hospitality, even towards outsiders, however, is prevalent across the board from Traditional to Modern to Russified Kazakhs.

### 2.7.3 Dreams

The Sufi saints were men set apart for special illumination from god and they had a calling and life separate from the ordinary Kazakh (Khalid 2007:10). Through the experience of dreams however, the normal Kazakh is able to have an experience similar to the saint. The ancestors are likely to appear in dreams when the Thursday remembrance meal ritual is being neglected and for the Traditional Kazakh especially this is a wake-up call to get serious about religion again (Valikhanov 2006:77).

The ancestors do not necessarily need to appear for the dream to derive its meaning from them. The ancestors are able to influence life and events that occur in a dream are seen as parallel to those of daily life. Privratsky (2000:137) explains that this does not mean that Kazakhs just fatalistically accept that what happens in a dream must come true in daily life. The effect of a bad dream on daily life can be prevented by a ritual such as reciting the Quran or a visit to a shrine. The Quran is silent on the importance of ancestor spirits and their appearance in a Muslim's dreams, consequently the purists in and outside of Islam would call this aspect of Kazakh religion Shamanism.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The author read the Quran and did an online search for ancestors with [www.searchtruth.com](http://www.searchtruth.com) which searches the Quran and Hadith. The Quran search produced no results and the Hadith 10 references all to do with the historical facts of what ancestors had done or said, with no reference to do with ancestor spirits.



#### 2.7.4 Shamanism, Tengrism and Healers

Soucek (2000:40) explains how Shamanism is not usually regarded as a formal religion as it has no traditional religious structure such as holy writings, a place of worship, and a set of doctrines. In essence it involves a specially empowered person who is able to communicate with and even manipulate both good and evil spirits. So for example, if a blessing is needed for an important task such as hunting then a Shaman could be consulted to ensure this. The Shaman does not go through any kind of formal training but may sit under an older Shaman to learn from their ministry or they may spend time in isolation practicing their art until such time as they are ready. Shamanism also provides a framework for understanding the issues in life that don't make sense, especially those that involve problems and pain. For the Shaman to enter the spirit world they have to go in to a type of ecstatic trance involving a lot of movement and sound.<sup>21</sup>

David Christian (1998:61) explains how Shamans have historically been present throughout the Central Asian steppe, primarily traveling to settlements that had need of their powers. Under communism the Shamans came under criticism and even persecution, and were typified as suffering from mental illness. Valikhanov (2006:85) argues that the Kazakhs in their practice of religion have had more in common with the Shamanism of Mongolia than with the practitioners of orthodox Islam.

Tengrism is the rise of a post Soviet religious movement in Central Asia that looks back to a shamanistic past that centered on the worship of a god called Tengri. Marlene Laruelle describes it as follows:

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<sup>21</sup> Stanley Krippner (2002:966) examines various models of how Shamanism is viewed including the charlatan model, the schizophrenia model, the soul flight model, the decadent and crude technology model, and the deconstructionist model. The soul flight model which describes the Shaman going through a ritual which results in a state of ecstasy through which the world of the spirits is accessed, fits the Central Asian context. Considering the various points and counterpoints of each model, Krippner concludes that Shamanism in the traditional sense is declining, but that a type of *neo*-shamanism has grown as a fad in the West.

Tengrism appears to be a monotheist natural religion whose last traces would be found in shamanism. The followers of Tengrism assert that this religion offers a cosmogony that is perfectly adapted to the contemporary world: it is ecological and calls men to live in harmony with nature. Moreover, it is tolerant and accepts to coexist with other religions. It is individualistic, does not have a holy text, and the religion is without a clergy, without dogma and interdictions, and finally the concept of prayer is unknown. (2006:1)

The attraction to Tengrism lies in the possibility that it is the most rooted religion in Central Asia so that Central Asians can claim it as ‘ours’. It is also much easier to adhere to as it makes far less demands than Christianity or Islam and due to its accommodating nature can incorporate aspects of Kazakh folk Islam such as the honoring of ancestor spirits. Perhaps its greatest promise though is that it gives credence to the nationalist movements that are growing in Central Asia. Thus far it does not seem to be a major movement in Kazakhstan and seems to be mainly confined to the academic and political domains. It may be that the growing discontent with radical Islam will lead to the development of a paradigm that promotes Tengrism as the Islam of Central Asia, however this is only speculation.

With the strong Sufi influence, anthropologists will tend to draw obvious parallels between Kazakh religion and Shamanism. Both have an emphasis on the spirit world of the ancestors and the need for illumination by means of a spiritual intermediary. Maria Subtelny (1989:595) argues that Kazakh religious practitioners “are intimately connected with the Central Asian brand of folk Islam that incorporated and syncretized pre-Islamic beliefs and traditions such as earlier shamanistic and animistic practices”. In a world that is modernizing it now seems backward to have a belief in the power of the Shaman and Sufi Islam offers a more reputable base for the practice of a spiritual intermediary. The Kazakh practitioners make extensive use of the Quran and the names of god and do not enter into an ecstatic, trance-like state. Filbert (1999:50-51) agrees that it would be an overstatement to classify Kazakhs as practicing Shamanism, and he argues that we should rather speak of the animistic

roots within a context of Islam. This works itself out in practices such as the honoring of ancestors, foretelling of the future, healing processes, and protection from evil spirits.<sup>22</sup> The importance of spiritual intermediaries may be best understood through the Kazakh terms used to describe them.

Whilst the Modern and Russified Kazakh will tend to go directly to a medical professional with an ailment, the Traditional Kazakh will make use of a 'healer' known as a *Yemshi*. Such a person has a calling from god to perform healing rituals and prescribe treatment (Kenzheaxmetuli 2004:248). Their help is used in addition to that received from a doctor or hospital and their diagnosis is seen as a confirmation of that of the medical professional. They are especially consulted when medical science has no answers and their reputation grows with each successful diagnosis and recommendation for treatment. Valikhanov (2006:80-81,85), Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:248,259) and Privratsky (2000:219) describes how these healers can be divided into various categories such as *Molda*, *Tawip*, *Palshi*, and *Baqsi*.

#### 2.7.4.1 *Molda*

This is the healer who has become well-versed in reciting the Quran as he performs a healing ritual, knowing which verses in the Quran most aptly apply to the particular illness (Olivier Roy 2000:152, Kenzheaxmetuli 2004:259, Privratsky 2000: 219). Whilst he may make use of various other paraphernalia, the essential ingredient is the expert use of the Quran. This category is male dominated and the calling is seen as coming from god through the ancestor spirits. A *molda* may pride himself over the other categories because of his knowledge and use of the Quran.

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<sup>22</sup> Mustafina (2005:20-29) in explaining these beliefs and practices does make the point that they are primarily observed in the traditional settings such as the city of Turkestan, and that elsewhere they may not be very evident.

#### 2.7.4.2 Tawip

“The tawip’s art is practical religion, an application of Kazakh belief in the ancestor-spirits, the Muslim saints, and the pure way of Islam” (Privratsky 2000:241). Whilst Tawips do not make extensive use of the Quran, and in many instances are women, they nevertheless see themselves as part of the proud Islamic healing tradition. They may be held in high esteem where their healing methods have been effective, or they may be discounted as frauds where they lose their effectiveness. Their calling and ability also derives from the ancestor spirits and they are led through techniques of pulse-taking for diagnosis, breathing on the patient, exorcism of spirits, fortune casting, and massage (:233).

#### 2.7.4.3 Palshi

The Palshi is a fortune-teller and usually a woman who receives her ability through the ancestor spirits (Valikhanov, 2006:81). She most often will practice her art in a public setting such as the bazaar or on a train. A session is usually brief and the person seeking help will sit before her and explain their problem. She then uses various items such as tarot cards, bones, and pellets, as well as reading the person’s palm. Once she has given her forecast, the person usually expresses appreciation with a monetary gift. The Palshi’s role in healing has to do with predicting the success of a medical diagnosis or prescription (Privratsky 2000:245). Her popularity however is broader than merely medical issues and may involve predicting circumstances that may be uncertain such as job success or the success of a marriage. The forecast is almost always positive and if the Palshi does receive a negative prediction she will remain silent rather than express it. To express it may cause it to come about and then she becomes the one that is to blame.

#### 2.7.4.4 Baqsi

This is the most controversial term used as it relates more directly to Shamanism and the use of ecstatic utterances (Valikhanov 2006:80). Kazakhs seem to use this term loosely to describe certain healers and yet no healer seems willing to have this title conferred upon them. Credibility in the post-Soviet era lies in being able to tie into the greater Islamic tradition.

#### 2.7.5 The Evil Eye

Valikhanov (2006:103) and Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:257) show how in common with other cultures, Kazakhs have a need to explain the uncertainties and troubles that accompany life and that this has given rise to a belief in the concept of the 'evil eye', a belief which is not unique but widespread throughout the Muslim, and even non-Muslim, world. Musk (1989:26) explains that even though the Quran does not speak to it directly, nevertheless the ordinary Muslim recognizes the power of the evil eye. "The fundamental concept of the evil eye is that precious persons or things are constantly vulnerable to hurt or destruction caused by other people's envy" (:26). The evil eye then is a constant spiritual presence that surrounds Kazakhs and is triggered into action through envy. Envy is the opposite of blessing and through the evil eye targets people or objects that are sources of blessing. Life is filled with blessing from god and the ancestors and therefore envy is everywhere for not everyone is being blessed at the same time or to the same extent. This belief in the evil eye for the Kazakh then provides a causal basis for those problems that are outside of their control. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:258) for example explains how with a serious disease that modern medicine has not healed, a treatment called *ushyktau*, a type of exorcism, is carried out to ward off the influence of the evil eye.

Kazakhs do not fatalistically live with the consequences of the evil eye; rather dealing with the effects of the evil eye takes various forms in Kazakh religious life (Kenzheaxmetuli 2004:257-258 & Paula Michaels 2003:29). Reciting the Quran and visiting the shrine of a saint or an ancestor's tomb may provide protection. If the remembrance meal for the ancestors had been neglected then this must be corrected. The most common protection however is the use of amulets and charms. These can be purchased in a store or the bazaar, but those that are seen as most effective come from a Mullah or healer (Michaels 2003:29). A common such amulet is in the form of a triangular pouch which contains some verses from the Quran and is suspended from the rear-view mirror of a car.

#### 2.7.6 Rites of Passage

Khalid (2007:22) explains how for Central Asians the way Islam was localized was to take local customs and sacralize them. This made Islam more indigenous and also legitimized the customs as Islamic. He explained "It was played out through the communal celebrations of august ancestors, annual holidays, and life-cycle events" (:22). These life-cycle events are also known as rites of passage and represent the passage from one stage of life to the next. Their religious significance in the lives of Kazakhs gives insight as to how these rites form part of what Kazakhs see as Islam. What follows is a look at some of the major rites with the understanding that there are nuances that play out in the various contexts.

##### 2.7.6.1 Birth

In describing a series of infancy and motherhood rites that take place at the birth of a child, Privratsky says "a newborn is ceremonially presented to the paternal grandmother in a cradle

ceremony (besik toy) that features the censuring of the cradle with wild rue (adiraspan) and attaching Quranic amulets (tumar) against evil spirits” (2000:106). This newborn child must be well protected from the evil eye and other than close family others are not allowed to see the child until it is forty days old.

For many Kazakhs they will hold a naming ceremony for the baby with the significance being that the name will somehow have a special effect on the future of the child (Kenzheaxmetuli 2004:64). They may be given a famous name such as the hero Abai, or that of a significant ancestor with the hope that the blessings that fell on that person will fall on the child. Some names are given on a fear-basis as a means to ward of illness or evil spirits.

As the child learns to walk there is also a walking ceremony that involves ribbons or thread being tied between the child’s legs (:72). The child then is placed facing the mother and takes steps towards her. The ribbons are then cut by a person of respect and wishes are made for the child to follow in that person’s footsteps.

#### 2.7.6.2 Circumcision

Although Kazakhs will say that one is born a Muslim, the rite of circumcision is the ceremonial marker of this fact (Zeinegul Seisenova 2006: 15). The family proudly announces that their son is now a Muslim and invites relatives and friends to a celebration which can last a few days and involve a lot of food and alcohol. With the influence of modern medicine through communism, almost all circumcisions take place in hospitals and the child is given time to heal before the celebration commences. Zhosipova (2004:25-26) and Kaliev (1994:28) describe some of the details involved in the circumcision ceremony, however they they make no mention of a specific ceremony or marker to show a girl is a Muslim.

### 2.7.6.3 Marriage

Gabdina, Emelina, Galikov (2002:138) and Seisenova (2006:15) describe how marriage involves lengthy interaction between the two families as various obligations are carried out. An important part of the process is a ceremony known as *bet ashar* meaning the unveiling of the bride. Privratsky describes it as follows:

Standing at the front of the crowd, the bride bows and nods from behind a brightly colored veil to greet each member of her husband's family, who are summoned by the *dombra* player's improvised song to come forward and make a monetary gift. After many verses, much laughter and many gifts – used by the family to defray the cost of the wedding – the veil is lifted, the bride receives a kiss from her mother-in-law, who puts on her a white scarf symbolizing her married status, and she is thus welcomed to her husband's family ..... several hours later, when the guests have been fed, the mullah arrives for the *neke qiyar* ceremony, the specifically Islamic event of the day..... the mullah sits facing the couple who are also seated. He briefly recites verses from the Quran and asks the couple to confess the faith of Islam. He puts two coins in a bowl of water and passes it to the couple and then the witnesses, who all drink from it. The mullah preaches to the new couple briefly on their impending roles as Muslim parents and gives them his blessing" (2000:107).

With the importance of hospitality and the home Zhosipova (2004:27) and Kaliev (1994:151) show how marriage and the setting up of a new home are foundational to Kazakh life and therefore contain significant ceremonies. Under communism the spiritual aspects of these needed to be home-based, but now it seems that more and more couples move to the mosque for that part of the ceremony that involves the mullah.

### 2.7.6.4 Death

With the strong emphasis on ancestors and their spirits, the ceremonies involved in a person's death are very significant. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:271) and Zhosipova (2004:133) point out



that in common with other Central Asian peoples, the memorial ceremonies at a person's death are marks of the Kazakh's Muslim identity.

Zhosipova (:133) and Kaliev (1994:189) describe how in the immediate seven days following death the deceased's home becomes a base for mourning and remembrance. Another remembrance meal is prepared on the fortieth day after death and all family members and close friends are expected to attend no matter the distance. This remembrance is repeated the hundredth day and then on the yearly anniversary of the person's death. How many years this goes on for seems to depend on each family and their circumstances. Eventually the deceased is seen as being remembered as part of the Thursday remembrance meal.

The official remembrance meal during the first seven days is elaborate. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explains all that is involved. If possible the family should acquire and slaughter a sheep and have the meal as a large feast. Usually the most senior male in the family dedicates the meal to the ancestor and verses from the Quran are recited. Depending on how traditional the family is, the women may have to sit separately and alcohol is not present. If possible a mullah should be present and he may join in the Quran recitals or actually perform them all himself. He will also pray to the ancestor spirits for their blessing of this remembrance meal. Even though they may not do so in normal daily life, this is time when the women will wear the head covering as a sign of Muslim obedience.

### 2.7.7 The Quran

William Graham (2001:27) explains how easy it is to misunderstand the importance of the Quran in a Muslim's life. Based on a Western paradigm we would look to see evidence of regular personal study and wonder how serious many Muslims are about their religion when

this is not the case. As Graham points out the Quran for Muslims is not a document to be studied and interpreted but rather as a spoken word it becomes very active in their lives.

“From birth to death, virtually every action a Muslim makes, not to mention every solemn or festive event in his or her life, is potentially accompanied by spoken words of the Quran”

(:39). Khalid (2007:21) describes the significance of the Quran for Central Asians:

The Quran is central to Islamic ritual: its recitation is a pious deed, its verses can serve as protection from misfortune, and the use of selected phrases from it in appropriate social contexts is the true measure of “comprehension”. However it was not central to the everyday conduct of Muslims.

His description shows how the Quran has some sort of talismanic quality so that there is something special about its *presence*.

#### 2.7.8 Purity

Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:94-95) explains the extensive use of the term *Ak* (white) in Kazakh. It refers to a pure way of living and the ancestors are seen as having lived on the pure path. This relates to a theme common in many forms of Islam, namely that of needing to make oneself pure. Pollution avoidance is characteristic of many rituals in the Muslim’s life and helps in understanding why Kazakhs like other Muslims allocate a bipolar value to actions and objects (Frederick Denny 2001:70). For example, ‘left’ is seen as polluted and ‘right’ as pure. There are cases in Kazakhstan where children born left-handed have been trained to switch to a right-handed orientation. The left hand then is used for the more humble and impure tasks whereas the right hand for more noble actions such as eating food and greeting others.

With the strong globalization/ urbanization taking place, are concerns with practicing purity fading? An example is the idea of ablution activities. These are traditionally seen to make a person unclean and so the ablution facility should be located at the farthest point

away from the house. In all the new houses being built in the cities, there are very few outside ablution facilities and indoor plumbing is now the standard. Urbanization also meant that apartment living became very common and this does not allow for outside ablutions.

#### 2.7.9 Celebration Days

Gabdina, Emelina, and Galikov (2002:140) explain how special celebration days take place throughout the year in Kazakh life and some of these have particular significance related to how Kazakhs practice their form of Islam. *Korban Ait* is a celebration that is celebrated across the Muslim world and is a time to remember when Ibrahim (Abraham) willingly offered his son Ishmael as a sacrifice to God (Zein Kahn 2006:1). Each family should sacrifice their best sheep or other animal and then give away the majority of the meat to the needy. Inherent in this sacrifice is the concept of sins being forgiven so that each person in the family gets a clean start to life. *Korban Ait* is one of the times in the year when Kazakhs feel most religious and that they are truly practicing Islam. They are honoring God, being with family and helping the poor. This celebration appears to be the one that is increasing the most in practice and popularity.

Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:224-235) explains in detail the various aspects of *Nawrus* and this seems to be the holiday/ celebration where Kazakhs are happiest and most optimistic. It comes at the end of the winter season at the time when day and night are equal in length. Although it is not supposed to be spiritual in nature, there are strong animistic overtones that suggest new beginnings seen in the new life that spring brings. There is the idea that the winter hibernation is over and everyone is thankful for the new opportunity to get out and live again.

## 2.8 Globalization and the Kazakhs

Globalization has been, is, and will continue reshaping our world at an unprecedented speed. There is no denying the changes that we witness on our streets, through our computer networks, and in our pockets, as we carry around the paraphernalia of globalization – credit cards, mobile phones, plane tickets. (Davey 2002:28)

Continuous reshaping is an accurate phrase to describe all that is taking place in Kazakhstan and the paraphernalia of globalization are more and more evident as the reshaping process develops. Nazarbaev (2010:3) suggests that Kazakhstan needs to take its place as a global partner and make all the necessary adjustments.

Surucu (2002:391) points out that geographically, Kazakhstan sits at the crossroads of Europe and Asia; and this has given rise to the concept of Eurasianism.<sup>23</sup> This becomes very strategic for the advance of the globalization cause and a direct challenge to orthodox Islam, as President Nazarbaev in his pursuit of Eurasianism describes “At the heart of the world religions are the moral norms of tolerance and mutual understanding, the strength of family ties, the seal of non-violence and openness to other faiths” (2010:17). The daunting challenge facing Islam in a modern, global world is well described as follows by Abusulayman:

Internally weak, relatively backward, frustrated, conflict ridden, suffering from internal tensions, and often controlled and abused by foreign powers, the Muslim world is in a state of crisis. For Muslims, all of modern history is a tragedy. At an earlier time, during the sweeping revolution of Islam, Muslims were the custodians of civilization and both the center and master of the civilized world. But at present, the Muslim polity is neither master nor partner, and both Muslims and Islam are often regarded in world politics as little more than problematic. How did such a state of affairs come about and in what ways can the Muslim people alter this condition? (Ahsan 2002:196)

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<sup>23</sup> The term *Eurasianism* seems to take on a definition dependant on who is using it. Cummings (2005:83) defines its use in Kazakhstan as follows “...incorporate a Muslim heritage into a secular, Europeanized state”. It is a term used regularly by president Nazarbaev and carries geographic significance in terms of Kazakhstan sitting physically between Asia and Europe, political significance in terms of bridging European democracy with Asian political systems, and philosophical significance in terms of combining a European way of life with that of Asia (2010:5).

Globalization, modernization, westernization; these are terms that cause unease and create skepticism amongst most traditional Muslims. For many these terms are interchangeable and to speak of one is to imply the others. In the context of this dissertation we will focus on the term globalization and where relevant make reference to the other two.

### 2.8.1 The Rise of Globalization

Thomas Friedman (2006:9) points out how globalization is not a recent phenomenon but rather can be described as arising within three distinct eras. The first era was driven by countries and kingdoms with new means of travel and a desire to discover new lands and opportunities and it spanned roughly the years from 1500 to 1800 AD. The second era was spurred on by the industrial revolution and the opportunities for new multi-national companies to find global markets for their products and services. It spanned the years from 1800 to 2000 AD. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century a third era has begun that is empowering the individual to participate on a global scale. The first two eras were largely dominated by countries and companies from the West, but Friedman argues that in the third era there will be no domination by any one part of the world, but rather the potential for mass participation by anyone, anywhere. Two key catalysts for the development of the third era are the fall of the Berlin wall and the availability of the personal computer. Friedman shows how the ending of the cold war, marked by the fall of the Berlin wall, removed the political barriers that isolated many individuals from each other. This is certainly true for the Kazakhs who are now interacting with other individuals from all over the world on an unprecedented scale. The availability of the personal computer and the internet for the individual has meant that they are able to communicate with other individuals regardless of where they live on the

globe. Whilst it lagged behind in the early years, nevertheless Kazakh society is catching up fast when it comes to the proliferation and use of the internet.

Underlying the progress of this new third era of globalization are values such as individual freedom and choice, democracy, willingness to change, and a positive attitude towards new technologies. Where does this leave the Kazakh and other Islamic cultures that often place a greater value on community than the individual? Whilst the third era is about empowering individuals worldwide, nevertheless it remains driven by Western ideals. Joseph Kitagawa (1990:210) points out that Western led globalization has led to a conflict in leadership in many non-western countries. New leaders are often western educated and so try to bring in the modernizing influences of globalization. The older leadership mostly opposes this and longs for the good times of the past that were not subject to western influence. In Kazakhstan's case, the failure of communism has made the political leadership more pre-disposed towards globalization and its modernizing influence (Nazarbaev 2010:16). But, for the religious leaders and traditional Kazakhs, the issue seems grounded in the cultural concerns, and beyond this they are open to the benefits that globalization has to offer.

### 2.8.2 Defining Globalization

Friedman (2006:510) speaks of the iron law of globalization being that it is neither all good nor all bad. It had tendencies for both and so can cause empowering and disempowering, generalizing or particularizing, a basis for democracy or authoritarianism. Depending on whether globalization is seen as positive or negative usually determines how it is defined and in the case of the Kazakhs we need to seek a definition that sees things as they do. For many people globalization is thought of in the narrow, economic sense of the word. Thus Friedman defines it as follows:

Globalization involves the integration of free markets, nation-states and information technologies to a degree never before witnessed, in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and countries to reach around the world further, faster and cheaper than ever .... Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world. (Pocock, van Rheenen and McConnell 2005:22)

Whilst free-market capitalism may be the driving force behind globalization, nevertheless there are effects that reach beyond economics. Johannes Nissen (2002:32) argues for the cultural component in describing how the various cultures of the world are opening up to each other and resulting in the birth of a global culture. It is the cultural component that seems to cause Muslims the most concern. For Westerners the cultural effects are de-emphasized, ignored or not even noticed, but for the Muslim it is often a package deal.<sup>24</sup> In our Kazakh context then we must go with a definition that takes into account the cultural element and so Michael Pocock's definition seems more relevant:

Taken as a whole, globalization is a trend of accelerating, compressed interaction between peoples, cultures, governments and transnational companies. It is a heightened multi-directional flow of ideas, material goods, symbols and power facilitated by the Internet and other communication, technologies, and travel.  
(Pocock, van Rheenen and McConnell 2005:23)

Friedrich Graf (2002:66) points out that we need to be careful to avoid a narrow Western understanding of globalization and the capitalism behind it. A broader understanding is arrived at if we describe three types of capitalism:

- a. Anglo-American capitalism that emphasizes the individual and plays down the role of the government.
- b. Rhineland capitalism that emphasizes a social market economy and public welfare.

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<sup>24</sup> Miasami (2003:1) tries to give a definition that de-westernizes globalization and so describes it as follows: "It is the tendency with which God has created man to live on exchanging his sources and experiences with others around him, in order to achieve and realize the best chances of life".

- c. Network capitalism that emphasizes family and relationship structures and transparency and accountability within those.

Having looked at the significance of family and clan ties as well as the push towards Eurasianism that emphasizes partnership, Kazakhstan would fall into the third category and the effects of globalization are best understood with this in mind.

Kofi Annan (2004:241) believes that a person's response to globalization depends on their life situation. For those who are citizens of a country that is well-organized and follows the rule of law, they are able to freely travel the world with the knowledge that if things get rough they can return to a situation of stability. For most Kazakhs this is still developing and until recently travel outside of the country was a way to find a new place of stability.

Samuel Huntington (2004:37) argues that the major effect of globalization lies in the area of culture and that clashes between cultures are unavoidable. He explains how the worldviews that different cultures possess are not mere temporary, fleeting ideas; but rather the product of centuries. Globalization over time will cause change, but it will not be smooth and without conflict. The non-Western world then sees globalization as a process where “ The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values” (:41). Arjun Appadurai (2004:102) believes that the biggest issue globalization faces is that it ushers in the offer of a global community that is at odds with the unique cultures of the world that provide it with its setting.<sup>25</sup> At the level of culture, many Kazakhs in common with other Muslims would fall into Peter Mandaville's description as follows:

Muslims are having difficulty deciding whether globalizing processes are culturally neutral – that is, something to which they can subscribe (and perhaps even something they can reproduce

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Lodberg (2002:60) would agree with Appadurai as he sees globalization as giving rise to intensified worldwide social relationships that link distant locations without giving high regard to place. So, the local context is less important in favor of a global perspective.



themselves) without seeing their norms and traditions diminished; or do they need to be aware of another agenda, of a set of global processes seeking ultimately to suppress and subvert their claims to difference? (2001:150)

Part of the clash for Kazakhs has to do with the ideas of loyalty and identity. In the West patriotism towards a national identity is held up as an ideal and in the USA for example, a person should proclaim “I am an American” firstly and then may go on to describe a European or South American heritage. The result is what is called the ‘melting pot’ where various cultures come together and blend into a new national culture. This synchronizes well with the ideals of globalization. For Kazakhstan, and many other Muslim countries however, the aspirations are for a tapestry rather than the melting pot. Primary allegiance and identity is to an ethnic group and the relationships and kinship ties within that group. Schatz (2004:63) sees the way in which kinship groups amongst Kazakhs created co-dependent ties as a distinct mark of Kazakh culture. The Laumulins (2009:34-35) and Joma Nazpary (2002:63) observe the rise of diplomacy and reciprocity networks that provide the Kazakhs with their moral community and as they work together there is a constant sense of indebtedness and obligation. If globalization is able to accommodate these networks then it becomes easier to embrace for the Kazakhs, but if it seeks to do away with these networks as part of the world coming together, then Kazakhs become more resistant.

Saulesh Esenova (1998:443-462), an insider, is a dissenting voice and she believes that Kazakh tribalism is largely confined to the political sphere with the consequence that most Kazakhs are positively pre-disposed towards modernization and globalization, which in the Kazakh context promote a more universal identity which is able to free itself from tribal boundaries. Her writings and background place her well within the category of the Modern Kazakh. For the Traditional Kazakh, the picture is not as rosy as Esenova describes. As Mike Featherstone points out, ‘tradition’ is largely a negative word in globalization dialogue where

it is "...seen as irrationally clinging to obsolete and negative values which stand in the way of the extension of human freedom and happiness" (2002:2). The Traditional Kazakh is left in the uneasy position of seeing globalization as having some promise and a lot of caution.

If this is true in Kazakhstan then it has serious implications for the way in which we do church planting. Nazpary (2002) is a secular anthropologist who lived amongst the general population in the largest city of Almaty. His observations and conclusions represent a scathing criticism of both the current political climate and the influence of globalization that he sees behind much of the issues.

His conclusion is summarized by his statement that " In contrast to the celebratory and glorious images of globalization produced by some scholars, for the dispossessed in Almaty globalization is a story of wild capitalism, chaos, dispossession, loss, tears, horror, violence, and fear" (2002:176). What is clear from his writings is that he is anti-globalization in general and so is pre-disposed towards a negative analysis. His insights however are valid in representing the negative impact that globalization can have. He sees the political elite as dominating the rest of society backed by western capitalism.<sup>26</sup> With the age of globalization being marked by rapid change, it would be interesting to see what Nazpary's observations would be today, a decade or so later. He commented on a decline in wages and pensions, and even though there is still much room for improvement, in the last five years there have been some dramatic increases in both of these. There is a rising middle class and whereas up to the end of the nineties many households could not aspire to owning a car, now it seems as if everyone has one (Laumulins 2009:78).

The wild capitalism that Nazpary observed is certainly motivated by a profit motive, but it cannot be denied that the many western companies that have established themselves in Kazakhstan have led to increased employment and the availability of higher quality goods.

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<sup>26</sup> Larry Rasmussen (1999: 6-13) adds a critical voice to the ideas of globalization and sees it as rooted in colonialism which means that the church in its mission needs to be very cautious in adopting these ideas.

Certainly Kazakhstan is not on the road towards the development of a utopia, but it is a complex environment where western-driven globalization was thrust upon a society that was left reeling from the collapse of communism. This new nation of Kazakhstan does seem to have been birthed in a time of chaos and change and in many ways the growing stability in many aspects of life is remarkable.<sup>27</sup> It is a misconception to hold that all of society in a country is able to move smoothly and consistently towards globalization. Kazakhstan like most countries is made up of a variety of cultures each of which embraces change in their own ways. A good comparison with Kazakhstan is the situation in Turkey. Turkey is often held up as the example that Kazakhstan would like to follow. As globalization has brought a modernizing influence in Turkey it has had to do so in the context of Muslim vs. secular, urban vs. rural, Turk vs. Kurd, and importantly, reason vs. faith.

### 2.8.2 The Example of Turkey

Sibel Bozdogan and Resart Kasaba (1997:4) describe a number of ways in which globalization has had an external influence in Turkey. There is a lot of visual imagery as new buildings are built and multi-national companies such as MacDonalds appear. Most Turks have abandoned the use of the Fez as old fashioned. Turkey's desire to be part of the European Union shows that its gaze is towards the West rather than its Muslim neighbors to the East. There is a common belief that with modernization comes a better life in terms of medicine, education, transportation, business, and communication. Almost all of this would be an accurate description of Kazakhstan.

Bozdogan and Kasaba go on to explain that in Turkey most Muslims are more folk that orthodox and so are more open to change but in a way that is different to the West (:6). Under

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<sup>27</sup> The Laumulins (2009) point out the monumental task president Nazarbaev had in avoiding chaos and establishing prosperity and stability.

western style modernization, the society tends to embrace modernization in all aspects of life including religion. With a non-western approach there seems to be a desire to modernize in categories, so that in a country like Turkey there can be a continual modernizing of the economy but a distancing of modernization's effects on religion. Inherent in modernization is the so-called virtue of relativism which clashes with any religion that insists on an unchanging absolute truth. Bozdogan and Kasaba point out that because globalization first entered Turkey as an elite-driven, all pervading influence, it was seen as more negative than positive (:39).

Winrow (1992:102) explains how Turkey has a special interest in Kazakhstan as a significant number of its people trace their roots to the Central Asian region. Like Turkey, Kazakhstan seems to be forging a different Islamic identity to that of the Middle East and as mentioned before, Kazakhs speak of two roads in Islam. There is the road of violence typified by the struggles in the Middle East and then the road of peace typified by a country such as Turkey. This road of peace offers a more positive interaction with the West and is also more accommodating to the spread of globalization. Upon closer inspection though, it appears that Kazakhstan is not prioritizing a relationship with Turkey over its relationships with others. Rather than just trying to imitate another's example, Kazakhstan is learning from the experiences of countries such as Turkey and South Korea, and then charting its own course based on the lessons learned and adapted (Nazarbaev 2010:17-18).

Globalization also presented formal Islam in Turkey as opposing reform, progress, and civilization and this appears to be the case in Kazakhstan as well. Haldun Gulalp (1997:46) in looking at Islam and modernization in Turkey makes an important distinction between political Islam and that as faith. He would propose that most Turks and Kazakhs seek a way

to pursue the benefits of globalization whilst staying true to what they believe is a relevant local expression of the Muslim faith.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.8.4 Glocalization

An attempt to synthesize the benefits of globalization with the local cultural way of doing things has led to the concept of glocalization. Ivan Satyavrata describes glocalization as follows “when ideas get to their new destination, they are not imbibed as they are – they are adapted to fit the local situation..... the effective assimilation of globalization forces within the framework of local traditions, aspirations and interests” (2004:211). He goes on to explain that this glocalization becomes the means of survival for an indigenous community in the face of globalization. Jonathan Ingleby (2006:50) argues that this synchronizing of the global with the local has resulted in the formation of new identities that are no longer as tied to the traditional way of doing things. So, we could speak of a ‘new’, or as described previously, a ‘modern’ Kazakh. Ingleby suggest that we need to make this a major focus of our church planting for four main reasons:

- This group of ‘moderns’ is on the increase and will be the majority of the mission field in the future.
- Moderns have a number of needs and are open to being helped by outsiders.
- The church itself is a hybrid of various peoples forming a new identity together as the body of Christ.
- Missionaries are able to be the gatekeepers against the negative influences of globalization. (:52)

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<sup>28</sup> Marcus Noland and Howard Pack (2004) describe a Western view of Islam and globalization that sees Islam as being less productive in a global world and Kazakhs have the challenge of showing how as Muslims they can be very productive in a global world.

Ingleby goes on to point out that this does present a challenge to the current trends in missions that are focused on people-group thinking. If modern Kazakhs are increasingly the majority in Kazakhstan, then what are the implications for a 'Kazakh only' church? Does a Biblical church model need to be more hybrid in nature than it has been thus far?

Roland Robertson (1992:185) explains how globalization is giving rise to 'world spaces'. By this he refers to cities that are heterogeneous in ethnicity. They show the greatest development of modernization, are progressive in nature and are held up by the media as the ideal to strive for. Within these cities arise international educational institutions whose programs and curricula espouse the values of globalization. A good example of this in Kazakhstan is KIMEP University located in the city of Almaty (see [www.kimep.kz](http://www.kimep.kz)). It is seen as one of, if not the premier university in the country. It has strong support from the government and its graduates are sought after around the country. Upon further investigation it is evident that most classes are taught in English and many of the courses are focused on trade and commerce, both local and international.

#### 2.8.5 The 2030 Plan

As representatives themselves, the Laumulins explain how the privileged and intellectual elite from amongst the Kazakhs encounter the world culture as they travel for business or education to world cities such as London or New York (2009:30). Once they return, and over time, they will become powerful change agents in Kazakh society bringing the influence of the world culture with them. This influence was already evident in the late nineties as the government began the widespread promotion of the 2030 plan. President Nazarbaev (1997:2) in his speech regarding the 2030 plan described a population in the year 2030 AD that would be actively employed in a market economy comparable to any other first world country, and

at the same time preserve their unique heritage and identity. As they participate in the global interaction between countries he declared that they would have equal command of the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages. He proposed that Kazakhstan would be in a position to play a leading role in connecting the interests of Russia, China, and the Muslim world. Alisher Tastenov (2007:1-4) went on to explain that through the 2030 vision Kazakhstan would move from being a country on the periphery to one that takes its place as a significant player on the global stage.

#### 2.8.6 Globalization's Challenge to Kazakh Culture and Religion

As explained before, the post-soviet period opened the Kazakhs to a number of new ideas and influences. Douglas Tiessen describes three effects of globalization on missions to the former Soviet Union (2005:116):

- A great increase in the number of foreign missionaries. In 1989 he counts 311 missionaries with that number growing to 5606 in 1997.
- Most of these missionaries came with a cultural ignorance which meant they were not prepared for the specific context in which they entered.
- A ready-made, Western Christianity was presented to each culture rather than providing them with the tools to develop their own Christianity.

All of this put the Kazakh culture and religion on the defensive as it tried to deal with a whole new environment. Additionally, there are the universal effects of globalization that have specific implications for the Kazakh context. Effects such as a global morality and individualism. Abd Al Kader Cheref describes the tension Kazakhs face with globalization in asking

...how to protect a unique heritage in the face of global pressure while upholding Islamic traditions; to preserve "linguistic purity;" to defend

social institutions; and, ultimately, to maintain a viable identity in the midst of a rapidly changing global environment. (2005:1)

The challenges of globalization for the Kazakh way of life begin with the concept of a global morality.

#### 2.8.6.1 A Global Morality

If we do live in a global village then David Shenk believes that the result is that we are all moved towards a "... universally relevant moral principle" (1995:63). He further contends that "Any commitment to global well-being gives a mandate to all religious and ideological communities: live in peace with one another." (:55). What then does 'live in peace' mean for the Kazakhs? If it narrowly refers to the idea of physical non-aggression then most Kazakhs would buy into it. If it refers to an ideological compromise which results in changes to the belief system, then Kazakhs would be very uncomfortable and even resistant. Hans Kung argues that in an age of globalization all mankind must move towards a global ethic that "... is a basic consensus on binding values, irrevocable criteria and basic attitudes which are affirmed by all religions despite their dogmatic differences..." (2004:45). He goes on to explain that this global ethic is based on two principles:

- Each person must be treated humanely.
- Do to others as you wish done to yourself.

Whereas it can be argued that these are clearly based on a Western worldview, nevertheless Kazakh religion would have little argument with either (Abai 1995: Word Fourteen). It is in the fleshing out of these that points of conflict arise such as with the tolerance for other ideologies and equal rights for women.



### 2.8.6.2 Individualism

Michael Kearney (1984:77) argues that if globalization causes individualism then cultures such as that of the Kazakhs, are in trouble. The close, mutually beneficial relationships of the group are replaced by an emphasis on self.<sup>29</sup> Others then exist so that they can be used to better the individual's life; and relationships become characterized by competition rather than co-operation. Kenzheaxmetuli (2004:92-200) describes how for the traditional Kazakh this emphasis on the individual is unacceptable and the ties to the family and ancestors remain strong. He shows how so many of the customs and traditions are based on the group, for example when a girl marries she becomes a *kelin* (daughter-in-law) and is under the authority of her mother-in-law from whom she needs permission and approval for various activities (:103). There is evidence to suggest that individualism is affecting modern Kazakhs, primarily where a number have let go of family and other ties to immigrate to other countries and start a new life. They may still have concern for and even send support to those in Kazakhstan, but their primary motive is for their own betterment.

University students are being exposed to influences outside of their traditional cultural upbringing and there are those who are thinking through the religious beliefs of their ancestors, attempting to arrive at their own conclusions as to what they believe (Laumulins, 2009:73). For some of them the idea of 'us in the future' has been replaced with 'me, now'. Support for this individualism rides on the wave of materialism that has washed over Kazakhstan.

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<sup>29</sup> Chris Hermans (2004:29) shows how individualism is fueled by cultures that are becoming more pluralistic, those where institutions have less of a hold on people, and the lessening of cultural traditions. In the Kazakh context the first two effects seem evident, whereas there seems to be a revival of Kazakh traditions that were suppressed under communism.

### 2.8.6.3 Materialism

A significant question to ask is whether the real god in Kazakhstan is money and hedonism? It appears that what Abai (1995: Word Three and Five) describes is still true today, namely that enough money can buy anything including a person's favor or loyalty, and who a person is, is judged by the size of their house and car. If this is true then the competitive environment that globalization brings causes alliances to be formed on the basis of economic benefit rather than political or cultural affinity. This also means that such alliances are fragile as they will change as the economic environment changes. With globalization comes exposure to more and more goods from around the world and many Kazakhs are swept up in the desire to possess these goods as soon as possible.

Increased materialism then seems to pose a challenge to the importance of the Kazakh Muslim faith. But, Graf (2002:68) argues that for the modern Muslim who is becoming fully involved in the pursuit of all that capitalism promises, their faith is the vital anchor that helps them stay grounded in a specific identity. Because the Kazakh faith is more tradition based than doctrine based, materialism is able over time to become part of that tradition, and this has serious implications for the growth of the Gospel of Christ. Many will argue that materialism has already become part of the Christian tradition in the West and even South Korea, yet it seems inconceivable that missionaries will need to be relatively wealthy and start churches that reflect a lifestyle of earthly riches. With the Bible as a guide this does not seem valid and so will the future Kazakh church need to become counter-cultural in its view of materialistic values?

Robert Schreiter (2002:29) observes that the increased secularization that has resulted from globalization and materialism has actually produced a renewed interest in religion all over the world. For the Kazakh church then this presents an opportunity in the midst of the

perceived threat of globalization. If an over-emphasis on materialism eventually produces a spiritual hunger then the church must position itself to meet this need.

#### 2.8.6.4 Post-modernism

As globalization has brought various cultures together it has promoted the post-modern worldview that accommodates differences in religious belief. Pocock, van Rheenen, and McConnell define those who buy into this worldview as follows: “ Postmodern people rely more on intuition, are more subjective in their judgments, do not trust systems and institutions, and treat most truth claims as personal or cultural” (2005:106). John Stott describes these post moderns as having three distinct needs: for transcendence (something beyond the material), for personal significance and for community (:116). This leaves Kazakh religion with both a threat and a promise. A threat in the sense that the Kazakh form of Islam does not allow a Kazakh to accommodate other major belief systems into their own; and so the post modern virtue of tolerance is rejected. Tolerance is only afforded those outside of the Muslim tradition who confine the practice of their specific religion to themselves. An interesting exception to this is the multi-religious center recently completed in the capital of Astana. The supposed brainchild of the president it is a formidable piece of architecture in the shape of a pyramid, situated directly behind the president’s official workplace. The idea is the people from such diverse faiths as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism can come and worship in a spirit of harmony (Laumulins 2009:125). It remains to be seen whether it will be anything more than an empty museum with the only potential worshippers coming from those who seek hegemony with the president.

The promise of post modernism for Kazakh religion comes in meeting the post modern’s need for transcendence and community. The importance of kinship ties and the

significance of the ancestor spirits provide the Kazakh religion with the opportunity to meet these needs. What of the Kazakh church?

#### 2.8.6.5 Westernization

Ulf Hannerz (2004:110) contends that each culture is in the process of becoming a sub-culture of the developing world culture. This world culture provides a center surrounded by a periphery of independent cultures, each of which has different levels of connectedness to the center. For Kazakhs the level of connectedness will depend on their identity as Traditional, Modern or Russified. Most would agree that this world culture is Western dominated with television programming providing a good yardstick to measure this. John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham (2004:299) argue that local cultures are not highly impacted by Western television programs, but in the case of Kazakhstan a good argument can be made for the strong influence of Western media on the Kazakh culture (Arman 2009, pers. Interview, 5 May).

Another result of Westernization is the more prominent role of women outside of the home (Laumulins 2009:87). In Kazakhstan under the communist system, women were encouraged to take their place as active Soviet citizens and occupy various positions in factories and educational institutions. In fact, women were encouraged to study at a higher level than most men and thereby occupy many of the 'white collar' jobs, leaving the men to perform the more 'blue collar' jobs that required significant physical effort. Kazakh religion is willing to accept this situation of empowerment for women, as long as it is confined to areas outside of religion. Even modern Kazakhs would be uncomfortable with a woman playing a significant role in the more formal aspects of the faith. They are acceptable only in roles such as fortune-tellers and healers, removed from the formal authority structure.

Joseph Stiglitz (2003:247) in considering the westernizing effect of globalization on culture would propose that it represents a threat to traditional Kazakhs. Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (1996:29) present an opposing argument suggesting that a modern, western worldview is able to stimulate cultural traditions. This seems a romantic notion in the Kazakh context where opposition rather than stimulation seems more likely.

#### 2.8.6.6 The Urbanizing of the Kazakhs.

Is a move towards the cities a move towards globalization? The answer to this depends on why people move to the cities, and the answer to that seems to hinge on the idea of opportunity. Cities hold out the promise of a better education, better social interaction and a better opportunity for employment; and therefore a better life. This is certainly the mindset in Kazakhstan although many have experienced disappointment and despair when they come to find that the promises are often empty (Nazpary 2002:51). Whilst it can be debated whether life is better in the cities, it is a fact that life is more modern and diverse. With life in the city then comes exposure to a wider worldview, one that is not confined to the internal cultures of Kazakhstan, but now also includes representation from all parts of the globe. An interesting measure of this is the use of English. In the village English has no use but in the city it has now become a means of making oneself more appealing to a potential employer (Arman 2009, pers. interview, 5 May). The demand for English lessons has seen a dramatic increase in recent years and because of its identification as a means of international communication, it is now officially taught in the schools.

Davey (2002:6) points out that the cities of today have evolved greatly from those of our ancestors with new patterns of community, communication, vocation, and recreation emerging. As he puts it “The contemporary city is a place where worlds meet” (:4). The

Kazakhstan cities of Almaty and Astana certainly reflect this. A significant number of Kazakhs through employment end up away from their families in these and other major cities. This offers great potential for believers to demonstrate a belonging to a family that has a strong spiritual tie rather than a blood one. Kazakh religion is likely to have two polar reactions to urbanization. In its formal expression it is likely to view large cities as positive in terms of creating a more mosque-based worship and the establishment of more madressehs. In Almaty for example, there are grandiose plans to build a very large mosque and adjacent madresseh. Will the more traditional expression of Kazakh religion struggle with urbanization if it de-emphasizes the ancestral practices and traditions?

#### 2.8.6.7 Pan-Islamism

Mustapha Pasha (2004:331) shows how there is no one Islamic response to globalization so that we cannot merely portray all responses as the same. As Pan-Islamism arose and withstood Western colonization, is it once again gaining importance as a guard against globalization? Lubeck argues that it has and purports that “Globalization has facilitated the interweaving of transnational Islamic networks within the new global transportation and communication infrastructure” (2002:79). Fred Halliday (2002:33) sees what he calls Islamism as a growing protest by Muslim cultures against external domination. Ironically, we see that where there used to be isolated communities of Muslims in various countries, they are now able to associate with the wider community of Muslims because of the opportunities that globalization brings. Globalization however does not leave the values and beliefs of these communities untouched as seen in the call for unity that Hala Mustafa suggests. In calling for coexistence between Islam and the West he says “The values of democracy and human rights should be persistently promoted worldwide....Political and cultural elites in Islamic countries

should actively advocate the values of reason, tolerance, and freedom” (2002:107). Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell (2005:94) argue strongly that Islam will be transformed from within as moderates such as Mustafa work to break down its rigidity and extremism. Globalization’s effect will be to cause more and more Muslims to seek freedom from a radical form of religion that desires to control their thoughts and lives. Bassam Tibi (2004:336) contends that Islamic fundamentalist movements are not united in how to bring about an Islamic world order, but as each attempts its own strategy they are capable of creating levels of global disorder.

Nazarbaev (2010:17-18) and the Laumulins (2009:125) would propose that the type of Pan-Islamism that rejects a path of radical fundamentalism would find acceptance amongst the Kazakhs, with the understanding that tolerance means leaving them to practice their own form of Islam without outside interference. They would agree with Salman Rushdie when he says “The restoration of religion to the sphere of the personal, its depoliticization, is the nettle that all Muslim societies must grasp in order to become modern” (2005:358). Within this broader, accommodating form of Islam, Kazakhs see their religion not as a set or static orthodoxy, but a dynamic and evolving one that continues to enrich itself by the assimilation of both Quranic doctrine and the influence of other worldviews.<sup>30</sup> The key is assimilation and not substitution, which took place under communism. As has been argued, the pure way of the ancestors is Islamic orthodoxy for many Kazakhs and this spells a major dilemma for Muslim missionary movements such as the Wahhabi who view anything outside of pure Quranic doctrine and practice as idolatry. Such movements may attract and influence those on the fringes of society, but are unlikely to have a major impact on mainstream society.

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<sup>30</sup> Anouar Majid (2000) would agree but also see the West’s need to embrace the cultures of Islam so that it is not a one way street.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Kazakh religion is a blending of rich cultural history and practices with the teachings and practices of Islam. Kazakhs are proud to be both *Kazakh* and *Muslim*, the combining of which gives them their own expression of Islam. Being free from Soviet restrictions, there is a revival of the practices of their ancestors as well as the introduction of more orthodox forms of Islam, primarily by outsiders. Globalization has thrust itself into this mix resulting in change and diversity in how Kazakhs live and practice their religion. For Kazakh church planting to be effective and relevant it needs to evaluate itself in the light of this changing Kazakh culture. In helping to achieve this end, this study has chosen to interview ten Kazakh pastors as a means of providing the primary research data.



### **Chapter 3: The Application of Grounded Theory to the Research Data**

Building on the research methodology outlined in chapter one, additional consideration must be given to the use of interviews in gathering the data. Kathy Charmaz (2006:25) describes how an intensive interview allows for a detailed exploration of a particular topic with a person who has had relevant experience regarding that topic. Such an interview must make use of open-ended questions which enable the interviewee to describe and reflect on their experiences. The interviewer listens, observes, encourages, and allows the interviewee to do most of the talking. H Russell Bernard (2006:53) raises two important effects that can bias the data. Firstly the Expectancy effect so that responses are shaped by what the interviewee thinks is expected. Secondly, the distortion effect where the interviewer sees what they want to whether it is there or not.

#### 3.1 Semi-structured Questionnaire Generation and Description

In this study each interview began with a brief explanation of the purpose of the research and then used open-ended but also semi-structured discussion questions. The interviewer in this study is conversant in the Kazakh language, but nevertheless there were times when an explanation was given or a point re-phrased to be sure that the discussion was understood. Using a semi-structured interview approach the following questions were used to create discussion and collect data:

- *Explain the importance of traditional Kazakh customs and whether believers should observe them.*

This question seeks to gather data on how contextual the church needs to be based on the importance of Kazakh customs. It also gives distinction to the different contexts in which the pastors find themselves.

- *Describe the effect of Western culture on Kazakhs.*

Globalization for the Kazakhs has often come in the form of westernization and so this question looks for the pastors' responses in terms of positive and negative effects, as well as their opinions as to the extent of westernization. Other than Russia, when speaking of outside influences, Kazakhs clothe the discussion in descriptions related to the *West*.

- *How important is it for Kazakhs to keep up with economic and technological advances in other countries? Explain.*

This question looks at how focused the pastors are on using new advances in the future. It builds on an aspect of westernization and seeks out data as to how focused on the future the Kazakh church should be.

- *Describe the importance of the following for the Kazakh church: Use of the Kazakh language, use of traditional instruments such as the Dombra, use of worship songs that are popular in other cultures, use of modern instruments such as electric guitars and keyboards, use of worship styles that appeal to the younger generation, use of songs written by Kazakhs.*

This question seeks to draw out discussion of what worship in the Kazakh church should look like within the traditional versus modern tension. It raises specific examples so that each pastor can comment on how much of an issue it is in the church.

- *For the growth of the Kazakh church in the future, give each of the following a score out of 5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not important at all:*

*Using the Internet for evangelism and discipleship.*

*Using computer technology.*

*Using new developments and programs from Christians in other countries.*

*Reaching university students.*

*Reaching villages.*

*Reaching cities.*

*Using television and programs via satellite.*

*Using stories and testimonies.*

*Using hospitality.*

*Reaching business people.*

*Reaching Muslim leaders.*

*Using the Q'uran.*

*Giving a Christian meaning to Kazakh traditions such as weddings, funerals, Korban*

*Ait etc.*

*Kazakh Pastors are supported by Christians in other countries.*

*Using family connections.*

Using the information gathered in chapter one, this question seeks to highlight specific aspects of contextualization and globalization that apply to the Kazakh way of life, and how they impact the church. Each aspect was discussed after being evaluated, providing data on why it was allocated the level of importance.

- *Describe whether the following statements are true or false:*

*Most Kazakhs are becoming stronger Muslims.*

*For most Kazakhs, money is their god.*

*Most Kazakhs don't care about religion.*

*Most Kazakhs want to be seen as modern.*

*Most Kazakhs would like to live like the West.*

*Most Kazakhs wait until retirement to get serious about religion.*

*Most Kazakhs acknowledge other religions as valid.*

This question seeks out the pastors' opinions as to how religious and how Islamic Kazakhs are, and how this combines with influences of modernization, westernization and materialism. Responses to specific statements were sought out thereby generating discussion.

- *Explain how significant the following types of church are for the future of the Kazakh church: Full-time pastor-led church, meeting in a separate dedicated building, house church, a large weekly gathering with home groups during the week, a cell-group structure.*

With the importance of the home in Kazakh life, and the traditional view of church, this question seeks out data as to the models of church. It attempts to draw the pastors into a discussion of which type of church has been and will be effective for the growth of the church. An additional goal of this question is to distinguish responses based on each pastor's context.

- *Explain the impact of the following groups on the future of Kazakhstan:*

*Traditional Kazakhs who emphasize the Kazakh language and traditional beliefs and practices.*

*Modern Kazakhs who combine an emphasis on Kazakh culture with a desire to be part of a modern and developing world.*

*Russified Kazakhs who are strongly influenced by the Russian culture and hold less to Kazakh culture and practices.*

Discussion around this question helped to confirm the validity of the three identities revealed in chapter one, and seek out the impact of each.

- *Describe which of the following are the greatest challenge to the growth of the Kazakh church:*

*Government restrictions.*

*A stronger commitment to Islam.*

*A secular/ materialistic lifestyle.*

*Christianity's foreign/ Western image.*

*Apathy in the current church.*

*A lack of committed leaders.*

*The tolerance and acceptance of other religions leading to syncretism.*

This question is based on some of the contextualization and globalization issues in chapter one as well as the current state of the church. A church planter risks being overwhelmed by all of these challenges and so this question seeks out priorities.

- Rank the following 5 aspects of the Kazakh church in terms of which is currently the most evident, with 1 being the most evident and 5 the least:

*Self-governing (Kazakhs are taking the lead).*

*Self-supporting (Kazakhs are providing their own money and resources).*

*Self-teaching (Kazakhs are providing Biblical/theological advice and training).*

*Self-expressing (Kazakhs determine how, where, when, what worship style).*

*Self-propagating (Kazakhs do the evangelism and church planting).*

The purpose of this question was to create discussion on how self-dependent the Kazakh church has become and in particular talk through the issue of dependency on outsiders. In essence it draws out discussion on leadership issues.

- Describe which of the following would be appropriate for a Kazakh church in a city context:

*Professional worship.*

*Large gatherings.*

*Intimacy in relationships.*

*Participation.*

*Strong pastoral authority.*

*Program-oriented ministry.*

*Small gatherings.*

*Showing before telling evangelism.*

*Direct evangelism.*

*Long-term relationship evangelism.*

*Hunger evangelism (they want what we have).*

Chapter one explains the importance of Modern Kazakhs and so this question looks at the significance of urbanization and the life of a Modern Kazakh. Discussion seeks out data that will point to an appropriate church within this context.

- *Describe how the issue of shame needs to be dealt with in evangelism and discipleship*

The importance of family and cultural identity described in chapter one mean that Kazakhs avoid causing shame to family and culture and so this question seeks to examine how churches deal with this.

### 3.2 Selection of Interviewees.

For the purposes of generating data in this study, ten Kazakh pastors were interviewed in a semi-structured setting and in order to provide a suitable means of comparative analysis they were selected as follows:

#### 1 Geographic spread.

So there are representatives from each corner of the country ( five provinces).

#### 2. Church type.

Some are House Churches, some are traditional, and one is a cell model.

#### 3. Church setting.

Two are in villages and eight are Urban.

#### 4. Church language

One uses Russian, six use Kazakh, and three a combination.

This distribution also enables comparison related to the three types of Kazakhs proposed by this study, namely Traditional, Modern, and Russified Kazakhs.

Marat is in his forties, married with one child, and has studied one year at Bible School. He affiliates his ministry with the House Church Fellowship of Kazakhstan<sup>31</sup>. He was born and lives in a provincial capital that is over ninety percent in Kazakh ethnicity and Kazakh language use. Kazakh traditions are widely observed in addition to signs of modernization such as widespread internet availability and use. The Kazakhs of this city would fall in an even spread between Traditional and Modern, with little or no Russified. He has traveled to the other corners of the country and so has been exposed to Kazakhs who have a less traditional worldview.

Nurlan is in his thirties, married with two children. He was born and lives in a rural, village setting but works part-time in the modern city of Almaty. He and his family identify with the village life and both know about and practice many of the Kazakh traditions and customs, trying to avoid those that conflict with the teachings of the Bible. He studied at a one year Bible School in the city and so built friendships and interacted with Kazakhs from other parts of the country, but has no official affiliation to any denomination.

Daulet is in his forties and married with two children. He is from the Southern city of Shymkent and became a believer there. He and his family actively participated in a Kazakh church there before leaving to start a new work in a large city in the Northwest of Kazakhstan. He has found himself in a different context to the South where there are many more Russified Kazakhs and he is having to make adjustments to the way he does church planting. He studied at two Bible Schools and is affiliated to the Russian Baptist denomination.

Akzhol is in his forties, married with six children, and was born and raised in the very Southern tip of the country, in a city that had little Russian influence. He became a believer there and had to move his family to Almaty due to persecution. He has raised support and

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<sup>31</sup> This is a coming together of church planters and pastors who have committed to the house church model. Many of them have backgrounds in other denominations but no longer remain affiliated to those. The first meeting was in May 2010 and they intentionally decided not to form any kind of denomination or registered organization, but rather to keep the loose identity of a *fellowship*.



works full-time with an agency that does evangelism and church planting all over Kazakhstan. As a result he travels a lot and works with all three types of Kazakhs. He is very supportive of the House Church paradigm and in recent years has been an active part of starting house churches. He has been a key figure in the launch of the House Church Fellowship of Kazakhstan. He has studied two years at Bible School and works across denominations.

Zhenis is in his thirties, married with two children, and is a Russian speaking Kazakh who lives in Almaty and has started a Russian speaking Kazakh house church. Most of his friends and church members are professionals with young families. He also speaks good English and average Kazakh and keeps up with the trends of modernization.

Zhanibek is in his thirties, married with four children, and lives in a major Southern city. He is fluent in Kazakh, Uzbek and Russian. He has studied for two years at a Bible college and also holds a law degree that he is seeking to use to reach professionals. His church is Kazakh speaking and has a particular burden for children and youth. He has been on evangelistic trips to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey and so has a broader missions view than most. He used to be affiliated with the Assembly of God denomination, but now is aligned with Saken's church.

Saken is in his forties, is married with three children, and is one of the pastors in the biggest Kazakh church, located in Almaty city. He has been a believer a number of years and has studied in and overseen the church's Bible School. This church has started a number of other churches in cities all over Kazakhstan. They have a strong ministry to young people and use modern worship styles. They have recently been emphasizing meeting in homes during the week with the idea that this is the church and not just an emphasis on the Sunday meeting. They can be said to have their own denomination whilst at the same time they are open to working with others.

Anwar is in his thirties, married with children, lives in the capital city and pastors a Kazakh language church. Many of the members have come from the poorer areas and he is trying to figure out how to reach the growing middle-class of Modern Kazakhs. Employment rates are high in this city and people have little free time. Traditions are reserved for special occasions with the rest of life being devoted to making a good living. He has studied at a one year Bible School and is affiliated with the church planting from that school.

Bolat is in his forties, married with children, and pastors a house church in Almaty. He speaks Russian, Kazakh, and English; and has completed a Master of Divinity degree in the USA. He has a strong interest in theology and hermeneutics. He has been active in a Bible School and sees the House Church model as the most effective amongst the Kazakhs. He believes that the church must make the most of what modernization and westernization has to offer. His background is Russian Baptist but he is now part of the House Church Fellowship of Kazakhstan.

Arman is in his forties, married with three children, and pastors a church in Almaty. He has a vision for a registered Kazakh Bible School offering up to a Masters level degree. He also runs his own business and argues that believers need to find good employment or business opportunities so that they fit into society. He has a number of young people in his church. He has studied at a one year Bible School and has been affiliated with the Presbyterian denomination.

### 3.3 Codes and Categories arising from the Data

At the end of the interviewing process the data is ready for the process of comparative analysis. George Allan (2003:1) explains that in grounded theory, analyzing the data involves looking for codes within the data and then the related concepts and categories that

are revealed by these codes. Coding involves analyzing the data for issues of importance to the topic which can be described in a short phrase. Charmaz describes coding as “categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data. Your codes show how you select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them” (2006:43). There are those such as Juliet Corbin and Strauss (2008:58) who propose a word-by-word micro-analysis of the data whereas others such as Glaser hold to a key-point or focused coding. This study follows Glaser and the coding of the data has involved identifying key points. Using what Glaser and Strauss call the Constant Comparative Method, the codes are compared to each other and grouped into categories which produce theoretical ideas. This comparison is between codes within a particular set of data as well as with codes from other sets of data.

Axial coding provides a means for relating categories to their sub-categories and so begins to sort and re-organize the data within a category, thereby giving dimensions and coherence to the category. As Charmaz (2006:61) explains, axial coding helps to provide a structure or frame for the developing theory. Charmaz makes an additional important point where she explains that there may now be some valuable and appropriate categories that have emerged, but nevertheless seem to lack sufficient data so that they appear under-developed (:96). This raises the idea of saturating a category with additional data, where relevant data is sought out and synthesized into the existing category until it appears completely developed. This is what Glaser and Strauss (1999:45) refer to as Theoretical Sampling.

Using Glaser’s key-point coding approach, the analysis of the data names the following categories and the codes that were used to create them:

### 3.3.1 Category 1: Kazakh Cultural Traditions

Codes:

Worship must be in Kazakh.

Traditional instruments are not important.

Traditional songs are not important.

Dance and appropriate costumes should be used.

There needs to be a combination of modern and traditional

Customs and traditions should be used in evangelism.

The use of traditions must not contradict the Bible.

Traditions must be adapted to the context.

Traditions are less important in a modern world.

Traditions are less important for believers.

Traditions are important in the village.

Traditions are less important in the city.

Using traditions keeps the church in the culture.

Using traditions identifies the church with Kazakh culture.

Traditions must not be used in a way that excludes others who don't identify with them.

National celebration days are an opportunity for the church to embrace culture.

Use the Dombra.

Use original Kazakh songs and melodies.

Giving Christian meaning (functional substitutes) to traditions must not offend.

### 3.3.2 Category 2: Commitment to Islam

Codes:

Orthodox Islam is having some effect.

For at least half of Kazakhs, money is their real god.

Most Kazakhs want to live like the West.

Being able to live like the West is more important than religion.

Religion is most important at retirement.

Most Kazakhs are not becoming stronger Muslims.

Money is more important than religion.

Religion is important at a surface level only.

Practicing religion is not important.

Kazakhs like to be seen as modern.

Most Kazakhs do not identify with radical Islam.

Some Kazakhs acknowledge other religions.

Religion is for the elderly.

Some younger people are becoming more Islamic.

Do not offend by criticizing Islam.

The church must avoid persecution due to offense.

Reaching Muslim leaders is not important.

Talking to Muslim leaders can overcome negative stereotypes towards believers.

The Quran is useful as a door to the Bible.

The Quran is useful with Kazakhs who use it.

The Quran is dangerous if seen as equal to the Bible.

Use the Quran for evangelism.

Use the Quran in limited circumstances.

Use of the Quran is dangerous in creating interest in it.

Use the Quran only if relevant.

The Quran should not be used, it causes confusion.

### 3.3.3 Category 3: The Influence of the West

Codes:

Western influence is not significant.

Western influence has helped Kazakhs be more compassionate.

Western influence has lowered moral standards.

Western influence has caused a lot of change.

Kazakhs living in the cities have become westernized.

Kazakh cities are westernized.

Westernization has brought openness.

The West has helped Kazakhs understand a healthy family.

First generation churches are too western.

Western influence has helped Kazakhs care for the community.

Westernization has opened the world for Kazakhs.

Westernization has emphasized surface level relationships.

Westernization has made Kazakhs more materialistic.

Westernization has helped business, education, and politics.

Believers from the West have helped the church with worship and preaching.

Believers from the West have helped to emphasize grace.

The influence of the West is positive for those under forty years of age.

The influence of the West is negative for those over forty years of age.

Western influence is seen as negative in the village.

Globalization is feared in the village.

Learn from what works in other countries.

#### 3.3.4 Category 4: New technology

Codes:

It is very important to keep up, or risk being left behind.

It must not replace personal contact.

It can be overused by the church where people are not ready.

It is needed in city churches.

It is very important for the younger generation.

The church must use new technology or become irrelevant.

Use of the internet in particular is becoming important.

New technology must be used for evangelism and discipleship.

The advances of instant communication must be used by the Kazakh church.

The church must not run after new technology.

New technology must only be used when applicable.

New technology itself has a neutral effect on culture.

Churches must use the internet and computer technology.

Television and satellite must be used with caution.

Satellite television can be used to create interest.

Satellite television is limited in evangelism and discipleship.

Satellite television can be used for evangelism and discipleship.

Television is dangerous if it replaces church.

### 3.3.5 Category 5: Reaching the Next Generation

Codes:

Worship should use modern instruments.

Worship must appeal to young adults.

Modern songs and melodies should be used.

Music is the language of youth.

Modern worship styles are more important than traditional.

Russian worship trends are influential.

Worship must feel right to the younger generation.

Young people's music style is significant.

Young people have a different worldview.

Use technology with young people.

Young people need social interaction.

Use facebook and my world.

Use special events such as concerts and picnics.

Use the internet for networking young people.

Use the internet for dialogue with young people.

### 3.3.6 Category 6: Key Segments for the Growth of the Church

Codes:

University students are very important.



University students can reach relatives in the village.

University students are the future.

Reaching businessmen has the potential for financial support.

Reach cities first due to greater openness.

Kazakhs living in the city seek intimacy.

Modern Kazakhs in the city value participation.

A church in the city needs a variety of programs.

There needs to be creative small groups for business people such as at coffee shops.

### 3.3.7 Category 7: Specific Methods of Discipleship, Evangelism, and Church Planting

Codes:

Use testimonies that focus on Jesus.

Stories and testimonies are highly relevant in evangelism.

Testimonies help reach others in a cultural way.

Hospitality is very important.

Using hospitality is of the highest importance.

Family connections must be used.

Families must be used in church planting.

The church must have family-oriented ministry.

Kazakhs are reached through families.

Use cultural celebrations.

Particularly with family, believers must live out (show) their faith before telling.

### 3.3.8 Category 8: Challenges to the Growth of the Church

Codes:

Materialism is the greatest challenge to the growth of the church.

Materialism is dangerous for the church.

If restrictive laws are passed they will threaten the church.

Materialism and Islam are the church's greatest challenges.

There are some signs of interest in Islam.

The church must try to counter materialism.

God's culture must replace a material one.

Materialism and leadership issues are the greatest challenges.

The lack of commitment by leaders is the greatest challenge.

Leaders have not been empowered.

Apathy in the church is a threat to growth.

There is not a great threat of syncretism in the church.

Christianity's foreign image is somewhat challenging.

There is a slowdown in the commitment of believers.

### 3.3.9 Category 9: Three Categories of Kazakhs

Codes:

Modern Kazakhs are the most influential.

Traditional Kazakhs are important, but modern the most influential.

Russified Kazakhs are the least influential.

The Russian language is influential.

Russian is still spoken by many.

Use of the Kazakh language is essential.

Modern Kazakhs will have the greatest impact on the future.

Modern Kazakhs can help to reach the others.

### 3.3.10 Category 10: Small Groups and House Churches

Codes:

House church is appropriate where the traditional church has registration difficulties.

House church is seen as a sect.

Some do not see house church as *real* church.

Traditional churches must have small groups.

Small groups must have strong leaders.

Small groups are essential for discipleship.

House churches are needed for reproducibility.

Diverse models are good and give Kazakhs a choice.

Kazakhs must be reached using house churches.

House churches are able to use hospitality.

House churches emphasize the importance of the home.

Larger Sunday meetings are important.

Full-time pastors are not always necessary.

A separate building is not essential.

Churches follow the model they are first exposed to.

### 3.3.11 Category 11: Baggage from the Past

Codes:

The past must be renounced early in discipleship.

Baggage from the past must be dealt with.

The pastor must set the example in dealing with baggage.

Individual counseling is needed in dealing with shame.

Almost all believers have to deal with baggage.

A group setting is too embarrassing.

Baggage will stop spiritual growth if not dealt with.

Intimacy is needed to deal with the past.

### 3.3.12 Category 12: Five Self Paradigm

Codes:

Bi-vocational pastors have more credibility.

First churches were too foreign.

Few Kazakh leaders were empowered in the first churches.

The first churches did not use the Kazakh language.

Second generation and beyond churches are more Kazakh.

The Kazakh church is not financially independent.

Kazakhs were forced into leadership prematurely.

Leadership training emphasized skills and not character.

Some Kazakh church leaders failed because they were too young in the faith.

Mentoring is needed.

Good leadership models have been lacking.

Biblical leadership must be shown outside the classroom.

Expatriate pastors are not needed.

Expatriate missionaries need to help local pastors on a personal level.

The lack of discipleship is due to inexperienced pastors.

There is very little self-theologizing.

The church still needs theological training from the outside.

There is no opportunity for theological study.

Kazakh leaders are trying to self-express within the Kazakh culture.

Kazakhs are able to do the evangelizing.

Kazakhs have less barriers to evangelism.

With expatriate mentors, Kazakhs can do the church planting.

House churches can be the most self-dependent.

Church leaders struggle with legalism and judging others.

Outside funding must be at the appropriate local level.

Outside funding must be without solicitation.

Outside funds have led some leaders astray.

Outside funds have caused dependence.

Outside funds have caused laziness.

Outside funds are negative if they take away from faith in God.

Outside funds complicate indigeneity.

### 3.4 Analysis of the Categories

#### Category 1: Kazakh Cultural Traditions

Issue: Should they be used in evangelism?

80% of the pastors say they should. They can be used to soften the opposition to the Gospel, and represent a door into the lives of an individual or a community. They must be used carefully so that it does not come across as deception for the sake of convincing people to become Christians. As such they must not be used to hide a Christian identity but rather to show that Kazakh Christianity honors its Kazakh heritage. Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) explains the use of cultural traditions helps to position Christianity closer to the culture as a complement and not an opponent so that over time the church will come to be seen as part of the culture.

Issue: Should they be used in discipleship?

90% of the pastors say that the Kazakh language should be used as well as expressions such as music and dance. When it comes to aspects that link to religion such as rites of passage, 20% say they should be adapted and used, whereas 80% say they are not needed. Believers need to be exposed to and encouraged to take on a Biblical (Christian) culture and avoid the danger of creating cultural superiority in the church with an overemphasis on cultural practices. 100% of the pastors say that culture should not be completely ignored and Akzhol's (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) opinion is that the church must learn how to infuse the Kazakh culture with God's culture.

Issue: Village or city context.

100% say they must be used in a village context. 30% say they are useful even in a city context. Cultural traditions are so much a part of village life and indeed almost all Kazakhs see the villages as the keepers of Kazakh traditions. Outsiders to the village are looked on with suspicion and so the use of traditions helps to overcome this. Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September), the pastor of a village church said that to not use Kazakh traditions in a village setting is to not be a *Kazakh* church. In a city context which is where most Kazakhs find themselves, globalization is diluting the use and importance of many Kazakh traditions. Through the internet, media, and travel Kazakhs are being exposed to a blending of cultures. One of the greatest effects is amongst the younger generation where a person's identity is moving from that which is part of a group to a more individual emphasis. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) explained how young people have a very different worldview to their parents and for young people it is a lot about fashion and where they hang out, suggesting that appearance is everything.

Issue: Biblical authority.

100% say that the use of Kazakh cultural traditions must not contradict the Bible. The authority of the Bible supersedes that of culture and so cultural traditions can be used within this understanding. This means that whether in evangelism or discipleship, each tradition needs to be studied and compared with Biblical teaching before decisions are made on whether it should be used or not.

Issue: The importance of national celebration days.

80% say that these must be used. National celebration days are a time for Kazakhs to express their cultural identity and in each village and city displays, concerts, and other events are held

to celebrate the holiday. These need to be embraced by the church and celebrated with an open invitation to a special event which can serve as an evangelical witness. This can also be used to help poorer Kazakhs participate in celebrations and thereby show that the church cares for them and the tradition.

Issue: Traditional vs Modern vs Russified context.

100% say that Kazakh cultural traditions must be adapted to each context. The extent to which cultural traditions are used must be based on an analysis of whether the Kazakhs being shared with are Traditional, Modern, or Russified. It is not appropriate to place a large emphasis on cultural traditions with Russified Kazakhs and in fact may end up embarrassing them if they seem to be unaware of what the traditions are about. At the same time to not use cultural traditions with Traditional Kazakhs would make a Gospel witness ineffective.

Issue: The use of music and dance within the church.

60% say that this is very significant in Kazakh worship. Kazakhs love music, dancing, and the use of costumes and this can be very effective in both drawing new people in as well as keeping the church relevant for those in the church. Believing Kazakh writers and poets should write worship songs and melodies that can be used with both modern and traditional instruments. 40% of the pastors agree with the use of music and dance within the church but did not attach particular significance to it.



## Category 2: The Commitment to Islam

Issue: Use of the Quran.

100% of the pastors said the Quran must be used with caution. The Quran is significant in that its presence somehow brings blessings, whether it is actually read or not. Hearing it read in Arabic at significant events is considered to be very meaningful, even though most of those present will not understand what is read. 40% said the use of the Quran must be limited to the first phases of evangelism where it may be able to open a door for a witness. Even then it should only be used where it has been read by the person being witnessed to and the focus must be on those passages that bridge into the Bible/ Gospel. 20% said that it is dangerous to use the Quran with a Kazakh who never reads it as it may cause them to be interested in it and so begin reading it on their own. Ideally, the person should bring it up themselves before it is used. 30% said that the Quran could be used when trying to reach the Muslim leaders, but that this was a very specific calling for a few and in terms of overall church planting this was not very significant. Those who have this calling can help to clear up misunderstandings of the Kazakh church in the Muslim community and so help to dilute its constant negative portrayal by this community.

Issue: Orthodox vs Cultural Islam.

60% said that Kazakhs are not becoming more orthodox and the 40% who say they are identify this as specifically with younger men and women who are attending the mosque regularly. 100% of the pastors said that the Kazakh cultural expression of Islam was more significant than an orthodox expression. They said that as a result retirement is a time to get serious about religion and that up to that time the real god is money and materialism. 40%

said that part of cultural Islam is an acceptance of the validity of other religions for neighboring ethnicities.

Issue: Village vs city context.

80% said that in the cities Islam is not seen as a strong challenge to the growth of the church, but in a village context it is a high level challenge. This is not necessarily the practice of orthodox Islam but specifically related to an Islamic identity. In the city a secular/materialistic lifestyle is a greater challenge.

### Category 3: The Influence of the West

#### 3a. Kazakhs as a whole

Issue: An environment of change.

100% of the pastors said that the lives of Kazakhs are being changed by influences from the West. This has helped to open the world to Kazakhs and especially the promotion of the English language has helped Kazakhs communicate with the world.

Issue: Has there been a positive influence?

60% say that the influence of the West has been positive where it has helped Kazakhs to see the value of compassion for others. It has also helped Kazakhs to be more open and honest with each other, helping to overcome the issue of shame and keeping things hidden. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) describes the greatest impact of westernization has been in the areas of business, education, and politics, and this has mostly been for the good. 70% say that there has been some loss of Kazakh traditions but the positive influences of the West

outweigh these losses.<sup>32</sup> Marat (2009, pers. interview, 2 December 2008) says that a lot of the West's influence has come via Russian trends which are seen as positive by most Kazakhs, as well as closer to their worldview. Modern and Russified Kazakhs feel as if they know and understand the Russian way of thinking after so many years of living beside them. They have Russian friends who they feel are in a similar position as regards the navigation of a new globalized world.

Issue: What are the negative influences?

50% of the pastors said that villages see the presence of the West as foreigners coming in to take over what is theirs, both on a material level in terms of possessions, but also on a non-material level regarding culture. The other 50% do not see this large scale influence as significant but that there are specific negative influences. The negative effects of the West include the exposure of Kazakhs to low morality in the areas of drugs, prostitution, and pornography. Another negative influence is the contentedness with surface level relations and a lifestyle committed to materialism. The result has been that most Kazaks like to live with the material comforts and advances that westernization/ globalization brings and so their energy and motivations are spent on these. This is also affecting how they value relationships, with the priority being getting close to those who can increase their material comforts. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) pointed out that the influence of the West needs to be seen in the context of the Soviet and Post-Soviet generations. For most Kazakhs younger than forty years of age, living like the West is very attractive, especially the emphasis on freedom. The over – forty generation who spent significant time under the Soviet system view the West with greater suspicion and see a lot of the influence as negative.

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen Dunn (1967) looks at the attempts by various outside influences to convert Central Asia to a Western, industrial based model and concludes that it has been filled with difficulties.

### 3b. Within the church

Issue: Has there been a positive influence?

100% of the pastors describe positive influences that have come primarily via the hands of the missionaries. Positive influences include helping Kazakh believers to understand the needs of their community. Kazakh churches are starting to find ways to serve their communities and this is softening opposition to the Gospel. Westerners have taught Kazakhs more options in worship and preaching, as well as a greater degree of grace. Kazakh believers have also been shown the importance of a balance between work and family, and how to grow as a family. There is greater diversity in the church which is good and Kazakh believers and churches need the freedom to choose how Western they want to be. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) believes the influence has been less so in the North and West, largely because there have been very few Westerners living in these areas. The Russian influence however has been greater, bringing with it its own reactions to the influences of the West.

Issue: What have been the negative influences?

50% say that western influence has been negative where the first churches that were started had too much of a foreign flavor and in particular did not prioritize the Kazakh language and culture. With the start of the first churches came financial support and this has caused dependency in the church. Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) argues that it has distracted from the main purposes of the church so that some pastors have sought ways to please Westerners in order to gain financial support. 90% say westernization and

globalization have created a secular and materialistic focus even within the church.<sup>33</sup> This has led to spiritual apathy and is a great threat to the growth of the Kazakh church.

#### Category 4: New technology

Issue: Should new technology be used in the church?

100% of the pastors said that the church does not have an alternative, it must use new technology. Developments in technology must be seen as an opportunity and not a threat to the church. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) cautions that new technology however must not be forced on churches who are not ready for it, such as in the villages. This increases suspicion and the idea that the church is a foreign sect. New technology must not be used or portrayed in a way that it is seen as so important that the church is not valid without it. Most Kazakh churches are still small and those within the house church model will remain so, which means that some new technologies are both inappropriate and unaffordable for them. If a church is to focus on the future it must place a greater emphasis on new technology over cultural traditions. Underlying this is the idea that all Central Asian cultures are changing and so to anchor the church to specific cultural traditions risks being left behind by the culture. As the culture moves forward then the church becomes less and less relevant.

Issue: What is the appropriate use of new technology?

90% of pastors said that technology should not just be used uncritically, but rather fitted to the context. The church must be open to continually adapt and incorporate relevant technology such as Facebook and satellite television. This adaptation must not go so far as to

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Sine (2003:354) asks whether the values of globalization (westernization) are counter to the values of the Kingdom? This is a good question for the Kazakh church to continually ask itself as Kazakh life continues to become more global.

replace personal contact with that via a technology. True fellowship in the church must still involve intimacy, in person. 30% argue that if young people are the future of the church then modern musical instruments as well as technology such as PowerPoint must be used. It is young people that are driving the use of new technology and the church has the choice of embracing or rejecting this.

Satellite television can be useful for stimulating interest and in some forms of evangelism, but it is very limited in discipleship. It is growing in importance in Kazakhstan and even in remote villages dishes can be seen on or next to houses, suggesting its usefulness in accessing these remote villages with the Gospel. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) explains that the danger with satellite television is that it can replace the church and the discipleship process. Believers can become complacent in delegating discipleship to television programming as well as themselves withdrawing from personal interaction in favor of passively watching the television. There is also the danger that the kind of programming shown is determined by the highest bidder, rather than that which would be most edifying to the growth of the Kazakh church.

Internet usage is increasing exponentially, especially in the cities and this must be used for both evangelism and discipleship. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) see the need for websites to be developed that focus on constituents such as youth, business people, and in connecting with believers who live far away in more isolated circumstances so that for example they can do Bible studies online. Through the internet a network of churches can be developed to both support each other and dialogue over issues. Globalization has made people live fast lives and today people have less time to read books and a greater need for instant information which technology such as the internet and texting provide.

### Category 5: Reaching the next generation

Issue: Young people's lives are different to their parents

80% of the pastors describe peer pressure and the need to fit in as very influential in how the younger generation, both believers and unbelievers, choose to live life. This younger generation is exposed to a much bigger world than their parents were and they have many options to choose from. There is a world of constant change, for both good and bad. Multiple new forms of media as well as new cultures are being exposed to them so that they are required to respond in a way that their parents did not have to. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) and Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) see young people as developing an independence from their parents that was not known in Central Asia. They want to make their own decisions as to their future and in particular who they will marry and what kind of career they will have.

Issue: Young people seek a modern worship style

70% of the pastors say young people will likely look for a church that does have their kind of worship. Young people seem to need a *vibe* which becomes like a magnet in attracting them and a church needs to appropriately use modern technology in helping to create this vibe. 40% of the pastors explain how for youth in the church it is not as important for a song or worship style to stick closely to the cultural traditions. If other young people are enjoying a particular way of doing things then that is what is most important. Any style can be used as long as it feels right. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explain how a pastor may use a very traditional style of worship thinking it will draw people to the church, and as a result not attract any young people and even lose those that are coming.

Issue: Young people desire social interaction

60% of the pastors say that young people are not as tied to family relationships and desire closer relationships with their peers. They need programs and events that allow them to connect on a regular basis. Their traditions are less settled and they are more open to new ideas. There are many activities that compete for their attention and the church must find ways to position itself so that young people want to be involved in the activities of believers. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) argues that the younger generation are more transparent than their elders and also desire a greater level of intimacy in their relationships.

#### Category 6: Key segments for church growth

Issue: University students represent future influence in society and the church

100% of pastors agree that there must be a high priority on reaching university students. These students are the future leaders and gatekeepers of the Kazakhs. Their time at university represents an openness to new ideas and this lends itself to many opportunities for discussion. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) explains how university students often represent families from the village and so they are key bridges to reaching village/ traditional Kazakhs. Care must be taken in showing new believers how to share with relatives in the village as there have been mistakes made where returning students have felt the wrath of their families because they have not used discernment. One of the Kazakh church's great challenges is how it gains financial independence so that its growth is not dependant on outside funding, and Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) believes that one of the keys to answering this challenge is reaching university students who will end up in positions of employment that enable them to support the church.



Issue: Business people need to be reached for the church's future.

80% of the pastors gave high priority to reaching business people. They have influence and represent the future financial stability of the church. They are hard to reach as they appear to only show interest in financial gain and so spend time with those who have the same mindset. They also have very little free time, and are willing to practice a level of dishonesty that would seem to compromise the Gospel. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) argues that believing business people are needed to reach the unbelievers.

Issue: Cities are a priority context for the growth of the church.

100% of the pastors say that cities must be the main focus in church planting. A link to every village can be found in the city and so reaching cities first opens doors to reaching villages. Cities are where Modern Kazakhs are found and so this is the context in which they will be reached with the Gospel. The cities of Kazakhstan are growing at a rapid rate, beyond the ability of the infrastructure to keep up. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) describes how many Kazakhs come to the city as strangers and are open to new relationships and ideas. All Kazakh cities are multi-ethnic and so their populations are used to dwelling in a multi-faceted society with amongst other things, many expressions of religion.

#### Category 7: Specific methods of evangelism, discipleship and church planting

Issue: The importance of hospitality and the home.

100% of the pastors say that church growth cannot take place without using hospitality and the home. They must be used in evangelism, discipleship and church planting. Hospitality has a high cultural value for Kazakhs and so the way the Kazakh home is structured and used is set up for this. In church planting the value of meeting in a home around a meal is that it

creates openness and helps dispel suspicion. A believer who expresses hospitality as a way of life opens the door to a verbal sharing of the Gospel. It also becomes a natural way of doing life on life discipleship and is a natural setting for fellowship and Bible study. A lack of hospitality would create a cold atmosphere in the church and people would leave. A focus on the home means that family connections should be used for both evangelism and church planting. Church planting will be even more challenging if Kazakh believers do not use family connections. Part of training church planters must be teaching them how to use the family. Believers need to be more concerned with showing their faith than telling their faith when it comes to family. Family members need to see the reality of a believer's faith before they will pay attention to a verbal witness and so this may take longer than a believer at first expects. Those who have had success need to mentor others such as Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) who shared how when he became a believer his family rejected him for three years, but he kept on trying to love them and keep relationship with them so that eventually they became believers and now they are part of church planting in their city. The pattern seems to be that as families come to the Lord they start churches.

Issue: Stories and testimonies are an appropriate way to share the Gospel.

100% of the pastors placed a high value on sharing the Gospel using stories and testimonies. Kazakhs love to tell stories and there are many legends depicting the great heroes of the past, and so using stories and testimonies for sharing the Gospel is effective, but these must link to and end up with a focus on Jesus. Expatriate stories and testimonies are helpful but they retain the foreign feel so as far as possible stories and testimonies from Kazakh believers should be used. 40% say this is also very important in the discipleship process where believers encourage each other and demonstrate God's faithfulness.

Issue: Are using redemptive analogies and functional substitutes appropriate?

70% of pastors say that giving a Christian meaning to Kazakh traditions such as weddings and funerals is very significant for evangelism. They represent doors for sharing the Gospel with the family and community. As long as Biblical principles are not compromised, functional substitutes can be used in rites of passage events. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) suggests using the Lord's prayer in Arabic as a functional substitute for the reading of the Quran at funerals.

### Category 8: Challenges to the growth of the church

Issue: What is the impact of materialism?

70% of the pastors say that materialism is the greatest challenge to the church. The remaining 30% give it high significance. They describe it as a strong desire by Kazakhs to have money, comforts, and possessions in a way that causes a lesser desire for spiritual things. This is both in and out of the church context. The tough times experienced during the breakup of the Soviet Union have created a desire in everyone for a better life and the main focus of this desire is an improvement in the material aspects of life. Globalization has also meant that Kazakhs are exposed to what a developed materialistic lifestyle looks like in other countries.<sup>34</sup>

Issue: Leadership development is a challenge to the growth of the church.

20% of the pastors say this is the greatest challenge and the remaining 80% say it is very significant. Faced with difficulties, there are leaders who have not shown perseverance and other potential leaders have not been willing to step up. . A number of leaders have sought

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<sup>34</sup> Eloise Meneses (2006:241) cautions the church that as globalization brings market capitalism, so it brings the accompanying values of work before family, efficiency over generosity, and a concern for self rather than neighbor.

early independence from their expatriate mentors and have struggled to stand on their own. They have lacked maturity and experience which has caused them to struggle as leaders as well as in their own commitment to God. There is a problem with expatriate mentors where these provide financial sponsorship to Kazakh leaders as a means to control them. Such leaders have both an obligation and an incentive to commit to the agenda of the expatriate mentor so that they fall into a pattern of being told what to do rather than working things through for themselves. Some leaders were put into these positions prematurely. This meant that they have not known how to disciple those under their leadership. This has been less so in a house church context where the leadership requirements have not been as overwhelming. 30% say that the lack of leaders has also been due to expatriate workers holding on to leadership too long. In some churches, Kazakh leaders have been ready to at least try a leadership role but have been held back. Some then become disillusioned and leave, and others develop a feeling of inferiority.

Issue: Government restrictions.

70% say that government restrictions have average significance for the growth of the church but that this significance would increase if new restrictive laws were passed. Although there is freedom of religion in the constitution, the Kazakh church will need to live with a pro-Islam bias. The desire of the government is for each segment of society to remain within their traditional religion and they become suspicious of anyone trying to convert someone to another religion. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) says that the key to peace with the government is not to do anything that seems to undermine the government or cause the public to complain. Additionally, Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) who has a law degree explains that most churches do not know the current laws and so they face difficulties because they are simply not adhering to some basic procedures which would not compromise

their beliefs. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) describes how whilst some churches are registering, many House Churches are choosing to simply meet in homes as a gathering of friends which is legal, and using discretion in not disturbing their unbelieving neighbors<sup>35</sup>.

Issue: The growth of Islam.

90% of the pastors say that Islam is growing in importance and has average significance as a challenge to the church. Part of this average ranking is that this interest does not go beyond appearances. This is evident for example in higher levels of attendance at Friday prayers and the observance of Ramadan. But these pastors argue that above appearances however it still seems as if this is merely a way to check off a list of religious duties so that they can return to a materialistic lifestyle as a matter of course. More and more mosques are being built and many have Madrasahs attached. 30% of the pastors explain that an exception would be a significant group of younger Kazakhs (approximately ten percent) that are showing a strong interest in a more orthodox expression of Islam and they are showing evidence of practicing the five pillars of Islam on a regular basis. Young men in this group are growing the traditional Muslim style of beard and their wives are wearing full length clothing and head scarves. They seem to face opposition from the government who prefer them to show a nominal commitment to Islam.

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<sup>35</sup> In 2011 the Kazakh government introduced new religious laws that appeared to be a harsh crackdown on radical Islam in particular, but also detrimental to the evangelical church. A one year grace period was given in order for religions to bring themselves in line with the new laws. The author attended a workshop on the new laws, held in Almaty December 8<sup>th</sup> 2011 by a Christian Kazakh lawyer. He explained that the Christian church if it kept out of the arena of political activity and protest, would not have much to fear from the new laws. Nevertheless there was uncertainty and skepticism with church planters waiting to see what would transpire after October 2012. The author has had follow up discussions on this issue with Akzhol and Zhanibek in December 2012 and both expressed surprise at how accommodating the Kazakh government has been in helping the churches navigate the new laws. There are sure to be others who have a different story, and certainly this current situation does not mean the government is favorable towards evangelical Christianity. Nevertheless, for now there seems to be no sign of panic on the part of the Kazakh pastors regarding the new religious laws.

Issue: Christianity's foreign image.

Opinions are evenly divided with 30% saying this is very significant, 40% saying average significance, and 30% saying low significance. Due to Christianity's initial foreign image, Kazakh society sees the Kazakh church as a Sect and that it therefore poses some kind of a threat to the Kazakh way of life. With what seems to be a worldwide tension with Islam has come support to the idea that Christianity is of the West and anti-Islam, and therefore anti-Kazakh. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) says this will likely diminish over time due to the effects of globalization and Kazakhs will begin to embrace diversity. The pace of this change in worldview cannot be predicted. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) describes how second and third generation churches have much less foreign influence and so the 'Sect' image is less of a challenge.

Issue: Apathy in the church.

30% of the pastors say that this is a serious challenge in the church and the remaining 70% give it an above average significance. There is an increase in the number of believers that have been in the faith for five or more years and they are seen as having settled into a routine that lacks the early years of excitement. Due to materialism many believers are so busy seeking money and possessions that they are less committed to the church. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) argues however, that with the current downturn in the economy, some believers are realizing that materialism fails to live up to its promises and they are showing stronger commitment to the church.

### Category 9: Three types of Kazakhs

Issue: Between Traditional, Modern, and Russified Kazakhs, what are their impact on society and the future of the church?

100% of the pastors say that with the increasing impact of globalization, Modern Kazakhs will have the greatest impact on both society and the church. . Modern Kazakhs reflect the trend of the country as a whole. They are found in the most influential and prominent positions, such as the president who fits the profile well. Modern Kazakhs are sympathetic towards both Traditional and Russified Kazakhs and as such can open doors for witness to both groups. Traditional and Russified Kazakhs tend to be critical of each other and so using one to reach the other is a difficult challenge. 100% of the pastors rank Traditional Kazakhs as having the second largest impact and Russified Kazakhs the least.

### Category 10: Small groups and house churches

Issue: The growth of the Kazakh church will depend on small groups and house churches.

100% of the pastors say that small groups are very appropriate and even indispensable to the future growth and health of the Kazakh church. 80% say that the small group is the church and so the term House Church is used more and more (or the alternative term Family Church). The other 20% say that large traditional churches must have small groups within them. House Churches represent the greatest potential for the growth of the Kazakh church in the future. They need few resources and fit into the Kazakh culture of family and hospitality. It is easier to train leaders and overcome the idea that all leaders need a formal Bible School training.

Issue: Small groups are needed for discipleship

100% of the pastors say that a church must always have small groups if discipleship is to take place. Generally discipleship has been weak in the first generation Kazakh church and a key factor is that believers have not met together in small groups. Small groups offer the potential for believers to be interactive in living out their faith. Without participation in small groups many believers are passive and do not share the issues they are dealing with. Intimacy and participation are crucial to discipleship and therefore small groups are indispensable.

Issue: Small groups require leadership.

100% of the pastors say that small groups will not succeed without strong, committed leaders so a church must be intentional in developing and training small group leaders. These leaders must show a willingness to devote a significant amount of time to those they lead. There needs to be patience when identifying and developing leaders so that new believers are not thrown into the role and left to figure it out for themselves.

Issue: House churches have a negative image in society.

50% of the pastors say that a concern with House Churches is that they are viewed with great suspicion by the public and thereby support the idea that Kazakh Christianity is a Sect. This is particularly so where the hosts do not develop good relations with their neighbors. The other 50% say that if House Churches are seen by neighbors and others as simply friends meeting together then the negative image is not significant. A lot of this has to do with the suspicion around activities being done in secret and so it is important for believers to have open and honest relationships with those around them.



Issue: House Churches need to come together for celebrations.

80% of the pastors said that House Churches in a particular network or location need to come together for celebrations. These celebrations build unity and support, and a dynamic would be lacking if there were only small groups and no larger weekly/monthly gathering. Believers widely express joy and enthusiasm for a regular large worship setting. These larger gatherings also allow for the use of music and dance as well as opportunity for young people to connect. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) who pastors in a large church with small groups believes that in a situation where Christianity is in the minority with believers facing opposition to their faith there is value in meeting as a bigger group for encouragement.

#### Category 11: Baggage from the past

Issue: The effect of shame.

100% of the pastors agree that shame is a big issue in the Kazakh culture. An individual should not do anything that could bring shame to the group, with the most important group being the family. Kazakhs across the board are very hesitant to talk about events in their lives that may be shameful to them or their families. Globalization then is a challenge as it has a more individual focus that emphasizes honesty and transparency.

Issue: Dealing with shame in the church.

60% of the pastors say that a church must have a counseling ministry on an individual basis if believers are to deal with shame. In a group there is too much risk of shame and people will keep things at a surface level. It is very important to train and develop Kazakh counselors who can help believers with this aspect of discipleship. Most counseling without training would be judgmental and break the person down. This part of discipleship is so critical that a

believer will not mature spiritually without it. This highlights the importance of small groups which develop intimacy between believers and allow for a safer environment to share problems. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) says one of the first steps in discipleship must be for believers to specifically renounce former problems and issues and so have a point in time they can look back to and know they are forgiven.

### Category 12: The Five Self paradigm

Issue: How independent is the Kazakh church and can it stand on its own?

Charles Brock (1994:90) suggests that one of the measures of the progress of the Gospel within a people group is to see how it ranks in five categories.<sup>36</sup> The categories were explained and discussed with the pastors so that they gave each a percentage score as to how true it was in the Kazakh church. The results are as follows:

- Self-governing (Kazakhs are taking the lead).

The average score is 40%.

- Self-supporting (Kazakhs are providing their own money and resources).

The average score is 34%.

- Self-teaching (Kazakhs are providing Biblical/theological advice and training).

The average score is 30%.

- Self-expressing (Kazakhs determine how, where, when, what worship style).

The average score is 72%.

- Self-propagating (Kazakhs do the evangelism and church planting).

The average score is 80%.

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<sup>36</sup> William Smalley (1979:35) challenges the use of the “self” paradigm in measuring the health and nature of a church outside the West. He says that they are based on the Western ideas of individualism and power. His caution is noted but nevertheless the five “selfs” do aid in both the expatriate church planter and the local Kazakh leaders sitting down and working through some measure of how the church is growing.

Regarding self-teaching, there are currently no opportunities for in-country higher level (Masters and PHD) theological training leaving outside opportunities as the only current option. Outside opportunities are dangerous in that often people do not return. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) who has a masters degree in divinity believes that qualified theologians and apologists are needed to defend evangelical Christianity. Without this Christianity will continue to be seen as a sect. Self-supporting is important as outside funds often come with strings attached. The current financial crisis is delaying the growth of the self-supporting category. House church offers the best opportunity to be self-supporting. Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) says that pastors need to change their thinking and consider becoming bi-vocational. This also makes them more legitimate in the eyes of the community.

Kazakh leaders are more and more standing on their own and with life on life mentoring this aspect will continue to improve. Expatriates are still called on in certain circumstances but over time this will decrease.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The categories that have emerged from the interview data show how the Kazakh church planting context is a complex one that has to take into consideration the dynamic between cultural traditions and Islam as well as the impact of Westernization (globalization) and its associated developments in technology. Flowing from this is that there is no one-size-fits-all model of church but a careful look must be taken at the various segments of Kazakh society in order for relevany church planting to take place. There are unique opportunities and challenges for the church planter, which require that methods and models need to adapt in

order to be both relevant and effective. The categories also point to areas of concern and development, such as leadership training, if the Kazakh churches are to stand on their own feet. Moving on then to the next stage in grounded theory, the categories are compared and analysed in order for theory to emerge that will inform church planting.

## **Chapter 4: Emerging Theory related to Kazakh Church Planting**

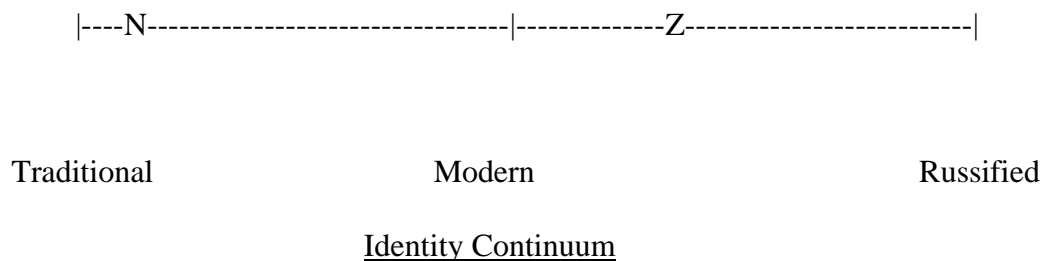
The categories and their related issues are now compared in order for theory to emerge. Glaser and Strauss (1999: 35) describe this phase as generating “hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties”. They go on to explain that the hypotheses may not seem to connect well at first, but as the categories are constantly compared, “ their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework” (: 40). Charmaz describes the process theorizing as “reach down to the fundamentals, up to abstractions, and probe into experience” (2006: 135). Having reached down to the codes and categories through constant comparison, grounded theory now reaches up to the abstractions and begins to probe into order to generate hypotheses and theory, beginning with the hypothesis of a Kazakh Cultural Identity Continuum.

### 4.1 The Kazakh Cultural Identity Continuum

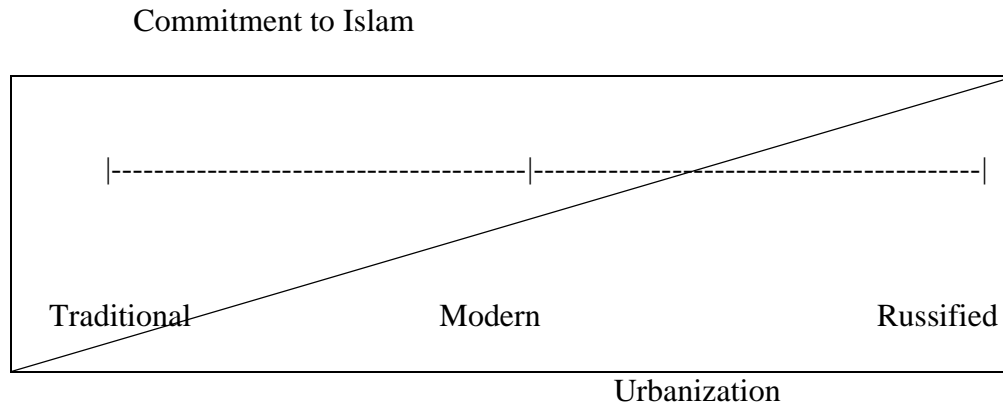
Revisiting Monshipouri's Muslim identities and their reactions to globalization, he describes them as follows (Monshipouri 2002:99). The first is that of the conservatives who dislike globalization and see no need to change an Islamic faith and practice that is neither bound by time nor world trends. For them globalization is a Western trend that seeks to dominate the world. The second category are the modernists who favor a renewal or revival of Islamic traditions in a way that allows Islam to be an equal player in a globalized world. Their participation however is tempered by a willingness to fall back to a more conservative position if they see the possibility of the erosion of the Islamic way of life. Lastly there are the liberals who are open to change even regarding some of the basic Muslim teachings and practice. They propose the adaptation of Islam to common international standards and

practices and see globalization as largely a positive force. How does this fit with the Kazakhs and their response to globalization?

David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen (1989:165) point out that the church planter must consider the contexts within contexts. From the descriptions of Kazakh life in chapter one, indications are that within the Kazakh context there are cultural, social, and situational contexts. So beyond a person merely saying they are Kazakh, there needs to be a consideration of the social community to which they belong as well as the immediate life situation in which they find themselves. Bearing this in mind, an overarching approach in church planting amongst Kazakhs must be the identification of where the particular person or group falls on an identity continuum from Traditional through Modern to Russified. As explained briefly in chapter one, this parallels the identity descriptions suggested by Monshipouri, but better fits the Kazakh context. As the categories are compared, the emerging hypothesis is that Modern Kazakhs adapt best within the current context, where there is a tension between returning to the traditional ways of the ancestors and embracing a new and changing world. A further hypothesis related to this is that no one model or method of church planting fits all Kazakh situations, but that the cultural identity of the situation will inform the church planting approach.



Using the explanations for each identity in chapter one, the church planter can place the specific church planting context on the continuum and then adjust their methods accordingly. Nurlan who lives in a village context would place his church planting context in terms of cultural identity right near the Traditional point on the continuum (N) (2009, pers. interview, 15 September). Zhenis who leads a Russian speaking house church in Almaty on the other hand would place his context between the Modern and Russified points (Z) (2009, pers. interview, 8 July). This also informs the expatriate church planter who seeks to partner with a national church planter. The expatriate church planter is able to put aside their preconceived ideas of how church planting needs to take place and instead become a student of their particular people group segment, with the resultant insights then informing the church planting practice. The analysis of the particular segment cannot be a one time static evaluation however as the influence of globalization in its broadest sense means that all cultures are in various degrees of change and adaptation, and so Nurlan's context may shift towards the Modern point of the continuum and Zhenis' may move left or right. Within the Church, the most significant impact of change causing a shift on the continuum is likely to be amongst the younger generation as well as the second and third generation churches that are started out of the first church plant. Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) and Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) point out how the younger Kazakh generations are showing an openness to new ideas and advances in technology so that we can hypothesize that church planting amongst them needs to emphasize globalization considerations over contextual ones. Paradigm filters such as Commitment to Islam and Urbanization can also be laid over the continuum to help give further distinction to the categories, as follows:



This example shows an inverse relationship between a commitment to Islam and urbanization and is a generalized hypothesis. Each church planting situation however needs to be examined. In the Kazakh context it may be that the example above is true in the North but less so in the South where there may be a degree of compatibility between a commitment to Islam and urbanization.

The Kazakh church then finds itself reflecting the challenges of a culture caught between identifying and reestablishing its past whilst at the same time trying to survive and even thrive in a global world where cultures are interacting and constantly changing. Contextualization is the term used to refer to the former and globalization referring to the latter. A closer look needs to be taken at the dynamic between these two terms.

## 4.2 Contextualization Considerations

### 4.2.1 Contextual Models

Revisiting the Anthropological model proposed by Bevans in chapter one, Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) and Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) emphasized the importance of giving detailed consideration to all aspects of the Kazakh culture, but sounded a caution that



there were religious aspects in particular (notably the worship of ancestor spirits) that are not be compatible with the teachings of the Bible and therefore cannot be used. Their response raises the argument that a particular cultural context is not entirely pure and on its own cannot produce a sound theology. Rather, as Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) argues, it needs it be measured against God's culture, the best source of which is a correct understanding of the teachings in the Bible.

The Countercultural model is questionable within the Kazakh context. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explain the importance of using Kazakh culture and in the Kazakh context churches leaning towards the Countercultural model would be seen as sects. The message would be sent that most or all of the Kazakh cultural beliefs and practices are evil and to be avoided.

The codes within the category related to the use of cultural traditions (page 85) indicate that although the pastors interviewed did not make use of the terminology, nevertheless their responses show support for the Translation model. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August), Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) and Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) argued the importance of placing Biblical truth above any cultural belief or practice, and looking for functional substitutes where culture needed to change. Luzbetak (1998:72) argues along these lines in saying that contextualization of the Gospel is where a culture is integrated with Christ and his message. If changes and adjustments need to be made then it is the local culture that must change and not the Biblical view of Christ and his message. Keeping Schreiter in mind, the way in which the message is communicated may also need to be changed. For the Kazakh pastors the struggle is how to filter out the Biblical model of church from all the cultural models they are bombarded with. The implications of this then are that the church planter becomes a student of the Biblical culture, attempting to

strip the results of any of their own cultural bias to discover what the core universal features of a New Testament church are.

Because the Kazakh culture is part of a changing globalized world, there are some whose worldview is undergoing rapid change and others who are attempting to resist this change and keep things as they are. Basic to this study is what relevant church planting should look like amongst the Kazakhs and so a highly contextualized approach refers to that which gives high consideration and use to the traditional worldview of the Kazakhs. This is the worldview of the Kazakhs that seeks to pass down an unchanging set of values, beliefs and behaviors, the majority of which are described in the first chapter. On the other end of the spectrum would be a very low level commitment to the traditional Kazakh worldview leading to an acceptance of change and a worldview with new values, beliefs, and practices. The church planter must understand how their particular context reacts to globalization and change. This is equally true for expatriate and local church planters in that the local church planters often find themselves in a part of the country that is new to them.

Church planting in the Kazakh context is a challenging exercise as there has not been a clean slate to work with but rather preexisting models of church in some of the surrounding cultures such as Russian and Korean. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) who has pastored both Kazakh and Korean churches says that these models have a very strong flavor to do with Russian or Korean culture and have elements that clash with a Muslim background culture such as the Kazakh one. Surviving and growing in an environment hostile to Christianity, a number of the Russian and Korean churches have been successful (Pieter Versloot 2008, conference presentation, 8 December) causing Kazakh church leaders to want to emulate them. Until recently, most Kazakh church leaders have not done a critical evaluation of these churches to see what would work in a Kazakh context, but rather tried to copy them within a paradigm that says 'everyone wants to be a part of the winner'. The idea

is that an outwardly successful church equates to God's blessing and approval which then also equates to the correct way to do things. At an annual convention of Kazakh pastors on 15 August 2005 the main speaker on church planting was an expatriate Korean pastor who had planted a large church in Almaty. He explained his method of church planting and told all present that if they copied him they too could have a large church (Song 2005, lecture, 15 August). Without any regard to the very different culture and context in which the Kazakh pastors found themselves, he seemed to be setting them up for failure.

Given the translation model based hypothesis that the Biblical culture is the screen the church planter uses, before giving consideration to cultural issues, one of the very first questions to be answered by a church planter then is, what are the Biblical essentials of a New Testament church? The church planter then becomes a student of church in the Bible. The blueprint for church is sought in the Scriptures with the understanding that even there it is wrapped in the culture of the day.

Proceeding from a Biblical frame of what a church looks like, the next issue becomes one of relevance. How do we make this church look, sound and feel Kazakh? Echoing the translation model, Dean Gilliland proposes that the challenge is to take the universal, timeless truths of Scripture and work them out as theology for each time, place, and people (1989:10). Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) argue that in the Kazakh context this has been too expatriate dominated, especially in the early years so that the Kazakh churches did have a foreign feel and approached theological issues from a Western/ Korean perspective. Effective contextualization of the Gospel suggests that we allow local believers to develop their own theology under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and based on their own understanding of the Bible. In theory this sounds great, but already in the Kazakh context there have been some significant departures from Biblical truth so that over time some of the basic tenets of universal Christianity are being

eroded. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) and Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) expressed concern with certain churches that seem to have departed from Biblical truth.

These challenges give rise to two important questions. What do we do with Kazakh customs and traditions so that the church can be indigenous (Kazakh and Biblical)? How does the expatriate church planter walk a line that avoids dominating the Kazakh church's self expression whilst at the same time not being so uninvolved that the Kazakh church ends up departing from the Bible? Holding to the belief in a Gospel core, there must be more dialogue, negotiation, and exchange. An interesting development is that the Kazakh churches in the cities of Kizl Orda and Aktobe that are beyond first generation are less tied to the specific models and methods that have influenced the first generation churches (Marat 2008, pers. interview, 2 December). These second and third generation churches are discovering what a *Kazakh* church in their particular context looks like. JD Payne (2009:187) says that the first generation churches will be strongly influenced by the expatriate church planters, but that over time succeeding generations will shed these foreign impressions leaving a Biblical impression embedded in the local culture.

Another part of the answer to this depends on the worldview of the particular group of Kazakhs amongst whom a church is being planted. As described before, for the Russified Kazakh an overemphasis on customs and traditions can alienate them and cause them to feel shame, whereas with Traditional Kazakhs the effect would be the opposite. Also explained in chapter one, with the impact of globalization, gone are the days where we can give a blanket description of who or what a Kazakh is. Kazakhs are changing in all areas including their worldviews and so an indigenous church in one location may look very different to an indigenous church in another. Attention needs to be paid to the particular

elements of Kazakh culture in a specific context that carry significance in church planting for that context.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Cultural Identity

The generalized hypothesis arising from an analysis of the categories to do with Kazakh cultural traditions and a commitment to Islam is that it is important to *appear* Islamic. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August), Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) and Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) believe Kazakhs are not serious about orthodox Islam and so, if we consider a true Muslim as one who regularly practices the five pillars of Islam and lives a moral life free of vices such as a hedonistic pursuit of wealth, the drinking of alcohol, and liberal sexuality; then the percentage of these amongst the Kazakhs is very low. If we lay this aside and consider the proposal that Kazakhs have their own view of what it is to be a Muslim then we can better understand this very important part of their cultural identity (see the description of religious identity in chapter one). Through this they belong to something with significance that is greater than themselves. They used to belong to something great during the Soviet years but with the failure of that system a return to an Islamic identity now fills the void. For Kazakhs the failure of communism implies the failure of atheism so that to be an infidel is the worst kind of cultural identity. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) and Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) describe a new interest in an Islamic identity so that integral to developing a Kazakh national pride is the development of an Islamic appearance.

The growth of certain Islamic practices serve the function of developing and strengthening the Islamic appearance so that the Kazakhs are able to claim a spiritual heritage

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Van Engen (2006:178) describes what he calls a dialectical tension: “The gospel can be known only within cultural frameworks, yet the gospel is always distinct from – sometimes affirming of and often prophetically critical of – all human cultures”. The Kazakh church planter must hold this tension in balance.

and depth which enables them to break out of the previous cultural blend of the Soviet Union. A good example of this is the building of Mosques. Khalid (2007:119) and the Laumulins (2009:124) explain how mosques are continually being built, and in villages they are a way of putting the village on the map. The village attains a higher status and pride if it has a Mosque, in other words it appears to be a Muslim village. Similarly, Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explained that the presence of the Qur'an in a home gives a credible Islamic identity, but that beyond this it was not used. The challenge for church planting is how to position the church in such a way that it functions as a substitute for this Islamic identity, going beyond mere appearance towards demonstrating a deep relationship with the one true God. One aspect is to patiently demonstrate the love of Christ over time so that opposing arguments are diffused. Another is to be intentional in discovering and developing functional substitutes using a critical contextualization approach. Critical contextualization as proposed by Paul Hiebert (1995:168) is what the Kazakh pastors tried to express in their own words. That we begin with a detailed study of the Kazakh culture and traditions, thereafter study what the Bible has to say about them, and then allow the local church to apply the Bible's teachings to these traditions, resulting in their own critical response. If the tradition or particular practice does not contradict Biblical teachings then the church works through how to use it to express Christianity in the Kazakh context.

Even after years of church planting, Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) and Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) explain that for the general population, the idea of a Kazakh Christian is an anomaly. Doug Coleman (2011) in his dissertation discusses the idea of an insider within the broader contextualization debate in missiology, and shows how arguments are made for allowing Muslim background believers to remain within an Islamic identity. They are then able to take advantage of this insider position to advance the Gospel. In the Kazakh context this is debatable, with Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August), Saken

(2009, pers. interview, 1 October) and Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) arguing that many Kazakhs simply want to wear the badge of Islam without practicing it very seriously. Consequently, it can be argued that if a Kazakh Christian tries to become a serious practicing insider that ironically they are actually an outsider to most of the Kazakh population. Despite an increase in Mosque construction, if most Kazakhs wanted to go to Friday prayers there would be no space for many of them to participate. The point rather is that simply having a mosque in the community makes it appear Islamic. As acknowledged previously, some of the younger men seem to be showing outward signs of a greater commitment; however their numbers are still in the minority. The perceived growth and influence of Wahhabi Islam is still to be validated, but if proved true then the concept of an insider movement may need to be explored. Coleman describes an insider movement as existing where new highly contextualized groups of believers are created so that “followers of Jesus remain part of their pre-faith religious communities” (2011:24). The concept of an insider movement is itself controversial and the church planter needs to determine how far they can go without compromising a commitment to Biblical truth. The indigenous Kazakh church then has the challenge of being accepted as Kazakh and yet being counter-cultural in holding to a higher level of both belief and practice compared to their Muslim countrymen, so that following Jesus is more than just an appearance.

David Bosch (1991:453) proposes that we need to allow the local (Kazakh) community to discover what a church is and so the church is *born anew* within the culture rather than merely expanded into it. Bosch therefore speaks of inculturation, as a synonym for contextualization but with a stronger emphasis on the church from within. As the codes within the category of using cultural traditions indicate (page 85), this has been a drawback associated with the early Kazakh churches and remains so with some today, where a particular Kazakh church appears as an outside influence rather than an inward phenomenon.

Bosch goes on to explain that church planters have to live with the contradiction of trying to be as culturally relevant as possible and yet at the same time having a message that will confront and even conflict with every culture (:455). The church can look and feel very Kazakh but its message must call Kazakhs to a redemptive relationship with Jesus Christ which for some will cause offense. Pocock (2005:289) uses the term indigenous to mean *born from within* but also cautions that there is the danger that Christianity can become so indigenous that it no longer has a divine distinctiveness. Hiebert (1994:84) argues in a similar vein when he says that uncritical contextualization can lead to problems for the church planter where the Gospel is distorted, absolute claims are diluted, and syncretism a reality. Nurlan (2009, pers. interview, 15 September) who lives in a village context sees some evidence of this and an example is how when some Kazakh believers are sick they pray and have the church pray for healing, and if it does not come they then visit the local traditional healers. Another example would be Kazakh believers acknowledging the power of charms and amulets to ward off evil.

Taking a cue from the anthropological model, the developing theory is that God has given the Kazakhs their unique cultural identity. Even though this may have been distorted by their own expression of Islam and the way sin affects every culture, there remains a foundation that is fertile soil for the growth of the church. There is the restriction however that Biblical truth supersedes cultural beliefs and practices.

Common ground is a term that resonates with the Anthropological model. Hesselgrave (2005:102) describes this approach by pointing out key ideas within its philosophy. Firstly is the concept of a common quest for God that seems to be universal to all mankind. Secondly, many religions have beliefs and practices that are shared, such as heaven, hell, and redemption. Hesselgrave goes on to argue however that the unique claims of Christianity outweigh the similarities with any other religions (:105). The common ground



approach is seen in the philosophy of Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub (2007:12) who argues for a significant degree of harmony and understanding between Christianity and Islam. He makes a distinction between the public and private character of the two faiths. He contends that the public face has much that serves as common ground between the two religions. Members of both are seen as “people of the Book” and that for both the “Word of God” is foundational. On the private side we can have differences and he uses verses from the Qur’an such as chapter 30 verse 22 to contend that “Theological doctrines may divide us, but faith unites us” (:15). He uses the *shahadah* (the core witness statement of Islam) to make his point. The first part declares: “I bear witness that there is no God but God” (:13) which is something Christians can declare with Muslims as part of a public faith. The second part declares: “I bear witness that Muhammed is the Messenger of God” (:13) and this is part of the private side of Islam that does not have to be shared with Christianity. Timothy Tennent in examining common ground asks whether “the Father of Jesus is the God of Muhammed?” (2007:25). After a detailed study on the etymology of the words “God” and “Allah”, as well as the contexts in which they are used, he concludes that the Father of Jesus is not the God of Allah (:48). He does not discard the idea of common ground but rather sees it as a way to prepare Muslims for the introduction of the Gospel.

If we speak of common ground in terms of fertile soil that is prepared to receive the Gospel then this exists in Kazakh religion, particularly in terms of the redemptive analogies mentioned in chapter two. If however we speak of common ground as part of the core of Christianity then important issues arise in particular with soteriology, centering on the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Eugene Nida’s (1990:15) insight in terms of the distinction between common ground and a point of contact is relevant when considering Kazakh religious identity in particular. Is it possible that the Kazakh Islamic views of God and his revelation have enough similarity that there exists a common ground of belief on

which Kazakh Christianity can be built? The codes that give rise to categories such as the use of Kazakh cultural traditions in church planting (page 85), reflect Nida's proposal that rather than speaking of common ground we need to speak of points of contact. Beliefs such as creation, sin, monotheism, and judgment can be used as points of contact to lead into the distinctive claims of Christianity.

Kazakh Christianity's image in the Kazakh government's eyes can appear to be something of a paradox. If it appears foreign then it is not as imposing on traditional Kazakh culture which as Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) explains, is what the government would like. The negative however is that it is now seen as a Sect with no real legitimacy, and so needs to be watched carefully. On the other hand, as Kazakh Christianity over time shows that it is *Kazakh* and positions itself as beneficial to the community in which it finds itself, then a lot of the suspicions are reduced and the Sect image is diluted. What seems clear is that the Kazakh church must truly live out a life that the Bible refers to as *salt* and *light* (Matthew 5: 13-16). A life that reveals the benefits of Christianity to Kazakh society.

#### 4.2.3 Music and Dance

The church has a great opportunity for impact in regard to the way it *expresses* its belief and practice. Keeping in mind the spectrum from Traditional to Russified, a Kazakh church can appear relevant and even inviting in the way it uses music and dance. This may be a challenge to the comfort zone of expatriate church planters and some of the emerging church issues being faced in the West may begin to apply to the Kazakh context as well.<sup>38</sup> Nida (1990:114) uses an interesting story from India to illustrate the danger of expatriates prescribing how the church should worship. He describes a taxi driver who would take a

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<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Lewis (2004:75) argues that too often the expatriate uses a hit-and-miss approach in trying to make a local church look and feel natural when instead the expatriate should move out of the way and let the local believers discover this for themselves.

Christian to church and then wait in his car until the service ended to take the person home again. Someone came up to the driver and asked when the service would end and he replied that there were four noises each service but that so far there had only been two. Worship in the Kazakh church must sound like melody not noise if it is to be culturally appropriate.

Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) is a pastor in a church that has a large Sunday meeting. They use dance as part of the worship and he argues that the Kazakh church does seem to make a clear distinction between music and dance within the church and that within the broader society, thereby avoiding any secular meaning or expression. He along with Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) and Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) propose that the use of music and dance for evangelism with the younger generation must be explored.

These pastors go on to explain that there is no one set style of relevant Kazakh worship and consideration must be given to the particular setting in terms of urbanization and cultural identity (Traditional, Modern, or Russified). Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) describes how the Dombra is an instrument that is so especially Kazakh that across the spectrum it's sound is held with affection. A special effort is made to ensure that it is present at all important events and there is a pride and honor that goes with being able to play it well. In keeping with modernization it has been electrified and modern compositions with the accompaniment of modern instruments have been introduced. Bolat further argues that the Kazakh church needs to capitalize on this and so praise and worship compositions for the Dombra, both traditional and modern, need to be promoted. The hypothesis then is that effective church planting amongst Kazakhs must make use of music and in certain contexts, appropriate dance.

#### 4.2.4 Cultural Markers: Rites of Passage and Celebration Days

##### 4.2.4.1. Rites of Passage

Chapter one described how within the Kazakh culture, some of the most significant events that define what it is to be Kazakh involve what are called the rites of passage. They are key markers in a Kazakh's life that they can refer back to and reference that they are indeed good Kazakhs. Key to applying Hiebert's critical contextualization model is the development of a theological discussion group/ circle where those Kazakhs who have an interest in dealing with these cultural issues come together regularly and go through the critical contextualization phases. This is beginning to take place in Almaty where a group of both expatriate and Kazakh church planters are getting together to exegete the Kazakhs' beliefs and rituals involved in the death and burial of a family member (Sieberhagen 2010-2011, personal involvement). A point of interest is how the Kazakh church planters at a meeting of this group in Almaty on 19 October 2010, discussed the issue of the use of Arabic at a funeral. Even though most of the attendees do not understand what is being said in Arabic, the entire funerary practice loses credibility without it. At first it appears as if the use of Arabic by Christians is wrong and compromising, by giving in to Islam. As the discussion progressed, it was established that the Arabic language in and of itself is not Islamic and has and can be used by God just as any other language. A believer can memorize the Lord's Prayer or Psalm twenty three in Arabic and substitute this in place of a passage from the Qur'an. All agreed that this would lead to follow up conversations afterwards where the meaning of what was said in Arabic can be explained.

There is a Kazakh proverb that says that a home with children is like a bazaar and a home without children is like a graveyard. Children are seen as a sign of blessing and status,

consequently, as explained in chapter one, there are significant rites to do with the birth of a child, and additionally for a son, the time of circumcision. The church needs to apply a critical contextualization approach to this as well as other important rites such as marriage. Theory emerges to suggest that Kazakh believers need to have their own cultural markers so that they are not seen as cultural orphans, having thrown away a credible Kazakh identity.

A developing functional substitute has to do with a comparison of the expatriate idea of a 'baby shower' and the Kazakh practice known as a Besik Toi (Cradle Party, see description in chapter one). In most of the expatriate cultures a baby shower takes place during pregnancy and is a time to bless the mother and baby through gifts and words/ prayers of encouragement. In Kazakh culture a Besik Toi is usually held on the fortieth day after birth and until this time no-one but the closest family members are allowed to see the baby to protect it from any influence of evil. The grandmothers play a very active role and there are shamanistic type rituals to bless and protect the baby. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) who has had four children born after becoming a believer explains how within the believing Kazakh community a practice is developing where a baby shower takes place on the fortieth day after birth and passages are read from the Kazakh Bible, gifts are given, and prayers and wishes are made for the future of the baby.

Akzhol explains that the extent to which a functional substitute can be used is almost entirely dependent on the issue of control. If a believer lives primarily within an unbelieving family and context, they do not have control over how a particular rite will be performed. The church needs to develop an answer for these believers as to how they should or should not participate in the rite. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) says there have been precedents where the church to which the believer belongs holds a second event in order to give the participants an opportunity to honor God. The most common rite in which this has happened has been marriage, so that the couple goes through two wedding events.

The hypothesis here would be that where a believer is able to exert control over the rite of passage event, they are able to have a strong influence in performing a functional substitute. This must be done very sensitively however as there are always unbelieving family and friends present who are easily offended and leave spreading rumors. Where the believer does not have control they needed to be counselled as to how to participate.

#### 4.2.4.2. Celebration Days and Times

As mentioned in chapter one, certain days and times of the year such as Nawrus, Korban Ait, and Ramadan carry particular religious significance. As the Kazakh church continues to self-theologize it needs to examine the possibility of what Don Richardson (1999:397) refers to as the redemptive analogy. The idea is that God has put aspects in place within the Kazakh culture so that through a detailed study of these the concept of God redeeming man to Himself can be exposed. As chapter one described, Nawrus comes at the start of Spring and celebrates the survival of winter and a new start to the year. People come out of a hibernation state of mind and begin to spend more time outdoors, enjoying the promise of warmer weather, and the colors and foods of Spring. A special cold soup called Kozhe is made from seven ingredients and signifies a type of thanksgiving for making it through the winter with enough to eat. Nawrus also carries the ideas of rebirth and renewal which can be made analogous to the new life that is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Within the Kazakh expression of Islam there is a particular practice to do with the forgiveness of sin that is shared with a number of other Islamic cultures, explained in chapter one as the celebration of Korban Ait. According to the Muslim calendar it takes place once a year and each family should save for the purchase of a sheep that they will sacrifice on the dedicated day. It can vicariously cover many sins of the whole family committed since the

previous sacrifice. The idea of a sheep sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins provides a great opportunity to draw parallels with the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The Kazakh church can make a big deal of these celebration events and host an occasion that gives opportunity to express the redemptive analogy. Again this must be done sensitively and on one occasion it may be appropriate for there to be public expression, whereas on another it needs to be private and individual.

There are so many misunderstandings of what is done and meant when believers celebrate the Lord's Supper. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) explains that amongst the general Kazakh population there are various rumors suggesting cultic practices to do with drinking blood. Even for new believers there is some confusion as to what it all means. Using the meaning behind Korban Ait and then drawing parallels to how believers remember Christ's sacrifice, provides the opportunity to clear up many of these misunderstandings. Celebration days and times represent special opportunities for the Kazakh church to make an impact on society, in particular in showing that Kazakh Christianity can be a valid part of Kazakh culture.

#### 4.2.5 The Danger of a Superiority Complex

Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) expressed concern that the Kazakh church can become so focused on developing a strong cultural identity that they become self-absorbed and even prideful. The consequences may include looking down on people from other cultures, both in terms of the burden to reach these peoples with the Gospel, as well as within the church where other peoples feel like they are on the outside looking in. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) describes how within the broader Kazakh culture, the growing national pride is producing a sense of superiority so that even near neighbor cultures such as Uzbek

and Kyrgyz are devalued. Kazakhs are entrenching themselves as the *bosses* with these other peoples working for them. Even though these other people groups have been citizens of Kazakhstan for generations, the Kazakhs portray themselves as the true inhabitants of the country and that the others live here by their favor and permission.

Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) believes that this is the issue facing the Kazakh church where they are inclined to portray themselves as the bosses or leaders of the Church in Kazakhstan. At a House Church conference on May 8 2009 in Almaty, Akzhol for the first time met leaders from Uighur churches and it was a defining moment for him as he saw how much bigger the Church was than he had thought. He confessed that he had been prejudiced against Uighurs, following the trend of society as a whole. The emerging theory is that the Kazakh church needs to walk a line between its own cultural identity and that of a church that seeks to reach people from the various people groups of Central Asia. This does not mean that all Kazakh churches must try to be all cultures to all peoples, for there are significant cultural priorities that differ between the people groups so that they want a church of their own. What it does mean is that the Kazakh church can take the lead in developing a spirit of unity and servanthood in the broader sense so that the churches that represent specific people groups feel an affection and connectedness towards each other. Kazakh pastors and leaders need to embrace a friendship and co-mentoring relationship with the pastors and leaders from the other people groups. As the majority people group in the country, the onus is on the Kazakhs to take the lead in this.

#### 4.2.6 Hospitality and the Home

Across the identity continuum Kazakhs place a high value on hospitality and the home as the basis for all aspects of life, and the codes within the category of special methods of



discipleship, evangelism and church planting confirm this (page 90). Whether local or expatriate, the church planter must make use of this, and two of the most effective evangelical methods have involved hospitality and the home. Firstly, Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explained how some churches have made effective use of special celebration days where they have hosted a traditional meal for the community and either directly presented the Gospel or opened a door to follow up with individual families. Where possible they have erected the traditional nomadic felt home called a Yurt and held the celebration there. Whilst those attending may still retain opposition and suspicion towards Kazakh Christianity, they are attracted to and cannot deny the very Kazakh feel of the occasion. There is always a lot of food and more than one course which implies that the church needs to make significant financial sacrifices in order to make the occasion a success.

A second, very effective means of evangelism is the use of hospitality within the home. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) believes the community needs to have a sense that the church planter's home is always open for a visit. As unbelievers pass through the home they are able to see that the believers are normal with the same challenges in life. Here countenance and attitude are crucial so that the visitors sense that within the same challenges, in this home there is faith, hope and love.

Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) says that hospitality in the home and time restrictions are contradictions in Kazakh culture so that guests may arrive hours late and leave in the early hours of the morning. The church planter has to be prepared to step out of their comfort zone such as staying up very late so that the guests only leave at their own request. This may be well after midnight, but often the deepest conversations take place when it is late and these would be missed if the church planter's family has their own idea of what a

reasonable ending time is. In an urban context where the host and the guests have work commitments that are time driven, these hospitality events will occur on weekends.

Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October), Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) and Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) explain that a significant challenge to hospitality in the home with unbelievers will be the expectation of alcohol. With the Soviet influence on the Kazakhs came the norm that alcohol and especially vodka are freely available to guests. Alcoholism is very prevalent in society and so the Kazakh church for the most part has decided on abstinence in the area of alcohol. Consequently, this needs to be carefully explained so that the guests are not offended nor made to feel evil. The best explanation seems to be an appeal to a belief in and commitment to God rather than taking some kind of moral high ground. Where believers are convicted that a limited use of alcohol is acceptable, they need to think carefully how this will happen when they host guests.

Another challenge is that as people become more comfortable in the church planter's home, they begin to share about their lives and eventually open up about the problems. An appropriate response in Kazakh culture is to pray for them, but for many church planters there is the sense of a burden being placed on them to solve the guest's problems (Zhanibek 2009, pers. interview, 2 February). This can end up in promises and commitments being made that are very hard to keep.

The home is also a very important place of discipleship. In a culture where shame and hiding of problems is the norm, the home is a special place for believers to be real and open up regarding the challenges they are facing. They don't have to pretend they are spiritual and can both counsel and receive counseling. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) explains that the current generation of Kazakh believers did not grow up with a Christian worldview and knowledge of the Bible so that they often deal with questions that seem very basic to the church planter. Afraid of appearing ignorant, these believers walk around with these

questions within them, holding them back from spiritual growth. House church and home Bible studies provide an opportunity for these believers to deal with their questions in an environment that reduces the shame factor. The theory emerges that effective Kazakh church planting cannot be done without using hospitality and the home.

#### 4.2.7 Stories and Testimonies

As with many other cultures, the Kazakhs look back to their legendary heroes and the stories that surround them. These stories provide a way of validating the uniqueness and importance of the Kazakh way of life. Kazakhs can look back to a rich past and see a heritage that defines who they are, whilst at the same time understand a responsibility to preserve and develop this heritage. The Kazakh church has the opportunity to use stories and testimonies for the growth of the church. Preliminary work has been done on tracing a Christian presence in Central Asia based on the efforts of the Nestorians (Filbert 1999:59). During this period some Kazakh forefathers turned to Christianity and these stories need to be published and used as a means to show that a Christian heritage is not completely foreign to Kazakhs. Stories from the Bible can be told in such a way that they can resonate with the Kazakh worldview. In the case of the Modern Kazakh in particular, stories of God's personal and intimate dealings with individuals parallel the Modern Kazakh's need, whether felt or not.

Testimonies from Kazakhs as to how they became Christians have the potential of making Kazakh Christianity either legitimate or illegitimate in the eyes of the general Kazakh population. If these testimonies are told in a way that seems to break down and criticize the Kazakh way of life then they will draw a negative response. On the other hand if they are told in such a way that Christ is seen as someone who loves Kazakhs and is interested in their way of life, then this can open doors to a witness. An interesting time is almost upon the Kazakh

church where there will soon be a number of adult Kazakh Christians who grew up in a Christian home without experiencing any of the beliefs and practices of Kazakh Islam. They are fully Kazakh and yet fully Christian, giving a strong testimony that a person can be both.

Stories and testimonies have been an important part of sharing the Gospel during the growth of the Kazakh church. They need to be developed and built upon for the future of the church. Church planters need to find ways to record stories and testimonies as well the most effective methods of telling them.

#### 4.3 Globalization Considerations

Pocock (2005:93) describes globalization's effect on Islamic cultures such as the Kazakh as tending to produce two different responses. Firstly, amongst those who take a more fundamentalist position the response is to counter globalization's effect with an attempt to keep things as they are. The belief here is that Islam cannot be modernized and retains its true expression when grounded in its historic Arabic culture, harking back to the time of Muhammad. The second response is to change Islam from within so that its rigidity is replaced by flexibility that enables it to be relevant in a modern, globalizing world. If we accept as the category describing the three types of Kazakhs suggests, that Modern Kazakhs are the ones to have the most influence and therefore lead Kazakh society into the future, then the Kazakh form of Islam is likely to lean towards the second response.

With globalization's bringing-together and melting-together effect, comes a tendency to church plant in a general, one-size-fits-all approach. As the three categories of Kazakhs and their sub-categories indicate, in the diverse Kazakh context as the church seeks to be

relevant, it must resist a homogenization that gives little concern to cultural identity.<sup>39</sup> To understand the effect of globalization on church planting amongst the Kazakhs, we must begin with the idea of *change*.

#### 4.3.1 Change: Surviving and Thriving

Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) says that across the continuum from Traditional to Russified, Kazakhs are dealing with change. Living in a global and interconnected world means that things are not the same from one generation to the next and even within a generation. Ironically then, change is one of the only constants. During Soviet times there was predictability to life and the current generation could look to the previous one to get an idea of how life would unfold. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) explains that this is no longer true for the current Kazakh generations, who have to deal with influences their parents never had to. Mass media and the Internet project a changing world on a daily basis causing Kazakhs to make adjustments. Some focus on trying to hold onto the past and only making changes which are necessary for survival. Many Kazakhs however are learning to move from surviving to thriving in a world of change and following a worldwide trend called glocalization.

As explained in chapter one, glocalization's greatest effect is within the cities and this is where many Modern Kazakhs are found. Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) sees change for Kazakhs as positive and so instead of avoiding change Kazakhs embracing glocalization can find ways to take the beneficial effects of change and make them relevant to the Kazakh way of life. For example, even though there is a long way to go in developing Kazakh websites that are more attractive than those from outside, all major cities have had

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Walls (2006:70) shows how the expansion and survival of Christianity depended significantly on the ability of the gospel to embed itself in a local culture. As it seemed to be fading in one culture and geographic location, it was flourishing in others.

fiber optic cables installed so that the Internet can be taken advantage of. Modern Kazakhs are embracing the Internet as a way for Kazakh culture to keep up with the developing world.

With change comes the issue of *exposure* so that Kazakhs are dealing with the influence of many diverse worldviews with their accompanying values and attitudes. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) who lives in the North amongst Russified Kazakhs says that they tend to embrace any change that seems beneficial, especially if it seems to be endorsed by the Russian culture. Anything that is clearly anti-Russian is seen by them as negative. The government as a whole is trying to determine how to control this exposure, but as Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) explained, it seems to be doing so with political motives, where censorship revolves around dissenting political views with little consideration given to moral exposure. The Bolashak (Future) scholarship program annually sends thousands of the brightest young Kazakhs to study at English language universities in the West with the goal of them returning and helping the country to develop/ change in a positive direction. These young Kazakhs are exposed to cultures of the world on the campuses and return with ideas and ambitions beyond the scope of their parents' generation.

Related to change there are two issues facing Kazakh church planting. Firstly, how can the church take advantage of change so that it enhances its relevancy and legitimacy? Secondly, change and globalization are to a large extent affecting Kazakhs positively in the areas of business, education and politics, but what are the effects on religion? If the Bolashak students are the future leaders and shapers of Kazakh culture then the church must seek ways to reach them. The majority of them are Modern Kazakhs and their felt needs must be studied and met. Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) explains that many of them have jobs and so time is an issue and they are reluctant to visit until the early hours of the morning, so the use of hospitality and the home must be tailored to their lifestyle and the demands of time.

Not all the changes resulting from globalization are compatible with a Biblical/Christian worldview. The church has to deal with and provide answers for Modern Kazakhs where it proposes areas of absolute truth in the midst of change. The theory would be that the Kazakh church needs to determine the Biblical absolutes and then within these embrace change in reaching Modern Kazakhs.

#### 4.3.2 The Modern Kazakh Church

As has already been argued, the future of the Kazakh church carries the most potential with a focus on the Modern Kazakhs. Fundamental to this must be an understanding that they are able to slide up and down the continuum so that a strong dose of traditional culture one week can be combined without contradiction with a Western/ Russian flavor the next. Even though the history of the Kazakh church post communism is brief, are the current forms of church relevant for Modern Kazakhs? Carl Sterkens (2004:298) speaks of transformative church development that challenges and inspires the forms and structures of church so that both the church of the future and the future of the church are assured. If church planting among Modern Kazakhs does not imply an uncritical embrace of all globalization has to offer, but rather applying those aspects that seem advantageous and rejecting those that would be offensive or unbiblical, what then are key areas of consideration?

##### 4.3.2.1 Relationships: Openness, Honesty, and Intimacy

Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) and Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) explained how a Kazakh's commitment to family is paramount and outside of this most other relationships are functional rather than personal. The modern Kazakh church has the

opportunity to promote a sense of family that produces levels of intimacy that are not normally experienced in society. Believers must be willing to be open and honest with each other, admitting when they are struggling and supporting each other sacrificially. This is particularly so for the church leaders as they set the tone and model a family approach.

Zhanibek goes on to explain that the consequences of this openness and honesty are that believers will be more willing to talk about shame issues and baggage from the past. How the church handles this has the potential to make or break it. Instead of harsh judgment, there must be confidence that a believer is in a safe environment for sharing their problems. It will only take one person to be openly shamed for a norm of superficiality in relationships to be established. Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) recommends that there needs to be training in Christian counseling so that believers have specific individuals to go to for personal counseling. This type of counseling is not natural to the Kazakh culture and so it cannot be assumed it will happen on its own.

The category of small groups and house churches indicates that the form of church that lends itself most to the development of family and intimacy is the house church model, or at the very least active small groups. Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) argues that the traditional model of church without the active promotion of small groups is unable to attain a depth of relationship that leads to openness, honesty, and intimacy. Again, it must not just be assumed that putting people together in a small group will naturally result in an open, honest and intimate group. Leaders and members of these groups need to be trained and interpersonal problems expected. The emerging theory is that effective church planting especially amongst Modern Kazakhs must make use of small group settings that allow people to go deep in their relationships with each other.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Emerging church is a term used to describe how the West is trying to reach a modern world. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger (2005:88) explain that the challenge these churches face is to be culturally relevant or face extinction, but at the same time Gospel focused or lose their identity. This is also a challenge for the Modern Kazakh Church.



#### 4.3.2.2 House Church

If we accept the above theory that believers gathering together in a small group are proving to be the most effective way of discipleship and church growth, then at the outset, the church planter must define the difference between a group of friends gathering, and a church gathering. For some this is merely an issue of semantics with the idea that a group gathering is on the road to becoming a church anyway. However it is looked at, the church that results needs to have a Biblical identity and the house church model can have the issue of being so unstructured that some of the members are not sure if they are in a church or not. The challenge in the Kazakh context as mentioned by Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) is that this is too often expatriate dominated, which is ironic in that most expatriate church planters come from a traditional church background. The most effective approach would seem to be for the local and expatriate church planter to study the Bible together and discover what a Kazakh house church is and how it should function. Advantages of the house church model for the Modern Kazakh include:

- Flexible meeting times.

Whereas Sunday is the rest day in Kazakh society, the house church can choose to meet on another day of the week if it is more suitable to the members. This then leaves Sunday as a day to spend time with and be a witness to unbelieving friends and family. Even if the meeting is on a Sunday it can meet at any time during the day. A building based church is often limited to a Sunday meeting as this is when the facility is available. A building based church can take advantage of a house church's flexibility if it actively promotes small groups meeting in homes. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) belongs to a large building based

church in the city of Almaty that has embraced home groups and has small group meetings each day of the week.

- Interest Group Focus

House church or small groups allow the church to strategically focus on certain segments of Kazakh society. A growing interest group is young professionals who have stable employment and face the challenges of limited time and work stress. They also deal with the desire to start a family and have a home that they own. They are exposed to the effects of globalization on a daily basis and at the same time try to keep relationship with their more traditional elders. Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) explains that being part of a like-minded group is very attractive to them.

Another interest group relevant to the modern church is university students. They are usually the most open to new ideas and change and so a small group that applies Christianity to their life situation will draw a lot of interest. They also represent potential to take the house church model with them when they graduate, the significance being that some of them will end up in cities and provinces that as yet have very little exposure to the Gospel.

- Low Maintenance

House churches require very little maintenance on a number of levels. Financially they are easy to sustain with almost all of the tithes and offerings being available for ministry. They are also free of the seemingly endless legal hurdles that a traditional, registered church faces.<sup>41</sup> Because they are based in the home, the location can be rotated so that no one family has the burden of hosting the church every week.

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<sup>41</sup> Roger Greenway (1989:140) does point out that there are some advantages to having a dedicated church building. Such advantages include a fixed place of identity, available seven days a week, privacy, and an oasis for the persecuted.

- Reproducible

A house church is able to start another one with relative ease due to the low maintenance. This does not imply that it can be done superficially as there have been many failures where other key factors have not been considered. The mother house church needs to develop a healthy blueprint that will then be birthed in a new church start. Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) describes how in the Kazakh context one of the critical elements has been the mentoring of healthy leaders who will take on the responsibility of the new church start.

- Hospitality

Satyavrata (2004: 214) in his study of Indian culture argues that where there is a culture of hospitality the house church model is very effective. As has been described, hospitality is an essential part of the Kazakh culture, and so using the home as a basis for church is appropriate. It also implies that as believers gather there will be some form of sharing a fellowship meal together.

- Effective Discipleship

If we consider that discipleship involves both the teaching of Biblical truth as well as an example of the living out of this truth then house church provides a useful vehicle for both. The House Church setting allows for an in-depth Bible study as well as lives lived together.

- An Understanding of True Church

The participants in a house church are able to quickly understand that the church is the people themselves and not the place they meet in. In other words that they are the church and do not merely go to church. Consequently, the leaders are able to encourage the active participation

of each member according to their gifting. Church is not then something that is done once a week, but the community of God lived out together every day and which may gather together multiple times one week and only for a onetime gathering the next.

The theory that emerges is that the house church model is very applicable to the Kazakh context. Whilst other models may also be used, effective church planting that reaches all Kazakhs in their particular contexts must involve house churches. At the very least a church must make use of small groups where believers can live out their faith together.

#### 4.3.3 New Technology

One of the driving forces behind globalization is the continual development of new technology and in particular how this serves to connect the cultures of the world. The Kazakh culture is facing this head on especially in the area of information technology. The church must make use of websites and social connections such as Facebook in reaching Modern Kazakhs. A number of the younger generation Kazakhs are signing up on Facebook every day. The Kazakh Bible is available on cell phone technology so that passages can be texted from person to person. This can be expanded to include devotionals and Christian music. Cell phone use is widespread and it is difficult to find a Kazakh who does not have one. Additionally, there is a growing interest in smart phones that can access the Internet from remote locations. The Kazakh church needs to explore ways to link evangelism and discipleship to smart phone use.

Websites offer great potential in providing believers with spiritual material. Bible study materials, books, seminars, and children's literature can be digitally uploaded onto a website and then downloaded by means of a password. Believers and churches in more

remote locations can also upload questions and issues they are dealing with for broader discussion and response.

If the end vision is a healthy Kazakh church then new technology must be seen as a significant means of getting there, but not the end in itself. A healthy Kazakh church must be one where believers live lives together rather than merely connecting in a virtual world.

Pocock sounds a word of caution when he says:

For all the efficiency of rapid communication and the enhancement of border-obliterating technology, personal relationships and simple acts of kindness may, in the end, constitute the best strategies – and they may have the most appeal in a postmodern era. (2005:41)

In the case of young people, there needs to be more than new technology providing a way to get together just for fun. There is a lot to be said for creating a context that involves fun, however this must not be the end purpose, but rather a means of getting these young people to healthy church. They must mature to the point of understanding that the greater importance is what they can contribute to the growth of the church rather than what the church can do for them.

#### 4.3.4 Urbanization

Globalization thrives in the context of the city and in the Kazakh context it has caused a large migration to the major cities. Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) explains how despite the government's attempts to promote village life, most Kazakhs see the possibility of a prosperous future as being confined to the opportunities found in the cities. This is not to say that all Kazakhs living in the cities see things the same and Payne cautions against the “one size strategy that fits all” (2009:354). He contends that a variety of strategies are needed depending on the sub group of people being considered. With Kazakhs this breaks down into

amongst others, language and economic distinctions. These groups need to be studied and their needs, both felt and unknown, discovered so that evangelism and discipleship can be tailored to them.<sup>42</sup> Cities are where Modern Kazakhs choose to live and many find themselves in the process of securing stable employment whilst at the same time establishing their families and future ambitions. The city culture has increased their pace of life and placed restraints on their time so that they are not as free to sit around and drink tea, discussing the issues of life. The church planter needs to consider lunch time meetings near where they work as well as weekends. Ray Bakke and Jon Sharpe (2006:112) encourage believers to work towards a common grace within the city so that people are able to say that because of the presence of Christianity city life is healthy and good. A practical example would be where Kazakh believers regularly clean up the trash that so often lies around.

Harvie Conn (1987:101) explains that when talking of religion there are two perceptions of the city context that seem to contradict. Firstly that secularism has replaced an emphasis on religion and secondly that religion is alive and well. As Conn points out the reality is somewhere inbetween and this seems true for the cities of Kazakhstan. The church planter has to recognize the secular effect on Kazakhs but also balance this with the city Kazakh's spiritual needs which are expressed in ways different to that in a rural context.

With increased structure in the life of a Modern Kazakh, the church planter needs to be cautious of creating more structure, but rather seek out a relaxed, friendship relationship that contrasts with the demands of the Modern's working life. In an urban context, Christianity has the advantage of being portrayed as an active relationship with God rather than a structured set of demands. As a contrast, Islam in the urban Kazakh setting has the challenge of being seen as imposing further demands on an already demanding life. This is what makes it so easy for Modern Kazakhs to compromise and support the common

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<sup>42</sup> Minho Song (2006:256) provides useful insight in recommending four phases of discipleship where the church planter begins with the supra-contextual message of the Bible and then moves to the needs and issues of the context. Thereafter specific discipleship material is created and finally the best method decided on.

argument explained in chapter one that taking religion seriously is for older people during retirement. Certainly as has been argued, there are small segments of young Kazakhs who have prioritized a participation in the structured, Mosque-based Islam, but rather than group these within the Modern Kazakh identity, they may more accurately be called young traditionals.

Modern city-dwelling Kazakhs do respond to special events as they can plan and dedicate time to these. As highlighted before these events revolve around rites of passage and celebration days. The church planter needs to take advantage of these events so that in the case of evangelism, redemptive analogies are sought out. In the case of discipleship, these events represent times to go deep with the Modern believer, building trust and helping them to navigate how to both celebrate and at the same time honor God. Such events are relaxed times of enjoying life and as such people are less time conscious and open to talking deeply about the issues of life.

Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) previously proposed that Modern Kazakhs (especially university students) in the cities represent an opportunity to take the Gospel to their village relatives. Even the village Kazakhs that are migrating to the cities represent an opportunity because they desire change and are therefore open to new ideas. Church planting must prioritize a city focus or risk becoming an activity on the peripheral.

#### 4.3.5 Materialism

Globalization carries a message that things are better when they are bigger, faster, and newer. It exposes Kazakhs to the bigger, faster and newer products and ideas from other countries and cultures in a way that they are not content with what they have, but want to own and partake in these other products and ideas. Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) describes

a motivation to keep up with the latest so that Modern and Russified Kazakhs in particular see their status and satisfaction in owning and displaying whatever the *latest* thing is, from cell phones to clothes to motorcars. As seen in chapter one, most of life is lived at this materialistic level with the spiritual only coming out on special religious days and celebrations, with a visit to traditional relatives in the village, or in a crisis where material possessions do not offer a solution.

The Kazakh church planter has to live in this world and walk a careful line between living a comfortable life and at the same time demonstrating a spiritual priority over the material. To say that the national church planter must be poor and live at a level below that of the Modern Kazakh means that they become irrelevant to these Kazakhs. Despite the current economic crisis, many city dwelling Kazakhs are living comfortable lives no longer concerned about where their food and shelter will come from. The church planter certainly does not need to live at the level of the wealthy but it is now very relevant for them to live a stable, comfortable life.<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that they run around seeking *foreign* sponsors, but by means of a good work ethic gain significant employment if their church is unable to support them.

If we consider the advantages of the House Church model then there is much to commend the church planter as having a secular means of income, either in steady employment or by being involved in their own business. This gives them the advantage of credibility in the workplace where other Kazakhs see them as a normal part of society and not some weird cult who gets its funding from secret sources. In addition, this also allows the church planter to live out their faith as part of normal daily life helping both believers and unbelievers to see that the Christian faith is a living relationship with Christ and not just

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<sup>43</sup> M Daniel Carroll (2006:211) cautions against the church seeing itself as only concerned with the spiritual realm of people's lives. He argues that in a globally connected world economics matter and the church must involve itself in this part of people's lives. As the church we must move the people who benefit from globalization towards those who are suffering.



weekly meetings. The main disadvantage of being involved in secular work is that it uses up a lot of time and energy, and furthermore can become a real distraction/ temptation if the particular work or business does well and leads to a desire for material wealth.

A trend that caused concern was related to the growing wealth from around 2004 to 2008. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) explained how a significant number of believers began to do well financially and the priority seemed to shift from a passion for evangelism and church planting to a passion for gaining wealth. The worldwide economic crisis then revealed how fragile and insufficient wealth and materialism are in giving true meaning to life. Despite the current financial difficulties, the Kazakhs have a bright economic future and the church needs to position itself very carefully in terms of teaching and practice when it comes to money and materialism. If believers are taught to give and they actually do so, then the low self-supporting score given by the pastors, thirty four percent, will largely take care of itself.

#### 4.4 Leadership

Leadership in the Kazakh church is an issue that pertains to both contextualization and globalization. The effective planting of churches depends on the development of leaders for these churches. Tom Steffen (1997:173) suggests that true leadership in missions must empower locals so that the expatriate is able to hand over privilege and responsibility to the local church. The prevailing model for Kazakhs, both in the past and the present is that of a dominant leader who largely makes all the decisions and is served by the followers. Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) and Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) explain that Kazakhs have followed this kind of leadership in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet times. This fits in well with the traditional Kazakh worldview where the elders, or Mullahs,

have authority over others and their words are not to be challenged or debated. As a consequence, when the first expatriate church planters arrived in the post-Soviet period, it was easy for Kazakhs to fall into a pattern of doing whatever the expatriate said. This left the expatriate with a choice of either intentionally mentoring the local church planter from the start with the goal of handing over leadership as soon as possible, or of deciding that it would be a long time before local church planters would be ready and so the expatriate needs to take the leadership. In both cases, mistakes were made. On the one hand the mentoring was not well defined and tended to emphasize skill over character so that local church planters were given responsibilities they could not handle. Zhanibek goes on to explain that the expatriate church planters who positioned themselves as the leaders have become so entrenched in their position that they are finding it very difficult to hand over to local leadership.

The leadership mix in Kazakhstan (largely mirrored in the first Kazakh churches) involves a tension between the traditional dictator and globalization-influenced facilitator styles of leadership. Discussing leadership issues with Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February) and Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) they indicate that within the Kazakh church there are some pastors who are beginning to understand and attempt a servant style of leadership based on the example of Christ found in the Bible. This is very challenging as it goes against the general trend and many followers can get confused with how to respect and follow someone who is a servant.

Interestingly, Saken (2009, pers. interview, 1 October) who pastors in a large church under an expatriate leader shows how Kazakh churches with over one hundred members are led by non-Kazakhs. This helps to explain why the pastors gave the church a low score when it comes to self-governing, namely forty percent. The only possible exception would be a Kazakh group within a large Korean or Russian church, but even here the Kazakh leader reports to a non-Kazakh. Without ignoring the fact that some traditional style Kazakh

churches are being successfully led by one main leader and that in the future there may be Kazakhs who lead large churches, Kazakh leadership seems to be very successful within a house church and shared leadership context. In particular this seems relevant where we are dealing with first generation leaders who did not grow up observing what Biblical leadership looks like. House church leaders are able to study the Bible together and then apply the principles of leadership, with the expatriate playing a mentoring role.

The house church model also makes it easier to deal with two leadership issues. Firstly, the challenge of when and how to hand over leadership from the expatriate to the local church planter is largely negated. Secondly, effective church leadership mirrors effective leadership in the home. The house church leaders begin with the leadership of their own families which lays the foundation and builds confidence for church leadership.

Contextualization: Dictator style

↓

Biblical: Servant style → **CLASH** ← Globalization: Facilitator style

### Leadership Mix

Examining the leadership mix above, inserting a Biblical view of leadership along with globalization into the traditional Kazakh view causes a three way clash. Many books have been written and analyses done on Biblical leadership and a dominant theme is that of servant leadership. At its core is that the leader in the church looks to uplift and support others even at personal expense. In globalization Friedman (2006:234) describes a leadership system that moves from the vertical to the horizontal so that leadership is seen as participatory with the

main role being that of facilitating. The big difference with the Biblical view is that in globalization there is the goal of personal advancement. Globalization does not support self-denial for the sake of others.

Arman (2009, pers. interview, 5 May) argues that Kazakhs are not yet ready for a shared/ facilitating style of leadership and so other than amongst some younger Modern Kazakhs, the style of leadership proposed by globalization is having little effect. In both the workplace and the home the vertical dominant leadership style is in place. The challenge for the church planter is to teach and live out a servant leadership style that becomes part of the church's blueprint even though it is counter-cultural.

Closely connected to the leadership challenge is the development of Kazakh teachers and theologians. This was to lowest score given by the pastors in the five self category when they evaluated how well Kazakhs are doing in providing theological training and advice. There is some progress such as the theological discussion group mentioned before, but this is still expatriate initiated. For the long-term health of the Kazakh church, methods and opportunities must be found for the development of Kazakh teachers and theologians. With the closure of many Bible schools this is going to require new approaches.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The emerging theory begins with a regard for cultural identity. The church planter needs to think through carefully who the target audience is along a continuum from Traditional through Modern to Russified. With the underlying evangelical assumption in this study, the church planter can *borrow* both good ideas and practice from various models, however the Translation model is most suitable when church planting in context. What it means to be Kazakh is then wrapped around the universal Gospel core. Being Kazakh involves an Islamic

identity, not in a traditional sense but rather that which takes into account the various beliefs and practices of Kazakh traditions. The church planter gives consideration to aspects of the Kazakh culture that carry high value such as music and celebrations, rites of passage, hospitality, and stories.

If globalization is bending and changing Kazakh culture then church planting must throw itself into this and continually ask what a relevant church looks like. It must take advantage of the opportunities to use new church models such as the house church, as well as new technology. At the same time it should not be completely uncritical towards all the changes, but give answers to the challenges that globalization brings such as materialism.

Consistent, indigenous leadership is a fundamental hypothesis in Kazakh church planting. Given exposure to many bad and some good models of leadership, Kazakh pastors need to be affirmed and trained as the ones to take the Kazakh church into the future. Specifically, mentoring in terms of appropriate leadership styles, and theological training opportunities are needed.

## **Chapter 5: Missiological Reflections**

Effective Kazakh church planting is the guiding theme for applying the theory that has arisen by means of the principles of Grounded Theory.<sup>44</sup> In the post Soviet years there has been significant church planting amongst Kazakhs and it is relevant to ask what has worked and what needs to change. The Kazakh culture as a whole is in a state of tension with the two forces of traditionalism and globalization, and the complexities within them, pulling the Kazakh identity and way of life in various directions. Church planting must take account of these tensions so that an appropriately contextual church can continue to emerge. At the same time church planting must be informed by a Biblical perspective and so consideration must be given to ecclesiological as well as broader theological issues. Church planting exists in both the macro context to do with Christianity's presence within Kazakh culture, as well as the micro context of the starting of individual churches. The emerging theory has to do with factors that apply to both of these contexts.

Success is a word that may seem inappropriate for religious advancement for it is God who brings about the harvest, and yet for the Kazakh church planter, it can help to simplify the challenge by asking: How do I successfully plant a church so that a Kazakh in their context would call it their own? The answer to this question is informed by the emerging theory beginning with a look at how the Kazakh believers see themselves as church.

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<sup>44</sup> By effective it is easy to evaluate this from an outsider perspective so that like Rene Erwich (2004:182) who proposes characteristics of healthy churches we then decide on effectiveness. Whilst there are certainly universal Biblical principles, the uniqueness of Central Asia however suggests that it may be better to come up with internal Biblically based characteristics that are more relevant such as a willingness to stand up to persecution.

## 5.1 Identity

The way in which Daulet (2009, pers. interview, 1 August) describes how the general Kazakh population sees the Kazakh church as a sect shows that there is a misunderstanding between Christendom and Christianity. Christendom can be considered as that which a person is born into, a type of heritage that helps determine their identity and belonging in a people group. It is not chosen but rather a result of being born and growing up in a specific context. Christianity calls for a personal decision towards becoming a part of a new community without taking into account a particular cultural heritage as a requirement. Resistance to the Gospel for Kazakhs is usually a reaction to the idea that Christendom is being forced on them. They have to move from their historical cultural identity and cross over into a foreign one. There is the idea that they need to reject the context they were born into and take on an entirely new one as if they had been born into it. Christianity must be seen as different so that it calls for a personal decision within a Kazakh's language and culture. That being a Christian and being a Kazakh are not mutually exclusive. An example of this would be the term used for Jesus where the Russian *Isus Christos* would be seen as a term from Christendom, whereas *Isa Masix* is a term that can be introduced as both Kazakh and Christian.

Kazakh Christianity cannot be identified with Christendom if the church is to be effective for in a globalized world Christendom is tied to the West. How the West is perceived would then be how the church is perceived and in the current socio-political climate the West is seen as anti-Islam which then means anti-Kazakh. Ironically, Kazakhs live in a society that finds itself under the Islamic equivalent of Christendom so that as mentioned before, to be a Kazakh is to be a Muslim.

One of the most important issues in dealing with the concept of church is that of perspective. Church planters are deeply influenced by their own perspective which is

constantly shaped by the changing context around them. The challenge is discerning God's blueprint from the Bible and then grounding this within the Kazakh context. Ideally, the church planter starts with a handful of new believers who have not been exposed to any specific models of church. They are then able to take the Bible and their own view of church and begin a new work. In the Kazakh context however this situation does not exist, other than in some isolated villages. Most Kazakhs know of the existence of 'Christian churches' even if they don't understand what their form and function are. The church planter therefore has to begin a church where previous models already exist, even if these models are outside of the Kazakh culture. This immediately raises the issue that in reality any church is outside of the Kazakh culture, for the prevailing viewpoint is that to be Kazakh is to be Muslim and not Christian. As Johannes Van Der Ven puts it, how do we start a church for Kazakhs where they would call it "something that is ours"? (1993:196).

Charles Weller (2006:63) proposes that we must take note of a people's *self-awareness* of their ethnic identity and nationhood. The strength of this will inform church planting and in the Kazakh context applies to whether we are dealing with Russified, Modern, or Traditional Kazakhs. As the emergent theory has shown though, a serious issue arises when this self-awareness causes Kazakhs to dominate the minority people groups so that a type of internal colonialism creeps into the church setting up a superior ruling majority. This also begs the question of whether a Kazakh only church is appropriate or should it be a house for all nations? Bosch argues for some of both in describing church as:

a place to feel at home, but if only *we* feel at home in our particular church, and all others are either excluded or made unwelcome or feel themselves completely alienated, something has gone wrong. (1991:456)

The Kazakh church in terms of its identity must continually balance the need to be *Kazakh* and at the same time be a place where other ethnic peoples can be made to feel welcome and



valued. If God has birthed the Kazakhs as a separate ethnic nation, then it is appropriate for them to fully express and celebrate this with the hope that they will come to know the God who has given them this blessing. But, the same can be said for all the other ethnic nations regardless of historical and geopolitical claims and boundaries so that these people groups are equally legitimate in wanting a church of their own. At the very least the Kazakh church needs to recognize the cultural value of those in the congregation who are not ethnically Kazakh.

If globalization will have an increasing influence on the future of Kazakhstan then should its *blending* effect be incorporated into the church? If ethno-linguistic cultures are constantly changing at an exponentially rapid pace, where does that leave an ethno-historical viewpoint when it comes to church planting, especially regarding the younger generation? In one of Kazakhstan's major urban settings (Almaty) there is a church that uses Russian as its main language and whose members, including the leadership, come from a variety of ethnicities.<sup>45</sup> Expatriate attendees are few and in the background, and most people are students and younger families. They are very much a church for the Moderns, have significant number of Kazakhs, and seem very appropriate to their context. To try to force a Kazakh-only identity on them would be disastrous.

Van Der Ven (1993:40) proposes a core identity that is very applicable to the Kazakh church. He sees the church as a community of believers. God is the origin and aim of this community and as such the believers exist as children of God, brothers and sisters who allow each other to freely worship God whilst at the same time making a deep commitment to each other. It is from this position that the church can then turn towards a world in need. Community is essential to Kazakhs as a whole and for the church to have this at the core of its identity resonates across the continuum from Traditional to Russified. Kazakh community

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<sup>45</sup> This is a first generation church that was started by the author's team members in 1999. In 2003/4 leadership was fully handed over to national leaders.

begins with the home and a person's extended family and then builds from there to include friends and acquaintances. Martin Goldsmith (1976:317) points out that the expatriate church planter usually comes from a society that has had the presence of globalization and individualism which causes them to underestimate how deeply a person from a Muslim culture feels part of their community. Becoming a believer has strong social implications, from immediate family through to distant relatives and friends.

This is why for some Kazakhs their experience of salvation lines up with the soteriology expressed in Romans 10:9 where there is a public confessing of Jesus with the mouth and an inward believing with the heart. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) in explaining how strongly his family and community rejected his conversion to Christianity indicates how the belief in the heart often precedes the verbal confession due to the stress of how to explain it to the family. A traditional Christian understanding of verse nine is that these two aspects are inseparable and happen together. For some of the Kazakh believers there was a belief in Jesus prior to the saying of a salvation prayer, suggesting that their salvation was a process rather than a moment in time, with ultimately only God knowing the exact point of salvation. There is a cost to be counted in becoming a believer so that significant consideration goes into the decision. This also gives insight into why believers are willing to face so much opposition from family, friends and society as a whole

The House Church model is proving very effective in providing community for believers, especially where they have been rejected by family and friends because of their faith. A once a week meeting is not enough for them and they desire the intimacy that meeting in a home brings. Glenn Wagner (2002:150) picks up on this idea in describing the church as a place of safe pasture. It exists as a place where believers can find a home and prepare for a life amongst unbelievers, not as a scared and timid minority, but having been spiritually encouraged and enabled to bear a witness for God. The focus is not on doing and

results, but rather on being and living out a love relationship with God. His love lived out in a community has been and will be one of the strongest arguments for the Christian faith amongst the Kazakhs. Academic and theological arguments may have some degree of success in sharing with Kazakhs, but an identity that reveals a genuine outpouring of God's love helps in breaking down opposition. As mentioned, on becoming a believer, Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March) was rejected by his family to the point of being disowned by his father. He responded by continually loving his family and after a number of years three of his siblings and his father have become believers. They could not deny the change in Akzhol's life and the character of Jesus Christ that he showed towards them.

Community is not exclusively for the House Church model, but is necessary for all the models of church. Those who seek to start a more traditional model of church can do so with small groups being part of their blueprint so that even if it seems that the Sunday meeting and full-time leadership are what the church is about, the members see church as much more, they live out being community with each other. The biggest challenge is for the traditional churches who have not emphasized community as part of their existence and now need to introduce a new paradigm to their members.

Globalization appears to work against the idea of community as it can cause the Kazakh church to form an identity that focuses on results and short term success. The focus is then on what the believers can do rather than who they are. As John Tomlinson (1999:7) explains, globalization creates proximity, but this can be merely a functional proximity for the sake of economics without a cultural element. Cultural proximity occurs where globalization is not merely embraced uncritically but rather evaluated in the light of the local context so that glocalization begins to occur. For Kazakhs this context will depend on whether we are dealing with Traditional, Modern, or Russified Kazakhs. Glocalization comes about then where cultural proximity leads to higher levels of synchronization and

syncretization so that what seemed at first to be foreign now seems to fit in. If the idea of glocalization is to inform church planting then community must replace proximity and syncretism must not go unchecked so that the resulting churches remain Biblical.

Globalization also tends towards individualism which in and of itself undermines the belief that God has created humans with a need and desire to be in close relationship with others. Especially in an urban setting a Modern Kazakh tends to segment their relationships according to the roles that they live out each day. This takes a lot of effort and so it is difficult to go deep in any particular relationship outside of a spouse. They believe then that in order to survive there needs to be some distance rather than intimacy which ends up leaving the person without a real sense of belonging. This is dangerous for the church as it leads to a lack of spiritual depth and as Samuel Escobar (2003:60) points out it sees individuals as units of success rather than a valued person. Van Der Ven (1993:236) describes this as an abstract solidarity that is based on functionality. Relationships are much looser than in a traditional community and their value is found in achievement. Emotions and feelings are kept in check.

In a close community there is a sense of belonging so that people share feelings and emotions, and are more willing to forgive each other and work through differences, committing to raising up the weak. Globalization can cause a trampling on the weak and a raising up of the strong. If Kazakh society's identity as a whole takes on this aspect of globalization then the church may need to have a counter-cultural aspect to its identity. As much as the church may want to reflect its culture, there are times when it has to stick out and Paul Pierson (2004:3) argues that the church has been at its most dynamic when it has been on the periphery rather than in the mainstream of society. If the church is to be light in a dark world then it must stick out. Being on the periphery can result in being seen as a Sect, but on the positive side it allows for flexibility and creativity and avoids the burdens and pitfalls of religious tradition.

The Kazakh church must continually find a balance between fitting in with the mainstream culture and yet taking a stand against those systems, beliefs, and activities that contradict its Biblical identity as a community of believers. Informed by the Praxis model of contextual theology, this must include standing up for human rights. This has particular application in the Kazakh context to the marginalized, the status of women, and freedom of religion. Whilst officially a secular government, Kazakhstan's leaders continually favor what they define as valid expressions of Islam and Christianity, and denounce anything outside of this. This narrow definition leaves people of other forms of Christianity and Islam feeling rejected and opposed, not to mention other religions. The Kazakh church must support freedom of religion for all, even Islam. It must support the individual's right to choose what they believe, even if this choice is not to believe in Jesus Christ. Additionally, the church must be counter-cultural in showing that women and men are of equal value. Officially Kazakh society would say that men and women are equal, but in life the male point of view dominates. The church must continue to show that in the eyes of God as well as lived out in community, men and women stand as one.

The Kazakh church must stand up for the marginalized. Mainstream Kazakh society tends to pretend that they do not exist.<sup>46</sup> They lack dignity and self worth, and have no real sense of belonging. An example would be the large number of orphans, many of which are on their own at age seventeen and end up in very difficult situations such as prostitution for girls and gang membership for boys. The Kazakh church needs to embrace what some are doing by going to orphanages and other places where the marginalized live, showing the love of Christ in such a way that these marginalized find self worth in a God who created and loves them.

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<sup>46</sup> The author is a director of an organization that works with orphans, the village poor, and in the prison system.

Related to this Manning Nash (1989:10) would add a shared value system in maintaining a strong identity. For the Kazakh church this would be the truths found in the Bible so that for example the church places a high value on faith, hope and love. Van Der Ven refers to these as the higher charismata without which “the church would simply cease to exist” (1993:313). Specifically for the Kazakhs this would also include a high value being placed on hospitality. Of secondary importance would be markers such as how people dress, what music style is used, and even which language is used. What the church looks like outwardly shapes its identity, but even more significantly is its character. The so-called higher charismata.

## 5.2 Character

As Post-Soviet Kazakh society navigates its future people are striving for a life that sees things as progressing and becoming more positive. As a result they have needs that the church can position itself to meet. The meeting of three specific felt needs will be significant and they are a need for hope, heroes and pioneers, and a work ethic.

### 5.2.1 Hope

Kazakhs want to know that life is getting better and their children’s future is secure. Even though there may be cycles of feast and famine, the road ahead generally needs to be one of hope. The church needs to lead the way in this on two levels. Firstly, the believers themselves must have hope that the Kazakh church is here to stay and that despite bumps in the road it has a blessed future. The authorities may pass restrictive laws and persecution may cause some believers and churches to seem to disappear, but overall the church holds solidly to the

promise that God has a desire and purpose to build a church amongst the Kazakhs. Secondly, the church must live out this hope in society so that believers infect others with an attitude of joy and optimism, especially in a time of famine. The church must clearly display a character of hope.

### 5.2.2 Heroes and Pioneers

Kazakhs look to strong leaders who will blaze a trail for them to follow. Historically, they had amongst others the poet/ philosopher Abai and the other leaders of the Alash movement until communism tried to replace them with leaders outside of their culture. But whilst the statues and street names of Abai and the Alash leaders remain, the communist ones have been removed, showing that they never were true heroes and pioneers for the Kazakhs. This is the challenge facing the current president, Nazarbaev, and opinions are divided as to his legacy. The Kazakh church is at a pivotal time where it needs heroes and pioneers that are indigenous and not expatriate. The crucial difference is that these need to have character that is based on the model of Christ and the teachings in the Bible. Unlike the secular titles of mayor and president which carry a leadership that sets these leaders above the people, the heroes and pioneers in the church must lead from below as servants. They need to show a depth of character that points to the ultimate hero and pioneer of the Kazakh church, Jesus Christ.

The importance of stories and testimonies in evangelism means that the church must find ways to tell the stories of believers as well as those of the Bible. The church needs to be given its own heroes and pioneers. In a modern world this must make use of various means such as video, audio, and web-based technology.

### 5.2.3 Work Ethic

Part of a successful future for Kazakhs involves the shedding of an image which sees them as having a character which tends towards laziness.<sup>47</sup> To compete in a modern, globalizing world they have to put in the effort required and develop a mindset that values a strong work ethic. Rene Padilla (2004:52) suggests that a globalized world offers believers the opportunity to live out their faith in the workplace and so demonstrate a religion that applies to all of life. This has been an issue in the church where some of the leaders have all but disappeared due to a lack of effort and endurance. The most glaring example of this is where many leaders were trained and funded in business to be bi-vocational so that they could support themselves as they grew the church. A large percentage of these businesses failed, and whilst there were significant other factors involved, there is no way to overlook the fact that many of the leaders were not willing to put in the time and effort required. A common response from many was that they needed sponsors, not businesses. The Kazakh church leaders must show an example of a strong work ethic and this becomes especially important with the House Church model where the leaders are not sponsored but have secular employment.

Character carries the idea of quality and depth. Philip Jenkins argues that this is what determines the church's survival in a culture and would describe it as “how deep a church planted its roots in a particular community, and how far the religion became part of the air that ordinary people breathed” (2008:35). This kind of measurement in the Kazakh context must be tempered by the reality that Kazakhs oppose any religion that seeks to move them from the form of Folk Islam to which they subscribe. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to ask whether the Kazakh church is having a positive impact on society. Does it bring love and

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<sup>47</sup> Rywkin (1985) explains how during Soviet times there was large scale underemployment which placed many people in low-effort, low-paying jobs. The result was boredom and a lack of motivation which cultivated a poor work ethic.



hope? Does it cause Kazakhs to selflessly care for others and live lives of greater integrity? In a globalized world the Kazakh church has a great opportunity to come alongside Traditional, Modern, and Russian Kazakhs and help them navigate the tide of change that globalization brings. Kazakh society also seems to be moving through three phases of existence and the church needs to find ways to live out the character of Christ within each. Diagrammatically these phases flow as follows:

Survival → Satisfaction → Significance

There are Kazakhs across the continuum for whom their existence is all about *survival*. They are not sure what the future holds in terms of basics such as food, clothing, and shelter. They are usually the victims of poor choices and/or unfortunate circumstances so that they are disadvantaged in terms of finding a stable living situation. At the time of the collapse of the Soviet system there were many in this situation, whereas today this group is made up largely of the elderly, orphans, substance abusers, prostitutes, and the village poor. The Kazakh church must show the character of Christ in ministering to these. Akzhol (2009, pers. interview, 24 March), his family and their House Church are a good example of this. He built a new home at the back of his property and then wondered what to do with the old home at the front. A believer friend approached him about allowing her to use it to minister to the homeless. He agreed and they took in eight people off the street, five of whom have since rehabilitated themselves and found employment. Even more significantly, these five encountered and found faith, hope and love in Jesus Christ as his character was lived out in front of them. The Kazakh church must be a place where people see needs being met so that to be part of the community of believers is to ensure that no-one is left on their own.

More and more Kazakhs find themselves focused on a life of *satisfaction*. The basics of food, clothing and shelter are in place so that now they can acquire the things that bring them greater satisfaction. The best example of this is the increasing number of expensive vehicles that are appearing on the roads. Previously any vehicle would have been acceptable, but now most are only satisfied with a late model Toyota or better. They have computers and increasingly use the Internet to discover more opportunities to satisfy their needs and wants. This fits in well with the promise of an increased standard of life that globalization brings. Kazakhs at this stage seem to want what they see as the 'best of the West'. Is it possible for the Western expatriate church planter to position themselves as part of the best of the West and so be seen positively? Would this actually be detrimental to church planting by reinforcing the assumption that Christianity is an outside imposition on Kazakh culture? It seems that more appropriate would be for the expatriate church planter to live out a life that demonstrates a true relationship with God in the presence of unbelievers, and then work as a mentor to Kazakh church leaders as they begin and lead churches. The danger for the church in trying to reach those Kazakhs at the satisfaction phase is the temptation to fall into an emphasis on a health and wealth gospel. The focus of the church becomes what the believer can get rather than what they can give. The Kazakh church needs to respond with the character that Jesus described when he taught his disciples "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6: 33, New International Version). Satisfaction must be seen as being in relationship with Jesus Christ and the community of believers no matter what a person's bank balance is.

Much of the satisfaction sought is surface in nature, focused on material possessions. This leaves the opportunity for the church to meet the need for intimacy and friendship, and to understand the meaning of life beyond what money can buy. The church does not need to show an identity that is poor and unable to meet the basic needs of its members, but at the

same time it must show that despite material blessings, its priority is a focus on God. The satisfaction phase for Kazakh society is characterized by accumulating and in response the church must be characterized by a willingness to give away.

A small but growing segment is those Kazakhs who primarily are concerned with living a life of *significance*. They desire to leave a legacy of some kind so that others will hold them up as a person of note. In almost all cases they are wealthy and isolated from interaction with believers. The majority population look towards them with both offense and jealousy. Offended because in many cases these wealthy Kazakhs have become so at the expense of others, and jealous because given the opportunity to be like them they would jump at it. The challenge for the church is for believers to show that a life of significance is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ firstly, and then living that out with others who have also had this experience. That this significance is not tied to material possessions, social standing, or official title, but can be found by anyone no matter where they are on the socio-economic scale of society.

*Hunger evangelism* describes part of the Kazakh church's character as expressed by Zhenis (2009, pers. interview, 8 July) and Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June). Simply put it means that unbelievers hunger after what believers have. There is a dynamic and attraction about being part of a believing community that makes Kazakhs willing to count the cost of becoming a believer. Donald Carson (2005:50) describes this as the character trait of authenticity and references 1 Peter 2: 12 "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us"(New International Version). He goes on to explain that being authentic is to be deliberately provocative, causing people to long for God, and is a strength of the emerging church movement of the West.

### 5.3 Participation

Anwar (2009, pers. interview, 3 February) and Marat (2008, pers. interview, 2 December) explain that a common fault of many of the models of church introduced into Kazakh culture is the position that says that the church members support the pastor who does the ministry. Even if this has not been intentional, functionally it is what has been brought about. The culture of passivity brought about by the Soviet system has also meant that many people have been used to simply listening to and doing what the leader says. Whether they were self motivated to be involved or not was unimportant. The Kazakh church needs to follow a Biblical model that sees the pastor/ elder as supporting the church members who do the ministry. Van Der Ven argues that “It is the duty of the leaders of the church to stimulate and encourage the ordinary, higher, and lower charismata in particular, which are rooted in the religious inspiration and motivation of its members” (1993:313). An effective Kazakh church must involve the participation of all its members.<sup>48</sup> This is one of the great advantages of a model such as the House Church. As with the Soviet model, in Islam and many of the traditional church models, members are often characterized as passive listeners with the idea that you 'do what you are told'. In models such as the House Church there are opportunities for a high level of participation so that members can dialogue as to how to understand and live out their faith. A Traditional model of church if it is to reach Kazakhs must seek ways to include small or cell groups so that its members can participate. In the globalizing, changing world that all Kazakhs face the believers need to interact and work with each other to discover what living as a follower of Christ looks like.

Church members participating together as a body has Biblical support in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 and Romans chapter 12. At the core of this teaching is the idea

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<sup>48</sup> Mandaville (2002:68) sounds an important caution where the church can be tempted to foster and allow participation to be virtual by means of electronic media. Active participation must involve physical presence as the first priority and then virtual presence can be considered.

that everyone has a role to play. The church contradicts this when it holds up a handful of supposed *spiritual* believers who are supposed to do all the evangelism and discipleship. No one believer has all the spiritual gifts needed to reach and disciple others, but rather the church needs each member to contribute in the way God has gifted them as they grow the church. This is not to say the roles and influence in each instance are identical, but that each person has both the responsibility and privilege of being a part of the ministry of the church.

The heartbeat of the Kazakh church must be discipleship if participation is to take place. New believers need a period of maturing during which their participation is marked by a high level of input and a lower level of output which will invert itself over time. Instead of discipleship being taken for granted, the leaders must look at their context and decide specific steps that new believers need to take in order to grow in their faith. In all three of the Traditional, Modern, and Russified contexts there needs to be input in terms of:

- Basic studying of the Bible.
- Understanding worship and prayer and how this differs from that in Kazakh Folk Islam, especially regarding the ancestor spirits.
- Understanding what it is to be part of a believing community.
- How to appropriately tell family and others about their faith.
- How to handle opposition.
- Building a home and family that honors God.

If these basics are being developed as part of the ethos of the church then believers are able to transition from being a part of the community for what they can get, to being a part that gives.

Globalization supports the idea that an individual's contribution is significant even if the ultimate goal is productivity over the person's well-being. As Modern Kazakhs live and work in an increasingly globalized world they come to see the value of an individual contribution to the whole which in turn enables them to see the high value of participation in

the church. Participation will be more of a challenge with Traditional and Russified Kazakhs where they are used to a dominant style of leadership that does not encourage a high level of involvement by the followers. At the same time this represents an opportunity to meet needs for relationship that remain unfulfilled.

Closely connected to participation is the opportunity for believers to receive ministry related to heavy burdens that they are carrying. Alan Tippett (1979:410) speaks of each culture's need for a therapeutic system that helps them to deal with difficulties and suffering. He argues that if the church does not help with this the members look to other systems for solutions and syncretism results. Instead of being relevant to all of life, the church then only becomes valid for certain aspects. This raises the whole area of felt needs and how the Kazakh church needs to be aware of and meet these needs as they are able. Depending on the church planter's theological persuasion, the way the church deals with this will differ. The issue however is not whether the church sees demons and spirits in every issue or not, but that a believer feels the freedom to begin talking about the things that weigh them down or the challenges they face. As discussed previously, the church is surrounded by a culture that considers it shameful to talk about problems. This is a significant challenge for the Kazakh church and there is a need for precedents so that those who have been open and honest and have discovered that Christ has set them free can be examples to others to do the same. This creates an opportunity for the expatriate church planter so that as they mentor Kazakh leaders they model being a good example of openness and honesty. Kazakh leaders then need to go counter-cultural and admit their own struggles and so model an example that says a believer can be real and at the same time accepted.

#### 5.4 Contexts within Contexts

From the emerging theory it is clear that an overall definition of what it is to be Kazakh can be surface at best. The church planter must delve deeper and become a student of their specific Kazakh context. This is even for the national church planter who assumes they know what it is to be Kazakh. A church planter from the more traditional South who travels to the Northern cities that border with Russia will need to humble themselves and become students of the culture there, even being willing to give up what may seem their greatest asset, namely fluency in the Kazakh language. Indeed it would be detrimental for them to walk around showing off how well they speak Kazakh and how unique their accent is. Kazakhs in the North are likely to react to this with either shame or offense and immediately a wall will have been created.

The changing context of the Moderns must be a priority for as said before they are the ones who are able to adapt and reach the others, but maybe even more importantly they are the ones who increasingly are having the greatest influence. The emerging theory does raise important points that need to be applied and adapted to the specific context in which a Modern Kazakh Church (MKC) is being planted.

*Creativity and spontaneity* are important for Modern Kazakhs argues Zhanibek (2009, pers. interview, 2 February). In a world of high technology and in particular the Internet, the MKC must consider networking through smart phones and online communities such as Facebook and My World (Russian). This is not to say that this takes the place of or even priority over face to face relationships, but rather that the MKC needs both. Discipleship and various other materials need to be uploaded to websites and these websites need to allow for feedback. Helpful links regarding issues, interests, and challenges need to be considered so that for example if a young married couple is considering how to plan out their finances and

purchase an apartment they are able to receive good advice. Globalization is giving rise to a global music style and churches amongst Moderns in the West are finding ways to use this style with Christian lyrics. This may be inappropriate for a church amongst Traditionals, but for Modern and even Russified Kazakhs consideration must be given to this. Activities such as weekend retreats, sports events, and picnics represent various ways to get Moderns together so that they can live deeper as a community. Music, theater and dance must be used creatively and are especially effective in reaching the younger Kazakhs of whom many will end up as Moderns. Another way of making this point is that church must not be boring, as seen through the eyes of the Modern. Spontaneity ties into creativity so that the church allows relationships to drive how it does ministry and not a high level of structure which would be more of the same that is experienced during the work day. Certainly care must be taken to ensure that this creativity and spontaneity does not take on a character that would be displeasing to God. Nor should it become a goal in and of itself so that being in community is little more than having fun, but rather its purpose must always be to bring people to a greater focus on God.

*Personal contribution* is also important when working with Moderns. They are likely to be caught up with satisfaction and so with significance being the next stage the MKC can make them aware of, and help to meet, this need. If globalization has the effect of individualism then the MKC can respond by transforming this in to personalization, where this places a high value on the person as they contribute to the whole. Each believer discovers how they have been gifted by God and how to use this within the church. The MKC can look for needs in the community and get members to be personally involved by volunteering time and resources to meet these needs. In most cities there are opportunities with the elderly, orphans, homeless, and others. Bolat (2009, pers. interview, 29 June) says that this has been



one of the most effective areas that expatriate church planters have modeled for the Kazakh church.

The secular world that the Moderns live in sends a message that significance comes from what you have and do. The MKC can help the believer to find significance in who they *are*. That instead of being performance-based, their self-worth comes from an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that then flows into intimate relationships with other believers.

The challenge of *relativism* that globalization brings must be dealt with in the MKC. With the collapse of the Soviet ideal and a largely surface commitment to Islam, Moderns live in a world where people define for themselves their values and beliefs. Compromise becomes easy so that a person can go to the Friday prayers at the Mosque at lunchtime and a nightclub with alcohol and other excesses in the evening. Whether consciously or not, people seem to live with a spiritual scale so that every now and then a check is made to see that the good side outweighs the bad. It has become part of life to take the easy road, where payments or favors help to avoid time and trouble, the justification being that no one is really being disadvantaged. There is also the idea that there are many roads to God so that surface Islam (appearing to be a good Muslim) should easily co-exist with surface Christianity and other religions (explained by Nurlan 2009, pers. interview, 15 September).

Relativism also results when the concept of common ground is taken too far. General categories of commonality can be discussed, but if exclusive truth claims are made, especially when these claims form the core of the religion, the church becomes distinctive. The MKC must choose to either stand firm on the truth claims found in the Bible and be prepared to face the opposition that will result, or try to blend in as much as possible without making any exclusive claims. Standing firm does not mean taking an ungodly attitude that causes unbelievers to characterize the church as mean and weird. The example of Christ as

well as the growth of the church in world history are evidence that truth and love are not mutually exclusive.

The importance of *family* is a large issue for Moderns. They remain part of a large extended family and are under pressure from elders to start a family of their own. Globalization tends to have a delaying effect on couples having children so that many wait until they have established a secure material base. Modern Kazakhs are caught up in this tension and the MKC must help them seek God's plan for how to deal with these types of decisions. As discussed so many cultural practices are involved in having and raising children and the church must walk alongside couples as they seek the joy of children in the midst of intimidating family circumstances.

The MKC must design ministry that caters to families so that children are able to be a natural part. In a House Church setting this means that time and space must be dedicated to the needs of children. Bible stories and worship that they can participate in need to be included and the current House Church momentum seems to be experimenting with two options. The first is to have children as part of the entire meeting time where once they have had their time, they are expected to sit quietly when it comes to the adult Bible study and sharing. The second is for adults to commit to taking turns in doing a separate study and fun time with the children whilst the adults have their time.

For the Kazakh context a related issue to family is the issue of being single. For the general Kazakh society across the identity continuum there is a negative stigma to being single and for a woman in particular it is seen as shameful. In the Kazakh church the women believers outnumber the men which leaves many of the single women believers with little or no choice of a husband. The Kazakh church must be family for these singles and find ways to help singles connect with each other across churches and even people groups.

## 5.5 The Bible and Theology

For the Kazakh church across the continuum to continue to grow and stand on its own, the leaders must continually be students of the Bible, and as they apply it to their context, develop theology that authenticates the existence of Kazakh Christianity.<sup>49</sup> The Bible must be more to Kazakh Christians than the Quran is to the majority of Kazakh Muslims. It is not simply a book to be brought out and read on special occasions so that its presence and the sound of it being read represents its usefulness. For believers it is God's truth for their lives and is meant to be read, studied, understood, and applied. For all of this to happen implies that there are teachers and theologians who help believers to do so, and if the church is to be truly Kazakh then these must ultimately come from within the church and not the expatriate community.<sup>50</sup> Certainly the expatriate church planter has a role to play in Biblical and theological education, but this must have the goal of raising up Kazakh teachers and theologians so that this ministry can be passed on to them. With most cultures living in a globalized context, Hiebert points out that as the Christian faith is given specific expression in a culture, it must be open to continual change by both Biblical insight and the insight of those within the broader body of Christ (2006:29). Neither domination by outside influences nor a complete rejection of their insights is appropriate, but rather Kazakh theologians giving careful consideration to how others have applied Biblical truth, and what can be learned from it.

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<sup>49</sup> William Dyrness (1994:16) challenges Western Christianity to allow theology outside of the West to emerge and have an equal contribution. Although his may seem far away from the Kazakh perspective is it nevertheless part of church planting strategy?

<sup>50</sup> Conn (1984:258) bemoans the creation of an expertise myth so that Western theology is seen as more advanced than anywhere else.

In the same way the Kazakh context will have a role to play in providing its own insights for others to consider.<sup>51</sup> After nearly two decades of post-Soviet church planting, lessons must be learned as to how Kazakh teachers and theologians have or have not been raised up. One of the biggest issues relates to the *means* of training.

### 5.5.1 Formal or Informal Training

The traditional Bible school model was able to operate for the better part of a decade. In recent years laws have been applied that have caused most of these Bible schools to shut down or radically redefine themselves and the way they do training. This formalized model of training saw students enter a residential program with classroom based training each day. Examinations were given with success resulting in the awarding of a one or two year diploma. Hundreds of leaders have had such a means of training and based on these numbers there should be many more churches than seems the case. This is not to say this model has had no use as many of the current church leaders studied at a Bible school and are grateful for the training they received.

Less formal but still structured has been the model that has brought church planters in for one or two weeks of intensive training at various intervals. The idea being that they pass on to others what they learned so that the means of evaluation is not a written examination but a practical application. The challenge has been to gather reliable evidence as to how well the teaching has been applied. In a shame culture, even with believers, there is a halo-effect so that the good is emphasized and the bad barely mentioned.

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<sup>51</sup> Lois Douglas (2006:285) believes that the expatriate missionary has a significant challenge in developing theological education. He reflects that much of theological education has globalized those parts that are beneficial, but also those parts that are dysfunctional. He sounds a call to creativity and intentionality in dealing with this. Certainly in the Kazakh context theological education needs to be given greater consideration than simply importing a program from outside.

Informal training has been where a church planter is invited to visit believers in a city and whilst there has taken the opportunity to teach. What they teach has been based on either a specific need amongst those believers, or something the church planter believes would be beneficial. This sounds like the model of the apostle Paul in the early church, but different however as Paul spent an extended time with the believers in the places where he ministered whereas mostly church planters in the Kazakh context spend only a few days. Because of the relative lack of structure the training is also not consistent and believers receive less than with the other models.

In the current context there is a need for training on two levels. Firstly, training that takes the teacher to the context of the believers must be developed and given some structure. The specific needs of the believers in their context must inform what is taught so that a Russified Kazakh church in the North will not have the same emphasis as a Traditional Kazakh church in the South. The training in the North may have to address the issue of Materialism before the issue of Folk Islamic burial procedures, with the opposite being true for the South. At the same time there needs to be some type of basic curriculum so that courses such as Bible Study Methods can be taught at each location. This implies traveling teachers who have experience and training which gives rise to the second level of training.

With the closure of the formal Bible schools there is very little opportunity for a higher level of study within Kazakhstan. There are church leaders who desire to do so but they have to consider all the barriers that need to be overcome in applying to Western or Korean institutions, and for most of them the challenge is insurmountable. There needs to be a way that theological training can be extended into Kazakhstan even if this is not residential. With the capabilities the Internet offers, as well as willingness on the part of institutions, theological training can be offered at a distance and by means of week long intensive courses. In Kazakhstan having your name on a diploma or degree from an established institution gives

immediate credibility, which means that if Bible schools are to open again in the future they will need qualified faculty to do so. Helping to provide theological education at a distance so that the students can graduate with a qualification from a reputable institution will help to lay the foundation for future Bible teachers.

At the same time there is the need for well educated teachers who will not necessarily teach in a formal institution, but rather fill the role of traveling teachers. They are crucial to the Kazakh church standing on its own two feet so that believers can readily call on them to answer questions and deal with issues. This particularly applies to the House Church Model. A priority in church planting must be to find ways to raise up Kazakh theologians and teachers.

#### 5.5.2 Cost and Access to Materials

Another issue concerning the means of training is how to fund it. Historically this has been almost entirely from outside and the current world financial crisis has greatly slowed the flow of funds. The expatriate church planters who helped acquire the funding would argue that this is not the ideal but an important intervention until the Kazakh church becomes so established that they are able to fund theological education on their own. This suggests then that the most appropriate theological education in the current context would be a distance based model with intensive classes where needed. It does mean that books and readings needed to complete a course need to be translated into Kazakh. A temporary solution could be to use what is available in Russian, but for theology to be Kazakh it must be in the Kazakh language. The translation of the entire Bible into Kazakh means that there are now experienced translators who need to be engaged in the continual process of producing Kazakh resources. An appropriate study fee needs to be considered to contribute towards these expenses.

### 5.5.3 Knowledge or Character

In trying to understand where the numbers of students who passed through the Bible schools over a decade have ended up, the church planter is confronted by the issue of character. Many of these students seem to have “failed” and this has resulted in questions about their work ethic, honesty, endurance, etc. Even if not intentionally, education was defined as the passing on of knowledge without detailed attention being paid to the character of the person being educated. This is not to say that students should be expected to be perfect so that each one becomes a highly successful church planter or teacher. Any expectations of finding the ideal student must be laid aside and in turn the expectations on the part of students in being given whatever they need must be dealt with. The expatriate church planter is often surprised by how the Kazakh student/ church planter sees them as the keeper of endless resources, despite any verbal explanation to the contrary.

The issue has a lot to do with understanding where the student comes from and the issues they are facing. In a shame culture this needs the context of a close relationship so that training involves walking alongside a believer outside of the classroom. This takes a lot of time and emotional investment from the person doing the training, and is a lot messier than simply teaching a body of knowledge in the classroom. The expatriate church planter often takes for granted the support system they have in place so that in times of difficulty they either have a way out or people who come around them. For many of the Kazakh church planters, especially those in the less reached areas, they have very little by way of a support system. One of the crucial investments an expatriate church planter can make is to help Kazakh leaders develop a support system for each other. The expatriate church planter needs to be part of this initially in order to model what it looks like.

#### 5.5.4 Teaching Methods

Kazakhs grow up with a narrow, authoritarian style of teaching where the student listens without question to what the teacher says. In Kazakh theological education a lecture style of teaching must be combined with discussion and dialogue. Yau-man Siew (1996:66), based on his experience in the Asia context, argues that if Bible school teachers limit themselves to the lecture method, they need to expect that the resulting ministry of their students will be ineffective. He states “..the critical importance of integrating theory and practice in the context of reflection”. The purpose of theological education is for Biblical truth to be understood and applied to the Kazakh context, requiring dialogue so that as the translation model proposes, the Biblical core is wrapped up in the local culture. The Biblical command to honor your father and mother for example, must be considered in the light of the Kazakh ancestor cult and this cannot happen without hearing from the culture itself.

Familiarity with dialogue must not be taken for granted and so the teacher needs to choose questions carefully and consider their reaction to student responses that seem incorrect. Discussion in a small group may be appropriate so that students feel less intimidated in expressing their opinions. This does mean that more time is needed and less material will be covered, but the objective is not conveying a certain volume of material but rather to see truth understood and applied. With the increasing familiarity with computers and the Internet, use can also be made of video technology so that pre-recorded seminars can be housed on the web or on DVDs. Nevertheless, there must be discussion so that a particular church context can have questions answered.



### 5.5.5 A Lack of Vision and Planning

With all the talk of theological education in the Kazakh context, most of it concerns the here and now and how to deal with present challenges. There is a need for the Kazakh church leaders to look years ahead and plan what is needed to establish a vibrant Kazakh theology. This will then inform steps that need to be taken now and should involve the insight and participation of the expatriate who is able to call on their experience in other contexts. In Soviet times the leaders were responsible for the *five year* plans and the population followed what they said. Kazakh church leaders must stand up and develop these long term plans and not fall into the trap of thinking that the expatriate is now in the role of the Soviet leader.

Part of the vision must be that theology must have a practical nature so that it informs practice. Richard Osmer sees four aspects of practical theology that are indispensable and makes the following claim: “It is the mutually influential relationship of practical theology’s empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic work that allows this field to construct action-guiding theories of religious practice” (2004:152). There is much within Kazakh culture that calls for Kazakh theologians to apply the truths of Scripture.

### 5.5.6 Curriculum Design

Korean and Western based church planters have had a bias as to what should be taught and when. Certainly there is a core of Biblical theology that is universal and cannot be left out in any curriculum in any context. The issue is rather what specific theological issues pertain to the Kazakh context and which need to be addressed as of first importance. The Kazakh leaders must be empowered to make these decisions. With the Kazakh emphasis on ancestors

and the spirit world, the pastors may decide for example that a course on pneumatology early on would help them establish the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the church.

## 5.6 The Bible and Contextualization

The position of the Bible in church planting will influence how this is done. If it is seen as having been given by God with the covering of the Hebrew culture but nevertheless speaking universal truth no matter what the context, so that a group of believers in a certain location can read and apply this truth as if it was written to them, then the translation model is appropriate. Based on the codes of the pastors in the category of how to use Kazakh cultural traditions (page 85) this is the position they have taken. Further evidence of this is how Akzhol explained that at an annual gathering of Kazakh pastors with no expatriates present, they discussed whether to use the Quran and acceptable folk Islamic practices in the context of a funeral.<sup>52</sup> Two church planters made a strong case for a highly contextual approach making as much use of Islam as possible but they were opposed by the majority and a decision was made that the Bible is the ultimate authority in dealing with religious rites and practices. The Kazakh pastors were not rejecting all levels of contextualization and the use of culture, but rather would agree with Gilliland in saying “The fundamental elements of the gospel, the essential biblical truths that lead to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, must be communicated faithfully to a particular people through the means available in that culture” (1989:24).

If the church planter whether local or expatriate takes this position then the implications for contextual church planting are:

- Where appropriate the Quran can be a useful bridge to validate certain truths and

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<sup>52</sup> This is the annual conference mentioned previously called *Kuriltai*, and this particular one took place 10 August 2011 in Almaty.

especially Biblical stories, but it does not contain the essential Biblical truths that lead to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Kazakh believers can treat the Quran with respect but this does not mean it is in any way equal to the Bible.

- Using Islamic terminology such as *Allah* for God can be acceptable where it is made clear that this is referencing the God of the Bible. The same for the generic Kazakh word for God, *Kudai*. The church planter must consider the micro-context to determine which terms are most appropriate, but in the end the issue is that the church planter is clear in explaining the Biblical meaning of the terms. In the Kazakh context this is done within relationships and may take time.
- A Kazakh believer is a person who follows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This means that even if Mohammed is acknowledged as being significant for Kazakhs in general, he is not to be given any allegiance by believers. Negative comments about Mohammed are to be avoided and if he is referenced in a conversation then instead of arguing as to his validity, believers can seek to point to Christ and what he means to them.
- The issue of deception can arise in the area of a believer's identity. If a believer chooses to call themselves a Muslim then it must be made clear that this means a follower of Jesus, with submission to his lordship. The believer can explain that Muslim means one who submits and that by implication this means submitting to someone. In a culture sensitive way then they can share their testimony and how it is Jesus that they are submitting to.<sup>53</sup> Without clarification the likely result will be that the believer will be seen as having tried to deceive others as to who they really are. The Kazakh church has to deal with the tension between being as Kazakh as possible while recognizing that it is to stand out as a Light in society. Part of the purpose of

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<sup>53</sup> They can use terms such as *Ak Zhol* (white way) and *korban* (sacrifice) which as we have seen are very significant religious terms for Kazakhs.

light is to shine in the darker, negative places in society which at times will result in being seen as strangers and aliens. This is what Van Der Ven (1993:222) sees as the church's dilemma. It can choose to blend in as part of the mainstream society and end up having very little impact, ignoring or being powerless in addressing the problems and injustices in society. On the other hand it can position itself on the periphery calling society to task on various issues, thereby being seen as a nuisance. The Kazakh church as a whole as well as each local community must deal with this dilemma.

- If the Bible supports the idea that believers come together and form a community centered on Christ, then it becomes difficult for the believer to say that their community is the Islamic one based at the Mosque. A Kazakh believer needs to intentionally make themselves part of the church community and then as a specific means of evangelism they can attend events at the Mosque. A church may even set apart those who have been called to reach Kazakhs at the Mosque, but the paradigm is always that the church has sent them out to do so. They remain closely connected to the sending church. The basic issue concerns *why* the believer is attending the Mosque? Distinction must be made between community and ministry.
- Folk Islamic practices must be measured against Biblical truth and where these practices contradict this truth they need to be evaluated. Some will need to be rejected and where possible a functional substitute found, and others transformed to adhere to the teachings of the Bible. This will take time and require that Kazakh theologians become students of both the Bible and their culture. Planting churches amongst Traditional Kazakhs must especially take this into account.

Kazakh theologians must decide for themselves whether common ground or points of contact exist, and whether these are Biblically acceptable. Regarding ancestors for example,

believers can be encouraged to honor the memory of the ancestor without crossing over into any level of worship. Theologians need to provide practical advice on what honoring looks like so that there is no confusion with the forms of cultural veneration. For example, on the one year anniversary of death there can be a meal to remember the ancestor where stories are told that bring back good memories. A photo album can be prepared and circulated and if they had become a believer their testimony can be shared and/or recorded in the album. Is all of this common ground or a point of contact? The difference may come down to when and where to take a stand on the Biblical distinctive so that the position of the believer is in contrast to that of the culture.

#### 5.7 Islam's Influence on the Kazakh Context

Opinions vary as to how deeply formal Islam is making inroads into Kazakh culture. Objective data is not accessible so that these opinions seem to be influenced by experience such as observing young women covering their heads with scarves, new Mosques being constructed, and militant action by radicals. The government proposes a moderate commitment to Islam and has openly opposed the stricter expressions. The question is whether this reflects the way society is moving or are young Kazakhs in particular seeking to be more Islamic? If Kazakhstan's and the church's future lie in the hands of young modern Kazakhs then the way they view Islam is important. If for example ten percent are seeking to become serious about Islam, then the church planter needs to decide if this is significant enough to warrant time and effort, or whether resources are better spent on the other ninety percent where the barrier of Islam is less. Part of the answer to this will be seen in the reaction of young moderns in general to radical expressions of Islam. If radical expressions of Islam make threats and demands that are opposed by the authorities will a significant

percentage of young moderns sympathize with these radicals even if they don't desire to join them? If so then church planting methodology will need to adapt with closer attention being paid to what the key points of contact are, such as the use of the Quran as a bridge.

A greater likelihood however is that Islam runs the risk of being polarized by its radical proponents. The isolation and control that radical Islam requires to succeed is becoming less possible in a globalized world. As has been explained, Kazakh society as a whole is rapidly moving in the direction of material and technological development so that a serious pursuit of religion is less of a priority. The result is that two types of Islam will exist with the open and official expression being a moderate and accommodating one, held to by the majority of the population across various demographic segments. The second expression will attempt to make religion the top priority. It will be both hidden and open, with the hidden seeking to draw Kazakhs into a Mosque-based community, hoping for a breakthrough in numbers and influence. Its open form will carry the nature of a protest against both the westernization from outside, and the exclusion from influence from within Kazakhstan. Where this second expression uses rhetoric and carries out actions that disturb the pursuit of peace and prosperity, it will be opposed by the majority. On the other hand where such rhetoric and action address the inequalities and injustices in Kazakh society by proposing positive change, then it will find sympathy with many Kazakhs.

## 5.8 A Missionary Vision

James Mittelman (2000:111) argues that globalization has spawned regionalism so that near neighbor countries and cultures join forces in order to compete together in the global community. This results in a warming towards each other and the development of some common ground. Where Kazakhstan develops regional ties this represents an opportunity for

the church to take advantage of this and send missionaries to those countries. The challenge will be where some countries are excluded causing a negative response towards those that excluded them.

In the Kazakh context the church has been introspective in the way the early church was, as described in the book of Acts up until the account of Cornelius and resultant decision by the council in Jerusalem in chapter eleven. Up to this point the early church was concerned with reaching Jews and other than a few exceptions ignored the need to take the Gospel to Gentiles. It seems clear that up to chapter eleven, the church's understanding of Acts 1: 8 was to take the Gospel to the *Jews* in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. From chapter eleven on there was still much to be done in taking the Gospel to the Jews, but significantly Gentiles were included and there was immediate and rapid response as evidenced in Chapter 11: 20-21. The time has come for the Kazakh church to see the people groups around them. The expatriate church planter has had and will have a significant role to play in helping the Kazakh church to do this, especially those who have little or no access to the Gospel. People groups such as the Chechens, Uzbeks, and Tatars have lived in Kazakhstan for generations so that they call it home. The Kazakh church must have a desire to reach these minority people groups with the gospel.

Two of the most significant barriers are pride and prejudice. As the majority people group and the controllers of the country's power and wealth, the Kazakhs have positioned themselves as the Lords of the land. The Kazakh church must get off this pedestal and humble itself before the other people groups with a message that asks "how can I serve you?" It also means that they must overcome the prejudice disease in Central Asia where most people groups are suspicious of each other and see their own culture as superior. Kazakhs are very wary of Chechens and Uighurs. This pride and prejudice must be dealt with and in so

doing represents a great opportunity for the Kazakh church to reach out and show love and acceptance to these other people groups.

The Kazakh church has the potential to church plant in places where Western and Korean missionaries are restricted. With Kazakhstan becoming a stable and prosperous country financially, the Kazakh church represents a missions sending base that can reach all across Central Asia. James Plueddemann (2006:254) describes five stages that emerging churches in new cultural contexts go through:

- i. The Receiving the Gospel stage is where the church is new and very focused on themselves and their internal needs with little or no missions vision.
- ii. The Sharing the Gospel Locally stage is where the church members begin to share their faith with family, neighbors, and friends around them.
- iii. The Evangelizing Near People Groups stage involves the church thinking about how to share the Gospel with members of their people group that live in other cities and villages.
- iv. The fourth stage involves sending missionaries to the other people groups that live near to the church, even those that seem hostile.
- v. The last stage is the church sending missionaries to other people groups who live in distant lands.

The Kazakh church must embrace all of these stages and in particular understand two important points. Firstly, they are done simultaneously and not seen as a hierarchy so that once the fifth stage is reached the others are neglected, or that the fourth and fifth stages cannot be attempted until the others are firmly in place. Secondly, the Kazakh church must avoid the paradigm that sees stage five and even four as the responsibility of the expatriate church planter. As if the Kazakh church would say – we are doing fine and you can move on



to someone else. A lasting missionary vision in the Kazakh church must embrace all five phases.

## 5.9 Leadership

A phrase that is often used in contemporary missions is that of a *church planting movement*. The idea that the church planting that is taking place within a specific people group is widespread, has a momentum of its own, and is rapid. For most church planters this would be their endvision, the fulfillment of their mission. As church planters have unpacked the many aspects that contribute towards or form part of the church planting movement, a vital ingredient is a *leadership planting movement*. A rapid, widespread starting of churches implies a rapid and widespread training of leaders for these churches and herein lies the dilemma. On the one hand there are those who would say that if the movement is from God then leaders will naturally and even supernaturally (in the sense that they will somehow automatically be ready) arise and take their place in the new churches. For others this seems utopian and it is unrealistic to speak of instant leadership. Rather there needs to be a significant investment of time and resources in developing leaders. Leadership training in the Kazakh context has encompassed both these approaches as well as combinations of both. Leadership development must be at the core of any Kazakh church planting and needs to take specific factors into account.

### 5.9.1 Generational leadership

Bearing in mind that there is no leadership development without issues, the development of first generation leaders in the Kazakh church has been particularly *messy*. There have been

unmet expectations, misunderstandings, questionable motives, and a lack of perseverance to name a few of the issues.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the expatriate church planter needs to do a self-examination on all these issues, but there are three significant factors that also play a role. Firstly, the Soviet leadership style and its effect on the first generation church leaders cannot be overlooked. As explained before, people simply did what they were told or what they thought the leader wanted. Taking initiative and becoming a co-laborer were concepts that did not exist. David Shenk and Ervin Stutzman (1988:96) warn against the one dominant leader model which has had mostly negative results.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, the first generation church leaders have not had role models within their own life circumstances. The years of post-Soviet chaos involved a lot of fear and uncertainty with most adults being consumed with their families' survival. This is what the first generation leaders lived through and it was a great challenge to care for one's own and at the same time be a servant leader to others. The expatriate church planter was able to model to a certain extent, but did not face the life challenges of the local church planter. The third factor is that first generation leaders come from either a communist/ atheist or folk Islamic background, and even a combination of the two. This background gives rise to unique challenges that must be dealt with.

The first generation church leaders must be shown a lot of patience and grace as they have much to overcome. Those such as Akzhol who have grown in leadership over the years are showing good initiative in starting new churches. Of particular significance is that their children are growing up in Christian homes with parents that are role models of a relationship with Christ. These second generation and beyond Kazakh believers represent future leadership that has an advantage over their parents. Certainly they will have their own

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<sup>54</sup> J Herbert Kane (1980:301) believes that the greatest weakness of mission work around the world has been the lack of local leaders, suggesting that too often missionaries give up in the face of problems and misunderstandings and fall into a pattern of believing that they the missionaries can do better.

<sup>55</sup> Already there are disturbing signs in a few of the Kazakh churches related to what Neil Cole (2005:57) laments in the Western church. Namely, that the presence or absence of the pastor/ leader seems more significant than the presence or absence of Jesus.

challenges such as the rising materialism and may lack some of the character that persevering through difficulty brings, nevertheless they have the potential to become the servant leaders that the growth of the Kazakh church will need.

### 5.9.2 Influence

Van Der Ven (1993:296) make a useful distinction between two types of influence in the church. There is that which is forced on others so that the authority and power that are derived do not result in willing followers, and then in contrast there is that type of influence that causes people to willingly accept and be led. The Kazakhs' Soviet experience exposed them to the former to a large degree, with much less experience of the latter. The current secular and even Muslim leaders in society have a challenge in overcoming what is perceived as a forced influence. The church must face this challenge head on as even within the House Church model there is a level of structure where the members look to one or more people to lead them.

Leadership in the Kazakh church must motivate and inspire the believers in such a way that they are excited about being part of a community that is building God's kingdom amongst their people group. The leaders are not appointed officials whose influence is by virtue of their title, but rather they model and influence others to be part of something special. Believers follow them willingly, not out of compulsion.

### 5.9.3 Passivity

A vibrant, growing Kazakh church needs servant leaders that encourage and enable the members to discover their ministry in the church. An ideal is for each member to be actively

part of the church as it makes a difference in Kazakh society. A barrier to overcome in achieving this has to do with a general attitude of passivity within Kazakh society. Going the extra mile is not the norm but rather doing just enough to get a particular task done. Injustices are responded to with an attitude that says ‘just wait and hopefully things will get better’. It becomes familiar then for believers soon after joining the church to sit back and watch others do ministry.

The leaders need to respond in three particular ways to address this issue. Firstly, they must help each believer to discover and use their spiritual gifts and talents, beginning by setting the example in their own families. Secondly, they must make use of small groups so that believers interact on a personal level and so inspire and encourage each other to be involved in ministry. Thirdly, leaders must prepare themselves mentally, psychologically, and spiritually to give away ministry. They must overcome the temptation to be the dominant, up front leader that does most of what is needed. It means addressing both pride in the position of leadership, and the model in society where the leader runs the show.

#### 5.9.4 Intellectual Merit

Where the church has been established, strong leaders are seen as reaching their positions and privilege in ways that can only be obtained through structured, systematic programs in higher institutions. The basic idea being that the greater a person’s knowledge, as evidenced by degrees and diplomas, the more qualified they are to lead. This reflects the position in Kazakh society where an official piece of paper with the right stamp on it carries much authority. Without contradicting the need for some leaders to study theology in depth, the Kazakh church must turn to the Bible and discover the emphasis of character merit over intellectual merit in choosing its leaders. Certainly all need knowledge of sound, Biblical

doctrine, but this is not the primary or only criteria for leadership. Hebrews 13: 7 describes it well: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (New International Version). The Word of God lived out in their lives is the primary criteria for Kazakh church leadership.

#### 5.9.5 Creating or Equipping

If church leadership is a skill or set of skills, then leadership can be created by taking any believer and training them in that skill. If however leadership is a calling with an emphasis on character, then the task is to equip the leaders that God has already revealed. In the Kazakh context, leadership training in the Post-Soviet period was offered to anyone who wanted to attend and whilst some were equipped for their current leadership roles, for many it was more discipleship training than leadership training, evidenced by a comparison of the numbers who went through training with those in leadership in the church.

The Kazakh church whilst still young has nevertheless matured enough where there are leaders who have been in their role for a number of years. These leaders along with expatriate partners need to be attentive to the new leaders that God is calling and include a strong mentoring component to the leadership training. Biblical models such as Jesus with the twelve disciples and Paul with Timothy need to be followed so that new leaders acquire the necessary knowledge and see the life of a leader lived out before them. Mari Gonlag (1996:213) explains that the mentor needs to focus on specific functions. Applying these to the Kazakh situation, the mentor needs to *model* what both personal and public ministry looks like, beginning in the home. The mentor *sponsors* in terms of the appropriate protecting and supporting of the new leader, and whilst dependency is a risk this must be worked through. The mentor *encourages* by affirming and inspiring, *counsels* by clarifying and advising, and

importantly *befriends* the new leader so that they develop intimacy towards a future co-laborer relationship

### 5.10 Conclusion

The question of identity is a theme that has emerged, and as much as the church planter needs to do an indepth study of this in Kazakh society, they need to pay equal attention to the identity that the church takes on. The Kazakh churches that are planted must balance a biblical with a cultural identity to be truly called a Kazakh (cultural) Church (Biblical). What form or model this church takes may vary according to the particular context, with the impact of globalization creating new contexts. Whatever the form, the church must provide community and at times be willing to counter the negative effects of globalization, offering hope to those who end up marginalized. This means it will not always simply blend into the culture, but at times stand out and demonstrate a godly character to society as a whole. Believers in the church need to live out a faith that shows how they have found satisfaction and significance in the Gospel so that those outside the church are drawn to what Kazakh Christianity has to offer. For this to happen the church must place a high value on discipleship and participation, allowing believers to be active members of the church.

The establishment of the Modern Kazakh Church is crucial to effective church planting and must allow for creativity, sponteneity, and personal contribution. It must address the challenge of relativism that globalization brings, as well as incorporate the importance of family in the Kazakh context. Basic to the MKC is the development of leaders that are well trained in Biblical theology so that they can address the questions that the culture as a whole and Islam in particular throw at the church. At the same time these leaders need to display a

godly character. *How* this training takes place gives rise to many issues and challenges that need to be answered by the church planter.

## **Conclusion**

*Bolashak* (future) is a word that is used daily in all aspects of Kazakh life. Kazakhs want to know that the future for them and their families is one of hope and success. Questions are raised as to how much needs to be learned from the past. Should beliefs and practices from the ancestors be revived or should greater emphasis be placed on adapting and thriving in a new globalized world? This study has show Kazakhs at all levels of society are finding their lives impacted by rapid change, with the forces of contextualization and globalization pulling them in various directions. The implications for church planting must be considered and those who seek to church plant cannot complacently assume that how church planting was done is how it will always be. The findings in this study contribute to the knowledge and practice of effective church planting within the current Kazakh context by causing church planting practitioners to evaluate how they deal with the influences of contextualization and globalization. Some of the principles apply beyond the current context offering ideas that church planting needs to consider in a future filled with change.

This study has examined the Kazakh culture with a special focus on the role of religion. The emerging theory shows that it is not sufficient to describe all Kazakhs simply as Muslim. Specific contexts need to be studied so that the Kazakhs within those can be identified on a continuum from Traditional through Modern to Russified. With this as a starting point, the church planter can then undertake a detailed study of what is believed and practiced in that particular micro context. Certainly there are general beliefs and practices to do with areas such as ancestor spirits, rites of passage, and celebration times, but each of these has its own nuances depending on the specific context. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the time has come for church planting to tailor its approach to each setting which by implication means that within the church planting community, both expatriate and local,



there needs to be an acceptance and affirmation of a variety of approaches. At the same time church planting must be self-critical so that even if methods vary, the resulting churches retain a Biblical identity.

Historically, the discovery of what a Biblical identity is has been clouded by the pre-conceptions of the various church planters and their backgrounds and so the emerging theory in this study is that Kazakh church planters themselves need to apply the translation model and go directly to the Bible and discover what church is. This does not mean that there is no role for outsiders, but rather that it needs to be one of guiding and assisting rather than prescribing. In particular, the Kazakh churches that are second generation and beyond must be allowed to develop on their own with expatriate assistance only given when asked for and then only if absolutely needed. This will provide a basis for evaluating whether these churches are able to carry on a movement of church planting that is both Biblical and Kazakh.

Church planting must deal with the issue of appearance. The emerging theory shows that the majority of Kazakhs like to appear religious and proudly proclaim that they are Muslims. The primary way to appear Islamic is through places and events rather than daily ritual/ expression. As explained in the theory to do with identity, whilst the Kazakh church at one level needs to appear Kazakh, at another level it must be in contrast and strive for a religious expression that goes beyond appearances. It must show a depth and authenticity that is seen in a daily relationship with God which impacts daily relationships with others.

Part of appearing Islamic is for a person to say that to be Kazakh is to be Muslim, it is who you are at birth. Without compromising the teachings of the Bible, the church must embrace all that it is to be Kazakh so that increasingly it will become possible to say that being a Kazakh Christian is an authentic identity. As Lamin Sanneh (1993:120) explains, Christianity which originated in the Middle East was imported to areas such as the West and over time there arose a Western Christianity that has become so entrenched that it seems to

have always existed. For non-Western cultures such as the Kazakh, Christianity and the West have become one and the same so that introducing Christianity is to introduce Westernization. In areas such as Africa and China, an indigenous church is arising that does not bear the identity of the West and the Kazakh church along with others in Central Asia need to learn from this so that Kazakh Christianity does not mean Western Christianity.

Another way of looking at appearance is to speak of presence. Kazakhs seem happy with the presence of Islam around them so that there are Mosques and the Quran. Kazakh Christianity must be more than just presence or it risks remaining on the periphery with the image of a sect. The theory in this study does advocate that in terms of the negative aspects of globalization, the periphery may at times be the right place to be where the Kazakh church challenges those aspects of society that are ungodly. Good contextualization however does mean that the church should not find itself on the periphery due to a lack of relevance. Whilst formal, Quran-based Islam is not seen as a sect by society, yet it seems to be moved towards the periphery with the syncretizing effect of Kazakh folk Islam playing a more prominent role. Kazakh Christianity must avoid allowing a syncretistic folk expression of itself to develop that easily slides into society without causing too much attention. There must be a transforming, impacting effect that the church has on society, where even if there are clashes, society is better off because of the presence of Christianity. This then gives rise to the priority and importance of the character the church displays. In other words, church planting that is not just to place the presence of a church in a community, but also giving priority as to *how* it exists in the community. The character of Jesus must be lived out by the church even if opposition arises.

To plant churches that will both identify with and impact Kazakh society means that the focus and methods of church planting need to be carefully considered. Theory in this study proposes that Modern Kazakhs represent the church planting focus that will have the

greatest impact on the growth of the church. They are able to relate to both the Russified and Traditional Kazakhs and thereby help to reach them. They are also best positioned to consider change and attempt to give local expression to the influences of globalization (glocalize). A Modern Kazakh Church must exist that is given freedom to incorporate aspects such as new technology, musical styles, dance, and choice of language. The church planter must understand the changing nature of the Modern Kazakh's life and the demands made on their time. The Modern Kazakh Church is also likely to be most open to other people groups and so is able to embrace and promote a missions vision. The Kazakh Church's burden to reach other people groups will be a key marker as to its health. To some extent this will mean the church acts counter to its own culture which tends to look down on many of the other people groups.

Whilst there are good arguments for the various models of church, the emerging theory to do with the House Church model discussed in chapter four, is critical for effective Kazakh church planting, from Traditional through Modern to Russified. The House Church model enables the church to position itself well to take advantage of cultural elements such as hospitality and the importance of family. It also helps the church to adapt to the changes brought about by globalization, meeting needs for intimacy and relationship. The House Church model does raise the issue of leadership and how this would differ from a traditional, up front, dominant leadership style.

Chapter four and five discuss how leadership training has been and will be at the core of Kazakh church planting. A Bible school approach where essential knowledge is acquired in a classroom setting is very challenging under the current religious laws. Creative alternatives must be found without local church planters having to leave their context for lengthy periods of time. Additionally, there must be a strong mentoring component where the more experienced church planters, both expatriate and local, live life alongside the new

leaders, demonstrating the Gospel lived out in their lives. In particular a servant style of leadership must be modeled even though it is likely to conflict with the styles proposed by both the Kazakh culture and globalization. An important aspect of leadership is for the Kazakh church to overcome the inclination for Kazakh leaders to simply tell the expatriate mentor what they think they need to hear. There must be opportunity to question and even disagree with the expatriate point of view.

The long term health of the Kazakh church is going to require Bible teachers and theologians that are equipped to help the church navigate the challenges and opportunities that both contextualization and globalization bring. Up to the present context this has been dominated by expatriates and as helpful as they have tried to be, methods must be found to see that this becomes more indigenous. This requires training as mentioned before, but then once trained, Kazakhs stepping up to train others, teach seminars, write books and articles, and make use of electronic resources such as websites. A specific example would be that instead of merely translating a confession of faith, Kazakh theologians study what others have done and then write their own which would contain the Biblical essentials and yet be as Kazakh as possible.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the Translation model of contextual theology would be applied. At the same time insights from the other models can be added, such as taking care of the poor and marginalized, and in this way the church represents the whole Gospel.

Part of the journey towards the Kazakh church becoming self-theologizing from a Biblical point of view, must include working through difficult issues that require both the expatriate and Kazakh theologian to do research, pray about, and undertake detailed discussion. There are commitments and beliefs within Kazakh culture that require careful analysis so that recommendations can be made as to how to respond. Theologizing must be

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<sup>56</sup> Steve Strauss (2006:140) cautions that these confessions or creeds should not be equated with Scripture, but rather they represent cultural forms in which truth is expressed. He contends that as church leaders in various cultures work through this they are able to contribute a unique perspective and thereby enrich the theology of the global church.

modeled as a dynamic and continual process of discovery, with the basic understanding that there are underlying, universal truths. This creates a confidence in theologizing by providing a base against which discovery can be measured.

Like a young sapling that has put down roots in new soil, the Kazakh church whilst appearing somewhat fragile, seems here to stay. It appears to have passed what Kenneth Scott Latourette (Walls 2002:10) calls the church test where there is an identifiable Christian community that willingly bears the name of Christ. Two decades of post Soviet church planting has resulted in a church that has grown geographically, numerically, and spiritually. Whilst proper contextualization leads to the growth of the church in a new culture, growth is not necessarily a sign of proper contextualization. When a culture goes through a crisis as was the case in Kazakhstan in the early post Soviet years, the church grew as there were Kazakhs who were willing to try anything new in search of a better life. Some things were done well from a contextualization standpoint and others were not. At the same time globalization began to have an effect and so the church planting context became increasingly complex. The findings of this study suggest applying important principles to this complex context, so that the Kazakh church can grow into a tree that stands tall, bearing fruit that reveals Jesus and his Kingdom as well as an authentic Kazakh identity. Challenges will blow hard at this tree and at times it will seem to bend alarmingly, but not so that it breaks.

To say that Kazakh church planting has or will be mistake-free is to ignore the reality of what church planting involves. Instead this study suggests careful reflection needs to be made so that lessons can be learned from what has been done well, what has been done poorly, and what has changed about the Kazakh context so that something new needs to be done. The Kazakh church must be given the grace both now and in the future to make mistakes and learn from them, which means that church planting will at times be messy, but nevertheless improve over time. Acknowledging that there will be mistakes should not be a

deterrent to church planting as this has been the case throughout the history of the church in various contexts and yet the church continues to adapt and grow.

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