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The Political Environment of the Cities of Northern Kazakhstan at the Cusp of the 19th–20th Centuries*

G.Zh. Sultangazy

M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University (Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan)

Политическое пространство городов Северного Казахстана на рубеже XIX–XX вв.

Г.Ж. Султангазы

Университет КАЗГЮУ имени М.С. Нарикбаева (Нур-Султан, Казахстан)

Cities of the northern part of Kazakhstan at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries had played the role of administrative units for a long period; however, the gradual development of the urban environment and the integration of the cities of the national outskirts into the system of socio-economic relations of the empire led to the formation cooperation of a citizen not only in the economic aspect, but also, in the political aspects. The research attempted to analyze the processes associated with the formation of a political space in a colonial city, where representatives of the national intelligentsia were the subjects, and the emerging media and public spaces were the tools. The author insists that the political component of the city had developed in the context of the all-Russian political situation. The systemic crisis in all spheres of the state's life demanded new formats of their rights struggle. Under these conditions, the intelligentsia takes the initiative and develops its own style of struggle, expressed in the creation of newspapers, which will later become the print organs of the parties. For example, the newspaper "Kazakh" will become the official organ of the Alash party. Thus, the author argues that the formation of the political space in the colonial city is the result of the activities of the intelligentsia. The article uses the data of the regional archives of Kostanay, Petropavlovsk and Nur-Sultan cities. One of the methods of this research was the historical and genetic one, which allows considering the problems in its development and identifying patterns. The use of the historical-comparative method revealed differences in the development of Kazakhstan historiography.

Key words: city, intelligentsia, political space, newspapers, colonial policy, Kostanay, Petropavlovsk, Akmolinsk.

Города северной части Казахстана рубежа XIX–XX вв. на протяжении длительного времени играли роль административных единиц. Но постепенное развитие городской среды и интегрирование городов национальных окраин в систему социально-экономических отношений Российской империи привели к формированию условий для активности гражданина не только в экономическом, но и политическом аспектах. Автор предпринял попытку проанализировать процессы, связанные с формированием в колониальном городе политического пространства, где субъектами выступили представители национальной интеллигенции, а инструментами — зарождающиеся средства массовой коммуникации и общественные пространства. Автор отмечает, что политическая составляющая города развивалась в контексте общероссийской политической ситуации. Системный кризис во всех сферах жизнедеятельности государства требовал новых форматов борьбы за свои права. В этих условиях интеллигенция проявляет инициативу и вырабатывает свой стиль борьбы, выраженный в создании газет, которые впоследствии станут печатными органами партий, например, газета «Казах» станет официальным органом партии Алаш. Таким образом, автор утверждает, что формирование политического пространства в колониальном городе является результатом деятельности интеллигенции. В статье использованы архивные данные областных архивов городов Костаная, Петропавловска и Акмолинска (в настоящее время — Нур-Султан). Одним из методов настоящего исследования выступил историко-генетический, позволяющий рассмотреть проблематику в ее развитии и выявить закономерности. Применение историко-сравнительного метода обнаружило различия в развитии казахстанской историографии.

Ключевые слова: город, интеллигенция, политическое пространство, газеты, колониальная политика, Костанай, Петропавловск, Акмолинск.

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Introduction

Colonial cities, created because of active Cossack advancement, primarily performed, in addition to defensive, administrative functions. In architectural terms, they were also far from the standards of the city, but the obligatory complex consisting of a fortress, where the administration was located, a market with a market square, where economic life developed and churches, focusing and reflecting the spiritual life were present. A mosque, library and other administrative buildings were gradually added. Thus, at the end of the 19th century Kostanay public and state buildings were represented by a wooden prayer house, the building of the Russian-Kazakh school, and Muslim prayer's house in the Tatar settlement [1, pp. 157–167ob.]. The urban space of Akmolinsk also demonstrated the cult architecture [2, p. 7; 3, pp. 2–4]. The population of the city was just over 10 thousand people, and the predominant part was employed in agriculture. This was the typical structure and picture of an urban settlement at the end of the 19th century. The weak level of development of urban culture and environment was the result of the weak development of socio-economic relations.

The city, with all its functionality and as a sign of progress, did not fit well into the system of the traditional format of agrarian relations, namely, the nomadic way of life. City-forming enterprises, which began to appear from the moment of active advancement of Russia into the Kazakh steppes, did little to strengthen and develop cities. A significant part of the citizens were merchants, traders and artisans employed in the processing of agricultural raw materials. The inhabitants of the cities were also Cossacks; in addition to service, they were employed in agriculture. According to the data of the First General Census of the Russian Empire in 1897, the urban population in Kazakhstan was no more than half a million people who inhabited just over 20 cities in the same period. The largest of them were Uralsk with a population of 36.4 thousand people, Petropavlovsk — 19.7 thousand people, and others. Akmolinsk population consisted of 9.7 thousand people, and Pavlodar citizens were 7.7 thousand people, etc. [4, 29].

The historiography of Kazakhstani cities is represented by regional studies. It should be noted that scientists mostly focused on large metropolitan areas, rather than small provincial cities; whereas the study of small towns gives more chances to study historical processes in a more complete volume (it is possible to use census data to cover or sample the entire population).

This article attempts to highlight the process of forming a political space in the cities of northern Kazakhstan, by which we mean the environment that contributed to the politicization and active involvement of citizens in political and civil processes at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. On the one hand, the study will allow us to trace the genesis of the relationship

between the town citizens, primarily the intelligentsia with the authorities, while on the other hand, we actualize the city as a space in the political dimension.

Materials and methods:

the documentary analysis of State Archives of Kostanay region and the city of Nur-Sultan reflects the materials on the opening and functioning of city libraries, statistical offices, various cultural and public institutions was used as a research tool. The study of this array of documents allows us to trace, on the one hand, the dynamics of qualitative changes in public consciousness and the degree of involvement of citizens in social and political processes.

Discussion

The city as an object of the research is most often viewed from an architectural and economic point of view. Recently, the political dimension of the city, the interaction of the authorities and active actors has become re-levant in the context of the “model for analyzing power at the level of society”. Gradually, in scientific research, the city was viewed as a space, capable of creating conditions for the politicization of a person and his involvement in social and civil processes. E. Trubina, notes the social significance of the city, and believes that “this is the main space where social changes take place, and the key place where social theory is created” [5, p. 15].

The city activates human activity in this direction more intensively than the countryside, where the economic factor is much more crucial than the political one. In addition, B. Waldenfels, discussing various types of understanding of everyday life, characterizes the city as a “place of exchange and exchange of opinions” [6, p. 154]. In Soviet historiography, political space as a formulation and as a separate object was not used or studied. In Kazakhstani historiography, attention was paid to the activities of the national intelligentsia without reference to location. At the same time, the key events of the indicated period unfolded mainly in the urban environment. The city was a catalyst for ideas and activities and set aspirations and directions for the development of society and the state. Currently, a solid block of scientific works has been formed, reflecting not only the economic, but the political role of urban centers, and various aspects of the activities of intellectuals and the city as such are being actualized.

The availability of sources and historiography of the present period allow us to take a deeper look at the problem of the existence of Kazakh intellectuals in specific historical conditions. However, the results of historiography do not give a complete holistic picture, and, accordingly, the feeling is created that we are still in the so-called “paradigm of mastering raw archival materials”. Meanwhile, there are monu-

scripts of Zh. Kasymbaev [7], N. Alekseenko [8], M. Koigeldiev [9], D. Amanzholova [10], G. Alpyspaeva [11], that serves as landmarks for many researchers, as they identified a range of problems: the formation and development of urban culture, the formation of political principles and platforms for the future party, relations with the political forces of the region and the empire itself.

According to E. Samoilova, the local intelligentsia played a key role in urban processes, especially in provincial cities [12, 149 p.]. From this group, the so-called "initiative group with a system of spiritual needs and interests" was formed. Its activities determined the city existence. However, the author admits that the resources of the intelligentsia were limited, and the lag of the provincial cities from the central ones was significant. Another interesting position was expressed by T. Nefedova who analyzed the issue of interaction between the city and the intelligentsia. She insists that, the city was perceived by the metropolitan representatives of the intelligentsia as a "kingdom with lack of freedom" [13, 154 p.].

The role of the Kazakh intelligentsia is unquestionable; it has become a leading force in the political arena of the early 20th century. But there is an uncritical approach in assessing its activities. Kazakhstani researchers have prepared an article that outlines the problem of the representation of Kazakh intellectuals in the political and public life of the region, regardless of their political preferences [14].

Indeed, even though the number of the intelligentsia was at a critically low level, nevertheless, it was ideologically disunited, it rather demonstrates quality. However, in modern Kazakhstani historiography, much attention is paid to its liberal sphere.

Results

The political development of Kazakhstan, including the cities, took place in the context of the all-Russian socio-political situation. For the indicated period, Kazakhstan was the outskirts of the Russian empire with a set of typical socio-economic problems, where the situation was complicated by the acuteness of the unresolved agrarian question. The traditional way of life did not fit into the system of capitalist relations, where the economy of Kazakhstan was fully integrated after a series of administrative reforms, to which the Kazakhs were not prepared, either psychologically or materially. Otherwise, the land reform of 1861, and the Regulations on the Resettlement of 1868 and later decrees that accelerated the large-scale resettlement of Russian landless peasants in the steppe proved that fact. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Kazakh population was actively fighting against colonization and restoration of political and economic rights. However, the applied instruments of political struggle are morally outdated. For all its activity,

the Kazakh society (late 17th — early 20th centuries), did not possess the knowledge and skills necessary for the political struggle of the early 20th century format. The nation set mainly the task of economic liberation, without implying any changes in the political design. Generic division, accompanied by conflicts, is also an indicator of unpreparedness for a systemic struggle with a foreseeable result. The political reality of the early 20th century demanded new forms and leaders. During this period, the formation of a social group was observed that performed the connecting functions between the traditionalist ethnos and the imperial power structures. The content of their activities has created the preconditions for the formation of an intellectual field for the search for alternative ways of adapting society to changing realities. This group of citizens, ethnically connected with the majority, genetically remained the heir to the state-administrative structure of the nomads, but on the basis of mutually complementary European and Eastern values.

The Kazakh intelligentsia was represented by a group of Kazakhs who were highly educated both in Muslim madrassas and educational institutions of the Russian Empire. The number of the Kazakh intelligentsia is still the subject of scientific research [15; 16]. The calculation is complicated by the fact that the "nationality" column was absent in the questionnaires and personal sheets. On the whole, it was a quantitatively insignificant stratum, which did not prevent it from playing an important role in shaping the world outlook and determining the political aspirations of society at that time.

However, the Kazakh intelligentsia was weakly politicized until the beginning of the 20th century. The overwhelming majority of Kazakhs, having received a European education, became officials of the colonial apparatus. This was facilitated by the fact that graduates of secondary and higher educational institutions, "having no competition in their ethnic environment, often content with little, stopping at what has been achieved, replenishing the ranks of the nomenclature" [17, p.31]. However, in connection with the deteriorating situation in the region, the intelligentsia came to comprehend its significance and historical role. Consolidating with the progressive forces of Russian society, it hoped to change the current state of affairs without resorting to armed conflicts. It attached great importance to the awakening of national identity through the opening of Kazakh schools and the development of national literature.

The intelligentsia designated the city as the place of its location and active activity. As a rule, young people, with a certain educational qualification, returned to the county towns, where conditions were created for their professional implementation.

The most controversial issue was the choice of the concept and instruments of struggle. It was

also obvious that the traditional format of open protest, spontaneous demonstrations was not only ineffective, but also fraught with the risk of loss of life. The intelligentsia was faced with the task of searching for a unifying principle, but it should not have been an analogue of the archaic world outlook of the steppe dwellers, but also not have a modernized meaning, remote from the traditional perception of the state and power by the nomad. The steppe space is characterized by the organic existence of the authorities and the people and the absence of limitations between them, and it could arise in view of the deep enthusiasm of representatives of the intelligentsia with Western ideas and the presence of social differences between the intelligentsia and Nomadic society. In other words, the ideas and legal thinking of Kazakh liberals had to reflect the qualitative state of society, its spiritual, material, geopolitical foundations [18, p.77]. Ideally, the formation of statehood, its foundations should have been the result of a reciprocal process on the part of the Kazakh society and the creative minority, represented by the liberal-minded intelligentsia.

As noted above, the political development and the formation of political culture in Kazakhstan at the beginning of the 20th century took place in the context of Russian political thought and reality. During this period, Russia was experiencing a peak of political activity: the mass media were developing, there was an increase in the number of libraries, which influenced the formation of political culture. Libraries became the public space where urban intellectuals collaborated, and county towns gradually acquired a political dimension.

Thus, the intelligentsia was able to reveal its potential as ideological leaders in the urban space, where there were opportunities for collaboration and consolidation of social forces along similar lines, but also to form a political platform. This process was quite complicated and time-consuming. Educational activity was a priority for the intelligentsia of the indicated period in connection with the denial of open protest, associated with risks and threats for the nomadic population. The Kazakh intelligentsia adhered to this position during the 1916 uprising, calling for a peaceful resolution of the issue. The city became the environment for the Kazakh intellectual, where people could show their concrete civic position. However, the outskirts of the city were distinguished by political indifference, rather they were urban settlements, where the predominant part was engaged in agriculture. Cities in the classical sense, in a very approximate form, were presented by public spaces: libraries, parks, theaters, clubs, etc., that is, this kind of location where the public could exchange views, discuss important news, etc.

However, a much greater effect on social development and social activity of city dwellers was obtained through the development of the mass media. The first newspa-

pers were aimed at educational and informational content, at the same time they were also a communication channel: business and citizens, society, and government, etc. which actually led to the formation of public activity, the desire to be involved in the processes of life and activities of the city.

So, in Kustanai at the beginning of the twentieth century, due to the acuteness of the land issue and a large flow of immigrants, a request for information about agriculture and the peculiarities of its development in the conditions of the Steppe Territory appeared. The appearance of such a publication as "Kustanai steppe economy" is quite natural, as the agrarian issue covered all categories of the population and became the cause of economic and interethnic conflicts in the region. The publication, as conceived by its creators, was supposed not only to defuse tension in this issue, but also to fulfill an educational mission: to acquaint readers with "leading articles on agriculture" [19, pp .8–12].

By the way, the first city publication of Kustanay was the newspaper "Steppe echoes", the purpose of which was to educate and activate the public life of the city. "Steppe Echoes" was supposed to be published 2 times a week with a small circulation, but it did not receive support and was closed. Until 1910, residents of the city depended on the information that could come from Orenburg, Troitsk and other cities. Publications were also subscribed from St. Petersburg and Moscow, but preference was given to local provincial publications. The reading culture for a small city was quite high with about a hundred printed editions [19, pp. 11–12].

Town citizens possessed the habit to learn the news through newspapers, here is an excerpt from an article on the development of the media in the region: "Now he, sensitively listens to the news coming from the heart of Russia, who had no idea about the newspaper, now he asks the first person he meets what they write in newspapers" [19, p. 25].

New practices and models of behavior are being formed, which existed in the county town until the beginning of the century. A citizen not only wants to know the news but is also ready to create news and be involved in the social processes of city life.

Urban themes are also reflected on the pages of the reports on meetings of the City Duma and on chronicle of public events. The City Duma, its activities, and the participation of the citizens in it, are the evidence of an increase in the level of political culture. The Kustanay City Duma for the entire period of its existence was able not only to identify, but also to solve some urban issues.

In this case, the newspaper becomes an instrument in the hands of the public that could solve both the problems of the city and the region as a whole. As a rule, such publications were not limited to narrow problems,

but topical issues fell into the field of vision and discussions [20, pp. 239–239ob.].

Criticism of the current regime took place; for example, in August 1917 the Kustanai City Duma decided to rename Tsarskaya Street after L. Tolstoy. The event is quite ordinary for the revolutionary period, nevertheless, it demonstrates the relevance and involvement of the town citizens in social processes [21, p. 11]. The politicization of urban space can manifest itself in various aspects. It is very important to understand what factors contributed to and what had an inhibitory effect on the development of political culture and the formation of political space in the city.

Let us assume that remoteness from large political centers and, in general, weak communications were constraining factors in the politicization of both urban so-

ciety and the city, where the urban intelligentsia, being essentially the main subject of this process, was not monolithic in its ideological orientation, but it rather created a favorable basis for politicization and the involvement of its various representatives. The revolution of 1905 activated the intelligentsia, which at that moment came to realize its civic responsibility for the fate of the Kazakh people. And its activity began to manifest itself precisely in the urban environment. The intelligentsia played a tangible role in the formation of the political space, where the city at the very beginning of its inception played, first of all, an administrative role. Thus, the intellectual essence with its desire for beauty and desire to ennoble, contributed to the emergence of libraries, establishment of musical evening concerts, founding a cultural space in the city.

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