

THE RITUAL AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Religious identity considers, as the primary in the history of human's identity forms, which has established the basis of the social and ethnic identity formation. Herein the religion becomes a kind of a cultural code, which transmits from generation to generation and defines morality and social norms. The awareness of integrity and constancy of existence in time and space occurs in the context of the saved religion traditions and rituals.

Notwithstanding the importance of determining the role of the ritual in the representation of religious identity, it is necessary to consider the concept «identity» and «religious identity» in the scientific discourse.

The term «identity» is derived from the Latin root *idem* and indicates the similarity and connection with anything. In addition, it serves as a category of social and human sciences (psychology, social philosophy, cultural anthropology, social psychology, etc.) and uses for describing individuals and groups as the relatively stable, «identical to themselves» integrities. The identity is not a property (i.e. something inherent in the individual initially) but the attitude. It forms and fixes (or on the contrary redefines and transforms) only during the social interaction [1].

It is known, that self-identification is the desire to determine «what I am in reality». Moreover, the identity is the existential self-determination that underlies an act of thinking [2, p. 55].

In his book *Identity Theory*, Peter Burke wrote that identity is generally used to define and describe an individuals' sense of self, group affiliations, structural positions, and ascribed and achieved statuses. Identity results from internal subjective perceptions, self reflection and external characterizations. Contrary to earlier understandings of identity as fixed and immutable, today identity is more often considered as an evolving process of «becoming» rather than simply of «being». Individual identity then can shift over time, due to personal experiences and larger social changes [3, p. 33]. Moreover, identity attempts to link the individual conception of self and the larger social structure within which the individual thinks and acts. However, these approaches to identity vary in their emphases on social structure, on the one hand, and the processes and interactions through which identities are constructed, on the other. The structural approach relies on the concept of role identities in ana-

lyzing individuals' self-conceptions, behaviors, and social relations with others. The second approach highlights on-going processes of identity construction, selection, and negotiation [3, p. 112].

V. Krylov determines the problem of the identity origin using the hermeneutical approach and leaning on the Christian aspect. There is the biblical story of humankind that starts with the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. «And saw the wife that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and it was also desirable for gaining wisdom; and she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave it to her husband and he ate. And opened the eyes of them both and they realized that they were naked...». Thus, according to the Bible, the man disobeyed and opposed himself to God. The theologians say that the Fall of the man changed his nature and his life was filled with misery, strife, famine, death and etc. The man realized not only his physical nakedness, but also its weakness and helplessness, and estrangement from the God led to the search for answers to such eternal questions as essence, value, integrity of life and his own «I» [4, p. 27].

In the number of researches, the religious identity examines considering its belonging to the religion. On the one hand, the religion serves as some kind of the beginning, which enables the implementation of the identification; on the other hand, it is an institution where people can identify themselves in different social contexts. In the process of identification and socialization, a person learns religious norms, stereotypes, patterns of behavior prescribed by the religious doctrine.

It is important to note that the institute of the ritual carries a significant role in the representation of religious identity. Identificational value of the ritual consists in its repeatability, signedness and group affiliation. On the one hand, the rituals represent strict, well-ordered acts; on the other hand, they thoroughly link symbolic acts with the ordinary one. Therefore, from the ancient times rituals are used in religious practices. They are considered to be an important element in the formation of religious identity.

Investigation of rituals conducted by E. Erikson, is carried out in the context of the various stages of human life, where moving into adulthood supposes a conscious inclusion into his own social group, and the ability to oppose another's world outlook and ideology. This viewpoint determines the interrelationships between the ritual and identity [5].

Theoretical explanations of ritual generally regard it as action and distinguish it from the concep-

tual aspects of religion, such as beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths. In her book *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Bell clearly stated that «beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths emerge as forms of mental content or conceptual blueprints: they direct, inspire, or promote activity, but they themselves are not activities» [6, p. 19]. Meanwhile, ritual, like action, will act out, express, or perform religious conceptual orientations. Ritual is a means by which «collective beliefs and ideals are simultaneously generated, experienced, and affirmed as real by the community» [6, p. 20]. In other words, ritual is the primary means by which individual perception and behavior are socially appropriated or conditioned.

In the context of social individuals' conditioning process, Bell suggests what she called «ritual mastery.» According to her, ritual mastery is the ability «to take and remake schemes from the shared culture that can strategically nuance, privilege, or transform, deploy them in the formulation of a privileged ritual experience, which in turn impresses them in a new form upon agents able to deploy them in a variety of circumstances beyond the circumference of the rite itself» [6, p. 116]. As a consequence, ritual mastery implies that ritual can exist only in «the specific cultural schemes and strategies for ritualization (i.e., for the production of 'ritualized' practices) embodied and accepted by persons of specific cultural communities» [6, p. 107].

Meanwhile, according to Bell, «ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities» [6, p.74]. As such, ritualization becomes a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities distinct from others, for creating and privileging qualitative distinctions between the 'Sacred' and the 'Profane,' and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors. Furthermore, intrinsic to ritualization are strategies for differentiating itself – to various degrees and in various ways – from other ways of acting within any particular culture. At a more complex level, it is a way of acting that «specifically establishes a privileged contrast, differentiating itself as more important or powerful» [6, p. 90].

E. Fromm, referring to the interrelation of the religious rituals and human behavior, distinguishes rational and irrational rituals. He considers irrational rituals to be the result of strong affect. An ablution is given as an example of such ritual, as an attempt to get rid of a deep sense of guilt.

«The destruction, that a person plans unconsciously and which in no case should achieve his

consciousness, is constantly neutralized in the ritual of the ablution. A man is in great necessity of the ritual in order to cope with his feeling of guilt. Being aware of the existence of destructive impulse, he can deal directly with it and understanding its source he can finally weakens it to the acceptable level». The rational ritual differs from the irrational, especially in function: «it does not alienate the suppressed impulses, but expresses aspiration, which the individual considers valuable. Thus, it hasn't such kind of hauntingly forced character, that the irrational ritual has; if the latter does not fulfilled at least once, the depressed threatens can break out, that's why any error generates strong concern» [7, p.112].

An anthropological investigation of rituals is addressed to human past which is based on the ethnographic data obtained in studying traditional communities. The first known rituals in the history were associated with magic acts in the totemism. The appearance of it was explained by the necessity of gaining a sense of unity and collectivism of the primitive mentality, which was an important factor in patrimonial identification [8, p.53].

In this regard, the latest book of E. Durkheim, «The Elementary Forms of Religious Life» deserves a particular attention. The author paid great attention to the totemic cults of the primitive Australian tribes where totem acted as the embodiment of the social community. Moreover, the regular rituals, which were associated with the totem, were intended to support its cohesiveness and identity.

As it is known, a society can exist only by generating in its members a sense of the sacred. It should influence the individual using its highest strength. It supports in people the feeling of solidarity and common identity by means of the special repetitive rituals recreating the joint sacred past. In the center of what the community considers being the sacred there is their specific past. The events concerning with the myth of the origin are very specific. Thus, regular and ritual re-creation of the events that constitute the common origin of the group is the most important way to maintain the unity [9, p.432].

According to Caesar Farah in her book *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, the Five Pillars of Islam (arkan al Islam) are five basic acts in Islam, considered obligatory by believers and are the foundation of Muslim life [10, p. 23]. The Five Pillars of Islam are shahada, salat, zakat, sawm, and hajj. The Quran presents them as a framework for religious act of

worship or ibadat and a sign of commitment to the faith. These ibadat can also be seen as Islamic basic rituals. Due to the scope of this paper, only salat, sawm and hajj, viewed as the primary embodied Islamic rituals (mainly using the body), that will be discussed and analyzed as a central means of Muslim identity construction. It should be noted as well that regarding these acts of Islamic worships, not all Muslims will do this ibadat in their daily life. However, as long as they do accept and embrace Islamic way of life and way of conduct, they will still be considered as Muslims in Muslim society.

It is very important, that in any society, there is a system of ritual and ceremonial activities, that determine the semantic structure of religious identity and its manifestation. For example, in the traditional Kazakh culture the ritual of «giving a name» represented a symbolic link between the name of the child and his future destiny. In order to affirm the baby as a social being it was necessary to endow him with all the attributes of the person, and the name considered to be the major among them. Traditionally the process of «giving a name» was not delayed, because according to the popular belief, Shaytan could give the child its name. Usually a mullah was invited in order to give the name to the newborn. During the very process of «giving a name» the baby's name was cried out into one ear, and into another ear the sacred writing of sura «Takbir» was read. That was done in order to keep the name of Allah from the very childhood and for the child to grow up clean, devout and faithful to the word of honor [11, p.110].

Thus, we can say that in the traditional societies, a person from his very birth already obtains both religious and cultural identification code. On the background of global religious transformations in post-secular world, current realities dictate to the human to choose his individual trajectory of religious identity. The man becomes the manager and belongs simultaneously to many worlds. He must correlate them between themselves. Mixing and transformation of the religious rituals in new religious movements clearly reflects this reality. God no longer chooses and elects the man, but the man chooses God and his religion. The religion becomes only the segment in the world of man, it does not pretend to define a common frame of the individual life. Instead of it, the individual is put together as a patchwork quilt from his world outlooks and recent reference points (patchwork identity).

Әдебиеттер

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