

CONFESSIONAL GROUPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN: IDENTITY AND FEATURES OF ITS DESIGN

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Abstract

Purpose: The relevance of the problem is caused by the need for a comprehensive study of interfaith group attitudes in multiethnic and polyconfessional regions of the Russian Federation. The purpose of this article is to analyze the strategies of constructing identity in the environment of religious groups in the Republic of Tatarstan in 2017 - 2018.

Methodology: The Leading approach to the study of this problem is a multi-paradigm methodology. The article gives a comparative description of the world outlook of the three studied groups -Muslims, Orthodox, and Atheists. Special attention is paid to the analysis of mechanisms of religious socialization and transmission of religious values.

Result: It is concluded that Muslims attach more importance to the implementation of religious rites and practices; the family is considered the main agent of religious socialization, they are more characterized by the position of "religion is not chosen." The materials of the article can be useful for ethnologists, social and cultural anthropologists, political scientists, as well as representatives of bodies and structures in charge of interethnic and interreligious interaction.

Applications: This research can be used for universities, teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of Confessional groups in the Republic of Tatarstan: identity and features of its design are presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: *confessionalism, identity, religious socialization, rites and rituals, ethnicity.*

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Tatarstan is historically one of the multinational and multi-religious regions of the Russian Federation. At present, the confessional diversity of the Republic is mainly determined by the interaction of such religious movements as Islam and Orthodoxy. It is also necessary to take into account a significant effect of groups who identified themselves as "unbelievers", that is atheists. The tendency towards the growth of religious self-consciousness has an impact on all spheres of society. In this regard, the relevance of the study of strategies for the construction of religious identity is determined by the needs of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of the Republic of Tatarstan. Identity construction strategies and religious practices of the population of the Republic have an impact on inter-group interaction in the industrial, cultural, leisure spheres, the nature of interpersonal communication, as well as the general state of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in the republic.

Interfaith relations in society are realized on two levels: institutional and intergroup. The first is studied by etnopolitology, the second by ethno-sociology ([Drobizheva, etc., 2016](#); [Kenan, 2018](#)).

In ethno-sociology interfaith interaction is studied through opinions, attitudes, orientations, values of people in different spheres of life – business, industrial, leisure, and family.

Strategies of construction of confessional identity form a wide range of problems, the study, and the solution of which is promising and relevant.

METHODS

The study is based on the methodological principles of the poly-paradigm approach. In the context of our study, the basic are two concepts of the theory of Bart: first, the conclusion that the determinants of membership in the group are socially-defined factors, which are based on the phenomenon of categorical attribution, and not "objectively" existing cultural differences. Secondly, ethnic categories, both in the identification itself and in the process of classifying others to certain ethnic groups, take into account not all objective differences, but only those that are perceived as significant by individuals themselves ([Barth,1989](#)).

The study, conducted in 2018, was attended by 2,100 respondents, 700 of whom identified themselves as Muslims, 700 as Orthodox and 700 as non – believers (atheists). The study covered the following cities and towns of the Republic of Tatarstan: Kazan, Naberezhnye Chelny, Nizhnekamsk and Nizhnekamsk district, Zelenodolsk and Zelenodolsk district, Mamadysh and Mamadysh district, Leninogorsk and Leninogorsk district, Almetyevsk and Almetyevsk district, Chistopol and Chistopol district, Laishevo and Laishevsky district, Aktanyshsky district, Vysokogorsky district. 51.1% of respondents are natives of the area, 28.3% moved more than 10 years ago, every tenth respondent moved from 5 to 10

years ago, 7.7% - from 1 to 5 years ago, 3.7% - less than 1 year ago. 40.2% of the respondents consider themselves Tatars, 47.1% - Russians, 12.7% are representatives of other ethnic groups.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the object of study: 50.2% of respondents are men; 49.8% are women. Distribution by age groups: 18-24 years-14,7%; 25-30 years-15,3%; 31 – 50 years – 39,7%; older than 51 years – 30,3%. 1.5% of respondents have primary education; 20.1% have secondary education; 47,7% have specialized secondary education; 30% have higher education; 0.8% have a degree. [Titova, T. A., Kozlov, V. E., & Guschina, E. G. \(2015\).](#)

Almost a quarter of respondents are employed in the service sphere; one in five respondents work in industry, construction, transport; 13.6% - in education, science, culture; 11% - pensioners; 9.4% - students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the respondents identifying themselves as Muslims - 90.4% are Tatars, 1.1% - Russians, 4% - Bashkirs, 4.5% - representatives of other ethnic groups. Among the respondents – Orthodox-82.1% - Russians, 2.9% - Kryashens, 2% - Tatars, 2.7% - Chuvash, 2.3% - Ukrainians, 2.1% - Mari, 1.9% - Udmurts; 1.7% - Mordvins, 2.3% - representatives of other ethnic groups.

To a larger extent, a group of Muslims is a mono-ethnic composition – more than 90% of this group are the Tatars. Thus, there is a connection between ethnic and religious self-identification of respondents. Classifying themselves as a particular denomination, respondents express their ethnic identity.

Among respondents- atheists, Russians dominate – 58,1%, and 28.3% are Tatars, 2.4% - Bashkirs, 2% are Chuvash, 2.4% - Mari, 6,8% - representatives of other ethnic groups. [Titova, T. A., Kozlov, V. E., & Guschina, E. G. \(2015\).](#)

In explaining the reasons for the revival of interest in religion the position of the respondents was as follows: 27.1% of respondents believe that interest in religion was caused by the plight of ordinary people in the 1990s; 20.7% of respondents noted the position that "society, having lost the ideals of communism, began to look for the sense of life in the religious values," 18% believe that the process of national revival sparked interest in religion. The position "this cannot be explained by anything but god's Providence" found the biggest number of supporters among Muslims (13.4% of Muslim respondents, 4% of Orthodox and 0.4% of atheists).

The explanation of interest in religion by the general decline in education is characteristic primarily of non-believers (20.9% atheists, 6% Muslims and 7.1% Orthodox). [Titova, T. A., Kozlov, V. E., & Guschina, E. G. \(2015\).](#)

The analysis of respondents ' construction of confessional identity revealed the following features. For Muslim respondents, and for Orthodox respondents, the following worldview is dominant: "To do good deeds, to help the needy, without expecting gratitude in return" (see table. 1).

The ritual component of religiosity is more important for Muslim respondents (see table.1).

Atheists are more inclined to adhere to the statement: «To believe or not to believe is a personal matter of each person."

The missionary approach "To bring the light of truth and faith to other people "is shared by 11.6% of Orthodox and 13.9% of Muslims.

Table 1: What do you think it means to be a believer? ,%

	Muslims	Orthodox	Atheists
Strive to observe all the rites, rituals and regulations	31.7	23.7	19.7
Bring the light of truth and faith to others	12.9	11.6	3.1
To do good deeds, to help those in need, without expecting gratitude in return	32.7	39.4	17.4
To believe or not to believe is a personal matter	16.1	19.4	46.9
Something else.	1.3	1.1	1.7
Difficult to answer	5.3	4.7	11.1

Thus, religiosity is not of a pronounced dogmatic nature. For most believers, religiosity is not limited to performing rites and rituals but involves certain social practices ("doing good deeds", "bringing the light of truth"). However, Muslim respondents attach more importance to the dogmatic side of religion than Orthodox respondents. This is manifested in the declared desire to perform religious rites and regulations.

"Education, teaching, explaining to people the concepts of Islam, not in a distorted form is very essential. In a word, it is very important to bring Islam to people in its original sense. It can be interpreted in different ways, so it is important to convey to people the correct assessment of Islam, it is the image of Islam in modern times, which can be drowned out in connection with current events especially" (focus group, ethnic Muslims, Kazan).

"Yes, the most important thing is to convey the original version of the Prophet, from whom all this came. Islam is the youngest religion and the purest one" (focus group, ethnic Muslims, Kazan). [Titova, T. A., Kozlov, V. E., & Guschina, E. G. \(2015\).](#)

"I think religion is needed to determine the power of the human soul, located in the "cosmos" so that it could produce a correct result. Therefore, religion is needed. But to speculate what religion is right... Here we are believers, Orthodox... Lord ... just I would not like to theologize, but I believe that Orthodoxy is the true religion. You can feel it in every way, here is an example, through Protestantism-a person felt in his heart where the spirit is, where the truth is" (focus group, practicing Orthodox, Kazan).

"I was also in Islam, I had faith since my childhood. And when I went to the first class, the headteacher came and said, "Children, God does not exist", and I felt that something inside me ruined. I was a seven-year-old child, I believed, and somebody came and told me that God does not exist. And I had an internal protest. Therefore, faith was in the first place. All this was higher than me" (focus group, practicing Orthodox, Kazan).

The correlation with the religious affiliation of respondents in the analysis of religious socialization and transmission of religious values is revealed. [Nurutdinova, A. N. \(2016\).](#)

Muslims attach more importance to the family as an agent of religious socialization than Orthodox and atheists, believing that "a person is guided to the path of communion with the faith by his father and mother (family), since religion is not chosen" (44, 4% of Muslims, 34.1% of Orthodox and 9.3% of atheists).

Orthodox and atheists more often than Muslims choose the position of "man himself, fully consciously, approaches the issues of faith, choice of religion" (42.7% of Muslims, 52.1% of Orthodox, 49.7% of atheists).

Atheists are characterized by the statement that in case of increasing their educational and cultural level, a person feels no need in the authority of religion (32.4% of atheists, 2.6% of Muslims and 2.9% of Orthodox).

"Faith originally appeared when people could not find an explanation: it was raining and the crops were washed away, so the gods wanted it to be so. And people had to pray to make them more favorable." (focus group, atheists, Kazan).

"Filling the void with faith is stupid. Because of faith, there have been many wars, faith brings disappointment. More precisely, the religion, then faith and religion are different things. These two concepts are similar in meaning, but faith is a belief in something abstract, and religion is a belief in God himself, in his existence. There was a lot of death because of religion. The scientific process, because people believed, was very slow. Human development could have gone faster if it hadn't been for religion. Maybe we would have already flown" (focus group, atheists, Kazan). [Sabirova, A. N., Titova, T. A., & Frolova, E. V. \(2016\).](#)

Studies of confessional processes in the Russian Federation are relevant for representatives of various scientific fields. Sociologists study ethnosocial and ethno-confessional aspects of migration in modern society ([Drobizheva, 2009](#); [Antúnez, 2001](#)). Political scientists are interested in the problems of the influence of the state of interethnic and interreligious relations on public policy and social processes in society ([Luo et al, 2018](#)). A special place is given to the study of the psychological aspects of interethnic and interreligious interaction ([Vargas-Hernández, 2016](#)). Researchers are interested in the size of the inter-group distance between the host population and foreign cultural groups of migrants, the level of xenophobia, especially social contacts between representatives of different faiths and nationalities. Anthropologists and ethnologists are interested in the study of everyday practices of interethnic and interreligious interactions. The focus of the analysis is, in particular, the study of social intergroup distance and religious practices in a multiethnic and multi-confessional society ([Jaramillo, 2018](#)). At the same time, the study of the peculiarities of inter-group attitudes in the multi-confessional regions of the Russian Federation requires more in-depth study. In this study, the team of authors studied the strategies of identity construction among confessional groups in the Republic of Tatarstan.

SUMMARY

Summarizing the above, we can say that the construction of confessional identity in the studied groups has the following features:

- Muslims attach great importance to the implementation of religious rites and practices; the main agent of religious socialization is considered to be the family; they are more characterized by the position of " religion is not chosen»;
- The Orthodox pay less attention to the dogmatic side of religion, believing that faith is, first of all, social practices, " good deeds»;
- Atheists are characterized by a critical attitude to religion, they consider the religiosity of society as a consequence of the decline in education.

CONCLUSIONS

The materials presented in the article may have scientific, humanitarian and practical significance. The materials of the article can be useful for specialists in the field of social Sciences: ethnologists, social and cultural anthropologists, political

scientists, as well as representatives of bodies and structures in charge of interethnic and interreligious interaction.

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