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**CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS RELATIONS
AT THE NORTHERN AZOV TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE:
DIALOGICAL MEASUREMENT**

The religion as a specific socio-cultural phenomenon determines the relation to all parts of human existence. The identity of a modern Ukrainian is based entirely on certain convictions, of which religious conviction is significant. The most notable is the effect of the combination of religious and ethnic identities in the North Azov Sea, which is directly linked to a large number of representatives of various ethnic communities and cultures.

O. Avdeyev, A. V. Aleksandro, L. Afanasyev, L. Glinskaya, B. Kocherga, O. Tukhvatulin were engaged in questions of inter-confessional relations of the Northern Azov region Ukraine. The significance of religious identity in contemporary culture was emphasized by S. Bensen, S. Dermendzhiev, M. Kurin, A. Sorochuk, A. Leschenko, N. Pivovarova, who wrote about belief as the basis of people's religious relations.

It becomes obvious, that the existence of a person in the multicultural space is extremely important for constructive dialogue between representatives of various ethnic groups and religions for the establishment of all human existence stages. After all, the ability to

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properly build a dialogue and express thoughts depend on the level of understanding heard and the desire to continue the interaction.

When considering the religious practices of a certain territory, we will certainly encounter the concepts of “religion”, “religiosity” and “belief”, which are served as the driving factors for dialogue building.

Investigating the first concept, it is fundamentally important to consider the opinion of N. Pivovarova on the phenomenon identified by three points of view: 1) background attitude towards (priests, sacred symbols, rites, cults, etc.), which includes a person as an estimated component of practice; 2) religion as a human phenomenon (associated with personality, his/her feelings, personal belief, perception of the surrounding world); 3) religion as a system of views and actions, a certain substance (an effective phenomenon that generates peculiarities of individuals and societies)⁴. In our research, we will consider religion as a third group of views, namely as a phenomenon and a certain social add-on.

It should be noted that the special feature of religion is the self-determination of person in the world. Thus, in our study we will treat religion as a social (its' arises, functions in the society) and individual (perceived individually and passes by the selection through practical development) phenomenon.

We consider it worthwhile to note that the religious phenomenon cannot exist without a trusting relation between person and God, the Supreme Power, the Absolute. The concept of belief bearing religious color is interpreted as the central life position of a believer. This system includes several points: the adoption of certain dogma, which is fundamental in the belief; keeping them in spite of certain doubts and differences regarding the faith of the believer; personal trust in God, serving as the center of demonstration of a righteous life. We emphasize that the concept of “belief” in Christianity and Islam is identified with the notion of “religion”⁵. That is why our research is

⁴ Н. Пивоварова, *Проблема інтерпретації та операціоналізації термінів “релігія”, “віра”, “релігійність”, “Український соціум”* 2014, № 1(48), с. 44-55.

⁵ В. Стёпин, А. Огурцова, Г. Семигин, *Новая философская энциклопедия: в 4 томах*, Мысль, Москва 2010, т. 1, с. 380-381.

based on the statistical processing of the questionnaire with aim of identification the factors of constructing the dialogue between people of the Northern Azov district, these two concepts will be considered as one whole (“belief”).

The interpretation of belief has not only a discursive character (scientific, philosophical, educational, religious, general cultural, etc.), but also acquires certain connotations, identifications with other phenomena. So, it is necessary to establish the essential features of this phenomenon, on the basis of which faith cannot be introduced into endless “confusion”, especially when it comes to the religious belief of different peoples. In this sense, the main sign of belief is the acceptance of any level true knowledge (communication, information, scientific laws, philosophical meanings) that does not require the imperative need to prove and confirm the truth perceived by the senses and the mind of men/women.

Such an understanding embraces the contents of all types of belief, the most important of which should be recognized as philosophical, religious, scientific, the main difference of which, in our opinion, lies in the “volume” of claims to influence on the objective world and human life.

The leading characteristic of belief, which is characterized as the rejection of objectivity, still occupies a different place in the plane of the world, which is the subject of human knowledge. Thus, scientific belief (prediction, hypothesis) is based on facts, on their analyzing, producing conclusions (laws and rules) which are remained within the limits of the recognizable (natural) and legitimate world. Religious belief passes into a plane that is not a subject to cognition (in its scientist sense), that is, in the supernatural, metaphysical world, and moreover, it extends the freedom that it perceives to the metaphysical world as well as to nature. Gradually, religious belief, leaving the basic meaning, canonically reduces faith in human action, in accordance with the moral principles of trust, devotion, loyalty, on the one hand, and to faith in otherworldly charity thanks to God, on the other hand. And, at the end, philosophical belief covers all forms of human existence (substantive, existential, and transcendental). Consequently, the object of philosophical belief is the man/woman in the natural

being-in-world, in the existence of human self (existential) and in God. Philosophical faith, wisely combining the physical, spiritual and God in person, must also wisely combine people of different faiths and those who do not believe in the aspirations of peace and good.

In our opinion, a significant link of the human life's world in the polyethnic and multicultural space of the Northern Azov region was religious, which served as a unifying element with the core. For the national identities, in particular settlers, this bridge was the church.

As part of our researching, the term "religiosity" will be understood as the conviction of the individual, his/her devotion and respect for the divine essence. In the most comprehensive use, religiosity can cover all spheres of religion. But in the narrow sense the religion denotes as a certain worldview and the adoption of religious rites and traditions⁶. Religiosity consists of some components, namely, religious activity, belief and selflessness. In a narrow sense, religiosity shows how much a person accepts one or another religion (practicing certain rituals, telling stories, referring to religious symbols, or accepting certain dogmas of afterlife and deity). According to anthropological, sociological and psychological studies, the phenomenon of religious congruency is rarely seen in everyday life. Let us explain that religious congruency is the assumption that religious beliefs and values are deeply integrated into the human mind or that religious practices and behavior directly depend on the religious beliefs of the individual⁷. Religious ideas are fragmented, unrelated, and dependent on the environment in which the person is. As in other areas of culture, religious affiliation is a complex activity that can have many sources. A person may object to all doctrines related to organized religions, not to attend religious services, but at the same time have strong persuasions about higher power and to have a close connection with it. Thus, religiosity has three dimensions: persuasion,

⁶ Л. В. Афанасьєва, Л. Ф. Глинська, *Релігійно-світоглядні уявлення народів Північного Приазов'я: діалог культур*, "Культура народів Причорномор'я" 2002, № 28, с. 226–231.

⁷ S. Benthein, *Couple congruence and spirituality: expanding Satir's modelotrough*, University of Victoria, USA, 2005.

efficacy and spirituality. The above-mentioned dimensions are interrelated, which in turn means that people who are often visited the churches also have clearly expressed convictions and spirituality. The individual serves religious consciousness as the basis of his/her religiousness and has three forms: belief in the supernatural, in connection with God, angels and demonic power, and certain sacred symbols. The connection of priests and parishioners to supernatural is expressed through the use of traditional religious rituals. The social burden of religiosity is the educational process of believers, their unification around certain ideas, the implantation of the rules of the corresponding behavior, the knowledge code of ethical behavior in the multicultural environment.

The material basis for the reproduction of religious activity and religious consciousness are religious buildings, and the spiritual foundation of human worldview⁸.

Under the outlook, we will understand the form of social existence of person, when based on generalized ideas about the world and the person himself/herself is formed attitude to being. Important collapsibles in this case are the practical absorption of spiritual culture (science, art, literature) and feelings that are inherent in person (ethical, cultural, legal, religious or atheistic). Worldview is not based on knowledge alone. The emotional-sensory sphere also plays an important role. We emphasize that the fidelity of the worldview is verified by the experience of men/women and over time becomes a vital position. The very outlook acts as the basis of the person's spiritual world, and the vital position is the universal expression of the individual in society.

A person's vital position can be active or passive. Realization of the formed life position is carried out with the help of the person's volition. An important indicator of volition is the ability to mobilize all forces to achieve the goal. Obstacles that occur in the way of a person (internal – disability, fear, external – the circumstances of human

⁸ В.В. Молодыченко, Л.В. Афанасьева, И.В. Букреева, А.В. Орлов, Е.Г. Хомчак, *Храмы этноконфессионального Запорожского Приазовья*, Милениум, Київ 2014.

existence), encourage the will to activity to achieve the intended purpose. It is important to note that the will acts as a vital basis for self-education, self-improvement.

One of the manifestations of an effective ideological position is social activity, which acts as the next factor in constructing a dialogue. Under this concept we understand the realization of a person's life positions. Social activity is social maturity indicator of the individual and the desire to change the world around him/her in accordance with his own worldview⁹. Thus, the sphere realization of their vital installations, new needs and interests, dialogue of human existence will be considered social activity.

Of course, the formation of a dialogue connected with the outlook and human consciousness is directly influenced by the historical living conditions in a certain territory, the actions of the political leaders of the region, and legislative documents. Consequently, the context of the era in a certain territory, in our case of the Northern Azov, is another factor in constructing a dialogue.

It should be noted that the region of the Northern Azov is a vivid example of taking into account all of these elements of dialogue (belief, religiosity, social activity, context of the era) in shaping the religious identity of a person.

Under religious identity we will understand self-awareness and self-association of a person in religion, belonging to a certain social integrity, as well as the actual awareness and experience of this affiliation¹⁰.

In our opinion, the historical context and the possibilities of dialogical interaction of representatives between different religions and ethnic groups in its background play an important role in creating a dialogue in a certain territory. In this regard, the opinion of S. Dermendzhieva concerning the influence of socio-cultural factors (society and living environment of a person) in a certain historical

⁹ А.М. Лещенко, *Психологічна структура віри та мотиви її формування*, "Аналітика" 2009, № 79, с. 119–128.

¹⁰ А. Сорочук, *Релігійна ідентичність особи в умовах сучасної культури*, Науковий вісник Східноукраїнського нац. унт. ім. Л. Українки, Київ 2013, № 11, с. 187–192.

period on the construction the dialogue between various ethnic groups representatives and religious communities is appropriate¹¹.

Thus, the territory designated by us (the Northern Azov) in the social and religious key has undergone a long path of formation. This territory has long been inhabited by representatives of various religious minorities. Among them, the most numerous were ethnic groups of Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians and others. Despite the number of different cultures representatives, the population of this part of country managed to use the common territory, even interact with each other.

A main factor in social, religious and economic life of the population, of course, is the territorial affiliation. To the region of the Northern Azov, we relate Melitopol and Berdyansk counties of the Tavriya province, as well as Mariupol county of Ekaterinoslav province.

As to the current administrative division of the territory of Ukraine, O. Avdeyeva notes that the North Azov includes "Melitopol, Priazovskiy, Primorsky, Berdyansk, Chernihiv, Kuybyshevskiy, Ruzivkiy, southeastern parts of Pogolivskiy and southern part Orechivskiy districts of Zaporizhzhya region and southern part Donetsk region"¹².

Regarding the settlement of the aforementioned territory, it should be noted that the key link in constructing the dialogic interaction of religious identities – the policy of the Russian government headed by Catherine II. Questions of inter-confessional nature were resolved by providing the opportunity to settle in Russia to all interested foreigners.

Christianity was the dominant religion of the Northern Azov Sea. The first settlers were the Greeks who professed Christianity, because at the time of the resettlement (1762) the elite of the Crimean Tatars had an Islamic belief in confessions and did not provide

¹¹ С. Дерменджијева, *Етноидентичността като алтернатива на «кризата на идентичността» през училищната възраст*, "Интеркултурен диалог и интеграция" 2008, Т. 6, с. 174–178.

¹² О.С. Авдејева, *Міжконфесійні відносини у Північному Приазов'ї*, дис. канд. іст. наук, Бердянськ. держ. пед. ун-т., Запоріжжя 2016.

opportunities for the development of Christian denominations. An attractive part of the relocation of the Greeks to the northern Azov was the granting of certain privileges: the opportunity to receive 30 acres of land, the differences in taxation and dismissal from service in the army.

The largest part of the region were the modern territory of Ukraine and Russia. Interaction at the cultural, economic and religious levels of the designated national minorities has led to the assimilation of the Greeks, Mennonites and Jews. Although it should be noted that these ethnic groups were able to preserve their unique culture and national identity through spiritual interaction.

Subsequent years (1790–1796) were quite fruitful with regard to the resettlement of various ethnic groups representatives in the Northern Azov, which, according to the religion, were Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Protestants.

Quite fruitful was 1803 for the resettlement of German colonists - Mennonites. According to the census of 1897, Mariupol County lived 20,000 Mennonites, most of them Lutherans¹³.

Important for the study of life and interaction, German settlers with indigenous people are materials of the Dnipropetrovsk State Archives. Data on the Mennonite census show that the registration process was carried out with the introduction of pedigree lists or camera records. The main focus was on four items: the serial number of the list; the name of the settlement of the person; owners and free people who have filed an application for revision; the number of male and female¹⁴.

The appearance of Bulgarians on the territory of the Northern Azov, in particular, in the Melitopol and Berdyansk counties, refers to the time of the powerful migration waves of the Bulgarian population (1861–1863) from the Bessarabian colonies and north-western Bulgaria. Bulgarians from the government received the status of

¹³ *Мариуполь и его окрестности*, Типо-Литография А.А. Франтова, Мариуполь 1892.

¹⁴ *Матеріали з Державного архіву Дніпропетровської області*, Ф. 134.

settlers and certain benefits (12 acres of land per person)¹⁵. The Bulgarian population was located in small groups also between existing villages in Primorsky, Pryazovsky and Yakymivsky districts of the Zaporizhzhya region. Regarding the religious identity of the Bulgarians, the bulk of the population was Orthodox Christians¹⁶.

The Czechs in the North Azov Region were relocated from Perekop District (Crimea) because of the inadequacy of land for cultivating grain on received parcels. In the Melitopol district of the Tauride province, the Czechoslovak colony was founded by the Czechs (the modern name is Novgorodkivka)¹⁷.

The settlement of the Polish national ethnos on the lands of the Northern Azov began in the XVI–XVII centuries, when part of the Ukrainian lands was under the control of the Lithuania Grand Duchy. New migratory processes of the Poles' resettlement into the Northern Azov are connected with the 60th years of the XIX century, namely the abolition of serfdom and the rapid development of capitalism. The resettlement of Jews to the Northern Azov was partly a colonial character of the government policy of the Russian Empire. The economic development of virgin lands gave the Jews the opportunity to move to the territory of, more precisely, the undeveloped lands near Northern Azov Sea. An interesting fact policy of the colonization resettlement of Jews was the adherence to the Jewish way of life. Most of the Jewish settlers came from Poland and Belarus. Compared with other North-Azov citizens (Greeks, Poles, Germans, Czechs), the Jewish population was ethno-religious differences¹⁸. The financial assistance of the Russian government (the decree to the Minister of Finance of December 17, 1819) prompted the Jews to receive certain privileges. Thus, the Jews were allocated special funds for the construction of

¹⁵ Б.М. Кочерга, Л.В. Афанасьєва, В.М. Александров, *Народи Північного Приазов'я*, Просвіта, Київ 1997.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, с. 21.

¹⁷ В.В. Молодыченко, Л.В. Афанасьєва, И.В. Букреева, *Храми этноконфессионального Запорожского Приазовья*, Милениум, Киев 2014.

¹⁸ О.С. Тухватулліна, *Релігійне життя єврейських колоній Північного Приазов'я (XIX–початок XX ст.)*, "Наукові праці: науково-методичний журнал" 2011, Вип. 142, Т. 154, с. 102–107.

their own homes and subsistence minimum per day. It should be noted that the Jews also allocated state land for development, but for the newly-arrived population, the urban type of life was attractive. Therefore, most immigrants refused land plots and moved to cities¹⁹. It should be emphasized that the religious identities of the Northern Azov were peacefully coexisting. Their relationship was mainly based on economic ties. And in the middle of the nineteenth century, the process of mastering the Northern Azov was largely completed. The cultures of the peoples of the Northern Azov have undergone some changes and modifications. Adherence to a tolerant attitude towards the customs and traditions of various ethnic groups and denominations, united by the common territory of residence, has helped to form and maintain a dialogue between religious identities of the Northern Azov Sea and present time. In order to find out the reliability of the hypothesis we put forward about the factors of constructing a dialogue on the territory of the Northern Azov, a questionnaire was conducted in the settlements of this region.

The survey involved about three thousand people from different areas of the region under study and different sections of the population (pupils and students, members of ethnoconfessional communities and others). One of the blocks of the questionnaire was "Factors for constructing a dialogue", which included four components:

Belief

What is faith for you?

How do you show love for God?

After analyzing the answers to the question "What is faith for you?" One can state that most of the questioned (59%) do not identify faith with a purely religious concept, but rather define it as self-confidence, faith in something extraordinary ("I believe only in themselves, family, relatives", "belief is the cultivation of cultural

¹⁹ *Матеріали з Російського державного історичного архіву*, Ф. 1263. Оп. 1. Спр. 467. Арк. 615.

values“, ” belief is a prevailing worldview“, ” belief is the state of the psyche“, ” belief is the cultivation of cultural values“); 14% of the questionnaires associate the notion of ”belief“ with God (”belief is God“); 8% – failed to answer this question; 7% – define their perception of the world as atheistic; for 7% of the polled belief it is synonymous with good (4%) and hope (3%), while the smallest percentage of respondents (3%) define the belief as something negative or incomprehensible (”belief is a relic of the past“, ”belief is a white spot in my life, with great significance“); 2% – interpret the belief as a specific religion or direction in science (”belief is Islam“, ”belief is Orthodoxy“).

Thus, we can state that the concept of ”belief“ among respondents is not limited to its religious interpretation. On the contrary, the understanding of this concept has psychological, epistemological, sociological or other interpretations. Most respondents do not have a correct understanding of the concept of ”belief“ and a certain religious orientation, denominational membership. In our opinion, there may be several reasons for this: a) unformed religious beliefs; b) insufficient degree of faith; c) influence on the outside person (family, friends, educational institution).

The questionnaire was also asked to answer the question ”How do you show love for God?“ Most of the questioned – 53% –indicated that they apparently did not express their love for God; 31% – could not answer this question; 11% of the respondents indicated that they express love for God ”going to church“, ”wearing a cross“, ”reading prayers“.

Religiosity

What role does belief play in your life? Do you believe that faith does not mean anything in your life?;

Could you accept another belief?

One of the issues that will allow us to determine the degree of personality religiosity was ”What role does belief play in your life? Do you believe that faith does not mean anything in your life?“ The majority of respondents answering this question were confined to the simple answer ”important“ (59%) or ”not important“ (12%), 10%

could not give a clear answer to this question; 8% of respondents explained in more detail the role of belief in their lives: some (7%) described belief as a component of socio-cultural phenomenon ("important, because faith is needed for society", "belief is important, because faith is, above all, faith, cultural traditions"); 4% of the respondents indicated the role of faith in life as the most important, noting that "life is being faithfully", "it is easier for me to go with belief in life, the voice of conscience sounds more often", "I live, using good doctrines", etc. So, in most of the respondents, religiosity plays an important role in life. In our opinion, this is primarily due to the growing role of church leaders in solving the social and societal issues of the present. The church or religious denominational communities are increasingly playing a role in transformations that are characteristic of modern Ukrainian society. Due to its multicultural nature and the presence of representatives of traditional and non-traditional cultures, the study region is a very significant factor in dialogic interaction.

The next question was "Could you accept a different belief?" This question was asked us in order to determine how strong the religious convictions of the population of the northern Azov region that were formed throughout life. The statistical analysis of data made it possible to state that 82% of respondents answered "no", adding that "it is a sin", "belief can not be changed"; 10% – answered "Yes", while specifying that "I would like to accept Rastafarianism" (for example, Rastafarianism is a religious movement that was formed as an Afro-Christian syncretic sect, a subculture that includes a system of views, a type of behavior, and a musical direction. This movement gained popularity through the music of reggae), or "if so, then only Buddhism" (we will explain that Buddhism is a religious-philosophical doctrine that arose in India about the sixth century BC, but its main postulates are the provisions of the inevitability of suffering in life, but the only way to avoid them is the achievement of a state of complete rest - nirvana); for 3% of the questioned possibility of changing the system of religious beliefs was not relevant, they did not think about the question, but 2% – left unanswered questions.

Finding the degree of sustainability of religious beliefs, we can state that the religious environment, which has an impact on the outlook of person, in most cases, is formed during a lifetime under the influence of the environment and is quite stable. In the event that this does not happen, the person allows the possibility of correcting and transforming religious preferences.

Social activity

Do you conduct educational work to spread your belief? What kind of? In which institutions?;

How often do you visit Orthodox churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.?

To determine the social activity of the religiously oriented population of the Northern Azov, we were asked to answer the question "Do you conduct educational work to spread your belief? What kind of? In which institutions?". 84% of respondents do not conduct any educational activity, they did not answer this question – 9%. It also turned out that 7% of respondents take part in educational religious activities – "conducting conversations among neighbors", "singing in a religious group, church choir".

Although, most in the region studied did not identify the need for group religious identification (wear a cross, go to church), however, we can not talk about the lack of individual religious identification. After all, for most of the questioned beliefs, God is something personal, internal and to believe in them means "trying to live according to the commandments", "do good", etc. The question that was also of interest to us in the context of our research was "How often do you visit Orthodox churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.?". Responding to it, 87% of respondents indicated that not often (1–5 times a year) or on major religious holidays (Easter or Christmas), 6% of respondents – often visit churches; 2% – attend temples only for educational purposes (during trips, excursions). It should be emphasized that the representatives of certain ethnoconfessional communities, operating in the territory of the region under research, are systematically attending the temple. For the majority of the population, religious practices (visiting temples, participating in

religious ceremonies, celebrating holidays, attending religious gatherings) are of no great importance in the region under study. Most of the respondents do not often attend religious events. However, for people whose religious space they influence, practices are not formal but based on internal needs.

Context of the era

You have chosen this religion because ...

To establish the influence of the context of the era on the consciousness of a person, we asked the respondents to answer the question "You chose this religion because ...". Approximately the same number of people responded that their religious views were formed by parents, relatives, family, environment (36%) and failed to answer questions (34%), 28% of respondents make it possible to state their conscious attitude to the religion they are preaching or what they consider to be their faith ("I chose this religion because it is beautiful", "I chose this religion, it is my heart and spirit", "I chose this religion, because I was interested in its ideology"); a small number of respondents (2%) answered that "pagan lives", "I need it", "religion is not chosen". Based on the statistical data of the conducted questionnaire, we came to the conclusion that there is an insufficient level of religious maturity of the of the Northern Azov district's population. We consider it expedient in the course preparation of theoretical and methodological support of dialogue in the religious practices of the peoples of the Northern Azov region to consider the factors of constructing a contextual dialogue: faith, religiosity, social activity and the context of the era during the formation of a person's religious identity.

Conclusions

When disclosing the question of constructing religious relations advisable advocates the idea of the importance knowledge of the religions of human habitation as an aspect of constructing a harmonious society. The practical study of this problem has allowed us to identify four factors in constructive dialogue that affect religious relations in a certain state of the country (in our research work, the Northern Azov of Ukraine), namely: belief, religiosity, social activity

and the context of the era during the formation of religious identity person's education in relation to the basic dominant religions laws of the region does not in any way mean confessions of these religions or observance of religious rites. This knowledge is an integral part of the history of human civilization and helps to maintain the balance of dialogue and help to know oneself and others from the standpoint of a human-minded approach. Religious education is a significant step in adhering to the policy of tolerance in the multicultural and multi-ethnic region that serves the North Azov and helps to avoid prejudices and misjudgment of any person who does not profess your religion and is a representative of another ethnic group than you. And the value knowledge of religious canons and ethnic rituals of the multicultural region should be oriented towards the good of peoples, cultures, and individual relationships that will help form a higher spiritual society.

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