

## Artículo de investigación

**Structuring of the daily religious practices**

Estructuración de las prácticas religiosas diarias

Estruturação das práticas religiosas diárias

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silaeva-zoya@mail.ru**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the study of religious practices. One of the characteristic features of development of religious studies in Russia is concentration on local religious practices similar to anthropological researches of the second half of the XX century. At the same time there is no conceptualization of present cases, only special theories of the case are formed, whereas the explanatory models is not established. This actualizes the need for the development of a conceptual and methodological framework to study the problems associated with the daily religious practices. On the background of evident demand for conceptual analysis of forming modern daily religious practices we think it is necessary to reveal general principles of their structuring in the context of everyday life.

**Keywords:** religious practices, rationalized religiosity, self-identification, tradition, informed choice.

**Resumen**

El artículo está dedicado al estudio de las prácticas religiosas. Una de las características del desarrollo de los estudios religiosos en Rusia es la concentración en prácticas religiosas locales similares a las investigaciones antropológicas de la segunda mitad del siglo. Al mismo tiempo, no hay una conceptualización de los casos presentes, solo se forman teorías especiales del caso, mientras que los modelos explicativos no están establecidos. Esto actualiza la necesidad del desarrollo de un marco conceptual y metodológico para estudiar los problemas asociados con las prácticas religiosas diarias. En el contexto de la demanda evidente de análisis conceptual de la formación de prácticas religiosas diarias, creemos que es necesario revelar los principios generales de su estructuración en el contexto de la vida cotidiana.

**Palabras clave:** prácticas religiosas, religiosidad racionalizada, autoidentificación, tradición, elección informada.

**Resumo**

O artigo é dedicado ao estudo das práticas religiosas. Uma das características do desenvolvimento dos estudos religiosos na Rússia é a concentração em práticas religiosas locais semelhantes às pesquisas antropológicas da segunda metade do século XX. Ao mesmo tempo, não há conceituação de casos presentes, apenas teorias especiais do caso são formadas, enquanto os modelos explicativos não são estabelecidos. Isso atualiza a necessidade do desenvolvimento de uma estrutura conceitual e metodológica para estudar os problemas associados às práticas religiosas cotidianas. No contexto de uma demanda evidente por uma análise conceitual da formação de práticas religiosas cotidianas modernas, pensamos que é necessário revelar princípios gerais de sua estruturação no contexto da vida cotidiana.

**Palavras-chave:** práticas religiosas, religiosidade racionalizada, autoidentificação, tradição, escolha informada.

## Introduction

Currently the reciprocal vector starts to be outlined in society – formation of rationalized religiosity, informed choice, and this process becomes stronger and more evident. At the present stage rationalization actually takes place but it becomes the part of forming the religious practice, whilst following the religious tradition didn't require practical logic for a long time.

Participation in religious practices is sanctified by tradition – this fact is considered to be proven, and displacement of religious practices on the red-letter day (let's call people who follow this tradition «Sundays Christians») becomes characteristic feature of the society where «the nominal religious» are the majority. This was considered in the human sciences of the end of the XX century (Lewis, 1976). Their nominal character is also expressed in the fact that on Sunday (on any special day, holiday) their presence isn't necessary – the fact of self-identification is enough. And, unexpectedly for many researchers, the religious group – to which this fact of profanation of religion is not applied as well as it is impossible to be exclusively «the Friday Muslim» – becomes very powerful. From Islam we get the new terminology – we divide the faithful into «practicing» and «not practicing». However, such dynamics is observed not only in Islam, but also in new religious movements, and in the traditional Christian confessions as well. As a result new rationality – intelligent religiosity – penetrates the world (Komarov, 2007; Teslya, 2001).

We think that structuring of religious practices in modern society is implemented as rather rationalized inter-subjective communicative discourse process.

Let's consider this thesis through the prism of the present religious practices of different religions in Russia, whereas let's specify that from all social and cultural practices we will marked out those ones that have religious awareness/motivation.

First of all, let's try to concentrate on those practices which were formed and took shape in the period of the end of the XX century – beginning of the XXI century (Brogan, 2002). It's evident that this period coincides with the stage of secularization, passing to the new cultural policy in the world, whereas for the Russian civilization it's – vice versa – time of appropriation of religious identity. And exactly

this period the time of rational religious self-identification, reflection of speculation of personality and discussion about relation with the sacred. At the same time we observe two main tendencies: from one side, there is modeling of religious practices on the basis of remained ideas about right religious behavior; from the other side, formation of new practices as reflecting intentions of inner religious life, something that will be «moral' and «right» in understanding of the faithful people. There is the conscious restoration of the foundation of religious tradition, with rather great substitution of the part of material (Oleshkevich, 2002).

## Methods

In this article we use the method of analyzing the essential characteristics, which are found in the phenomenon of religious practice. In the study we identify the content of those acts in which religious experience is transmitted to social forming (Waardenburg, 1973; Giddens, 1993). With this approach, the study of objectively existing social structures is combined with the analysis of subjective intentions of religious consciousness.

## Results and discussions

Let's consider the traditions of religious practices connected with the body. Carnal practices can be divided into two big groups – the ones connected with the body itself and the others connected with conservation of life of body, first of all it's food practices. Practices of many people connected with food originally had rather religious meaning gradually lost with processes of secularization. In Russia in the XX century these processes had much more expressed character because of impossibility to keep all elements of practices. Accordingly, food religious practices – with loss of religious control and importance of religious tradition – should gradually become the tradition, and then absolutely disappear. However, it does not happen. For example, the Orthodox fasting, admitted in Russia before the Soviet period, today is still practiced in rather radical forms, despite the fact that this food behavior is not obligatory for all, but it's only recommended for absolutely healthy people who lead mainly monastic life. During the research we constantly came across people who ask benediction from the priest to release the fasting, for example, to allow to eat oil: serious





diseases (diabetes, oncology and others) during which it's not recommended (by Orthodox church as well) to keep these restrictions, were the reasons. However, faithful people refused to accept responsibility for non-fulfillment of religious norm, considered doctor's recommendations insufficient and asked the priest to free them from the fasting, at least, in part. It's rather evident that fasting traditions were not passed on and brought up in people who keep them today, vice versa, it becomes the informed choice of every faithful person. But as far as lent diet is accepted as the system of restrictions to the majority of people, modern man forms severe system of the forbidden, transforming practice of lent diet into more understandable diet, when the term «It's forbidden» acquires new familiar meaning and doesn't demand further rationalization.

Observance of food practice acquires the form of one of the elements of religious identity, it becomes maintenance of priorities of personality, chosen and kept. In families mixed by nationality with the so-called «ethnic Orthodox» and «ethnic Muslim» during the fasting we saw the system «double dinners» when the husband and the wife ate different food cooked due to religious requirements. Wives (often Orthodox, with Muslim husbands – as the example of the admissible marriage in Islam) confessed that they didn't try dishes with «unallowed» components, they complained that it's difficult but they liked very much the tradition of family dinners. They didn't like the idea of uniting the traditions: at least, in periods of fasting they tried to keep themselves «in cleanness» (first of all, in food sense). Such practices of different kitchen was also in families where other family members did not determine religious choice.

Motivation of the Muslim who used halal food was much complicated. Recently a lot of shop appeared that allow to eat taking into account the requirements of Muslim law, however, not all people follow religious norms. About half customers in such shops are followers of healthy life style, they think that religious foodstuff will be more natural, without GMO and harmful additives. And vice versa: people who like Islam but who have not determined yet, start to use halal food, and they accept it as gradual acquisition of new for them religion. It means that not all people near halal shop are Muslim, but the contrary one is also right – possibly, future Muslim.

Food practices in Islam are also connected with the system of prohibitions, but they presuppose some trust: for example, the shop assistant will unlikely be able to prove the way of animal mortification. The norm, according to which lie about the product becomes the sin for the person who lied, exists exactly for this.

It's necessary to say that in Islam, as well as in Orthodox tradition, there is the tendency to formation of doctrine foundation of food practices, originally without such. For example, it's necessary to finish the Lent by an egg: it's the first food that a person eats during Easter meal after the service. The tradition to dye eggs has a lot of interpretations; now we speak about the fact of eating it. There is a person who kept a fast, who was purged, who took communion to God in Easter. And there is a consecrated egg and a person should break his fast eating exactly this food. The clean to the clean. Even those people who didn't keep a fast eat eggs during Easter: this tradition is the only thing that was kept in Russia during all time of the years of Soviet Union. Consecration of Easter cakes and eggs often becomes more important than liturgy itself: religious practice connected with everyday life submerges mystery practice.

In Islam the similar attempt «to raise up» everyday life at the expense of religion and food practices is also formed. For example, everyone knows the feast of sacrifice when Islam prescribes to slaughter a sheep as recollection of Koran plot. However, other holiday, including religious ones, prescribe to serve mutton at this time. As a result, some Muslim people think that that it is necessary to slaughter a sheep for all religious holidays, and this is obligatory religious practice.

What do food practices give? For the majority of peoples and religions it's ideas about body cleanness (Judaism and its food practices of kashrut kept in definite structured form the elements of collective memory can be exception in this connection (Nizar Sophie, 1998; Schutz, 2001). Either food that corresponds to the canons is especially pure, or a person eating definite food products purges, becomes closer to the Holy. In this case we again follow E. Levinas dividing «the Holy» and «the sacred». Nevertheless, remembering M. Douglas and her descriptions of division of religions into developed and undeveloped – as a sphere of division of the pure and the unholy, where – in the process of perception of the unholy and its

removal from the sphere of «the holy» – religion becomes more developed, the wish to discuss and to show contemporary religious life as the new level of penetration of dichotomy «holy-unholy» into religious everyday life appears. Highlighting of special sphere of everyday life allowed to force out all unholy into this sphere of the other system of meanings. «Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's». But with time new level – religious everyday life as the result of absence of constant metaphysical argument for the majority – is formed: in this case religious practice meets the same requirements as any other, differing only by the fact that it's formed to acquire some characteristics. First of all, differing the practicing person from the others spiritually, secondly, developing this difference – desirably into the direction of increasing spirituality. Thus, exactly innocence becomes the first indirect and rationalized notion which brings a person closer to desired holiness.

Now let's look at practices connected with the body: clothes is one of important moments that allow to hold religious identification of a person who wears it. Exactly in connection with the fact that clothes is the sign of membership, the first marked fact saying about its bearer and for its bearer, clothes' elements have always been used to identify membership to community: clan differences, position in the family, position of the family in the hierarchy, etc. A lot of elements were put to the emblem; at the same time it's necessary to take into account a lot of elements and parts of clothes which the person have been and is judged by. From this point of view it's not surprising that wearing kerchiefs/hijabs/headscarves and other forms, prescribed by the tradition, by Muslim women is interpreted, first of all, symbolically as the way to demonstrate exactly their religious membership, and only secondly – as demonstration of modesty of a woman and her wish to keep her morality. For example, wearing the kerchief becomes religious and ideological problem. Still it's possible to consider the wearing of headscarves as religious practice – this is the practice of changing of boundaries of body, increase of social distance in the situation of undesirable but inevitable social interaction. People feel irritation in the presence of a woman in hijab exactly because of the fact that in community social borders among men and women decreased, there is undesirability of any social contacts. This practice in the regions out of such tradition doesn't simply reminds secular people about the

fact that there are religious people; irritation is much deeper, practice makes people who don't execute it feel not clean in the eyes of those who practice it, and all this – together with understanding of necessity and undesirability of these social contacts – makes us «low», «bad» us people.

In Tatarstan practice of wearing head scarves by Muslim women took place, but in absolutely other forms. It is interesting that in Volga region old women kept the rule to make a public appearance in kerchiefs, but the kerchief was tied in a different manner. It should not interfere the working woman and was understood rather functionally, on the level of working everyday life. For a very long time nobody thought about religious context in this tradition.

Thus, wearing a hijab cannot be compared with wearing the baptismal cross, for example – with similarity of signs of religious membership, these practices have different characteristics of meaning.

It is interesting that wearing a head kerchief by some Muslim women of new generation does not presuppose wearing right normative free clothes: for example, we can see girls in kerchiefs and jeans in Muslim regions. It means that in this case the kerchief acquires exactly the meaning of definite identification of religious membership of the social-religious group, of the practicing Muslim women: however, symbolically boundaries for girls have not acquired the above-mentioned meaning.

Religious practices have the feature to transgress beyond religions that formed them, fully or partly, with symbolic luggage of a new group. For example, the Russian Orthodoxy where there is the rule to cover one's head during the prayer, today has rather developed community of women who wear kerchiefs in everyday life; moreover, Tatarstan Orthodox women often buy clothes in Muslim shops. Orthodox people, accepting the Judaic law (as the Testament, the part of the Writings), often spread many food prohibitions in their life: in the field research we met about 30% of such respondents. Orthodox practice to consecrate carts (cars) and to allocate special icons them in consecrate places was adopted by Muslim drivers: there one can often see embroidered sentences from Koran, beads with the crescent Moon, other signs of Islam (more than 80%), etc.





Structures of everyday life that have modeling influence on religious practices can be described by the list of characteristics. Let's define the most important characteristics:

- Cyclical nature. Formation (or use of the sample) of the cyclical model compared with some pattern, such as human life duration, annual cycle, seasonal cycle, sun or moon cycles, etc., is presupposed. Everyday life – to some extent – presupposes adjusting of religious activity under these models, constant appellation to them. It's connected with limitation of resources of everyday life: practices as collective memory acquire the meaning exactly in connection with the cyclical systematic nature, otherwise they won't be reproduced. At the same time, the religious everyday life structures such practices that have only local meaning, as reminiscence about local events. Because of this it's necessary separate local and centralized religious practices for the right interpretation.
- Rate scale or stereotypical scale. Structures of everyday life are arranged by the system of evaluation of events, and it's supposed that religious practices form such scale. This, first of all, is connected with perception of «the good» and «the bad», «the kind» and «the evil», etc. primary normative valuation on the level of «common sense». Practices are adjusted under them, dividing people into stereotype groups on the basis of the fact of their execution/non-execution. And defining, as we have already considered, the levels of «purity».
- Time dimension. Practice should become attached to start of definite time past-present-future, it has definite and strongly marked appellation for time of execution. Religious practice as action puts a person into new time cycle, i.e. localization in time can vary but running everyday life requires to justify every moment of religious practice. Carrying out of religious practice is prescribed in time: it can be solar-lunar clock, biological rhythms, etc.
- Topo-localization presupposing existence some kind of «the map of religiosity» of the community, with definite relief and landscape of religiosity. In this case «the relief of religiosity» will be understood as bi-dimensional reflection of levels of religious land, whereas «the landscape of religiosity» presupposes reflection of religious land view, distribution of different religions, etc. In accordance with these ideas religious practices are tied, for example, to locations as places of living of necessary community of people with necessary characteristics of religiosity. Besides, combination of these two characteristics will

allow to monitor possibility to borrow practices from other religious traditions, to explain appearance of some elements of religious practice. Description of funeral ceremony on Java by C. Geertz is the vivid example of such analysis where syncretism is observed, and Muslim tradition is dominating in several rites.

- Individual routing of everyday life. Today structuring of every religious practice is more connected with individual characteristics of the religious, where labour practices play rather important role. The routes of creedless life – with addition the religious component into them – still keep dominating structuring feature. Forming and keeping conditions to celebrate religious practices is one of such problematic features. For example, to keep fasting – Christian and Muslim – is very difficult during business lunches, and in secular countries it's not polite to refuse it. Accordingly, religious life is submitted to the secular schedule, but it is taken into account so to make a life plan by the believer.

### Summary

People's attitude to religion can be understood as one of the criteria of their spiritual development. At present it is not the original religion relation that is discussed more often, but an attempt to self-determination and only then an attempt to self-identification in multi-religious world. Thus, religious border is the act of consciousness in the first place.

In our view, structuring of the routine religious practices in current everyday life is not stipulated by dogma, and often without interference of any religious institute. The main mechanism is the communicative rationalized conception of “me” of each actor. It is discursive and comprises a compound scheme of identities.

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