

TYPOLOGY OF TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS (CONFESSIONS) AND ETHNOCONFESSIONAL SITUATION IN THE CAUCASUS

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The problem of a typology of traditional religions and their versions – confessions, reflecting extent of their distribution among people of the world is considered. The author specifies that creation of a similar typology demands entering two additions into the standard division of the developed traditional religions on world and national and suggests to distinguish two main types of world religions: universal and ethnolocal confessions. Any confession of the first type is widespread among many people of the world, the second – confesses only one ethnos or its part. Each of these types splits into two subtypes depending if the confession covers ethnos (ethnoses) in whole or in part. Universal confessions are subdivided on the multiethnic, covering the most part of many ethnoses, and polylocal, recorded at a number of the people, but having in each of them only insignificant number of adherents. Ethnolocal confessions can be either monoethnic type, or monolocal. Confessions of both of these subtypes exist in ethnically homogeneous environment, however monoethnic in this environment dominate, and monolocal confess only its small part. Further the author analyzes an ethnoconfessional situation in the Caucasus and comes to a conclusion that in this region from four options of kinds of world religions only two are presented in essence – monoethnic and multiethnic which allow close interface of the confessions belonging to them to the ethnic sphere. Confessions of other subtypes did not gain a little considerable distribution in the Caucasus. For this reason (and some others) a vast majority of the people of the Caucasus observes very strong communication between religion (confession), traditional for them, on the one hand and ethnic traditions, ethnic consciousness with another. The accounting of this circumstance is extremely important as for carrying out successful policy in the field of the national (ethnic) relations within the certain states of the region, and for achievement of socio-political stability in the Caucasus in general.

Key words: traditional religion, universal confession, ethnolocal confession, ethnos, ethnosphere.

In modern world religious and ethnic factors are still playing an important role in socio-political life of many countries and regions especially in those that are characterized both by ethnic and confessional heterogeneity. There is no doubt that the Caucasus is one of such regions because it has both a unique variety and originality of nations, languages and cultures and lack of confessional unity. The dominant place is being held by two religions: Islam and Christianity. The first one is represented by the two main branches – Sunni and Shiite Islam. The second one is represented mainly by Orthodoxy and Monophysitism.

We need to study several theoretical issues to be able to give correct evaluation of ethnoconfessional situation in the Caucasus on the whole and its different regions and to be able to identify possibilities of averting conflicts and other negative processes on ethnic or religious basis (or on both at the same time). To the above mentioned issues belongs the development of scientific typology of religions and their varieties (confessions) based on the character of their relation to the sphere of ethnic phenomena.

Religious studies use a series of typologies (classifications) of religions. According to one of them all main religions (only developed traditional religions are meant there; primitive beliefs so called tribal religions and also untraditional cults are usually viewed as separate types of religious beliefs) are divided into national and world religions depending on the degree of their spread among the nations of the world. It is common knowledge that there are three world religions – Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Other developed traditional religions as a rule are considered national (we shall stress the conditional character of this term): Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Shintoism and others. (Different authors modify this scheme by either increasing the number of world religions or by singling out a transition variant to which they refer Judaism and Hinduism). As it is generally assumed religions of this type are mainly spread exclusively or in any case within

one ethnic community. On the contrary, world religions have supranational polyethnic character – each of them is professed by a great amount of ethnoses.

We have no doubts that national religions are connected with ethnic sphere. However, religions of a second type also exist in a multinational world and as they are traditional religions of many world nations they can also have a definite connection with ethnic sphere. Moreover, each of world religions not being internally unified breaks up into several main branches and into definite amount of less prominent subdivisions. So Christianity has from three to five main divisions (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and some authors include here Monophysitism and Nestorianism) and also many small movements and sects. Islam has at least two: Sunnism and Shiism and we should also include Kharijism (sometimes it is viewed as a sect because of a small number of followers but this point of view is not quite right because Kharijism has very clear and consistent position on religious-legal issue on the basis of which there was a split in Islam and that is why it should be considered a separate movement) and possibly Isma'ilism. Buddhism has three different varieties: the Mahayana (north branch), the Hinayana (south branch) and lamaism (Tibetan- Mongolian branch of the Mahayana).

The term “confession” is used mainly in relation to the varieties of world religions. Some of these varieties are widely spread – scores of nations are professing them; other confessions have insignificant number of followers belonging sometimes to one ethnic group. Scientists established long ago the existence of local variants of world religions being typical only for separate ethnic communities – sort of national religions inside world religions. Developing this idea the author of the article suggests that we shall distinguish two types of varieties of world religions: 1) universal confessions that are spread among many nations, and 2) ethno-local confessions each of which is being professed either by one ethnos or even part of one ethnos (subethnos, ethnographic group etc.). If we take Christianity as an example, we shall refer Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and practically all Protestant movements to the first type. Nestorianism, practically all Monophysitic churches, sects split from Catholicism (the Waldenses) and from Orthodoxy (the Molokans, the Doukhobors, different types of Old Belief) we shall refer to the second type.

Moreover, in the framework of every type of world religions` varieties we can single out two subtypes more depending on the fact whether one or another confession embraces an ethnos partly or fully. According to this principle ethno-local confessions shall be divided into monoethnic and monolocal. The first type is spread among only one ethnic community in which it is not the only one but in any case predominant confession. For example, the overwhelming majority of Armenians traditionally belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church that is Monophysitic in its religious doctrine but that has definite distinctions from other churches of this movement of Christianity. So Armenians in fact don't have coreligionists among other nations of the world in every sense of the word. (Strictly speaking among the followers of this church there are still representatives of other ethnoses. Besides Armenians we see that “to this denomination belongs the part of the Udins, small group of the Azerbaijanian Tats and also Boshas that live in Armenia and Syria” [3, p. 683]. But taking into account small number of these ethno-religious groups and their significant assimilation by Armenians we shall conclude that this fact doesn't contradict the above mentioned statement.) In essence we can call Nestorianism also monoethnic confession; it is professed only by Assyrians (Asori) (if we don't take into consideration a small part of Malayali nation in the South of India) for which it is a main traditional confession. Though this ethnos does not belong to the number of proper Caucasian nations, small communities of Assyrians can be found in Georgia, Armenia and some other parts of the region [3, p. 61].

Monolocal confessions are also spread within the limits of one ethnos but they embrace only the part of its representatives that is usually small. We can take different sects that split from Russian Orthodoxy in the seventeenth-eighteenth century as an example: different types of Old Belief, also the Doukhobors, the Molokans and other sects close to them that have common name “the Spiritual Christians”. They are within the ethnic borders of Russian nation and their followers make up a small part of the nation now. However, geographically these religions spread quite widely mainly because they were persecuted by the authorities, in particular in the nineteenth century some settle-

ments of the Molokans appeared in Transcaucasia and at the moment not numerous part of the followers of this form of Christianity that is exotic for the Caucasian region is living on the territory of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia [4, p. 47-48].

The common trait of these two subtypes is that confessions belonging to them are homogeneous in their ethnic composition and because of this fact they can have noticeable ethnic tinge. But this factor shows itself differently depending on the degree of embracement of ethnic communities by these confessions. Monoethnic confessions are usually connected with the ethnic specificity of the whole ethnos or its main part; monolocal ones are playing the role of ethnographic peculiarity of insignificant part of the ethnos.

So even among universal confessions it is important to distinguish polyethnic confessions (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Lutheranism in the framework of Christianity, Sunnism in Islam, all three main movements of Buddhism) that embrace the bigger part of the representatives of these ethnos-es; and polylocal confessions that are spread among many nations of the world but that have only small number of followers in each of them (the majority of movements of the so-called late Protestantism, some movements in Islam and Buddhism). But truth be told, any of the above mentioned polyethnic confessions also has small groups of followers in the nations that have other predominant confessions. As opposed to polyethnic confessions, polylocal confessions don't have mono- or polyethnic nucleus at all and they are composed only of dispersed groups that are interspersed in different confessional ethnoses and they are religious minority throughout the world, in any country and in any nation. Being international in character polyethnic confessions without any doubt can have considerable influence on the "ethnic portrait" of different nations defining many traits of their culture, influencing their mentality, character of their relations to other nations, etc. Polylocal confession as a rule don't have such an influence on ethnic sphere. Out of all four subtypes of the variety of world religions polyethnic type is the most cosmopolitan ethnoindifferent type of confession.

It is natural that this scheme as any other simplifies the reality in some way and not all confessions can be unconditionally attributed to one of the four variants of world religions because some movements can combine the traits of different subtypes. In Christianity it is Calvinism, its varieties (Presbyterianism, Reformed Church, Congregationalism) have in some degree the traits of three out of four subtypes of world religions that we distinguished (all except monolocal). In respect to Islam this statement is true when concerning Shiism (we mean only traditional variant of Shiism – Shiite-Imamis) that is usually viewed as a kind of Iranian national form of Islam. However, proper Iranians (Persians) compose practically the half of Iran's population and besides other nations of this multinational country also have the predominance Shiite branch of Islam. Moreover Shiism is being professed by Azerbaijanians, by more than a half of Iraq Arabs, etc. So here we deal with the confession that one would think has universally recognized Iranian national character but we cannot attribute it unconditionally either to monoethnic or any other subtype. Although several separate varieties of world religions, as we clearly see in the examples above, combine traits of several confessions at the same time, the proposed scheme reflect adequately the types of religions in their connection to the nations of the world and can be used in the analysis of ethno-confessional situation in the Caucasian region.

Out of four variants of world religion's varieties that we have specified there are in essence only two subtypes in this region – monoethnic and polyethnic. We shall emphasize that both subtypes, especially the first, assume or at least tolerate tight interconnection of confessions belonging to them with ethnic sphere. Monoethnic form of Christianity is professed by Armenians that consider the Armenian Apostolic Church their national Church, symbol and spirit of the nation. "Practically all Armenians treat their Church with respect and even love as it is a centuries-old keeper of cultural tradition that in many aspects substituted the lost statehood. However we can seldom see deep religiousness, wide churching among Armenians..." [1, p. 9]. Other nations of the Caucasus have a characteristic feature of having another subtype of confession in the framework of world religions – polyethnic (with some exceptions). We mean, first of all, Orthodoxy (it is predominant among Georgians, Ossetians and some other ethnoses) and Sunni Islam (traditional confession of the majority of the North Caucasus nations) and also with some reserves Shiite form of Islam (spread pri-

marily among Azerbaijanians and Talyshians) which by the look of things doesn't have evident Iranian character. Although we view such confessions as possible forms of universal confessions, in reality they can get specific ethnic tinge especially in conditions when an ethnos professing them (or a group of ethnoses) is in different foreign confessional setting. Consequently practically all confessions represented in this region both of monoethnic and polyethnic subtypes can be closely connected with the sphere of interethnic relations. And the varieties of world religions that belong to two subtypes that are more ethno-indifferent (monolocal and polylocal) are not significantly spread in the Caucasus.

Besides, in the Caucasus we see frequent coinciding of ethnic and confessional belonging because only several out of some scores of nations whose main ethnic territories are within its borders can be at a stretch called polyconfessional. These nations are Kabardinians – they are mainly Sunni Muslims and part of them (Mozdok Kabardinians) are mainly Orthodox Christians [7, p. 110]; Ossetians that profess Orthodoxy in the majority but also profess Islam [7, c. 179] and some other nations. Apparently we can say that the only true polyconfessional ethnos of the Caucasus is Tats, one part of which is Shiite-Muslims, another part is Monophysitic Christians and the third part is Jew (“highland Jews”) [3, c. 522]. Almost all other nations from the so-called indigenous ones are solid in the confessional aspect: each of them has only one dominant religion, more frequently Islam – both Shiite (Azerbaijanians and Talyshians) and Sunni (the majority of North Caucasus ethnoses). Even spread of two Sunni mazhabs is in accordance with ethnic belonging of the Muslims. The Shafiites are religious Chechens, Ingushs, Avars [4, p. 53], Dargwas [7, p. 92], and also representatives of other separate minor nations of Dagestan that are ethnically close to Avars (in particular Chamalal people [7, p. 225-226]). Other highland nations that profess Islam (Balkars, Karachais, Circassians, the majority of Dagestan ethnoses, etc.[4, p. 53]) are following hanifism.

Because of the stated reasons (also because of some reasons that we didn't mention) we see that the majority of Caucasian nations have strong connection between their traditional religion (confession) on one hand and ethnic traditions, ethnic consciousness on the other. Consideration of this circumstance is of high importance for running successful policy in the sphere of national (ethnic) relations in the framework of separate states of the region and also for achieving social and political stability in the Caucasus on the whole.

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