
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE INFLUENCED BY RELIGION AND ITS CONNECTION WITH CONTINUITY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL NOTION

Oralbay Kabul^{1*}, Garifolla Yesim¹ and Olga Viktorovna Velikaya²

¹*L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Satpayev str., Astana, 010008, Kazakhstan*

²*Kostanay State University A. Baitursynov, A. Baitursynov St. 47, Kostanay, 110000, Kazakhstan*

(Received 16 October 2017)

Abstract

The focal point of the paper is the problem of continuity in the development of culture under the influence of religion. Cultural continuity, which stems from religion, has become a key instrument of social activities based on the system of religious relations, ideas, knowledge and practice. It is also a pivotal moment of religious institutions, material and spiritual consequences inherited and developed by culture transmitters in accordance with historical conditions. The aim of the study is to examine the continuity in the development of culture, to describe the definition and mechanisms of continuity in the evolution of culture under the influence of religion. This article is concerned with studying the philosophical category of continuity and methodological aspects of cultural continuity as its inseparable part. A special focus is laid on the historical role of Orthodox Christianity played in the religious continuity of Russia and Orthodox Eastern European countries. The research highlights the significance of religious continuity for the formation of national cultures. The most important common features are objectivity, universality, continuity, meaningfulness and reproducibility of traditions. They receive considerable attention in the paper.

Keywords: culture, religion, succession mechanism, traditions, historical memory

1. Introduction

The mutual influence of religion and culture remains an important theoretical, cognitive and socio-historical problem, the relevance of which is traditionally significant in terms of nature, evolutionary changes, the dynamics of the interrelationships between these two phenomena and spheres of social life, which strongly encourages to rethink the notion of continuity in the development of culture, fully understand the origin of modern spirituality and use achievements of the past in creating new values.

Nowadays, there are about three hundred definitions of 'religion' [1]. This fact indicates the interest of researchers in the diversity of religious forms, the approach to the realization of the religious aspect of culture.

*E-mail: oralbaykabul@mail.ru

Many foreign scholars highlight the interaction between religion and culture. Clark and Hoover wrote that “culture and religion are inseparable”, and “religion is indeed a vital part of cultural and social concepts” [2]. Stephen M. Croucher also believes that the relation between religion and culture can be characterized as an indispensable and symbiotic [3].

In Beckford’s opinion, religion surely influences culture, but is also influenced by culture itself since religion is the most significant cultural layer [4]. For instance, Hoover claims that the rise of individualism in the second half of the 20th century can be explained by the decay of Jewish and Christian traditions and the introduction of ‘parasharhs’ and more personal prayers [5]. However, the above mentioned decay of religious institutions in the modernized society did not diminish the role of religion and spirituality as sources of tranquillity in such tragic situations as death, loss and suffering.

When such cultural features as individualism and collectivism are attributed to religion, the definition of religion and its functions have a lot in common with those of culture. For instance, scholars often connect the notion of religious identity (Jewish, Christian, Islamic, etc.) with such cultural concepts as individualism and collectivism [6] in order to better understand and compare cultural differences. These combinations made for comparative and analytical purposes demonstrate that religion and religious identity, in particular, are often regarded as variables of the microlevel when, in fact, the connection between religion and culture is irrevocable.

Studying the connection between religion and culture, Russian scholars ascribe the religious aspects of culture to the spiritual culture, “engendered by the religious demands of people and called upon to satisfy them” [7]. Thus, I. Yablokov defines the religious aspects of culture as “a combination of ways and means to ensure and implement human being. These factors are realized during religious activity and are represented in products having religious meanings and meanings that are transmitted and assimilated by new generations.” [8] The approach of I. Yablokov much better conveys the meaning of the phenomenon, but is still more abstract in comparison with the definition of V. Volovik, whose religiosity of culture is “a category of religious consciousness, socially philosophical and religious studies. It is also the category of historically composed forms of religious relations, the corresponding system of religious knowledge, motives, forms, approaches, and methods of religious activity of believers. Here also belong religious organizations and institutions created by believers, material and spiritual results, values and assessments, which necessarily belong to the people or the nation; religiosity of culture is attributed to another social group, a specific society, humanity as a whole, as well as an individual person at a certain stage of development.” [9]

As far as the working definition of religion in our research is concerned, we describe it as a historical form of outlook that, in addition to the human, recognizable world, is based on recognition and belief in the existence of the supreme and supernatural absolute – the container of supernatural forces worthy of worship. The ‘inclusion’ of connection with the supernatural is the basis for the

formation of religious consciousness, which is viewed as a dynamic historical and cultural phenomenon, and a system of relations that 'colour' social activities embodied in religious cultures. Culture in its religious aspects acts as a social and philosophical category, which is revealed as a social activity based on a system of historically established religious relations, ideas, knowledge, and practice, religious institutions created on their basis, received material and spiritual consequences inherited and developed by transmitters, who correspond them to historical conditions. Continuity is the basic category of awareness of the historical and religious-cultural development process.

It has conclusively been shown that already half a century ago, positivist thought predicted the disappearance of religion as a social phenomenon. Regarding the idea of man's initial impotence before nature, as the basis of religion, scientists believed that with the development of science in the 20th century, religion loses the foundation of its existence. It was during the approval of such concepts, when I. Wallerstein, one of the first researchers of religion, noted that, despite the forecasts, instead of decline, there is a 'religious renaissance', the causes of which, according to his vision, were rooted in a systemic crisis of the state, associated with science and culture [10, 11].

Exposure to deep understanding of the correspondence between the phenomenon and the concept of continuity actualizes the above mentioned purpose of our research.

2. The philosophical category of continuity

Thinkers of antiquity understood continuity as the main component of man and society. Thus, the adherence of ancient Egyptian culture to traditionalism reflects itself in religious art, which throughout its existence enjoyed one canon [12]. According to the Egyptian tradition, naturally emerging new elements were perceived as an improvement of existing ones. It is significant that the activity form of continuity precedes and intersperses with the verbal-effective continuity, which subsequently coexists with a written form of translation of the inheritance. It is precisely the ancient Egyptian conservatism that created the conditions for the development of traditional images, professionalization as a combination of conceptuality and craftsmanship, which were based on the previous hereditary experience.

As a testimony of constant attention to continuity, let us recall the reflection of the 'spoiledness' of children, imitators of hereditary traditions in Hesiod [13], Titus Lucretia Kara [14] and Plutarch [15]. In the Middle Ages, such reflection is present in the works of Boerzius and the 'fathers' of the Christian Church.

There are relatively few historical studies on continuity. The first philosophical categorical development of the concept of 'continuity' belongs to G. Hegel. In his opinion, 'continuity' is one of the common manifestations of the dialectical law of negation of the negation, a form of preserving a certain experience. 'Removed' is regarded as lost its immediacy, but not destroyed completely. Dialectically perceived removal presupposes not only the destruction

of the old, but also the collection and development of what meets the immediate needs [16].

Using the approach of materialistic dialectics, researchers regarded continuity as an objective law of being, which manifested itself in the process of the development of knowledge. The most important aspect was the continuity of material production, which determined other types of continuity. Thus, socio-economic relations, being conditioned by the productive potential, determined the ideological background of social relations. The complex, ambiguous nature of continuity in the development of culture leads to the isolation of its progressive (raising the cultural level) and regressive (decline of the cultural level) type. If development is an irreversible, directed, and logical process of cultural ascent [17], continuity is a fundamental link that unites the whole construction and ensures the transmission of cultural experience. The pivotal role of continuity in the development of culture is the preservation of the elements [18] and the connections of the whole, its parts in the structure of relations in the transition to a new state.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the survival of new human generations, which is ensured by predecessors in the form of successive links between generations, called “collective memory”, “the vital world” [19]. Extensive research has shown that the inclusion of descendants in the system of social relations, built in the past, does not ensure its immutability. There is much evidence that the fluidity of historical conditions determines the complements and transformations of the cultural heritage, the removal of the relevance of experience to the periphery, because it is unclaimed in specific conditions at present. The system of cultural continuity fulfils the role of the spiritual contour, which, forming the spiritual state of the generation, itself is transformed under the influence of actual social, cultural, economic, and other conditions that historically differ from the previous ones.

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes continuity as a category of Social philosophy. Stemming from this viewpoint, continuity is in organic relationship with the leading philosophical categories of certainty, conditionality, and integrity, without which analysis of the materialistic dialectics categories is impossible. It is now well established from a variety of studies, that each process, differing from others, has something ‘in common’, the very existence of this ‘in common’ together with necessity determines continuity. Distinguishing the evolutionary and cyclic types of development, it is necessary to distinguish continuity at the level of quantitative changes within the bounds of unchanging quality. In these circumstances, it is the basis of recurrence, for continuity is associated with qualitative changes, the defining feature of which is the negation of the existing structure [20]. The transition to a new qualitative level is defined as proper ‘development’ which is opposed to ‘changes’, repetition. One of the greatest challenges of continuity is that in terms of close concepts (‘succession’, ‘lineage’, ‘filiation’) it occurs only in relation to structurally complex objects. With a simplified structure of the object it is opposed to the concept of “simple reproduction” [21, p. 138].

3. Cultural continuity as an inseparable part of continuity - methodological aspects

At the same time, two types of continuity are epistemologically different: *continuity of generations* and *cultural and spiritual continuity*. The cultural and spiritual component is the range of cultural heritage ('what is being transferred'), however, the succession of generations is a subjective side of the process of continuity ('who transmits'), omitting mastering the heritage it is impossible to convey it without distortion, adapt to the updated social conditions.

The components of the process of continuity are: cultural environment, heritage, heritage transmitters, the 'channel' of heritage transfer; the receivers of heritage, the transfer of heritage. According to these data, we may infer that the spatial-temporal model of the hereditary process is structured in vertical and horizontal directions: the vertical direction reveals the picture of the transmission of the cultural heritage in a successive change of generations, the horizontal direction allows us to analyse the interaction of generations, synchronous in time and space.

Continuity, viewed as a certain amount of experience-information, should have excited followers and a reliable mechanism for reproduction, revealing consistency as a system that accommodates objective and subjective components. There is a set of *objective* components, which are as follows: values, ideals, traditions that represent continuity, as a certain amount of information. *Subjective* components include connection of generations, embodying social knowledge and skills, a mechanism for transfer of inheritance, subject-object and subject-object-subject relationship between subsystems of continuity.

It has previously been observed that the process of developmental continuity of culture is not always open to the intellectual perception of the temporal connection of the past, present and future. Therefore, much wisdom is needed to disclose the true meaning of the hereditary tradition. E. Husserl interprets 'wisdom' as a significant spiritual quality that reveals the spiritual heritage of past generations [22]. Consequently, the religious and cultural continuity translates not only experience, but also 'wisdom', as an adequate understanding of the state of things that cannot be identified without a harmoniously developed vital activity.

In general, it seems that *consistency* of culture ensures the presence in its composition of a fundamental nucleus containing both general cultural and identifying maxims, which have the ultimate degree of compulsion. There is much evidence that variability is determined by a part of the cultural heritage, which relates to the core and retains the interpretations and the means of objectifying the basic maxims. The mechanism of continuity is a way of transmitting information-heritage, connecting transmitters to transfer the heritage. In the activities of all generations, the hereditary religious experience, while preserving its actual functionality, transforms formally, in fact, it remains relatively non-variable. This fact explains the low rate of qualitative changes in cultures under the influence of religion.

This study has been able to demonstrate that *hereditary* religious experience unites many branches of religious life which are as follows: religious *social* experience (integrity, preservation, transmission, and development), the experience which is generalized on the common human and individual cultural and religious levels, as well as religious *personal* experience (storage, transmission, and development) of the transmitter.

This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that the continuity mechanism is social, it activates hereditary experience, previously adapted to social conditions, brought by the parents to the descendants. Passing through the 'general modern' of parents and their children, the experience is separated into actual and irrelevant, which, in turn, are themselves divided according to the degree of relevance. The most relevant life experience is used and adapted by parents for the needs of 'children' through the process of education, while less relevant experience is used only in case of need.

The social mechanism of cultural continuity is in constant development and functions in a specific cultural environment for the reproduction of activities that are accepted as desirable. However, during the upraise from the ethno-religious level of culture to the universal, the social mechanism must exhibit rigidity that would limit the loss of cultural and ethnic identity. Therefore, the religious mechanism of continuity of culture has specific features, which are as follows: differences in the transfer of theoretical and practical experience, general religious experience (spirituality) and specific religious beliefs.

Criteria for evaluating continuity are as follows: cultural ideals and their reproduction in personal and social behavioural patterns; the manifestation of religious and cultural patterns in personal and social activities; the knowledge of theoretical concepts concerned with national and religious traditions; the real-life use of ethnical and religious traditions; social and religious maturity.

4. Religious continuity of culture in retrospect - Orthodox traditions

As history shows people often find a solution to burning problems in their traditions. Thus, modern philosophy should take into consideration the spiritual heritage of Byzantium. When the Byzantine spirituality is revived and the Byzantine civilization is understood as a part of the modern one, it forms an authentic national culture and preserves its initial spiritual image based on Orthodox traditions.

Therefore closer inspection of the history of Russia made G.M. Levitskii conclude in his work 'The Byzantine Route of Russia' that Byzantine culture had made a great impact on the Russian culture. He emphasizes that Byzantine is the mother of the Russian Orthodox faith. It is she who instilled in Russians the light of the faith of Christ, and in her best apostolic form – the belief in Orthodox Church. The researcher notes that this influence was noticeably constant since it lasted for more than one century. According to G.M. Levitskii, the understanding of his own Russian culture is closely connected with the understanding of Byzantine culture. He points to the superiority of the primary Byzantine source,

contrasting it with the 'barbarous' for those times Rome. Appreciating the Byzantine culture, the author stresses that the achievements of Byzantine were not a mechanical assimilation for Russia. On the contrary, there was the creative transformation of Byzantine achievements on Russian cultural grounds, where the elements of the borrowed culture acquired the status of identical to the Russian cultural heritage. In other words, Russians managed to fulfil the nationalization of Byzantine spiritual achievements [23].

It is apparent from Russian history that the mountainous area of Athos was very important and its special status was stressed by the Christian tradition. If we consider only the so-called cultural part of the Athonite history, then, of course, there is no other place on Earth where Byzantine culture was preserved in the same untouched form.

The holy Mount Athos is a spiritual school, a place that is called the stronghold of Orthodoxy around the world. For many centuries Athos had been playing a key role in developing the Russian culture starting from the times of Kievan Rus and to modern age. Thereby it greatly influences national philosophical and religious traditions in Russia [24].

Still from the Kiev period in Old Russian literature there are 'pilgrimages' to the Holy Mountain, the lives and legends of the Athonite ascetics. There is much evidence that for Russia, Athos has become a place of deep attraction to the Eastern Christian liturgical, prayerful, and mystical tradition, and a standard of aesthetic and cultural perception of the world. Monastic tradition of Russia owes its origin mainly to Athos.

The Holy Dormition Monastery of the Holy Lady was the spiritual and historical link that closely connected Kievan Rus and the Holy Mount Athos. From it 1000 years ago the Monk Anthony of Caves was first transferred and approved in the Russian Orthodox monasticism on the grounds of the strict monastic traditions of the Holy Mountain. Under his influence, the formation of the Kiev-Pechersk Laura took place, which turned out to be a kind of 'spearhead' of the Athonite heritage and Orthodox monasticism, bookishness, and enlightenment in Russia. Since then, Athos and its spiritual traditions for many centuries have been playing an important role in the development of the spirituality and culture of the Eastern Slavic Orthodox peoples. After the devastation of Kievan Rus by the Mongol-Tatar hordes, the communication with Athos, although weakened, never ceased [S. Shmel, *Venerable Anthony of Kiev and ancient Russian Athos. On the influence of Athos on the formation of the Russian monkhood*, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/72420.html>].

In the 16th century under the influence of Athos companions and spiritual traditions in Russia, outstanding figures of Russian culture wrote polemical works and printed important books. Thus, Athos had great influence on the formation of Russian theological-philosophical thought. The successors and bearers of the Athonite heritage in Russia were the Reverend Sergius of Radonezh and Kirill Belozersky.

As opposed to the leading ideology of ‘the Second Jerusalem’ as a holy land typical of Kievan Rus, the ruling elite forming Muscovite Russia borrowed Orthodox Christianity and the idea of ‘the Third Rome’ as absolute power from Byzantium. After the Turks conquered the Balkans and Constantinople had been demolished, Muscovite Russia became the last independent state of Orthodox Christianity in the second half of the 15th century. These political changes supported the idea that a new state is a spiritual leader and should take after the theology of some universal empire. Keeping the heritage of early Christianity, Kievan Rus became an ancestor of the cultural chain ‘Jerusalem – Rome – Moscow’, while the Orthodox Church in Russia began to play the role of an imperial religion – a model of the interaction between the church and state inherited from Byzantium. Foreign historians analyse this model from two main perspectives.

From the first viewpoint, the church is controlled by a Byzantine emperor, which makes it a political tool to sacralise the empire. In its turn, the state ensures that the church has monopoly over the social and religious consciousness. This idea can be expressed by the term ‘Caesaropapism’ [25, 26].

Supporters of the second viewpoint highlight the notion ‘symphony’ that stands for the cooperation between the state and church to form, preserve and develop the Christian community, as well as their mutual support which is based on their independence and differentiation of functions [27].

The advantage of the notion ‘symphony’ is its Byzantine origin, i.e. the medieval Balkan states (Serbia, Bulgaria) and Danubian Principalities (Moldavia, Wallachia) tried to adopt this political culture of the interaction between the Church and state, and form the Church that would be independent of any external factors, but closely connected to the existing government. Indeed, the Berliner historian Holm Sundhaussen wrote about eight structural differences characterizing the Balkans as a historic region where Orthodox Christianity, namely “the Byzantine Orthodox heritage”, played a special role [28]. Thus, the Serbian ethnical and cultural identity was even closer connected to the Eastern Orthodox Church since there was a special religious structure called Patriarchate of Peć (1557-1766) functioning under the Turkish reign. It was an independent organization that used the Old Church Slavonic language and was separated from Patriarchate of Constantinople [29].

Unlike Romania, the territory (Danubian Principalities) of which was never controlled by the Ottoman Empire, orthodox Serbia and Bulgaria demonstrate the discontinuity of national traditions typical of the Balkan states conquered by the Turks. After the Turkish demolition many nobles were killed or exiled, while peasants could not overcome the borders of local self-administration.

Despite this tragic discontinuity of national traditions, there is still some kind of continuity of the so-called ideal ‘symphony’. Thus, the Danubian Principalities dramatically influenced by the Turkish occupants preserved their Christian elite addressing ‘symphony’. However, ‘symphony’ was completely impossible in Eastern provinces in the centre of the Ottoman Empire as it needed Orthodox secular rulers and there was none of those. Monasteries in these

territories managed to preserve the ideal of ‘symphony’ in icons or fresco paintings depicting these Orthodox rulers.

5. Conclusions

Religion brings fundamental concepts into diverse culture, including the differentiation of sacral and laic, definition of the ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ behaviour, the formation of values, etc. These beliefs can be found not only in religious texts, but they are also a part of traditional culture that has been closely connected to religion and transferred to people for many centuries.

Similar to morals, art and philosophy, religion is a spiritual activity that can be analysed as a phenomenon of spiritual culture. The historical dominance of religion in culture formed the so-called traditional culture characterised by a great number of religious ideas and beliefs in all the kinds of spiritual activities. Nowadays religion is still the basis of various mind-sets and cultures, including the Orthodox ones.

The present study raises an important issue that in the dialectics of development, each new stage of culture is impossible without the preceding one and, at the same time, denies it. Thus, during the analysis given, it becomes possible to outline common features of continuity in the development of culture. They are as follows.

Continuity in the development of culture, like continuity in general, has an objective, universal character, existing independently of the desire of ‘conservatives’ and the reluctance of ‘innovators’. Continuity is a constant, continuous process that reproduces the transmission of life experience.

Continuity in the development of culture, like continuity in general, is conditioned by the activity of people and human communities with a conscious, purposeful, meaningful character.

Continuity is of dialogical nature, i.e. culture exists only when it is inherited.

Protoforms of cultural continuity are associated with a religious cult, the bearer of sacral life experience.

The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to the general theory of continuity. Continuity links all spheres of cultural life. Forming the objective understanding of the national history, its uniqueness and continuity should become a vital part of the national politics for preserving generation memory.

References

- [1] E.I. Arinin (ed.), *Phenomenon of religion and religiousness: conceptualizing in academic philosophical theology*, Vladimir State University, Vladimir, 2015, 14.
- [2] A.S. Clark and S.M. Hoover, *At the intersection of media, culture, and religion, in Rethinking media, religion, and culture*, S.M. Hoover & K. Lundby (eds.), SAGE, Thousand Oaks, 1997, 17.

- [3] S.M. Croucher, C. Zeng, D. Rahmani and M. Sommer, *Religion, Culture, and Communication*, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, online at <http://communication.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-166>.
- [4] J.A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of the sociology of religion*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, 2007, 768.
- [5] S.M. Hoover and K. Lundby, *Introduction*, in *Rethinking media, religion, and culture*, S.M. Hoover & K. Lundby (eds.), SAGE, Thousand Oaks, 1997, 3-14.
- [6] G. Hofstede, *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*, McGraw-Hill, London, 1991, 434.
- [7] G.N. Volkov, *Ethnical pedagogy*, Academia, Moscow, 2000, 168.
- [8] I.N. Yablokov, *The problem of defining religion*, Vysshaja shkola, Moscow, 2002, 17-28.
- [9] V.I. Volovik, *Philosophy of religious consciousness*, Prosveshchenie, Moscow, 2009, 125.
- [10] I. Wallerstein, *Analysis of global systems and situation in the modern world*, Universitetskaya Kniga Publishing House, Saint Petersburg, 2001, 416.
- [11] M. Iovan, *Eur. J. Sci. Theol.*, **6(4)** (2010) 5-20.
- [12] B.V. Rauschenbach, *Paintings and sculptures of Ancient Egypt. Geometrical pictures and their visual reception*, Azbuka-klassika, Saint Petersburg, 2002, 320.
- [13] Hesiod, *Theogony. Hellenic poems*, in *Hellenic Poets*, Series 'Library of Ancient Literature', Hudozhestvennaja Literatura, Moscow, 1963, 180-185.
- [14] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Hudozhestvennaja Literatura, Moscow, 1983, 416.
- [15] M.L. Gasparov (ed.), *Hellenic poets from the 7th-3rd centuries BC till AD. Epic, elegy, iambic verse, melik*, Lodomir, Moscow, 1999, 528.
- [16] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of religion (2 volumes)*, Vol. 1, Musl, Moscow, 1975, 532.
- [17] E.G. Yudin, *Development. Philosophical encyclopedic dictionary*, Sovetskaya entsiklopedia, Moscow, 1983, 561-562.
- [18] E.A. Buller, *Continuous development of culture*, Nauka, Moscow, 1969, 294.
- [19] E. Husserl, *Cartesian meditations*, Nauka, Yuventa, Saint Petersburg, 1998, 91.
- [20] R.A. Wortham, *Soc. Sci. J.*, **53(4)** (2016) 573-580.
- [21] J.A. Belzen, *Religion*, **35(3)** (2005) 137-165.
- [22] E. Husserl, *Selected works*, Izdatelskiy dom Territoria budushchego, Moscow, 2005, 229.
- [23] G.M. Levitskiy, *The Byzantine development of Russia*, Logos, Moscow, 2016, 272.
- [24] R.K. Kuzakhmetov, *Bulletin of Orenburg Seminary*, **1(5)** (2016) 50-62.
- [25] N. Davis, *Communis. Post-Commun.*, **29(3)** (1996) 275-286.
- [26] M. Radu, *Orbis*, **42(2)** (1998) 283-300.
- [27] G. Davie, *European Religion from the Atlantic to the Black Sea*, in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edn., Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2015, 258-263.
- [28] H. Sundhaussen, *Gesch. Ges.*, **25** (1999) 626-653.
- [29] S. Vrcan, *Religion*, **25(4)** (1995) 357-370.