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## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROCESS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND RELATED TYPOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

The article examines one of the phenomena of personality transformation called religious conversion. Increasing scientific interest to the phenomenon of religiosity, in particular to religious conversion, has been observed in the last decade in Kazakhstan. The current religious situation in our country, namely, the growth of new religious movements, an increase in the number of adherents of traditional religions, including Islam, makes it necessary to comprehend the rapid transformation processes of religiosity, and as a result, the transformation of social identity. This article describes the main types of the changes in the semantic sphere, namely ascetic, crisis and positive types. Their key characteristics are presented. As a result of religious conversion, transformation of social identity occurs. Due to this, the convert focusing on Islamic moral values in everyday life rebuilds identifications in the self-image according to the religious beliefs and ideas of the Muslim about himself or herself and the reality around. Thus, religious conversion is a long-term, multi-level process of conscious transformation of personality due to the emergence internal craving for the search for truth within the religious vision of the world, which leads to the transformation of social identity through a change in the hierarchy of its elements. The new converts who took part in this study correspond to the dominance of religious identity over its other elements.

**Key words:** transformation, religious conversion, semantic sphere of personality, religiosity, religious socialization.

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### Діни конверсия процесіне әсер ететін факторлар және онымен байланысты діни конверсия типологиясы

Мақалада тұлғаны өзгерту құбылыстарының бірі – діни конверсия қарастырылады. Соңғы онжылдықта Қазақстанда діндарлық құбылысына, атап айтқанда діни конверсияға ғылыми қызығушылықтың артып келе жатқанын байқауға болады. Біздің еліміздегі қазіргі діни ахуал, яғни, жаңа діни ағымдардың көбеюі, дәстүрлі діндерді, оның ішінде ислам дінін ұстанушылар санының көбеюі, діншілдіктің тез трансформациялану үдерістерін және соның нәтижесінде әлеуметтік сәйкестіліктің трансформациялануын қажет етеді. Семантикалық сферадағы өзгерістердің негізгі түрлері, яғни аскетикалық, дағдарыстық және позитивті түрлері сипатталған. Олардың негізгі сипаттамалары келтірілген. Діни көзқарастың нәтижесінде әлеуметтік сәйкестілік өзгереді. Нәтижесінде, күнделікті өмірде исламдық моральдық құндылықтарға назар аудара отырып, мұсылманның өзі және айналасындағы шындық туралы діни сенімдері мен идеяларына сәйкес өзін-өзі сәйкестендіруді қалпына келтіреді. Осылайша, діни үндеу әлемнің діни көзқарасы аясында шындықты іздеуге деген ішкі құмарлықтың пайда болуына байланысты жеке тұлғаны саналы түрде өзгертудің ұзақ мерзімді, көп деңгейлі процесін білдіреді, бұл оның элементтерінің иерархиясын өзгерту арқылы әлеуметтік сәйкестіліктің өзгеруіне әкеледі. Осы зерттеуге қатысқан жаңа дін қабылдаушылар, діни сәйкестіктің оның басқа элементтер үстемдігіне сәйкес келеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** трансформация, діни конверсия, тұлғаның семантикалық сферасы, діндарлық, діни әлеуметтену.

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### **Факторы, влияющие на процесс религиозного обращения, и связанная с ними типология религиозного обращения**

В статье рассматривается один из феноменов трансформации личности – религиозная конверсия. В последнее десятилетие можно наблюдать возрастающий научный интерес к феномену религиозности, в частности к религиозной конверсии, в Казахстане. Актуальная религиозная ситуация в нашей стране, а именно – рост новых религиозных движений, увеличение числа приверженцев традиционных религий, в том числе ислама, ставит перед необходимостью осмысление быстрых трансформационных процессов религиозности и, как следствие, трансформацию социальной идентичности. В статье описаны основные виды изменения смысловой сферы, а именно аскетический, кризисный и позитивный типы. Представлены их ключевые характеристики. В результате религиозного обращения происходит трансформация социальной идентичности. Вследствие этого конвертит, ориентируясь на исламские нравственные ценности в повседневной жизнедеятельности, перестраивает идентификации в Я-образе согласно религиозным убеждениям и представлениям мусульманина о себе и реальности вокруг. Таким образом, религиозное обращение представляет долговременный, многоуровневый процесс осознанной трансформации личности по причине возникновения внутренней тяги к поиску истины в рамках религиозного видения мира, что ведет за собой трансформацию социальной идентичности через изменение иерархии ее элементов. Новообращенным, принявшим участие в данном исследовании, соответствует доминирование религиозной идентичности над другими ее элементами.

**Ключевые слова:** трансформация, религиозное обращение, смысловая сфера личности, религиозность, религиозная социализация.

#### **Introduction**

Increasing scientific interest has been observed in the last decade to the phenomenon of religiosity, in particular to religious conversion, both in the Western and in the Russian sociological tradition. Representatives of such disciplines as social psychology, sociology of religion, social anthropology, etc. also actively turn to religious conversion. Scientific literature provides extensive information on the structural component of religious conversion, its stages and levels. The place and role of religiosity is also well studied, the dynamics of which in the most general form represents the phenomenon of conversion, in the formation of social identity in a psychological perspective. However, in sociology, the ratio of religious conversion to social identity is represented to a lesser extent.

Religious consciousness, religious identity, religious experience, religious socialization, convert (neophyte), Islam.

Religious conversion is a long process of changing religiosity in the form of a transition from disbelief to faith or a transition from one religion to another accompanied by deep emotional experiences and a change in the value system.

The degree of religiosity is determined, first of all, by religious identity, which is associated with the mechanisms of self-determination, emotional

identification and the individual's subjective involvement in a particular religion, lifestyle, and community of co-religionists. People convert to a different religion for various reasons, including active conversion by free choice due to a change in beliefs, secondary conversion, deathbed conversion, conversion for convenience, marital conversion, and forced conversion.

Proselytism is the act of attempting to convert by persuasion another individual from a different religion or belief system. Apostate is a term used by members of a religion or denomination to refer to someone who has left that religion or denomination.

We can divide the way historians describe the conversion process into four categories: acculturation, adhesion or hybridity, syncretism, and transformation. Acculturation is when religious change accompanies the incorporation of a people and its territory into a conquering empire or socioeconomic system. Adhesion or hybridity is when the person or group adopts new beliefs and practices alongside the old. Syncretism occurs when the convert(s) reconcile or fuse old and new beliefs and practices to create a new religious synthesis. Transformation is when converts attempt to completely replace the old with the new. In the latter situation, a person or group may either turn to piety within the religion to which the person or group already adheres or may exchange the beliefs or practices in which the person or group was

raised for those of another religion. The former may also be termed intensification or revitalized commitment, and the latter is also known as tradition transition. Ultimately, whether conversion entails a process of acculturation, adhesion, syncretism, or transformation, it is also accompanied by the conversion of the landscape and sacred spaces.

The current religious situation in our country, namely, the growth of new religious movements, an increase in the number of adherents of traditional religions, including Islam, makes it necessary to comprehend the rapid transformation processes of religiosity, and as a consequence, the transformation of social identity. In this regard, the phenomenon of religious conversion acquires particular relevance as a process of religious change, entailing significant changes in the self-determination of the individual and the revision of his identity.

### **Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives**

The current religious situation in our country, namely, the growth of new religious movements, an increase in the number of adherents of traditional religions, including Islam, makes it necessary to comprehend the rapid transformation processes of religiosity, and as a result, the transformation of social identity. In this regard, the phenomenon of religious conversion acquires special relevance as a process of religious change entailing significant changes in the self-determination of the individual and the revision of his or her identity. The main goal is to study the process of religious conversion with the subsequent identification of socio-cultural prerequisites and its impact on the formation and development of social elements. To achieve this goal, I have identified the following tasks:

1. Analysis of classical and modern theories, models of a sociological explanation of religious conversion;
2. Analysis of the features of religious conversions formation and development;
3. Revealing socio-cultural factors contributing to the emergence and development of the religious conversion phenomenon;
4. Revealing the main stages in the development of religious conversion in the framework of various theoretical directions.

### **Research methodology**

In this work, a synthesis of several theories and concepts of the study of the phenomenon of religious

conversion was applied. The methodological basis of the research was formed by the concepts of domestic and foreign scientists from the field of sociology of religion and sociology of conversion. The following theories were used as the basic theoretical and methodological foundations for considering the concept of religiosity and the structural aspect of conversion: the theory of conversion by J. Lofland and R. Stark, the stage model of conversion by L. Rambo, as well as the views of other representatives of sociology, sociology of religion and social psychology.

### **Main part**

The problem of religious conversion, which manifests itself mainly in the transition from unbelief to religious faith and less often in the transition from one religion to another, has repeatedly become the subject of research in various disciplines: psychology, philosophy, anthropology of history, theology and sociology.

The methodological solution to the study of religious conversion is to turn to the biographical method and the method of textual analysis of biographical interviews.

The theoretical significance of the study is determined by the fact that the work has prepared a theoretical basis for the study of religious conversion.

In the Russian scientific community, less attention is paid to the process of religious conversion, but there are important developments for consideration. One of the first to consider the category of conversion was the Soviet specialist in the field of psychology and sociology of religion D. M. Ugrirovich in his work «Psychology of Religion». Religious conversion is defined by him as «connected either with the transition from unbelief to active and deep faith, or with the transition from one religion to another (Biktimirova 2003, 49). His psychological approach is to separate religious conversion and religious development following Conversion proceeds quickly, with a sharp change of deep emotional experiences, while religious growth (development) is accompanied by a gradual slow deepening into religious beliefs and a gradual knowledge of a new system of values – this psychological difference in these forms of religiosity is the mechanism-the crisis underlying the conversion. E. A. Ostrovskaya is a representative of modern sociological science, who widely studies religious conversion within the framework of the sociology of religion, V. A. Martynovich, J. B. Morawiecki etc.

It is necessary to pay attention to the terminological aspect of the phenomenon under study. In the stu-

dies of Russian sociologists, the terms «conversion» and «conversion» are used to denote religious conversion, which is the reason for the use of the concept of «religious conversion» in this work. Traditionally, theoretical concepts and models of the study of religious conversion are considered from the perspective of two directions: positivist (goes back to the ideas of O. Comte and E. Durkheim) and interpretive (Garadja 2005, 157) (goes back to the ideas of M. Weber). The positivist approach focuses on the social system and its structures, what influence, or perhaps pressure, they have on the convert, and how they interact with the person in the conversion process. Such models are based on the relationship between religious conversion and social mechanisms, on the influence of religious organizations and structures on the potential believer in the church. Certain beliefs of a person. In this direction, American and Western researchers are actively working: J. Lofland, R. Stark, D. Snow, U. S. A Bainbridge et al. A distinctive feature of the second approach, interpretive, is that in it the main role in the conversion process is occupied by the subject and its meanings, or rather the interpretation of meanings generated by social action (in our case, entering a new religion and its acceptance). Representatives of this approach (T. Lukmann, B. Tylor, J. Richardson, etc.) study the internal hidden causes of conversion. In line with these two approaches, the Russian sociologist Isayeva V. B. in her work «The social mechanism of religious conversion: on the example of the St. Petersburg Buddhist lay community Karma Kagyu» highlights in Within these approaches, there are five models of religious change: in the positivist approach, it is a model of social connections and a resource model, in the interpretive one, a communicative, intentional and role model has been formed (Djeims, 1910, 228).

If we turn to the subject of the study of this work, then in the mid -60s of the XX-th century, R. Stark together with the American researcher J. P. Blavatsky.Lofland developed a theory of conversion, in which the process of religious conversion is considered in stages in seven stages, representing the change of states of the individual relative to religious change. This theory is called the «model of social relations» and consists of the following stages and stages of the gradual development of the religious idea in man (Drobıjeva, 2008):

1. The conversion always begins with a long and heavy for the perception of tension. A person, first of all, experiences a complex state that pushes him to solve new issues in other ways.

2. After a difficult internal state suffered by a person, there is an awareness of the issue within the

framework of the religious path. The individual begins to think and think with a religious consciousness.

3. Seeing the solution of the problem in a religious perspective is not enough for conversion. At the third stage, a person is aware of himself in a state of search, and most importantly-the search for religious things.

4. Religious conversion is preceded by interaction, meeting with a religious group, community, while being in an unstable state of search.

5. A necessary point in the process of religious conversion is the presence of an internal emotional relationship with a representative of a particular religion, with a believer.

6. The penultimate stage is characterized by the absence of strong ties outside the religious group, which means complete immersion in religion and removal from secular (non-religious) contacts.

7. The last step in the implementation of conversion involves active and constant communication with the religious community. Here we are talking not only about communication, but also about specific actions – for example, creating thematic meetings, joint prayers, etc.

In the methodological understanding of the phenomenon of religiosity within the framework of sociology, the multidimensional model of religiosity is widely known. Glock and R.Stark. The model, which, according to the authors, is applicable to different religious systems, represents five dimensions or five components of the phenomenon religiosity: emotional aspect, ideology, ritual activity, intellectual and logical. The first dimension of religiosity includes the sensations and feelings experienced by a person during the entire religious experience. The ideology of religiosity presupposes its content part, description of the picture of the world from the point of view of a particular religion. The third component of religiosity – ritual activity is manifested in religious practices and the degree of involvement in them. A significant dimension is also the awareness of the believer, his knowledge of basic beliefs based on sacred texts, etc. – this is an intellectual component of religiosity.

The last dimension concerns the influence of religion on a person's lifestyle and daily activities (Dylina, 2008).

The second theory within the positivist direction was the resource model of W. Bainbridge and Stark, who distinguish between religious conversion and religious affiliation. Researchers believe that joining an religious group is not always associated with a change in vision of the world, but often depends on those resources (social, material, psychological,

etc.), which this group is ready to give to the convert (Ivanov, 2006: 85) in religious communities, people find like-minded people and friends who can understand and listen, here a person sees an opportunity for self-realization, and sometimes for building. Of course, here you can open up internally, express pure emotions and expect understanding from others. This approach is interesting because it not only directly connects the individual and the religious structure, but also explains this connection through the attempt, the desire of a person to find the missing resources (material, psychological) in the host community. Due to the increased attention in all spheres of life to utilitarianism and profit, today this is a fairly popular model that is actively used in life. In confirmation of this, I will give my personal example of direct acquaintance with a girl from a small village of the Republic of Dagestan. In a brief conversation, she admitted that she had converted to Islam not because she felt the need for religious search, but because she had strong social ties with her muslim friends and thus wanted to preserve and maintain these ties. Of course, there is no overt emphasis profit – this is a symbolic benefit, but what is important is the initial position, which is not based on an internal search for religious truth. The two theories discussed above, within the framework of the positivist approach, focus on social connections, religious structures and mechanisms that determine the process of conversion, and the religious meaning of the phenomenon under consideration fades into the background. The Lofland and Stark model and the Bainbridge and Stark theory reflect the structural interactions of a potential convert and a religious group with its representatives, but do not take into account changes in value orientations and individual vision of the world, and do not reveal the reasons why the individual begins this process.

However, it is logical to assume that there are theories and models based on subjective factors, values, intentions and demonstrating personality in the process of religious search. Such theories are created within the framework of an interpretative approach.

Social identity is considered an important regulator of self-awareness and social behavior. For a long time, the phenomenon of social identity was considered in a psychological and socio-psychological perspective, set by psychologist E. Erickson with his concept of the three-level nature of identity: the individual level, personal and social. Within the framework of official psychology, this concept was further developed thanks to the research of A. Tashfel and J. P. Blavatsky. Turner, who focused on group

membership and pointed out three consecutive steps in the formation of the group. Awareness of belonging to a social group: social categorization, social identification and social identity. The specificity of the phenomenon of conversion is that the reference to the religion of another culture allows you to distance yourself from the immediate cultural context of the crisis. Religious conversion in this context has significant implications for a person's social identity. It is accompanied by a partial or radical change in the way of life, organized on a religious basis, which cannot but affect various aspects of the integral social identity of the individual.

The study of religiosity and the religious conversion that is important to us began with William James in his work «The Varieties of Religious Experience». An interesting division of religious conversion into two types attributed to Professor Edwin Starbuck: volitional and self-surrender. The volitional conversion is understood as the process of spiritual rebirth, proceeding gradually and constituting the slow construction of a new foundation for moral and cultural habits (Djeims, 2019: 362). The peculiarity of the conversion process is that the initial active participation of the will, self-compulsion and zeal give way to feelings of inner freedom, satisfaction in a righteous life full of prayers. The self-surrender type of religious conversion is distinguished by its original orientation: the main thing is a passionate desire to be saved from sins through drawing closer to God, and not a striving for righteousness, which leads to the realization of one's powerlessness and, as a result, passive humility before the will of God.

James pays special attention to this type, since usually the convert was accompanied by mystical insights, and this type of conversion was perceived for a long time as a universal model of conversion. Here is a sudden conversion based on mystical internal and external forces.

This typology of religious conversion gave rise to the tradition of dividing converts into active and passive.

Continuing the consideration of religious conversion within the psychological approach, it is necessary to note the typology of W. Clark given in the book «The Psychology of Religion: An Introduction to Religious Experience and Behavior»: crisis, emotional and the type with normal growth of religiosity. The first type is characterized by a sudden and rapid immersion in a religious belief system or an abrupt change in such beliefs. The emotional type has a lesser degree of emotional experiences due to a reduced involvement in the ongoing changes. The third type, according to Clark, is the most common

among converts. In all three types, faith plays the main role but differs in the degree of rootedness and acceptance of certain beliefs. Clark subdivided the category of faith into four levels:

1. the first level was called «elementary literalism» and had a characteristic feature of taking on faith the entire sacred text, which, in my opinion, was not accompanied by deep emotional experiences and searches;

2. the second level assumed «intellectual comprehension», which means only the work of thinking but again it did not take into account the sensory component of religious conversion;

3. the third level has an active character, that is, a certain behavior expressed in prayers, good deeds and a righteous life; it confirms the presence of faith;

4. the last level presupposes the highest degree of faith, including all the previous levels in their unity and integrity, which in this case allows us to speak of complete understanding of the category of faith only in combination of all levels.

Different levels of faith can be present in all three types of religious conversion by Clark, either individually or in combination with each other: crisis, emotional and with normal growth of religiosity. For example, a crisis type of conversion with its sharp nature can stop only at the first level of faith, taking of the entire sacred text as read, but at the same time without deep inner feelings. However, for each individual case, in order to determine the type of conversion and levels of faith, it is necessary to consider the number of external and internal factors affecting the specific process of religious conversion.

While analyzing the typologies of religious conversion of different researchers, we inevitably come across certain factors emphasized in each of them. The first serious study to identify factors influencing conversion was the study by Waskom Pickett of converts to Christianity from Hinduism in 1928 in India (Ipatova, 2006: 56). 4000 people were interviewed, choosing from 40 options from a list of possible reasons and motives but there was also an opportunity to give their own answer options. Based on the results of the answers, one can thus arrange the indicated reasons in descending order:

1. most of the respondents noted spiritual motives (34.8%), that is, the search for truth, the path to God, the acquisition of faith, divine providence, etc.;

2. origin also had a great influence (34.7%), which will be indicated below as «parenting» in the normative approach to the study of religious conversion;

3. social reasons (22.4%) were less in percentage terms but also quite high, which speak of the

impact of social groups (religious communities, professional groups, etc.);

4. the least significant were secular motives (8.1%), including the desire to raise social status, receive material benefits or help from missionaries.

Research carried out almost a century ago by Pickett retains its effective relevance for religious conversion in modern conditions: origin, as well as the spiritual desire to understand oneself and one's destiny, often remains almost an obligatory component of the acceptance of faith, which will be confirmed in the examples of the informants participating in the investigation.

An interesting factor influencing the conversion was revealed by the modern American professor of psychology L.A. Kirkpatrick: when looking at conversion rates among adolescents and adults, he used the pre-adolescent attachment variable for mothers (Ýgrnovich, 1986: 83). The results reflected a surprising pattern: respondents with the strongest and most «sensitive» attachment to their mother reflected a fairly low frequency of religious conversion (not more than 10%), but in the case of a low and weak emotional connection with the mother, the conversion rate was 44%. As a result, we can talk about another factor influencing the religious attitude, i.e. the type of relationship with the mother.

To determine the factors that influence and give rise to the process of religious conversion, researchers take various elements of the internal (psychological) and external aspects of a person's life, depending on the approach they are working in. In the normative approach, religion is understood as a sociocultural phenomenon that performs a list of such important functions as communication, social integration, social control, sense making and others. At the same time, religiosity is understood as a socio-psychological property of a person, expressed in a system of behavior patterns, social norms and values. The process of the formation and development of religiosity, which directly relates to the process of religious conversion as the acquisition of a new or another degree of religiosity, is accompanied by the influence of various factors: school, parenting, religious education, close environment, etc. A supporter of this approach was D.M. Ugrinovich, who presented his ideas in the work «Psychology of Religion», where he studies the nature of religiosity in the process of interaction with the social environment (Rambo, 2010: 211). D.M. Ugrinovich calls the person's surrounding community, namely the religious family and the religious community the most important factors of influence and formation of religiosity. Moreover, indeed, it is impossible to re-

ject the fact of the influence of the surrounding community, especially if it is religious, on the formation of a certain system of values and beliefs of converts, which was confirmed in my empirical research.

In addition to the external socio-psychological factors described above, internal driving forces are also considered within the framework of the normative approach. First, the internal factors influencing religiosity and religious conversion are expressed in the theory of instinct of the American psychologist Edmund S. Conklin, described in his work «Nature of Conversion», as well as in the studies of E.D. Starbuck. The disposition to religiosity and a tendency to a religious understanding of the world will be explained by means of innate factors that create a special sensitivity in a person to religion, which is also associated with a certain age characteristic. Studies by E. Starbuck showed a pattern in the formation of religiosity with the age period of life: it is 16.4 years for men and 14.8 years for women. Researcher Stanley Hall explained this pattern by sexual instinct. At first glance, completely different categories of sexuality and religiosity are embodied in a coherent theory: the sexual instinct, which is known to be activated precisely in the above age periods, creates the effect of increased attention and, as a consequence, an increase in social contacts, which, within the framework of the normative approach, is an indicator of the formation of religiosity in the form of a surrounding community, religious communities, etc. However, attention is manifested not only towards the people around, but also towards oneself in the form of increased anxiety and excitement caused by new sensations in the body. According to Stanley Hall, this contributes to the development of the interests of young people in a variety of areas, including religious one.

In modern psychology of religion and sociology of religion a tendency to search for one dominant primary factor, which primarily raises a feeling of internal religious change or the need for this religiosity in a person can be noted among researchers. In my opinion, the phenomenon of religious conversion, so complex in its structure and internal logic, is difficult to present through a coherent clear system of certain prerequisites and results. In this case, the thesis of Lewis Ray Rambo is interesting: «people are motivated to turn to a wide range of factors that can constantly change» (Ipatova, 2006: 88). At the same time, in the situation of conversion, according to Rambo, four factors are inevitably involved: the need for a coherent and consistent picture of the world; the need for social relationships and communication with other people; power given by religion

in the form of control over life, a confident system of meanings explaining death, failure, etc.; striving for the transcendental, divine.

The factors I have considered do not exhaust the whole variety of motives, incentives and reasons for the transition from one religion to another or the emergence of religiosity in general, but reflect the elements of the social structure and psychological characteristics that play a special role in the process of religious conversion.

Stages of formation and development of religious conversion.

A certain understanding of conversion, taking into account specific factors of influence, entails a special consideration of religious conversion as a long process that occurs in an appropriate number of stages and levels of religiosity development. In my opinion, the procedural, dynamic nature of religious conversion is well reflected by the above-mentioned «model of social ties» by D. Lofland and R. Stark.

Religious conversion can be summarized in the following stages:

1. experiencing strong stress;
2. acquisition of a religious vision for solving problems;
3. awareness of oneself as a religious seeker;
4. emergence and initiation of a religious movement;
5. forming connections with neophytes;
6. weakening outside of religious contacts;
7. willingness to open interactions within a religious group.

Within the framework of this theory, we observe the decisive importance of problematic life situations and states in the first three stages, as well as the influence of a religious group, which has the function of socializing converts into a new community. The model of conversion in specific stages is presented by the American researcher Alan Tippett, in which the stages partially broadcast plots from «models of social ties» by Lofland and Stark:

1. «discovery» of God, the religious vision of the world;
2. «consideration» of changes in life orientations in accordance with religious ones;
3. «self-determination» as a practicing believer;
4. «dissonance» between old attitudes and new understanding of the world;
5. «discipline» as an element of identity with members of a religious trend and submission to the appropriate discipline

A significant development in the study of the stages of religious conversion was introduced by Lewis Ray Rambo, already discussed above, who

emphasizes the nonlinearity of this process, in which the convert can return to the previous stages, to its key moments and conversion factors.

The seven stages of the conversion process, or better to say the plots, since the term «stages» itself presupposes the sequence of what is happening, are as follows:

1. «context», where macrosocial phenomena take effect: political, economic, religious situation in social space (the dominant religious organization and social institutions), and also internal subjective factors (motives, religious experience, etc.) are considered;

2. «crisis» – at this stage disordered emotional experiences call the person's former world into question, while we can take into account all problem situations that destabilize life attitudes, the formation of identities, etc.;

3. «quest» is a period of activation of spiritual searches, vision as one of the possible, a religious picture of the world;

4. «encounter», when the first experience of contact between a potential convert and an adherent of a new religion occurs, a meeting with a preacher is carried out;

5. «interaction», which is an interpersonal communication with members of a religious group, gaining knowledge about the teachings, lifestyle, rituals of a given community, gaining a new role through which a person is involved in the community with a sense of real perspective;

6. «commitment», where there is an encounter with the need for a final choice and public testimony of this choice, making certain commitments;

7. «consequences» – at this stage the process of changing all aspects of life is carried out, and also at this stage there is a subjective understanding and assessment of the results of their religious path by the converts themselves, which in the study of religious conversion requires special study and close attention.

The considered theories of the sequence of changes in the process of religious conversion are sufficient to see the inevitable stages and factors that take place to one degree or another in each case of conversion.

The corresponding patterns of behavior and the nature of the actions of a potential convert or an accomplished neophyte inevitably leads us to the system of social relations in which the formation of the personality took place before the meeting with the new religious system of attitudes. It can also be concluded that religious conversion should be considered as a strategy of social adaptation that allows self-realization in society.

## Results and discussion

Thus, religious conversion is a long-term, multi-level process of conscious personality transformation due to the emergence of an internal craving for the search of truth within the framework of a religious vision of the world, which leads to the transformation of social identity through a change in the hierarchy of its elements. The new converts who have taken part in this study are consistent with the dominance of religious identity over its other elements.

For a more detailed study of the transformation of social identity under the influence of religious conversion, in the future, it is planned to conduct a study to identify the hierarchy of elements of social identity, where Christians with similar sex and age characteristics will be a control group. Religious conversion is a reaction to an emotional crisis expressed in general characteristics: anxiety, uncertainty, self-doubt, and fear. Comparing Islam and Christianity in an ideological sense becomes a decisive step towards a change in religious orientation. The crisis-search model triggers the activation of spiritual quests, which leads to the acceptance of the existence of another possible belief system

## Conclusion

This article is devoted to the process of religious conversion, which was studied by representatives of different disciplines, namely sociology, psychology, anthropology, etc. It is of interest to consider religious conversion from the point of view of the anthropology of religion and the sociology of religion. Proceeding from Weber's understanding sociology and the interpretive approach that goes back to it, the concept of religion is defined as social activity, on the basis of which the individual and the group decide the question of «meaning», their attitude to the fundamental problems of human life, i.e. death, good and evil, love, etc. The phenomenon of religious conversion is a long-term process of changing religiosity in the form of a transition from disbelief to faith or a transition from one religion to another, accompanied by deep emotional experiences and a change in the value system.

Religious conversion is a reaction to an emotional crisis, expressed in general characteristics: anxiety, uncertainty, self-doubt and fear. Comparison of Islam and Christianity in an ideological sense becomes a decisive step towards a change in religious orientation. The crisis-search model triggers the activation of spiritual quests, which leads to the



acceptance of the existence of another possible belief system.

Regardless of the place of residence, the main factor for the majority of the respondents determining the first acquaintance and the first knowledge of Islam was the presence of «ethnic» Muslims in the social environment, who traditionally follow Islam according to their nationality. This influenced the comprehension of the acceptable «other» vision of the world.

Thus, religious conversion is a long-term, multi-level process of conscious personality transformation due to the emergence of an internal craving for the search for truth within the framework of a religious vision of the world, which leads to the transformation of social identity through a change in the hierarchy of its elements. The converts who took part in this study are consistent with the dominance of religious identity over its other elements.

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