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## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MIGRATION PROCESSES: RESEARCH DISCOURSES

The article presents an overview of the main research discourses in the context of studying the role of religion in contemporary migration processes and their interaction. The relevance of this issue stems from the historical characteristics of human societies, where migration has significantly influenced ethno-demographic, political, and cultural boundaries. The modern discourse on migration has increasingly emphasized the religious factor, bringing it into the realm of socio-political issues. The purpose of this article is to review the main research approaches to the problem of the interaction between religion and migration. Religion, as a social institution, becomes crucial to the migration experience, and an attempt is made to establish a theoretically grounded link between religion and migration. The study explores both classic approaches in the interdisciplinary field of academic work by foreign researchers and new perspectives. A number of researchers highlight the transformations of the religious landscape due to the influence of migration, considering the formation of new boundaries and communities through the use of virtual reality. Special attention is given to the importance of analyzing the migration situation in the republic, as migrants bring with them their religious beliefs, customs, and way of life, which may have various consequences, possibly conflicting with the socio-political doctrines of the host country, but also enriching the destination countries by introducing them to new cultures and strengthening social cohesion through peaceful coexistence. The study concludes that migration contributes to the strengthening of the religious identity of migrants as a way of preserving ethno-cultural uniqueness. Therefore, migration processes can pose a challenge for a secular state. The article concludes that there is a need for interdisciplinary research on the interaction between migration and religious institutions, and a comprehensive analysis of the social aspects of migration in order to ensure the sustainable development of Kazakhstani society.

**Key words:** migration, migration studies, integration, religious identification, religious landscape.

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### Көші-қон процестеріндегі діннің рөлі: зерттеу дискурстары

Мақалада қазіргі көші-қон процестеріндегі діннің рөлін және олардың өзара әрекеттесуін зерттеу контекстіндегі негізгі зерттеу дискурстарына шолу берілген. Бұл мәселенің өзектілігі көші-қон этно-демографиялық, саяси және мәдени шекараларға айтарлықтай әсер еткен адамзат қоғамдарының өмір сүруінің тарихи ерекшеліктерінен туындайды. Қазіргі көші-қон дискурсы діни фактор мәселесінде белсенді түрде күшейіп, қоғамдық-саяси мәселелер жазықтығына көшті. Мақаланың мақсаты көші-қондағы діннің өзара әрекеттесу мәселесіне негізгі зерттеу тәсілдеріне шолу болып табылады. Дін әлеуметтік институт ретінде адамдардың көші-қон тәжірибесі үшін шешуші мәнге ие болуда, дін мен көші-қон арасында теориялық негізделген байланыс орнатуға тырысады. Шетелдік зерттеушілердің ғылыми еңбектерінде пәнаралық өрістегі классикалық тәсілдер, сондай-ақ жаңа көзқарастар зерттелген. Бірқатар зерттеушілер виртуалды шындықты пайдалануға байланысты жаңа шекаралар мен қауымдастықтардың қалыптасуын ескере отырып, көші-қонның әсерінен діни кеңістіктің трансформациясын шығарады. Республикадағы көші-қон жағдайын талдаудың маңыздылығына ерекше назар аударылады, себебі мигранттар өз діни сенімдерін, әдет-ғұрыптары мен өмір салтын өздерімен бірге әкеліп, бұл қабылдаушы мемлекеттің әлеуметтік-саяси доктриналарына қайшы келетін түрлі салдарға әкелуі мүмкін, алайда екінші жағынан, баратын елдерді байытып, жаңа мәдениеттермен таныстырады және бейбіт қатар өмір сүру арқылы әлеуметтік келісімді нығайтады. Зерттеудің нәтижесі көші-қон этномәдени бірегейлікті сақтаудың бір түрі ретінде мигранттардың діни сәйкестендірілуінің күшеюіне әсер етеді. Тиісінше, көші-қон процестері зайырлы мемлекет үшін сын-қатер тудыруы мүмкін. Жұмыста дін және көші-қон институттарының өзара әрекеттесуін пәнаралық зерттеу,

дық қоғамның орнықты дамуы мақсатында көші-қонның әлеуметтік аспектілерін кешенді талдау қажеттілігі туралы қорытындылар жасалды.

**Түйін сөздер:** көші-қон, көші-қон туралы зерттеулер, интеграция, діни сәйкестендіру, діни жағдай.

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### **Роль религии в миграционных процессах: исследовательские дискурсы**

В статье представлен обзор основных исследовательских дискурсов в контексте изучения роли религии в современных миграционных процессах и их взаимодействия. Актуальность данной проблематики исходит из исторических особенностей существования человеческих обществ, где миграции существенно влияли на этно-демографические, политические и культурные границы. Современный дискурс миграции активно усилился в вопросе религиозного фактора переходя в плоскость общественно-политических проблем. Цель этой статьи заключена в обзоре основных исследовательских подходов к проблеме взаимодействия религии в миграции. Религия как социальный институт приобретает решающее значение для миграционного опыта людей, и делается попытка установить теоретически обоснованную связь между религией и миграцией. Исследованы классические подходы в междисциплинарном поле научных трудов зарубежных исследователей, так и новые взгляды. Ряд исследователей обозначают трансформации религиозного пространства по причине влияния миграции, причем с учетом формирования новых границ и сообществ в связи с использованием виртуальной реальности. Особое внимание уделяется важности анализа миграционной ситуации в республике, так как мигранты приносят с собой свои религиозные убеждения, обычаи и образ жизни, что может иметь различные последствия, возможно противоречащие социально-политическим доктринам принимающего государства, но и, с другой стороны, обогащая страны назначения, знакомя их с новыми культурами и укрепляя социальную сплоченность посредством мирного сосуществования. Результатом исследования выступает факт того, что миграция влияет на усиление религиозной идентификации мигрантов, как форма сохранения этнокультурной самобытности. Соответственно миграционные процессы могут выступать вызовом для секулярного государства. В работе сделаны выводы о необходимости междисциплинарного исследования взаимодействия институтов миграции и религии, комплексного анализа социальных аспектов миграции в целях устойчивого развития казахстанского общества.

**Ключевые слова:** миграция, исследования миграции, интеграция, религиозная идентификация, религиозная ситуация.

## **Introduction**

Religion plays a significant role at various levels of social life. It can be a personal matter of an individual's spiritual life, but it can also be an aspect of the formation or existence of a particular spiritual community. On the state level, religion can be viewed in different ways: it may serve as a tool for political and social cohesion or be entirely confined to the private sphere. Religion can also become a primary source of conflict within a state. All these aspects play a certain role in migration processes. Historically, human societies have ranged from being spiritually homogeneous, where it was unacceptable to "be different," to heterogeneous, where various religious values coexist. Migration processes have played a crucial role in the history of the formation of ethnic groups, cultures, states, and so on. The role of religion in the legal system and the functioning of

the state varies across different governmental systems. Problems can arise if migrants from one system must adapt to a completely different situation in the host country. An example is a person or an entire community coming from a country governed by Sharia law who must now live in a secularized state. A person's religious needs, beliefs, and values may conflict with the laws and lifestyle of the host country, posing risks to social cohesion. The historical realities of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example, in the geographical region of Europe, have shown how the ethno-confessional structure of society in European countries has transformed, leading to the deterritorialization of religions. Therefore, a critical aspect of interdisciplinary research is the study of the mutual influence between migration processes and the religious factor.

Migration processes in Kazakhstan, which actively began in the early 1990s considering the

socio-political and economic realities, set trends in population movement in various forms. The growing dynamics of people's movement over the past decades of independent Kazakhstan require a comprehensive study of the theory and practice of legal, economic, and cultural adaptation of migrants in host countries. With the increase in migration flows of different kinds, it is important to understand that migrants may carry certain religious ideologies and values that may conflict with the socio-political doctrines of the host country.

Kazakhstan is a country with a population predominantly identified with Islam, which can pose potential conflict risks in the context of migration. The historical background of certain geographical areas of Central Asia, the Middle East, and neighboring regions has its own characteristics in the formation of religious identity. Accordingly, religious practices in Islam, for example, may vary depending on established traditions, considering the economic, cultural, and socio-political conditions. When discussing the religious practices of various local migrant communities, it is essential to examine how they influence the local population through the lens of their cultural and religious values and whether their beliefs contradict the legislation on religion. Therefore, it is crucial to study the main discourses in the interdisciplinary field of interaction between religion, migration, and a number of legal aspects. This will provide an opportunity for future research to identify potential conflict zones and contradictions in migration policy and legislation in direct interaction with the religious landscape in the republic.

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

The aim of this article is to review the main research discourses on the interaction between religion and migration within the contemporary socio-humanitarian field. The topic is broad, and the primary task will be to explore classical approaches in the interdisciplinary field of academic work by foreign researchers. Numerous case studies highlight the impact of migration on society in recent decades. The geographical areas of these cases include the European Union as a socio-political region with historical and cultural commonality, Eurasia, and particularly Russia, where migration processes from Central Asian countries have intensified in recent decades. Studying these cases in the context of the interdisciplinary approach to migration and religion is also important for Kazakhstan, both as

a transit zone and for analyzing the current situation. Additionally, one must not forget the process of forming new virtual boundaries, the so-called de-territorialization of many social phenomena, including religion, due to the influence of global trends in the digital world. Accordingly, migration processes can pose a challenge for a secular state, necessitating interdisciplinary research into the interaction between migration and religious institutions, as well as a comprehensive analysis of migration to ensure the sustainable development of Kazakhstani society.

#### **Scientific research methodology**

For conducting research in an interdisciplinary direction, a structural-functional method was employed, which allows for the correlation of various disciplines within the humanities, particularly in the fields of religion and social sciences. This method involves studying the connections between two independent processes – migration and religion. The systemic-structural method is essential for the theoretical understanding of this complex system of interrelations. Population migration is a complex process that requires analysis from multiple approaches (social, economic, legal, demographic, and political), including cultural ones, to analyze the religious landscape. Specifically, this involves examining the influence on the worldview of the local population, which comes into contact with migrants and their religious beliefs. Therefore, the systemic-structural, comprehensive approach serves as the primary methodological principle for studying the causes of the spread of religious worldviews, including destructive ones.

#### **Results and Discussions**

Research dedicated to the interaction between migration and religion takes on various academic contexts depending on the methodological tools and interdisciplinary approaches used. The classical works of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim contain the first systematic sociological analyses of religion and its influence on economic life and social structure. The study of religion's role in this area has gained relevance due to the challenges posed by the sharp increase in migration, the transformation of the local into the global, the influence of transnationalism, cultural and religious diversity, and the international political context.

Western socio-humanitarian research has focused closely on studying modern strategies for

integrating migrants. Since the 1990s, the term “parallel society” has been discussed in the socio-political discourse of European researchers, which emerged as a response to the consequences of active migration and multiculturalism policies in European countries (Heitmeyer, 1996). The concept was originally introduced by Danish sociologist of culture P. Duelund in his article “Parallel Society as a New Political Strategy,” but the term was not initially linked to confessional or religious issues (Duelund, 1968). He referred to the creation of a parallel society as an alternative, one that changes the existing society from within by introducing new value axioms. In modern research discourse, “parallel society” is associated with the segregation of immigrant communities along confessional and ethnic lines within the civil society or “majority” of a particular country, which poses a threat to national security and regional identity.

Models of assimilation and integration of migrants into society are constantly discussed at various levels, from political to academic, and are often criticized by both researchers and policymakers. Various integration projects are proposed, suggesting reciprocal movements between the majority society and minorities, the development of horizontal connections within civil society, and the involvement of migrants in these connections, which is impossible without considering the role of religion in their lives.

The study of “parallel societies” has become one of the central themes in immigration research, but there are other approaches in this field, such as the concepts of “ethnic colonies” and “ethnic ghettos,” which emerged in the context of European migration to the United States (Virt, 2015: 109).

An important sociological perspective in researching the discourse on the interaction between religion and migration is the identification of religious trajectories of immigrants during the first years after migration (Khouidja, 2022: 527). The level of religiosity is measured by attendance at religious organizations and subjective religiosity over a specific period after immigration. Researchers, based on sociological measurements, identified an initial increase in attendance, which gradually stabilizes and eventually returns to its original state, as well as a steady decline in subjective religiosity across all immigrant groups. Among those who actively demonstrate religious identification, a specific group pattern emerges: an initial increase followed by a decrease, and then a return to the previous level. The results of such studies show that the analysis of

attendance at religious or spiritual institutions is not the primary factor determining the religious choices of immigrants.

Russian researchers, similar to their Western counterparts, are actively studying this complex migration process in connection with the religious factor. This issue is particularly relevant for Russian society, as due to the natural population decline, labor shortages, and other factors, most migrants from Central Asian countries are not oriented towards integration, leading to the “enclavization” of migrant communities (Pronina, 2020: 226).

According to Russian experts, the phenomenon of “migration and religion in Russia” is insufficiently studied. This situation can largely be explained by the country’s general neglect of migrant integration policies, despite the fact that migration in Russia has been a traditional practice and remained strong throughout the 1990s and 2000s. An international study conducted by the Pew Research Center shows that Russian society is less concerned with the problems of “extremism” than the European audience and generally exhibits less Islamophobic (but more xenophobic) sentiments (Laruelle, 2021). This can partly be attributed to the fact that Russian political discourse tends to emphasize “ethnic separatism” rather than “religious extremism.” Despite the increasing extremist tendencies among some representatives of the Islamic faith in recent years, this phenomenon is less frequently associated with migration processes, likely because a significant Muslim population has traditionally resided in the country.

The issues surrounding the interaction between migration and religion in the European context, framed within the concepts of challenge and response, have led to a rethinking of Islam and the need for its transformation. This has given rise to the concept of “Euro-Islam,” which proposes a synthesis of Muslim obligations and principles with the foundations of Western democratic societies, such as human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and gender equality. One of the proponents of this concept, Tibi B., argues that given the current circumstances, there are only two possible outcomes: “either Islam will Europeanize, or Europe will Islamize.” T. Ramadan, another proponent of the “European Islam” concept, believes that European Muslims should develop a “European Islam,” as there are already “Asian Islam” and “African Islam,” each with its own cultural variations. This view is contested by orthodox Muslims, who believe there is only one true Islam. Ramadan T. asserts that Muslims



in Europe should reinterpret fundamental Islamic religious sources, especially the Quran, in light of their own cultural experiences influenced by European society. His ideas are received differently by European and Eastern Muslims; some view him as an advocate of Islamic fundamentalism, while others see him as a liberal promoting European cultural values. British political scientist D. Pryce-Jones describes T. Ramadan's ideology as nothing more than "reverse imperialism," suggesting that Muslims in non-Muslim countries should have the right to live by their own rules and traditions, while Western liberal tolerance should entail respecting this choice (Sadyhova, 2010: 95).

When discussing cultural threats and risks related to migration, these are associated with intercultural interactions with the religious traditions of migrant communities and the possible transformations of spiritual values and lifestyles in the host society (Gaertner, Dovidio, 1986). It's also important to note that migrant children may face socio-psychological issues, as integration into the community through social institutions (such as schools) can lead to feelings of alienation and estrangement in the process of reflecting on the "self" and the "other" (Levecque, Rossem, 2015; Toselli and others, 2014).

One of the questions researchers grapple with is the extent and mechanisms through which religion influences immigrant integration – how religion facilitates or hinders socio-economic and cultural integration from an interethnic perspective, especially among the youth. Authors in this field identify five mechanisms through which religion affects integration (Kogan, Fong, Reitz, 2019). They also emphasize the role of social, cultural, and economic conditions in determining how religious affiliation relates to integration outcomes. First, religion can serve as a marker of identity for specific communities, influencing the daily life practices of youth. When young people face discrimination or marginalization, their process of identification may lean towards religion, often observed among second-generation migrants and beyond. Second, the content of religion also affects the formation of fundamental spiritual and moral values, as major religions generally do not differ significantly in their moral contexts. The complexity may arise from specific social norms, such as dietary restrictions, gender roles, and alcohol consumption. Third, membership in a religious organization provides certain opportunities and resources. Religious institutions offer a place for gatherings and communication among people with a shared ethnic or cultural identity, providing psychological protection

from external situations of potential discrimination and access to services (language courses, consultations, etc.). Fourth, religious identity is manifested in symbols that represent social stereotypes. For example, religious symbolic attire (such as the niqab in Islam or kippah in Judaism) serves as a marker of religious affiliation. These markers affect the social integration of individuals depending on their acceptance. In secular societies, frequent prayer, for instance, may not always be welcomed. Additionally, there are still existing stereotypes about former colonial countries being underdeveloped. The fourth mechanism involves conscious rationality regarding potential discriminatory behavior by employers, while the fifth mechanism considers various forms of unconscious discrimination.

The reverse side of this issue focuses on research into the religious rights of migrants and their integration into the host society (Lisovskaja, 2019; Penninx, 2019). The protection of migrants' religious rights through international standards is actively examined in academic literature (Ahsan Ullah and others, 2022: 63). Researchers aim to explain religion as a complexly intertwined concept in migration discourses and to explore the significance of various terms related to political Islam in the contemporary world within the context of migration. Migrants bring with them their religious beliefs, customs, and lifestyles, enriching the host countries, introducing new cultures, and strengthening social cohesion through peaceful coexistence.

Migration processes, with a focus on diaspora and race, are subjected to scientific reflection within various aspects of interdisciplinary practices. Western scientific research centers concentrate their studies on the issues of migration and diaspora in the historical, anthropological, political, cultural, and religious fields of the humanities, on the one hand. On the other hand, within the social sciences, socio-legal and socio-economic studies of migration are conducted, as well as at the intersection of ethnic and racial studies, such as the Irish question in the UK or the differentiated integration of Polish migrants in London (Hickman and Ryan, 2020, Ryan, 2018). This approach highlights the concept of "differentiated embedding," which allows for exploring how migrants negotiate attachment and belonging as dynamic temporal, spatial, and relational processes. In this case, the focus is on migration within the European Union, where Polish migrants, since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, have initially demonstrated temporary or short-term mobility. However, over time, a certain portion extended

their stay in London, integrating into a global city with transnational frameworks. The authors argue that there is a need for a differentiated concept that captures the nuances of interactions of structural, relational, spatial, and temporal connections. This concept reflects not only the multidimensionality of the process of embedding migrants into society but also the levels of belonging and attachment. A key aspect of this research is the study of European migrants within the EU, comparing waves of Irish migration to Britain with Polish citizens. If the case of non-European origin migrants, or “non-Western migrants,” is considered, the problem of integration is more complex and burdened with the risks of social isolation, marginalization, and the formation of “parallel communities.” The result of sociological research (migrant surveys) and narrative analysis of migrant interviews indicates that, in this case, migration is cyclical, as those who stayed for a longer-term eventually permanently returned to their home country. Why might this research case be relevant for Central Asia and Kazakhstan? Migrations from neighboring countries of the Central Asian region, considering shared historical foundations, culture, and religion, may have analogies, but this requires in-depth study in further research and is not set as the main goal of this article.

The ongoing sociocultural and demographic changes in European countries have led to new interpretations of legal norms, where the right to freedom of conscience is subjected to critical rethinking, leading to constitutional debates regarding its substantive content and the limits of its restriction (Bosso, 2022; Alicino, 2022).

The above analysis of research trajectories requires comprehensive interdisciplinary research into the Kazakh case of religious policy and legislation in connection with migration processes and similar legal aspects to develop solutions against the influence of various destructive religious views and the formation of a mechanism for regulating the protection of the rights of citizens and migrants.

The study of the influence of destructive movements in the republic is extensive in various fields of social and humanitarian knowledge. At the same time, it should be noted that individual comprehensive studies on the interaction of migration and religion in the context of their analysis and legal solutions to counter radical religious views have certain contextual studies (Karimova, 2020; Azil’hanov, 2022).

Problems explored by foreign researchers can be of significant importance in the comprehensive

study of migration in connection with religious institutions, as these issues in Kazakh society are under-researched and not illuminated by interdisciplinary research practices.

Interdisciplinary research into the interaction of migration and religion institutions in various social aspects requires a comprehensive analysis of the migration process in the context of the spread of destructive religious views through it and the identification of threats and risks to preserve national security and the sustainable development of Kazakh society.

## Conclusion

Modern trends in global migration will be shaped by existing world problems such as the depopulation of certain urban centers, the aging of nations, and the demographic decline in some countries, which leads to mass movements. Socio-political (wars), economic (inflation, etc.), and geographical (climate change) reasons can act as triggers for migration processes. Therefore, analyzing the religiosity of immigrant communities and their influence on society is of great importance.

The relationship between religion and migration is defined by their complexity and interconnection. We have considered the complex interrelation between the phenomena of religion and migration, which has been intrinsic to the history of human society from ancient times to the present. It should be noted that an analysis of the few contemporary works in this area has revealed the necessity and expediency of conducting future research. Despite the presence of familiar perceptions of migration from a demographic or current political viewpoint in the works of modern authors, we have been able to note certain facts indicating the mutual influence of religious institutions and the migration process.

The presented review of the main research discourses in the context of studying the role of religion in modern migration processes and their interaction is based on the identification of main trajectories. Firstly, the research discourses are based on cases of migration in Western societies, as this issue stems from the historical features of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, where migration processes significantly influenced the ethno-demographic and socio-political situation. A response to the challenges of the consequences of active migration from Eastern countries to Europe was the concept of European Islam. Several researchers point to the transformations of the religious space due

to the influence of migration from various angles, where on one hand, migrants bring their cultural and religious beliefs, and on the other, they integrate into the host society (acculturation). Based on the aforementioned studies, it is necessary to note the general fact that migration enhances the religious identification of migrants as a form of preserving ethno-cultural identity. The religious aspect also influences the assimilation of migrants in the new country, and the degree of influence depends on whether the dominant religion of this country differs from the migrants' own religion or if it is a secular state. Migration processes can also lead to the misuse of religion for political purposes. Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly investigate

the interrelation between religion and migration, which has special humanistic significance. Accordingly, migration processes can pose a challenge to secular societies, necessitating an interdisciplinary study of the interaction of migration and religious institutions, and a comprehensive analysis of the social aspects of migration for the sustainable development of Kazakh society.

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