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THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOSITY ON THE INTEGRATION/ DESINTEGRATION PROCESSES AND THE RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE OHRID-STRUGA REGION

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We are in a period which is characterized by huge social changes, economical, political and social, and they are followed by enormous changes to the value orientations, respectively to the whole system of values. The people can hardly adapt to these changes because they are very dynamic and intensive. Losing the self-confidence on the power to solve important tasks, people seek help in religion. The religion as a historical category extends its lifetime in the modern society. Through its teachings, religion establishes a mutual relationship with man, offering solutions to the many issues that human beings face in their everyday life. Also, there must be emphasized the activities of the confessional communities that use their organizational forms and insist on attracting attention, at the same time filling the blank spaces left by the other social institutions and organizations.

The Ohrid-Struga region as an environment, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, is a special ground of constant integrative or disintegrative influences, which of course plays an important role in these integrative or disintegrating processes. Disintegration processes are often accompanied by certain forms of religious intolerance that have occurred at certain times.

In this research paper, the subject of religious interest in its integrative i.e. disintegrative processes and the religious tolerance of the population is in the region of Ohrid and Struga, a region which as we have mentioned is an ethnic and religious heterogeneous environment. The two most important religious organizations are the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric and the Islamic Religious Community. The target group in the study consisted of all persons over the age of eighteen. The results of the research show that religiosity influences the integrative or disintegrative processes and the religious tolerance of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region.

Key words: religion, religiosity, integration, disintegration, value orientation, religious tolerance

Introduction

There are numerous examples throughout history, as well as in the present that confirm the relevance of religion with integrative respectively disintegrative processes and religious tolerance both theoretically and practically. Among other

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social processes, religion has a special place in achieving social cohesion. Religion through a secured system of values as well as a built-in view of the underlying goals enables the spiritual unification of different individuals and groups within a global society. However, in addition to integrative function, we must certainly not neglect the role that religion plays in religious heterogeneous environments. In such environments as the research area, the disintegrating role of religion is more noticeable. Each religious community through its teaching performs spiritual unification only to the members of its own community. The activities of one religious community cause a sense of endangerment in the other religious community, leaving room for the manifestation of emergent forms of religious intolerance.

Religious intolerance was present in various religions and across time periods. We should emphasize the fact that intolerance manifests itself "not only to members of other religious communities but also to members of the same religious communities" (Popov, 2005: 81). "It is often the case that intolerance is stronger for members of the same religious community than for members of other religious communities, because the fear of community disintegration is stronger than the fear that they will clash with another or other communities" (Šušnjić, 1998. b: 341). "Intolerance actually represents the dark side of religion, but it is most prevalent in the three world monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam" (Башкими, 2009: 60).

The issue of ethnic or religious tolerance is particularly important in ethnically and professionally heterogeneous societies. Tolerance is basically a "permissible deviation from one's own beliefs, that is, a pattern of behaviour that permits (permitted) the application of other principles that are not in accordance with one's own, but which must be respected" (Matevski, 2005a: 61). That is, "tolerance is the willingness to listen to a person who has a different opinion on the same thing, to discover in his or her opinion content that can contribute to the two opinions being brought closer, corrected, supplemented and expressed in a form that will satisfy both parties" (Šušnjić, 1998; b: 346).

Manifestations of tolerance, or intolerance, are found in everyday relationships between people expressed through attitudes toward differences, whether they are different attitudes, ideas, customs or different psycho-physical traits of people. Attitudes toward diversity in everyday relationships between people can range from admissibility and attitudes that deviate from one's own convictions, to attitudes that are mostly prejudiced. "Prejudice basically manifests itself against those who are somewhat different from prejudice holders and members of their reference groups" (Joksimović i Kuburić, 2004: 18). The very phenomenon of prejudice is closely

linked to intolerance. That is, all those "who are prone to prejudice are intolerant of differences. While intolerance to diversity is in fact one of the basic characteristics of an authoritarian person" (Башкими, 2009: 60). "One religious community draws a conclusion about the other more on the basis of its own prejudices than on the basis of real experiences and knowledge, whereby larger religious communities know less about the smaller than these about them" (Šušnjić, 1998 b: 344). It should always be borne in mind that the data obtained in the study of religious tolerance reflect the current state of consciousness of the respondents, which may be influenced and affected by certain social circumstances. "Depending on the environment in which one lives and the current socio-political climate depends on whom or to whom intolerance will be manifested, which means that in different environments and at different times, intolerance is not always manifested towards the same phenomena, groups and individuals." (Joksimović i Kuburić, 2004: 18).

As we have already pointed out, there are two religious organizations operating in the research area: the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric and the Islamic Religious Community. "While one and the other religious organization maintains that their teaching is only right and only true, and all others propagate false distorted religious teachings, that does not mean, however, that there is no religious tolerance. It is present in both MOC-OA and IRC " (Башкими, 2009: 61). "They approach one another and cooperate with each other, without questioning the basic dogmatic principles of their own teachings" (Matevski, 2007a: 72). "This is the so-called daily tolerance that exists in ethnically-confessional mixed environments such as the Republic of Macedonia and is characterized by the protection of its dogmatic principles, while not interfering in an irreconcilable relationship with other churches and other religious communities" (Matevski, 2005: 61). In fact, the two religious organizations MOC-OA and IRC, with their activities, are focused on their believers while showing interest only in them, without any pretensions to others who preach other faiths. However, promoting or self-promoting a religious community through its organization as a "guardian" of national interests in national and religious heterogeneous environments can constitute a basis for religious intolerance and the emergence of a sense of marginalization and endangerment of smaller religious and ethnic communities.

Lately, and given some developments (events in 2001), the tolerance in R. of North Macedonia, and certainly in the Ohrid-Struga region, is quite "sensitive". The connection of religious organizations with the political circles is more noticeable, with both going beyond their declarative commitments. Such a situation contributes to creating conditions for possible forms of impatience or intolerance both within a religious community and between religious communities that exist in the area under

study. We should also emphasize the fact that there is an evident discrepancy among religious organizations between the declarative and the true religious commitment to tolerance. When we speak of a true religious commitment to tolerance, we mean first of all whether religious organizations have done in that direction what they should have done both in terms of the emerging forms of religious intolerance and in the remediation of its consequences. We feel the need to emphasize this in particular because multiconfessionality with its features as well as given social circumstances make the examined area even more sensitive to possible manifestations of emergent forms of intolerance or intolerance. Of course, in the future we should work on affirming the values in order to strengthen the religious tolerance. To this end, it is necessary for religious organizations to speak their religious language without daily political admixture in affirming their dogmatic principles.

Religious tolerance cannot be neglected when studying religion in a multi-confessional environment. In our research we pay particular attention to religious tolerance without going into any in-depth study. Perhaps the results obtained in the field of religious tolerance in the future will serve as an impetus to conduct a more thorough research that will address its etiological side, forms of manifestation, degree of religious tolerance, or intolerance. Certainly the issue of tolerance in general, and in particular the question of religious (non) tolerance, plays an important role in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society in the establishment of social relations on which social development depends. Socio-political structures in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional social community should carefully analyse the data obtained from scientific research on religious (non)-tolerance and incorporate them into their programmatic commitments as a basis for the creation of active measures for timely prevention. Possible manifestations of intolerance, i.e. ethnic or religious intolerance.

The results that we will present are part of the results obtained with the survey of the religiousness of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region.

Research results

The research, without going into any deeper analysis, assumed that the religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region influence the integration or disintegration processes and the tolerance towards the members of other confessions. The Ohrid-Struga region, which comprises the municipalities of Ohrid, Struga, Debrca and Vevcani with their characteristics as a multi-cultural, ie multi-ethnic and multi-confessional environment, is in some ways a minimized form of the Macedonian multi-cultural, mutually multi-ethnic

and multi-confessional community. The total population according to the 2002 census is 127,065 inhabitants out of whom 58,592 inhabitants belong to the cities of Ohrid and Struga. By ethnicity 75,432 (59.4%) inhabitants declared themselves as Macedonians, 39,147 (30.8%) Albanians, 5,898 (4.6%) Turks, 185 (0.1%) Roma, 981 (0.8%) Vlachs, 483 (0, 4%) Serbs, 132 (0.1%) Bosniaks and 4816 (3.8%) are remaining. While 74,975 (59.1%) were religiously orthodox, 50,721 (39.9%) were Muslim, 178 (0.1%) were Catholics and 1191 (0.9%) were other (Попис 2002). The two most important religious organizations operate in the Ohrid-Struga region: the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric and the Islamic Religious Community, which with their teachings make this environment interesting for this kind of research. Areas with such characteristics are constantly exposed to some integrative, i.e. disintegrative influences, which of course religion, i.e. religiosity takes an important place in those integrative, i.e. disintegrative processes.

The design of the sample is in line with the research subject and expected objectives, as well as the research approach. This study uses a quota sample. The quotas express the variation of the phenomenon under investigation. 400 respondents aged 18 years were selected according to predefined relevant characteristics. In determining the quotas, it is important to include respondents from different settlements in the Ohrid-Struga region ih the sample, while adhering to the rule for geographical and socio-demographic representation of the respondents. The following techniques, questionnaire, informal interviews and observation were used to collect and record the facts of the research subject.

In the study of the influence of religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity on the integration of the population in the Ohrid-Struga Region were used indicators that included the influence of religious affiliation on frequent contacts with members of other confessional communities and the frequency of mixed marriages (in which spouse are of different confessional affiliation), as well as the influence of religiosity on tolerance towards members of other confessions.

In addition to trying to show the impact of religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on integrative or disintegrative processes and on tolerance towards members of other confessions, we have tried to make a typology of religion by using some indicators. For this purpose, indicators were used to measure religiosity, grouped into four groups: belief in the sacred, behaviour of the respondents in a society that derives from the moral aspects of religion, religious practice, and knowledge of the theological doctrine of one's own religion. Respondents were categorized into certain levels of religiosity based on the answers to the questions asked. The first category, i.e. respondents with a

low level of religiosity, include those who answered "I disagree" to the questions asked (eg, having to believe in God after a transient earthly life thanks to God does not wait for eternal life, etc.) and who answered the questions with "never" (eg. are you praying during the day, do you fast, etc.) or who answered "wrong" to questions concerning the knowledge of the theological doctrine of one's own religion. In the second category, i.e. respondents with average degree of religiosity, are those respondents who answered the questions with "I do not know" and "sometimes". While in the third category, ie respondents with a high degree of religiosity, are those respondents who answered with "I agree", "regularly" and "correctly" to questions related to the knowledge of the theological doctrine of their own religion. From the obtained results, the percentage of respondents with a high degree of religiosity is significantly higher (69.6%) compared to the respondents with a moderate degree of religiosity (17.3%) and a low degree of religiosity (13.1%).

The influence of the religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the integrative or disintegrative processes and on the tolerance towards the members of the other confessions were found through the answers to the questions regarding the frequency of the contacts with the members of the other confessions, mixed marriages as well as issues related to tolerance towards members of other confessions:

1. Is your best friend a member of the same faith as your own?
2. What is your view on mixed religion marriages?
3. Do you agree with the view that mixed religious marriages are doomed to failure in advance?
4. Do you agree with the view that a person can feel secure only if he/she lives in an environment where the majority are of the same faith?
5. Do you agree with the view that members of the other faith should be careful even when they are friends with us?

1. The impact of the religious affiliation of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the frequency of contacts with members of other confessional communities

The influence of religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the frequency of contacts with members of other confessional communities will be seen through the answers to three questions: Does your best friend belong to your faith?, What is your view on mixed marriages?

and Do you agree with the view that mixed religion marriages are doomed to failure in advance?

Table 1 - Religious affiliation and attitude in choosing the best friend

	Religion					
	Orthodox			Muslim		
Does your best friend belong to your faith?	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
	91,5%	8,5%	0,0%	92,2%	5,2%	2,6%

For the question "Does your best friend belong to your faith?" the answers to the question in Table 1 shows that the number of Orthodox respondents who answered affirmatively is slightly lower (91,5%) compared to the number of respondents of Islamic religion who affirmed (92,2%). In other words, the number of respondents who answered that their best friend is from a different religious background is different from that of the respondents of the Orthodox religion (8,5%) and of the respondents of the Islamic religion (5,2%).

Table 2 - The degree of religiosity and attitude in choosing the best friend

	Does your best friend belong to your faith?		
Degree of religiosity	Yes	No	Don't know
Low degree	86,4%	12,0%	1,6%
Moderate degree	92,8%	6,1%	1,1%
High degree	96,5%	3,5%	0,0%

The data given in Table 2 show some difference in the choice of the best friend depending on the degree of religiosity of the respondents. For example, the highest proportion of respondents with a high degree of religiosity (96.5%) reported

that their best friend was of the same religion compared to respondents with a moderate (92.8%) and low level of religiosity (86.4%). It can be seen that the degree of religiosity among the respondents influences the choice of the best friend.

Regarding the question "What is your opinion about mixed marriages?" the answers to this question in Table 3 show that the number of Orthodox respondents who answered yes to the question is higher (23.5%) compared to the number of

Table 3 - Religious affiliation and attitude towards mixed marriages

	What is your opinion about mixed marriages?			**Do you agree with the view that mixed religious marriages are doomed to failure in advance?**		
Religious affiliation	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
Orthodox	23,5%	62,4%	14,1%	31,8%	29,2%	39,0%
Muslim	9,9%	73,4%	16,7%	11,9%	38,3%	49,8%

Islamic religion respondents that answered affirmatively (9.9%). That is, the number of respondents who answered yes to mixed marriages is small, i.e., the number of respondents who do not approve of mixed marriages is higher among both respondents (73.4%) and respondents of Orthodox religion (62.4%). To the question "Do you agree with the view that mixed religion marriages are doomed to failure in advance?" The answers to the question in Table 3 show that the number of Islamic respondents who answered yes to the question is higher (49.8%) compared to the number. of the respondents of the Orthodox religion who answered yes (39.0%). That is, from the total number of respondents, the number of respondents from the Islamic faith who do not agree with the view that religious mixed marriages are doomed to collapse in advance (11.9%) is small compared to the number of respondents of the Orthodox faith (31.8%). Therefore we can conclude that religious affiliation affects the attitude of respondents towards religious mixed marriages.

Table 4 - The degree of religiosity and attitude towards mixed marriages

	What is your opinion about mixed marriages?			**Do you agree with the view that mixed religious marriages are doomed to failure in advance?**		
Degree of religiosity	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
Low degree	22,9%	41,2%	28,9%	39,5%	24,5%	36,0%
Moderate degree	13,8%	73,3%	12,9%	21,4%	35,5%	43,1%
High degree	4,9%	87,4%	7,7%	7,2%	41,9%	50,9%

The data presented in Table 4 show that the degree of religiosity of the respondents has a certain influence on the attitude towards mixed marriages. The increase of level of religiosity among respondents reduces the percentage of respondents who approve of mixed religion marriages, i.e. increases the percentage of respondents who agree that mixed marriages are doomed to failure in advance. From this we can conclude that the degree of religiosity influences the attitude of the respondents regarding mixed religion marriages.

2. Impact of the religious affiliation of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the tolerance towards the members of other confessions

The influence of the religious affiliation and the degree of religiousness of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the tolerance towards the members of other confessions will be seen through the answers to the questions: "Do you agree with the view that one can feel secure only if he/she lives in an environment where the majority are members of the same faith?" and "Do you agree with the view that members of the other faith should be careful even when they are friends with us?"

Table 5 - Religious affiliation and attitude towards members of other confessions

	Religious affiliation					
	Orthodox			Muslim		
	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
Do you agree with the view that one can feel secure only if he lives in an environment where the majority are members of the same faith?	39,0%	24,2%	36,8%	25,0%	20,7%	54,3%
Do you agree with the view that members of the other faith should be careful even when they are friends with us?	31,3%	20,1%	48,6%	15,7%	21,9%	62,4%
Average mean value	35,2%	22,1%	42,7%	20,3%	21,3%	58,4%

Table 5 shows significant differences in the answers to the question "Do you agree with the view that one can feel secure only if they live in an environment where the majority are of the same faith?" depending on their religious affiliation. For example, the number of respondents of Orthodox religion (36.8%) is significantly lower than the number of respondents of the Islamic religion (54.3%). There is also a big difference with the second question "Do you agree with the view that members of the other faith should be careful even when we are friends?" depending on their religious affiliation. Thus, the number of respondents of the Orthodox religion (48.6%) is significantly lower than the number of respondents of the Islamic religion who agree with the position (62.4%). This confirms the view that religious affiliation influences attitudes towards members of other confessions.

Table 6 - The degree of religiosity and attitude towards the members of other confessions

	Do you agree with the view that one can feel secure only if he/she lives in an environment where the majority are members of the same faith?			Do you agree with the view that members of the other faith should be careful even when they are friends with us?		
Degree of religiosity	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
Low degree	40,5 %	25,5 %	34,0 %	22,0 %	24,0 %	54,0 %
Moderate degree	35,7 %	21,2 %	43,1%	21,8 %	21,5 %	56,7 %
High degree	29,2 %	18,2 %	52,6 %	15,3%	20,4 %	64,3 %

The data in Table 6 show that, depending on the degree of the respondents religiosity, there is a difference in the respondents answers regarding the feeling of security in an environment in which the majority are from other religions and a sense of caution towards members of other religions even when we are friends. According to the data, the increase in the level of religiosity increases the feeling of insecurity to live in an environment where the majority are members of other religions and also increases the sense of caution towards members of other religions even when they are friends. This confirms the view that the degree of religiosity affects attitudes towards members of other confessions.

Concluding observations

When it comes to the influence of the religious affiliation and the degree of religiousness of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region on the frequent contacts with the members of the other confessional communities, as well as the influence of the religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity on the integration of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region from the research showed the following:

Regarding the influence of religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the Ohrid-Struga Region on the frequent contacts with members of other confessional communities, the results showed high percentage of respondents from Islamic faith and respondents with high degree of religiosity who have declared that their best friend is a member of the same faith as theirs. The results also show that there is a higher percentage of respondents of the Islamic faith, as well as respondents with a higher degree of religiosity who stated that they do not approve of religious mixed marriages, i.e. that religious mixed marriages are doomed to failure in advance.

Regarding the influence of the religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity on the integration of the population in the Ohrid-Struga region, the results show that the percentage of the respondents of the Islamic religion as well as the respondents with higher degree of religious affiliation are higher. That one can feel secure only if he or she lives in an environment where the majority is made up of members of the same faith, that is to say even members of another religion should be careful even if we are friends.

Based on the data obtained from the research, we can conclude that the religious affiliation and the degree of religiosity of the population in the region of Ohrid-Struga affect the integration processes or the disintegration processes and the tolerance towards the members of other confessions.

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