



RELIGION IN PANDEMIC CONDITIONS: ATTITUDE TO DIGITALIZATION RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Salamov Jakhongir Tashtemirovich,

Master of Theology faculty

Russian Islamic Institute

Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received 8th October 2022 Accepted: 8th November 2022 Published: 17th December 2022</p>	<p>The digitalization of religious practices has become the sharpest point of social and theoretical discussions during the pandemic. Even though the process digitalization began long before the pandemic and took place in different directions: information exchange, organization mutual aid, online theology lessons, broadcasts services, etc. etc., sanitary restrictions and political coloration exacerbated the problem of the relationship between "traditionalists" and "modernists" in religious organizations. For some believers, broadcasting of religious services was the only opportunity before meet their religious needs, pandemic only turned this problem into a universal one. Multidirectional reactions and judgments about boundaries the applicability of digital technologies, the essence of religious practices, the future of religion and religious institutions made this problem one of the most discussed over the past year, including in the sociology of religion. There is no consensus in the expert community on whether digitalization of religious practices, and if so, in what ways borders.</p>
<p>Keywords: digitalization; religious practices; Islam; sacredness; pandemic; experts, religious organizations</p>	

The digitalization of religious practices during the pandemic, the emergence of new forms of religious life emerging in based on modern information and online technologies, became one of the most significant subjects related to the change in the institutional, existential, axiological and political configurations of sociality, and found themselves at the center of public and theoretical disputes and discourses.

The introduction of modern digital technologies into religious life technologies provoked discussions regarding their acceptability for religious practices, causing, among other things, an increase in interest in the parameters of the "materiality of religion", flowed into social and political discourse in the areas knowledge related to anthropological issues. Become acquire new relevance such concepts and research fields as "material religion" ("Material Religion"), posing the problem of physical intermediaries interaction with the transcendent and their perception in different cultures and others. [1]

The search for suitable terminology is not accidental, for example, "digitalization" and "zeroing" of religions. It would be an oversimplification to think that religion is the concept is exclusively spiritual and has little connection with the material world. Religion is also a set of material religious objects of worship: temple buildings, robes of clergy, sacred books, objects for worship, etc.

They can also include various religious services publicly held in temple buildings or other places of worship. For example, among American Protestants, a dispute recently broke out regarding the legitimacy of electronic editions of the Bible [Khonineva, 2019: 156]. It turned out that not all believers share the enthusiasm for the Bible in a smartphone. According to people who are skeptical about electronic copies of Holy Scripture, they lack such a complex and difficult to translate characteristic as "Bibleness", which is a set of certain qualities of a printed copy of the Bible that defines it as a sacred object. [2]

In reality, the digitalization of religious practices started long before the pandemic. research markers on topic at the beginning of the 21st century. became such concepts as "network religions", "global market of religions", "deterritorialization religions", characterizing the phenomena that accompany the process of digitalization of religion. [3]

Then began to appear the possibility of ordering online requirements, "kosher search engines", online services "ask a father" or "Contact the Mufti" and so on. Despite the fact that in Uzbekistan these processes lagged behind similar ones in Europe, USA, Saudi Arabia, nevertheless by the beginning of the pandemic many religious organizations, including parishes and monasteries and mosques, already had their own well-developed digital methods of communication, and even in the conditions of self-isolation and other sanitary restrictions during the pandemic, the clergy had to urgently master video blogging and social networks. [4]

The use of online technologies in religious practices, the digitalization of the latter caused, perhaps, the most fierce disputes among believers and non-believers segments of society during the pandemic, and not only split society, but also called into question the further applicability of the approaches of the traditional sociology of religion. There was a pluralization of the group, which was previously simply defined as "believers, followers of a certain denomination", and a part of conservative-minded believers and their spiritual leaders, the so-called "church COVID-dissidents", clearly stood out, new forms of work with the flock turned out to be unacceptable for them: replacement of services "graceless" video broadcasts, repentance, commemoration and other requirements through gadgets and social networks.

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While for the other, more numerous part, convenience and "modern" interactions with the church through Internet technologies are becoming not only acceptable, but also the preferred way to meet religious needs. Also, public discussions about the digitalization of religious practices, the relationship between security and religion, ways of legitimation within the church fence became the focus of the politicization of the religious sphere in the era of the pandemic.

Through the prism of the sociology of organization and management, the digitalization of religion looks like a rational and even inevitable way of adapting religious organizations to a changed external environment, effectively promoting ideas, goods and services and extracting the income necessary for the existence and development of the organization.

In conclusion, it should be said that the survey on the admissibility of the digitalization of religious practices does not have an unambiguous assessment, or at least a consensus approach. On the contrary, there is a pluralization of views and, as a consequence, vectors of behavior, up to polarization. All this caused a lot of discussions that attracted the attention of the general public. However, this process as an objective trend is gaining momentum. First television, then the Internet, social networks, mobile gadgets - everything is taken into service in an effort to withstand fierce competition in the struggle for minds and souls. The pandemic only exacerbated the problem, showed that many parishes and monasteries are already using modern technologies, insisting on pragmatics - to quickly exchange information, organize assistance to the sick. [6]

For some people, the broadcast of religious services has previously been the only opportunity to join them, the pandemic has only universalized the problem of access to satisfy religious needs. Respectively, it would be more correct to raise the question not about the possibility, but about the limits of the use of digital technologies by religious organizations, which acts as a limiter, or, conversely, the possibilities can spread indefinitely.

In the course of the pandemic, one phenomenon has clearly manifested itself, which only seems like a paradox. On the one hand, according to long-term monitoring studies of the Institute sociology traditional religions in Uzbekistan level sharp social contradictions, smooth out, prevent social conflicts, thereby fulfilling a protective function for our state, on the other hand, it is in the bowels of traditional religious organizations that the civic activity of believers flourishes, their self-organization to provide mutual assistance, support the sick, the poor, those in need — with the most active use of digital technologies, and this activity during the pandemic only increased [7]. Thus, the civic activity of parishioners helps people in a difficult situation to cope with problems, to "swim up", not to become marginalized, who have nothing to lose, not to become embittered against the state, not to become oppositionists.

A too rigid hierarchical religious structure can prevent it from quickly and effectively solving unexpected problems, responding to new challenges of the external environment (such as pandemics and sanitary restrictions); and also, in order to successfully resist the main competitor in the "Islamic religion market" - radical Islam, it is necessary to surpass this competitor precisely in the field of digital religious services. [8]

An analysis of expert assessments shows that the online boundaries of religion are becoming the main points of tension, the digitalization of religious practices is becoming one of the loudest sounding themes of politicization and the clash of tradition and modernity in a pandemic.

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