

SCTCMG 2018
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural
Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»**

**TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF
POPULATION IN CROSS-BORDER REGIONS**

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Abstract

Cross-border regions are characterized by a special geographical location and specific political, economic and sociocultural space. Their fundamental role is to maintain the integrity of borders and hence, to ensure stable existence of the entire state. In many respects, safe development of cross-border regions is determined by favorable sociocultural climate, which formation and maintenance shall become one of the key tasks of the state policy. Sociocultural space of cross-border regions is presented by the intersection of ethnocultural processes, interaction of religious traditions and a certain level of the quality of life of the population. These parameters define transformation features of religious consciousness of the cross-border population. Qualitative changes of religious consciousness in such regions are characterized by particular intensity and originality. The paper studies one of the forms of transformation of religious consciousness in cross-border regions, i.e. religious syncretism. It determines its dominating positions caused by superposition of integrated cultural and religious layers. Structural and conceptual features of religious syncretism, its specifics in spiritual practice of the population are analyzed. However, the authors conclude that conflictogenity of religious syncretism is its historical rarity. The results of the study contribute to the system of knowledge on transformation forms of religious consciousness, their regularities and features, role of religious syncretism in sociocultural space of cross-border regions. Besides, the study will be useful in development of scientific, educational and cultural measures aimed to establish and strengthen relations between representatives of various nations and cultures united by cross-border space.

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Keywords: Transformations, religious consciousness, syncretism, stability, quality.



1. Introduction

In modern living conditions of a society, characterized by globalization processes in politics, economy, social and cultural spheres (Richard, 2014; Myrsini, 2017), the religion did not lose its positions and the religious fundamentals were not destroyed or weakened, but, on the contrary, religions were strongly embedded into the system of social life (Christiano, Swatos, & Kivisto, 2015; Roberts, 2015). Thus, the modern world of religion forms some features of individual and mass consciousness, defines specifics of interethnic relations, influences the politics of certain states, creates or destroys cultural values (Spica, 2017; Herbert, 2017). The influence of religions on society is becoming stronger with rapid emergence and functioning of religious doctrines and cults defined as syncretic. The present stage of religious evolution is quite controversial. On the one hand, many religions are losing their religious importance. The ontological fundamentals of religions are transforming – the content of religious consciousness ‘looses’ the idea of God, while the ideas of supernatural and transcendental disappear, the religious rituals are replaced with introspective psychotechniques, the cult objects are becoming the interior decor. On the other hand, religions strengthen their positions in social reality. They turned to be strongly embedded into all spheres of public life. As a result, the society found itself surrounded by the ‘network’ of numerous, ‘competing’ and diverse religions, religious-esoteric and religious-philosophical doctrines, movements and associations, which members consider themselves ‘spiritualized’, ‘spiritual’, but not too religious. A new type of religiousness – ‘personal religiousness’ free from doctrinal matters not recognizing the principles of isolation and exclusiveness is being formed and extending. Such religiousness characterizes intensive processes of transformation of religious consciousness and demonstration of the most ancient but still relevant in modern sociocultural realities form of transformation of religious consciousness, i.e. religious syncretism. Modern religious syncretism helps a person not only to make a conscious choice of the most convenient religion, but also to connect several religious traditions, thus professing their dogmas, or to synthesize and implement ritual practices. Modern scholars point to this tendency in the evolution of religious consciousness. “Such religiousness quite often representing the syncretic views adopted from different religious and philosophical systems of the West and East destroys certain borders historically embedding ‘traditional’ religions and creating spiritual and moral grounds for the distribution of globalization in all spheres of social life, mainly in economy, information, culture, politics” (Elbakyan, 2018). It is worth adding that the interference of sociocultural religions and transformations is obvious. In the modern world the religions become more stable, and their intrinsic and ‘deep’ characteristics are characterized by syncretic multilayeredness and mixed secular and religious aspects with the first one often prevailing. Such strength of religions may be explained by their ability to interact, connect and merge both among themselves and with other elements and form public and mass consciousness, ‘flexibility’ and ‘plasticity’ of their substantial components, ability ‘to adapt’ to constantly changing reality.

Under the influence of numerous factors and mechanisms the modern world is passing through continuous transformation of religious consciousness represented by the activity of various forms, the religious syncretism being one of them. The outstanding manifestation of religious syncretism is observed in cross-border regions, which are characterized by a specific territorial location, polyethnicity and cultural diversity. The religious syncretism in such regions is not the only form of transformation of religious

consciousness, though it is considered domineering. Besides, the religious syncretism acts as one of the factors that ensure and maintain social security and hence, stability of cross-border regions.

2. Problem Statement

Cross-border regions represent specific spatial territory characterized by the variety of political, social-economic, religious-cultural spheres. First of all, the transboundariness implies a special geographical location of regions of adjacent countries thus ensuring the formation of uniform and stable economic and spiritual environment of the population developed for centuries and decades (Kurki, 2014, Celata & Coletti, 2015). Such integrity results from long-term economic interaction and sociocultural integration. However, despite this fact, the cross-border regions are characterized by a major risk of various conflicts that pose a serious threat to social and territorial security, cross-border interaction and functional status of state boundaries (McCauley, 2017). The fact that cross-border regions are inhabited by representatives of different ethno-confessional groups may cause the risk of religious and ethnic conflicts. This situation is possible due to innovations in religious consciousness and their implementation, which may lead to ethno-confessional conflicts destructing the cross-border space. Besides, such situation is aggravated by extremely low level of quality of life of the population and the existence of 'cultural filters' preventing consolidation of ethnic groups on the basis of cultural and religious synthesis. Therefore, it is particularly important to identify the features of transformational processes in religious consciousness leading to destabilization of sociocultural sphere in cross-border regions. However, on the contrary the transformations of religious consciousness of the population in cross-border regions often form a favorable sociocultural environment through integration and syncretism of cultural and religious traditions thus ensuring security and stability of cross-border space. Where is this fine line between security and conflictogenity in sociocultural space of cross-border regions? What measures shall be taken in order to preserve it? How to control or to correct conflict-generating processes in cultural and religious interaction and on the contrary, to expand and maintain stabilization of transformation with regard to religious consciousness? The contradictions in the transformation of religious consciousness of the population of cross-border regions are still being studied. However, the system of knowledge of transformations of religious consciousness, forms of transformation, and their functioning mechanisms still require additional actions. For many countries the oppositions and conflicts in cross-border regions on cultural and religious grounds pose the threat of violation of border security and integrity.

The study of religious syncretism in the context of transboundariness is characterized by a certain importance and originality since it allows revealing features of religious syncretism in cross-border regions, tracking its features and defining religious syncretism as the most important existence factor of sociocultural space of cross-border regions.

3. Research Questions

The spiritual sphere of existence of the population of cross-border regions is characterized by intense transformational processes in individual and mass religious consciousness. In the conditions of historical dynamics, the transformation of religious consciousness is manifested in various forms quite often being in continuity. Thus, secularization and desecularization in spiritual sphere, 'hybridization', 'incorporation' of

religions, religious syncretism, etc. may refer to forms of religious transformation. Such forms of transformation of religious consciousness, originality of structure and content are determined by a variety of factors, including changes in sociocultural sphere. First of all, such changes are caused by the interaction of civilizations and cultures. Transformation of religious consciousness influenced by such factors exert reciprocal impact thus causing either stabilizing or conflictogenic sociocultural dynamics. However, changes in sociocultural sphere during various historical periods may define the dominating positions of either forms of transformation of religious consciousness, or on the contrary, make their functioning 'latent'.

The analysis of a modern sociocultural situation in cross-border regions of the Asian part of Russia near the border with China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan showed that one of the dominating forms of transformation of religious consciousness of the population living in these regions is religious syncretism. Besides, such regions are characterized by sustainable sociocultural development with quite rare cases of security risk. There is a creative role in the functioning of the most ancient form of religious transformation – religious syncretism.

The modern science fails to give the accurate definition to religious syncretism. Due to the fact that religious syncretism is a many-sided phenomenon, the understanding of its meaning is differently interpreted by scholars. The unilateral understanding of religious syncretism as a unity and inextensibility of religious images and ideas, or their chaotic 'inorganic' connection causes the need to complete and specify the given concept. Let us use the most complete definition formulated by the researcher studying religious evolution N.S. Kapustin. Religious syncretism is an objective process combining various religious elements, merging diverse irrational components into a comprehensive belief and cult system (Kapustin, 1984). It should be added that this process represents the most ancient form of religious transformation. Since its origin and up to the present all religions were somehow subject to this transformational process. The syncretism of archaic consciousness of a person and the syncretism of spiritual culture resulted in differentiation of forms and levels of public consciousness, which further constructed specific historical forms of religious existence, their theoretical bases and institutes. Religious syncretism influences spiritual and social spheres of an individual and a society. Moreover, depending on historical conditions the functions of religious syncretism evolve and hence, its impact on culture, religion and society differs to a larger or smaller degree.

Religious syncretism in cross-border regions developed and functioned along with the origin of such regions and with their territorial and spatial representation. Therefore, the mechanisms of development and consumption of special syncretized spiritual values by the population of cross-border regions have similar history with such regions. The features of religious syncretism are shown here by mechanisms 'working' in the conditions of polyethnicity, cross-cultural interaction and special socioeconomic patterns (Gavrilova, 2017). The level of life quality of the population is also important within these processes. Thus, the religious syncretism in cross-border regions is in many respects specific. Besides, religious syncretism, that has been existing for centuries in cross-border territories, even under poor living conditions of the population, ensures stability thus uniting ethno-confessional groups, forming closer contacts between people, defining their cultural solidarity.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed to identify and analyze features of transformations in religious consciousness of the population in cross-border regions. For this purpose, there is a need to study the features of the main universal parameters forming sociocultural space of 'transboundedness' and exerting direct impact on changes in religious images and cult and ritual practices of the population. First of all, there is a need to analyze the interrelation of such parameters as ethno-confessional interaction and dynamics of the quality of life of the population. This will allow defining the most conflictogenic or stabilizing tendencies of transformations in religious consciousness.

It was of a particular interest to study religious syncretism as one of the forms of transformation of religious consciousness which functioning substantiates sustainable development of sociocultural sphere of cross-border regions. For this purpose, there is a need to identify and study the features of religious syncretism under transboundedness conditions, to reveal mechanisms, which help the religious syncretism to ensure social security.

5. Research Methods

Taking into account the fact that religions form an integral part of culture and impact all spheres of life of an individual and a society, then there is a need to study the features of transformation forms of religious consciousness and their influence on the development of cross-border regions from sociocultural and functional perspectives. The use of these approaches will allow analyzing the sociocultural component of cross-border regions, revealing its specifics; defining features of religious syncretism in cross-border space, tracking the influence of religious syncretism on integrity and stability of social and cultural spheres.

The study implies the use of the basic concepts related to the quality of life and religious syncretism.

The study is based on the results of comparative analysis, survey (questionnaire) of the population of the Trans-Baikal Territory conducted within the School of Sociology of Life Quality of the Transbaikal State University.

Thus, the use of the above methodological approaches, concepts and methods will make it possible to analyze the features of transformation of religious consciousness of the population in cross-border regions; to reveal the role of religious syncretism in ensuring integrity and security within the sociocultural space of the Trans-Baikal Territory.

6. Findings

During the study of transformations of religious consciousness of the population in cross-border regions, there is a need to understand the fact that such regions represent the interaction of ethnic communities and cultures. It is particularly important to understand that it not the passive contact between ethnic groups living in cross-border space among themselves and with sociocultural features of their activity, but the interrelations between them. Besides, the formation of new elements and structures of spiritual and material spheres of life becomes the result of such interaction. In culture, especially on the periphery, on the border where the cultures meet and contact each other, the new cultural meanings are renewed and created, new models and schemes of development are generated (Sergeyev, 2005). Especially considering the fact that the cross-border regions are intensively involved in globalization processes. Here

the network of economic, political, social and cultural ties is strongly developed under the major condition of the globalized world – openness and readiness to form and safeguard the uniform living space. Therefore, we may refer to intensification and originality of transformation at various levels of religious consciousness.

The transformation in any sphere implies renewal, synergy of changes, transformations, appearance of new structures and forms of something, qualitative modification of phenomena and processes. Such understanding of transformation is also applicable to the evolution of religious consciousness. Having passed through a centuries-old development, the religious consciousness in modern living conditions of a society is still present in permanent transformations, which not only amplified, but also acquired, or to be more precise, retrieved the most ancient initial form of existence – religious syncretism. It is known that religious syncretism of a primitive society preceded the differentiation of forms of religious consciousness and their institutionalization. The current state of religions also demonstrates the appearance and distribution of syncretized elements sometimes with complete loss of the idea of God or gods, the concept on supernatural, or replacement of cult and ritual practices with introspective psychotechniques. The scholars talk about the possibility of the global religion, rather ethical than mystic and ritualized. But the distribution of religious syncretism does not imply purely negative influence on spiritual life. At present, the religious syncretism, on the contrary, is able to create a strong basis for unification of diverse, different functional elements of various cultural and religious traditions. The formation of ‘amalgam’ from different religious images, ideas and doctrines, the mixture of religious practices of various religions is able to consolidate stable ethno-confessional interactions. Moreover, it refers to the formation of close and direct contacts between people belonging to various religious and cultural traditions, between people having their own worldview and attitude, but being part of a single cross-border community. Thus, in a certain way the religious syncretism may be interpreted as an ‘assistant’ to globalization. The religious syncretism in cross-border regions confirms this fact.

Let us consider some features of religious syncretism in cross-border regions and define the activity of the stabilizing function of religious syncretism through which it influences the maintenance of social security.

Social security of the cross-border region is understood according to the definition given by the representatives of the School of Sociology of Life Quality of Transbaikal State University under the supervision of prof. M.B. Liga. Social security is the activity of a person aimed to reproduce and improve individual and social subjectivity in a certain historical living space and within the interdependence of people regarding their living space typified by primary, basic social relations of possession, use, order and distribution, consumption and conversion in all main spheres of social life: in economy – concerning property; in politics – concerning power; in social sphere – concerning living conditions within a family or a microgroup; in social and ecosphere – concerning the reproduction of ecological resources within the living region; in spiritual and practical sphere – concerning production and consumption of spiritual and cultural values, which eventually improve the quality of life in modern society (Liga, Shchetkina & Tomskikh, 2014). Stability in functioning and development of all spheres of society is defined by such integrated indicator as the quality of life. The life spheres of the population of cross-border regions as well as social security are not an exception. The quality of life and social security are interdependent and directly influence each other. Thus, in many respects social security is defined by the level of life of the population

while the decent quality of life is formed under the influence of robust and stable social security. This causes the need to consider the level of life thus identifying and studying factors that ensure and maintain social security.

The quality of life shall be understood as the individual assessment of the level of meeting the needs, satisfaction (dissatisfaction) with social and individual subjectivity determined by the life strategy of an individual, social policy of the state (Liga, 2006). Therefore, it is important to study the influence of religious syncretism on the formation of a certain level of life, which will make it possible to assess its contribution to social security.

In cross-border regions the religious syncretism performs a number of functions typical for any religious tradition, however in many respects such functions are specific and many-sided. First of all, religious syncretism affects ethno-confessional consciousness of certain people living in cross-border regions. The consequences of religious syncretism are the most visible in multiethnic environment. Under the conditions of syncretization between two or several national religions, the ethnic communities incorporate alien elements of material and spiritual culture. As a result, syncretism leads to unification of various components of religious and cultural life of various ethnic groups, causes transformations, and sometimes the destruction of qualities and properties defining the features of any sociocultural process and phenomenon. The synthesis of religious images and ideas blurs the line between various manifestations of spiritual and even material spheres of life within ethnic groups. The level of ethnocultural sphere that includes religion, customs, traditions, etc. is transformed especially intensively. There may be the destruction of the entire ethnocultural layer or creation of new syncretized and uniform cultural forms. Such blurring of religious and cultural features of ethnic groups of cross-border regions fosters the unity of sociocultural environment, erases national and ethno-confessional boundaries, which stabilizes the social situation in the region thus maintaining security. This leads to a certain level of social stability in cross-border regions.

Religious syncretism in cross-border regions is manifested at the interference of religions either related, uniform or close in terms of their content. The identity of components typical for syncretism acts as some kind of catalyst of synthesis and may be explained by the presence of general related grounds of religions. No wonder that this religious nature is not always typical for this grounds. A certain unity in the content of images, ideas and representations, similarity in actions of cult and ritual practices, close sense and similar image of symbolism, as well as the compliance of many other structural components of various religious and cultural systems cause syncretism, facilitate and accelerate its course. Besides, strong and the most stable syncretic religious systems are formed on this basis. Such identity of certain structural components of diverse religions is gained through evolution and as a result of interaction with various ethnocultural systems typical for the population of cross-border regions.

A good example of religious syncretism in cross-border regions in the appearance of integrated Shamanism and Buddhism in Buryatia, Trans-Baikal Krai and adjacent territories. Buddhism and Shamanism are two different religious systems in terms of their formation and development (Bernyukevich, 2016), and hence, they are diverse in their content and are aimed to perform various functions. However, deep and stable syncretism of these religious systems became possible due to similarity of some religious ideas, representations and ritual practices. First of all, the 'initial' and 'pure' Buddhism passed through a

long way of “adaptation to ethnocultural realities and traditional folk beliefs of the people of Central Asia (Tibetans, Mongols) that are close or related to Buryats. The Buddhism found its way in Buryatia already in the form of transformed Central Asian cultural and historical variation” (Abayeva, 2006). Hence, the syncretic unity of Shamanism and the transformed Buddhism was formed without serious consequences since these religious systems gained a certain structural and conceptual unity during their evolution (Gavrilova, 2015). Besides, the syncretism of some elements of Shamanism and Buddhism, their peaceful co-existence and a distinctive type of synthesis are possible, first of all, on a secular metaworldview basis. Such secular basis represents historically uniform living conditions of the population of cross-border regions, centuries-old features of their lifestyle, economic and cultural integrity of life.

However, the above described living conditions of religious syncretism in cross-border regions can sometimes be fraught with danger of nationalist intentions in order to maintain national, religious or cultural identity. The blurring of spiritual values and ideological stereotypes typical for a certain ethnic group within polycultural and polyconfessional environment changes the content of individual and mass consciousness, causes the need to keep the historical memory of certain people, cultural values, traditions and customs fostering the conservation of their originality. This may lead to the spiritual crisis, undermine the stability in the region, or break the integrity of frontiers and bring the conflict to the international level. Syncretic elements of religions either become alien and unnecessary for some individuals, or are at all rejected by them. This results into the rejection and even opposition to new ideas, images and representations in the consciousness of believers. In turn, this may lead to crisis of individual and mass religious consciousness followed by the loss of former ideas of supernatural reality so familiar for a person and social groups. As a result, the crisis in spiritual sphere often finds social and practical expression in the form of deviant behavior, or leads to national egoism stoked by religionism being a serious threat to social security. In such conditions the mass consciousness is characterized by the elements of nationalism, chauvinism and fundamentalism, various forms of religious and nationalist consciousness (Semyonov, 2009). In the conditions of blurring of national cultures, the religious syncretism may create diehard conservative tendencies and lead to long national and religious opposition and conflicts. Nowadays the co-residence of various confessional groups sometimes leads to bigger mutual understanding and interaction, but still there are conflicts and disengagement. <...> Local villages distributed by confession remain inside the ‘global village’ (Sellers, 1998).

Let us give an example of dissociation due to new syncretized branches of religion typical for the ethnos. It is an example of a merger of religious and cultural traditionalism with the elements of new doctrines in line with modern trends. This example includes the activity of representatives of traditional Shamanism and its syncretized types in the Republic of Buryatia. Having regenerated based on residual classic tradition of Boo Murgel the modern Buryat Shamanism is actively acquiring the influence of other cultural, mystical, philosophical traditions, which makes it possible to talk about neoshamanism as a stable tendency, against which the representatives of the ‘pure’ Boo Murgel tradition are trying to fight (Urbanayeva, 2001). Thus, the ‘champions’ of classical Shamanism contribute to the revival of Buryat traditions and consequently, preserve the national consciousness and introduce dissociation elements into the culture of Buryat people. Despite contradictions between traditional shamanists and the representatives of its syncretized forms, there were never open military collisions between them. Thus, even if religious

syncretism may lead to spiritual crisis and cultural and religious dissociation, then the danger of violating the stability is minimal – there are no open armed conflicts, and the ‘opposition’ takes place at the level of personal hostility of adherents.

However, the attempts of authorities to fill the spiritual vacuum with various ideological concepts embodied in practice are especially dangerous. As the famous researcher N.F. Bugay notes using Georgia as an example, “there is a distinct policy of the nation’s formation in Georgia on the basis of society crystallization theory (in the territory of the titular nation – only one nation) and the theory of irredentism (creation of the territory with one culture, which brought these communities to a deadlock and the loss of their territories” (Bugay, 2015). Thus, such situations are supported or are artificially formed by especially interested individuals grinding their own axe. The ‘natural’ religious syncretism in cross-border regions is an objective phenomenon evolving from standard development of society and culture. Therefore, the religious syncretism objectively forms the basis for stability and security in social and cultural spheres. First of all, religious syncretism prepares consciousness of an individual and the mass to perceive, experience, and then to ‘accommodate’ a different culture and religion.

The mechanism through which the religious syncretism stabilizes the situation in cross-border regions involves the regulator of psychological state of their population. Individual and mass religious consciousness is most sensitive to religious syncretism. Certain individuals easily perceive and acquire the synthesized religious ideas, images and representations, which are clear and familiar to them. It is bound to the fact that such syncretic elements of religious systems are formed through subjective religious experience, under the influence of daily social reality surrounding a person and are embedded into the living space of a personality. Hence, the attitude to gods, spirits and other supernatural creatures is more personal; the believers feel and experience compensation or full satisfaction with existential-practical and personal-psychological needs. In the conditions of religious syncretism, the individuals may belong to any specific religion, identify themselves with a certain ethno-confessional group, however in difficult life situations they tend to resort to help of rituals and practices of absolutely other religions thereby cultivating religious syncretism in their consciousness and practical activities. In this regard, the religious syncretism of traditional religious complexes for Zabaykalsky Krai bordering with Mongolia, China and the Republic of Buryatia is considered unique. The religious syncretism in these regions represents a special centuries-old system that includes Christianity in its various forms, Buddhism (Gelugpa School) and Shamanism. Indeed, other religions are also present in these regions, however the above-named religious traditions are dominating. Their centuries-old syncretism created the unique and stable sociocultural environment of the Trans-Baikal. Thus, for example, in Zabaykalsky Krai, the believers considering themselves Orthodox Christians and attending Orthodox churches, appeal to Buryat shamans in tough situations, visit Lamaist temples to perform religious rituals meant to remedy the difficult situation they face. The practice-oriented approach of Shamanism and Buddhism make these religious traditions ‘convenient’ for peace of individuals experiencing crisis situations. The shamanist purification, Buddhist prayers against evil tongues, for success, good luck, family health, etc. often performed by the clergy practicing both Shamanism and Buddhism are things that a person living in regions with severe social and economic conditions needs. As N.F. Bugay fairly notes: “As for the damage to the country’s safety, it is undoubtedly caused by its economic condition” (Bugay, 2015). It is worth noting that the economic condition of cross-border regions,

having a huge economic and investment potential, leaves much to be desired and the level of the quality of life of its population is relatively low. However, let us look at the data obtained in the study of the living quality of the population in Zabaykalsky Krai conducted in 2014 and 2016 by the Laboratory of Sociology of Life Quality of Transbaikal State University and define the dependence of transformation of religious consciousness on the level of quality of life.

The 'quality of life of the population of the region' was the main criteria used to assess the condition of social security. The satisfaction of individuals with their wealth, work and profession, life and the current situation in the region in general were assessed during the study. These aspects form the basis for the assessment of the population's living environment, which may be characterized as the living space of a personality, as a habitat of a person making it possible to reproduce and improve his life, as a set of elements constituting natural and sociocultural basis for human life as a biopsychosocial being. The living space of a person includes individual axiosphere, religious beliefs, religious ritual-domestic practices that influence the satisfaction with the quality of life and hence, the main indicator of social security. Despite the fact that the study did not cover certain problems of cross-cultural and interreligious interaction, it allowed analyzing the dynamics in sociocultural sphere, revealing the level of satisfaction with the quality of life and defining the condition of social security in the Trans-Baikal.

The survey of public opinion regarding the state of international relations as an indicator of social security was carried out in 2014 in Zabaykalsky Krai (Liga, Shchetkina, Tomskikh, 2014). Some questions of this survey were used to assess the quality of life of the population in Zabaykalsky Krai.

The following levels were identified during the assessment of satisfaction with life and its various spheres: low, below average, average, high, very high. The obtained data show the dependence between the assessment of the standard of living in general and its certain spheres. Low level of satisfaction with life in general also demonstrates low satisfaction with health, housing, profession, family relations. And, on the contrary, high and very high level of satisfaction with life in general determine high and very high satisfaction with various aspects of life.

Based on the result of this study, the state of social security of Zabaykalsky Krai can be assessed as stable. 61.4% of respondents in general estimate the satisfaction with life as high and very high. Much smaller number of respondents (36.4%) estimate their satisfaction with life as average, below average and low (Liga, Shchetkina, & Tomskikh, 2014).

The results of the study conducted in 2016 demonstrate further dynamics of the quality of life in the region.

The sociological survey of public opinion regarding the satisfaction with the quality of life as an indicator of social security was conducted in March-April 2016 in Zabaykalsky Krai. The survey was carried out in the form of a questionnaire.

The same levels of satisfaction of respondents with certain aspects of life were defined: low, below average, average, high, very high.

The survey shows that the majority of respondents gave a positive assessment to the quality of life in general. The majority of respondents choose very high and high level of satisfaction. The relative density of the population unsatisfied with life takes the fifth part of all respondents. Over a third of respondents

assess their satisfaction as average. The majority of the population of Zabaykalsky Krai (66.2%) assess the level of quality of life as average. 52.3% of respondents assess their satisfaction as very high and high.

Thus, the satisfaction with the quality of life is stable and has positive dynamics. Besides, the results of the survey in 2014 and 2016 show relatively high percentage of respondents with high and average level of satisfaction with the quality of life – ranging from 36.0 to 66.2%. High quality ensures stable state of social security. Stable state of social security is a condition of a society ensuring reliable and comprehensive protection of a personality, society and state from different risks of natural, social, and technological realities. Low quality of life makes the state of social security socially dangerous.

Various aspects of life of the population in cross-border regions, including culture, play an important role in the assessment of satisfaction with the quality of life. The analysis of coexistence of different religions and processes of their joint evolution and results of the survey of the quality of life in cross-border regions show the stability in culture provided relatively urgent social issues are present. Despite this fact the quality of life in cross-border regions (using the example of Zabaykalsky Krai) is assessed as average and high, which positively affects the social security.

The daily social reality of a person greatly influences the social security. Social security in certain settlements and regions and the countries in general determine the scope of life of an individual and as the way he assesses it, what measures will he take to improve it or maybe he relies on public authorities. One of the indicators influencing satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the population with the quality of life includes problems that the population of the region is concerned with. The survey allowed defining the range of problems, with which the population of Zabaykalsky Krai is concerned (Figure 1).

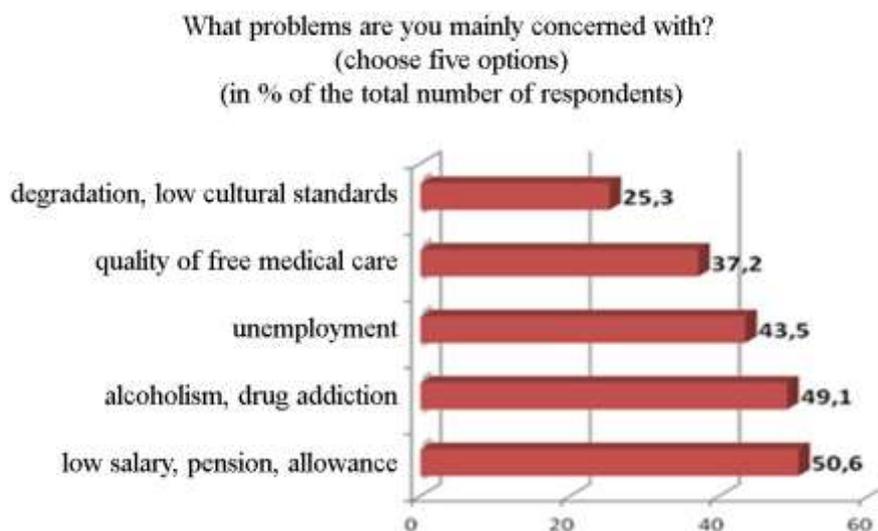


Figure 01. Problems of the population of Zabaykalsky Krai

Thus, in the ranking of problems the social problems take the leading position: low salary and unemployment, commercialization and decline of health care and education. Sociocultural problems take the last place, which indicates a certain stability in sociocultural sphere and lack of tendency towards spiritual crisis. This confirms that in the territory of Zabaykalsky Krai the religious syncretism ensures sustainable development of sociocultural sphere via the distribution and maintenance of cultural values,

exposure to historical, cultural and national heritage, removal of psychological and social tensions. The centuries-old coexistence of several cultures and several religions creates a uniform basis for sustainable development of the region.

For example, religious syncretism of the Torah village in the Republic of Buryatia – Shamanism, Buddhism, Orthodox Christianity – are those three religions, which interlacing forms a unique inner world of a village. The vast majority of its inhabitants, even if they call themselves unbelievers (not atheists as in the past years), are the followers of two and even three religions at once. There is no spiritual pathology here, this is a natural state of a person who grew up in the area of several cultural traditions (Zhukovskaya, 1995). Stability and lack of ethno-confessional tensions in such regions may be explained by factors causing religious syncretism. For example, centuries-old assimilative processes and commonality of ‘holistic’ opinions, mainly on a secular but not religious basis belong to such factors. In many respects, the conditions of religious syncretism define its place and role in ensuring and safeguarding social stability in cross-border regions.

7. Conclusion

Thus, religious syncretism in cross-border regions is key to stable function and development of sociocultural sphere and thus may act as one of the most important factors of social security in such regions. The centuries-old religious syncretism under long historical interaction of economic and cultural spheres of various ethnic groups inhabiting the cross-border territories ensures uniform sociocultural environment characterized by endurance and stability of existence. This is possible with the appearance of new sociocultural practices and coexisting religions that are objectively developed through joint evolution. This conclusion is confirmed by the results of the survey carried out in Zabaykalsky Krai of the Russian Federation located at the intersection of borders between Russia, Mongolia and the People’s Republic of China.

Besides, due to specifics of cross-border territories the new syncretic religions do always appear and their existence is not obligatory to ensure stability of cross-border regions. There is enough ‘mixture’ of religious customs, traditions and practices which may be syncretic and refer to religious syncretism. They form a relatively strong basis for sociocultural integrity of cross-border regions. Syncretism of religions creates a spiritual basis for consolidation of the cross-border population thus defining general sociocultural conditions of regional development; syncretism of religions forms close intercultural and interreligious relations among people inhabiting the cross-border areas characterized by a certain historically developed system of ordered and stable interactions, which almost excludes conflicts and ensures functional integrity of state borders.

The role of religious syncretism in cross-border regions is identified and studied taking into account two aspects: 1. specifics of ethnocultural interaction; 2. level of quality of life of the population. This approach is innovative and supplements the attempts of scholars to study the problems of design and function of religious syncretic complexes in cross-border regions.

The given materials and conclusions may be used for further study of religious syncretism, its features and role in the development of not only cross-border regions but other regions in general. The understanding of positive and negative impact of religious syncretism on society will make it possible to

consider its role provided programs of improving the quality of life and ensuring social security are available.

Thus, religious syncretism plays an ambiguous role in modern living conditions of a society. On the one hand, it contributes to the development, brings peace and calm coexistence to various ethnic groups, on the other – the blurring of ethnocultural traditions leads to the destruction of cultural layers. The social role of religious syncretism for the population of cross-border regions is the fact that by changing some social practices, it influences the evolution and transformation of the entire sociocultural reality, namely by ensuring social stability.

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