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Religious Identity, Religious Practices and Spirituality of the Population of Russia's Asian Borderlands

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Abstract. The religious identity of Russian citizens in modern conditions is transformed under the influence of socio-cultural processes of a global nature, often taking individualized forms and combined with practices of reviving interest in religion and its protective, compensatory functions in conditions of uncertainty. In 2022–2023, with the support of the Russian Science Foundation, a sociological study was conducted to examine religious identity, religious practices and spiritual security in the border regions (Altai Territory, Altai Republic, Tyva Republic and Novosibirsk Region, 1868 people). The population of the border regions gravitates towards Orthodoxy (36%), however, significant differentiations in the regional refraction of the religious mosaic. Orthodoxy prevails in the Altai Territory and the Novosibirsk Region, shamanism prevails in Tyva (52%), Burkhanism is represented in the Altai Republic (16%). Moreover, an index of religiosity based on the Huber methodology was calculated in the study. The index is built on the integration of the five structural components of religiosity: intellectual, ideological, public and personal religious practices, and religious experience. The average index of religiosity was 2.41 points, the most religious is the population of the Tuva Republic (2.75), followed by the Altai Republic (2.52), index values below the test norm (2.45) were recorded in the Altai Territory (2.36) and the Novosibirsk Region (2.16). Ideas about religiosity and spirituality are changing and acquiring new meanings in the light of changing social relations between believers and non-believers, emerging new practices and religious organizations.

Keywords: religious identity, religious practices, religiosity index, Asian borderlands of Russia

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Религиозная идентичность, религиозные практики и духовность населения азиатского приграничья России

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Аннотация. Религиозная идентичность граждан России в современных условиях преобразуется под влиянием социально-культурных процессов глобального характера, зачастую принимая индивидуализированные формы и сочетаясь с практикой возрождения интереса к религии и ее защиты, компенсационные функции в условиях неопределенности. В 2022–2023 гг. при поддержке Российского научного фонда было проведено социологическое исследование по изучению религиозной идентичности, религиозной практики и духовной безопасности в приграничных регионах (Алтайский край, Республика Алтай, Тыва и Новосибирская область, 1868 чел.). Население приграничных регионов тяготеет к православию (36%), однако имеются значительные различия в региональном преломлении религиозной мозаики. В Алтайском крае и Новосибирской области преобладает православие, в Тыве преобладает шаманизм (52%), в Республике Алтай — бурханизм (16%). Кроме того, в исследовании был рассчитан индекс религиозности на основе методологии Хубера. Индекс основан на интеграции пяти структурных компонентов религиозности: интеллектуальной, идеологической, общественной и личной религиозной практики и религиозного опыта. Средний показатель религиозности составил 2,41 пункта, наиболее религиозным является население Республики Тыва (2,75), на втором месте по религиозности — Республика Алтай (2,52), тогда как в Алтайском крае (2,45) и Новосибирской области (2,16) значения индекса минимальны. Представления о религиозности и духовности меняются и приобретают новое значение в свете изменения социальных отношений между верующими и неверующими, новых практик и религиозных организаций.

Ключевые слова: религиозная идентичность, религиозные практики, индекс религиозности, азиатское пригранижье России

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Introduction

Modern studies of religious identity interpret it as a social construct, a product of culture and society, which is formed in a particular social context under the influence of external and internal factors. Constructivism considers religious identity through the formation of social representations and the establishment of the relationship between individual action, social activity and the influence of social structures, as well as through the opposition between individuality, identity and belonging to a collective community (Hastings, 1997; Howarth, 2002; Dubuisson, 2003; Lichterman, 2008).

Central to religious identity is religiosity as an individual and social (in the case of mass forms) quality that has emotional, evaluative, cognitive and behavioral aspects and reflects the results of possessing religious knowledge and feelings, the internalization of religious norms and sacred symbols, and the recognition of the legitimacy of religious institutions. The concepts of religiosity and religious identity are often not separated and are used together as related and difficult to separate (Ryzhova, 2016, 2017; Ivanov, 2020). Just as ethnicity and ethnic identity correlate with each other, so do religiosity and religious identity (Noyanzina, Maximova, Omelchenko, 2023). And while identity is reserved for the identification function itself, correlation with a certain image, ideal (of a true believer), and group community (religious group); religiosity implies the possession of a certain set of attributes: religious knowledge, perceptions, feelings, attitudes towards one's own and other religions, religious behavior, expressed in a continuum: from the complete absence of religiosity to strong (including manifestations of fanaticism) religiosity.

There are numerous and varied approaches not only to determine the methodology of research and evaluation of religiosity, but also approaches to its typologization and aggregation of sociological methods of analysis. Such attempts, as well as the grounds for typology, are presented in the works of the classics of sociology E. Giddens, G. Hegel, N. Luhmann, E. Durkheim, M. Weber (the review is presented in the work of Hervieu-Leger D. 2015) and other modern Russian authors (Fedorova, 2016; Khlopkova, 2020; Chesnokova, 2005; Grishaeva, 2018; Lebedev, 2020; Sinelina, 2011).

S. Lebedev (Lebedev, 2020) proceeds from the fact that the conventional “model” of a believer for a sociologist is a traditional individual included in the life of a religious community, who correlates his thoughts and behavior with the reference group and its attitudes. He suggests relying in a sociological study on one of the three approaches, called “classical”, “non-classical” and “post-classical”, in relation to which the identification of the religiosity of the population is carried out. The first approach implies religiosity as the direct involvement of the individual in the life of the community, external control, and the presence of confessional communities consisting of traditional believers. The second assumes distance or an individual's falling out of the system of social ties

of the religious community, internal control based on religious norms, and the believer's crisis state. The third describes the state of the believer in isolation from the real religious community (virtualization of the religious community), an orientation solely to internal control, and a group of extra-confessional (weakly religious, inactive) believers (Glock, 1962, 1973; Faulkner, De Jong, 2011; Allport, Ross, 1967; Huber, Huber, 2018).

In our research, we believe it is important to rely on a comprehensive approach, in which there is room for both subjective and objective assessments that reflect internal religious experiences and their external manifestations. In particular, we share the positions of S. Huber and O. W. Huber (2007, 2008, 2012, 2020) about the existence of multiple dimensions of religiosity and the possibility of their universal operationalization and generalization to different population groups. In their works, the authors propose a category of *religiosity centrality* that takes into account general assessments of the key components of religiosity that together describe the diversity of religious life (namely, five dimensions of religiosity: public religious practice, personal religious practice, religious experience, ideological and intellectual dimension of religiosity) (see Huber and Huber, 2018; Huber, et al., 2020; Ackert, Prutskova, Zabaev, 2020).

Thus, this approach (Huber, et al., 2008, 2020) allows us, first, to study the religious identity from a comprehensive theoretical perspective that reflects the dynamic nature of religious identity and religiosity and their continuum, and, second, to assess the importance of religiosity to the individual and describe the repertoire of religious identity, from internal, spiritual, to external, instrumental. Another strength is an organic attempt to link together the individual and social aspects of religious identity, through which identity is manifested in private and public spaces, religious communications are built, and identity is verified (confirmation) among other believers and non-believers. We also propose to take into account the peculiarities of the formation of spiritual security.

Methods of sociological research and calculation of the religiosity index

Based on a sociological study aimed at studying religious identity, religious practices and spiritual security in the border regions of Russia, the population of four regions of Russia's Asian borderlands was surveyed (regions: Altai Territory, Altai Republic, Tyva Republic, Novosibirsk Region; n = 1868 respondents).

In our study, we used the Religiosity Centrality Scale (hereafter, CRS), a methodology substantiated and tested in 25 countries with more than 100,000 respondents (including representatives of Russia) by Stefan Huber et al., professor of empirical religion research and interreligious communication theory at the Institute of Empirical Religious Research (University of Bern, Switzerland) (see Huber and Huber, 2018; Huber, et al., 2020). This technique measures the centrality (severity) of five dimensions of religiosity: public religious practice, personal religious practice, religious experience, ideological and intellectual dimension of religiosity, which together characterize an individual's religious life. It is important to note that the author calculated test norms for Russia of 2.45 points, with a standard deviation of 0.96 points.

The rating scale for the parameters of each dimension of religiosity has several levels (from 1 to 5): the first two levels (answers 1 and 2 points) mark the absence of certain

religious constructs in the minds of individuals, they are not “psychologically relevant”, and the answers in the range of 4 and 5 divisions of the scale indicate the clear presence of religious constructs in the system of personal identifications, which allows to identify the individual as “highly religious”. Intermediate choices (3rd division of the scale) mark an intermediate position between the “presence and absence of religious constructs” and religious individuals who become such from time to time (Huber and Huber, 2018).

Research results

A sociological study was conducted to examine religious identity, religious practices and spiritual security in the border regions of Russia, surveying the population of four regions of Russia’s Asian borderlands (regions: Altai Territory, Altai Republic, Tyva Republic, Novosibirsk Oblast).

In the four regions of Russia’s Asian borderland, 1868 people between the ages of 15 and 70 participated, the average age of the respondents was 40.1. The sample consists of 498 people from the Altai Territory, 448 people from the Novosibirsk Region, 439 people from the Altai Republic and 246 people from the Tyva Republic. The age structure was as follows: 32.7% of the population aged 15–30, 38.5% aged 31–49, 28.8% of the population aged 50 or older.

Among the population of the four border regions, only a third of the respondents (31% in total) do not consider themselves believers, while all the rest consider themselves as followers of a particular religion, or belief, or are had a blurred religious identity. In general, the population of the border regions tends to be Orthodox (36%), however, a significant differentiation of the religious mosaic is expressed in the regional refraction. For example, in the Altai Territory and the Novosibirsk Region present a similar religious picture with a predominance of the Orthodox population: in the Altai Territory, 51%, and in the Novosibirsk Region, 37% of the population consider themselves Orthodox believers. In the ethnic republics of the borderlands the share of non-believers is less, but in the Tyva Republic their share is minimal, only 9%, in this sense, Tuva is more different from other territories covered by the study because of its traditionalism and immersion in the spiritual space of life. Whereas in the Altai Republic, along with the Orthodox Christians, who also constitute the majority (36%), the so-called “Altai faith” (Burkhanism) is widely represented (16%), in Tuva, only 5% are Orthodox Christians, and the dominant religious references are shamanism (52%), or its combination with Buddhism (16%). The main number of believers in Tuva are Buddhists and shamanists at the same time, resorting to the spiritual assistance of both lamas and shamans, which preserves the already formed and persisting phenomenon of syncretism of shamanism and Buddhism in Tuva.

Cult or religious behavior: in total, almost a fifth of the border residents (19.9%) have experience of making religious pilgrimages, traveling to holy places for religious purposes, and another 15.2% have a desire for sacred travel. Most residents with such experience are in the Republic of Tyva (38.8%), significantly less share is in the Altai Republic (19.7%), and in the Altai Territory and Novosibirsk Region shares are about the same level of 14.4% and 13.4%, respectively.

The intellectual component of religiosity

So, following the CRS methodology, we turn to the analysis of the first construct in the system of general religiosity of the population, its intellectual dimension. The intellectual component of religiosity is assessed in terms of its consistency with the expectations of a well-informed population regarding religion and the ability to reflect on their views on the transcendent. General indicators of the intellectual component are the frequency of reflection on religion and the intensity of the desire to maintain and increase the amount of information.

Table 1

Таблица 1

Average scores on the scales of the intellectual component
of religiosity, regional comparisons

Средние значения по шкалам интеллектуального компонента
религиозности, региональные сравнения

		Thinking about religious topics	Maintaining your awareness of religious matters	It is interesting to learn more about religious topics
Altai Krai	Average	2.47	2.15	2.62
	Standard deviation	1.08	1.08	1.17
Altai Republic	Average	2.71	2.32	2.84
	Standard deviation	1.16	1.15	1.16
Tyva Republic	Average	2.85	2.50	3.15
	Standard deviation	1.01	1.09	1.01
Novosibirsk Oblast	Average	2.72	2.30	2.58
	Standard deviation	1.08	1.08	1.18
Total	Average	2.67	2.30	2.76
	Standard deviation	1.10	1.11	1.16

Overall, for the entire sample, the intellectual component of religiosity and its components are expressed on an average level, with interest in learning about religion ($m = 2.76$, $sd = 1.16$) and the frequency of mental reference to religious topics ($m = 2.67$, $sd = 1.1$) being the most pronounced, followed to a lesser extent by activities aimed at expanding the scope of religious knowledge ($m = 2.3$, $sd = 1.11$). The values are distributed in a similar way on the scales within the regions. The frequency of reflection on the religious is most pronounced in the Tyva Republic ($m = 2.85$, $sd = 1.01$), and, oddly enough, in the Novosibirsk Region ($m = 2.72$, $sd = 1.08$), and least pronounced in Altai Krai ($m =$

2.47, $sd = 1.08$). Activities to expand the knowledge about religion are also in Tyva ($m = 2.5$, $sd = 1.09$), and less peculiar to the residents of Altai Krai ($m = 2.15$, $sd = 1.08$), interest in information about religion in Tyva has the highest average values on the scale ($m = 3.15$, $sd = 1.01$), the lowest is in Novosibirsk Oblast ($m = 2.58$, $sd = 1.18$) (Table 1).

The ideological component of religiosity

The next component we considered refers to the ideological side of an individual's religiosity and is measured in relation to the attitude that religious people have beliefs, according to which there is some kind of transcendent reality, with which religious (and non-religious) people directly or through spiritual persons (e.g., priests), or sacred objects establish a connection.

Belief in life after death is probably the most doubtful in the minds of the population, the strength of this belief, in comparison with the other two components of the ideological component of religiosity, is not so pronounced (at the level of 2.8 points), which is also confirmed by the standard deviation ($sd = 1.34$), unlike belief in God or conventional higher powers ($m = 3.06$, $sd = 1.35$; $m = 3.18$, $sd = 1.39$). Belief in God (the existence of divine power) is characteristic of the residents of Tuva ($m = 3.38$, $sd = 1.06$) and the Altai Republic ($m = 3.28$, $sd = 1.31$) to a greater extent, and of the Altai Krai ($m = 2.96$, $sd = 1.34$) and Novosibirsk region ($m = 2.74$, $sd = 1.48$) to a lesser extent. Belief in the real existence of a higher power is also high in studied regions: Tuva ($m = 3.51$, $sd = 1.14$) and Altai Republic ($m = 3.36$, $sd = 1.37$), Altai Krai ($m = 3.03$, $sd = 1.36$) and Novosibirsk region ($m = 2.96$, $sd = 1.52$). As for belief in life after death, it is less common across the residents of Altai Krai ($m = 2.46$, $sd = 1.45$) and Novosibirsk Oblast ($m = 2.72$, $sd = 1.29$) (Table 2). It is interesting to look at these data from the perspective of the fundamental principles of religions and beliefs that are most prevalent in the four regions of Siberia. Thus, belief in the afterlife (as well as belief in the one God and the act of creation) is one of the religious formulas of Christianity. The afterlife is life in an ideal world (the Kingdom of Heaven), which is ruled by God and endowed with maximum perfection. The basis of the religious and philosophical concepts of Buddhism is the perception of life as an almost endless life cycle and a series of countless rebirths, the wheel of which is turned by karma as a universal law, to which all beings doomed to an endless change of birth and death obey. Only the achievement of nirvana as an inexplicable state of detachment from all desires can mark a chain of rebirths. Ideas about the soul, death and the afterlife are also the basis of the shamanic worldview. Predetermined by gods and spirits, Heaven, the death of a person continues transferring to another world, where his relatives and friends are. Thus the dead can influence the alive, help or harm them, therefore, with the help of shamans it is possible to interact with them, and it is also important to make sacrifices to propitiate the dead. The Altai Burkhanism, as a variety of Burkhanism of the Turkic peoples of the Altai-Sayan, is also characterized not only by the idea of the existence of the One God, the appeal to which does not require intermediaries (shamans), but also by the idea of Heaven and Hell, the rebirth of the human soul¹. Thus, in fact, the proposed structural elements of the ideological compo-

¹ See, for example: Gabriel, T., Jeeves, R. Religions of the World: A Brief Reference. Moscow : Kladez-Buks; Lanilyan O. G., Taranenko V. M. (2005). Religious studies: a textbook. Moscow : Eksmo.

ment mark, among other things, the adherence of the respondents to the key principles of faith and their acceptance.

Table 2

Таблица 2

Average scores on the scales of the ideological component
of religiosity, regional comparisons

Средние значения шкал идеологического компонента
религиозности, региональные сравнения

		How strongly do you believe in the existence of God or some divine power?	How much do you believe in the existence of life after death?	How likely is it that there really is a higher power?
Altai Krai	Average	2.96	2.72	3.03
	Standard deviation	1.34	1.29	1.36
Altai Republic	Average	3.28	3.05	3.36
	Standard deviation	1.31	1.30	1.37
Tyva Republic	Average	3.38	3.08	3.51
	Standard deviation	1.06	1.19	1.14
Novosibirsk Oblast	Average	2.74	2.46	2.96
	Standard deviation	1.48	1.45	1.52
Total	Average	3.06	2.80	3.18
	Standard deviation	1.35	1.34	1.39

Public religious practice in the structure of religiosity

The measurement of the manifestation of public religious practices is assessed in relation to the social expectation of an individual's belonging to a reference religious community, his or her participation in religious activities and religious rituals, the publicity of this participation, as well as involvement in the life of a religious community. Public religious practices are based on patterns of action that are formed under the influence of the intellectual and ideological components, ideas about the transcendent. Thus, these can be worship (masses) for Christians, meditation for Buddhists, the performance of namaz for Muslims, a ritual of sacrifice for Burkhanists, and so on. Recall that the assessment was based on scores under three questions: "How often do you participate in religious services?", "How important is it for you to participate in religious services?", "How important is it for you to belong to a religious community?"

Compared to the two components of religiosity described above, the average scores for the expression of public religious practices are lower, which probably reflects reality. On the one hand, not all religious prescriptions require the publicity of religious life, relying on the performance of the sacraments, meditation, spirituality and righteous living, etc. On the other hand, we live in a secular society where social rituals take precedence: the importance of belonging to a religious community as a whole in the four regions is expressed at the level of 2.07 points ($sd = 1.23$), the significance of participation in religious services is 2.12 points ($sd = 1.2$), the frequency of participation in them is at a low level of 1.98 points ($m = 0.9$).

The frequency of participation in services for religious reasons is highest in Tyva ($m = 2.33$, $sd = 0.92$), and lowest in the Novosibirsk Oblast ($m = 1.77$, $sd = 0.81$). The low range of the standard deviation values for this parameter indicates the homogeneity of the estimates, and, in general, a trend for refusal or low activity of attending religious services. The highest importance (according to the average score) of participation in religious services was recorded in Tyva ($m = 2.63$, $sd = 1.12$), the lowest is in the Novosibirsk region ($m = 1.67$, $sd = 1.08$), the average estimates of the significance of belonging to a religious community were distributed similarly ($\max m = 2.63$, $sd = 1.22$; m in $m = 1.63$, $sd = 1.07$) (Table 3).

Table 3

Таблица 3

Average scores on scales of public religious practices as a component of religiosity, regional comparisons

Средние значения по шкалам публичных религиозных практик как компонента религиозности, региональные сравнения

		How often do you take part in religious services?	How important is it for you to participate in religious services?	How important is it for you to belong to a religious community?
Altai Krai	Average	1.90	2.11	2.08
	Standard deviation	0.91	1.16	1.20
Altai Republic	Average	2.06	2.24	2.11
	Standard deviation	0.90	1.23	1.27
Tyva Republic	Average	2.33	2.63	2.63
	Standard deviation	0.92	1.12	1.22
Novosibirsk Oblast	Average	1.77	1.67	1.63
	Standard deviation	0.81	1.08	1.07
Total	Average	1.98	2.12	2.07
	Standard deviation	0.90	1.20	1.23

Personal religious practice in the structure of religiosity

In contrast to public religious actions, personal religious practices focus on the private space of an individual's life and the inclusion of transcendental and religious rituals in it, that is, the appreciation of personal religious styles. Such practices include a commitment to prayer and meditation as acts of addressing the "opposite" (Hubert and Hubert, 2018) and a dialogic type of spirituality.

The sub-scale element reflecting the frequency of attempts to interact with the divine has the lowest average values ($m = 1.81$, $sd = 1.08$), and the most pronounced element describes the frequency of prayer ($m = 3.11$, $sd = 1.55$). The importance of prayer was rated at an average of 2.85 points ($sd = 1.45$), the frequency of meditation scored 2.8 ($sd = 1.49$), the least frequent was the unplanned recourse to prayer practices ($m = 2.36$, $sd = 1.23$), and the least important was meditation ($m = 2.27$, $sd = 1.26$). For all elements that collectively reflect personal religious practices, the maximum average values were recorded in Tyva Republic, and the minimum values were recorded in the Novosibirsk Oblast (Table 4).

Table 4

Таблица 4

Average scores on scales of personal religious practices as a component of religiosity, regional comparisons

Средние значения по шкалам персональных религиозных практик как компонента религиозности, региональные сравнения

		Prayer	Meditate	How important is personal prayer to you?	How important is meditation to you?	Pray in an unplanned way about everyday situations that arise	Unintentionally trying to make contact with the divine
Altai Krai	Average	3.04	2.71	2.73	2.26	2.26	1.97
	Standard deviation	1.58	1.54	1.39	1.26	1.21	1.15
Altai Republic	Average	3.29	2.79	3.03	2.19	2.54	1.89
	Standard deviation	1.48	1.45	1.47	1.23	1.24	1.11
Tyva Republic	Average	3.80	3.02	3.47	2.79	2.90	1.96
	Standard deviation	1.17	1.48	1.18	1.23	1.13	1.09
Novosibirsk Oblast	Average	2.55	2.75	2.37	1.99	1.94	1.49
	Standard deviation	1.59	1.47	1.48	1.18	1.15	0.87
Total	Average	3.11	2.80	2.85	2.27	2.36	1.81
	Standard deviation	1.55	1.49	1.45	1.26	1.23	1.08

Religious experience in the general structure of religiosity

Religious experience is more subjective, reflecting the experience of encounters with the divine (mystical) reality, the sense of the divine presence in the world and the life of the individual (fate, karma, dependence on the divine will, a certain higher (divine) order of things, etc.). This component is closely related to the emotional assessment and component of the religiosity of the individual, as it is associated with the experience of hope (for example, for rebirth, to be in paradise, forgiveness of sins, redemption, etc.), inner peace, trust in the will of God, a sense of guilt or fear of a higher judgment. Huber proposes to distinguish two forms of experiencing the transcendent: “one-to-one experience” which corresponds to the dialogic type of spirituality and “experience of being as one”, corresponding to the participating type” (Cited from: Huber and Huber, 2018: 153).

Table 5

Таблица 5

Average scores on scales of religious experience as a component of religiosity, regional comparisons

Средние значения по шкалам религиозного опыта как компонента религиозности, региональные сравнения

		The feeling that God or some divine force is interfering in your life	The feeling that you and the world are one	The feeling that God, or some divine power, wants to tell or show you something	The feeling that you were touched by divine power	A sense of the presence of God or some divine power
Altai Krai	Average	2.40	2.27	2.31	2.16	2.20
	Standard deviation	1.17	1.21	1.16	1.20	1.15
Altai Republic	Average	2.62	2.32	2.49	2.10	2.31
	Standard deviation	1.20	1.22	1.18	1.16	1.20
Tyva Republic	Average	2.57	2.46	2.53	2.16	2.37
	Standard deviation	1.08	1.15	1.05	1.13	1.10
Novosibirsk Oblast	Average	2.27	2.19	2.01	1.69	1.89
	Standard deviation	1.17	1.14	1.12	0.96	1.06
Total	Average	2.45	2.29	2.31	2.02	2.18
	Standard deviation	1.17	1.19	1.15	1.14	1.14

The expression of the religious experience of the population of Siberia is quite high: a sense of divine intervention is at the level of 2.45 points (sd = 1.17), unity with the world

is 2.29 points (sd = 1.19), guiding influence of divine power is 2.31 points (sd = 1.14), divine touch is 2.02 (sd = 1.14), divine presence is 2.18 points (sd = 1.14). The findings are consistent with the data of representative polls by Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), according to which in 2015 more than a quarter of the Russian population surveyed (26%) reported that religion helps them in everyday life (in 1990 this proportion was only 5%), and 29% had encountered divine help in their lives (18% in 1990)¹.

The experience of divine intervention in the life of individuals is most pronounced in the Altai Republic (m = 2.62, sd = 1.2), and is less pronounced in the Novosibirsk region (m = 2.27, sd = 1.17), unity with the world is most clearly manifested in the Tyva Republic of (m = 2.46, sd = 1.15), less in the Novosibirsk region (m = 2.19, sd = 1.14). The direction of life by divine will is maximum in Tyva (m = 2.53, sd = 1.05), and minimum in the Novosibirsk region (m = 2.01, sd = 1.12), the frequency of the touch of divine power is maximum in Tyva and the Altai Krai (m = 2.16 / 2.16, sd = 1.13/1.2), the presence of God is more often felt by the residents of Tyva and the Altai Republic (m = 2.37/2.31, sd = 1.1/1.2), less often by the inhabitants of the Novosibirsk region (m = 1.89, sd = 1.06) (Table 5).

Index of religiosity centrality

Religions, beliefs and religious ideas can differ significantly from each other in terms of the complexity of religious systems and institutions, content, forms of rituals, the degree of regulation of the life of believers. However, all religions have a commonality, which is, for example, the division of the world into earthly and “heavenly” (or this world and other world). Besides this, the basis of any religion is faith in God or gods, deities, divine essences, supernatural forces, as well as in their participation in “earthly”, “natural” processes, in people’s lives.

This belief is reflected in the concept of “religiosity”, as noted by Danilyan O.G. and Tarasenko V.M. (Danilyan, Tarasenko, 2005), and has, unlike religion, an objective character, as it acts as a measure of the centrality, importance, or expressiveness of religious meanings for a person, that is, it is a character trait. Religiosity marks the worldview, behavior, way of life, mediates the evaluation of social processes and phenomena. Accordingly, the degree of religiosity describes the extent to which an individual has assimilated religious ideas and norms, the values of religion.

Thus, based on the summation of frequency ratings for all 20 component scales and the calculation of average values for all four regions, the index of religiosity of the population was calculated. The overall index of religiosity for the entire sample is 2.41 (sd = 0.86), which is slightly lower than the test norm for the Russian Federation, recorded in Huber’s study (Huber and Huber, 2018). The most religious population is in Tuva Republic, where religiosity is expressed at the level of 2.75 points (sd = 0.75), the second position is taken by Altai Republic, where the index value is 2.52 points (sd = 0.87), the index values below the test norm are recorded in Altai Krai (2.36 points (sd = 0.87)) and Novosibirsk Region, where the religiosity of the population is expressed to a lesser extent: at the level of 2.16 points (sd = 0.82).

¹ In 2015, 16,000 people were interviewed in 130 settlements of 46 regions of the Russian Federation, in 1990 — 766 people. Source: VTsIOM, Infographics VTsIOM: Religion: for and against (wciom.ru) .

In the table below, the average values of the structural components and the centrality index of religiosity of the population of the four border regions are grouped for ease of perception (Table 6).

Table 6

Таблица 6

Distribution of the average values of religiosity components
and religiosity centrality index in regional samples

Распределение средних значений компонентов религиозности и индекса
центральности религиозности в региональных выборках

What region do you live in?	Altai Krai		Altai Republic		Tyva Republic		Novosibirsk Oblast		Whole sample	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	mean	SD
IC1 ¹	2.41	0.93	2.62	1.02	2.83	0.85	2.53	0.96	2.57	0.96
IdC2	2.90	1.19	3.23	1.19	3.33	0.95	2.72	1.38	3.01	1.23
PRPC3	1.98	0.90	2.06	0.97	2.49	0.89	1.65	0.86	2.00	0.94
LRPC4	2.48	1.01	2.64	0.96	2.98	0.84	2.18	0.91	2.53	0.98
ROC5	2.27	0.98	2.37	1.02	2.40	0.90	2.01	0.89	2.25	0.97
RCI	2.36	0.87	2.52	0.87	2.75	0.75	2.16	0.82	2.41	0.86

Примечание: 1 Here and below, abbreviations are used in the tables: IC 1 — intellectual component of religiosity, IdC 2 — ideological component of religiosity, PRPC 3 — component of public religious practices, LRPC 4 — component of private religious practices, ROC 5 — component of religious experience, RCI — index of centrality of religiosity .

Preliminary assessment of model quality

Psychometric characteristics show good results for a sample of each of the four regions (Table 7). Correlations between the five main changes in religiosity range from 0.515 for PRPC3/IdC2 in the Altai Republic to 0.797 for ROC5/LRPC4 in Altai Krai. It is important to note that none of the specific values exceeds the correlation with the total score, within the cells $\Delta_{max} = 0.18$ for ROC5/PRPC3 for the Republic of Tyva (correlations of religious experience with public religious practices). In fact, this is consistent with the earlier conclusions that both the religious doctrine and the personal attitudes do not at all determine the high level of public declaration of religiosity, but it may be a reflection of the special interweaving of religious and secular culture in the everyday life of Tuvans.

All correlations of the religiosity centrality index with its structural components are in the zone of high and very high correlations, which once again convinces us of the correctness of the chosen method.

Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis procedures, we tested the extent to which the structure of the latent model is able to explain the “central role of religiosity” factor constructed on the basis of religiosity scales, that is, to see whether some of the

differences between the indicators are explained by the total variance, and whether it can be combined by the overall construct of the “index the centrality of religiosity. We see that a similar picture of the factor structure of the index scales (its theoretically constructed components) was obtained for all four regions: only one significant factor was identified, where all scales have high positive loadings ($r > 0.7$), the factor of personal spiritual practices, that is, the indicator of personal religious practices, has the maximum loadings in all regions.

Table 7

Таблица 7

Matrix of correlations of the calculated structural components of the index, as well as correlations relative to the index of religiosity centrality (data in the cells reflect the values of the correlation coefficients for AK / RA / RT / NO, the significance levels are identical for all regional correlations, $p < 0,001$)

Матрица корреляций между структурными компонентами и интегральными значениями индекса религиозности (данные в ячейках представляют значения коэффициентов корреляции в Алтайском крае, Республике Алтай, Республике Тыва, Новосибирской, уровень статистической значимости для всех регионов равен $p < 0,001$)

	IC1	IdC2	PRPC3	LRPC4	RCI
IdC2	.696** /.678** /.632** /.544**				
PRPC3	.622** /.669** /.608** /.596**	.524** /.515** /.567** /.643**			
LRPC4	.705** /.690** /.681** /.578**	.711** /.740** /.641** /.752**	.720** /.613** /.642** /.578**		
ROC5	.691** /.704** /.681** /.526**	.697** /.718** /.541** /.725**	.574** /.643** /.560** /.542**	.797** /.781** /.705** /.759**	
RCI	.745** /.831** /.833** /.832** /.723**	.866** /.841** /.843** /.783** /.883**	.617** /.791** /.751** /.773** /.756**	.816** /.933** /.921** /.907**	.903** /.910** /.897** /.873** /.871**

The results of factor analysis allow us to verify the suitability of the data obtained (see the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy measure values: [0.8; 0.9], which indicates high adequacy of the factor analysis to this sample) and Bartlett's sphericity

test (criterion values indicate the normal distribution of variables and their significant correlation, $p = 0.000$) (Tables 8–9).

Table 8

Таблица 8

Factor weights in the structure of religiosity centrality scales (the components with the highest load are highlighted in bold)

Факторные веса в структуре индекса центральности религиозности (компоненты с максимальными нагрузками выделены полужирным начертанием)

	AK	AR	TR	NO
IC1	0.858	0.862	0.858	0.753
IdC2	0.845	0.845	0.803	0.881
PRPC3	0.812	0.779	0.799	0.798
LRPC4	0.911	0.897	0.880	0.879
ROC5	0.896	0.879	0.848	0.851

Таблица 9

Table 9

Results of factor analysis

Результаты факторного анализа

	KMO	Barlett's test, chi-q (Df), p	Number of factors with eigenvalue greater than «1»	% variance explained
AK	0.875	1643.279 (10), 0.000	1	72.3
AR	0.866	1260.96 (10), 0.000	1	72.8
TR	0.87	721.1 (10), 0.000	1	70.2
NO	0.85	1233.63 (10), 0.000	1	69.5

In addition, correlation residuals matrices were constructed. The analysis helped to make sure that all correlations of the index components are well reproduced by the factor model with a number of factors determined on the basis of the theory, that is, the calculated factors are correct and unique: the closer the difference between the reproduced and real correlations to zero (i.e., low or insignificant), the more confident the researcher in his choice of the number of factors (see Table 10).

Table 10

Таблица 10

Residual correlation matrices for AK/AR/TR/NO

Матрицы остаточных корреляций для регионов (АК/ПА/РТ/НО)

		IC1	IdC2	PRPC3	LRPC4
Residuals	IdC2	-.034/-0.076/ 0.075/-0.134			
	PRPC3	-.070/-0.004/ 0.081/-0.012	-.151/-0.156/ 0.080/-0.055		
	LRPC4	-.083/-0.092/ 0.086/-0.099	-.058/-0.023/ 0.067/-0.033	-.020/-0.083/ 0.061/-0.125	
	ROC5	-.072/-0.082/ 0.031/-0.131	-.041/-0.038/ 0.117/-0.028	-.078/-0.110/ 0.012/-0.145	-.019/-0.013/ 0.026/0.005

Conclusion

A comprehensive and differentiated assessment of the state, problems, and development of religiosity in the regions of the Russia's Asian borderland. Based on the results of the research, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

The religious identity of Russian citizens in modern conditions is being transformed under the influence of socio-cultural processes of a global nature, often taking individualized forms and combined with practices of reviving interest in religion and its protective, compensatory functions in conditions of uncertainty. Concepts of religiosity and spirituality are changing and acquiring new meanings in the light of changing social relations between believers and non-believers, new practices and religious organizations, and the activities of traditional religions to preserve their values and adherents.

As part of the study of the level and expression of religiosity in the population of four border regions of the Russian Federation, the centrality index of religiosity was calculated. The approach used is based on the application of the CRS methodology (Sh. Huber's scale of religiosity centrality) tested on international research data in 25 countries. The index is based on the integration of the five structural components of religiosity: intellectual, ideological, public religious practices, personal religious practices, and religious experience (the test norm for Russia is 2.45 points with a standard deviation of 0.96 points).

In the overall sample of regions, the index of religiosity of the population was 2.41, the most religious is the population of Tuva Republic, where religiosity is expressed at the level of 2.75 points, the second position is occupied by Altai Republic where the index value was 2.52 points, the index values below the test norm was recorded in Altai Krai (2.36 points) and Novosibirsk Oblast, where religiosity of the population is expressed to a lesser extent (2.16 points).

Based on the index values, groups of the population with different expressions of religiosity centrality were identified. Overall, 3.9% of all surveyed residents of the border regions are highly religious people. 38.9% of the population of four regions can be classified as non-religious residents, while the majority (57.2%) are religious people, for

whom religion and belief in the divine, and spiritual life are important.

The religiousness of the population is manifested differently in all the regions covered by the study, with a peculiar refraction not only along the ethnic republics, multi-ethnic regions with a “Russian core” traditionally drawn towards Orthodoxy, but also represents a more complex diversity. Thus, the Republic of Tyva has the largest share of the religious population. It is obvious that faith and religious views are the key meanings of life for most of the inhabitants of the republic, however, the expression of this faith and its activity, the behavioral embodiment rather “even”, i.e., it is part of the everyday culture and life of the Tuvinians, deeply “rooted” into secular practices and in many respects already indistinguishable from them. Altai Republic has the highest share of highly religious population (6%). This may be connected with the revival and strengthening of the ethnic self-consciousness of the republic’s indigenous population in recent years with the demonstrative, declarative nature of religious affiliation closely connected with ethnic identity. Altai Krai has a slightly lower proportion of the highly religious population (3.3%), but the proportion of non-religious people is significantly higher (41.8%), while more than half (54.9%) can be described as religious. Novosibirsk Oblast, compared to the ethnic republics and even to Altai Krai, has predominantly non-religious population, which is 52.9% of the residents who took part in the study, the share of highly religious here was 2.4%, religious — 44.7%.

Thus, we have recorded that the religious outlook and spirituality in general are of great importance in the life of the population of the Russian regions, which undoubtedly requires more careful and in-depth study. The results of the correlation and factor analysis convinced us of the correctness of the chosen methodology and allowed us to verify the reliability of the data obtained.

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