

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty
«6D020600 - Religious Studies»

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Religious symbols: history and and modern period

General description of work. This dissertation analyzes the origin of religious symbols, its specificity and historical evolution. The place and function of the symbol in the system of modern religions, symbolic manifestations in traditional religions, religious symbols in modern new religious movements and their transformation are determined and studied.

The relevance of research. In the conditions of modern globalization, the interest of the people of the world in religion is growing. There is every reason to believe that in our country, within thirty years after independence, there was a process of religious revival and renewal of the religious consciousness of Kazakhstanis. For anyone who takes the path of religion, along with its theoretical content, the practical side is also of great interest. The practical side of religious faith includes the performance of rituals, the celebration of religious holidays, the use of attributes that distinguish this religion. All this can be called «religious symbols» under the general concept. Religion itself as a whole is largely expressed through religious symbols.

The relevance of the problem lies in the need to study the origin, genesis of religious symbols, its historical evolution and transformation, since religious symbols in our understanding have passed through great historical stages of formation. The formation of religious symbols and their use corresponded to the trends in the development of religious consciousness and science-education of those historical epochs. In historical epochs, under the influence of socio-political processes, as well as the demand of religious consciousness, religious symbols underwent external formal and substantive changes. While over time some interpretations of religious symbols have been obscured, other meanings, on the contrary, have become more common.

In subsequent epochs, the division of religions into different currents and directions intensified. Accordingly, religious symbols of new religious movements were formed according to their beliefs. Over time, the practical content of such religions has undergone changes and has been replenished. New religious organizations sought to strengthen their influence by adapting their systems of religious beliefs to the mentality and national characteristics of the local population.

Thus, we believe that the study of religious symbols, their origin and genesis, historical evolution and transformation, their place and activity in the system of modern religions and religious studies analysis is an important issue that will arouse the interest of the scientific community.

The degree of study of the topic. The first thoughts about the symbol can be found in the works of ancient thinkers Aristotle, Plato, Pythagoras and others. In later epochs, the theme of the symbol formed the basis of research by philosophers, philologists, cultural scientists, sociologists, theologians and others. If the reflections on the symbols of ancient thinkers were continued by I.Kant, F.V. Schelling, G.V.F. Hegel, N. Kuzansky,

P.A. Florensky, etc., then E. Cassirer, S. Langer made an invaluable contribution to the further development of ideas about symbols and symbolism.

The concept of a symbol was studied from psychological, cultural, philosophical points of view in their works by K. Jung, K. Levi-Strauss, M. Heidegger, G.G. Gadamer, etc. Thus, in the twentieth century, Western concepts were formed, denoting the concept and definition of a symbol. The above-mentioned Western scientists considered the problem of the symbol from an idealistic point of view.

In Soviet times, the interpretation of the symbol and symbolism was dominated by a materialistic approach, the opposite of the above Western idealistic views. Nevertheless, Soviet science also made a significant contribution to the study of the symbol problem. Various aspects of the problem of the religious symbol were reflected in the works of V.V. Bychkov, D.M. Ugrinovich, I.N. Yablokov, E.G. Yakovlev, M.N. Yeresko, M. Mamardashvili and A. Pyatigorsky, S. Averintsev, V. Antonov, K. Svasyan, N. Rubtsov, etc. And in the works of M. Eliade, R. Guenon, A. Golan, V. Turner, S. Kondybai, etc. the theoretical and methodological essence of the myth as a symbol is revealed.

Semiotics itself as a whole is intertwined with logic, or rather with logical semantics, philosophy of language, language problems. These directions can be associated with the names of such scientists as F. de Saussure, C. Pierce, C. Morris, R. Barth, Y. Lotman, P. Riker.

In the post-Soviet period, the interest of representatives of the humanities in the problem of the symbol has increased. Especially in recent years, Russian scientists have conducted special studies. Among them are the studies of S.G. Sycheva, N.V. Kulagina and T.B. Zakharyan. These authors, moving away from the materialistic, atheistic methodologies of the Soviet era, tried to objectively investigate the problem of the symbol in accordance with idealistic concepts.

In Russian religious studies, no special studies have been conducted yet concerning the problem of the religious symbol we are considering. Nevertheless, the works of A. Nysanbayev, N. Ayupov and T. Gabitov, G. Yesima, M. Orynbekov, D. Kenzhetai, S. Nurmuratov, A.T. Kulsarieva, A. Kurmanalieva, N. Baitenova, K. Borbasova, K.K. Begalinova, B. Beisenov, etc. have determined the theoretical and methodological basis of our research.

Since the independence of the country, a number of monographs and dissertation studies have been published on the problems of semiotics, the reflection of the symbol in culture and art. Among them are the works of A.A. Ryskieva, N.K. Aljanova, Zh.T. Beristenov, Sh.T. Saudanbekova, Zh.O. Abikenov.

Thus, the review of the degree of study of the topic shows that the problem of the religious symbol has not yet been studied in Kazakh science.

The purpose and objectives of the study. The purpose of the dissertation is to conduct a religious study of the history of the formation and current state of the religious symbol. In accordance with this goal, the following tasks are defined:

- study of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study of religious symbols;

- to give a conceptual characterization of the concepts of «symbol» and «religious symbol», to reveal the relationship of a religious symbol with a sign, emblem, metaphor, image, allegory, myth, archetype;

- to determine the stages of the emergence and formation of the symbol, its place in primitive communal mythology;

- classification of forms of religious symbols, taking into account the grouping of symbols depending on their manifestation and nature;
- to explore the historical evolution of religious symbols and show the symbolism of the Kazakh worldview and spiritual heritage;
- analysis of the problem of religiosity in the context of globalization and the place and function of the symbol in the system of modern religions;
- to determine the hierarchy of religious symbols in traditional religions, to reveal their meaning and the level of modern use;
- to conduct a comparative religious studies analysis of the symbols of new religious organizations and determine their transformation.

Object of research: religious symbols in the system of religions.

Subject of research: the system of religious symbols, their origin, genesis, historical evolution and transformation.

Scientific novelty of the research. Within the framework of the religious science of Kazakhstan, for the first time, an attempt was made to study the problem of religious symbols in a special and comprehensive way using historical and religious methods. As a result of the dissertation research, the following scientific results of an innovative nature were achieved:

- the specificity of the religious symbol is revealed and its peculiar definition is given; its relationship with the emblem of the sign, metaphor, image, allegory, myth, archetype is revealed;
- the sources of the formation of religious symbols and the stages of its genesis are determined;
- religious symbols were classified depending on the nature of origin and purpose of use, their types were determined;
- the symbolic nature of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Kazakh people (beliefs and prohibitions, proverbs and sayings, traditions and rituals, ornaments, etc.) is revealed, their practical significance is proved;
- the role, meaning and function of religious symbols in the system of modern religions are determined;
- the analysis of the main symbols of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam is carried out, their meaning is explained and the place of religious symbols in the practice of these traditional religions is determined;
- the place and meaning of symbols in the practice of modern new religious organizations, their system and content, the specifics of use and transformation are consistently explained.

The main scientific conclusions presented for defense.

1. A religious symbol is the main core of any religion, embodying its content and ideas, the language of presentation and explanation of religion, a means of communication between a person professing religion and the Creator. The difference between a religious symbol and a simple sign is that it simultaneously points to an object (material) and has a hidden, subtext meaning associated with it. Such hidden meanings of a religious symbol sometimes lend themselves to the concept not rationally, but irrationally, i.e. only through inner intuition.

2. The emergence of the symbol is directly related to the development of primitive communal consciousness. At an early stage of primitive communal mythology, a pre-symbol was formed. The next stage of the genesis of the symbol is the pre-symbol. In the

primordial symbol, the manifestation of the mythological consciousness of ancient man was somewhat concretized and systematized, it was given a certain form, a certain character. The symbol in our modern understanding appeared at the final stage of primitive communal mythology and marked the beginning of its disintegration. The symbol-forming factors are natural phenomena, actions to reveal the secrets of his supernatural powers, the psychological state of a person and various rituals.

3. The religious symbol has come a long way in its historical evolution. Symbols of a religious nature began to form at the level of social psychology during the collapse of tribal relations and the emergence of the first states. This was facilitated by the complication of religious consciousness. During this period, the tradition of erecting temples in honor of the main gods and offering sacrifices was established. The symbolic manifestation of the worship of the gods gradually turned into art. In the Middle Ages, the formation of religious symbols was finally completed. During this period, some characters were changed and transformed with the requirements of the time.

4. The system of religious beliefs of the Turkic peoples, including the peoples leading a nomadic lifestyle, has changed over time. The symbolic system of the religious faith of the nomadic peoples was their ancient faith in Tengri, Yer-Su and Umai ana. With the spread of Islam, elements of Islam appeared in the symbolic system of the Kazakhs. They were reflected in religious faith, architecture and applied art, material and spiritual culture. Beliefs and prohibitions, proverbs and sayings, traditions and rituals, ornaments of the Kazakhs are permeated with symbolism of a religious nature.

5. Religious symbols play an important role in the system of modern religions. In addition to preserving religion, they also reflect the entire content of that religion. Religious symbols also serve as a means of propaganda and dissemination of religion. When religion weakened, it consciously changed symbols, preserving their old meaning, giving them a new ideological content and propagandizing them, aroused people's interest in religion. Religious symbols are a means of nonverbal communication of a believer with the Creator.

6. Traditional religions have their own hierarchical system of symbols. It consists of the main symbols and religious symbols that perform an additional function. The system of symbols of traditional religions is characterized by stability, content, vitality. They retained their original ideas and meanings, although in the process of forming religious symbols they underwent a number of conscious transformations.

7. Religious symbols also occupy an important place in the practice of modern new religious organizations. The new religious organizations have developed an effective system of symbols, which at the initial stage was formed under the influence of symbols of traditional religions. Later, they underwent significant changes in accordance with their teachings and moved away from traditional religions. The teachings and religious symbols of modern new religious organizations are characterized by syncretism, variability, instability and simplicity.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the dissertation work. When writing the scientific work, they were guided by Western, Russian and domestic theories and methodologies, scientific concepts of the direction of religious studies. When studying the problems of symbolism and symbolization, Western idealistic and Soviet materialistic concepts were compared, their advantages and disadvantages were revealed. The latest scientific discoveries and results of modern Russian, as well as domestic religious and philosophical schools were taken into account in the study of the problem

of the religious symbol. In the study of individual issues related to the topic, the methods of generalization, description, systematization, grouping, comparative analysis, classification, retrospective method and approaches of interpretation, reconstruction, modeling common to the humanities were used.

Theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation. The theoretical and practical significance of the research topic is explained by the increased need for religious studies in the context of religious revival in the period of modern globalization, the growing demand for religious knowledge. The materials of the dissertation can be used in revealing the nature of the new religious consciousness that is being formed in our country, and in the process of cultural and spiritual education. The study of religious symbols in the system of modern religions as a factor influencing the religious consciousness of young people is also important in the work aimed at improving their religious literacy. The main results and conclusions of the dissertation research can be used to develop an elliptical course «Religious symbols: History and modernity» for students of religious studies and historians, to prepare research projects on the problem of religious symbols for students and school children.

Approbation and approval of research work. The dissertation was performed at the Department of Religious Studies and Cultural Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The main scientific results and conclusions of the dissertation are published in 14 scientific articles, including 2 of them published in scientific publications included in the Scopus database, 7 journals from the list approved by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 5 collections of international scientific conferences. In addition, according to the results of the study, reports were made at international scientific conferences.

The structure of the dissertation work. The dissertation work consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and an appendix.