

2021.02.005. ELENA DMITRIEVA. ISLAM AS A PART OF THE SWEDISH RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE // *Condensed abstract.*

Keywords: Sweden, Islam, migration, confessional structure of the population, intercultural communication, mass media, Muslims in the countries of Northern Europe, parallel migrant communities.

1. S.Yu. Dianina. The Interaction of Peoples and Cultures in the Context of Muslim Integration into Society in Sweden: Problems and Prospects* // *Concept: philosophy, religion, culture.* 2020. Vol. 4, No 2 (14). P. 105–114.

2. M.M. Agafoshin, S.A. Gorokhov. Impact of External Migration on Changes in the Swedish Religious Landscape* // *"Baltic region",* 2020. Vol. 12. No. 2, P. 84–99.

Today, an increase in the pace of migration of the Muslim population to Europe that results in intensification of the role of the "Islamic factor" in the lives of Europeans is one of the most important processes in the region. Sweden has one of the world's highest rates of spread of Islam in Europe. With the indigenous population of Sweden being mostly not religious, integration of Muslims into Swedish society often leads to misunderstandings and conflicts on both sides. An increased level of secularization of modern society in Sweden entails ignorance of the religious rules and customs, including both Christianity and Islam. As a result, Swedes lack understanding of the way of life of Muslim migrants. Nowadays, religion in Sweden is viewed as a private matter, while in Islam religious rules go far beyond that. Nevertheless, the high level of secularization of the Swedish population leaves room for Muslims to practice their own religion, but at the same time religious rules and lifestyle of Muslims undergo changes, tuning in to certain cultural filters and adapting to the everyday life of Swedes.

* Translation of the title is presented in author's version.

The author of the article S. Dianina (1) notes that today's Sweden is somewhat conflicted due to Muslim migrant inflow, and the number of such conflicts keeps growing, e.g. relations between migrants and the indigenous society, challenges the Swedes face living side-by-side with migrants, etc. In case Muslim culture and religion, the problem is particularly acute, since Europeans tend to believe that Muslim values are not quite in line with the European way of life with strong secular rational and non-traditional values. As an illustration of social and cultural differences, the author cites the case of Yasri Khan, a member of the Swedish Green Party and a Muslim, who refused to shake hands with a female reporter while recording a TV show back in 2016. Instead, he intended to greet her with his hand over his heart, without actually touching her. Later he explained that a handshake was considered too intimate in Islam, but anyway, Khan had to leave the party due to heavy criticism.

The author points out that Swedish mass media plays a significant role in interpreting Islam to the Swedes. Thus, Islam is often presented as a static, unchanging religion that dictates people how to live and behave. Swedish mass media tend to give too much focus to issues and differences between Swedes and Muslims, which leads to mutual misconceptions and further alienation. In such a way, mass media act as a tool for shaping opinions, attitudes and stereotypes. The author suggests that high level of secularization of Swedish society demands a Muslim not only to incorporate into the host society adhering to another religion, but also to adapt to a highly secular environment that is fundamentally different from the one in his country of origin. In the author's opinion, when discussing the increase in the number of Muslims and the place of Islamic religion in Sweden, Swedish researchers make a focus on employment or education of migrants, leaving out such themes as family and childbirth. In this connection, they assume that studies focused on demographic characteristics of migrants are more like propaganda intended to scare the indigenous

population of the country. According to Swedish researchers, the attitudes and values of migrants change over time and the process of assimilation is discernible.

The majority of Swedes are eager to help migrants integrate into society following large refugee inflows to Europe in recent years. Most often, this is due to a sense of moral responsibility, because many Swedes believe that migrants have no other choice but to stay in Sweden. A dilemma is that immigrants are viewed as vulnerable people in need of assistance, on the one hand, and as a cultural threat to Swedish society on the other hand. In recent years, Swedish policy focusing on the adaptation of refugees has been heavily criticized for putting cultural differences above everything else. Data by Swedish researchers show that more than half of the Muslims who arrived in Sweden over the past five years consider language-learning as one of their priorities. Language proficiency is an advantage when seeking employment and during job interviews. The author notes that other scholars believe that the concept of “cultural identity” refers to a complex set of beliefs and attitudes, coming to the fore only in contact with another culture, but not in a homogeneous cultural environment.

In Swedish media, Muslims are often portrayed as a group that creates a dilemma for Swedes concerning the discussion of religious freedom. When minorities live under oppression, full tolerance for all differences may lead to increased segregation and injustice. The author cites as an example the case of a Muslim immigrant, who claimed that in about three years since he arrived in Sweden his colleagues never asked him about his religion or mentioned Islam in his presence, although he usually went somewhere private to pray during the working day. But when his acquaintances started asking questions about Islam, he felt uncomfortable and even defined it as a manifestation of racism. Thus, full tolerance and acceptance of differences is not enough to ensure intercultural communication. In order to jointly create a functional social structure, blind tolerance for all

differences is not an option. The most important thing here is mutual understanding and friendly atmosphere that can be achieved through communication, including discussion of differences between people.

The author identifies several stages of integration of Muslims into a host society. Everyday habits of a member of a minority may be questioned, since it is not always clear what is right or wrong about the behaviour patterns. The more a person is integrated into society, the more he absorbs its culture, and the culture starts to change his understanding of religion. Based on a study of media materials, the author highlights several differences between Sweden and the countries of the Islamic world, which create additional hardships for Muslim migrants. The length of daylight hours is an important factor that complicates fasting. Unlike this natural factor, social patterns of conduct are much easier to change. Cultural differences in everyday communication may be illustrated by the following example: in Somalia, at a bus stop, it is easier for strangers to start a dialogue, while in Sweden it is almost impossible. According to migrants, the Swedes are usually emotionally reserved, frown upon children contacting in public places, etc. Moreover, the focus shifts from private problems in communication towards global problems of integration. Sweden is the country with one of the most open migrant policy in the world where government allocates sufficient funds to provide cash benefits and housing for migrants; but at the same time, for example, in the US migrants are better integrated into society, although they receive significantly less financial support. Thus, successful integration of migrants could be achieved through combined efforts of the State and civil society, i.e. closer interaction and greater understanding between people. In addition, Muslim migrants mentioned low interest in and misunderstanding of their religion, absence of the call to prayer, women wearing revealing clothes and no hijab in the streets, and difficulty to combine working or study time with prayer.

Due to the high level of secularization, Sweden guarantees freedom to practice religion freely to all its citizens. Over time, young Muslims who arrive in Sweden change their views on certain things.

In conclusion, the author states that the high level of secularization in Sweden gives a certain religious freedom, but at the same time it creates a number of difficulties that often affect the daily life of Muslim migrants, limiting their right to performing cultural or religious rituals. Attitudes, prejudices and views of Swedes on how to behave in society affect lives of Muslims in today's Sweden. Thus, the process of integrating Muslims into Swedish society is rather difficult, and disconnect between people is steadily growing. The behaviour of Muslim migrants largely depends on the specific situation, which may not be regulated by religious rules, therefore making religion only a guide, but not a guarantor of their actions. Cultural and religious constructions are constantly changing, so they cannot be reduced only to a social code of conduct. Swedish Muslims interpret their own religion by applying various cultural filters, building an understanding of European society and trying to tune in on the acceptance of differences, not only the search for common ground and compromise. Integration is possible only with the involvement of both sides.

Researchers M. Agafoshin and S. Gorokhov (2) study the changes in the confessional structure of Swedish population taking into account the cyclical dynamics of replacement of Protestantism by Islam. The authors note that although the Lutheran Church has had the status of the official state religion throughout most of the history of Sweden, the beginning of mass immigration in the second half of the 20th century had a considerable impact on the confessional structure of the country's population. As a result of growing number of refugees from the Balkan Peninsula, the Middle East and Africa, Sweden has become a multi-religious state and one of the leaders among the EU countries as far as the growth rates of Muslims are concerned.

Immigrants have adaptation difficulties that result in their social, cultural and geographical isolation and subsequent emergence of parallel migrant communities.

The authors note that European migration crisis of 2014–2016 that caused millions of people from Asia and Africa come to Europe has seriously aggravated the problems of social and cultural adaptation of migrants; these problems are particularly pressing in countries that host more migrants from Islamic countries, e.g. Sweden. As a result, numerous parallel religious communities emerge; members of such communities tend to escape from the new reality by concentrating in enclaves, refuse to integrate into the European civil society and create parallel bodies of power. These parallel communities maintain close relations with their country of origin and relatives who stayed there, thus increasing the migrant flow from their homeland and hampering the cultural assimilation of the diaspora. In this connection, it should be mentioned that diasporas play a crucial role in establishing economic relations between the country of origin of its members and their new homeland and that various migrant organisations facilitate integration of their members into the new social and cultural environment by helping them with accommodation, employment or education. Nevertheless, intensification of migration processes in the modern world that cause emerging of parallel communities in the developed countries with low birth rates may result in ‘indigenous’ population of these countries gradually becoming a minority. This process is known as a “third demographic transition”; according to the author of this concept David Coleman, a British demographer, the benchmark is a priori decline of indigenous people (former majority) to below of 50 percent of the total population. The authors hypothesize that religious landscape dynamics has a cyclic nature shaped by competition of religions; this hypothesis is in line with the third demographic transition. The cycle of replacing one religion by another may be triggered by the migration of adherents of the religion that starts to

compete with the one that previously dominated in the religious landscape of the hosting country. The authors estimate that such a cycle lasts for 106 years on average and consists of 4 stages: initial replacement, sustainable replacement, parity, and final replacement; each stage has a certain duration and impact on the structure of the religious landscape.

Considering the historical background, the authors note that in the Middle Ages migrants from Northern Germany, mainly merchants and artisans, were already arriving in Sweden. In the 17th century, the discovery of large deposits of iron ore attracted Walloon Protestants, who fled from religious persecution in their homeland, the territory of modern Belgium. Since the 16th century, Lutheranism has become the state religion in Sweden, and restrictions were imposed on the activities of other religious organizations. Over time Swedish law has become more liberal in terms of religious freedom, and finally in 2000 the Lutheran Church lost its status of the official church of Sweden. Thus, until the mid-20th century migration inflow didn't have a significant impact on the ethnical or confessional structure of the Swedish population; in the years after World War II, immigration to Sweden significantly increased, which was mainly due to the favourable economic situation in the country. As the Swedish economy was developing fast after the war, it desperately needed labour force. After the liberalization of migration legislation in the 1950s, Swedish labour market was flooded with migrant workers, coming mostly from Scandinavian countries, Germany and countries of Eastern Europe. However, since 1970s migrant flows to Sweden have become more heterogeneous due to an increase in the number of immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe outside the EU. In total, during the period from 1950 to 1980, the number of Catholics in Sweden increased almost fourfold, the number of Orthodox Christians increased by 12.5 times, and Muslims became a hundred times as numerous. Thus, with the diversification of the religious landscape in Sweden, there appeared religions that can compete with

Lutheranism, i.e. trigger the cycle of religious competition in the country's religious landscape.

In the late 1970s, the structure of immigration flows to Sweden started to change, which was due to a lower demand for labour as a result of weak economic climate in the country and overall decline in industrial employment. This is why labour migrants from developed countries were replaced by refugees and immigrants from developing countries, whose culture and religion differ from those of the Swedes. Swedish migration policy was exceptionally humanistic, and the state leadership positioned the country as a "humanitarian superpower", emphasising human rights protection and large public support of hosting refugees. In the 1990s, mass migration of refugees to Sweden began. Its first peak was due to the flow of migrants from the former Yugoslavia (primarily Bosnians), which was in a state of civil war at the time. For instance, only in 1992 (the record-setting year in terms of the number of refugees) Sweden granted asylum to 84,000 migrants mostly coming from the former Yugoslavia. Besides, Sweden continued to receive refugees from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

In the 2000s, the flows of migrants from these regions kept growing for several reasons. Firstly, Swedish law guarantees the right of families for reunification, so relatives of migrants relocated to Sweden too. Secondly, the situation in countries trafficking migrants to Sweden became even worse; the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 almost tripled the number of migrants from that country within just a decade. The Arab Spring in 2011 and the following events in the countries of the Middle East, including the civil wars in Syria and Iraq, gave rise to the next wave of refugees to Sweden. Among European countries, Sweden has hosted the largest number of refugees per capita. Since 2017, Syrians have been the most numerous group of migrants in the country; the Finns are the second largest group, while the Iraqis hold the third position.

Considering the confessional structure of the population in the countries that generate inflow of migrants to Sweden, the authors assess that Muslims account for more than 80 percent of the migrants. This is why the share of Muslims has become the most fast-growing segment of the religious landscape of Sweden. The number of Muslims in Sweden peaked in the 1990s and after 2010, which matches the two largest waves of refugee flows to Sweden, the first one from Yugoslavia and Bosnia, and the second one from Syria and Iraq. Muslims account for almost 14 percent of the religious population in the country. Today, Sweden is literally a country of migrants: in 2018, 930,000 people (9.1 percent of the country's population) were citizens of other countries, and more than 1.2 million of Swedish citizens were born abroad. In Sweden, almost 25 percent of the population have foreign origins, that is, either they were born abroad or at least one of their parents was born abroad.

Geographically, migrants in Sweden are located in a rather uneven manner, more than half of them are concentrated in 3 of the country's 21 counties (läns): Stockholm, Västra Götaland, and Skåne, primarily in their largest cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö). There live almost 60 percent of migrants from Islamic states. Muslims are especially numerous in Stockholm County, where 27 percent of the country's Muslims live. In Rinkeby, north-western district of Stockholm municipality also known as Little Mogadishu, about 80% of the population adhere to Islam. This also applies to Rosengård (a district of Malmö), where almost 86 percent of locals are of foreign origin, mostly from Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan and other (predominantly Muslim) countries.

The authors note that since the 1990s Sweden predominantly receives immigrants belonging to other cultures and religions, which makes their integration into the Swedish society hard (and impossible in case of Muslims), contributes to their social degradation and criminalisation and leads to emerging of parallel migrant communities. Parallel communities usually emerge in the

so-called “vulnerable areas”, enclaves where the state monopoly on law enforcement is challenged by the institutions of traditional leadership based on the Islamic norms that are different from the West European liberal values. In 2017, there were 61 vulnerable areas in the country, which hosted 560,000 people (more than 5 percent of the country’s population). According to the Swedish police, 5,000 criminals and 200 criminal networks operate in these vulnerable areas. Moreover, 23 of these areas with a total population of 200,000 people, including Rinkeby in Stockholm and Rosengård in Malmö, are classified by Government of Sweden as “especially vulnerable” and almost uncontrolled by the authorities. In this way, it took only 50 years for the external migrants to transform Sweden’s religious landscape. According to the authors, migration flows to the country has become more diversified primarily due to the increasing number of migrants from Muslim countries, resulting in the growing share of Muslims in the country’s population, which in turn triggered the cycle of replacement of Protestantism by Islam in the religious landscape of Sweden. Initial replacement, the first stage of the cycle of religious competition, began in 1994 when Muslim migrant inflow from Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iran and Iraq was at its highest. Next time Muslim migration to Sweden peaked in 2014–2015 when the country received the record number of refugees from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, which triggered the second stage of the religious competition cycle. Thus, in Sweden, the first stage lasted for 20–21 years, approximately matching its average duration of 18 years. By 2018, share of Muslims increased to 14 percent that corresponds to the parameters of the next stage in the religious competition cycle, the stage of sustainable replacement. Taking in account its ideal cycle of 21 years, the authors suggest that by 2036–2040 parity stage will begin, i.e. by that time the share of Muslims in the religious population of Sweden may reach 30 percent, which is in line with the data of Pew Research Center (by 2050 the share of Muslims in the country’s population will exceed 30 percent). In any case, parity stage has already become

a reality in a number of districts of Sweden's largest cities where the majority of the population is Muslim.

The authors conclude that modern Sweden is one of the first countries in the world, which went from a mono-ethnic country with a dominating official religion to a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state in just 50 years. External migration is the key factor that transformed the Swedish society and changed its cultural traditions. Initially, this migration had economic reasons, but later receiving migrants from the world's most disadvantaged regions became a "humanitarian responsibility" for Sweden. Growing Muslim community that is gradually becoming the "second majority" after the adherents of Lutheranism, creates serious problems for its adaptation and integration into the Swedish society. It turned out that not only the migrants but also the Swedes themselves, who belong to different religions and often adhere to different values, are not ready to coexist in one country. This is why the growing cultural, social and geographic isolation of refugees in Sweden leads to sustainable emergence of parallel migrant communities. Today, the political elites of Sweden are yet to develop a new migration strategy. On the one hand, the political parties of the "old" system have reached consensus regarding the image of Sweden as a "multicultural humanitarian superpower" that does not impose discriminatory restrictions against Muslim migrants. On the other hand, many politicians in Sweden cannot afford to overlook many Swedes pleading to restrict migrant flows to the country. As a result, the new party of Sweden Democrats, which aims at protecting national identity and ensuring wellbeing and safety of Swedish citizens in the wake of Muslim migrant inflow, has become quite popular. It's hard to imagine today's Sweden becoming a mono-ethnic state again. However, the authors believe that under the electorate pressure Swedish government will have to change its "generous" migrant policy to a more practical one.