

Religious Values in Post-Communist Albanian Society

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Abstract:

Religious values are an important aspects of the collective conscience of a nation. I will attempt to understand how religious values are represented nowadays in the Albanian Society. The Religious Pluralism in Albania existed before the political pluralisms but it did not endanger the existence of religious identity through history. I can determine that this religious pluralism is an important result that derived from the history and culture of Albania and that has to be respected. The Religious Values are important to be understood because they define the meaning of a society and its classification and they help to conclude effective formulas on how society can be improved in the future.

The purpose of this work is to understand the today Albanian's perspective on religion by making a general approach on the meaning of religion in Albania through the course of history and weather there was a definition of the relationship between religion and Albanians.

Through the quantitative methods we can create a picture of how this relationship it is today. Do Albanians believe in religion? How much do they believe? How is the religion atmosphere and how important do they consider God in their life? Finally, we will try to understand if there are any age group religious values differences in this study population.

Key words: religion, society, religious atmosphere, religion belief, religion pluralisms.

1. Introduction

We live in a world where being isolated is not possible. The era that we live is characterized by peoples mobility and cultural differences. The culture of a nation is composed also by the religion that represented it historically. Religion is a very important aspect of spiritual life of individuals. As Arnold J. Toynbee once wrote " Religion is one of the most greatest invention of human kind" (Haring, 1968:67). The religion values have always been perceived as important for evaluating the profile values of a society and what can you expect from it. The Value Model prescribed by Ronald Inglehart explains that societies that give a lot of importance on religion values believe that religion

itself is a very significant aspect in the life of a person. They regularly go to the Church or other religious institutions, they perceive themselves as religious persons, they believe in the after world (heaven, hell) and find support on religion. This kind of society can be categorized as a society with traditional values (Inglehart, 2000). The freedom of religion was the beginning of political and civil freedoms.

It was the struggle to worship God in each individual conscience that shocked the political- religion order of the Middle Ages. Throughout the years it has been proved that the abstinence of freedom of religion can have major impact in the political stability of a country. Tocqueville was right when he emphasized that "The protection of freedom of religion plays a critical role in a society that indirectly promotes the flourishing of civil society" (Tocqueville,2002:292)

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze whether the Albanian post communisms society maintains its religious values or whether communism has eradicated them. The reason why this is important, as I mention above, is to create an idea an how this society makes its decisions and how do they judge a particular issue that arises for the social opinion.

The methods used are both qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative framework methodology, there were reviewed high-toned authors who have analyzed the role of religion and religion values in a society. The authorsthat I will consider are Durkheim, Weber, Turner, Parsons, etc.

In the same methodology framework I have analyzed previous studies to create a better view of the religion status in Albania through the course of history. And also I have analyzed the works of ethnologist, the canons that have served as quasi-legal documents in various regions of Albania and that still apply in the conditions of a state of law, and lastly the communisis era as a very marking period of the Albanian society.

In the quantitative method with the purpose of understanding the actual situation of the Albanian society, I have applied a questionnaire with structural question where the responders had to choose one of the given alternatives. This simplify the classification of data and common results. The survey took place only in Tirana, the capital of Albanian because we think that Tirana can be a representative of all the country. The reason is that according to last CENSUS of the country made by INSTAT (Statistical State Institute) in Tirana lives 1/3 of the population of our nation. (Census, 2012: 134) Secondly form a demographic point of view the internal migration during the democratic years in Tirana represents a conglomeration of different cultures from the regions where they have previously lived and lastly, Tirana is the only region that offers an easier infrastructure for mobility.

These are the reasons that make mejudge that by studding Tirana I will have the chance to generalize the result of the country without damaging the representativeness.

The survey was made by trained surveyors, which are students in the European University of Tirana. The surveyors did not complete by them self the survey and this avoided misunderstanding or fictitious fulfillment of the survey without even reading the questions. Instead, it assured that they wound answer the needs of the responders.

The quota sampling method was selected because there is a lack of accurate data and address of the population and also because this method preserves the proportions of population's age, gender, income, etc.

In order to understand the religion values in time, the sampling was divided in group age. Given that the number of Tirana's population was around 600,000 of people aged over 15 years,(Census, 2012:134) it was decided for the sampling size to be 250 responders.

The data were collected, reviewed and processed in the SPSS program which offers a better option for statistical analysis by using the frequency device to analyze the society profile on religious values. In order to understand the differences between group ages and religion values I used the instrument of crossed tables. This instrument escorts the relation between the two variables to see if this is a significant correlation or just casual one. The SPSS program offers two tables with Chi square coefficient (chi square test), Phi and Cramm's V (symmetric measures). All this instruments are statistical tools that served our research on religious values.

3. Religion and Albania

3.1.The meaning and role of religion

Religion' (religio) has two distinctive etymological roots (Derrida, 1998). Firstly, relegere, from legere, means to bring together, to harvest or to gather. Secondly, religare, from ligare, means to tie or to bind together (Benveniste, 1973). The first meaning recognizes the religious foundations of any social group that is gathered together. The second indicates the disciplines or morality that is necessary for controlling and regulating human beings (Turner, 2005:305)

According to Durkheim, collective religion experience such as rituals, cults and beliefs allows a cohesion of a group in practices that transcendent from individuals. This definition divides religion from magic, as for the latter it is impossible to generate a common community of believers and followers(Durkheim, 1954).

Weber in his work "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" demonstrates a strong connection between the religion of a society and the levels of economic success and the behavior of citizens towards success and money. He supports the idea that capitalism develops more in Protestant countries. He compares Christianity and Protestantism. Capitalism is based on the moral values of Protestants. The more successful we are in life, the more god loves us. So economic success or success in other areas of life shows that God loves us and it is not necessary to wait for the afterlife to understand God's love. In Christianity we understand if god loves us only in the after world and between God and us there is mediator, the papacy, the pope. While Protestants create a spiritual connection with the earth values(success, money). In Protestantism, a waste of money is a waste of moral values.(Weber,2005)

To better understand the role of religion in society we may also refer to the definition of Clifford Geertz: "A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 2001:89). From this definition we can understand that religion motivates and stimulates people to create their models of existence in their mind. They approve or disapprove the realities in

societies from the spiritual bases that created religion. We can witness attitudes of extreme believers in every religion that are categorically against homosexuality or abortion who don't have any other arguments besides "This was not decided by God" or "It is not moral according to the holy book". This kind of argument clearly shows that religion is an important base from which individual make their opinions and then this reflects in their attitudes.

In a reasume the function of the religion in a society are: 1. Religion provides mental peace 2. It inculcates social virtues 3. Religion promotes social solidarity: Durkheim viewed that religion strengthens social solidarity. A.W. Geen also pointed out that religion has the supremely integration and verifying force in human society. 4. Religion converts the animal qualities to human qualities 5. Religion is an agent of socialization and social control: Parsons viewed that religion is one of the most important agents of socialization and social control. It has significant role in organizing and directing social life. It helps in preserving social norms and strengthening social control. 6. Religion promotes welfare 7. Religion gives recreation 8. Religion influences economy: Sociologists like Sombart and Max Weber rightly established the relationship of religion with economic system. Weber observed the influence of Protestant ethics in the development of capitalism. Sombart found this spirit of capitalism in Jewish norms 9. Religious influences political system 10. Religion Strengthens Self-confidence (this reasume is made for an article found at: <http://www.preservearticles.com/201104296054/10-most-important-functions-of-religion.html> last seen at 7 January 2014)

In the official document of the Statistical State Institute, a state institution that produces official data, the religion is determined as "a community beliefs or practices, which sometimes includes the recognition of a divine existence, power or principle, according to which people manage their behavior during the life, in practice as well as from a moral perspective". (CENSUS, 2012:34) Even in this definition, coming officially in Albania, it is noticed the definition that people through religious principles and values manage their behavior in the society. To understand how to be function in the society, which principles are supported, the morality that is considered as accurate, we have to understand even their religious values.

3.2 The historical link of Albanians with the religion;

The plurality of religions in Albania has existed even before the political plurality and traditionally this plurality has not risked the existence of the regional identity. This plurality is an important historical and cultural result, which needs to be respected. Since in the early studies about Albania and Albanians it is clearly shown their plurality of religions. According to the ethnologist, Andromaqi Gjergji "Albanians are a heterogeneous nation regarding their religion. There are no data about their demographic religion structure since their registration in the years '30 of XX century. What is known is that according to the data of the last census, the Muslim community constitutes the majority of the population" (Gjuraj, 2013:17).

Even in the Kanun, it is reflected a society that believes, a society that have knowledge about the religions and respect them, as well as a society that practices religions rituals. Religious object are saints and have their lands and importance in the society. In the Laberi Kanun, with regard to the

freedom of religions we noticed sanctioned in the 14th article: "anyone and everyone is allowed and provided with the right of the free religion; no one can violate, prohibit the right of free practice of the religions; against the persons who violate this right, the units of the municipalities/communes have the right to take punitive measures till their expulsion from the municipality/commune." (LaberiKanun,2006:37).

In the LekDukagjinitKanun, the church is treated as a untouchable institution and this because Catholic religion was practiced in the north part of Albania. The church has its specific status and laws and did not respect the Kanun laws. (LekDukagjinitKanun, 2004).This was before the establishment of the dictatorship regime in Albania

According to Zhelyazkova, after the year 1967 the atheist state was created, which stopped the rites of the three traditional religions and their temples were destroyed or transformed in magazines, cinema, etc. (Zhelyazkova,2003:26). The communism promised to the peoples a paradise, but not a paradise in the sky but in the earth. The saviour was the party or being more concrete the first secretary of the Party Central Committee. Instead of the religious books were the EnverHoxha books/works. I can say that based on what I noticed today during the feast celebration, the religion stroking in the communist regime destroyed the religion from the institutional view but on the other side reinforce regional feeling. It is known that persecution of the religions goes in favour of the reinforce of the regional feeling.

Starting from the importance that I noticed reflected in the Kanun, I believe that religions have been part of Albanian traditional values even though prohibited during the communism period in Albania. Regarding the values and their influence in the actual society, it is uncontested the influence of the traditional values in the Albanian society, especially of that part of the values that were supported even from totalitarian regime for specific interests.

Facing with the new values of the west model these values had a crisis, but their independence from the economic system (independence that claimed even Weber and Huntington) appeared as their renovation or as their camouflage with new terms. An institutional modification, regardless of its weaknesses, was not accompanied with a fast transformation of the mentality or a preordination of the mentality in Albanian transition.

For some cultures, the religion has represented the higher aspirations of the human existence. In other cultures the religions have been institutions which claimed that bring perfection. The religion in Albania, was never raised in this level mainly because of the historical and political factors. Actually, in Albania does exist officially 5 religions which are: Muslims, Bektashi, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. In the preamble of the Albanian Constitution it is written that: "We, Albanians, proud and aware of our history, responsible for the future, with faith in God and/or of other universal values, determined to build the state of law, democratic and social, to guaranteed rights and freedoms, with a spirit of tolerance and religious coexistence ... "(Albanian Constitution 2003:1).

Two are the concepts that needs to be well understood in each of these words: 1. It is allowed and everyone is free to believe in God or in other universal value and 2. The spirit of tolerance and religious coexistence that has always characterized the Albanians. The freedom of religions, of practicing religions and of its appearance it is totally complete and unlimited in Albanian Society

today. While the historical trends has existed since the times where the Albanian people faced threats to its national existence religious, the religion was in put in the service of this existence. Today, according to the latest results of census, produced by INSTAT, this is the situation of religion belonging, the question has been free and population has been free to answer or not. (Census, 2012:72)

Religious affiliation	Resident population	Percentage of resident population
Total	2800138	100
Muslims	1 587 608	56,70
Bektashi	58 628	2,09
Catholics	280 921	10,03
Orthodox	188 992	6,75
Evangelists	3 797	0,14
Other Christians	1 919	0,07
Believers without denomination*	153630	5,49
Atheists	69 995	2,50
Others	602	0,02
Prefer not to answer	386 024	13,79
Not relevant/not stated	68 022	2,43

*Persons who answered "i don't belong to any religion, but i am a believer"

4. Empirical study, religious values today

As it is mention even in the methodology, the paper is based on the questionnaire, questionnaire which includes more topics/questionsthan this paper is about, but here I take into consideration/analyze only that questions that are connected with religious values. With regard the question: "How important is God in your life?" Starting from 1 to 10, where one is not at all important and 10 is very important, the citizens have answered in this way:

God	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	5.0	0.8	4.6	3.3	10.4	6.6	8.7	7.7	6.9	42.9

I don't know 1.2% and No answer 0.8%

From the above results, it is noticed that 42.9% of the respondents consider God as very important in their life, giving 10 from the scale of 1-10. If I do the final result assuming that starting from 5 till 10 it shows that God is very important, than there are 73.9% of the respondents considering God as very important in their life. Only 10.4% of the respondents are in dilemma about the importance of the God and they give an secondary role. The other 13.7% of the respondents do not consider as important. What is the first meaning when I ask: How important is God in your life? Automatically I understand that those that consider God as very important in their life: firstly they express their acceptance of God existence, secondly they express their acceptance of a divine power of God to guide their lives, thirdly they believe that God can influence their life and the lessons given from each of the religions are necessary to guide their lives. So the 73.9 % of the respondents answering that God is very important shows a society that is feeds with the values of the religion and the existence of the divine power. There is no need to put names to the God consignor in the earth or to speak about the lessons of the Bible or Kuran. There is no differences between one religion or another. Another thing raised to the respondents was how they determine themselves: "Regardless of the fact if you go to the Church or Mosque, can you say that you are: 1. One of the religious, 2. One of non religious, 3. Atheist. The answers given were:

Self determination	One of the religious	One of non religious	Atheist	I don't know	No answer
%	60.8	19.4	10.5	3.0	6.3

In the question about the self determination, the majority of the respondents, 60.8 %, consider their selves as religious. This is in the same line with the previous results connected with the importance of God in their life, considering it as very important. The next question is about the religious atmosphere, which means rites, symbols and religious behaviors in their family. The question gives the possibility for a yes or no answer. Are you grown up in a religious atmosphere in your family? 1. YES, 2. NO, 3. I don't know, 4. No answer.

The answers of the respondents were:

Religious atmosphere	YES	NO	I don't know	No answer
%	35.8	61.7	0.4	2.1

It is worthy to discuss this result because the lack of the religious atmosphere in the family as the main education environment of value and moral does not explain their self conception as religious. One explanation may be connected with the communist period in Albania in which it was prohibited every kind of demonstration of the religious values and the general fear that everything was controlled by the state has influenced towards the lack of the religious atmosphere in the family but the religions exist. However, this is not necessarily the only explanation of this situation. We can see the answers of other questions to understand more. The next question asked to the respondents was: How much trust in the religious institutions? The scale was from 1 to 5, where 1 – not at all, 2- not very, 3 – somehow, 4 – sufficient, 5- very.

The respondents answered this way:

Trust in religious institutions	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know	No answer
%	34.4	19.3	19.7	10.2	15.6	0	0.8

There is a lack of trust in the religious institutions that is noticed from the answers of the respondents. On one hand we have a higher level of trust in God and on the other hand they do not believe in religious institutions. The reason why they do not have trust in this institutions has not been object of this study. What we can argue is that citizens do not connect the trust in God and in religious values with the trust in the religious institutions. Possibly Albanians prefer a spirit and direct connection with God and not through religious institutions. But this can be a topic in the center of another study. The next question is in the same line with the previous one: How often do you participate in the religious services recently? 1. More than one time a week; 2. Once a week; 3. Once a month; 4. Only during the special religious occasions; 5. Once a year; 6. Less than once a year; 7. Never.

Religious services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know	No answer
%	2.9	4.2	3.8	40.0	7.1	10.8	28.8	0	2.5

This answer somehow is in line with the fact that they do not believe in the religious institutions. This is why we can not find higher percentage in the performing frequency of the religious practicing which are carried out in these institutions. This can be connected also with the lack of the religious atmosphere in their families, which has not cultivated a notion to perform religious services, as long as they do not practice religious rites in their families.

The last question is about the religion belonging: Do you belong to one religion? The possibilities to answer to this question were yes or not, if yes they were asked to specify which religions they belong to? The following data are from the results of this question:

Religion	None	Myslyms	Orthodox	Catholic	Bektashi	Evangelicals	Other	No answer
%	9.1	52.3	11.6	8.3	13.7	1.2	1.2	2.5

The results show that Albanians not only believe in God but they have a religion that accompanies their belief in the existence of the transcendental. The percentage proportion according to the religions of the respondents goes in the same line with the percentage of the proportion which is the overview of the Albanian society according to CENSUS. In brief this means that, it is reinforced the conviction expressed during the presentation of the methodology that one questionnaire about Tirana citizens can be considered as representative of the Albanian society. This gives us somehow the right to think that the above results represent the overview of the Albanian society.

5. Relationship between age and religious values

It is of interest to understand if there are differences between age groups in their responses to the above questions, more among young people who were born and lived only in a democratic system and the elderly who were born and have lived a good part of their life in the communist system. The latter, is of much interest in terms of assessing what the trend of the Albanian society will be, that as it is logical in the future we will need to reflect the attitude of today's youth.

To understand the distribution I have created cross tables made possible from the statistical program SPSS, crossing each of the questions outlined above with the variable of age. This allows us to understand whether there exists an association between the two couples of variables taken in consideration. It was observed from the cross tabulation that you find below that there was no association between the two of them. So I found uniform results in the answers of both age groups. Given the latter results we decided to not to use other instruments foreseen in the beginning such as Chi square coefficients (chi square tests) and Phi and Cramers'V (symmetric Measures). The lack of association is a strong indicator of religious values in Albanian society that shows that perception and approach is the same regardless of the fact that the communist system oppressed them and the democratic system freed them, leads to the conclusion that we are fundamentally conservative in our values. Hence, the importance of religious values do not diminish or increase according to the political systems that people live in, but rather are imprinted deep in their conscience and also they are not related with the level of trust that people have for religious institutions.

God * age Crosstabulation

Count		Age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
God	1	3	2	3	1	1	2	12
	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	3	4	3	3	0	0	1	11
	4	2	2	1	2	1	0	8
	5	7	3	4	3	4	4	25
	6	2	3	2	4	4	1	16
	7	7	2	5	1	3	3	21
	8	5	6	2	4	0	2	19
	9	7	2	2	5	0	1	17
	10	20	19	24	16	13	12	104
	I don't know	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
	No answer	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total		59	47	46	36	26	26	240

Trust in religious instituions * ageCrosstabulation

Count		age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
Trust in religious instituions	1	24	19	18	8	7	8	84
	2	15	11	5	8	4	4	47
	3	10	7	11	9	6	4	47
	4	7	5	3	3	3	4	25
	5	3	5	9	9	5	6	37
	No answer	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Total		59	48	46	37	26	26	242

Religious services * ageCrosstabulation

Count		age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
Religious services	1	3	2	1	1	0	0	7
	2	1	3	3	2	1	0	10
	3	5	0	0	2	0	2	9
	4	22	18	21	16	10	8	95
	5	3	5	3	4	1	1	17
	6	9	4	5	2	4	2	26
	7	13	13	12	9	10	12	69
	No answer	3	2	0	0	0	1	6
Total		59	47	45	36	26	26	239

Religion * age Crosstabulation

Count		Age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
Religioun	None	6	5	6	2	1	2	22
	Myslyms	31	22	24	25	12	11	125
	Orthodox	5	6	6	4	2	5	28
	Catholic	7	1	4	3	1	4	20
	Bektashi	6	7	5	3	9	3	33

Evangelicals	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Other	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
No answer	3	2	0	0	0	1	6
Total	59	46	46	37	26	26	240

Religious atmosphere * ageCrosstabulation

Count		Age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
Religious atmosphere	Yes	26	14	12	13	11	10	86
	No	32	31	34	22	14	14	147
	I don't know	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	No answer	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
Total		59	47	46	35	26	26	239

Self determination * ageCrosstabulation

Count		Age						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	over 65	
Self determination	One of the religious	32	18	29	28	17	19	143
	One of non religious	15	13	5	4	5	4	46
	Atheist	6	6	7	1	2	3	25
	I don't know	2	3	1	0	1	0	7
	No answer	4	7	2	1	1	0	15
Total		59	47	44	34	26	26	236

6. Conclusions

In the above paper I tried to understand more about religious values in albanian society. Religious values are essential to be understood as they help in understanding the society, its classification and giving the right tools for improving it in the future. Albania is characterized for its religious plurality, currently five recognized religions: Sunni Muslim, Bektashi, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. Over the years religious feelings have arisen, but not from any religious conflict. During communism all ties with religion were stopped, but it apparently had no impact on people's religious views.

From empirical research it appears that Albanians believe in God and consider themselves as religious in their lives. They were not raised in a religious atmosphere and do not perform on a regular basis religious services except in cases of religious holidays. The fact they commit to religious holidays, once again shows that they respect being part of one religion and follow the teachings and rites of that religion but do not believe in religious institutions. Most of the population stated that belongs to the Muslim religion. All results show that the Albanian society cannot be classified as religious practitioners but beholders of religious values associated with the perception of God and the afterworld preferring perhaps a direct connection with God and not through religious institutions. It was also noted that the fact that do not see changes in answers between different age groups, especially among young people who were born in democracy and the elderly who were born in communism. The latter shows that kind of sustainability in religious values of Albanian society independent of the political system and the external pressure factors, for good or bad.

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