

THE ROLE OF "COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES" IN THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

Ernazarov O.

PhD in History, Associate Professor, UNESCO Chair on religious studies and the comparative study of world religions,

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article provides information about the emergence and formation of the subject of "Comparative Religious Studies". The researches of Western and Eastern scientists who contributed to the development of science are discussed.

Keywords: "Academic Comparative Religious", Euro-Christian "interpretation", Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Max Müller, James Frazer, Mircea Eliade, "Al-islam wa-nasraniyya ma'al ilm wal madaniyya".

Introduction. "Comparative religious studies" is a field of science that broadly studies religious life forms and traditions, and has stimulated the development of new views on the scientific study of similarities and differences in religions. In fact, the method of comparison in science is considered a real (fundamental) mental activity, the basis of which is classification of various things according to common and different aspects, summarization of data, interpretation and putting forward new assumptions. The use of the "comparative" method in religious studies, as in other fields, was the greatest achievement of this science. Critical views of religion, cultural bias, religious and scientific motivation led to the emergence of the science of "comparative religious studies" and turned it into a "field of debate".

Material and methods. The methods of comparative-historical, typological, hermeneutic and complex analysis of the literature were used to study the emergence and the formation of Comparative Religious Studies in Western and Muslim world.

Results. Despite the fact that tourists and theologians have always had some knowledge about the religions of different peoples, the scientific interpretation of "comparative religious studies" appeared in European and American universities at the end of the 19th century. At the same time, the science of "comparative religious studies" filled the need to summarize the enormous amount of information collected about the world's religions. Furthermore, researchers in "academic comparative religious" encountered a simplistic and uncomfortable Euro-Christian "interpretation" of various religions. According to it, all forms of belief that are foreign to the Christian tradition are recognized as "paganism", and in turn, other religions also study other religions based on the standards of their religious teachings.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, some progress was made in inter-religious dialogue. This positive shift in the field of comparative religious studies was marked by a deeper study of the way of life of representatives of other religions. According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000), an influential Christian comparativist and specialist in Islamic religion, the science of "Comparative Religion" must describe the beliefs,

values, and standard of living of different peoples so that people can have sufficient knowledge about other religions.

When it comes to specialists who made a great contribution to the development of the science of "comparative religious studies", the German scientist Max Müller (1823-1900), who was sometimes recognized as the "father of the science" (comparative religious studies), is mentioned among the first. Max Müller, who prepared a fifty-volume work under the name "Sacred books of the East", made a great contribution to the departure of religious studies from the scope of the "Western interpretation of sciences" and the acceptance of Eastern religions as a research object of science. He emphasized that the science of "comparative theology", like "comparative anatomy", which studies all aspects of a biological species, should study religions, not a specific language like "comparative philology".

James Frazer (1854-1941) was another person who played an important role in the development of this science. His twenty-volume work of "The Golden Bough", first published in 1890, was a valuable source in the field. In this work, many rituals and legends related to primitive society were collected. According to the author, the first representatives of mankind believed that a new spirit enters the world, nature and society through these rituals.

Mircea Eliade (1907-1987) was another person of great importance in the development of the science of "comparative religious studies". His work "Patterns of Comparative Religion" is popular among experts in the field. According to the scientist, religions are not only a set of different beliefs, but also a form of describing the living world through rituals that are gradually mastered and firmly established.

Discussion. Eastern scholars have a slightly different approach to the emergence of the science of "comparative religious studies". They claim that this science was founded by Muslims and cite a number of arguments to prove their words. For example, they say that "struggle in a beautiful way" in the verse "O believers, argue with the People of the Book only in the most beautiful way" in the Holy Qur'an Surah "Ankabut" indicates this knowledge. According to Muslim researchers, the attitude of Islam to other

religions has acquired a theoretical and practical aspect. The theoretical recognition of previous religions with the verse of Surah "Shura" "(O you who have believed) Allah has prescribed for you in religion what He commanded Noah and what We revealed to you (Muhammad), (as well as) what We commanded Abraham, Moses and Jesus". From a practical point of view, the rights and duties of people of the book and dhimmis living in Muslim countries were identical. In this way, the science of "comparative theology" was created in the Muslim world.

After studying the research methods of Ibn Hazm on religions, Mahmud Ali expresses the opinion that the science of comparative religious studies was created on the basis of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. From the middle of the 2nd century of the Hijri, with the beginning of the "Tadvin age", Muslims wrote many treatises on fiqh, hadith and tafsir. In addition, great attention was paid to the science of comparative study of religions. According to researchers, the first written source on this topic was "Al-Ara' wa ad-Diyanat (Religious Views and Beliefs) by An-Nawbakhti (died 202 AH). After that, Mas'udi (died 346 AH) wrote a work about religions called "Al-Adyan" (Religions). Apart from these, Abu Raikhan Beruni's book "India" was considered a masterpiece of works written on "comparative religious studies". Since the work was about Indian religions, it did not give much space to other religions and beliefs like the above books.

At the same time, a group of Muslims opposed the science of "comparative religious studies" based on the idea that "Islam has no equal, it cannot be compared with other religions". In addition, at that time, the attention of the Muslim kings to this science and the support of scientists was weak. For similar reasons, "Comparative religious studies" has been left out of the sciences related to Islamic fields.

Only by the middle of the 20th century, the science of "comparative religious studies" began to develop again in the East. In this regard, the work of Muhammad Abdullah Diroz, who lived and worked in

the last century, should be highlighted. In 1949, he introduced this subject for the first time under the name "History of Religions" in the "Philosophical Studies" department of the Faculty of "Etiquette" of Cairo University. During this period, a number of researches were carried out in the field of "comparative religious studies". For example, Muhammad Abdu's "Al-Islam wa-nasraniyya ma'al ilm wal madaniyya" (Islam and Christianity: science and modernity), Muhammad Abu Zahro's "Mukhadarat fi an-nasraniyya" (Lectures on Christianity), Muhammad Khalifa Hasan's "Tarikh al-Adyan" (History of Religions), Rafqi Zahir's "Qissat al-Adyan dirosatan historiyyatan muqaranatan" (Stories about religions: a historical-comparative study), Ahmad Shalabi's "Muqaranat al-Adyan" (Comparative religious studies) works can be cited.

Conclusion. In conclusion, it can be said that An-Nawbakhti, Abu Rayhan Beruni and a number of other scientists conducted research on the science of "comparative study of religions" in the 8th-11th centuries in the East. However, the formation of this science as an independent science began to appear in the West in the middle of the 19th century, when departments were established in universities, textbooks and training manuals were written. In the East, this process came about only in 1949 as a result of Diroz's efforts.

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