

## THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH OF RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN THE SOCIAL FIELD

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### Introduction

Religiousness, composition of religions as well as history of religious communities have been explored for many years in Lithuania. Nevertheless, the objects and methodology of these studies were diverse in different historical periods. Greater scientific interest in religiousness – except the ideology of atheism – was devoted after the restoration of independence of the Republic of Lithuania in 1990 (Matakaitė, 2003; Juknevičius, 1998; Žiliukaitė, 2000). Many research papers dealt with the problems of religious composition as well as history and migration of confessions to Lithuania (Akmenytė, 2003; Alperavičius, 2000; Bairašauskaitė, 1992; Čiubrinskas, 1998; Firkavičiūtė, 2000; Hermann, 2003; Kregždė, 1980; Kviklys, 1980–1987; Laukaitytė, 2003; Potašenko, 1993). Furthermore, the findings of the second population census in 2001 (the first one took place in 1923) were relevant for to the analysis of Lithuanian composition of religions, as respondents were questioned about their religious attitudes. A special map of religions in Lithuania has been drawn based on published results of this population census (Adlys, Ambrozaitienė, 2002; Stanaitis, Stanaitis, 2002). However, the reported attitudes on religious behaviour are sometimes very superficial and can be falsely interpreted. They do not render information about actual behaviour of inhabitants. In some cases self-attribution to one religious group meant a deep faith, however, sometimes – only a nominal self-identification with this confession. This ambivalence of attitudes lacks detailed researches about possible territorial differences as well as their changes over time.

Religion as well as society's religiousness is a very complex phenomenon, which might be explored based on different methodological approaches. One possible alternative is the method of social balance field. The basics of this method were founded in Confucius', Aristotle's as and Plato's philosophies. The sociologists (Sorokin, 1966; Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003) – also some Lithuanian sociologists (Grigas, 1998a,b) – were the first to explore the significance of social field and practically utilize this methodology. After some time geographers investigated social field, as an independent research object. The Department of General Geography of Vilnius University has been engaged in preparation of scientific research “The territorial structures of social field as well as evaluation of transformation in the context of regional policy”. Within the framework of this research some works dealing with the theoretical problems of social tension fields (Kavaliauskas, 2001; Kavaliauskas, Bražukienė, 2002; Kavaliauskas, Daugirdas, 2002; Kavaliauskas, Petrulis, 2004; Krupickaitė, 2002) were elaborated. Some of these research papers aim to develop further application of this method in the Lithuanian context (Kavaliauskas, Bražukienė, Krupickaitė, 2004; Krupickaitė, 2005).

The purpose of this article is to explore the apprehension of religious tensions. Thus, the concept of religious tensions, their dichotomy as well as some other relevant theoretical problems are discussed in this article.

## 1. Position of Religious Tension in the Social Fields

In addition to moral, economic, ethnic-cultural, political, organizational, supranational, demographic fields, a separate field of religious relations, as a part of the social field, was denoted by Dr. Habil. R. Grigas. He was one of the first researchers in Lithuania to apply scientifically the methodology of the social field (Grigas, 1998a). Religious issues were directly attributed to the social organization in his works. Moreover, religion was considered as both historical phenomenon and cultural legacy that in the process of evolution of the society had formed particular traditions and behavioural norms in collective knowledge and social life. Five autonomous couples to define the religious tensions in the social field were specified in his works: religiousness – atheism, ecclesiastical religiousness – individual religiousness, religious cosmopolitanism – religious nationalism, traditional religions – untraditional religions, ecclesiastical social organization – secular social organization (Grigas, 1998b).

Explorers of religiousness as a social phenomenon in Lithuania and worldwide emphasize that the cultural component slightly overcomes the religious component defining religion. Religion becomes a way to express the links with particular cultural community. First, religion is an element of culture, especially in terms of cultural values. On the contrary, pure religious regulations as well as orthodox religious values are hardly obeyed in the common life. (Kunovich, Hodson, 1999; Žiliukaitė, 2000). Thus, P. Kavaliauskas and V. Daugirdas suggested a generalized concept of cultural field without distinguishing a field of religious tension (Kavaliauskas, Daugirdas, 2002). However, a part of antinomies of cultural field was expressed through religiousness of the society in their work (atheism – religiousness, traditional religions – untraditional religions, modest religiousness – fundamental religiousness). Cultural field as well as the whole field of social balance is not homogeneous. One could distinguish different tensions of cultural fields in the society – ethnic, religious, moral, socio-cultural, etc. (Fig.). The explored religious tensions are interrelated not only with the cultural field, but also with all processes that take place in the social field (Paltanavičiūtė, 2005).

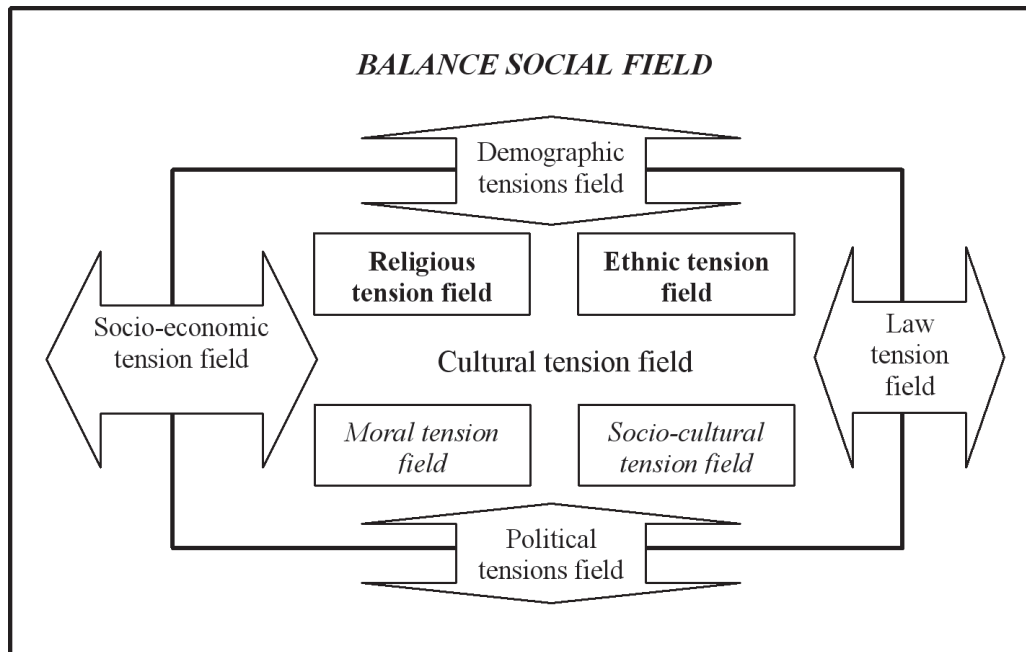


Fig. Dimensions of religious tensions in the Social Field.

The processes in the religious field are influenced even more by the processes in the whole social field rather than in the cultural field. Indeed, religious tensions are more apparent in those regions where some other demographic, economic and political problems coexist. The results of mass report of Lithuanian inhabitants were also utilized by outlining the religious tensions. However, some subjective data, *e.g.* subjective opinions and attitudes, are also to be considered conducting this research.

## 1. Dichotomy of Religious Tension Field

While exploring the correlation of religious identities and ethnic intolerance in Croatia, R. Kunovich and R. Hodson have outlined five possible reasons of possible conflicts: freedom of speech (especially due to its hampering), perspectives of children's education, independent mass media, political representation as well as freedom to establish independent governments (Kunovich, Hodson, 1999). Summarizing and supplementing antinomies of religious relations worked out by sociologist R. Grigas as well as geographers P. Kavaliauskas and V. Daugirdas, the following eight dichotomies were drafted. They elucidate society's attitude towards religion, state's attitude towards religious communities, society's relation with religious communities and evolution of religion:

1. Religiousness–atheism;
2. Ecclesiastical religiousness–individual religiousness;
3. Religious cosmopolitanism religious nationalism;
4. Legislation that is favourable to religious communities–legislation that is unfavourable to religious communities;
5. Correctness of mass media–incorrectness of mass media;
6. Religious activity–religious passiveness;
7. Religious majority–religious minority;
8. Evolution of Church territorial organization–digression of Church territorial organization;
9. Traditional religions–untraditional religions.

It is, however, not always possible to evaluate territorial differences of religious dichotomies in terms of quantities. Not all tensions can be marked quantifiable: they can be unmeasured, problematic and quantifiably measured. The 1–3 items refer to problematic dichotomies. On the other hand, fragmentary and undifferentiated data as well as some specifics of the analysed object stipulate some difficulties to conduct territorial evaluation. The 4–5 dichotomies are impossible to be measured because of the lack of the data referring to the differences in different territories. Furthermore, these dichotomies should not differ in the whole territory of the Republic of Lithuania. Only those dichotomies as specified in the items 6–9 might be explored in terms of quantities in the different regions on the basis of statistical information.

Taking into consideration scientific assumptions on social tensions (Дмитриев, 2003) as well as some other research papers (Kavaliauskas, Bražukienė, Krupickaitė, 2004; Krupickaitė, 2005), the following four categories of tensions were applied: partial neutrality (absence of tension), slight tension, medium tension as well as big tension.

**Religiousness–atheism.** The wide spreading secularization is one of the features of modern society. It is usually considered not as a decline of religion, but the decrease of religious authority. This process has different effects on individual, organizational and social level. While the secularization processes take place, religion and religious norms loose their importance and influence in the everyday life. As it was noted above, religion is considered just as a part of culture (Chaves, 1994). Despite of the overwhelming processes of

secularization in the Western societies, Lithuania has retained some its own peculiarities in the field of religiousness. According to the different researches conducted in the last years, the role of religion compared with the other vital values is decreasing (Mitrikas, 2005). Albeit the detailed research data of mass report of Lithuanian inhabitants shows that most of the inhabitants (84%) identify themselves as belonging to one of the religious groups, only about 20% of them go to church at least once a week and only about 12% find religion important in their lives (Europa..., 2001).

**Ecclesiastical religiousness–individual religiousness.** Another consequence of secularization suggests that ecclesiastical religiousness losses its previous social position and importance. People consider religiousness as their personal matter (Chaves, 1994). The traditional ecclesiastical religiousness that denoted a strong emotional attachment to parents' religion competes with the individual religiousness. It means that a person creates it own religion based on his own experience. People tend to trust what they want to trust rather than follow the traditional ecclesiastical doctrine. Thus, persons, who perceive they to be Christians, believe in reincarnation more than in coexistence of heaven and hell. The weakening of orthodoxy in the Lithuanian society shows that only 59% of respondents are convinced that it is important to uphold one religion rather than contemplate different religious doctrines.

Religious rituals related with the birth of a child, wedding or death are regarded as important not only by religious people in Lithuania, but also by those who do not attribute themselves to the any of the churches and those who don't go to church (birth – 93%, wedding ceremony – 89%, death – 95% respectively). Therefore, it is to conclude that religious rituals have lost their original religious meaning. Most of people practice them only as a cultural tradition (Žiliukaitė, 2000).

**Religious cosmopolitanism–religious nationalism.** Religion was the most important feature of self–identification until the end of the 19th Century. The concept “Lithuanian” denoted not only ethnic identity, but religious subordination as well, i.e. respective subordination to the Roman Catholic Church. However, a change of self–perception took place at the beginning of national revival, while nationality was set in the first place (Savukynas, 1997). On the other hand, the stereotypes formed during the centuries have contributed that religious subordination became also a distinguishing feature of nationality. According to the Mass report of 1923 a big part of Latvian Catholics of Northern Lithuania were classified as Lithuanians (traditionally Catholicism predominated in Lithuania) (Akmenytė, 2003). After the end of World War II, the Soviet Union and Germany signed a treaty on repatriation of Baltic Germans. According to the treaty, the Soviet Government had agreed to recognize Lutheranism as an evidence of German origin. After inspection of repatriates, it was ascertained that 1/3 of applicants did not understand German (Hermann, 2003).

The changes in society also stimulate the changes in religious communities. In order to attract churchgoers to St. Soul's Parish (*liet. Šv. Dvasios parapija*) in Vilnius, divine worship is held in Lithuanian, though traditionally the orthodox worship takes place in Russian. On the other hand, common religion – Catholicism – does not prevent all the conflicts between Lithuanians and Poles regarding the applicable language of worship rituals. Thus, sometimes the national identity overcomes the religious sense and can confront the members of the same confession (Gaučas, 1999). Furthermore, a research was carried out during the process of integration to the European Union to ascertain of how people understand European national identity. Accordingly, common European Christian legacy was identified as the main link of national identity between Lithuanians and other Europeans (Šutinienė, 2004).

**Legislation that is favourable to religious communities–legislation that is unfavourable to religious communities** Legislation can stimulate or, on the contrary, restrain the establishment of religious communities that aim to disseminate their own religion. Nowadays the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania as well as Law on Religious Communities entrench a freedom to promote own religion. There is no state religion in Lithuania. The religious communities nevertheless are classified pursuant to the above-mentioned Law: (i) traditional, (ii) other (untraditional) religion communities as well as (iii) those that are seeking for state's recognition. The concept of "traditional religion (Church)" denotes a historical, spiritual and cultural legacy (Plumpa, 2001). Thus, before obtaining a status of "traditional religious community" the applicant has to present evidence of its cultural and historical value to Lithuanian society. By virtue of the legal classification, religious community acquires different status in the state.

**Correctness of mass media–incorrectness of mass media.** Currently mass media enjoys a big credibility in Lithuania (for instance, about 60–70% of Lithuanian inhabitants rely on the veracity of mass media (Lietuva..., 2004). Therefore, mass media became one of the main factors to form a public opinion. Researchers, who analyse activities of religious communities as well as attitudes of mass media with respect to various religious matters, highlight that both traditional and untraditional religiousness is depicted as deviation from the generally accepted norms in the mass media nowadays. Newly founded religious organizations are generally attributed to the "sects" (creating prejudices in advance). Furthermore, researchers, who professionally handle these topics, fail to present authoritative comments. There are hardly prepared detailed analyses on the role of religious organisations, *etc.* In general, social and cultural aspects of the activity of religious communities are not discussed sufficiently in public. (Barker, 2001; Kuznecovienė, 2000; Navickas, 2001; Peškaitis, Glodenis, 2000; Žiliukaitė, 2001).

**Religious activity–religious passiveness.** As it was noted above, a formal denominative attribution to some religious communities does not reflect the actual degree of religiousness in the society. This would be better depicted by the actual attendance of church, a number of schoolchildren attending religious lessons, religious mass media, Sunday schools, non-governmental organisations that deal with religious issues, *etc.*

During the national revival, churches often become a consolidating factor. Therefore, sometimes church becomes a very important part of public life (Kunovich, Hodson, 1999). During the first decade after restoration of independence in 1990, the number of persons, who denote themselves as believers, increased significantly. Nevertheless, there was a remarkable increase only of those persons, who attend major religious celebrations, while the respective share of those, who are actively engaged in the activity of religious organisations, remained almost unchanged. Both in 1990 and in 1999, this ratio was about 4% respectively. These findings imply the superficiality of religious revival (Europa..., 2001; Žiliukaitė, 2000).

**Religious majority–religious minority.** If a majority of particular population attributes themselves to one community, it is relatively more difficult to establish new religious communities. Local media or sometimes even local governments can be instigated to resist against establishment of new religious communities. These obstacles are especially relevant to the new religious communities, while the elder ones have already passed this "recognition test". A majority of Lithuanian population attribute themselves to Roman Catholics. The composition of confessions is a bit more diverse only in bigger towns of the Republic of Lithuania. Tolerance as well as slight tension evolves out of long and complicated coexistence of different religions (cultures). Therefore, some more tolerance is founded in heterogeneous societies, whereas frequent personal contacts contribute to development of tolerance.

(Kavaliauskas, Daugirdas, 2002; Vosyliūtė, 2000). Nevertheless, according to T. Vanhanen's concept, the diverse society stipulates potential tensions as well, as there are many direct contacts between divergent ideologies (Vanhanen, 1999). Therefore, in order to evaluate the "level of tolerance", the changes of the ratio of majorities and minorities should be observed as well.

**Evolution of Church territorial organization–digression of Church territorial organization.** Tension can be explored considering two aspects of this dichotomy. First, the structure of Church territorial organisation should be considered. Either the network of Church can be equal in the whole territory or there can be significant territorial repartitions or desperately allocated communities (Jordan-Bychkov, Domosh, 1999). The historical development of territorial organisation shows whether the structures have been developing evolutionally or they were influenced by some external factors. For instance, the territorial structure of the current Roman Catholic Church expresses political, historical, cultural events that took place in different historical periods in Lithuania (Paltanavičiūtė, 2002). The maturity of structure expresses the complexity of territorial organisation likewise – whether there is one-tier structure, or there are some hierarchical levels, or there are no relevant structure in the territorial community (Мосунов, 1988; Valentine, 2001). Second, the other axis to create a tension is correlation of allocation of Churches with the allocation of believers in the territory. The tension becomes more evident when particular believers do not establish a community – an organisational unit of Church territorial organisation. Some other combinations are possible as well. Due to natural processes (migration, ageing of society, etc.) as well as external intervening (e.g. compulsory expelling), erosion of historically formed territorial Church organisation occurs: there are some blessing facilities; however, there are no old members of the confession left.

**Traditional religions–untraditional religions.** The newly established religious organisations are a result of society's secularisation (Chaves, 1994), as people consider religion as their personal matter. Eventually many people seek to combine different religious doctrines to find relevant answers. In general, society reacts very divergently to the new religious organisations. Some people accept the differences very respectfully, the others, however, can be hysterically frightened. Religious freedom as well as opportunities to choose own religion have come to Lithuania after the national revival. However, the changed economic and social situation has contributed to the widespread sense of insecurity. Due to the prejudices elucidated in mass media, fresh religious movements were also tackled. A public reaction to the new forms of religion is highly dependant, whether and to which extent they are culturally similar or alien to the values of traditional society. Indeed, ideological or secular point of view was not so important accepting religions (Peškaitis, Glodenis, 2000). Lithuania is more and more integrating to the multicultural and multi-confessional community. Thus, the interrelation between something "traditional" and "untraditional" will be even more frequent in the future. A high degree of tolerance in respect to the other religions prevails in old member states of the European Union. However, even there a big part of population requires rendering a priority to traditional values and norms, especially in family law matters (Attitudes..., 2003).

## Conclusions

1. A complex of dichotomies in the social field reflects the tensions between different religious groups, traditional and untraditional religious communities as well as religious communities and the state. These links can be by the following couples of dichotomies: religiousness–atheism, ecclesiastical religiousness–individual religiousness, religious cosmopolitanism–religious nationalism, legislation that is favourable to religious communities–

legislation that is unfavourable to religious communities, correctness of mass media–incorrectness of mass media, religious activity–religious passiveness, religious majority–religious minority, evolution of Church territorial organization–digression of Church’s territorial organization, traditional religions–untraditional religions.

2. Considering the criterion of territorial difference, religious tensions can be classified to these categories: (i) tensions that can be hardly evaluated in quantities terms, problematic (ii) and quantifiable measured (iii) (these tensions can be evaluated on the basis of mass reports of Lithuanian inhabitants as well as some other statistical material).

3. The new quantities criteria that explain the territorial differences of religious relations should be elaborated. These new criteria should encompass not only the general tensions in the cultural field (ethnic, moral, socio–cultural, etc.), but also socio–economic, demographic, political tensions in the particular location.

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## **Religinių įtampų socialiniame lauke tyrimo problema**

### **Santrauka**

Religingumas, religinė sudėtis bei religinių bendruomenių istorija Lietuvoje tyrinėjama daug metų, tačiau šių tyrimų pobūdis ir turinys tam tikrais visuomenės gyvenimo etapais skyrėsi. Apie Lietuvos religinę sudėtį bei atskirų konfesijų istoriją bei kelią į Lietuvą yra parašyta nemažai darbų. Tiriant Lietuvos religinę sudėtį labai svarbūs ir naudingi buvo 2001 metų Visuotinio gyventojų surašymo duomenys, kurie suteikė galimybę sudaryti tikslų Lietuvos religijų žemėlapi. Tačiau denominacinė priklausomybė yra labai paviršutiniškas ir neretai klaidingai interpretuojamas religijos rodiklis. Jis neteikia informacijos apie realųjį religinį gyventojų elgesį bei nuostatas, nes vienu atveju savęs priskyrimas tam tikrai religinei grupei gali reikšti gilų tikėjimą, kitu – tik nominalinę tapatybę.

Pastaraisiais metais vis labiau ryškėja, kad religingumo stipresnis kultūrinis, o ne religinis aspektas, religija yra vienas būdų išreikšti savo priklausomybę tam tikrai kultūrinei bendrijai. Religija ir visuomenės religingumas yra sudėtingas reiškinys ir jį galima tirti vis populiarėjančiu socialinio balansinio lauko metodu.

Religinių santykių erdvę, kaip vieną socialinio lauko dalių, išskyrė sociologas habil. dr. R. Grigas. Prof. P. Kavaliausko pasiūlytame socialinio balansinio lauko modelyje religinės įtampos priskirtos kultūriniam laukui. Apibendrinus religinių santykių įtampų lauko bei kultūrinių įtampų laukų antinomijas bei jas papildžius, buvo sudarytos 9 dichotominės poros: religingumas–laisvamanybė, bažnytinis religingumas–individualusis religingumas, religinis kosmopolitiškumas–religinis tautiškumas, religinėms bendruomenėms palanki teisinė bazė–religinėms bendruomenėms nepalanki teisinė bazė, žiniasklaidos korektiškumas–žiniasklaidos nekorektiškumas, religinis aktyvumas–religinis pasyvumas, religinė dauguma–religinės mažumos, bažnytinės teritorinės organizacijos evoliucija–bažnytinės teritorinės organizacijos regresija, tradicinės religijos–netradicinės religijos.

Tačiau ne visada įmanoma kiekybiškai įvertinti religinių antinomijų teritorinę diferenciaciją. Pagal tai išskirtas antinomijas galima grupuoti į kiekybiškai neįvertinamas, problemines ir kiekybiškai įvertinamas. Problemiškų antinomijų (1–3) teritorinį vertinimą apsunkina fragmentiški ir teritoriškai nediferencijuoti duomenys bei tyrimo objekto specifiškumas. Kiekybiškai neįvertinamų antinomijų (4–5) beveik neįmanoma išskirti dėl pačios įtampos neteritoriškumo ir teritoriškai diferencijuotų duomenų stokos – ji vienoda visoje Lietuvos teritorijoje. Statistikos duomenimis, kiekybiškai vertinamas dichotomijas (6–9) galima įvertinti pagal įtampos stiprumo regioninius skirtingumus.