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## **Research on the geography of religion in Ukraine**

*Abstract:* This article proposed a structure of geography of religion: confessional geography, sacred geography, geography of pilgrimage. This structure considers three elements: 1) the spatial situation of religious life in Ukraine and defined regional denominational structure; 2) the geography of the sacred center. The meaning of religious centers in religious life are divided into levels: national, regional, local; and 3) the geography of pilgrimage – for different denominations within Ukraine, abroad from Ukraine, from abroad into the country.

The general trends in the geography of religion, created in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: 1) revitalization of the Moscow Patriarchate with the active support of the Russian Orthodox Church and the public authorities. This is evident in the increasing number of religious communities and the active construction of churches; 2) increases the number of Protestants and charismatic churches of believers; 3) the strengthened position of Greek Catholics; 4) a “return” of some Ukrainians to ancient religious roots, promoting actually paganism (Native Ukrainian National Faith), rituals of which are reconstructed.

*Keywords:* geography of religion, Ukraine

### **1. Research on the geography of religion in Ukraine**

The geography of religion is a branch of geographical knowledge about spatial and temporal characteristics of religious life. Geography of religion is a focus of geographers, as evidenced by themed magazines, IGU materials, e.g. Glasgow, Tunisia, Cologne (Lyubitseva 2012), and IGU regional conferences in Kyoto (Lyubitseva 2013). Analysis of research allows the author to propose a structure for the geography of religion (Fig. 1). The geographic study of religion is undertaken at different hierarchical levels (from the global to the city level) and includes tangential issues of ethnicity and culture, geopolitics and tourism.

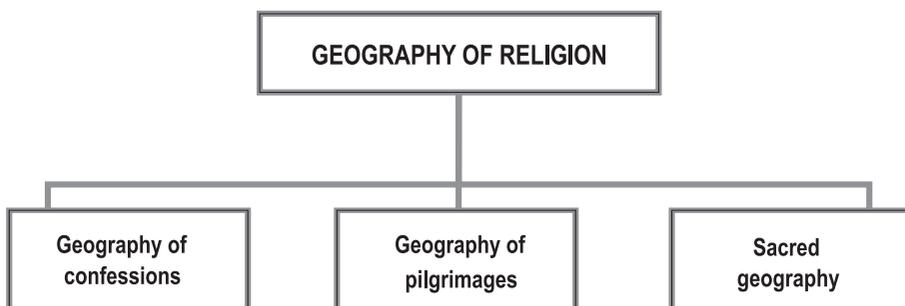


Fig. 1. Structure of the geography of religion

Religion was integrated into the subject of geographical studies in Ukraine only after our country gained independence. At the same time, the International Fund “Renaissance” in the country was a contest of the new, not Soviet, textbooks. At the competition in 1994, the textbook *The Geography of Religion* won second prize and the recommendation of the Ministry of Science and Education as a basic textbook on the subject for all higher education institutions of the country (Pavlov, Mezentsev, Lyubitseva 1998). In 1998, the book was published in the major circulation of the fund and distributed to educational institutions of the country. This was the first book, and still today almost the only book, on the geography of religion in the former Soviet Union. Since the author is the head of the department tourism and regional Studies, the problems of geography of religion have been developed in the study of pilgrimage and religious tourism. Later, these problems were developed in the book *Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism* (Lyubitseva, Romanchuk 2011), which is also recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science for use in the educational process in all higher educational institutions.

Research on the geography of religion in Ukraine is carried out by L. Shevchuk, O. Kuchabsky, V. Patiychuk, A.Kovalchuk and some young scientists. Young scientists mainly assess religious life in the regions (e.c. Chernihiv, Kharkiv). Pilgrimage and religious tourism is explored by T. Bozhuk.

## 2. Confessional geography

Research methodology in geography religion based on the indissoluble unity of the components (Fig. 1). Basic research is the study of geography confessions. The purpose of these studies is to determine the geo-religious situation – the state of religious life in a certain area at a certain time. The comparison of geo-religious situations is used to draw conclusions about spatial processes that are unique to specific religions, offering their explanation through the interaction of certain factors.

The term “sacred geography” in Ukrainian geographical literature is often used synonymously with the term “geography of religion.” The author stresses that these concepts are non identical and considers sacred geography as the geography of sacred places. In studies of sacred geography, we consider the function of sacred places, sacred landscapes as places of pilgrimage.

The geography of religiousness in the population significantly affects the geography of pilgrimage since both of them are determined by the fact that the religious tradition in Ukraine is very strong. One could even argue that, as in many other countries, it was the religious tradition which consolidated a segment of the Ukrainian population during the totalitarian period. Our studies of pilgrimage led us to the conclusion that more than half of the pilgrims from the Russian Empire to the Holy Land, based on support of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, were natives of the provinces in the territory of modern Ukraine. So, Ukraine is a multi-confessional country with the traditions of pilgrimage which have been historically formed.

Revival of religious life in Ukraine began in the late eighties of the last century and was marked by quantitative growth of religious communities (Fig. 2), the restitution of churches to the communities, and the restoration of monasticism.

According to statistics, as of early 2013 in Ukraine there were

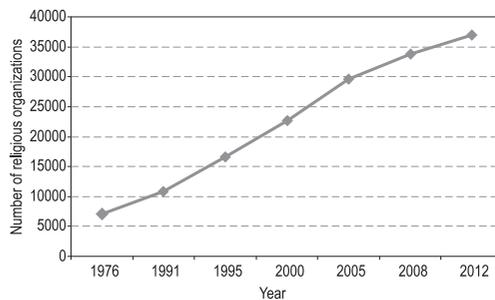


Fig. 2. Dynamics of the religious organization in Ukraine

35,116 registered and 1,879 unregistered religious organizations; 87 religious centers and 295 offices of all religions; and the number of priests totaled

31,3 thousand people. In the country there are 500 monasteries, which include 6,8 thousand monks, 370 missions, 81 brotherhoods, with 202 religious schools enrolled nearly 20,0 thousand pupils (www 1).

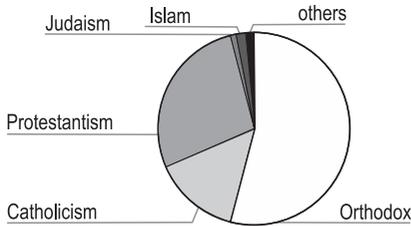


Fig. 3. Denominational structure in Ukraine

Territorial organization of the sphere of religion in Ukraine is determined by the ratio of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism within Christianity as well as Islam, Judaism and other small religious communities and movements (Fig. 3). Christianity is dominant in the country. The Orthodox constitute over half of the population. They are followed by almost twenty five percent of Catholic.

The religious situation has certain regional differences. Map shows the religious situation in the country (Fig. 4). The network of religious communities of the Moscow Patriarchate almost evenly covers all regions of Ukraine. During 1992, as a result of the Moscow Patriarchate's interference in the affairs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, it was split into Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, headed by Metropolitan of Rostov and Novocherkassk Vladimir (Sabodan); and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate, headed by Metropolitan Filaret (Denisenko). The network of religious communities the Kiev Patriarchate are mostly presented in Kyiv and Kyiv region, Ivano-Frankivsk, Volyn and Ternopil regions. Catholic religious communities prevail in Western Ukraine. More than a third of Greek Catholic religious communities are located in Lviv region and another third of them – in Ternopil region and Transcarpathia. Roman Catholic religious communities most in areas traditionally inhabited by Polish ethnic minority in Ukraine (Podillya, Zhytomir and Galicia). At the same time the Protestant persuasion has very high growth rate and it relates both to the traditional (Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.), and new charismatic churches. This process is particularly active in the south-eastern and central regions of the country and in the capital – city of Kiev.

Judaism today is professed by less than one percent of the population, with almost half of them counted as members of the Hasidic Chabad Lubavitch Association of Jewish religious organizations which are mostly common in Kiev, Poltava, Lugansk, Donetsk and Dnepropetrovsk Regions.

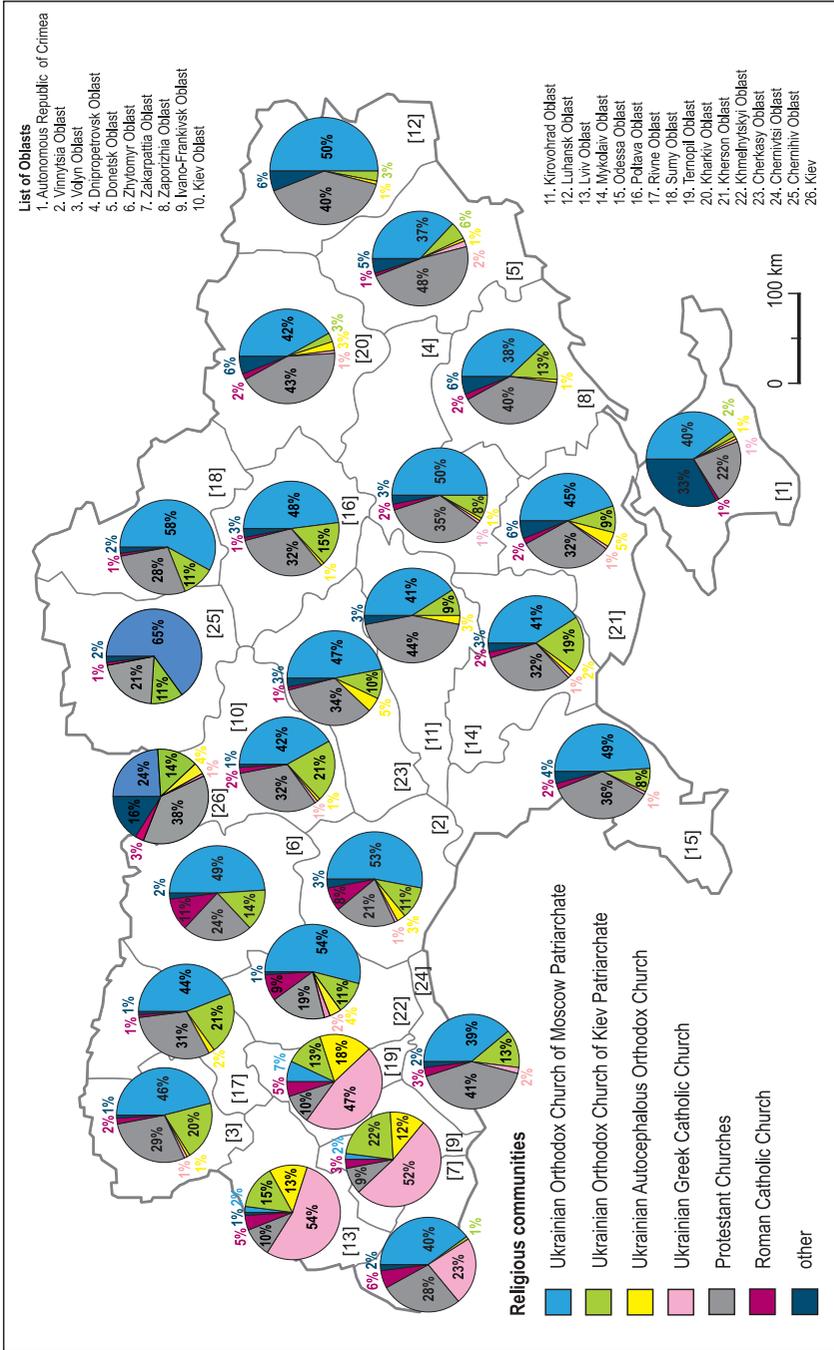


Fig. 4. Denominational structure in regions of Ukraine

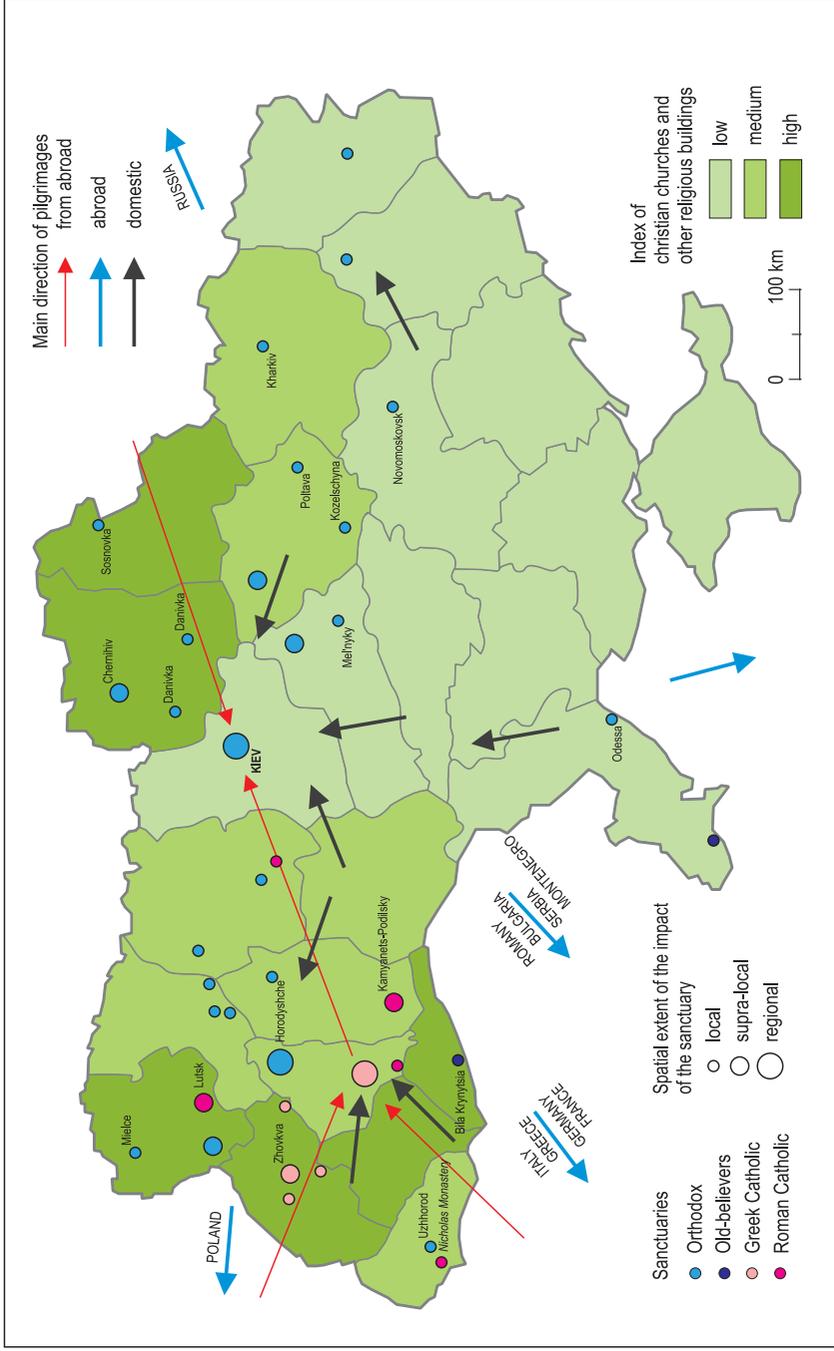


Fig. 7. Sanctuaries and direction of pilgrimage movement

The Muslims population in Ukraine is almost two percent, of which nearly seventy percent is represented by the Crimean Tatars. In Crimea there are also believers of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Karaites.

Nearly two percent of the population belongs to other religions: Eastern beliefs, especially Buddhism; and krishnaism, which counts more supporters in the eastern regions (Donetsk, Kharkiv region).

Some Ukrainians “return” to ancient religious roots, promoting paganism (Native Ukrainian National Faith) in which the rituals are reconstructed. It is common in Kyiv and Cherkasy region as well as in Podillya.

However, the problem of interfaith relations can be attributed as one of the most pressing social problems. Experts divide the sectarian conflicts as follows: 1) Orthodox-Catholic, with the opposition in some communities in Western Ukraine, which are now almost completely resolved; 2) inter-Orthodox (which is artificially exacerbated by the actions of the Moscow Patriarchate); 3) internal contradictions in other confessions; 4) between traditional and modern religions. These conflicts are not active nowadays, but may cause social conflicts, as exacerbated by political purposes.

### **3. Sacred geography**

The establishment of each monastery is always associated with certain sacred event (appearance, acts of the saints, miracle-working icons, etc.), so these were sacred places serving the function of pilgrimage (Fig. 5).

Confessional structure of the monasteries in Ukraine is almost equally represented by Orthodox and Catholics (Fig. 6).

Almost a third of churches and monasteries in Ukraine are known as landmarks reflecting the historical and cultural heritage of the country and have the status of objects that are under state protection.

There are three Orthodox large monasteries in Ukraine: Svyato-Uspenskaya Kievo-Pecherskaya (got this status in 1598, Svyato-Uspenskaya Pochaevskaya 1833, Svyato-uspenskaya Svyatogorskaya (2004), so they occupy the special place among Orthodox monasteries.

The oldest Christian shrines of Ukraine are located in Crimea. They are presented by cave complexes, which, despite the difficult course of historical events, revived and continue to perform their sacred function. Among them Inkerman

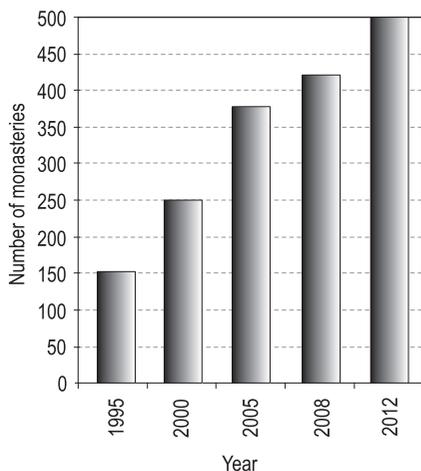


Fig. 5. Dynamics of monasteries in Ukraine

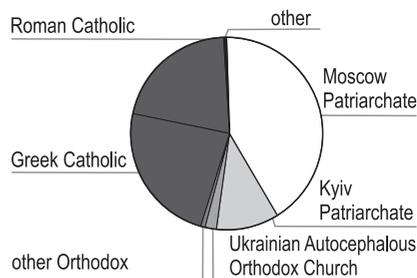


Fig. 6. Confessional structure of the monasteries in Ukraine

Klymentiyivskyy cave monastery known from the eighth century. These places are associated with the path and last years of St. Clement, the Pope, who was ordained as bishop of Rome by the Apostle Peter and so is considered to be the second Pope after the Apostle Peter. St. Clement was sentenced to hard labor at the quarry in far outskirts of the Roman Empire – near Chersonesos. Another well-known cave monastery in Crimea is the Assumption monastery from the 8<sup>th</sup> century located near Baychysaray. Rock monasteries on the territory of Ukraine are known not only in the Crimea, but also in Podillya and valley of the Dniester River.

There are also the sainted places of Karaites. The oldest is the center of St. Hach – Monastery of the Holy Cross, located in the Crimean mountains near the town of Old Crimea, known since 1338, which is monastery-fortress. The Armenian temples are known in Lvov, Kiev and many other cities of Ukraine, but a sacred center remains in Crimea.

Catholic sacral geography in Ukraine is presented by the hierarchical structure of centers, among which Lvov and Zarvanica are the most known. Lviv City was founded in the mid-thirteenth century by Prince Danylo Galytskyi and named after his son. On invitation of the Prince, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Armenians, Karaites, and Jews settled here and for centuries all of them formed the unique architectural face of the city. This actually was the reason for the inclusion

the historic center of Lviv in the UNESCO list in nineteen and ninety eight. Consequently Lviv took form as the spiritual center of many religions represented in numerous places of worship. The first monasteries of Lviv were Orthodox and they were known from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century various Catholic orders started their operations, having established their churches and monasteries; and after the union (16<sup>th</sup> century – 1596) Greek Catholic monasteries appeared. One of the first Catholic monasteries in Lviv was Bernardine, which is now a monument of classical Roman Catholic city architecture. The most visited is the Cathedral of St. George.

#### **4. Geography of pilgrimage**

Each confession has its own hierarchy of pilgrimage centers, which historically has developed and become entrenched in the minds of believers (Fig. 7).

Due to its significance for the Orthodox Church Kyiv can be attributed to the pilgrimage centers of European (macro-regional) level. In literature the city is often called “Jerusalem on Dnieper.” Here where the holy places of Orthodoxy are located, there are temples and centers of other religions and confessions. Sacred geography of the capital has such laws: in the historical center of Kiev are concentrated most famous temples of all faiths. Almost all of them are monuments and protected by the state. In the semi-peripheral ring formed Greek Catholic and Protestant sacred centers. At the periphery of the city, most actively built were cathedrals of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as new charismatic churches. Kiev was the center of pilgrimage even in Soviet times. The pilgrims path that was laid in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is now restored. The path of pilgrims in Kyiv included: both modern UNESCO sites Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, which during the great holy days were visited by up to ninety thousand pilgrims; St. Sophia Cathedral; and also St. Michael Cathedral built in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (in 1108–1114), destroyed in nineteen thirtieths and restored in late ninetieths. Another object for pilgrims’ visits were monasteries and temples of Podol. Currently, more than 10 monasteries of Kiev host pilgrims. Recovered hermitages and celles in the modern surroundings of Kyiv include Kytaevo, Goloseevo, Tserkovshina, and Feofaniya. The Greek Catholic Church governance has now also transferred to Kiev. The governance center of Muslims of Ukraine as well as one of the most respected Jewish synagogues is also located in Kiev.

Pochevska Svyato-Uspenska (Holy-Assumption) Lavra is the regional centre of Orthodox pilgrimage of the Right-Bank Ukraine. According to legend it was founded by monks of Kievo-Pecheskiy (Caves) Monastery who fled from the Mongol invasion in 1240. Svyato-Uspenskiy Sviatohirsk (Holy Assumption) Monastery – is an Orthodox monastery located in the city of Svyatohorsk in Donetsk region on the high right bank of Siverskiy Donets river on the chalk ledges, called The Holy Mountain. In this region the Orthodox faith was preached to Khazars by brothers Saints Cyril and Methodius. This is the center of Orthodox pilgrimage left-bank Ukraine.

The city of Chernigiv and region around is the local center of Orthodox pilgrimage. It is famous because of Kiev Rus period temples and caves in Nizhin, Kozelets, Pryluki and Novgorod-Siverskiy with known miraculous icons and acts of saints. A well-known sacred center of Slobozhanshchina is city of Kharkiv with Svyato-Pokrovskiy (Holy Protection) monastery 17<sup>th</sup> century (1689) and Mgarskiy Lubenskiy Spaso-Preobrazhenskiy (Holy Transfiguration) monastery located near the city of Lubny (Poltava region). The sacral centers of Cherkassy region are represented by Motryski monastery in Kholodny Yar and Suboptiv as well as Chyhyryn area, Krasnohirskiy Svyto-Pokrovskiy (Holy Protection) in Zolotonosha.

The primary centers of Catholic pilgrimage are Lviv and Zarvanytsia. Around Lviv the sacral centers are presented by active Greek Catholic monasteries Krehivskiy (early 17<sup>th</sup> century) Podgoretsky (12<sup>th</sup> century) Univsky (14<sup>th</sup> century). Sixty kilometers from Terebovlya (Ternopil region) there is a small village Zarvanytsya – one of the centers of Greek Catholic pilgrimage. This sacred center is among twenty most visited by pilgrims in Europe. The Icon of the Virgin in Zarvanytsia is one of the oldest in Ukraine; its origin dates back to 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century. Renaissance of Zarvanytsia as significant spiritual center began in eightieths of the previous century. The Virgin icon, hidden during the evil times by believers, was miraculously found and regained its place and value.

Sacred centers of Judaism in Ukraine are related to Hasidism: Medzhybizh Uman, Berdichev, Belz, and others. In fact, a major Hasidic fraternity, whose members nowadays live mostly in Israel and the United States, originates from Ukraine. In the city Medzhibozh (now Letychivsky district, Khmelnytsky region) at the local cemetery rests the founder of Hasidism Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (Besht). He was known as wonder-worker and healer, mentor and teacher, not only among Jews but also in the Ukrainian population. The largest Hasidic community is in Bratslav. “Bratslav” Hasidim hallow Rabi Nachman,

great-grandson Beshta, who developed his ideas and is the most respected tzadik of Hasidism, is buried in Uman, which became a center of pilgrimage from all over the Hasidic world. Tsadik Levi-Itshok Berdichevsky lived, preached and was buried in Berdichev and his tomb is also a place of pilgrimage for Hasidim. The city of Belz (now Sokal district, Lviv region) became the center of Belz Hasidism, which has its own tzadiks' dynasty. In fact the Belz Hasidic is one of the most influential Hasidic groups of nowadays and has its own synagogue in Jerusalem. Hasidic shrines are associated with life and deeds of tzadiks'. Their graves, besides the mentioned above, are located in Cherkasy (Shpola Talnoe, Rotmytrivka), Poltava (Gadyach), Khmelnytsky (Polonnoe, Slavuta), Vinnytsia (Bratslav), Zhytomyr (Korosten Malin, Verednyky), Kyiv region (Tarashcha, Fast, Skvira), Chernihiv (Nizhyn).

One of the most important centers of Islam in Ukraine (Yevpatoria in the Crimea) is the renewed Juma-Jami Mosque (16<sup>th</sup> century). In many cities of the Crimea (Simferopol, Old Crimea) there are rebuilt or restored mosques; in cities with numerous Muslim communities (Kharkov and other) new ones are built.

There are actual questions of logistic provision for the centers of pilgrimage. The development of infrastructure, including hospitality, with the purpose of these centers' development rests on the basis of a balanced operation. This problem becomes yet more acute in connection with the increasing number of both Ukrainian and foreign pilgrims, proper exorcism of centers of pilgrimage, and also the neglect of clergymen to the problems of the balanced development.

## **5. Conclusions**

The study of geography of religion in Ukraine revealed the following results:

- 1) the revitalization of the Moscow Patriarchate with the active support of the Russian Orthodox Church and the public authorities. This is evident in the increasing number of religious communities and the active construction of churches;
- 2) increases in the number of Protestants and charismatic churches of believers;
- 3) the strengthened position of Greek Catholics;
- 4) the "return" of some Ukrainians to ancient religious roots, promoting paganism (Native Ukrainian National Faith), rituals of which are reconstructed.

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