



International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues

ISSN: 2146-4138

available at <http://www.econjournals.com>

International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues, 2015, 5(Special Issue) 15-17.

Economics and Society in the Era of Technological Changes and Globalization



Buddhist World in Global Context

Mergen Sandzhievich Ulanov^{1*}, Valery Nikolaevich Badmaev²

¹Kalmyk State University, 358000, Republic of Kalmykia, Elista, Pushkin Street, 11, Russian Federation, Russian, ²Kalmyk State University, 358000, Republic of Kalmykia, Elista, Pushkin Street, 11, Russian Federation, Russian. *Email: ulanov1974@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

The article covers the problem of globalization process impact on the Buddhism. Authors note that Buddhism takes into consideration the spirit of time and makes attempts to modernize. Buddhism has been growing as one of the most influential elements of cultural landscape in globalization process. It may be explained by the fact that due to religious and genetics reasons Buddhism does not have organized antiglobalism. Besides, individual character of self-fulfillment, inner spiritual freedom, private character of religiousness and pluralism that are typical for Buddhist tradition are consonant with the values of global liberation cultivated now. They are human rights and freedoms, ideas of democracy and post-modernism.

Keywords: Buddhism, Religion, Globalization, Neo-Buddhism, Modernization

JEL Classifications: F60, P46, Z12

1. INTRODUCTION

Being integral social and cultural phenomenon, globalization manifests itself in a number of specific forms including religious globalization. Study of this form of globalization is important for conducting dialog between confessions and cultures in today world that is gradually turning into a single entity. World confessions still demonstrate different reaction on globalization challenges. Even inside Buddhist reaction on globalization is different. It should also be remembered that global world study is now seeking both for its object and its boundaries that has a certain influence on methodological principles applicable for analysis of religious sphere globalization.

2. MAIN BODY

Let us consider in details main features of religious sphere globalization and the way these features manifest themselves in Buddhism. We base on relevant researches including selected works of Globalization: Critical concepts in sociology (2004) in 6 volumes prepared by well-known sociologist and culturologist Robertson and a number of other materials (Globalization: Critical

concepts in sociology 2004). So, Beyer (Canada) analyzed the role of religion in globalizing world and pointed out two ways of its development. First way the religion restriction only to private life, second it active affects the social life either from ecumenism point of view considering today reality or protecting cultural unicity of a people. According to Beyer second variant of religion development dominates now. At the same time as Beyer pointed out it is unlikely that any religious and cultural model becomes dominating in today's conditions of cultural plurality (Beyer, 2004: 87). Lechner (USA) marked the important role of religion in modern world because all world religions historically have existed as global institutions and religious integration preceded political and economic integration. But religion today resists to political globalization. At the same time, as Lechner pointed out, globalization is generally a secular process (2004: 96). Falk (USA) considered that religion is being disputed by dominating motives of globalization. It should either disappear or rebirth as a force alternative to globalization (2004: 425).

The works by Robertson (2004), Radhakrishnan (2004), Casanova (2001), Kale (2004) and others should also be noted discussing the topic "Religion and globalization in at the open of Eurasia." This book was prepared in the scope of the program of international

relations and national construction (program supervisors - Martha Brill Olcott and Aleksei Malashenko). Authors view globalization problem from Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and modern paganism points of view (Malashenko and Filatov, 2009). Works of Agadzhanian (2005), Badmayev and Goryaev (2005), Yu (2008), Ulanov (2009) and others should be mentioned.

Distinctive feature of religion modern globalization is the fact that the form of religion existence in public consciousness that has matured in the USA is now actively spreading over the world. The most important feature of this American model is taking the principles of democracy and human rights into religious principles that are defended and preached by priests of all confessions. Religion is gradually turning into the defender of democracy and civil liberties in society and state. While earlier religion has mainly the legitimizing and protective function and supported the authority especially in traditional society, now religious institutions begin to criticize the authority from the positions of moral and justice that are being understood not only in religious but in the democratic context (Filatov, 2005: 11-12).

In Russian social and cultural space the interest to Buddhism is related to liberal and democratic ideas too. New Russian Buddha are as usual open-minded liberal people tending to relatively soft and pluralistic character of Buddhism. Today scientists note that “fundamental Buddhist value dominants - rejection of any forms of violence, religious, ethnic and cultural, racial, social, gender tolerance, peacekeeping, disapproval of all forms of despotism, urge towards correlating of religious and scientific world-view, recognition of human right of free choice - are well correlated with the values of civil society” (Ostrovskaya, 2009: 19).

At the same time we should consider the history of development of Russian society after Soviet Union break-up. New Buddha who were natural opponents of the Communist party did not manage to become so called “new Russians.” So Buddhism in social and cultural space of Russia (apart from traditionally Buddhist regions) like in the other post-Soviet countries remains marginal phenomenon and a sort of alternative to any establishment (Agadzhanian, 2005: 250).

Deterritorialization of religion is one more important feature of today global religiousness. Religion starts to cross traditional confessional, political and civilization boundaries. Almost all main religions find the followers in regions where there was never be and lose congregation in the places of traditional prevalence, in their canonical territory. A certain person is more often the subject of choice of the religion despite the membership in some confessional tradition (Filatov, 2005: 13-14).

Deterritorialization phenomenon affects Buddhism as well. In the second half of XX century Buddhism started to cross former ethnic and confessional borders covering new cultural areas. Globalization processes enliven cultural exchange between countries of the West and the East. In the end of XX century Buddhism started to spread over Europe and America. Buddhism now is not pure eastern religion. Several hundreds of Buddhist

centers and organizations work now in Europe, in South and North America, Australia and the New Zealand. European Buddhist Union regularly holds its congresses in European capitals. It is interesting that Buddhism is spreading most actively in developed countries of the West where local population cannot find the answers on their spiritual requests in traditional confessions and people seek for faith on their own.

In social and cultural space of Russia Buddhism also crosses the boundaries of regions where it has been traditionally spread. In last decades Buddhist communities have appeared in Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Samara and many other big cities of Russia. While in traditional regions of Buddhism various social and cultural social segments of people are the follower of this religion, so in Russian-speaking regions the youth and intellectuals usually join it.

As a result of spreading various Buddhist forms and schools in the countries of Western Europe and America so called “globalized” or trans-border Buddhism appears here. Unlike traditional forms it is almost free from the context of cultural traditions.

Due to the globalization intra-confessional interactions in Buddhism again appeared to be actual as it was in the time of Aśokaempire or Kushan Empire. But even then there were no such frequent crossings of different Buddhist traditions as in the second half of XX century when almost all known Buddhist forms and schools are presented in most big cities of Europe and North America. This trend is gradually spreading over Asian region. For example, in Japan or Hong Kong different Tibetan traditions and Theravada are widely spread and Zen Buddhism centers start to appear in Mongolia, Buryatia, Thailand and other countries. Globalization trends penetrate even in the forms of Buddhism and as a result meditation of Theravada tradition is being included in curriculum in numerous Mahayana centers and Theravada masters start to accept authenticity of Mahayana and even use the practice of its different schools.

Emergence of so called “new religions” that appear by the course of modernization of traditional confessions is also a specific indicator of globalization. For example, neo-Buddhism trends have appeared as a result of rejuvenation of traditional Buddhism. They are surprisingly different from traditional forms of Buddhism in philosophical positions. Instead of passive stay in monasteries and praying and meditating monks start to go out into streets and popularize their religion. Stepanyants noted, that “not a detachment from world and not search for individual redemption but active participation in fight for social reconstruction based on new humanistic ideas are the main ethic principles of the reformers” (Stepanyants 2007: 142). Neo-Buddhist groups have mastered practical approach to society, the way of affecting it by charity and social aid. These groups are engaged into educational and enlightening work, oppose war and protect environment (Hsin-Huang, 2004: 73).

Modernized or renewed Buddhism that actively participates in social and political life and solves actual problems of today world is often called neo-Buddhism and “Buddhism in action” or “active

Buddhism.” Two last terms were introduced by *Thích Nhất Hạnh*, Vietnamese master who preaches in Western countries.

New ideas related to growing of social and political activity of Buddhists have taught even Theravada that is the most orthodox type of Buddhism but still it is modernizing and socializing. The followers of Theravada start to participate more and more actively in social life trying to make the life of people better. These processes go on mainly in the countries of Southern Buddhism and with relatively high historical rate. For example, orientation on ideology and politics and social role of the local Buddhist priesthood has noticeably grown during one generation (Starostin and Starostina 1998: 426-427). Politization of priesthood in Sri Lanka has led to founding the political organization “Jathika Hela Urumaya” that got several seats in parliament in 2004. In Burma many sangha actively participate in anti-governmental protests and support democratic opposition. These examples disprove “stereotypical idea of some authors that the spirit of passive submission dominates in Buddhism while in Islam, for example, it is the spirit of political activity” (Agadzhanian, 2007: 277).

One of neo-Buddhistic organizations in Russia is originating from Japan the order “Nipponzan Myohoji.” It takes active part in social and political life of Russia. Monks of the order opposed shooting at the building of the Russian parliament in 1993. Monks of “Nipponzan Myohoji” actively participated in antiwar campaign during Chechen conflict and conducted several protest actions near the houses of government.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Buddhism accounts for the spirit of the times and makes attempts to modernize. In the course of globalization Buddhism becomes one of influential elements of cultural landscape. It may be explained by the fact that due to religious and genetic reasons organized antiglobalism is not typical to Buddhism. Besides, individual character of self-fulfillment, inner spiritual liberty, private character of religiousness and pluralism that are typical to Buddhist tradition and are consonant to values of global liberation in the form of human rights and liberties, ideas of democracy and post-modernism being cultivated now.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research was funded by the Russian Humanitarian Scientific Foundation in the scope of scientific and research project “Buddhism and economic culture of the East (socio-philosophical analysis),” project # 15-03-00251a.

REFERENCES

- Agadzhanian, A.S. (2005), Buddhism in modern world: Soft alternative to globalism. Religion and Globalization in Eurasia Space. Moscow: Neostrom. p222-255.
- Agadzhanian, A.S. (2007), Buddhism and political conflicts in the South-East Asia. Religion and Conflict. Moscow: Russian Political Encyclopedia. p266-283.
- Badmaev, V.N., Goryaev, A.T. (2005), Alternative models of world globalization or the “Buddhist sphinx”. Kalmykia Regional Branch of the Russian Philosophic Society Gerald, 2, 36-42.
- Beyer, P.F. (2004), Privatization and the public influence of religion in global society. Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology. Vol. 5. London, New York: Routledge. p71-90.
- Casanova, J. (2001), Religion, the new millennium and globalization. Sociology of Religion, 62(4), 415-441.
- Falk, R. (2004), The monotheistic religions in the era of globalization. Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology. Vol. 5. London, New York: Routledge. p425-437.
- Filatov, S. (2005), Religious life of Eurasia: Reaction on globalization, Religion and Globalization in Euro Asia Space. Moscow: Neostrom. p8-25.
- Hsin-Huang, M.H. (2004), Cultural globalization and localization in modern Taiwan. Many Faced Globalization. Moscow: Aspekt Press. p57-76.
- Kale, S.H. (2004), Spirituality, religion, and globalization. Journal of Macromarketing, 24(2), 92-107.
- Lechner, F.J. (2004), Religion, law and global order. Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology. Vol. 5. London, New York: Routledge. p91-106.
- Malashenko, A., Filatov, S. (2009), Religion and Globalization in Eurasia Space. Moscow: Neostrom. p343.
- Ostrovskaya, E.A. (2009), Russian Buddhist Non-State organizations: Perspectives of consensus. Philosophy in the dialog of cultures. Elista: Kalmykia State University Publishing House. p18-23.
- Radhakrishnan, P. (2004), Religion under globalization. Economic and Political Weekly, 39(13), 1403-1411.
- Robertson, R. (2004), Religion and the global field. Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology. Vol. 5. London, New York: Routledge. p145-160.
- Robertson, R., White, K.E. (2004), Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology. London: Routledge. p1-6.
- Starostin, B.S., Starostina, Y.P. (1998), Scientists of the West, East and Russia about the Buddhist civilization. Comparative study of civilizations. Moscow: Aspekt Press. p57-76.
- Stepanyants, M.T. (2007), The East in the dialog of cultures. Dialog of Civilizations as a Mission. Moscow: People’s Friendship University of Russia Publishing House. p133-149.
- Ulanov, M.C. (2009), “The median route”: Buddhist response on globalization challenges, people’s friendship University of Russia Gerald. Philosophy, 2, 44-51.
- Yu, L.S. (2008), Buddhism in the context of intercultural and interconfessional dialog. Russian Christ Humanitarian Academy Gerald, 1, 177-184.