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Theoretical Models of Buddhist Economy

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ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the description of sociological approaches to studying the Buddhist economy. The researches of Buddhism have not sufficiently studied institutes of economy of Buddhist communities, and methods and mechanisms of the resource provision of their needs. The researches of Buddhism study mainly its religious and philosophical, political, cultic aspects, while economic ones are almost not touched upon. Along with this, Buddhism fulfilled important economic functions. Some Western researchers devoted their works to studying them. They laid basis for the development of scientific directions of the Buddhist economy. It is possible to single out several theories in the history of sociology. Problems related to the impact of Buddhism on economic development were researched within their framework. The article is an attempt to reveal basic variables of the theoretic analysis of economy in Buddhist communities and to describe the economic functions of Buddhist institutions. As a result of the analysis, three theoretical models of Buddhist economy that had non-equivalent impact on the science and in some periods competed were described. The article considers works of the Marxist direction and their interpretation of the Buddhist impact on economy. The contribution of M. Weber in the development of the Buddhist sociology is stated. The concept of the "Buddhist economy" of E. Schumacher is described.

Keywords: Buddhism, Buddhist Economy, K. Marx, M. Weber, E. Schumacher, Buryatia

JEL Classifications: H76, R11, R58, Z12

1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is often considered as the religion that is the most oppositional in relation to economic activity in general, and goals declared by the market capitalistic economy. Along with this, Buddhism has been developing during two and a half millenniums. It shows that it was functionally adequate to the needs of the societies where it functioned. These societies happened to be economically efficient to an adequate degree to provide high level of social and functional differentiation where a considerable number of people was excluded from the directly material production, and more than that, held high positions in social stratification. These societies are characterized by

the development of comprehensive institutional forms of social church hierarchies, appearance of large monasteries, development of philosophical ideas, and creation of monuments related to material and spiritual culture that entered the world treasury. The researches devoted to Buddhism still do not pay enough attention to the economic institutes of Buddhist communities, methods and mechanisms of resource provision of their needs. Wide spreading of monasteries became one of the striking traits in regions where Tibetan Buddhism is extended. The largest monasteries became centers of not only religion but also management, trade, and craft. Monasteries are traditionally considered as "nurseries of Buddhist philosophical wisdom" and from the economic point of view the Marxist ideological

cliché about them as feudal and villeinage remnants is often mentioned. Along with this, societies of Tibet, Mongolia and Buryatia that are not the richest and most developed from today's point of view happened to be able to create the branchy network of large monastery universities on the basis of the agricultural economic structure based mainly on nomadic cattle breeding.

On the other hand, a lot of indicators of the development of Buddhist societies do not correspond to modern economic ideas. Moreover, in the 20th century all of them faced the urgent need in accelerated modernization that was carried out with different levels of successfulness. In the 20th century in the countries of Tibetan and Mongolian sociocultural model initially due to political reasons Buddhism lost its position of the dominating ideology and even happened to face the risk of disappearance. However, an important role of Buddhism and Buddhist sangha in political and economic transformations is characteristic of a number of countries of the South-Eastern Asia. Comparing Burma and Thailand in the 1959-1960s, D. Planner and J. Ingersoll show that monks are not directly connected with the production, means of production and economic roles. However, transferring Buddhist value orientations and cultural norms, the institute of monkery has an impact on the economic system and influences the lifestyle, and decisions related to the production and consumption, capital formation and investing (Starostin and Starostina, 1998).

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the article is to describe theoretical and sociological models of the interrelation of Buddhism and economy. This work is based on the analysis of the works aimed at the research of the social and economic role of Buddhism in the societies where it was traditionally extended. The object of the research includes works of the authors who made considerable contribution in the development of theoretic directions of the Buddhism sociology. The article is an attempt to reveal basic variables of theoretic analysis of the economy in Buddhist societies, and to describe economic functions of the Buddhism institutes. Before coming over to considering peculiarly sociological approaches, it is necessary to say some words about the methods of their arrangement. To a certain extent a great number of works makes it difficult to single out and generalize their methodological principles. Personological description is the simplest and often used solution. According to it, the positions of the most remarkable authors are enumerated within the narrow problem. Another classification is formed in accordance with the chronological principle based on the periodization of the development of scientific methodology. The allotment of researches according to the existing theoretic schools, directions or paradigms can be thought as the third classification. One more principle of classification is according to the basic problematics of the research, its adhesion to the topical area of any scientific discipline. It is possible to use these and other principles of structuring scientific material in applications to theoretic and methodological aspects of studying Buddhist clergy in the mixed variant. In our opinion, it will allow to describe them to the fullest degree.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Marxism and National Researches of the Buddhist Economy

Karl Marx did not leave any special works devoted to the analysis of various religious and historical phenomena or religion as an ideology as a whole. However, a lot of his works contain many statements, analytical thoughts, notes related to the essence of religion as a whole and the characteristic of specific religions or various stages of their development. Friedrich Engels was mainly involved in studying issues related to religion and its history. The works based on the Marxist methodology made a considerable contribution to the development of the scientific problematics of Buddhism. In Russia due to political and ideological reasons they mainly include the researches of the Soviet period. However, their directionality was determinately influenced by ideological focus on atheistic propaganda and criticism of religion as a fading phenomenon. Even now they are of great scientific theoretical and empiric importance. It is also necessary to note that Soviet researches paid great attention to the criticism of Western authors as "bourgeois" and "unscientific."

In the Marxist concept of social structure, religion is a product of specific and historical conditions of the development of social relations, the result of person's subtraction and development of the class exploitation system (Engels, 1955). It is considered as a backstop of exploitation classes in the antagonistic class society that consecrates the existing social order with religious ideology developed by it. V.I. Lenin wrote "in order to secure their domination, all and any depressing classes need two social functions: The one of the executioner and the one of the priest. The executioner must suppress the rebellion and indignation of the oppressed. The priest must clam the oppressed, show them perspectives (it is especially convenient to do it without guaranteeing them "the performance" of such perspectives...) of mitigating miseries and victims while securing the class domination, and thereby accommodate them with this domination, drive them off revolutionary actions, shatter their revolutionary spirit, break their revolutionary determination" (Lenin, 1961). The basic function of religion is illusory and compensational. It aims at releasing the conflict that arises as a result of the world duplication and the person's subtraction from the real world. Religion provides with the opportunity to overcome subtraction through the creation of the illusory imagined supernatural world where real social class relations are transformed in their imitation, and compensate for the person's disability to influence social relations subtracted from him.

Herewith, the religion structure is generally considered as a relevant social and class structure of the specific society. Changes within it are dictated by peculiarities of the production method and changes of the system of social and economic and political relations that was formed on its basis. The church and clergy are social institutes bound up with the political organization of the society and state that consecrates the formed system of class exploitation by using the whole powerful potential of influencing the populace.

While using this approach and taking into account that "...by the time Lamaism appeared, in Buryatia the process of destroying patriarchal and ancestral and forming feudal relations had taken place among Buryats..." (Ochirov, 1981). Above all, the Buddhist clergy is considered as ideologists who meet the objectively formed needs to rationalize and explain the complicating social and economic relations in the interests of dominating elements. In Buryatia "primary stages of Lamaism enactment in the new environment begin with political intentions of the dominating highest ranks. The union with the governance accelerates the formation of the church organization because the classes that dominate use Lamaism as an additional ideological tool to strengthen their social positions (Gerasimova, 1971). In class and economic terms Buddhism is adapted to the existing exploitation system and forms its own one that accentuates the dominating position of populace, including direct producers. Above all, the researches of social and economic role of Buddhism and Buddhist sangha paid attention to the concentration of power and ownership in hands of the top clergy that controls the activity of monasteries, and its closed relationship with the temporal power. Specific tributes were paid to Buddhist monasteries for the development of religious and philosophical science, culture and art. Herewith, extremely negative economic and demographic consequences and the heaviness of economic burden related to keeping monks excluded from material production were emphasized.

As a whole, researching the historical development of Buddhism and Buddhist clergy in the society of Buryatia, the works of the Soviet period contain its evaluation as a reactionary and exploitation social layer whose interests aim at exploiting populace through the production of specific forms of social management, and above all, through functioning of a specific social organization – church.

3.2. Sociology of Buddhism of M. Weber

Max Weber made a great contribution to studying the ethics of Buddhism and the system of Buddhist values. His work "Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism" devoted to studying the religion aimed at revealing the relation between changes of religious and ethical ideas and forms of economic activity. He regarded relations between the world and religion through the analysis of "types of behavior" that are formed in "the methodological lifestyle" and that "the attempt once made to rationalize the ideas about the world in the unified consistent system in the set direction originates immanent dialectics of the rationalization process" (Parsons, 2000). It is possible to describe economic behavior on the basis of the analysis of types of rationalization expressed in ethical ideas. Empirically in the construction of ideal types of social action the people's economic behavior as the most instrumentally rational corresponds to the purposeful rational type.

However, M. Weber acknowledges that no economic ethics was based exclusively on religious ideas. He thinks religion is one of the most important determinants of it. According to Weber, Buddhism was popularized by traveling begging monks who went in for meditation and refused the world. Only Buddhist monks "belonged to the community in the real sense of the world; all the rest were inferior laypeople in the religious respect: Objects but not subjects of religionism" (Weber, 1994).

Religious elements of the action are related to the person's attitudes to supernatural substances, and the interest to religion is defined by directions of types of activity, people's goals they hope to achieve through these actions. On the "primitive" level religious actions remain more or less integrated series of actions aiming at realizing practical interests. The world of supernatural substances itself is not integrated in the completed rationalized system. Religious non-admission of the world is presented as a rationally constructed opposition of ideal types of "asceticism" – "mysticism". It is the basis of the scheme of four types of behavior. Asceticism is "activity that is acceptable before God as the God's instrument," while mysticism is "meditative possession of redemption... where it does not go about acting but possessing, and where the person is not an instrument but a vessel of the God's will" (Weber, 1990). The opposition of asceticism and mysticism can become radical when active asceticism in the form of lay asceticism is expressed in the lay life and transforms it rationally with the aid of a lay profession in order to suppress the manmade and godless. In its turn mysticism as a mediation that avoids lay life eventually "leaves" the lay. On the other hand, this opposition can be mitigated if in its external behavior active asceticism in the form of asceticism avoiding the lay moves closer to the mediation that avoids the lay, is limited in inhibition and overcoming of all befall in itself, and that's why focusing on active godly methods of redemption and coming to the refusal from any activity in the lay. The opposition is also mitigated if within the lay mysticism the mediating mystic does not make a final conclusion about the necessity to leave the lay life and stays in the lay like the lay ascetic.

Weber states that "those types of behavior that were formed in the methodological lifestyle created the foetus of both asceticism and mystics, and overgrew from magic ideas" (Weber, 1990). Herewith, according to Weber, historically it is more important that they should be applied not only to prevent evil spells but also to awaken charismatic traits.

However, herewith, Weber notices that the benefits promised by Buddhism to godly laypeople must not be understood only or even primary as "the ones of the other world." These benefits bear the character of this world: They come down to health, longevity and wealth. Only virtuoso of religious belief – ascetic and monk – strived for achieving the lay benefits. However, even in this case "it was important for those who searched for the redemption to feel the sensation of this world". For Buddhism this is that acosmic feeling of love of the Buddhist monk who is sure that he will immerse himself in the nirvana (Weber, 1990).

3.3. M. Weber and Development of Buddhist Sociology

The Weber's sociology of religion continues its considerable influence on contemporary Buddhist studies (Gellner, 2008). Among the authors who are involved in sociologic study of Buddhism, "there are no such authors who would remain different to its theoretical heritage and would try to again reconsider and assess its thesis according to new empirical information and today's problems of modernizing Asian communities" (Starostin and Starostina, 1985).

To a certain degree M. Weber's works in the area of studying economy and religion polemically aimed against Marxist definitions. However, as a whole, for M. Weber like for K. Marx religion is a variable social phenomenon of historical conditions of the society development. He thinks rationalization to be the most important process of the development of economic activity and society, as a whole (Weber, 1994). In the Russian science the competition of the Marxist and Weber's paradigms in studying Buddhism revealed as criticisms of Western works by Soviet researchers of Buddhism of the South-Eastern Asia. In the Russian science Yu.P. Starostina and B.S. Starostin were among the first researchers who studied the influence of M. Weber on studying Buddhism and development of "Weber's" and "anti-Weber's" approaches in Buddhism studies. They specify that a number of authors strive for confirming the basic thesis of M. Weber about irrationalism of Buddhism, its animosity to the spirit of capitalism, and social and economic progress as a whole with new facts and considerations. Another group of researchers think that in his assessments of the impact of Buddhism on economy M. Weber considerably relied on the theoretic approach. It resulted in wrong conclusions about the negativity of such impact. They claim that this religion can both directly and indirectly contribute to the modernization and thus fulfill constructive, social and progressive functions.

To a large extent the integrative structural and functional general theory of social action of T. Parson was created on the basis of M. Weber's works. In his analytical scheme religion is one the most important mechanisms of producing value-conscious samples and securing social solidarity, at least at early stages of the development of non-modernized societies (Parsons, 1997). In their turn T. Parsons's works had a considerable impact on the history of the world sociology of the 20th century as a whole, and on the post-Soviet Russian Buddhist researches.

3.4. Buddhist Economy of E.F. Schumacher

The model of the "Buddhist economy" offered by the English economist and sociologist of the German origin Ernest Friedrich Schumacher can give the clearest vision of the "anti-Weber" approach (Schumacher, 2007). At the present time the theory of "new economy" of E.F. Schumacher has a considerable impact in many countries (Changkhwanyuen, 2004; Zsolnai, 2011). In his works he strictly criticized inefficiency of the existing economic model and offered a specific way to modernize it as the "green economy" concept that is becoming more and more popular.

In his concept E.F. Schumacher opposes the Western economic tradition and Buddhist ethnic principles. The lifestyle in Buddhist countries requires the relevant "Buddhist economy" in the same way as the Western materialistic mode of thinking and life requires economic science. Resting on Buddhist principles, production and consumption are more rational and efficient than the Western ones, because they are based on simplicity and non-violence. With regard to economy, "the Buddhist lifestyle is amazingly wise: The most modest means are enough to achieve full welfare" (Schumacher, 2007). That's because the Buddhist economy tries to meet to the maximum extent the needs by optimal consumption, while the Western science focuses on the maximum consumption

with the aid of optimal production. The Buddhist ethics is an important alternative both for the local level of production and for the world economy for "people who live in small settlements with subsistence economy are less inclined to get involved in wars and revolutions than those whose survival depends on the availability of resources from another part of the world" (Schumacher, 2007).

E. Schumacher states that the impact of Buddhist values on the lifestyle, forms of the economic activity and consumption stands for the creation of "intermediary economy" and "intermediary technology." That's why it must be studied and advertised in the developing countries in every possible way. As there is a notion of Buddhist lifestyle, there must be also a notion of "Buddhist economy" that differs from other economic systems. According to Schumacher, the sense of civilization is not in increasing the needs but in the person's lavation itself. Thus, his creative activity as such becomes higher than the production and consumption that are not a goal in and of itself.

4. DISCUSSION

The Russian researches of Buddhism study mainly its religious and philosophical, political and cultic aspects, while economic ones are almost not touched upon. Along with this, Buddhism fulfilled important economic functions, and a number of Western researchers devoted their works to studying them. They laid the basis for the development of scientific directions of the Buddhist economy.

There are several traditions of the ideologic interpretation of the economy within the field of Buddhism itself. In the most common sense the ideas of Buddhism express value and normative soteriologic mindset to the redemption that must be an orientation for social practice in all of its aspects. According to abhidharma, any society's development including economic is interpreted as regressive in virtue of the decay of Dharma. Almost all directions of Buddhism are characterized by the division of the religious community to monks and laypeople. It is regulatory secured in the system of disciplinary oaths of Vinaya and state regulations focusing on the Buddhist ideas. Monkery is excluded from material production, but it is involved in spiritual production. Being guided by Buddhist ethics, Buddhist laypeople are involved in real economy and provide the monks' community with resources. Economic interrelation of the laity giving alms and the clergy is an offering act that was the most important resource for sangha especially at the early stages of its development (Ganskiy, 2011). The offering act for the layman is a form of virtuous action – merit, and receipt of virtuous karma through the practice of dana offering. Herewith, the sangha offering was considered as a source of the greatest benefit. In some periods believers' alms reach rather considerable sizes and allow to provide the monkery community with the needs, and construct cultic facilities. Herewith, in a number of cases it is criticized (Natsov, 1998).

In the real practice Buddhist communities often have to search for the methods to adapt to changing social, economic, and political conditions. So, as long ago as at the 20th century after the creation of the Soviet state, representatives of the Buryat

Buddhist renovating movement developed the ideas about the affinity of the communism and Buddhism on the basis of common non-perception of ownership, exploitation, and achievement of social justice. They made attempts on reforming monasteries with the communalization of the property and creation of agricultural communes (Badmatsyrenov, 2012).

Contemporary processes of economic changes in Mongolia and Buryatia are often a subject of discussions of Buddhist clergy's and activists' representatives. Today's Buddhist clergy of Buryatia represented by Pandito Hambo-Lama D. Ayusheev offers its own view on the role of Buddhism and Buddhist clergy in the economic and social development of the region on the basis of the national culture rise, revival of traditional forms of economic activity and nature use, livestock of indigenous cattle breeds (Badmatsyrenov, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, theoretical models of Buddhism can be described by singling out three approaches that differently interpret the impact of Buddhism on economy. Representatives of Marxism consider religion as the reflection of the person's weakness to the nature that results in forming early forms of religious life. As soon as the society is complicated and classes appear, the religion is developed as a class phenomenon that in the ideologic sense reflects the person's practical disability to change production and social relations that are distracted from him. The Buddhist ideas that arouse under the conditions of conflict in the ancient Indian society fundamentally oppose the real world of class contradictions to the supernatural world. Buddhism as a historical phenomenon is considered through the description of specific historical forms of the society existence that are based on economic production and class relations. The development of Buddhism as an institutionally organized religious system was interpreted as a result of class and exploitative in their nature relations. In the economic system of Buddhism the most important role was ascribed to noneconomic methods of exploitation and concentration of resources in monasteries.

Max Weber's ideas had a considerable influence on the development of sociological images of Buddhism. According to M. Weber, the economic ethics of Buddhism subordinates the daily life to the redemption ideas. M. Weber explained the differences in the development of the West and East by peculiarities of cultural and above all religious values. Unlike the West due to their specificity and strangle of magic and mystic, all religious systems that exist in the East happened to be unable to rationalize the way of life of the individual himself. Almost all soteriological teachings of Asia including Buddhism are comprehended only by inhabitants of monasteries – educated monks, but not by laity. According to Weber, these teachings were based on the prerequisite that “the knowledge whether they are taken from written resources or mystic gnosis is finally the only absolute way to the top of holiness both in this and another worlds” (Weber, 1958). Teaching such knowledge does not contribute to using empiric science, and does not lead it to the rational affirmation in people's consciousness as main values of the nature and person being as it was in the West.

Ernst Friedrich Schumacher introduced the term “Buddhist economy”. This is a set of economic principles that are partially based on Buddhist ideas. Buddhist lifestyle is based on the Buddhist ideas of minimizing consumption and production aiming at the meeting of “real” needs of people.

In addition to theoretic analysis, the research of the impact of Buddhist ideas on economic relations and evolution of “Buddhist economy” must be based on the empiric study of real economic processes. Buddhism as the most powerful ideologic system contains a considerable component of economic ideas whose study is rather urgent nowadays. Besides, economic functions of institutions and practices that organize Buddhist communities are yet little researched.

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