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**THE MODERNIZATION OF BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION: ADAPTATION STRATEGIES**

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Abstract

This article examines the main directions of the transformation of religious Buddhist education, reflecting both the need to adapt to the new, globally determined sociocultural conditions prevailing in the countries (regions) of the traditional spread of Tibetan Buddhism, and the desire of Buddhist communities to actively participate in intercultural and interfaith cooperation, finding ways to effectively integrate the mechanisms of traditional and modern society into a national-state and world educational space. The thesis is substantiated that the modernization of Buddhist religious education in the modern world is focused on the constructive adaptation of tradition, with the imperative of mutual understanding of the representatives of various cultures. An analysis is given of reactive and proactive adaptation strategies for the modernization of Buddhist education aimed at responsively adapting the language, technology, and social practices of the global world in order to preserve the traditional principles of individual and social self-organization in new sociocultural conditions. The article was composed on the basis of field studies conducted in the last decade of educational institutions of Tibetan Buddhism in China, Mongolia, Nepal, India and Russia, as well as educational programs of Tibetan Buddhist centers in the West.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of studying the experience of modernization in Buddhist traditional education is based on its inclusion in multidirectional sociocultural processes of the modern world, in which, along with globalization projects, the desire to restore destroyed life forms, educational structures, cultural succession, and the revival of national and ethnocultural traditions are manifested. This carries both the potential for conflict and prospects for mutually enriching cooperation of social subjects involved. In particular, the practical relevance of the study of religious education for Russia is determined by the far from complete search for models of a national-state educational system that is inclusive of its multi-ethnic and multi-religious diversity. Departing from binary destructive oppositions such as "religion and science" and "religious and secular," the search for pragmatic solutions to provide continuous education, academic mobility and conversion of diplomas has been expressed in the approval of a state standard and ongoing development of educational programs in "Theology" (Buddhist module) for universities and "Fundamentals of Buddhist Culture" for middle schools. These solutions require a theoretical analysis of the possibility of combining pedagogical ideas, educational structures, subject content, and educational technologies of traditional Buddhist and contemporary non-denominational religious studies.

2. Problem Statement

The specificity of Buddhist culture is manifested in the accentuated attention to education and upbringing as well as the purposeful formation of personality in order to align with certain moral, religious, philosophical and socio-psychological norms and criteria developed in Buddhist culture.

The system of religious education in Buddhist cultures became a sustained tradition that has developed stable organizational forms, special techniques and highly formalized methods of influencing a person that can serve as the subject of focused study and adaptation.

Currently, traditional Buddhist education, rooted in the cultural and historical traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, represented in Russia (Buryatia, Kalmykia, Tyva), Tibet and Mongolia, is forced to simultaneously address the issues of restoring traditional institutions and personnel after the destruction caused by the revolutionary transformations of the 20th century and defining long-term strategies for their development in postmodern societies. This is occurring not only in the West, where Buddhism is being institutionalized in a new cultural environment but also in regions of the traditional spread of Buddhism, where it must fit into the cultural and educational spaces of modern states in the context of globalization.

3. Research Questions

The study poses the following questions. What is the experience of the modernization of traditional Buddhist education in the countries (regions) of the traditional spread of Tibetan Buddhism? How do faith-based religious education and the academic study of religion interrelate in the modern "post-secular" world? What issues are addressed in the process of the transformation of religious Buddhist education? What are the main adaptation strategies of traditional Buddhist education and its resources in the global multicultural world?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify the main directions of the modernization of traditional Buddhist education in the national-state cultural and educational spaces under the influence of globalization. The hypothesis of the study is that the preservation of the pedagogical capacity, subject content, and educational technologies of traditional Buddhist education is being achieved by the development of a range of reactive and proactive adaptation strategies. The imperative of development affects all educational systems of the multicultural world. The issues of modernization of education that face different stakeholders are in many ways similar. Addressing these issues can help promote productive dialogue.

5. Research Methods

The article was composed on the basis of field studies conducted in the last decade of the educational systems of Tibetan Buddhism in Russia, China, Mongolia, Nepal and India. These studies used the methods of participant observation, expert interviews, ethnographic descriptions, and document analysis. To interpret the data obtained, a comparative historical method, structural-functional approach and typological analysis were used.

6. Findings

The transformation of religious education is included in the multidirectional processes of modernization of national-state education systems in the context of globalization. In post-socialist countries, including Russia, these processes are closely associated with the revival of national and ethno-cultural traditions after the fall of the communist (atheist) ideology and the emergence of the opportunity in the "new Russia" to freely practice religion.

6.1. Restoring traditional education that operates in the context of national-state structures

Russia: Since the beginning of the 20th century, Buddhist teaching was the subject of academic research and comparison with European philosophical-religious systems, which called forth reflection on its content by Buddhists who received a university education B. Baradin, T. Jamsarano. Changes in civic life in the pre-revolutionary years gave rise to reform projects in Buddhism; and the revolution made them urgently relevant because in the new Russia, there was a radical breakdown of traditional social foundations. The existence of the Buddhist church in its old organizational forms became impossible. Renewal projects, which were widely discussed at that time, also related to the modernization of the Buddhist education system, as the anti-religious policy of the Soviet government, which banned spiritual education for people under 18, made it almost impossible to keep it in its traditional form. The fate of Buddhist education became an important point of complex negotiations on the future organization of the church, which A. Dorzhiev led with the Soviet government. However, after the destruction of the Buddhist church in the 1930s, the projects of change in the system of Buddhist education lost their relevance (Nesterkin, 2017).

The issue of organizing Buddhist education in its new cultural conditions appeared again when in the newly opened Buddhist monasteries of Buryatia and Mongolia it became necessary to train young clergy (Bazarov et al., 2017, p. 274). For these purposes, a religious educational institution was established in Ulan Bator according to the standard of a secular higher educational institution within the framework of a five-year program of specialization. The study of philosophical and religious doctrine was based on knowledge of the "The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment" by Tsongkhapa, and tantra – with the *sadhana* of Vajrabhairava. The knowledge they gained from the program allowed graduates to fulfill religious demands of worshippers in a qualified manner and made it possible to continue their education under the guidance of an experienced lama. They also studied the disciplines required for higher education institutions that have state accreditation (Vanchikova & Chimitdorzhin, 2006, p. 56). This experience was later adopted in Buryatia, when at the monasteries of Ivolginsk, in 1991, and Aginsk, in 1993, Buddhist educational institutions with faculties of Buddhist philosophy were founded.

Initially, the course of study in both was five years, and this resolved the issue of training clergy who know the basics of Buddhist philosophy and can perform the rituals conducted in the Geluk School. The five-year program at the Aginsk Buddhist Academy has survived to the present. After four years of studying theory during the year, students undergo practical training in ministry, after which they can work as a lama in a *datsan* (monastery) or continue their education – for example, in Buddhist monastic universities in India.

In the Dashi Choinkhorlin Buddhist University, after the return of lamas who were trained at the Goman Faculty of Philosophy at the Gumbum Monastery (in India), they transitioned to the traditional program of this faculty. The term of study increased to eight years, and the curriculum corresponds to the first eight years of study at the Goman Faculty. The subjects include eristics (*duira*), the study of a logical reasoning and its properties (*dagrig*), the study of consciousness and mental processes (*lorig*), and the first three courses of study of the soteriology (*parchin*), as well as the Tibetan language (classical and colloquial), Old Mongolian script, English, and the rules of conducting rituals. A significant amount of texts is memorized. Anyone can continue their education at the Goman Faculty of the Drepung Monastery in India.

In 1998, the Tantra Faculty was opened at the Buddhist University, in which the training is conducted according to the program of the Tibetan monastery of Gyuto. One can enroll after completing two years of study at the Philosophy Faculty and complete a six-year program.

In addition to religious subjects proper, the applied disciplines traditionally included in Buddhist education are studied: iconography (the Iconography Faculty at the Buddhist University was opened in 1999) and medicine (at the Aginsk Academy, the School of Tibetan Medicine was opened in 1993). An important feature of medical education at the Academy is the combination of high standards of traditional education (in 1994, the School of Tibetan Medicine was recognized as a branch of the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute (Dharamsala, India) with Western medical education. All students of the Medical Faculty of the Academy may receive a Western standard medical education in a medical college.

At present, the process of preparing for the accreditation of professional religious education institutions (spiritual educational institutions) is actively occurring in Russia. At the same time, professional education in the specialty of "Theology" is carried out in secular higher educational institutions in

accordance with federal educational standards. In addition, Buddhism is studied in schools in the relevant module of the discipline "Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" (Sablin 2018).

New opportunities for receiving an education at religious educational institutions in accordance with the state standard are appearing as the digital educational environment and the online education system are being created. The quality, issues, and prospects of this form of education have already become the subject of analysis (Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin, & Anosova, 2017; Almazova, Andreeva & Khalyapina, 2018; Fersman, Zemlinskaya & Novak-Kalyayeva, 2017; Glukhov, & Vasetskaya, 2018; Pogodin, & Li, 2017).

China: The process of restoring and developing the educational system of the monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism in China began later than those in Russia, Mongolia, and India. We investigated this in a series of expeditions around Inner Mongolia and Amdo in 2013.

At present, considerable funds, both from the state and local community, are being raised to restore the Buddhist educational system in Inner Mongolia and in areas inhabited by Mongols. One of the main problems is the lack of qualified clergy.

In local monasteries of Inner Mongolia, only about a third of clergy have full religious education. These monasteries provide primary spiritual education, and in general the students then go to the educational monasteries of the Amdo region or to the Beijing Yonghegong Monastery. What significantly reduces the possibility of obtaining in-depth monastic education is the increasingly common institution of married lamas.

The Yonghegong Monastery, previously a court monastery of the Chinese emperors, currently plays an important role in the Buddhist education system. Its main task is to train Mongolian lamas for teaching in the monasteries of Inner Mongolia. A prerequisite for admission is a nine-year general school education and knowledge of the Mongolian and Chinese languages. Of its 110 inhabitants, only 11 are Tibetans, who have the role of teachers; the rest are Mongols. The duration of study is not established, as students graduate based their mastery of the course material. In the monastery, from the set of five basic philosophical disciplines, only the courses of epistemology (Tib. *tshad ma*) and soteriology (Tib. *phar phyin*), as well as the Lamrim and the basics of Tantra, are studied. Then the students can continue their education in large monasteries, usually in the province of Amdo at Gumbum or Labrang. There, students take an exam for the religious educational degree "Geshe."

In addition to traditional ties (most of the Mongolian and Buryat students received their education these monasteries), the choice of a place to complete education is traditionally determined by the relatively greater loyalty of the monasteries of the region to central authority. In return, the authorities allow relatively extensive religious freedom – for example, in some monasteries on the altar you can see portraits of the 14th Dalai Lama, which is unthinkable in Central Tibet.

The Institute of Buddhism became a new phenomenon under the leadership of the Panchen Lama, founded in 1987. It accepts lamas who already have a Geshe degree and hold (or aspire to hold) leadership positions in the Buddhist *sangha*. Training lasts two years, and the program contains, in addition to specialized disciplines, social and ideologically oriented disciplines, the mastery of which allows representatives of the Buddhist elite to fit into the modern state and ideological system of the PRC. Having completed the training, graduates have the equivalent status of a Ph.D., which gives them the possibility of

participating in academic life. The leadership of the institute is entrusted to a Buddhist hierarch appointed by the Chinese government, which ensures its complete control and loyalty (Garri, 2016).

Thus, by allocating substantial funds for the restoration of the Buddhist church and its educational institutions, the Chinese government is seeking to maintain leverage on the Buddhist Sangha through the education of a politically loyal Buddhist elite (Yangutov, 2016, pp. 318–319). The adaptation strategy here is implemented by strengthening the pro-state “protective” ideological component of the educational process (Li, Lu, & Yang, 2018).

6.2. Interrelation of faith-based religious education and the academic study of religion in the modern “post-secular” world

Without attempting to make normative judgments, let us turn to the experience of modernizing Buddhist religious education in religious and secular educational institutions of the countries (regions) of the traditional spread of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as Western Dharma centers. Here we find various adaptation strategies that are flexible in accordance with specific conditions. They are distinguished by their proactive nature, which is expressed by their readiness to discuss the achievements of modern science and civil society within the framework of religious education (Townsend, 2016), and to widely use digital technologies in educational programs.

Below are highlighted several forms in which the adaptation of the Buddhist educational process to the realities of the modern world is taking place.

Expansion of subject content while preserving the forms and methods of traditional education.

At the University of the Mindrolling Monastery in the Nyingma tradition (Dehradun, India), the Karma Kagyu Institute (in Sarnath, India), the universities in the Sakya tradition in India (Dehradun) and Nepal (Kathmandu), traditional philosophical education was reconstituted by highly qualified teachers from the Buddhist intellectual elite that left Tibet, and language courses (English, Hindi, Nepali) were added. The Geluk monasteries took this direction further. According to a policy decision made at a meeting of the abbots of the main monasteries of the Geluk School, monks studying in the last four years of the main monastic program and the first two years of training for the degree of Geshe-Lharampa (corresponding to a Ph.D. degree) must study modern scientific disciplines.

Teaching a set of traditional disciplines in accordance with the standards of secular university education. This kind of course of study that accords with the Bologna standards was first developed at the Central Tibetan University (Sarnath, India). The university was established by the order of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964 as an educational institution for the Himalayan peoples of India. There, Tibetan refugees could study their culture in a secular format. It initially operated as part of the Sanskrit University Sampurnanand (Varanasi), under whose jurisdiction academic exams and the awarding of scientific degrees were conducted until the 1990s (Rinchinov, 2018, p. 230). At that time there were three faculties: religious studies (Hetu and Adhyatma Vidya), linguistics (Shabda Vidya) and social sciences (Adhunika Vidya) (“Golden Jubilee”, 2018, p. 30).

A full course of study is nine years (four years of higher secondary education, including a number of special disciplines without which a bachelor’s program is impossible; three years of undergraduate; two years of master’s programs; and a doctoral program that corresponds to a Ph.D. degree). Philosophical

education is differentiated in the traditions of four schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Geluk) and the Tibetan indigenous tradition of Bön. Its full course includes four traditional subjects – epistemology (Tib. *tshad ma*), soteriology (Tib. *phar phyin*), Middle Way philosophy (Tib. *dbu ma*) and phenomenology (Tib. *chos mngon pa*), albeit with much less content than in religious institutions. Monastic discipline (Tib. *'dul ba*) is not studied, since not all university students are monks. Teaching is conducted in a lecture manner, in contrast to traditional religious education, where disputation is widely used (especially in Geluk monasteries).

Currently, training is conducted in the faculties of medicine, astrology and art. Along with special disciplines, subjects that are included in the Indian state educational standard are taught: history, economics, political science, literature, etc. ("Central Institute...", 2016).

Education at the university is correlated with the traditional: after receiving a doctoral degree, students can go on to a religious educational institution to prepare for a degree by traditional standards; and having a university diploma significantly reduces the time required for this training. Conversely, holders of a religious degree can continue their education in a master's degree program of the university, bypassing the undergraduate degree. This allows for the opportunity to pursue an academic career.

This model turned out to be quite successful, and a university with this kind of program was founded at the initiative of the main lama of Ladakh, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, in the capital, Leh.

The model is closer to the standards of Oriental studies than to traditional religious education standards. For example, at the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford, one can major in Buddhist Studies; and in Varanasi, a specialization program in Buddhist texts was started even in such a conservative center of Hinduism as the Sanskrit University.

6.3. Responsiveness of Buddhist education to social trends of modern society

The 14th Dalai Lama proposed to abolish gender discrimination in the field of religious education and to create opportunities for women to complete a full course of study with the awarding of a "Geshma" degree corresponding to that given to men.

The Engaged Buddhism movement, which arose in Asian Buddhist organizations with branches in the West, later became supported by Western communities and educational centers themselves. Thus, at Naropa University (Colorado, USA), affiliated with the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages, a specialization in this subject was created.

Buddhist leaders demonstrate openness to dialogue on a wide range of social and humanitarian issues (Ayusheeva, 2015). Thus, the meetings of the 14th Dalai Lama with scientists have become a tradition. In recent years, a similar dialogue has begun with Russian scientists.

Another characteristic of the modern presentation of Buddhist teachings is the accent on its rational aspects and distancing from the religious-mystical ones: Buddhism is an experimental science of the mind and not a religion. Such an interpretation has its foundation in the Buddhist educational tradition itself, based on a solid theoretical and methodological base of anthropology and psychology.

Deeply differentiated ideas about the cognitive and psychodynamic characteristics of personal development underlie the educational structure and teaching technologies of Buddhist education. It is for

good reason that many researchers of education reference the pedagogical capacities of Buddhism (Dreamson, 2018).

Buddhist educational experience is in demand in discussions about raising awareness in scientific education (Powietrzynska, Tobin, & Alexakos, 2015) and about the fruitfulness of using the “practice of self-with-other” to enlarge a teacher’s relational capacity (Chang & Bai, 2016). Researchers propose rethinking modern educational practices that are inevitably associated with changes and uncertainty. The idea is to orient them towards the competencies developed in Buddhist education: “negative capability” and the sensibility to uncertainty that this entails (Todd, 2015). Buddhist education is being explored as a plausible theory of education of the emotions and more (Morgan, 2015).

Constructive adaptation of one's own educational tradition allows one to build a dialogue with representatives of other cultures. The content of Buddhist teachings can increasingly become the subject of non-religiously motivated research and pragmatic interest as well.

7. Conclusion

Faith-based religious education led by clergy, ensuring the propagation of religious institutions and their personnel in new sociocultural conditions, is closely connected with the academic study of religion in the educational space of civil society. The modernization of traditional Buddhist education in the countries (regions) of the traditional spread of Tibetan Buddhism, is being carried out in historically distinct conditions in the context of reformed national educational systems. It is addressing a number of issues: restoring destroyed traditional Buddhist education, strengthening the position of the Buddhist church in their cooperation with government and other institutions of modern societies, and increasing the attractiveness (prestige) of religious Buddhist education.

The preservation and development of the pedagogical capacity, content, methods, and technologies of traditional Buddhist education is being implemented through a spectrum of reactive and proactive adaptation strategies: changing the forms of the educational process and its substantive content, ensuring the convertibility of diplomas and academic mobility, strengthening the ideological protective component in relation to government, offering programs of continuing education, inclusion in religious education of subjects reflecting the achievements of modern science and civil society, the use of digital technologies in education, structural adaptation of Buddhist educational traditions, and the emphasis on elements that have a non-denominational universal significance.

The diversity and flexibility of adaptation strategies presented in the wide variety of forms of Buddhist education make it possible to preserve its traditional content in a globalizing world, ensure its attractiveness beyond religious boundaries, strengthen its position at the ethnocultural, national-state and global levels, and participate in intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

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