

BURYAT TRADITIONAL BUDDHISM IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 21st century, the traditional Buryat sangha faces a new challenge, which is connected to processes of increasing globalization that concern all the greater territories of Russia. This paper examines Buryat Buddhism in the light of a variety of global tendencies that are characteristic of contemporary religious processes. How does Buddhism in the form of the traditional Buryat sangha react to its entry into the 'condition of globality'? The author argues that, as a reaction to globalization, Buddhism supports the formation of a 'glocal' religio-cultural meta-narrative that is easy to understand, transparent for the whole populace of the Buryat Republic, and thus provides a structure for its poly-ethnic community. Simultaneously, the logic of the development of Buryat Buddhism allows the conclusion that its embedment in global trends of religiousness is more likely to be a consequence of necessity, characterized by protective adaptation, than of a progressive developmental strategy of the Buddhist Sangha.

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Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, Buryat Buddhism faces a new challenge, which is connected to processes of increasing globalization. Vast territories of Russia are slowly, albeit interruptedly, concerned by these processes. By spreading norms and values, globalization affects ideologies and social relations, of which religious beliefs are an integral part. As globalization can thus pose a threat for religious beliefs, they have to find adequate responses to these circumstances in order to secure their existence in society.

This paper aims to examine some global tendencies regarding contemporary religious processes to Buryat Buddhism. Globalization alters and transforms the social position of traditional institutions that are based on religious values. What are these changes? How does Buryat Buddhism react to its entering into 'the state of the global'? What is its local response to this new situation? These questions can hardly be answered if we do not take the important conditions that influence the contemporary religious processes into consideration as well. This is why the socio-cultural context in which the development of the Buddhist religion in Buryatia takes place will also be examined here.

The analysis of the interrelations between global and local religious processes and processes of globalization regarding Buryat Buddhism will be focused on the Buryat Traditional Sangha of Russia (BTSR) out of two reasons: Firstly, this Buddhist community is the biggest and most influential in Buryatia; and the processes that take place in it define the picture of Buddhism in the country and take effect on the 'script' of the long-term development of Buryat Buddhism. Secondly, assumedly, only the Sangha is perceived as the legitimate carrier and keeper of Buryat traditional religion. The Sangha owes this unique status in many respects to its history (the present BTSR is the straight successor of the Central Spiritual Management of

Buddhists of the USSR (CSMB USSR)) and its leading role in the Buryat national revival of the post-Soviet period.

Before one can search for answers to the questions formulated above, it is necessary to allocate and briefly characterize the basic features inherent in the general religiousness and in the mutual relations of religious organizations and society. It is possible to maintain that the development of globalization rendered the following aspects the most significant and discernible regarding the sphere of religion:

- An increasing value in public discourses for religious communities and an increasing importance of the social role of religion: Being exposed to significant changes, religious institutions actively participate in social practices, and religion becomes an important and demanded resource of comprehension to understand political and social life.

- A transformation of political and human rights principles into religious principles: Religion becomes a kind of spiritual keeper of democracy and civil freedom in society and the state. It ensures the ongoing support of the authorities by criticizing them from an ethical perspective that is perceived as legitimate. Of particular concern here are moral values and justice, both interpreted not only in a religious, but also in a liberal-democratic context.

- A diversification of religiousness: This is a result of the ‘free market’ of religions, which dissolve traditional denominational, political, and cultural boundaries. This phenomenon leads to a ‘de-territorialization’ and ‘de-ethnification’ of religion as it promotes the weakening of historically and culturally grown relations between ethno-cultural groups and traditional religions as well as the strengthening of the role of individual choice regarding religious orientation.

These processes and phenomena can be situated in the context of an increasing value of religion. However, the intensity and direction of religious development in a modern society raise the question of the precise character of the impact the new ‘global religiousness’ might have—will it lead to a ‘religionization’ of society, or rather, to some kind of secularization of religion?

Context: Religious syncretism among the population and the plasticity of the Buddhist doctrine

It is obvious that global trends regarding religiousness acquire regional specifics in a local context. In Buryatia, these specifics are determined by the interaction of two factors: On the one hand, the religiousness of the local population is coloured with deeply rooted religious syncretism; on the other hand, the Buddhist religious tradition itself possesses many adaptive abilities.

Even without referring to historical and ethnographic details, one can confidently say that cultural-religious syncretism is an important socio-cultural characteristic feature of the Buryat Republic. The long coexistence of Buryats and Russians and, related to this, the processes of interaction between three religious traditions at once—Buddhism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Shamanism—did not result in the total dissolution of ethnic, religious, and social boundaries between the dominant ethnic groups, but rendered possible a rather wide range of cultural phenomena that have become a common heritage of the whole population of the Republic. This also concerns religious values independent of ethno-denominational self-identification. A Buddhist lama describes the situation in the following words: “Buryats visit churches, and Russians visit datsans. Probably, we trust each other. The Buddhists have no term corresponding

to ‘missionary’, and people of all denominations come to us, which means that here they find something valuable to them” (Alsuev, 2007: 16).

A certain pluralism, or even: eclecticism, of religious worldviews is widely spread on both the communal and individual level and combines elements that have no logical and genealogical connection and have been borrowed from the different traditional religions. Good illustrations for this can be found in the local mass media. For example, one of the most popular newspapers wrote: “Dashi-Dorzho Itigelov died in 1927 meditating in the lotus pose and reciting a prayer for his posthumous peace” (Buddisty Rossii, 2009). While the phrase “meditating in the lotus pose” indisputably refers to the Buddhist tradition, the phrase “reciting a prayer for his posthumous peace” (za upokoy) points to the simultaneous presence of Russian Orthodoxy. And neither readers nor journalists care about ‘conceptual’ inconsistencies such as these.

The policy of multiculturalism promoted by the authorities serves the strengthening of cultural syncretism. For example, the joint celebration of Sagaalga (“White Month”, the Buryat New Year) and Maslenitsa (“Butter Week”, a Russian carnevalesque religious and folk holiday preceding Lent), practised in Ulan-Ude in recent years, can be regarded as a newly invented tradition (Hobsbawm, 2003: 1–14) primarily ‘invented’ to propagate interethnic tolerance and, simultaneously, to reinforce the image of a versatile (ethno-)religious space in the Republic. The regularity of these joint celebrations that have taken place annually since 2007 and their contents (the ethnographic abundance of the events that constitute the festival) account for their successful entry into the common socio-cultural space. As such, it is in this sense being ‘naturalized’ and turning into an integral part of the civil culture that is concomitantly connected to the cultural traditions of regional ethnic groups. In other words, the festival proper has the qualities and functions of a stable institutional mechanism that is used in the ontologizing process of a united syncretistic religious environment.

Notwithstanding, this ‘mixed culture’ also includes numerous Buddhist elements. In the Buryat socio-cultural space, amorphous mass-cultural phenomena that are more or less connected to Buddhist topics can easily be distinguished. These topics also exist in modern literature, in pieces of art, and in socio-cultural practices like paramedical psychotherapy and healing, popular astrological prognosis, design, religious tourism, and in some aspects of youth subculture.

As for the adaptive abilities of Buddhism, it is necessary to note the following: In the different historical stages of its existence in Buryatia, Buddhism managed to adapt to the wider socio-political and ideological context of the specific epoch. Since the very beginning of its arrival in Buryatia, Buddhism has actively acquired, mastered, and adapted the local shamanist cults for its needs. A good example of the adaptive abilities of Buddhism is the Innovation Movement of the 1920–30s, when the religious leaders of Buryat Buddhism tried to reconcile the philosophy of Buddhism with the Marxist-Leninist ideology of socialism. Buddhism also successfully utilized the period of post-Soviet ethnic mobilization since the 1990s, marked by the search for a national, cultural, and religious identity in general after the collapse of Soviet Russia, for its own ‘revival’ and development.

It is true that in the course of the 20th century, Buddhist philosophy more than once demonstrated its ability to transcend the framework of religious issues and participate in the various public discourses, because it turned to the scientific-rational cognitive model of perception and interpretation of reality that seemed to be more appropriate for modern mentality.

For example, Bidiya Dandaron explains in his works the Buddhist outlook by making use of the terminology of ancient Greek and Western philosophy as well as the Christian church fathers. Thus, he explains the Buddhist idea of the ‘absolute’ by means of Plotinus’ ‘logos’, and the idea of ‘time’ with Heidegger’s existential philosophy. He proposes to distinguish between the ‘sensual’ and the ‘conceivable’ in a Kantian sense, and explains the idea of karma with the whole course of history of the Western civilization (see Dandaron, 1997). From contemporary representatives of Buryat Buddhism, such as him, one can learn the following: “Buddhism has attracted me with its scientific reasoning and scientific profundity. This is the Buddhist theory of reality, which provides a precisely grounded ontology. The philosophical theory of Buddhism is the most profound of all I know” (Portal-Credo, 2009). And the Dalai Lama himself notes that “Buddhist science has very much in common with modern science. And nowadays a very serious dialogue is conducted between Buddhist and modern science” (Zhironkina, 2009). As the Dalai Lama is a supreme authority for most ordinary Buryat Buddhist believers and also for many scholars, his words are of special importance in the public and scientific discourses. Moreover, in Buryatia, some representatives of the Buddhist clergy try to ingrain the idea in the public consciousness that, at present, “Buddhism must be understood not as a religion but as a type of science, culture, and philosophy” (Portal-Credo, 2009). This discourse of “Scientific Buddhism”, as David McMahan calls it (McMahan, 2008: 89–116), goes back to the early days of Buddhism’s encounter with the West. In this perception, Buddhism is proposed to be not a religion proper but rather a new worldview that is able to take the place of communist, nationalist, or liberal ideologies.

The plasticity of contemporary Buryat Buddhism is also visible in its ability to change its organizational structure and to find the institutional form most suitable to the needs of a specific community: Alongside the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia exists ‘the ecological direction’, and there are dharma-centres that are seriously engaged in the struggle against drugs, alcohol-abuse, etc. In general, we can agree with Elena Ostrovskaya when she says that in Buryatia, as well as in other traditionally Buddhist regions of Russia, this religion “is more and more acquiring a translocal character as a certain number of communities are oriented towards the global communicative net of Tibetan Buddhism in their activities” (Ostrovskaya, 2008). It may be also noted that modern Buryat Buddhism understands that, under the conditions of globalization, it must manifest itself in new social forms beyond the limits of the traditional Buddhist religious institution. At the beginning of the 21st century, such insistence on a new status of the Buddhist tradition in Russia [...] as not a religious belief but as a type of science, a science of consciousness and the nature of reality, as philosophy and ethics, as a system of spiritual perfection of a man, is motivated by the necessity to look for a universal basis of human identity and all-human unity (Urbanaeva, 2008: 51, 53)

Thus, the institutional component of modern Buddhism in Buryatia is developing at least partially in accordance with a mode of de-territorialization that can be understood to be postmodern, and the interaction between the adepts transcends all ethnic, cultural, political, and other boundaries.

The intention to overcome boundaries of all sorts, to step out of strictly religious discourses, and to construct a general socio-cultural continuum distinctly shows in the rhetoric of followers of Buryat Buddhism. Buddhism, notes Irina S. Urbanaeva, the leader of the Buddhist community Green Tara and professor of Mongolian, Buddhist, and Tibetan Studies at the

Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, representing at the same time both the scientist and the believer—this in itself is significant in the given context—, “possesses the potential to radically help mankind as a whole and each individual in its daily life. And this powerful force of Buddhism can be widely put to use, irrespective of its religious functions” (Urbanaeva, 2008: 48). For this purpose, however, it should be perceived in this broadness not only by “representatives of Buddhist faith”, but also by “representatives of other cultural spheres” (Portal-Credo, 2009). Some legitimate bearers of Buddhist knowledge believe that Buddhism is the optimum tool for the harmonization of social life in the age of globalization: “It would be silly not to use it as ontological basis under the conditions of globalization” (ibid.), as Buddhism “is a philosophy of mutual understanding and the unification of all people of this planet at the level of universal symbols of human existence” (Urbanaeva, 2008: 53). And therefore it could “become a very powerful factor, a condition, perhaps even a basis for the formation of essentially a new planetary worldview” (Portal-Credo, 2009).

So, the deeply ingrained cultural-religious syncretism, together with the principles of tolerance and multiculturalism, characteristic for the society of the Republic, and also the potential of Buryat Buddhism for significant institutional and doctrinal transformations, create favourable conditions for the evolvement and development of a ‘global religiousness’ in the Buryat Republic. Both the population and religious institutions are thus open to the perception and utilization of new formats and ways of interaction promoted by globalization, and the chances of an anti-globalist reaction are small. All this allows optimistic forecasts about the prospects of globalization of Buddhist religious space in the Buryat Republic. However, what can be empirically observed in the social reality? How does Buryat Buddhism react to the advent of globalization in Buryatia?

Inclusion in public discourses: conversion of symbolical capital

It may seem as though Buddhism ‘organically’ accords with the logic of the development of a ‘global religiousness’ that exhibits the involvement in discourses outside the ‘religious realm’ as a main feature. Accordingly, the Buryat Buddhist clergy is actively included in various aspects of the socio-political life of the Republic, which accounts for such general tendencies as an increasing significance of public discourses for religious communities.

In the social sphere, Buddhists are engaged in activities that are somewhat ‘traditionally religious’, such as the participation in sponsoring and charitable events; the target group consists thus mostly of members of the socially disadvantaged: orphans, elderly, and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the Buddhist centre Maydar is, together with Americans and Europeans, committed to the management of environmental problems in Buryatia. The BTSR takes active part in the promotion of sports and the popularization of a healthy way of life in general. As Khambo Lama Ayusheev says, the Sangha constantly realizes “projects directed towards the spread of a healthy way of life. Work with youth today is very important, especially in such spheres as the struggle against the proliferation of drug abuse and alcoholism, and it can be conducted by believers of all religions” (Interfax, 2005).

It is interesting to note that the Sangha’s charitable and sports activities are often of ethnically marked character. Regarding the latter, for example, ‘traditional Buryat’ kinds of sports receive special attention: wrestling, horse racing, and arrow shooting. The ‘ethnic’ character of the Sangha’s charitable activities can be well illustrated with ‘Craftsmen of Baikal

to children of Baikal' (conducted in May 2009). The aim of this event was to help develop the manufacture of 'ethnic' souvenirs—an issue embedded in the context of the problem of developing 'ethnic tourism' in Buryatia. The financial means collected in this event have been directed towards the realization of a further ethnically and religiously marked social project—the summer expedition 'Baikal-Mongolia' to sacred places of this region for children with disabilities and young orphans.

Also regarding the sphere of economics, the Sangha's representatives participate in discussions on the strategy for the development of the region. The necessity of preserving the traditional ethnicity and religiousness in the context of the problem of the Republic's economic integration in global processes is frequently debated: "The preservation and development of the spiritual and cultural traditions, the Buryat identity and — on this basis— the attraction of tourists are a unique trading offer of Buryatia and what distinguishes Buryatia from other regions in what it can offer to the world" (Andreeva, 2007: 54). In other words, traditional Buryat Buddhism and the ethnicity ascribed to it are considered to be a significant cultural-historical resource to promote the development of tourism. In this sense, 'ethnic' religion is interpreted by Buddhist representatives as one of the 'brands' of the Buryat Republic, and its preservation and development are thus considered a mortgage for the successful integration into global economy.

Furthermore, Buryat Buddhists take active part in the political life and react to important events in Buryatia, Russia, and the world. Particularly the BTSR sets the tone in this respect as it positions itself as a unique religious institution, representing not only Buryat Buddhism but also Russian Buddhism as a whole. Nevertheless, other Buddhist communities are politically active as well, especially regarding discussions on the Tibet question. However, the BTSR has succeeded politically more than any other Buddhist organization, and this is exemplified by the institutionalized political activity in political bodies such as the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Interreligious Council of Russia, and the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP).

One of the outcomes of these political activities, and apparently very significant for the BTSR, is the establishment and strengthening of relations within the governmental bodies of Buryatia. In their political activities, the BTSR leaders take up the role of true supporters of the federal authority and of statesmen. Possibly, one could assume, the Khambo Lama can count on resources of the federal authority for his aim to preserve the Sangha's control over the faithful. It is important to note that this agrees perfectly with the conception of 'traditional religions', that grants the Orthodox Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist creeds in Russia a special status, based on the fact that they are historically and culturally deeply enrooted in the life of the country.

The importance of the Sangha in the life of modern Buryat society is simultaneously constructed and manifested by controlling the access to Buddhist relics. For example, rather strict rules of access to the 'imperishable body' of Khambo Lama Itigelov (see Darima Amagolonova, in this volume) for 'ordinary' believers—eight specially allotted days per year—will be loosened for members of the political establishment and other VIPs of Buryatia and Russia. Thus, the President of Buryatia, Vyacheslav Nagovitsyn; the speaker of the State Great Khural of Buryatia, Matvey Gershevich; the ex-director of the Russian Stock Company United Energy Systems of Russia, Anatoliy Chubays; the ex-Minister of Defence, Sergey Ivanov; the film director Sergey Bodrov Sr.; the sculptor Dashii Namdakov; and other well known people have been allowed special access at various times to the imperishable body (personal

observation). The BTSR leaders emphasize that the right for free access to the specially constructed residence of Itigelov is granted only to lamas of high ranks. However, the deviation from this regulation can be perceived as consequence of a logic, which allows the ‘powerful persons of this world’ access to the relic just as it grants the religious hierarchs (albeit by the sanction of the BTSR) access on the grounds of their allegedly sufficient spiritual exclusivity and charisma. This can be interpreted as the symbolical inclusion of the socially and politically significant into the ‘possession’ of the Sangha/BTSR. In this vein, the political status and symbolical capital of VIPs become a part of the symbolical capital of the Sangha/BTSR and possibly, to a certain extent, vice versa.

The forms of participation in public discourses allow us to interpret the activities of the Buddhist clergy in terms of the conception of the ‘conversion of the symbolical capital’. It may be assumed that the implicit tactical purpose of Buddhist communities is the conversion of ‘religious capital’ into economic, political, and other sorts of ‘symbolical capital’ (Bourdieu, 2001: 219–237). Indeed, from the point of view of clerics, their political activities have distributed concrete ‘dividends’, i.e. they feel that the authorities have started listening to the advice of religious leaders, coordinating many serious steps and decisions [...]. [...] Today, religious representatives are increasingly involved in decisions on affairs of state. This contrasts former times, when we, religious organizations, were separated from the state in much greater degree and could not afford involvement. (Shishmareva, 2006: 2).

The conversion of ‘religious’ into economic ‘capital’ takes place both in the form of suggestions to utilize the cultural-symbolical resources of Buryat Buddhism in strategies regarding the development of the region and of a direct commercialization of religious practices, as well as the creation of a specific ‘market’ for religious services.

Buddhism and liberalism: integration or conflict?

Being part of a socio-political system that is oriented towards the western model of liberal democracy, it would be difficult for Buddhism not to make allowance for basic concepts of liberal ideology, such as democracy or human rights. However, as many specialists emphasize, considering its immanently tolerant and democratic character, Buddhism does not face any difficulties in ‘organically’ integrating itself into the modern discourse of liberalism (see e.g. Agadzhanyan, 2005; Amogolonova, 2008; Ostrovskaya, 2008). It may be confidently assumed that the Buddhist communities contribute considerably to the construction of a civil society in Buryatia, as the values of peacemaking, nonviolence, and tolerance particular to Buddhism easily converge with the values of civil society.

Indeed, Buddhist leaders in Buryatia enunciate their adherence to the concept of human rights. Khambo Lama Ayusheev notes that “Buddhism in our country is associated with human rights” (Cydyrov, 2007:1), and that this is not simply stating the fact but, furthermore, an imperative for action: “I am directly obliged to protect the rights and interests of citizens—particularly, if these rights and interests are violated by authorities” (Beloborodov, 2007:6). The political regime is subject to severe criticism from some Buddhist communities in connection with the problem of the Dalai Lama’s visit to Russia, which is interpreted as violation of their religious rights. As Urbanaeva says:

With Putin’s ascension to power we have returned to the habitual traditions of a totalitarian rule. All democrats, all left-wing parties have been disbanded; there are no

independent TV channels, newspapers; no freedom of speech at all in this country. The religious freedom does also only exist in a very reduced form. What kind of religious freedom can Buddhists have, if they are deprived of the opportunity to see the Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader, in our country, in Russian regions? (Portal-Credo, 2009).

Thus, the Buddhist organizations of Buryatia that are engaged in the global communicative network of Tibetan Buddhism, declaring themselves defenders of human rights, carry out rather important and socially significant functions in the Russian civil society, such as developing democratic and human rights practices and assuming the role of controllers and opponents of the authorities.

At the same time, Buryat Buddhism adheres to certain elements of an anti-West and anti-globalism discourse. From the positions of this discourse, both the political culture of the West and the absolute values of liberal ideology, globally purported as a universal model for the socio-political structure, are questioned. The conceptions of liberal economics, pluralism, freedom, and human rights are considered as “vulgar ontological concepts” (Portal-Credo). These “vulgar concepts” equal the status of ‘universal’ values, and are conceived to lead to uneasy moral-ethical collisions when legitimating “a new reality, in which homosexual marriages, euthanasia, etc. are normative” (Urbanaeva, 2008: 47). Significant achievements of western civilization are interpreted as ‘fetishes’ that convert ‘relative’ values into ‘absolute’ values. In this context, globalization becomes subject to criticism as the main mechanism of the distribution of ‘perversions’ of western culture in the social reality of other cultures:

Nowadays, the increase in negative manifestations of globalization could not but disturb us [...]. [...] The present threat to mankind and the environment is connected not to the exhaustion of resources for human survival or any natural cataclysms but namely to the postmodern human personality—the split, one-sided, narrow-minded individual whose inner world, supreme values, and spiritual universe are replaced with cultural substitutes (ibid.: 52).

The example of the BTSR shows that in addition to philosophical-intellectual criticism, the social-organizational system of Buryat Buddhism partially confronts the democratic model: The structure of today’s Sangha started taking shape in 1995 when a new regulation had been confirmed that made the Khambo Lama head of administrative and financial control of all datsans. It is needless to say that this secured the power of BTSR officials over the Buddhist clergy of Buryatia. Incidentally, the new statute of the Sangha suspended all restrictions regarding the re-election of the Khambo Lama. Thus, the Sangha’s organization has a centralized hierarchical character, which hardly agrees with democratic principles. However, it is rather typical for such a conservative institution. Inside the Sangha, rigid ideological discipline is applied: The Khambo Lama has taken up a firm stance on the propagation of Buddhism only in the form of the Gelug tradition. “The Sangha—in his opinion—is Gelug, therefore it should treat all other Buddhist traditions and schools, such as Dzen-Buddhism or Karma-Kagyü, in the same manner as Orthodox Christians treat protestants” (Filatov, 2007).

Probably, these peculiarities can be regarded as testimonies to the fact that democratic norms are not deeply enrooted in the everyday life of the community. Considering that the BTSR is the largest and most influential Buddhist community that strongly influences the development of the Buddhist creed in Buryatia, such deviation from democratic ideals can be perceived as rather alarming.

The diversification of Buddhism: the struggle for symbolical authority

Because of the general religious diversification modern Buryat Buddhism proves to be a motley mosaic of various schools and directions both in organizational and in doctrinal aspects. There are fifty-three Buddhist communities in the Republic overall. Six of them are independent, all others are part of four large Buddhist associations: the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia (twenty-six communities), the Spiritual Administration of Buddhists of Russia (three communities), the Central Spiritual Administration of Buddhists (CSAB) of Russia and Association of Buddhists of Buryatia (thirteen communities), and the Republican centralized religious Buddhist organization Maydar (five communities). Each of these organizations possesses its own character, which is expressed in philosophical-religious preferences, in specific cult practices, in particular modes of communication with their communities, etc. Accordingly, the BTSR positions itself to a great degree as the national Buryat Buddhist community and claims absolute independence from 'parental' Tibetan Buddhism. The CSAB of Russia, on the contrary, focuses its attention on close relations with European and Tibetan Buddhism and considers them an important resource for the development of Buddhism in the region. The Maydar community distinguishes itself by aspiring to be the link between Buddhism and traditional Buryat Shamanism.

In short, it is possible to make out a number of distinctions regarding the tactics and strategies of the different Buddhist communities of Buryatia. It is important to note that their coexistence and interactions are highly prone to be potential sources of conflict. These interactions can be regarded within the logic of a struggle for the symbolical control of the Buddhist sphere in the Republic. Each of the relevant actors presented here, "uses specific religious authority to conquer the symbolical field of the prophetic or heretical competitors, trying to subvert the symbolical order" (Bourdieu, 2005: 55, 56).

This is particularly brightly and distinctly manifested in the rhetoric of the BTSR representatives. Khambo Lama Ayusheev often talks of the incompetence and illegitimacy of the lamas and the datsans that operate beyond the framework of the traditional Sangha: "Now, in the guise of Buddhist organizations, there appeared some new sects in our country that originate from the west and deform the essence of the Buddhist dogma and undermine the authority of our religion" (Interfax, 2005); "it is no secret, that now, under the guise of lamas, many charlatans and lay-people are coming" (Badmarinchinov, 2000: 4). The Khambo Lama also treats Shamanism negatively, if not aggressively, and thinks that Buddhists should not mix their traditions with those of Shamanism and that they should not recognize Shamanism as equal to Buddhism. As Sergey Filatov notes, according to Ayusheev "Shamanism is the religion of primitive people, the spiritual expression of their fears and superstitions. Shamanists cannot explain where he (or she) is from and where will he depart to. Those are two main questions that one faces. Shamanism has no perspective" (Filatov, 2007).

Trying to preserve the 'ethno-religious landscape' of the Buryat Republic, the BTSR is ready to resort both to the state's help and to the resource of 'ethnicity'. Its representatives call upon the governmental authorities to pay "more attention to the needs of the traditional Sangha, which represents all Russian Buddhists" and would like to solve the "problem of parallel Buddhist structures" by means of an "Interreligious Council of Russia" (Interfax, 2005); they also support changes in the legislation "in order to uphold the priority of the 'traditional religion' of Buryat people" (Interfax, 2005). To stop the growth of religious diversification and to keep

their own dominant position, the leaders of the BTSR support the ‘ethnic identification’ of Buddhism. The main purpose of the Sangha, in the view of the Khambo Lama, is to involve as many Buryat people as possible in the traditional national forms of Buddhist piety: He supports the conduct of religious services in the Buryat vernacular, and, to a lesser degree, in Tibetan. He promotes the strengthening of the ethnic exclusivity of the Sangha and of ethnic boundaries in the social space of the Republic.

All these examples are the consequence of the explicit confrontation of the different Buddhist communities of Buryatia. The issue at stake here is the establishment of the exclusive control of the sacral sphere (in this sense, the status of the leader of a certain community and the political ‘dividends’ distributed thereby are no more than a consequence or effect of the victory of this symbolical struggle). To confirm its claim for such control, the Sangha in particular certifies the priests. As a result, “each cleric receives a certificate of a standard form” (Badmarinchinov, 2000: 4). Through this procedure, the authority is transferred to priests, who are thereby relieved of the necessity to constantly re-confirm their power and, furthermore, protected from consequences of unsuccessful religious activities. Simultaneously, BTSR representatives emphasize that “a number of small religious communities, which are not subordinate to the Sangha [...] have neither the power, nor the means for the training of clerics” (ibid.). Again, they hint at the incompetence of their competitors. The defeated parties in this symbolical struggle are stigmatized and condemned as ‘lay-people’ or even ‘charlatans’, dispatched to the periphery of the religious field, and turned into marginal actors, bereaved of their authority and legitimacy. It illustrates the fact that any practice or belief occupying a subordinate position is subjected to becoming a profane and being reduced to magic since, by the fact of existence, and even if lacking the slightest intention to exert any control over it, it objectively challenges the monopoly of administering the sacral sphere, and, hence, the legitimacy of the owners of this monopoly (Bourdieu, 2005: 26).

Instead of a conclusion: the reaction to globalization

It is possible to assess that, despite a favourable context, Buryat Buddhism has not yet a precise strategy for action under the conditions of globalization; and its intuitive reaction to global trends has inconsistent character.

In search of resources to preserve their positions in society, Buddhist communities actively adopt the new formats and modes of endeavours provided by globalization. Frequently, this leads to a simplification and worldly orientation of the dogmatic and cultural maintenance of Buddhism, but allows the orientation toward other cultural traditions, and, thus modified, its export to other social, cultural, and political contexts. However, it is necessary to recognize that modern Buryat Buddhism is simultaneously an example of latent resistance to globalization: In reality, globalization is implicitly perceived as a threat, and not as a source of and for development. For this reason, it seems, Buddhist hierarchs in search of modes of development are guided by ‘external’ factors—i.e. the state and/or the ‘ethnic’ resource—rather than by the actual religious potential (as ‘internal’ factor).

Charity, sports and a healthy way of life, politics—these are the spheres, in which Buryat Buddhism increases its social capital and moral authority by means of specific symbolical activities. Increasingly, the active participation of the Sangha in public and political life aims to achieve a basic strategic purpose—the substantiation of Buddhism’s status as ‘root religion’ and

the strengthening of its own socio-political position. Simultaneously, traditional Buryat Buddhism has noticeably bent to uphold ethno-denominational boundaries; and 'ethnicity' has become an important resource particular to the aim of preserving religion. In this way, religion is provided with primordial ethno-genetic connotations. The discursive practices and ways of converting symbolical capital considered here become an important mechanism for the legitimization of religious institutions in the social world, and for challenging the processes of desecularization, but not so strongly that the Buddhist Sangha has given up on additional 'worldly' resources of naturalizing their status and influence in contemporary society.

The developmental logic of Buryat Buddhism permits the conclusion that its embedment into global trends of religious revivals occurs more likely out of necessity and is characterized by protective adaptation, rather than being an element of a progressive and active strategy for the development of Buddhist faith under modern conditions.

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