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Western Buddhism in the Local Context
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Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the
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Valentina Isaeva

Saint-Petersburg State University

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Western Buddhism in the Local Context of the Russian Federation: The Case of the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition

Valentina Isaeva¹

Abstract

How Buddhist organizations adapt to new environments appears to be the key question defining their activities and the possibility that they will attract new followers. This article considers the case of the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu tradition in the context of the social and cultural milieu of the Russian Federation. In particular, it looks at significant features of historical development and legislative regulation of the religious sphere in Russia and how Diamond Way as

¹ Saint-Petersburg State University, the Sociological Institute of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This research is supported by a grant from the Russian Science Foundation (Project no. 15-18-00119). Email: vbisaeva@gmail.com.

a Western Buddhist organization has implemented culture politics to correlate its ethics with the local environment and to create cultural coherence with the broader Russian society. The research explicates four main guidelines of the culture politics of Diamond Way: (1) integration into the sociocultural environment of the city and the country; (2) assertion of its traditionality on the territory of the Russian Federation; (3) political neutrality in the public sphere; and (4) a variety of leadership styles.

Introduction

Buddhism is one of the mainstream religions of the Russian Federation and is traditional for certain ethnic regions (Kalmykia, Tuva, and Buryatia). In the 1997 law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (“Federal'nyj”),” Buddhism is noted as “part of the historical heritage of Russia.” In post-Soviet Russia, ethnic Buddhism has been recovered as a powerful and conservative integration force in the process of nation-building. Although in the Soviet Union there existed only one centralized Buddhist organization—the Central Buddhist Spiritual Board in Buryatia—by the end of 2018 in Russia there were already 269 Buddhist organizations,² of which twelve had the status of being centralized.

However, the majority of these organizations, about 200 communities, belong to varieties of Western Buddhism (Mongush “Traditionnyi” 12) that appeared in post-Soviet Russia in the 1990s. In this article, the term “Western Buddhism” is used with two meanings. On the

² The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. “Number of Religious Organizations Registered in the Russian Federation at the End of 2018.” *gks*, 27 April 2019, Federal State Statistics Service, www.gks.ru/folder/11191. Accessed 31 July 2019.

one hand, it is a geographical concept which describes the phenomenon of new Buddhist communities which appeared in Russia in the post-communist period and came from the West—from the countries of Europe and North America, and in this sense they are Western in relation to traditional Buddhism, which once came from Mongolia and Tibet, i.e., from the East (Mongush “Traditsionnyi”). On the other hand, “Western Buddhism” is understood as a concept that is comprehensively discussed in the debate on the transformation of Buddhism in the modern era and refers to the global phase of its spread. It is characterized by hybridity, globality, de-territoriality, and other modernist features such as an emphasis on rationality, the scientific nature of Buddhism as a worldview, its social activity, and the relevance of meditation (Baumann “Global” 4, 10). Researchers apply different terms to the variety of transformations that Buddhism undergoes being adapted to the needs of modernity, as well as to the demands of a European audience, Western lifestyles, and thought: “global Buddhism” (Baumann “Global”), “Buddhist modernism” (McMahan), “Western Buddhism” (Prebish), “the new Buddhism” (Coleman). Following the idea of Martin Bauman, the essence of this concept refers not so much to the ethnicity of the followers of Buddhism, but rather to the changes in organizational forms, interpretations of doctrine, and practices (“Global” 2). Preserving the dogmatic core of Buddhism, proponents of Western Buddhism create new organizational forms, use modern philosophical concepts and ideological innovations to reveal the central ideas of Buddhist philosophy (Mongush “Traditsionnyi” 12).

Due to the specifics of Russia’s historical development and legislative regulation of the religious sphere, Western Buddhist communities started to appear mainly from the beginning of the 1990s. Today, among them there are Dzogchen Shri Singha Buddhist centers, the Kwan Um School of Zen, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Gomde centers, Diamond Way Buddhist centers, and others. They are mostly spread in the European part of Russia (Mongush “Traditsion-

nyi”), but at the same time they can be found in the traditional Buddhist regions as well (Badmatsyrenov “Sotsial'naya”).

Disciples of Western Buddhism have experienced a number of difficulties trying to exercise their right to freedom of religious belief because the conversion of Russians to Buddhism in historically Orthodox territories is perceived as a kind of deviation. The historical background of Imperial and Soviet periods, together with particular features of present day legal regulation in the religious sphere, creates a problematic social and cultural environment for Western Buddhism. Hence, the activity of such communities often lacks credibility both for official authorities and for traditional Buddhists. To cope with these problems and to exercise freedom of religious belief, a Buddhist organization must develop certain culture politics.

This article aims to reveal the main guidelines of the culture politics of the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition (hereafter the Association) and its implementation within the theoretical perspective of the cultural sociology of religion. In Russia, the Association is one of the most widely spread and influential organizations of Western Buddhism representing lay communities. It is a part of the global Diamond Way Buddhist network which includes 635 centers worldwide.³ In the post-communist area, Diamond Way Buddhist groups first appeared in Poland in the late 1970s and through Poland they came to other post-socialist countries, including Russia in 1989. To-

³ “Diamond Way Buddhist Centers Worldwide.” *diamondway-buddhism*, 2019, www.diamondway-buddhism.org/diamondway-buddhist-centers/. Accessed 4 November 2019.

day there are around one hundred Buddhist centers and meditation groups in the Russian Federation.⁴

The network of Diamond Way Buddhist centers is headed by the charismatic leader Danish lama Ole Nydahl and under the official patronage of the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa. There is currently a schism within the global Tibetan Karma Kagyu School because of the identification of the two candidates for the transmission lineage holding. Ogyen Trinley Dorje was supported by hierarchs of Karma Kagyu and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and Trinley Thaye Dorje was supported by Kunsig Shamar Rinpoche, one of the four influential hierarchs of Karma Kagyu. Diamond Way Buddhist centers and their leader positioned themselves on the side of the second candidate (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox” 40). It is important to note that Shamar Rinpoche contributed extensively to the development of the Diamond Way Buddhist centers in the West: following the Sixteenth Karmapa⁵ he confirmed the status of Ole Nydahl as a Buddhist master⁶ and a lama⁷ and visited Diamond Way centers founded

⁴ “The Russian Association.” *buddhism*, 2019, Centralized Religious Organization (hereinafter CRO) Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/o-nas/. Accessed 4 November 2019.

⁵ The Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. “A Certificate from the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa.” 1979. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/sertifikat-ot-karmapyi-xvi-1979-g/. Accessed 15 July 2019.

⁶ Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. “A Letter from Shamar Rinpoche about Qualification of Ole Nydahl as Buddhist Master.” 1983. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/pismo-shamara-rinpoche-o-kvalifikatsii-lamyi-ole-nidala-1983-g/. Accessed 15 July 2019.

⁷ Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. “A Letter from Shamar Rinpoche about the Title of “Lama” in Relation to Ole Nydahl.” 2006. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/pismo-shamara-rinpoche-o-titule-lamyi-po-otnosheniyu-k-lame-ole-nidalu-2006-g/. Accessed 15 July 2019.

by the spouses Ole and Hannah Nydahl. In Russia it is Trinley Thaye Dorje who is well known, due to his visit to Russia in 2009 and the wide spread of the Diamond Way communities in the region (Mongush “Karma” 121).

This article is based on the review of relevant literature, document analysis, and interviews with representatives of the Association. First, I outline the theoretical underpinnings of the research within the framework of the cultural approach in sociology of religion. Second, I characterize the historical background of Buddhism in Russia, which includes the Imperial and Soviet periods, and I also identify the social premises of the spread of Western Buddhism in post-Soviet and modern Russia. Third, I examine the main guidelines of the culture politics of the Association: correlation of norms and values with the society, the issues of official status, principles of its social activity in the public sphere, and styles of leadership.

Culture Politics of a Religious Organization within the Framework of Cultural Sociology of Religion

Today there is much literature in Buddhist Studies that deals with the process of the adaptation of Buddhism in non-Asian contexts, in the West, and in post-socialist countries. The issues of philosophy, history, source study, and ethnography of Buddhism have been discussed in detail (e.g., Prebish; McMahan) but still there is not much attention given to the sociological dimension of the institutionalization of Buddhist culture in new social, economic, legal, and cultural conditions (Yü; Badmatyrenov “Sociology”). The institutional level is essential for understanding the spread of Buddhism in new environments because the institutional field is a primary locus for creating cultural coherence in a society

(Edgell 251). From this point of view, the cultural approach in the sociology of religion is the most viable methodological tool for the analysis of the institutionalization of Buddhist culture, for it takes into consideration particular features of modernity including the significance of the cultural dimension in social and religious life, the methodological importance of considering regional contexts, and the reflexivity of religion and society (Bakharev and Lebedev).

The concept of “culture politics” was proposed by the American researcher of religion Henri Gooren to describe a strategy that a religious organization uses to manage level of tension with the society. This strategy is based on the religious worldview and is applied in order to compete with other religious institutions (Gooren). I want to reframe the concept of culture politics within the broader context of cultural sociology of religion to take into consideration not only market competition in the religious field but also the relations between the religious organization in its ethical aspect, i.e., aspect of norms, values and ideas, the state in its legal aspect, and the society in its cultural and social aspects. Thus, the culture politics of the religious organization is conceptualized as an instrument of strategic correlation of the ethics of the religious organization with the sociocultural environment. Religious ethics, following Max Weber, is framed as norms, values, and ideas that provide practical guidelines for social action, i.e., practical ethics which are followed in daily life and give certain specifics to religion (442). The culture politics of the religious organization is implemented in several ways: the correlation of the norms and values of an organization with the norms and values of a society; the issues of its official status and the principles of its social activity within the public sphere; and its style of leadership. This article examines the culture politics of a particular Western Buddhist organization constructed in order to exercise the right for freedom of religious belief within the controversial historical, social, cultural, and legal context of the Russian Federation.

Buddhism in Russia in the Imperial and Soviet Periods

The first contacts between Russian authorities and Buddhist clergy took place in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the Kalmyk khanate joined the Russian state. At the same time, Russian pioneers developing Eastern Siberia met Buryat-Mongols. Both the Kalmyks and the Buryats confessed a Tibetan form of Buddhism that they had adopted from Mongolia and Tibet. Russian authorities did not restrict profession of Buddhism by those Mongolian tribes. They cooperated with the Buddhist clergy in order to achieve their own purposes at home and in foreign policy. In both Kalmykia and Buryatia, the hierarchy of the Buddhist priesthood was established and legitimated on the state level. It was headed by a lama who was subordinate to the civil administration and the police. Accordingly, there existed a symbiosis of civil and religious powers. Monasteries owned vast tracts of land, were centers of cultural and social life, and provided education, art workshops, and medical care. In the first half of the eighteenth century the number of officially legitimated lamas was defined by the Russian authorities, the lamas were exempt from paying taxes, and were allowed to disseminate Buddhism among “nomadic indigenous tribes,”⁸ Buryats, and Evenks (Tsyrempilov “Past”; Zhitenev). Tsyrempilov remarks that those measures can be considered an implicit recognition of Buddhism as an official confession of the Russian Empire, though the official document itself containing the

⁸ Indigenous peoples or *inorodtsy* were members of national non-Slavic minorities. In 1798, the Tsarist legal act on indigenous people characterized them as non-settled and aimed to help them to move gradually to a settled way of life. In 1822, the “Regulation on Indigenous Population” was adopted; it defined the status of the *inorodtsy* and incorporated different categories of indigenous population—fishers, gatherers, and hunters of the Far North; nomadic indigenous tribes; and settled indigenous people. Thus, they were administered differently from the rest of the population of the Russian Empire. The Tsarist government respected their mode of life and economy and tried to protect them from arbitrariness of the local authorities (Kappeler 124-125).

decree about acknowledgement of Buddhism by the Imperial Administration still has not been found (“Decree” 105).

Thus, the policy of Russian officials in the Imperial period was to strictly link Buddhism to particular ethnic groups and limit its spread to certain ethnic and confessional environments. According to the “Statute of the Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Religions”⁹ every confession was assigned to certain ethnic groups—the phenomenon known as ethnodoxy (Karpov 644). Following the statute, Buddhism was considered as a “tolerable” religion. Notably, there was a hierarchy of tolerable confessions within which a range of rights and state privileges was differentiated depending on their status. The hierarchy had political grounds and was based on national principles; the most significant groups were peoples with ancient cultures and a tradition of nationhood. Buddhism occupied a low position among the tolerable religions because Buryats, Mongols, and Kalmyks were defined as indigenous tribes or *inorodtsy*. Hence, Buddhism in the Russian Empire was a step higher than Mennonitism, Shamanism, Paganism, Old Believers, and some other religions that did not represent whole nations. Nonetheless, among the others such as Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, a number of Protestant denominations, and some others, Buddhism as a religion of indigenous tribes of Kalmyks and Buryats had the lowest status (Reisner 160-162). The Russian Orthodox Church made attempts to convert Buddhists into the predominant confession, even establishing an “Anti-Buddhist Department” (Fedorov 135).

⁹ In the Russian Empire, all religions with the exception of the Russian Orthodox Church were considered to be foreign. Foreign religions were divided into tolerable and non-tolerable and this classification was outlined in the “Statute of the Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Religions.” Orthodoxy was the only officially prevailing and the most privileged confession a conversion to which was welcomed. As confessions were linked to ethnicity becoming Orthodox meant becoming Russian and, thus, conversion to Orthodoxy was used as one of the integration instruments in the multinational state.

In short, the national and confessional policy of the Tsarist government resulted in the phenomenon of ethnodoxy and in non-equal positions of different religions in the Russian Empire, among which Buddhism had low status.

Considerable changes in the religious sphere happened after the Communist revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks decided to implement an antireligious policy but in a moderate way because of the great amount of believers in the country. They planned a gradual elimination of religion from a long-term perspective (Sinitsyn 114). A number of Buddhist priests initiated a renewal of the Buddhist doctrinal and ritual system in order to preserve their religious tradition through cooperation with the Soviet government. Originally, Soviet authorities seemed to be eager to cooperate with Buddhists in order to get their support to promote the communist ideology to the East. They even assisted reconstruction of a Buddhist monastery in Saint-Petersburg. But at the same time there existed some “leftist” views for solving the “religious problem,” and those who followed them wanted radical and immediate eradication of religion. They initiated anti-Buddhist activities as early as the 1920s. From 1925 onwards, the first tendency, namely the cooperation of the Bolsheviks with Buddhists, began to wane, partly because of the failure of the Soviet mission in Tibet in 1924-1925 (Sinitsyn 35-37, 114). Buddhist temples were closed and destroyed; clergy, monks, and lamas were repressed. By the end of the 1930s Buddhism no longer existed on the institutional level in the USSR (Sinitsyn 122-127).

After the war, in 1946 the head of the Soviet Union, J. Stalin, loosened the antireligious policy. Two Buddhist monasteries were restored and reopened in Buryatia. The same year the Central Buddhist Spiritual Board in Buryatia was established—the only centralized Buddhist organization in the USSR. The Soviet government continued, to some extent, the policy of Imperial times, using collaboration with Buddhist lamas to

achieve certain geopolitical purposes in Asia (Tsyrempilov). On the whole, the antireligious campaign of the Soviet authorities resulted in the mass atheism of the population. As Russian researcher Sergei Filatov remarks, “Buddhism, Islam, Paganism turned into something exotic that had never existed in the culture of the Soviet people” (10-11).

Social and Cultural Premises of the Spread of Western Buddhism in Post-Soviet and Modern Russia

In the 1990s, after the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the religious situation in Russia was marked by liberalization and pluralization as a consequence of the enactment of the Law “On Freedom of Religious Belief” (“Zakon”). Thereafter, the phenomenon of Western Buddhism has appeared in the religious landscape of the Russian Federation. According to the new legal system, there was no longer the traditional strict linking of ethnicity and religion. However, for different reasons including the intention of the Russian Orthodox Church to have a privileged position and a number of experiences connected with the activity of “destructive cults,” the law of 1990 was revised. In 1997, the enactment of the law “On Freedom of Consciousness and Religious Organizations” (Federal Law) started the trend to rank religious organizations from the point of view of their traditionality (Stetskevich 262-265). In its preamble, the special role of Orthodoxy in Russian history is emphasized, but also the necessity to respect Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions “constituting essential part of the historical heritage of Russia.”

The revised version of the law contains obvious inconsistencies: on one hand, it guarantees equality of citizens before the law and their right to confess the religion of their choice; on the other hand, the law differentiates religions according to their traditionality (Stetskevich

264). There is continued controversy because except for the one-time criterion, the law did not set definite criteria for the identification of traditionality. The law of 1997 specified a fifteen year term of presence of confession to register the group as a local religious organization. Only centralized religious organizations which can confirm their existence on the territory of Russia for fifty years and more can use the words Russia and Russian in their name (Tarasevich). Thus, the law created a hierarchy of religions. Those which comply with the terms and therefore are considered to be traditional are of higher status and those which do not meet this criterion and accordingly are not referred to the category of traditional religions are of lower status.

Law specialists contend that the law does not undermine the principle of equality, because “equality” means that religious organizations have equal obligations to the state. However, equality of obligations does not imply equity of rights. Therefore, traditional religions potentially have a privileged position in having more rights and more priorities to get subsidies, privileges, etc. from the state (Tarasevich 30).

As a consequence, after the 2000s there has been a rise of protectionist policy in relation to ethnic and national religions. Traditional ethnic Buddhism has been recovered as a powerful and conservative integration force in the process of nation-building. Hence, the activity of Western Buddhist communities lacks credibility in the eyes of both official authorities and traditional Buddhist organizations. Nevertheless, as it has been mentioned in the beginning, there are many Western Buddhist communities in Russia, about 200 organizations out of a total of 269.

Apparently liberalization of the religious sphere in the 1990s created legal conditions for the religious revival in Russia, but it is also important to mention that social dislocations became essential premises for the spread of Western Buddhism in post-Soviet and contemporary

periods (late 1980s-2015). Social dislocations imply the absence of effective and/or legitimate methods of solving problems by means of conventional social institutions. This results in the alienation of individuals from the social and cultural order of society, thus making them susceptible to alternative ways of thinking and behavior as well as recruitment to nontraditional religious groups (Bromley). Having a new religious worldview along with a religious normative system and religious community can become an effective alternative means of solving problems and achieving purposes. The results of the all-Russian monitoring¹⁰ demonstrate the existence of social dislocations in the three spheres of Russian society: innovation standstill in the economy; vulnerability to human rights violations; and lack of institutions to develop human and social capital and to realize human potential. The existence of stagnant spheres indicates inefficient functioning of various social institutions; that in turn means lack of effective and legitimate ways of solving a range of social, cultural, economic, and legal problems (Lapin “Recession”). Seven waves of the monitoring show that social dislocations are conserved, become stable, and are reproduced in different societal subsystems.

In summary, there are three particular features of the Russian regional context in historical perspective which are relevant for the spread of Western Buddhism: ethnodoxo (strict linking of religion and ethnicity); differentiation of religions into one that is “prevailing”

¹⁰ Seven waves of the all-Russian monitoring (1990-2015) “value orientations and interests of population of Russia” have been accomplished by the Center for the Study of Social and Cultural Transformations of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Lapin “Factors”; “Recession”). It is aimed at the evaluation of the social well-being of the citizens of Russia understood as a complex phenomenon describing people’s subjective perception of meaning of their life in the context of past and future, emotional satisfaction with their social position, estimation of everyday relationships with other people, social institutions, etc. (Lapin “Stabilization”).

whereas the others are “tolerable”; and Soviet atheism. Because of these, in the public consciousness of Russians, Buddhism is still associated with traditional regions (Tuva, Buryatia, and Kalmykia); therefore, it is perceived as an ethnic religion and conversion to Buddhism is not seen to be normative.

Another three features relate to the modern context and create premises for the rise and conversion to Buddhism: liberalization of the religious sphere; its further traditionalization; and social dislocations. Taking into consideration these six characteristics, the achievement of cultural coherence between Western Buddhist organizations and the broader society is not an easy task and is one that has to be implemented by the Buddhist organizations themselves.

Main Guidelines of Culture Politics of the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition

Correlation of norms and values of the Association with Russian society

As it was stated earlier, the culture politics for religious organizations is conceptualized as an instrument of strategic correlation of the religious organization’s ethic with its sociocultural environment. The culture politics of the Association has several guidelines. The first guideline—correlation of norms and values of the Association with Russian society— involves integration into the social and cultural environment of the country and the city. German sociologist Thomas Luckmann has noted a tension related to the contemporary form of existence of religion between its limited influence in the social structure of the society and its main function to control the consciousness and behavior of an individual (Luckmann). Present day Diamond Way communities resolve this tension through a radical transformation of the form of Buddhist teachings and

ritual practices. General characteristics of the contemporary lay Western Buddhist communities, which have been distinguished by researchers (Tamney; Yü), completely correspond to the culture politics of the Russian Association. The Association emphasizes value orientations which are consistent with the predominant values of a contemporary democratic society and has adapted its normative control of behavior to the modern urban lifestyle. The Association's tenets of a doctrine and a normative system are self-confidence, optimism, and social activism. These correlate with values of the modern civil society—individualism, stress on positive human nature, belief in progress, and the aspiration to change people and society. These values are identified in interviews with the Russian disciples of Diamond Way Buddhism through a criticism and orientation to social transformation of the negative aspects of Russian society, an idea of service to the society, and responsibility for the transmission of cultural values:

Then when I found many people who are the same as me I thought: "No, I'm where I ought to be, but everything around me must be changed." I don't like the fact that people kill themselves different ways: alcohol, first of all, and other things. As there are vast territories here and resources people treat environment not very carefully. The same way they treat themselves and everything. And there is a kind of rudeness. A lot of rudeness here and in relation to women as well, the remnants of patriarchy have been preserved, and they are strong. But this is culture. There is a very big gap between different social groups which probably does not exist anywhere else (Gennady. Personal interview. 15 January 2014).

I think we bring benefits to the society through our lectures. . . . We are part of the society and these Buddhist

achievements he [Buddhist] brings to the society or group or family, and benefits them (Lara. Personal interview. 5 April 2014).

The doctrinal idea about the complementarity of feminine and masculine as wisdom and compassion legitimates principles of gender equality and active participation of women in all community activities. Women become travelling teachers, lecture on Buddhism, conduct meditation courses, organize exhibitions of Buddhist art, etc.

Values of religious and ethnic tolerance, equality of freedoms and the rights and protection of them, treatment of nature with care, doing no harm to other people, awareness of the interdependence and interconnectedness of existence of human, society, and nature—these spiritual and moral reference points of Buddhist tradition respond to the need of the contemporary individual for alternatives to consumerism and the market philosophy of commodification of nature and labor (Korotezkaya; Ayusheeva):

In Buddhism I found myself. Through all my life I have been busy with personal development. Here it's the main thing you need to do with a human, with his consciousness. Maybe it sounds trivial but I act to bring happiness to all human beings. This sounds a little bit naively even for me, nevertheless, this is the most rational way of behavior and assessing my past life I understand that I have done wrong many things out of all things I have done (Gennady. Personal interview. 15 January 2014).

Ole Nydahl emphasizes that Karma Kagyu Buddhism is Diamond Way (Vajrayāna) Buddhism, which means that it is connected with spe-

cial ritual methods such as particular yogic practices.¹¹ The normative system of the Karma Kagyu is oriented to the quick and effective spiritual development of its adherents through these yogic practices. Special theoretical preparation is not demanded (Nydahl “Buddhism” 26-32). The president of the Association says: “Diamond Way Buddhism is practical Buddhism. It fits for those people who want to use meditation practice to improve their life and not to spend much time reading books about how to meditate” (Koibagarov 45, 47).

The charismatic leader stresses that Diamond Way Buddhism is oriented to people with a certain type of mind in which “attachments and wishes predominate”; therefore, one’s deprivation of emotional ties are stressed. In the macro social conditions of the Russian Federation characterized by violating human rights, preservation of social inequality, and low trust level between people, individuals experience different forms of deprivation and different needs for emotional interaction and “attachment.” Such conceptualization of attributes of the potential adherents is consistent with the situation of preservation of social dislocations in Russia.

The representatives of the academic community occupy different positions in relation to the Association. One position is acceptance of Diamond Way Buddhism. Leading specialists in Buddhist Studies—E. Torchinov, B. Kitinov, N. Zukovskaya,¹² L. Korotezkaya, and others—recognize Diamond Way Buddhism as a modernized Tibetan tradition that

¹¹ Traditionally meditation was a “virtuoso” practice (in Weberian terms) which was pursued only by monks. But laicisation of meditation and its therapeutic orientation have become an inherent feature of the spread of Buddhism in non-traditional regions (Agadzhyan).

¹² “Official Documents.” *buddhism*, 2019, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/o-nas/dokumentyi-assotsiatsii/. Accessed 5 November 2019.

transmits traditional Buddhist teachings and practices in adapted form. Another part of the academic community is quite critical about Ole Nydahl's activity and does not acknowledge it as a form of traditional Buddhism. Specialist in Religious Studies, E. Balagushkin, identified the communities of the Association as new religious movements belonging to neo-orientalism (Balagushkin 220). The specialist in Buddhist Studies, A. Terentyev, on the website of the journal *Buddhism of Russia*, wrote about the attempts of Ole Nydahl to "manipulate public consciousness" under the name of Buddhism (Terent'ev).

The issues of an official status: Legitimization of the traditionality of the Association on the territory of the Russian Federation

Describing the phenomenon of Western Buddhism, researchers distinguish traditionally oriented centers affiliated with a particular Buddhist tradition and independent Buddhist communities created in the West and focused on innovation (Baumann 22). From this point of view, the Association can be qualified as traditionally oriented Western Buddhism: modernizing organizational forms, interpreting doctrine and forms of practice, it identifies itself with the Tibetan Karma Kagyu tradition both in the global context and in the regional Russian context. This trend is reinforced by the abovementioned features of the legal regulation of the religious sphere in Russia which resulted in the second guideline of the culture politics of the Association—the Association strives to prove its traditionality on the territory of the Russian Federation.

The first local organizations of Diamond Way Buddhism were registered in Russia in 1991, soon after the enactment of the "Law on Freedom of Religious Belief." In 1993, the centralized religious organization "The International Association of Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu

School”¹³ was officially established with Russian and Ukrainian *Dharma* centers. In 1997, the enactment of the law “On Freedom of Consciousness and Religious Organizations” ranked religious organizations from the point of view of their traditionality, using as a criterion the time period of their existence on the territory of the Russian Federation. The Association sent documents, its charter, and information about religious doctrines and rites of the Karma Kagyu in Russia to the Chamber on Public Associations and Religious Organizations Affairs in order to pass an expert review. Experts found no statements or norms that could break the law of the Russian Federation¹⁴ and in 1998 the Association was registered as “The Russian Association of Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu School.” That the word “Russian” appeared in the name of the Association was the first step towards establishing its status as a traditional religious organization.

Subsequently, the Russian Association applied both to officials and specialists in Buddhist Studies in order to get expert reviews to confirm the traditionality of the Karma Kagyu school following the only noted attribute—the time length of its existence on the territory of the Russian Federation. The Association made a request to the Republic of Kalmykia, a traditional Buddhist region. The vice president of the Government of the Republic of Kalmykia wrote a letter to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation which noted,

¹³ The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. “The Certificate of State Registration of the Non-governmental Organization.” 20 June 2011. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1430/svidnalog2.jpg. Accessed 5 November 2019.

¹⁴ The Political Advisory Council under the President of the Russian Federation. “The Letter from the Chamber on Public Associations and Religious Organizations Affairs.” 1 June 1998. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1430/palata.pdf. Accessed 5 November 2019.

The Karma Kagyu school existed in culture of Kalmyk tribes from the thirteenth century and up to nowadays. During political and religious repressions the line of continuity of religious tradition did not stop because it was preserved by some *lamas* and lay people. Entirely this religious tradition was restored in 1989 by teachers of the Karma Kagyu including Ole Nydahl.¹⁵

Expert reviews were also received from scholars B. Kitinov (1999), N. Zukovskaya (2000), and E. Torchinov (1999).¹⁶ Torchinov points out in his review that the Karma Kagyu school appeared in the territory of the present day Russian Federation in the thirteenth century together with nomadic Mongolian tribes today known as Kalmyks and Buryats. Since the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries when Buddhism was established as the religion of Buryats, Karma Kagyu canonic texts are still considered authoritative. Torchinov's conclusion about the traditionality of the teachings and practices of the Russian Association is that "its doctrine and cult are consistent with traditional practice of the Karma Kagyu school and adapted for the modern Russian environment. Activity of the Association is realized within the related tradition and does not violate the Russian legislation."¹⁷ Additionally, there is a letter from one of

¹⁵ The Government of the Republic of Kalmykia. "The Certificate from the Government of the Republic Kalmykia." 16 March 2004. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1430/kalmykija-1-744x1024.jpg. Accessed 5 November 2019.

¹⁶ "Official Documents." *buddhism*, 2019, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/o-nas/dokumentyi-assotsiatsii/. Accessed 05 November 2019.

¹⁷ Torchinov, E.A. "The Certificate about the Russian Association of Buddhists of Karma Kagyu School." 30 November 1999. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1430/torchinov1-2.pdf. Accessed 4 November 2019.

the four influential hierarchs of the Tibetan Karma Kagyu school, Kunsig Shamarpa Rinpoche, about how the Karma Kagyu “teachings, practices and rituals” existed “since the Eleventh century as an independent school of Buddhism in India, Tibet, Nepal, and other Asian countries of the Himalayan region, as well as on Russia’s territory since the Thirteenth century (within the Kalmyk and Buryat tribe’s religious tradition).”¹⁸

In 2011 the Association underwent state registration in the Ministry of Justice and was registered as a centralized religious organization: the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition; i.e., the Association was recognized as a traditional organization by the Government of the Russian Federation. The president of the Association became a member of the Expert Council of Moscow City State Council Committee on Public Associations and Religious Organizations Affairs. The Association now has the right to establish new Diamond Way centers in Russia and to confirm that they belong to the Karma Kagyu tradition. This confirmation becomes the ground for their state registration.

Although the Association gained recognition from the state as a traditional organization, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church have repeatedly criticized the activity of the Association and Ole Nydahl. They even characterized Diamond Way Buddhism as a destructive cult.¹⁹ Conversely, other Buddhist organizations have recognized

¹⁸ Kunsig Shamar Rinpoche. “The Letter from Kunsig Shamarpa Rinpoche.” 10 October 1997. *buddhism*, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1430/shamar1.gif. Accessed 5 November 2019.

¹⁹ Deacon Plotnikov, M. “The neo-Buddhist Mission of Lama Ole Nydahl. A Report at the International Conference “Totalitarian Sects and a Democratic State.” *Sectoved. A website*

and cooperated with the Association. In 2009, Ole Nydahl for the first time met *Hambo Lama* Damba Ausheev, the head of the Buddhist Traditional *Sangha* of Russia. He evaluated the activity of Ole Nydahl in a positive way. He said: “I think that the Karma Kagyu practice fits contemporary Europeans. If people who came to you are happy and found themselves, then this form of Buddhism is needed.”²⁰ In 2016, Ole Nydahl became the second nominee of the Order of Agvan Dorzhiev. The first nominee of this award was the Fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso in 2014. The Order is given for prominent achievements for humanity in the spread of Buddhist teachings. Indeed, Ole Nydahl makes two round-the-world trips each year visiting Diamond Way centers, giving lectures, conducting meditation courses, and taking part in cultural events. The Order was given to Nydahl by the head of the Atsagat monastery in Buryatia, the president of the Foundation named in honor of Agvan Dorzhiev.²¹ In fact this award means acknowledgement of the Association by other traditional Buddhist organizations of Russia.

about sects, false teachings, and destructive cults.
www.sektoved.ru/enciclopedia.php?art_id=41. Accessed 4 June 2018.

²⁰ Sokolov, A. “If the People Who Came to You are Happy . . .” *buddhism*, 2018, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/hambo-lama-damba-ausheev-intevyu-2009/. Accessed 24 May 2018.

²¹ “Lama Ole Nydal is Awarded the Order of Aghvan Dorzhiev - One of the Most Prestigious Awards of Buryatia.” *buddhism*, 2018, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/center_news_page/lama-ole-nidal-nagrazhdyon-ordenom-agvana-dorzhieva/. Accessed 15 January 2018.

Principles of social activity in the public sphere: political neutrality of the Association

The third principle of the culture politics of the Association is political neutrality. The president of the Association says: “We do not take part in any political campaigns. We are engaged only in spiritual practices and teachings” (Kojbagarov 46). He emphasizes that the social activity of the Association is limited to the cultural and symbolical sphere. The Association organizes exhibitions representing Buddhist culture and tradition; makes films about Tibetan Buddhism, its history, and existence in the modern world; and conducts workshops on traditional religious painting and sculpture.²² The travelling exhibition, “Treasure of the Himalayas,”²³ has already existed for fifteen years and takes place annually in different Russian cities. It also runs the publishing house Diamond Way Buddhism. Beginning in 2008, the Association has arranged the international scientific conference, “Vajrayāna Buddhism in Russia,” which takes place once in two years in various regions of the Russian Federation. The participants include both representatives of the academic community and religious organizations.

The Association also organizes regular festivals of Buddhist culture of different levels. For instance, in 2018 the Fifth International Festival of Buddhist Culture took place in Volgograd and was initiated by the local religious organization “Diamond Way Buddhist Center of the Karma Kagyu Tradition,” which is part of the Association. The program included the travelling exhibition “Entering the Diamond Way: Buddhist

²² “Press Folder of the Association.” *buddhism*, 2019, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/site/assets/files/1432/prezentatsiya_apkk_brosnyura_blok_print_lowres.pdf. Accessed 5 November 2019.

²³ *An Exhibition “Treasure of Himalayas.”* 2018. International Public Organization “Himalaya Cultural Heritage,” exhibition.gimalai.org/. Accessed 16 May 2018.

Wisdom over time and limits,” the opening ceremony, inauguration of the Stupa of Enlightenment, and lectures on Buddhism.²⁴

In the summer of 2017, the Association built and inaugurated two *stūpas*—cult constructions symbolizing Enlightenment—at Lake Baikal and in Krasnoyarsk. Prior to that, in Moscow it built the cultural center “Buddha House.” The Association also organizes numerous “retreat” tours all over the world—intensive meditation sessions which are combined with travelling in the global network of Buddhist communities. One of the disciples, a travelling teacher, assesses the activity of the Association in this way:

We are opened center. If people look for wisdom or benefit for themselves they can come to a lama. We have practices, meditation courses. . . . Buddhist is a gift for the society. People should understand that Buddhist journalist or Buddhist politician—this is a very good present. There is always wisdom and eagerness to be helpful. (female, born 1965, travelling teacher)

Style of leadership: the variety of leadership modes in the Association

An examination of the Association and the global Diamond Way network shows that there are three main leadership positions, which are characterized by a combination of different styles of leadership: hierarchs of the Karma Kagyu school, who exercise ethical and symbolic leadership;

²⁴ “Buddha in Volgograd. The Fifth International Festival of Buddhist Culture.” vk, 2018, Local Religious Organization Buddhist Center of the Diamond Way of the Karma Kagyu Tradition of Volgograd, vk.com/budda_2018. Accessed 15 September 2018.

the position of Ole Nydahl, who demonstrates charismatic and servant styles of leadership; and the travelling teachers, who have facilitative and path-goal leadership.²⁵

A traditional leadership position is represented by the hierarchs of the Karma Kagyu school, primarily by the head of Karma Kagyu (earlier by the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje and currently by the Seventeenth Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje). As high Tibetan lineage holders and the representatives of traditional monastic Buddhism,²⁶ they perform the ethical mode of leadership which involves demonstrating moral standards of behavior and orienting their disciples towards common moral values (Thanissaro 121). In the context of the organizational specifics of Diamond Way Buddhism, another aspect of leadership, the symbolical, becomes more important. The representatives of the monastic lineage of the Karma Kagyu tradition symbolize the continuity of Buddhist teachings and the authenticity of ordination, thereby legitimating the validity of Ole Nydahl's activity as a lama. This charismatic leader introduces his activity as a mission entrusted to him by the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, who "had given Nydahl the West as field of (lay) conversion" (Scherer "Interpreting" 32-33). In short, the symbolical mode of leadership represented by hierarchs of Karma Kagyu contributes, firstly, to resolving the controversies connected with non-traditionality of Nydahl's Buddhist education as a lama. Secondly, it legitimizes the Diamond Way Buddhism as a "Western style lay-oriented branch of the Tibetan Karma Kagyu school of Buddhism" (Obadia 182). In this regard, it is necessary to mention the visit of the Seventeenth Gyal-

²⁵ About styles of leadership in Buddhism see Thra Thanissaro.

²⁶ The Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa abandoned monasticism in 2017 because of his marriage but continued to fulfill duties of the school hierarch "with the exception of conducting ordination" ("Karmapa").

wa Karmapa to Russia in 2009 at the official invitation of the head of the Republic of Kalmykia, one of the traditional Buddhist regions, and with the support of the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition. Thaye Dorje visited six cities, met with the head of the traditional Buddhist Sangha of Russia Damba Ayusheev, the President of the Republic of Kalmykia Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, other officials, and students, mainly followers of Diamond Way Buddhism.²⁷

The leadership of Ole Nydahl involves both charismatic and servant modes. The charismatic mode is characterized through his exceptional personal qualities which helped him to create and to become the leader of the global network of Diamond Way centers. Ironically, those aspects of Ole Nydahl's activity for which he was most criticized by both academics and the public—his teaching style, his political rhetoric including being anti-Islam, and the legitimation of his status of a lay teacher—describe considerably the qualities of his charisma and are the ground for his successful work as a leader. His teaching style is influenced considerably by his personal life and preferences, which has resulted in “life-style Buddhism” as it is designated in critical discourse (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox”; Baumann “Art”). For instance, Nydahl advocates extreme sports such as skydiving as a means to experience a state of mind similar to the one during meditation. Nydahl is also known for his right-wing political and anti-Islamic rhetoric, as well as his emphasis on free heterosexual partnership relationships (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox”). One more key aspect of charismatic leadership is the legitimation of his status as a lay lama which is implemented largely through two of his autobiographical books, *Entering the Diamond Way* and *Riding the Tiger*. In these books he describes his spiritual transformation, missionary

²⁷ “The Seventeenth Karmapa.” *Buddhism*, 2019, CRO Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, www.buddhism.ru/o-buddizme/uchitelya/karmapa-xvii/. Accessed 5 November 2019.

work, and the global dissemination of Diamond Way Buddhism. They are hagiographical in the style of traditional Tibetan Buddhist *namtar* (see Scherer “Interpreting”; Isaeva).

The second aspect of Nydahl’s leadership position is servant leadership, characterizing his orientation to cooperation and trust with disciples and understanding his leadership role in terms of bringing benefit to others. The Danish lama represents Diamond Way Buddhism as a lay Buddhism based on friendship and idealism, which confronts hierarchical bureaucratic structures, and whose *Dharma* centers are built on the principles of “meritocracy” and “flat hierarchy” (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox”). German researcher B. Scherer stresses that in his hagiography, Ole Nydahl represents the foundation of Buddhist centers as an activity which is in his opinion equivalent to spiritual achievements and even more important than formal practice. Currently this type of leadership is undergoing changes because Diamond Way Buddhism characterized in terms of religious movement has moved to the late charismatic phase of its development with the establishment of hierarchical structures to consolidate the movement. Scherer identifies four phases of the evolution of Diamond Way Buddhism: 1969-1972—Nydahl’s religious conversion, spiritual transformation, and mission; 1972-early 1990s—beginning of the charismatic phase; 1992-2007—charismatic phase, global dissemination; 2007-present time—late charismatic phase of consolidation of the movement. He argues that the late charismatic phase is marked by “a more rigid approach concerning his followers in matters of political activism (‘no politics in the centers’) and conduct codes for social media” as well as strong in-group pressure for conformity (“Neo-Orthodox”).

In the phase of the global spread of Diamond Way Buddhism, Nydahl established a new position in the structure of the global network—travelling teacher. In 2003 there were thirty travelling teachers; in

2010, more than 200 (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox”). This leadership position can be described in terms of facilitative and path-goal leadership. The facilitative mode involves behavior which strengthens the collective ability of the group to adapt, solve problems, preserve the common goal, and maintain a strategical orientation to reach it (Thanissaro 138). Thanissaro remarks that this style of leadership supposes access to Buddhist knowledge and languages. Classical facilitative leaders are religious leaders who have the abovementioned characteristics, interpreters, and members of the academic community. In the Russian Association the bright example of a facilitative leader is Elena Leontieva, a Ph.D. in History, an interpreter, chief editor of the journal *Buddhism.ru*, and a travelling teacher, who obtained her Buddhist education in the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI).²⁸ However, in modern Diamond Way Buddhism, this type of leadership has its own features; facilitative leaders are specialists in organizational issues rather than knowledgeable about Buddhist philosophy. They contribute to the functioning and development of the numerous *Dharma* centers of the Association and the Diamond Way global network as a whole. A majority of travelling teachers do not have special Buddhist education or considerable meditation experience. Therefore, they cannot perform the traditional functions of lamas, such as conducting the initiation ritual (i.e., to give the Refuge) (Scherer “Neo-Orthodox”). However, travelling teachers promote the realization of the will and vision of Ole Nydahl in the *Dharma* centers, help disciples conform to common norms and values, and carry out their activity in the frames established by the charismatic leader.

Furthermore, the position of a travelling teacher demonstrates one more leadership mode, path-goal leadership, which in a Buddhist context involves first of all the participation of the laity. This, firstly,

²⁸ “About the Writer.” *LiveLib*, 2019, www.livelib.ru/author/348662-elena-leonteva. Accessed 1 August 2019.

contributes to the assimilation of Buddhism in both Russian and Western contexts; and secondly, it contributes to the delegation of authority, cooperation, and achievement of motivation and satisfaction of disciples. Ole Nydahl designates this leadership mode as “meritocracy” (Sherer “Interpreting” 129). For instance, the case of the Russian travelling teacher Anatoly Sokolov is a bright example of facilitative and path-goal modes of leadership. Anatoly, who once planned and organized Nydahl’s trips to Russia, was one of the originators of the concept of winter Russian tours of Nydahl and his followers—from the Western Part of Russia, Saint-Petersburg and Moscow, to the very East, Vladivostok. Guiding Ole Nydahl, he visited all centers of the Association and many Diamond Way centers abroad and “acquired valuable experience of building and development of Dharma-centers.” In 1996, Nydahl asked him to start working as a travelling teacher, and in 1999, to be a supervisor of the building of the new *Dharma* centers.²⁹

Thus, the Russian Association as the part of the global Diamond Way Buddhist network involves a variety of leadership styles which contribute to the high adaptability of Diamond Way Buddhism not only in the local Russian context but in the global scale as well. Each leadership position identified through combination of leadership modes has certain functions in relation to the Diamond Way Buddhism teachings and centers: Ole Nydahl, as the charismatic and servant leader, performing the function of adaptation and dissemination; travelling teachers as facilitative and path-goal leaders, performing the function of maintenance; the hierarchs of the Karma Kagyu lineage as ethical and symbolic leaders, performing the function of legitimation. I agree with the argument of Thra Thanissaro that a variety of approaches to Buddhist leadership is able to strengthen Buddhism in different regions of the world (Thanissa-

²⁹ “Anatoly Sokolov.” *Buddhism*, 2018, www.buddhism.ru/tt/anatolysokolov/. Accessed 15 June 2018.

ro 138). The case of the Russian Association of the Diamond Way Buddhism of the Karma Kagyu tradition demonstrates empirically how the combination of different leadership styles increases the adaptive abilities of a religious organization and contributes to the achievement of its goals.

Conclusions

In this article I have tried to answer the question how the Western Buddhist organization, the Russian Association of Diamond Way Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, manages to create coherence with the social and cultural environment of the Russian Federation. The research demonstrated that there are six particular features of the Russian context which contribute to formation of the controversial field of norms, values, legal acts, opinions, and evaluations and are significant in relation to identification of the main guidelines of the culture politics of the Association. They are (1) historical phenomena of ethnodoxy—strict linking of ethnicity and religion; (2) differentiation of religions into prevailing one and tolerable ones; (3) Soviet atheism; and in the modern period (4) liberalization of the religious sphere; (5) its further traditionalization; and (6) social dislocations. To achieve cultural coherence with the societal context the Association adapts its ethics, i.e., practical norms and values of its daily activity, and implements culture politics following four main guidelines: (1) integration into the sociocultural environment of the city and the country, (2) assertion of its traditionality on the territory of the Russian Federation, (3) political neutrality in the public sphere, and (4) a variety of leadership styles fulfilling different functions. Implementation of such culture politics has resulted in successful dissemination of Diamond Way Buddhism in Russia and obtaining the status of a traditional confession.

It is important to emphasize that the distinguishing feature of the Russian case in comparison with, for instance, Western Europe or Northern America, is the existence of traditional Buddhist territories and the traditional Gelugpa school there. This circumstance intensifies the need to legitimate modernized Buddhism within tradition and stimulates the search for its historical roots on the territory of the Russian Federation. Gaining the status of a traditional confession, the Association has occupied an equal position with such traditional organizations as, for example, the Buddhist Traditional *Sangha* of Russia in Buryatia or the Kalmyk Buddhist Society.

However, unlike these organizations representing traditional monastic Buddhism, the Association is under the supervision of the lay lama Ole Nydahl and its activities are supported by lay travelling teachers, while the function of Karma Kagyu hierarchs is limited mainly to symbolic legitimization of the status of the Western lay-oriented branch of Karma Kagyu and its leader.

The question for discussion that goes beyond the scope of this article is about the future of the Russian Association: would travelling teachers be able to fulfill the functions of charismatic and servant leadership and continue to implement the culture politics of the Association following the same guidelines? Or would the Association be headed by the representatives of monastic Karma Kagyu and in this case would the organization's ethics be changed? On the whole, the approach of the cultural sociology of religion and the concept of culture politics uncover how the ethics of a Buddhist organization is formed in a particular sociocultural environment and how it is transformed so that it correlates with the societal context. This in turn contributes to the questions posed by Yü and Badmatsyrenov in the mode of understanding what facilitates the spread of Buddhism in the new areas and makes it attractive to new followers.

Although this article discusses one particular case—communities of Diamond Way Buddhism—it can be assumed that other Western Buddhist communities experience similar difficulties in creating coherence with the cultural and social environment of the Russian Federation, as they face the same contextual constraints. Certainly, each case demands special consideration and analysis of the features of its culture politics.

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