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Typology of conversion to Western Buddhism from the perspective of the concept of the social mechanism of religious conversion

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Abstract. “Western Buddhism” as a modernized version of traditional Buddhism, represented by communities of lay followers under the spiritual guidance of Lamas, turns out to be one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Western-style Buddhist communities can now be found almost throughout the Russian Federation, including the traditional Buddhist regions. Despite the existing works devoted to the study of various aspects of Western Buddhism, both in the Western countries and in the post-socialist space, the problem of sociological understanding of conversion to Buddhism in the new socio-cultural conditions is still little studied. In the article, the process of conversion to Western Buddhism is considered from the perspective of the methodology of analytical sociology through a conceptual model of the social mechanism of religious conversion. The model includes such new elements as differentiated processes of social exclusion - cultural and structural, as well as material and spiritual deprivation and gives possibility to trace the variability of the process of religious change identifying its certain types. Based on biographical interviews (n = 42, 2019) with the disciples of the Diamond Way Buddhism of the Karma Kagyu School, a characteristic of the types of religious conversion is presented, in which special attention is paid to the processes of rationalization. It was revealed that the processes of rationalization as typical ways of understanding transformation of one's own worldview, personal history and life play a key role during religious conversion. The article demonstrates that rationalization also performs an important function in changing the Buddhists' evaluation of the quality of their own life: the cognitive and emotional styles of rationalization are closely connected with various aspects of subjective well-being: satisfaction, meaningfulness of life and emotional comfort. The results of the research confirm the relevance of application the analytical sociology approach to analyze the conversion process and to explain its variability.

Key words: Western Buddhism; analytical sociology; social mechanism of religious conversion; emotional rationalization; cognitive rationalization; type of religious conversion

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Table 1

The subjective dimension of the theoretical model of the social mechanism of religious conversion and types of religious conversion

(type of social exceptions (predisposing factors - structure)	(type of rationalization (driving factors subject)	emotional rationalization	cognitive rationalization
/ exclusion	structural instrumentality	/ crisis; objective religious participation; material deprivation	/ inter-est; subjective religious participation; material deprivation
/ cultural exclusion	non-instrumental	/ the crisis; objective religious participation; spiritual deprivation	/ interest; subjective religious participation; spiritual deprivation

2018-2019 . (n = 42, - 2 .)

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