

BETWEEN STRANGENESS AND AN ALTERNATIVE BUDDHIST LIFESTYLE: An Expression of Religious Non-Conformity in Consumer Culture

ZUZANA BÁRTOVÁ, *Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Pardubice*

ABSTRACT: This study contributes to the sociological understanding of the social perceptions of religious engagement and its self-presentation in consumer culture. Drawing on three years of comparative ethnographic research on the Buddhist lifestyle in five different organisations in France and the Czech Republic, it reveals that Buddhist engagement, through its practices, is considered peculiar or even potentially dangerous by the participants' environment. Remarks of the people surrounding them reflect typical features of the popular understanding and the literature on sects, cults and new religious movements and express social pressure to respect different social norms. They also partly represent social demands to adopt a conformist lifestyle because of their often individualised and activity-centred character. At the same time, Buddhist practitioners' self-presentation of their engagement is in line with alternative lifestyle discourses since it challenges different social practices, forms of sociability, ethics and other values. The importance, diversity and positive image associated with this alternative stance can be considered an expression of the value of non-conformity that reflects the individualism and disdain of conformism typical of consumer culture.

KEYWORDS: convert Buddhism, sects, France, Czech Republic, religious lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

When I arrived at the centre at 6.45 p.m., preparations for a Zen Buddhist funeral ceremony were in full swing.¹ Since Jiří's grandmother had died recently, Dominik, a Zen monk active in Prague, would lead the ceremony after a silent meditation session. While we were singing the Heart Sūtra and Lukáš was playing the drum and Zora the bell, the doorbell suddenly started to sound. Pavel ran out of the room to assure a neighbour who did not appreciate the noise we were making. While we were drinking tea after the ceremony, the practitioners debated the incident. Some practitioners suggested going to see the neighbour to explain to her what was going on. Lukáš mentioned that they had already discussed the possibility of going around to the neighbours to explain their activities in the building, but they had decided not to. However, Pavel pointed out that they should do it in her case so she would not consider them a 'sect'. I

found this qualification intriguing. Why would he think that? Wasn't Buddhism considered one of the most likeable religions, according to media surveys, and does Liogier (2007) not declare that it had become ordinary, politically and socially accepted? Did this experience reflect the experience of stigmatisation of Buddhist engagement? This article will inquire about the lived experiences with the negative social perceptions of Buddhist engagement and examine the modes of self-presentation proposed by practitioners.

Based on comparative ethnographic research into five different Buddhist organisations in France and the Czech Republic belonging to Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism, including Soka Gakkai, the findings concern the population of Buddhist practitioners who identify themselves primarily as practitioners of a particular Buddhist practice (*zazen*, prayer, *ngöndro*, meditation) or Buddhist/Zen practitioners. These practitioners are generally treated under the category of 'convert Buddhism',² which includes individuals who are interested in Buddhism and have no ethnic links to the Buddhist Asian cultures from which it came.³ These individuals are not numerous in French and Czech societies. Their numbers do not exceed several tens of thousands of people in France (Bauman 2002; Hourmant 2019; Lenoir 1999a; Obadia 2019)⁴ and several thousand in the Czech Republic (Český Statistický Úřad [Czech Statistical Office] 2014).

The social perception and self-presentation of convert Buddhists in the European social fabric have not been treated systematically. As mentioned above, Liogier (2007) claims the social acceptability of Buddhism. Considering Buddhist practitioners as members of a social minority,⁵ Baumann (2002) and Obadia (2019) associate them with a positive public image and a rational private spirituality that does not 'disturb social peace' (Obadia 2019). A similar social image of Buddhism is bestowed upon it, along with a form of alternative spirituality (Heelas et al. 2005; Obadia 2013).

At the same time, Obadia (2016) analyses how convert Buddhism embraces its minority status to gain 'social acceptability', and for Baumann (2002), Buddhist identity remains strange and looks for normality in the European context. The social acceptability of Buddhism and its practitioners does not seem unequivocal or established.

Moreover, some scholars analyse Buddhist organisations in Europe, especially Soka Gakkai, Zen Buddhism and some Tibetan Buddhism organisations, as new religious movements (Barker 1989; Beckford and Levasseur 1986; Clarke, 2006; Lužný 1997; Scherer 2009; Vojtíšek 2007; Wallis 1984; Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994; Wuthnow 1986). This classification shows that Buddhist engagement can be associated with '*potentially* dangerous situations' (Barker 1989, 137) and with public opinion charges of brainwashing, financial misconduct and living a reclusive life, particularly where Soka Gakkai and New Kadampa Tradition are concerned, as they are treated as sects in public discourses and media (Baumann 2002; Hourmant 2019; Obadia 2007; Obadia 2019). Buddhist engagement can thus be stigmatised.

Regarding self-presentation strategies, Tibetan convert Buddhists are claimed to share elements of self-presentation with the public image of modern rational private spirituality (Obadia 2019). Buddhist new religious movements present themselves as approving or transforming social reality through self-transformation (Wallis 1984; Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994). At the same time, Buddhism's minority status implies distinguishing features in teaching and aesthetics whose reference points are norms of monotheism and secularity (Obadia 2019). As with new religious movements or cults (Dawson 2006), Buddhist organisations also propose new forms of membership and commitment that are less exclusive and intense and a new approach to moral dilemmas of the time (Dawson 2006).

While these approaches focus on the social image of Buddhism and different Buddhist organisations, they grasp the self-presentation put forward by Buddhist actors, but only to a

limited extent. Moreover, they suppose either Buddhist identification or clear organisational belonging, which were problematic for the practitioners studied in this article. Some of the practitioners even contested a shared collective Buddhist sense of belonging. They also contended that organisational membership either did not exist or involved only adherence to the local association running a local centre.

To overcome these weaknesses and propose complex tools for the analysis of the discussed themes, I propose adding the sociology of religious lifestyles to the scientific debate. This enables us to conceive of religious identification as personal and less normative. This approach understands Buddhist engagement in terms of a systematic and coherent lifestyle comprising specific practices, collective activities, beliefs, ethics and values. Since the theories about religious lifestyles on which the article is based connect them to the context of consumer culture (Gauthier 2020; Gauthier, Woodhead and Martikainen 2013), this culture of a market society and consumption (Slater 1997) also constitutes the cultural context of the analysis.

To respond to the questions of negative social perception and self-representation of Buddhist engagement, I will first present social theories on religious minorities, sects, cults, alternative spirituality and alternative lifestyles in the context of consumer culture. After some remarks on methodological considerations, I will tackle the issue of how Buddhist practitioners were confronted with mocking, suspicion or even rejection of their engagement. Finally, I will discuss practitioners' discursive promotion of their engagement as an expression of alternative lifestyle choices, where the value of non-conformity is central and positive.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, SECTS, CULTS, ALTERNATIVE SPIRITUALITIES AND ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper revolves around connotations linked to new forms of religion, especially small religious groups analysed as religious minorities, sects, cults and new religious movements. At the same time, it considers social images associated with alternative spirituality. Furthermore, it presents a theorisation of social perception and the self-presentation of alternative lifestyles in consumer culture, since this culture is considered the main social context.

The distinction between the religious minority and majority may seem obsolete in both national contexts, as religious majorities have become minorities to the non-affiliated majority (Bastian 2007). Still, the concept is useful to analyse the social status of numerically inferior religious groups (nationally or transnationally). It supposes limited social influence, distinguishing features regarding majority and minority self-consciousness (Obadia 2016; Zwilling 2014, 2019). The most distinctive feature of a minority is its minority label, which is sometimes associated with stigmatisation and ill treatment (Obadia 2016). This label can also be appropriated by religious minorities and individuals to gain recognition and legal rights and to avoid stigmatisation (Obadia 2016). They thus embrace their differences and social distance. Such theories are intentionally more focused on collective action than on the self-presentation strategies of individuals (Zwilling 2019).

Sociologists of religion have also treated small religious groups as sects and cults. The classical sociological theory of Max Weber (1995 [1921]), later developed by Ernst Troeltsch (1919), differentiates between sect and church. Weber analysed sects as small schismatic groups (broken away from a dominant church) whose belonging was voluntary and exclusive. In the second half of the 20th century, Bryan Wilson (1970, 1982, 1990) developed a classification system of sects as a self-conscious religious minority with different teachings, practices, modes of socialisation regarding dominant religious or cultural forms, and voluntary and exclusive belonging that refuses orthodox authority and encompasses all aspects of life. Less interested in questions about sects' social perceptions (except their inferior status), he highlighted their

self-legitimation and self-presentation strategies about modes of salvation, especially their orthodoxy claims, social separation and protest character against the church and a morally corrupted world (Wilson 1970). Later, he maintained that the distinguishing characteristic of a sect is its protest character, especially against the secular (non-religious) society, its forms of leisure, health facilities, education, economic institutions and sometimes the state (Wilson 1982, 1990). In 1990, he proposed considering sects in tension with the wider society and as sources of an alternative way of life that is, to some extent, separated from society (Wilson 1990).

Since the second half of the 20th century, several new small religious organisations have become known as cults. This classification is still used by Dawson (2006) to maintain the difference between cults, sects and new religious movements. According to Dawson, cults represent new organisational creations and are not particularly concerned with the wider society. Multiple reasons exist for joining 'cult movements', which are more organised variants of cults, for example, the search for alternative moral values, opportunities for communalisation, their more family-like and guiding nature and one's own goals in their personal life.

In the 1980s, researchers proposed the term 'new religious movements' to analyse new small religious organisations (Barker 1989). While this terminology may not be ideal either, it at least avoids some of the normative analyses associated with earlier research based on the threefold typology of church–sect–cult. Barker (1989), a specialist in new religious movements, defines these as small-scale religious organisations with charismatic leaders and various religious origins. Their members are converts and mostly educated young adults from middle-class backgrounds who are generally critical of society and propose its change. For Barker, the new religious movements are 'a sort of side-kick to the general hippie milieu' (Barker 1994, 128–129) who are parts of the middle class that, in the late 1960s, gave up political protest to change the world through self-development.

Wallis (1984), for his part, analyses them according to their attitudes towards the world. He argues, similarly to Wilson's later work (1999), that the new religious movements do not necessarily adopt a protest attitude, but some approve of the world or accommodate it. Members of the world-rejecting new religions, which are already marginalised in the social tissue, reject societal values of anonymity, individuality and materialism; they do not want to participate in consumption and career patterns, which leads them to retract from society and live together. In contrast, socially integrated members of world-affirming new religions appreciate society by staying in it, working in cities and developing themselves during their leisure time.

Another way to analyse new forms of religion in the scholarly debate is through the notion of alternative spirituality. This type of spirituality is presented in contrast to 'mainstream' religions (Vincett and Woodhead 2009). In scholarly terms, alternative spirituality is associated with the positive image of religious forms that do not conform to religious dogmatism, external authority and hollow ritualism.

In contrast to alternative spirituality, terms of new religious movements, especially 'cult', have been charged with negative connotations in popular understanding and public policies (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Cowan 2009; Dawson 2011; Lužný 1996; Ollion 2014; Richardson 2012; Vojtišek 2004). Theological allegations of doctrinal deviance were progressively replaced by those condemning the practices, notably those relative to the psychological effects (Ollion 2014, 105). Sects/cults and new religious movements have been associated with deviant behaviour and practices because the actions of these movements are supposed to be socially disruptive (marginalising their members), as their members are known to quit university or work (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Dawson 2006, 2011; Ollion 2014). Sociologists point out that conversion to these movements can provoke fear of damaging and breaking up social relations

with family and friends, leading to social isolation (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Dawson 2006). Loss of self-control is also feared when persons involved in new religions start getting rid of possessions and leisure activities, speaking publicly about the religion and engaging in noisy religious practices (Beckford 1982). Furthermore, the groups are thought to impoverish members (for example, through the commercialisation of religious ideas, activities and objects [Barker 1989; Hervieu-Léger 2001]; Luca 2002) and even be harmful to their members, members' children and others (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Dawson 2006, 2011). They are accused of making members fanatics, as they are single-minded in their religious experiences, activities, emotions and skills (Beckford 1982). Since membership is considered unstable and temporary, the engagement is seen as worthless (Beckford 1982). Conversion to such groups may be dismissed as irrational (Cowan 2009; Dawson 2006, 2011; Wilson 1982).

However, above all, sects are supposed to be 'mind-controlling' (Barker 1989; Cowan 2009; Dawson 2006, 2011; Ollion 2014). This *brainwashing thesis* represents the most famous output of these considerations. It frames religious conversion as a constraint choice and an expression of a psychological disease that results in total emotional and material dependency on the group and its charismatic leader.

Beckford (1982) summarise these allegations and show the assumptions they hide. Such allegations criticise 'mental immaturity' and behaving like a child (Beckford 1982, 292–298), being 'brainwashed', 'irrational', 'harmful to self', 'controlled', 'drifting', 'fanatical', 'artificially committed' and 'family-indifferent'. This criticism assumes that adepts' normal state should be 'adult', 'free thinking', 'rational', 'self-concerned', 'autonomous', 'purposeful', 'balanced', 'genuinely committed' and 'family-minded'. As Beckford (1982) points out, allegations against cults show us what is considered normal and what is not in society. They express social norms.

Other scholars have also remarked on the normative character of the debate on new religious movements and sects. Václavík (2006) differentiates among new religious movements according to their attitudes towards society in terms of conformity. He analyses the degree of their respect for social norms. Ollion (2014, 2017) explains the specific attitude of the French state, which regularly published reports on sects between 1993 and 2006, by examining the fact that these groups break with the state-defined and controlled norms in education, health, nutrition, civil duties, sociability and so on.

Moreover, Hjelm (2011) argues that religions began to be labelled as problematic because they transgressed different social norms. Religions have been criticised less because of their non-orthodoxy and more for their supposedly pseudo-religious character, in contrast with true religion, that is, historically approved religious forms, such as the Christian Church in the West. They have also been criticised on an ethical and medical basis for doing morally wrong things and for being dangerous to physical and mental health. Furthermore, any religion is rejected for being non-rational, futile and peculiar. Being religious is defined as deviant because of its opposition to rationality and science.

These discussions on the negative perceptions of small religious groups and religions can conclude that religious groups are negatively labelled because they do not conform to the norms. These are norms of social cohesion, good and moral behaviour, rationality, physical and psychological health, success at work and Christianity.

Based on the reflection of Gauthier and colleagues (Gauthier 2020; Gauthier, Woodhead and Martikainen 2013) on contemporary religion, this article proposes to add the sociology of lifestyles in consumer culture to the discussion of the social perception and self-presentation of new forms of religion. Gauthier et al. are interested in the cultural aspects of consumer society and show that religion is transformed with respect to consumer society and consumerism as its ethos. These authors base their analysis on the sociology of consumer culture (Lury

2011; Sassatelli 2007; Slater 1997), according to which consumer society has developed in Western societies since the second half of the 20th century and has fully evolved in both France (Baudrillard 1970) and the Czech Republic (Večerník 2010). As for its major characteristics, consumer culture is based on market mediation and places essential importance on market consumption. In consumer culture, as a culture of consumption, consumption refers to the purchase and use of commodities. The cultural ethos of consumer culture is thus premised on consumption. These consumerist values can be materialism, commoditisation overconsumption, massification, narcissism, individualism, freedom, autonomy, choice, authenticity, hedonism and non-conformity.

For Gauthier et al. (Gauthier 2020; Gauthier, Woodhead and Martikainen 2013), contemporary religion places individual, personal experience and identity at its centre. It becomes a lifestyle resource. Lifestyle includes behaviour patterns, practices, belonging, values, meaning and identity frameworks that are characteristic of individuals or groups in their everyday lives (Duffková, Urban and Dubský 2008). In consumer culture, lifestyle becomes a systematic, complex and multidimensional cultural model for a way of life and identity construction.

This article is particularly interested in the notion of an alternative lifestyle.⁶ An alternative lifestyle is a result of the voluntary and subjective choice among different lifestyles (Duffková 2006; Duffková, Urban and Dubský 2008). The basic characteristic of an alternative lifestyle is that it is opposed to another lifestyle. The difference from that lifestyle is defined in every substantial aspect. It concerns practices, values and opinions, even all of them at the same time. This other lifestyle may be a consumerist and mainstream lifestyle, which is the dominant socially accepted lifestyle. The actively opposed dominant lifestyle expresses different social conventions, while an alternative lifestyle is considered different and better (Kettemann and Marko 2012).

An alternative lifestyle can also be qualified as non-conformist. In *The Rebel Sell*, Heath and Potter (2005) argue that non-conformism has become a central value of consumer society.⁷ For them, 'alternative culture', also called 'counter-culture' during the 1960s, criticises the conformism of consumer society. Instead, it promotes rebellion, difference and undermining conventions. Consumption is led by negative preferences; 'mainstream' products are refused over 'cool' products recognised by only a limited number of people. Non-conformism procures the sentiment of moral superiority, a contemporary form of distinction on the part of the cultural elite against the low-status conformism of the majority. This explains the popularity of different alternative lifestyles.

METHODOLOGY

My paper is based on field research carried out within different organisations of convert Buddhism in France and the Czech Republic during my PhD thesis research (Bártová 2019): Soka Gakkai, Bodhicharya France and Association Zen Internationale in France, and the Diamond Way and Buddhovo Sezení (formerly Sótó Zen Česká republika) in the Czech Republic. Soka Gakkai is based on the Buddhism of Nichiren, the 13th-century Japanese monk who emphasised the chanting of the title of the Lotus Sūtra (Metraux 1988). It was founded in 1930 in Japan and established in France in the 1960s. Tibetan Buddhism is represented by two organisations: Bodhicharya France and the Diamond Way. These organisations observe different religious practices (sitting meditation, prostration, initiation, etc.) and value the role of teachers (Powers 2007). The first one emerged in the 1990s in France, and the second

⁶ Alternative lifestyles are associated and analysed mostly in relation to different subcultures. However, the theoretical debate around this concept is beyond the scope of the present article.

⁷ As other values typical for consumer culture, non-conformity has not emerged with consumer culture. It has become the core social value thanks to its importance in consumption practices. It is also individualised, personalised, prestigious and associated with higher social status.

one expanded into the Czech Republic after the 1989 revolution. For Zen Buddhism and its Sōtō branch, two organisations were studied: Association Zen Internationale and Buddhovo Sezení. They trace their immediate origin to Taisen Deshimaru, a Japanese monk who arrived in France in the 1960s (Lenoir 1999b). Deshimaru belonged to the tradition founded by Dōgen, the 13th-century monk for whom the sitting meditation of *zazen* was a primary Buddhist activity (Dumoulin 2011).

The research work took place between September 2010 and November 2013 and employed a combination of participative observations and qualitative interviews with 47 practitioners, mainly in Strasbourg (Alsace, France) and Prague (Czech Republic) and to a lesser extent in other locations where chosen organisations hold activities lasting several days. Practitioners were thus studied in two historically Catholic countries where only a minority of the population adheres to institutionalised Christianity (Václavík 2010; Willaime and Portier 2021). Practitioners were beginners (less than a year of regular Buddhist practice), more experienced (between two and four years) and advanced (more than five years). They were asked questions about different dimensions of everyday Buddhist religiosity. I have used pseudonyms and provided only basic information about occupation and age to retain their anonymity. The analysis of fieldwork research and interviews followed the inductive approach inspired by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 2004). The ATLAS.ti program was used for coding.

Practitioners were urban and white, with slightly more women than men. The Czech practitioners were also a little younger on average than the French (31 years instead of 43 years). Two-thirds of the practitioners in both countries had finished or were completing undergraduate studies. Practitioners in both countries had diverse occupations, such as information technology engineer, business and bank manager, legal expert, personal assistant, teacher, social worker, librarian, life coach, child care assistant and personal care assistant. Sociodemographic characteristics, including occupational positions and financial resources, indicated that the majority of practitioners belonged to the middle class and the minority to the working class. The Buddhist practitioners included in the study did not belong to any minority ethnic group, nor did they lack cultural or, for the most part, financial resources.

The analysis did not compare French and Czech practitioners and used the ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ approach (Beck and Sznaider 2006, 1). This approach avoids national contexts as starting points of any sociological analyses and enables us to see a common cultural background for different national contexts. It does not imply the end of the national state or the inexistence of local differences, but it argues that they have to be revealed, not assumed. It points out similarities due to global dynamics. I particularly emphasise the context of consumer culture as a culture that transcends national borders and leads to similar life experiences. I chose to conserve references to a national origin of Buddhist practitioners to prove the relevance of this approach.

BUDDHIST ENGAGEMENT AS AN EXPRESSION OF A ‘STRANGE’ LIFESTYLE⁸

According to Liogier (2007), despite being socially accepted, Buddhism is associated with weirdness in popular opinion. This weirdness was also observed for Dutch Buddhist practitioners (Wiering 2016), and Wilson and Dobbelaere (1994) found that 55% of Soka Gakkai practitioners were confronted at least once with negative reactions in their environment to their engagement. For many of the practitioners interviewed, sharing information about their Buddhist engagement meant facing reactions that were not necessarily encouraging. These remarks primarily concerned four aspects of Buddhist religiosity (listed according to the

⁸ For a more detailed analysis of Buddhist engagement as a lifestyle, see Bártová (2019, 2021b). Buddhist engagement is based on subjective choice (Bártová 2021a) and includes different practices, beliefs, aesthetics, ethics and values that are adopted in a coherent way and are self-perceived as a ‘way of life’.

frequency): collectivities,⁹ practices, religious value and way of life.

A predominant response experienced by several practitioners was being warned against the dangers of a 'cult', a suggestion of the potentially dangerous character of a Buddhist collectivity. Some of the future practitioners were apprehensive about cults, as were their families and friends. This fear of cults did not exclusively concern Soka Gakkai practitioners, an organisation designated a cult by French authorities at the end of the 20th century. Louise, a young person from a Chinese-Cambodian family who was interested in meditation, checked the Zen Buddhism centre website before her participation in Buddhist activity.¹⁰ Her fear of a 'cult', an expression she used, disappeared when she saw a professional website with a price, a fixed-line number and a public address. Jakub (Czech Republic, 20s, master's degree, manager, advanced Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) warned a friend about going to a Diamond Way centre: 'I always told him, "Don't go there, it's a cult, you'll stay aloof from others, you won't talk to them anymore."' Jakub feared his friend's Buddhist engagement because of its supposed communitarian tendencies. He expressed the fears of sects and new religious movements due to the social isolation of their members (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Dawson 2006).

During an interview with Klára (Czech Republic, 30s, bachelor's degree, intermediate occupation, advanced Zen practitioner) and Andrea (Czech Republic, 30s, bachelor's degree, employee, advanced Zen Buddhism practitioner), I asked Klára how her mother had reacted to her Buddhist engagement. They responded:

Klára: I think that she didn't dare to ask me more, and I think that our [Klára's and Andrea's] parents don't really know how it looks. However, your [Andrea's] mother was scared, wasn't she? She used to say, 'What kind of cult is that?'

Andrea: She was afraid because of my previous Christian experience during my teenage years. [...] She was scared that I was falling into something, that they would take all my money, drive me insane and so on.

While Klára's mother did not object to her daughter's Buddhist engagement, Klára remembered that Andrea's mother had fears about a cult. Andrea's mother was afraid and ascribed to the Buddhist collectivity accusations of impoverishing and brainwashing members. Other practitioners also talked about fears of a dangerous cult leader. The collective character of Buddhist engagement was thus problematic for future practitioners and their social environment, which replicated typical critiques of cults and the new religious movement on the negative impact of an individual's financial situation (Barker 1989; Hervieu-Léger 2001; Luca 2002) and brainwashing (Barker 1989; Cowan 2009; Dawson 2006, 2011; Ollion 2014).

Several practitioners reported that their social circles were suspicious of Buddhist practice because it was considered too strange and exotic. Corinne (France, 40s, bachelor's degree, executive, experienced Soka Gakkai practitioner) reproduced for us a discussion with her family:

They were highly sceptical at the beginning; even now, [they are] suspicious. I didn't tell them immediately. When I asked for a gohonzon [a religious object delivered by Soka Gakkai upon request], I told them. [They said:] 'It's really strange, this thing. Why Buddhism?' At first, they told me, 'Just be careful.' I listened to them; outsiders' views are important. [I told myself:] 'I will be careful.'

⁹ The term 'collectivity' is used to embrace different forms of sociability without presuming a community feeling (Meintel 2014, 199).

¹⁰ Field notes, Association Zen Internationale, 3 February 2012.

Corinne's Christian-Jewish family found her Buddhist engagement strange and warned her about its possible negative impact on her life. Due to their own religious background, their concerns may be associated with the contrast they drew between Buddhism and historically approved religious forms, such as Christianity and Judaism (cf. Hjelm 2011). Some other practitioners explicitly talked about this contrast.

Corinne reported following their advice. At the same time, she presented some of her Buddhist readings to them: 'I gave them some of my readings; I gave them some [Soka Gakkai's] magazines. It wasn't helpful. They were even more suspicious.' Corinne linked this suspicious attitude to Buddhism, its teachings as expressed in magazines and its practice:

Now, it's OK. [They tell me] from time to time, 'Do you still follow that strange thing of yours?' 'Yes.' [smile] For them, it's strange to chant like that, things that they don't understand.

If chanting a Japanese text, the principal religious practice of Soka Gakkai practitioners, was perceived by her family as strange and exotic, the discussion about her interest in it turned them around due to her personal preferences and personality traits:

I discussed it with them. It is not something that would be right for them, but there are no barriers any longer [...] They used to tell me, 'You've always been a bit of a non-conformist.'

An interest in Buddhism and its practice was not interpreted as a question of belonging but of practising an activity that corresponded to Corinne's presumed search for non-conformity. Corinne's engagement was perceived as an expression of alternative lifestyle choices and not as an impact of adherence to a religious group.

Some practitioners revealed that they had been teased at work about Buddhist practice, as Frédéric (France, 40s, education not specified, employee, advanced Zen practitioner) reported:

We [my colleagues and I] can talk [about my practice]. I say, I do a [meditation] posture and so on. Sometimes people are so stressed that they say, 'Hey Fred, I should do zazen [sitting meditation], shouldn't I [laugh]? I'm not well; I should do zazen.' 'Cause you are sometimes overrun, busy.

While Frédéric saw meditation as an antidote to a stressful work environment, he also made us understand indirectly that remarks on meditation caused some laughter among his colleagues at the factory. According to Hjelm (2011), this laughter trivialises religious practice regarding the norm of rationality. I also suggest that Frédéric's colleagues laughed at the non-conformity of his practice. This can be seen in an experience with another interviewee. To avoid any awkward situations, Tomáš (Czech Republic, 30s, master's degree, manager, intermediate Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) described how he preferred sitting meditation to prostration while staying at his parents' house:

When you come home, to do prostrations in front of my parents, it would be exotic. Well, they know that I meditate; it's OK to sit down, have a sitting practice. [...] It's about what you consider possible and appropriate to do in society.

Tomáš chose meditation over other forms of Buddhist practice, since meditation was not labelled exotic. If his parents saw it as ordinary, it may be because of the image of meditation as a relaxing practice for individual well-being without necessarily having any religious connotations transmitted in popular culture and media (Borup 2016; Irizarry 2015; Mitchell 2014). However, this normalisation did not happen in Frédéric's working-class environment.

While Buddhist practice was sometimes judged as strange and ridiculous, Aleš (Czech Republic, 30s, doctorate, manager, beginner Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) was even ascribed a dangerous religious mindset. He was confronted by his wife's fear when she accused him of being a 'fanatic' while prostrating himself.¹¹ His wife's reaction is akin to an accusation of fanaticism addressed to cult members, reflecting their controlled and irrational state of mind (Beckford 1982).

These examples show us different degrees of negative reactions to Buddhist engagement through its practice – from a categorical refusal via suspicion to laughing. They can be considered expressions of normative regard of religious engagement and behaviour, that of Christianity-Judaism, rationality and a balanced state of mind. However, once again, the transition was ascribed to individuals, their choices and practices, not to their religious belonging.

Other puzzling comments regarding Buddhist engagement were explicitly concerned with what I call its religious value. The religious value of Buddhist engagement was targeted in Bianca's (France, 40s, bachelor's degree, employee, advanced Soka Gakkai practitioner) narrative regarding her difficulties receiving a *gohozon* (object of practice) that would mark her adhesion to the Buddhism of Nichiren and a Soka Gakkai community:

I had to practise a lot to assert myself. I was living with my children's father at that point. He is materialistic, intellectual. Well, he did some psychoanalysis. So, he looked at it [Buddhist engagement] as a kind of whim. It was hard to stand up for it seriously, to keep going. You see, he made fun of me. He didn't support me.

Bianca's husband joked about her Buddhist engagement and minimised its importance, viewing it as a short-lived leisure activity. He echoed accusations about the worthlessness and futility of religious engagement (Beckford 1982; Hjelm 2011) without referring to the cult character of Soka Gakkai. Since she attributed his regard to his materialistic and scientific worldview, he implicitly opposed her behaviour to atheistic and scientific norms and questioned her rationality (cf. Hjelm 2011).

The religious value of Buddhist engagement was also central in Véronique's (France, 50s, master's degree, professional, beginner in Zen Buddhism) experience. To my question of whether she wanted her future boyfriend to be Buddhist, she responded:

If I had a boyfriend, he would be Buddhist; I am pretty sure about that. Otherwise, I don't know if I could get on with him. We [Buddhists] are so strange, different. I even lost some friends because of it. I've noticed that people aren't, that people who are atheist or not spiritual at all, they are fed up with me. A friend of mine is like that; she hasn't been talking to me ever since [I've started to practise].

Véronique became aware of how her Buddhist engagement was problematic when it damaged her social relationships. She attributed this to the transgression of the social norms of atheism and non-spirituality. This transgression was also linked to the collective strangeness. However, this accent of the collective character of the Buddhist minority (cf. Obadia 2016; Zwilling 2014) should not be overestimated. She referred to a collective identity in response to my question that implied she had embraced the Buddhist identity. Such experiences concerning the religious value of Buddhist engagement exemplified practitioners' transgressions of the atheistic/non-religious norm of individuals they knew and elicited unpleasant reactions. Their engagement was non-conformist because of its religious character.

The fourth subject of tension between practitioners and their social environment was a presumed Buddhist way of life. Some practitioners commented on this, as it corresponded

¹¹ Field notes, Diamond Way, 7 June 2012.

to their perceptions of Buddhist engagement. Even if Dana (Czech Republic, 40s, bachelor's degree, independent worker, experienced Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) had been interested in Buddhism for a while, she kept her distance because she and her friends associated Buddhism with 'meditating in a cavern' and a restrained sexual life. Practitioners then had to explain to their friends that they were not planning to adopt an ascetic or monastic way of life, without love, work and money. They echoed fears about the socially disruptive and marginalising consequences of membership in sects and new religious movements (Barker 1989; Beckford 1982; Dawson 2006, 2011; Ollion 2014). However, in my study, this marginalising effect of Buddhist engagement was attributed to individual lifestyle choices, not to any membership. These choices were seen as excessively non-conformist.

Practitioners spoke about fears of social marginalisation, isolation, brainwashing and impoverishment. They also experienced that their engagement and practice were ridiculed and its importance was downplayed. Thus, they mirrored typical accusations concerning sects, cults, new religious movements and religions. Their testimonies were about practitioners' transgressions of the social norms of social integration, autonomy, mental health, economic success, rationality, traditional religions (such as Christianity) and atheism. Nevertheless, their transgressions did not directly lead to social exclusion. Rather, practitioners testified about more activity-centred and individualised remarks that expressed social pressure to conform their lifestyle choices to different social norms.

Buddhist practitioners provided evidence that different elements of Buddhist engagement could be labelled as potentially deviant, represent a social problem or at least be considered weird. They reflected a popular understanding of the non-normative character of sects, cults and new religious movements and suspicion around non-conformist lifestyles. To implicit requests to respect particular social norms, practitioners proposed self-presentation based mainly on alternative lifestyle discourses.

BUDDHIST ENGAGEMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE

In response to critical or mocking representations and reactions, practitioners promoted their Buddhist engagement as positively different from ordinary forms of sociability, practices, ethics and values. They were not interested in defying orthodoxy claims on teaching and authority and affirmation of exclusive belonging, which are typical markers of difference for sects and cults (cf. Dawson 2006; Wilson 1970). They actively drew several oppositions coherent to the alternative lifestyle analysis (Duffková 2006; Duffková, Urban and Dubský 2008).

Contrary to theories of sects developed by Wilson (1990), any form of collective separation from society was rarely expressed. Nor was minority self-consciousness embraced to point out the difference between Buddhist engagement and society (cf. Wilson 1970, 1982, 1990). It was also not appropriate to gain collective recognition (cf. Obadia 2016). Many practitioners explicitly valued being part of a Buddhist collectivity, but they appreciated the collective character of their engagement and being in the presence of its virtuosos (masters, monks and nuns, teachers, etc.), in contrast to individualistic Buddhist, therapeutic and well-being activities.

Some perceived Buddhist collectivities as an alternative to their everyday social interactions with family, friends and colleagues. They appreciated seeing different people in different settings and having different kinds of social interactions. Martin, an advanced Zen Buddhist practitioner, said that, if he wanted to have discussions with his fellow practitioners, he 'would have gone to a sports club'.¹² His remark made us understand that Zen sociability was, for him, more about common practice than about sharing personal lives. Monika (Czech Republic, 30s, high school diploma, professional, advanced Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) described this

¹²Field notes, Association Zen Internationale, 27 April 2012.

different mode of sociability when she talked about her experience of an all-encompassing presence in time and space thanks to her encounter with Buddhist teachers. She then continued:

I don't want to sound like everything is great; it isn't, but the most important thing is that everybody is in the process of self-development. It's not about finding a family where to live, what I thought at the beginning. I see it now, that I can be here as I am; I don't have to pretend, hide, be somewhere I don't want to be. I like the people in here; that's why I'm here.

Monika initially approached the Buddhist collectivity as a substitute for her complicated family relations at the time, to finally differentiate between her ordinary modes of sociability and the Buddhist one. The Buddhist sociability represented for her a form of sociability that encouraged personal development and the expression of the authentic self. Delimited by the Buddhist centre and the duration of practice, this alternative Buddhist sociability enabled her to engage in self-realisation.

Talking about Buddhist ethics was also an opportunity for Buddhist practitioners to highlight an alternative dimension of their Buddhist engagement. Many practitioners presented Buddhism as an antidote to the ethical values of their society, its individualism, violence, aggressive relationships and absence of tolerance, respect and solidarity. This was articulated by Farida (France, 30s, two-year higher-education diploma, intermediate occupation, advanced Soka Gakkai practitioner) when she described the force she gained from collective engagement and an eye-opening effect of Buddhist practice:

It [collective practice] is mutual support. We really try to rise as human beings and, as much as we can, not to be in the fundamental darkness that can form in our lives and the system in which we live, especially the system in which we live. There is no need to search for it – you see it in TV shows and so on. I have a car, so I don't often use public transport, but when the weather is nice, I avoid driving a car, but on a tram, people are jostling, insulting one another. Last time, there was a lad, and two mothers insulted him, and I said, 'No, really, listen. He's just a kid. I understand that he behaved badly, but don't you think that you are pushing him to be even more violent?' Actually, I think that we live in a world where it is easier to hurt someone than to do good, to help each other. Humanity has lost the notion of mutual aid.

Farida saw in Buddhist practice, especially in its collective form, support to encourage the ethical behaviour of doing good to others and of solidarity. For other practitioners, this position was more implicit when they proposed ethical behaviour as the dominant mode of the Buddhist way of life. Furthermore, they conceived Buddhist ethics as a way to change the world by changing oneself and others. They shared this attitude towards society with new religious movements (Barker 1994).

Other Buddhist values were also considered as defying dominant conceptions of these values and associated practices. The Buddhist understanding of freedom proposed ways to escape gendered conventions and social expectations. Buddhism was seen as an alternative solution to psychology and ordinary rationality. It offered more advanced tools for self-understanding and reflexivity. Buddhist well-being resulting from practice has been compared to the use of chemical substances, such as painkillers, anti-depressants or illegal drugs. Tadeáš, an advanced Diamond Way practitioner in his twenties, expressed it vividly. Unable to get up after his first meditation during fifteen minutes, he commented it: "That's fucking stronger than drugs!"¹³ The Buddhist response was considered a stronger, a healthier and more efficient option to achieve well-being.

¹³ Field notes, Diamond Way, 31 October 2011.

Some practitioners also contrasted the Buddhist experience of well-being with material acquisitions and the pursuit of a career.¹⁴ However, such world-rejecting positions (Wallis 1984) were individualised and not built into organisational strategies. Practitioners also compared Buddhist well-being with well-being practices like sophrology, relaxation and so on. Buddhist well-being was, for them, more lasting and more profound. The narrative of Dominique (France, 30s, two-year higher-education diploma, employee, advanced Tibetan Buddhism practitioner) evinced both considerations about reflexivity and well-being:

[Buddhism helps me] to deal with stress, to deal with emotions, to deal with things because I have to withstand a lot of things at work since I work with people who are sick, sometimes irritated, and they pass it on to me. And Buddhism helps me to unwind, to put things into perspective, to handle emotions, you know. I need it to get better in general, you see. Meditation, I hadn't been aware of it before; I had tried other stuff, relaxation and stuff like this, but it isn't all the same. Relaxation, you unwind, but it doesn't affect self-esteem.

Working with disabled persons was physically and psychologically demanding for Dominique, but in Buddhism, she found a way to handle her emotions. Thanks to Buddhist practice, she developed a reflexivity that helped her deal with her emotions and take some distance. As she explained, through meditation, you 'let go of your thoughts; it's a starting point. Then, you can turn yourself..., depending on what you want to tackle as an aspect of your thoughts, without analysing as we do ordinary, rationally.' It led her to feel better. She also compared the Buddhist answer regarding her emotional difficulties to the more common practices of relaxation and their versions of well-being. Nevertheless, she did not challenge the value of the well-being as such. She felt that Buddhist practice enabled her to feel better and that Buddhist well-being was qualitatively superior to relaxation well-being. It was not just about feeling good; it was disciplined well-being, repeated and developed over time, that influenced the perception of the self.

If the practitioners' environment was critical to their Buddhist engagement based on scientific, non-religious and atheistic positions, many practitioners observed an alternative stance in the religious value, in emic terms, of their engagement. They compared it to the non-religious character of the society-dominant lifestyle. Half of the practitioners explicitly targeted overconsumption and the absence of 'spirituality', stability, questioning, meaning-seeking and depth in contemporary ways of life, which are all elements that can be found in Buddhist engagement. For Zora (Czech Republic, 20s, high school diploma, executive, advanced Zen Buddhism practitioner), the difference between Buddhism and ordinary people lies in the depth of the Buddhist experience of the present moment and unity:

Well, some people just exist; they flow on the surface of life. It is enough for them, but as for me, I just don't get it. They suffer and turn and repeat situations all the time; they rush, they are born and they die, and they are born again and die again, and they rush; they just must turn all the time. [...] [During her first Buddhist seminar] I felt, I don't know, it was a feeling, a feeling of freedom, liberty, full presence. There is a feeling of unity – the unity with myself. I know that tears were running down my cheek, and I thought I had found a treasure. I felt that I found a treasure, and I wanted to share it with others, but when I came back to this world after the sesshin [Buddhist seminar], I found out that I saw poverty around me and that people saw that I was holding a treasure, but they just passed next to me. They didn't see; they were blind.

Zora contrasted her Buddhist experience of unity with herself with a common lifestyle without depth. Her first Buddhist seminar, together with her first Buddhist meditation,

¹⁴ In the Czech Republic, the critique of materialism and career ambitions was expressed only by younger practitioners. This shows that Buddhism may be considered more in tune with consumer capitalism there than in France (Bártová 2021b).

convinced her that there must be something more to life than she had known until then. This difference can be understood as a holistic conception of the self that, in different emic forms, constitutes the religious value of the Buddhist lifestyle for all practitioners.

More than half of the practitioners compared their Buddhist engagement to Christianity. These significant comparisons can be understood as an expression of a conscious search for a religious alternative or, at least, as an important element in the construction of the alternative character of their involvement in Buddhism. A third of the practitioners reflected on the holistic conception of the self in Buddhism as an alternative to the Christian duality of the self and God, and the holistic self in temporal continuity in contrast to the Christian conception of a single life and death. Similarly, some practitioners, especially in France, linked Christianity with coercive rules and the feelings of guilt. In this way, Christianity would deprive them of the possibility of progressing and changing their lives. As Hanegraaff (2000) argues, holism can be a powerful alternative to Christianity and cultural dualism, in which God is an exterior entity with the power to influence an individual's life.

Practitioners also depicted Christianity as a ritualistic religion taking place in churches and disconnected from the body and everyday life. The narrative of Marek (Czech, 20s, master's degree, executive, advanced Zen Buddhism practitioner) was replete with these concerns:

At first, [...] I would say I was looking for something completely opposed to the Christianity I had come from and, more or less, I refused as rubbish during my teenage years. I was looking for something I would consider completely different [...] Furthermore, I was interested, and I didn't find it anywhere else, this degree of usefulness, I would say. [...] I still like the [Buddhist] path because it is..., for a modern person living a normal life [...], simply nowadays, Christianity's response. I think its questions are not these I am the most worried about in everyday life. [...] I have no ontological problems. [My worries are] rather really how to survive this crazy reality. [laughs] And for me, Buddha's teaching and its practical side focused really, in technical terms, on work with your mind, but [also] on really simple attention to the present moment, [...] that I can understand everything as an opportunity to practise.[...] Then you stop to feel like [...] that life is just passing you by.

Contrary to Christianity, Marek found an embodied practice of meditation and a focus on reflexivity necessary to fully live his everyday life in Buddhism. Despite the exceptional character of Marek's experience in the Czech context, due to his active Christian engagement in his youth, he had a pragmatic perception of Buddhism, which was common among practitioners. Buddhism was considered connected to everyday life, unlike Christianity. Consequently, Buddhist engagement was also conceived of as a totalising way of life, in contrast to compartmentalised Christian religiosity. In line with alternative spirituality discourses, Buddhist practitioners criticised external authority, religious dogma and hollow ritualism (Vincett and Woodhead 2009). They also used the vocabulary of 'spirituality' or 'philosophy' to label Buddhism and mark its alternative character to the conventional understanding of religion represented by Christianity.

Buddhist practitioners highlighted their Buddhist engagement as different from other forms of sociability and to what they considered dominant practices, ethics and 'secular' lifestyles. They also challenged the common understanding of freedom, well-being and reflexivity and criticised Christianity as a main representative of religion. Regarding the context of consumer culture, Buddhist practitioners understood Buddhism as a resource for an alternative lifestyle; their engagement combined alternative forms of sociability, practices, ethics and other values. Based on individual decisions and choices, this alternative engagement was coherent because different aspects of Buddhist engagement were considered a source of alternative propositions to more current social solutions. The importance of the alternative dimension of the Buddhist lifestyle also reflects a consumer-culture value of non-conformity and its positive

understanding. Alternative lifestyle discourse proposes to Buddhist practitioners a positive self-perception and self-presentation of the individually chosen lifestyle based on religious engagement that may be criticised or mocked on other occasions.

CONCLUSION

Practitioners engaging in Buddhist practice in different organisations in France and the Czech Republic experienced how their engagement was criticised or mocked on the premises of cloistered and dangerous socialisation, strange practices, irrationality, frivolity and its religious dimension. Such reactions reflect typical negative features associated with sects, cults and new religious movements. They also result from a more general tendency to frame religion as a social problem. However, they did not accompany social exclusion. Rather, based on the demands of social conformity, they reflected the social strangeness of the Buddhist non-conformist lifestyle.

At the same time, Buddhist engagement was associated with personal character traits and the willingness to be different, along with lifestyle choices. This stance was also largely adopted by Buddhist practitioners who emphasised the alternative character of their involvement in Buddhism. They highlighted this as different in terms of sociability, ethics and being religious without being 'religious' and practising Christianity. They expressed their appreciation of Buddhist versions of different values, such as freedom, well-being and reflexivity. Thus, they promoted Buddhist engagement as a question of choice of an alternative lifestyle – an exceptional lifestyle contrary to the dominant lifestyle. The Buddhist lifestyle was discursively designed to be an appreciated expression of the value of non-conformity in the consumer culture that highlights individualism and despise conformity.

The aim of this article was to show that, to fully assess the dynamics between the external regard of Buddhist engagement and its self-presentation, it is necessary to combine theories of different forms of new religious groups – religious minorities, new religious movements, sects and cults – with the sociology of lifestyles. It also argues about the explanatory potential of the context of consumer culture while analysing current religious forms.

REFERENCES

- BARKER, EILEEN. 1989. *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*. London: HMSO.
- BARKER, EILEEN. 1994. "New religious movements in Europe". In *Religions in Europe: Contemporary Perspectives* edited by Sean Gill, Gavin D'Costa and Ursula King, 120–140. Kampen: Pharos.
- BÁRTOVÁ, ZUZANA. 2019. "Le bouddhisme comme style de vie organisé pour les classes moyennes dans la culture de consommation: analyse de la religiosité des pratiquants bouddhistes en France et en République tchèque". Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg.
- BÁRTOVÁ, ZUZANA. 2021a. "L'authenticité comme valeur centrale de l'engagement religieux dans la culture de consommation: le cas des pratiquants bouddhistes en France et en République tchèque". *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 50 (1): 141–162. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008429820916155>.
- BÁRTOVÁ, ZUZANA. 2021b. "The Buddhist Style in Consumer Culture: From Aesthetics to Emotional Patterns". *Journal of Religion in Europe* 14 (1): 28–54. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18748929-20211488>.
- BASTIAN, JEAN-PIERRE. 2007. "Pour une redéfinition du concept de minorité religieuse dans l'Europe contemporaine". In *Minorités religieuses dans l'espace européen: approches sociologiques et juridiques* edited by Jean-Pierre Bastian and Francis Messner, 63–73. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- BAUDRILLARD, JEAN. 1970. *La société de consommation: ses mythes, ses structures*. Paris: Gallimard.
- BAUMANN, MARTIN. 2002. "Buddhism in Europe: Past, present, prospects". In *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* edited by Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann, 85–105. Berkeley: University of California Press. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520936584-007>.

- BECK, ULRICH, AND NATHAN SZNAIDER. 2006. "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda". *British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 1–23. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2009.01250.x>.
- BECKFORD, JAMES A. 1982. "Beyond the Pale: Cults, Culture and Conflict". In *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society* edited by Eileen Barker, 284–301. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- BECKFORD, JAMES A., and Martine Levasseur. 1986. "New Religious Movements in Western Europe". In *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change* edited by James A. Beckford, 29–54. London: Sage.
- BORUP, JØRN. 2016. "Branding Buddha: Mediatized and Commodified Buddhism as Cultural Narrative". *Journal of Global Buddhism* 17: 41–55. doi.: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1305859>.
- ČESKÝ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD, ODBOR STATISTIKY OBYVATELSTVA. 2014. *Náboženská víra obyvatel podle výsledků sčítání lidu*. Český statistický úřad. [http://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/t/7C00563328/\\$File/c01b10t.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/t/7C00563328/$File/c01b10t.pdf) (Date of retrieval: 3 December 2021).
- CLARKE, PETER B. 2006. *New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World*. London: Routledge. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203508336>.
- COWAN, DOUGLAS E. 2009. "New religious movements". In *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* edited by Linda Woodhead, Hiroko Kawanami and Christopher Partridge, 379–406. London: Routledge.
- DAWSON, ANDREW. 2011. *Sociology of Religion*. London: SCM Press.
- DAWSON, LORNE L. 2006. *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DUFFKOVÁ, JANA. 2006. "Životní způsob/životní styl a jeho variantnost". In *Aktuální problémy životního stylu* edited by Alexander Fazik and Martin Matějů, 79–90. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze.
- DUFFKOVÁ, JANA, LUKÁŠ URBAN AND JOSEF DUBSKÝ. 2008. *Sociologie životního stylu*. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk.
- DUMOULIN, HEINRICH. 2011. *A History of Zen Buddhism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- GAUTHIER, FRANÇOIS. 2020. *Religion, Modernity, Globalisation: Nation-State to Market*. Oxford: Routledge. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429276033>.
- GAUTHIER, FRANÇOIS, LINDA WOODHEAD AND TUOMAS MARTIKAINEN. 2013. "Introduction: Consumerism as the ethos of consumer society". In *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers and Markets* edited by François Gauthier and Tuomas Martikainen, 1–24. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.
- HANEGRAAFF, WOUTER J. 2000. "New Age Religion and Secularization". *Numen* 47 (3): 288–312. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852700511568>.
- HEATH, JOSEPH, AND ANDREW POTTER. 2005. *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't be Jammed*. Chichester: Capstone.
- HEELAS, PAUL, ET AL. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- HERVIEU-LÉGER, DANIELLE. 2001. *La religion en miettes ou la question des sectes*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.
- HJELM, TITUS. 2011. "Religion and Social Problems: A New Theoretical Perspective". In *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology of Religion* edited by Peter B. Clarke, 924–941. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588961.013.0052>.
- HOUMANT, LOUIS. 2019. "La Soka Gakkai". In *Minorités religieuses en France: panorama de la diversité contemporaine* edited by Anne-Laure Zwilling et al., 105–120. Paris: Bayard.
- IRIZARRY, JOSHUA A. 2015. "Putting a Price on Zen: The Business of Redefining Religion for Global Consumption". *Journal of Global Buddhism* 16: 51–69. doi.: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1305896>.
- KETTEMANN, BERNHARD, AND GEORG MARKO. 2012. "The Language of Alternative Lifestyles: A Critical Analysis of the Discourses of Emos and LOHAS". *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 37 (1): 69–94.

- LENOIR, FRÉDÉRIC. 1999a. *Le bouddhisme en France*. Paris: Fayard.
- LENOIR, FRÉDÉRIC. 1999b. *La rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident*. Paris: Fayard.
- LOGIER, RAPHAËL. 2007. "Deux perceptions différentes de la religion minoritaire en Europe, islam et bouddhisme". In *Minorités religieuses dans l'espace européen: approches sociologiques et juridiques* edited by Jean-Pierre Bastian and Francis Messner, 251-282. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- LUCA, NATHALIE. 2002. "Quelles politiques face aux sectes". *Critique Internationale* 17: 105–125. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.3917/crui.017.0105>.
- LURY, CELIA. 2011. *Consumer Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- LUŽNÝ, DUŠAN. 1996. "Antikultovní hnutí: otázka nebezpečnosti nových náboženských hnutí a metody akademického studia náboženství". *Religio* 4 (1): 17–36.
- LUŽNÝ, DUŠAN. 1997. *Nová náboženská hnutí*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- MEINTEL, DEIDRE. 2014. "Religious Collectivities in the Era of Individualization". *Social Compass* 61 (2): 195–206. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614524321>.
- METRAUX, DANIEL. 1988. *The History and Theology of Soka Gakkai: A Japanese New Religion*. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press.
- MITCHELL, SCOTT A. 2014. "The Tranquil Meditator: Representing Buddhism and Buddhist in US Popular Media". *Religion Compass* 8 (3): 81–89. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12104>.
- NUMRICH, PAUL DAVID. 2003. "Two Buddhisms Further Considered". *Contemporary Buddhism* 4 (1): 55–78. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140185>.
- OBADIA, LIONEL. 2007. *Le bouddhisme en Occident*. Paris: La Découverte. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.obadi.2007.01>.
- OBADIA, LIONEL. 2013. "'Désoccidentaliser' encore les sciences des religions? L'anthropologie contemporaine et la modélisation des traditions asiatiques en France et en Europe". *Revue des sciences sociales* (49): 122–129. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.3406/revss.2013.1581>.
- OBADIA, LIONEL. 2016. "Minorité et sciences religieuses: pragmatique, minoration et religiogenèse". In *Minorité et communauté en religion* edited by Lionel Obadia and Anne-Laure Zwillling, 61–77. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pus.14179>.
- OBADIA, LIONEL. 2019. "Une visibilité paradoxale en France". In *Minorités religieuses en France: panorama de la diversité contemporaine* edited by Anne-Laure Zwillling et al., 36–50. Paris: Bayard.
- OLLION, ÉTIENNE. 2014. "Comment les Témoins de Jéhovah sont redevenus une 'secte'. Les définitions changeantes du sectarisme en France." In *Minorités religieuses, religions minoritaires dans l'espace public* edited by Anne-Laure Zwillling, 97–115. Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires Strasbourg. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pus.9612>.
- OLLION, ÉTIENNE. 2017. *Raisons d'État : histoire de la lutte contre les sectes en France*. Paris: La Découverte. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.ollio.2017.01>.
- POWERS, JOHN. 2007. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Ithaca and Boulder: Snow Lion Publications.
- RICHARDSON, JAMES T. 2012. "Major controversies involving new religious movements". In *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements* edited by Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, 44–60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521196505.005>.
- SASSATELLI, ROBERTA. 2007. *Consumer Culture: History, Theory, Politics*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446212684>.
- SCHERER, BURKHARD. 2009. "Interpreting the Diamond Way. Contemporary Convert Buddhism in Transition". *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10: 17-48. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1306807>.
- SLATER, DON. 1997. *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

- STRAUSS, ANSELM, AND JULIET CORBIN. 2004. *Les fondements de la recherche qualitative. Techniques et procédures de développement de la théorie enracinée*. Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg.
- TROELTSCH, ERNST. 1919. *Gesammelte Schriften. Band I: Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- VÁCLAVÍK, DAVID. 2006. *Sociologie nových náboženských hnutí*. Praha: Malvern.
- VÁCLAVÍK, DAVID. 2010. *Náboženství a moderní česká společnost*. Praha: Grada.
- VEČERNÍK, JIŘÍ. 2010. "Konzumní společnost: vstup do ráje hojnosti a manipulace". In *Jaká je naše společnost: otázky, které si často klademe* edited by Hana Maříková, Tomáš Kostelecký, Tomáš Lebeda, et al., 100–113. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- VINCETT, GISELLE, AND LINDA WOODHEAD. 2009. "Spirituality". In *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* edited by Linda Woodhead, Hiroko Kawanami and Christopher Partridge, 319–337. London: Routledge.
- VOJTÍŠEK, ZDENĚK. 2004. *Encyklopedie náboženských směrů: náboženství, církve, sekty, duchovní společnosti*. Praha: Portál.
- VOJTÍŠEK, ZDENĚK. 2007. *Nová náboženská hnutí a jak jim porozumět*. Praha: Beta Books.
- WALLIS, ROY. 1984. *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*. London: Routledge, Kegan Paul.
- WEBER, MAX. 1995 [1921]. *Économie et société. Tome II: L'organisation et les puissances de la société dans leur rapport avec l'économie*. Paris: Pocket.
- WIERING, JELLE. 2016. "'Others Think I am Airy-Fairy': Practicing Navayana Buddhism in a Dutch Secular Climate". *Contemporary Buddhism* 17 (2): 369–389. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2016.1234751>.
- WILLAIME, JEAN-PAUL, AND PHILIPPE PORTIER. 2021. *La religion dans la France contemporaine : entre sécularisation et récomposition*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- WILSON, BRYAN. 1970. *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- WILSON, BRYAN. 1982. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WILSON, BRYAN. 1990. *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WILSON, BRYAN ROLAND, AND KAREL DOBBELAERE. 1994. *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- WUTHNOW, ROBERT. 1986. "Religious Movements and Counter-movements in North America". In *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change* edited by James A. Beckford, 1–28. London: Sage.
- ZWILLING, ANNE-LAURE. 2014. "Introduction: parler de minorités religieuses dans l'espace public". In *Minorités religieuses, religions minoritaires dans l'espace public* edited by Anne-Laure Zwilling, 5–16. Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires Strasbourg. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pus.9582>.
- ZWILLING, ANNE-LAURE. 2019. "Introduction". In *Minorités religieuses en France: panorama de la diversité contemporaine* edited by Anne-Laure Zwilling et al., 13–34. Paris: Bayard.