

UDC 298.9 (477)

DOI 10.31733/2786-491X-2022-2-25-36



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### **THE PHENOMENON OF FALUN GONG IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT OF ANTI-TOTALITARIAN TENDENCIES IN RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF UKRAINIANS**

**Abstract.** The study of Falun Dafa phenomenon in the context of the essential opposition of the religious culture of Ukrainians to the aggressive religious rhetoric of racist totalitarianism in the conditions of Russia's war against Ukraine and the related transformations of the Ukrainian community is relevant. During the analysis, it was found that acquaintance with Chinese culture through the study of the non-traditional religious movement Falun Gong encourages Ukrainian scientists and young students to recognize the existence of strong totalitarian tendencies in the activities of the Chinese authorities and the Chinese Communist Party.

Aggressive policy of the totalitarian government is reprehensible and encourages condemnation of practices of persecution for religious beliefs. The necessity of opposition from the side of neo-religious organizations to manifestations of state totalitarianism is concluded. In the conditions of military resistance to racism, this is a confirmation of the need to confront the totalitarian aggressor.

**Keywords:** *religious culture, aggressor, war, racism, totalitarianism, Falun Gong, Falun Dafa.*

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**Introduction.** The relevance of the study is determined by the need for the Ukrainian community to realize the fact that it faces a difficult task in establishing a new world order, building a future where there will be no place for aggressive actions against sovereign states and their citizens. And the crimes against humanity will be condemned so harshly that their implementation will become unprofitable and unthinkable. In the context of understanding the important influence of Ukraine on the formation of a new world order, it is necessary to take a close look at religious systems that are unconventional for our community. These systems have been actively spreading on Ukrainian territory and influenced the development of the religious culture of Ukrainians and the consciousness of our fellow citizens since the 70s-90s of the last century. This is also important because the process of development of religious culture is directly related to the emergence of new symbolic systems that not only reflect changes in the sphere of religiosity, but also influence the formation of new meanings of social existence.

Historically, none of the traditional religions have succeeded in bringing humanity to peace. Now it has become obvious that neither Hinduism, nor Christianity, nor Islam, nor any other traditional religious system is capable of creating conditions for global solidarity of democratic forces and appeasement of aggressors. The significant increase in the number of fundamentalist religious movements around the world, their attempts to revive fundamental religious values with the help of terror, shows that the era of post-secularism, which Western communities and Ukraine are now entering, will not ensure a peaceful future for humanity and a conflict-free coexistence of peoples by the revival and spread of traditional religions.

Moreover, certain directions of traditional religiosity, such as Russian Orthodoxy, which actively supports the aggressive policy of the racist dictator, testify to the propensity of many followers of Orthodoxy to a totalitarian way of thinking and the forced imposition of their beliefs on fellow citizens. This situation is a reflection of the crisis of traditional religiosity and evidence of the inevitability of changes in the process of its adaptation to new conditions of existence. Currently, all over the world, we are witnessing active transformational processes in the sphere of established religious culture, which have given rise to a huge number of neo-religious movements. Among them, Falun Gong draws special attention due to the need to understand how a democratic country should build its relations with neo-religious entities, what it can afford in the process of establishing communication with believers, and what it should abandon.

If we consider the problem from the point of view of its influence on the development of domestic religious scientific discourse, it becomes obvious that there is a need for the formation of new methodological approaches and principles for the adequacy of analytical studies dedicated to neo-religious movements and the development of productive ways of their communication with state institutions.

The development of scientific religious studies and theology in the world and in Ukraine convincingly proves that the prospects for the formation of a new religious culture are significantly influenced by neo-religious teachings, in particular, and the theoretical work of the founder of Falun Dafa, Li Hongzhi. In the conditions of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine, the formation of

ability to think critically is of particular importance for our students. This also applies to the sphere of interreligious relations.

Proving the necessity of the existence of an objective scientific view on the essence of neo-religious movements as one of the principles of cultural opposition to totalitarianism can be vividly demonstrated on the example of the study of the essence of Li Hongzhi's teachings on Falun Dafa and the opposition of Falun Gong followers to unjustifiably cruel persecution by the Chinese authorities.

The degree of elaboration of the problem allows us to state that the peculiarities of the influence of the neo-religious Falun Gong movement on the religious culture of Ukrainians during the confrontation with the racist aggressor were not studied.

Our analysis is directly based on the works of Li Hongzhi, in particular the fundamental for every Falun Dafa follower text called "Zhuan Falun" (translated into Ukrainian in 2021, Li Hongzhi, [https://uk.falundafa.org/books/ZhuanFalun/zfl\\_03.htm](https://uk.falundafa.org/books/ZhuanFalun/zfl_03.htm)). The study also analyzes the ideas presented in numerous sermons by Li Hongzhi (2006) and in his work "The essence of conscientious improvement" (Li Hongzhi, 2014).

A study within the framework of the "Great Era" international project entitled "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party" deserves special attention, in particular the fifth commentary entitled "The Collusion of Jiang Zemin with the Chinese Communist Party to Persecute Falun Gong", which reveals an insidious policy of the brutal persecution of followers of Li Hongzhi (Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party, 2007).

Let's pay attention to another work entitled "How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World" (Ukrainian-language version dated April 5, 2020) within the scope of the above-mentioned project. The text claims that "the evil ghost of the Communist Party did not disappear after the collapse of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe", "the evil spirit of communism and the devil together create chaos in the world of people" and "the devil is the cause of cross-border war" (<https://radiosvoboda.org>). We note that quite valid ideas are hidden behind non-scientific terminology. Among the deep Western analysts regarding Falun Dafa, the works of Penny Benjamin "The Religion of Falun Gong" (Hardcover, 2012; Penny, 2012) should be singled out. Religious scholar and historian David Ownby notes in his work that the Chinese authorities mistakenly consider Falun Gong a "dangerous heretical sect", equating it with the "Branch of David", "Order of the Sun Temple" and "Aum Shinriki" (Ownby, 2010). American writer and human rights defender, author of the book "Silent Genocide", Ethan Gutman, in this work and his other analysts, condemns the unjustified repression and persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and supporters (Gutmann, 2010, 2014).

The vast majority of Ukrainian analysts negatively assess non-religious teachings, emphasizing precisely their non-traditional for Ukrainian mentality. Based on this conclusion, researchers claim that new religions have a harmful effect on the religious culture of Ukrainians. Falun Dafa also falls into the cohort of negatively perceived neo-religious movements. Although the logic of reflections on the essence of the doctrine is sometimes based on quite strange arguments. For example, Valentyn Kowalskyi bases his warnings about Falun Gong mainly on a pragmatic approach. He believes that we are dealing with a

dangerous sect that threatens its followers with death and emphasizes that the activities of this sect can lead to deterioration of relations between Ukraine and China. Kovalsky calls on the Ukrainian authorities to realize the harmful influence of Falun Gong on the development of relations between our countries and to ban the activities of the sect (Kovalsky, 2022).

There are many questions for the author. There is nothing about scientific objectivity when assessing the activities of the “sect” from the very beginning of research. Such “accusations” based on a pragmatic interest in economic cooperation with China cause indignation. Guided by such logic, Europeans would not help Ukrainians in their fight against racism, because they would give priority to economically beneficial cooperation with Russia.

The article by I. Grabovska, T. Talko, Sv. Kahamlyk and others “Political ideas of the leaders of the charismatic movement “New Generation” in the context of the formation of post-secular trends in Ukraine” is methodologically significant in terms of identifying extremist and fundamentalist tendencies in neo-religious teachings that are developing in Ukraine (Grabovska et al., 2021). Also worthy of attention is the article by T. Vlasova, I. Grabovska, T. Talko, devoted to the identification of post-secular trends in Ukrainian culture in relation to neo-religious movements (Grabovska et al., 2020). The scientific investigation of domestic scientists regarding the perception of fundamentalist religious ideas by Ukrainian students serves as the basis for highlighting the problem (Grabovska & Talko, 2022).

The analytical intelligence of D. Granov (Granov, 2007), D. Krasnokutskyi (Krasnokutsky, 2012), E. Morozova (Morozova, 2002), K. Tyshchenko (Tyshenko, 2006), V. Petuhova (Petukhov, 2007), O. Petruni (Petrunya, 2012) deserve attention. In general, it is obvious that the Ukrainian segment of Falun Gong research is insufficient and significantly outdated. Among current analysts on this topic, current journalistic intelligence has an advantage.

**The purpose of the article** is to identify the peculiarities of the influence of Falun Gong on the development of anti-totalitarian tendencies in the religious culture of Ukrainians.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks were identified:

– on the basis of an experiment (testing), to analyze how the ideas of Ukrainian youth about the essence of the neo-religious movement Falun Gong are formed and whether the students are able to single out the semantic field of teaching of Li Hongzhi and critically consider it;

– to investigate what threats to the further development of the Ukrainian community in general are represented by our youth’s assessment of the essence of teachings of Li Hongzhi and the significance of the neo-religious Falun Gong movement for the development of the religious culture of Ukrainians;

– to broaden scientific and purely utilitarian approaches to the neo-religious movement Falun Dafa in modern Ukrainian researches;

– to reveal the influence of the Falun Dafa phenomenon on the development of anti-totalitarian tendencies in the religious culture of Ukrainians and the formation of adequate methods of interaction between neo-religious movements and state institutions.

The subject of the study is the peculiarities of the influence of the neo-religious movement Falun Gong on the development of anti-totalitarian

tendencies in the religious culture of Ukrainians.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Researches in the field of development of the methodology of religious peacemaking in Ukraine have methodological and conceptual significance for our analysis.

Such methodology stems from the experience of reconciling warring parties belonging to different religious traditions. Thanks to this methodology, military chaplains learn to build a dialogue with people who have different religious beliefs and views. In this regard, the remarks of the domestic scientist Yu. Chornomorets seem to be quite valid regarding the fact that today there is a lack of theoretical religious works that would analyze the modern development and achievements of theology from a philosophical standpoint, and develop new methodological strategies (<https://www.religion.in.ua/main/>).

The articles by T. Talko entitled “Neo-religions in Ukraine and the problems of interfaith communication in the context of the educational process” and “The problem of the transformation of religious consciousness of Ukrainians in the context of post-colonial studies” (Talko, 2016, 2017), as well as a monograph by a group of authors entitled “National memory in the conditions of social transformations” (National memory in the conditions of social transformations, 2022) are considered methodologically significant. As a worldview and methodological basis in the analytics, we relied on the article by I. Grabovska and T. Talko “Putinism and its ideological foundations as a problem of modern theoretical discourse in socio-humanitarian studies” (Grabovska & Talko, 2019). The idea formed by the authors of this article about the totalitarian essence of Putinism was deepened thanks to new research by Serhii Grabovskyi about “putinism before putin” (Grabovskyi, 2022).

In addition, the use of scientific methods and, in particular, the method of historicism and comparative method, as well as the methodology of postclassical philosophy and postmodernism provided an opportunity to deepen the analytics and solve the tasks.

A test survey of 198 students of various faculties of Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, in particular the faculty of social sciences and international relations, history, biology and economics, became the experimental basis for processing the problem. The authors of the article report that such testing is not absolutely representative for comprehensive conclusions regarding the stated problem within the borders of Ukraine. However, we believe that the opinions of the students presented below reflect essential approaches and trends in the perception of the neo-religious Falun Gong movement in the youth environment of modern Ukrainian society.

Below are the most revealing works in terms of interpretation of the essence of the Falun Dafa phenomenon by the student audience. For example, Katia B., a student of the philosophy department of the Faculty of Social Sciences and International Relations, writes that neo-religious movements in general and Falun Gong, in particular, are attractive especially to young people, because they arouse curiosity with their exoticism and rejection of tradition. It is a kind of rebellion against ossified religious systems, which are difficult to adapt to the realities of the modern world. Of course, not all non-traditional religions are harmless – there are also totalitarian sects among them. However, it should not be assumed that absolutely all new religious movements are affected by this disease. To be sure, so much of what is usually stubbornly called a sect turns out



to be an extremely peaceful religious current, sometimes even tangibly useful for its followers (from the archive of T. Talko). Political scientist Oleksandr D. believes that non-traditional religions are quite attractive for a person of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because they are focused on specific tasks, and usually help an individual to develop not only spiritually, but also physically. The student includes Falun Dafa, yoga, and guruism as such systems. He emphasizes that these neo-religions have very strong social and educational programs. We conclude that people focused on self-development and material goods will make a choice in favor of new religions that are able to satisfy both of these requests (From the archive of T. Talko).

Diana P., a student of the religious studies department, describes her ambivalent attitude towards Falun Gong. The student writes, it turns out, that the founder of the doctrine did not want to talk about his life, and the state, where he lived (the People's Republic of China), found it beneficial to show and tell people what discouraged them from joining his teachings. The student perceived the fact that the supporters of Falun did not mass encourage people to join the movement with the help of speeches, sermons, etc. On the contrary, the founder of the school, Li Hongzhi, avoided people and did not seek public attention. As a positive, the student also noted that the main principle of the movement was accessibility for the community and moral content (from the archive of T. Talko).

With the beginning of the aggressive invasion of racist troops in Ukraine, students associate neo-religious movements with opposition to totalitarian tendencies in the activities of traditional churches.

For example, student Anton V. is interested in new religions, because they can be applied practically and they encourage self-improvement. He believes that going to a traditional church and praying is not as interesting as drawing pentagrams, practicing the occult, doing certain physical exercises, postures, following a certain diet, meditating, and thus exploring and testing your body and spirit. The student concludes that the mysticism and romance of neo-religions is much more attractive than the everyday routine of traditional religiosity for modern youth (from the archive of T. Talko).

Student Taras T. notes that he cannot remain indifferent to the fate of Falun Dafa practitioners after watching documentary "Hard to Believe" (2015) by K. Stone in digital format. The film tells about the forcible removal of organs from living Falun Gong followers. This film caused a shock and became the basis for thinking about the need to protect human rights, and not only in terms of the possibility of freely choosing one's faith, but also preserving life in the face of totalitarianism (from the archive of T. Talko).

Student Hanna P., tracing the reasons why people belong to traditional churches, connected the growth of neo-religious aspirations with Russian aggression and the immoral behaviour of the Orthodox clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate. At the same time, she insisted on the fundamental inability of the Orthodox clergy to make democratic changes in the church itself. And although the newest religions are not rooted at the mental level, and some of them are aggressive and intrusive, such movements seem exotic and attractive to young people. The aggression presented in these practices indicates serious mental problems of the adepts of these movements, who have personal grudges and a thirst for worldwide revenge. Such people look for an innocent victim, and then

shift the blame onto him or her, as supporters of putinism do regard to Ukraine. Propaganda and manipulation are the tools to achieve the goal for them.

The aggressor appears as an idol, so all his actions have an “excuse”. The ideology of the aggressor is the main weapon that produces irreparable and terrible results, both for the one who uses it and for the one against whom it is directed.

Distorted and rewritten history, covering up imperial ambitions and aggressiveness towards neighbours with religion and good goals, controlled information space and lack of freedom allows brainwashed individuals in Russia to be controlled. Terrorists also use aggression as a way of communication. Ignoring social attitudes, they blindly demand their way through murder and destruction. They do not understand and do not accept that other than their views exist and have the right to exist. Trying to build a society on their own terms, aggressors destroy life in general. Madness is the end point of an aggressor (from the archive of T. Talko).

**Formulation of the main material.** Ukrainian researchers note that non-traditional religiosity originated in the 1950<sup>s</sup> and reached its peak in the 1990<sup>s</sup>. The rapid development of the popularity of neo-religious cults is associated with globalization, which contributes to the creation of a world economic and cultural-religious unity.

When considering the history of the emergence and existence of Falun Dafa, we should focus on some important points that will make it possible to understand the essence of this movement and the fact that we, the authors, will insist on, namely: Falun Dafa cannot be unequivocally defined as a destructive sectarian entity. Regarding the latter, it should be clarified that in the course of its religious development, mankind has always dealt with sects – groups of fanatics led by a charismatic leader. Sects have developed special methods of attracting followers to their ranks and means of keeping them. Establishing control over a person’s psyche and manipulating their thoughts and behavior, brainwashing and propagandistic imposition of certain religious attitudes, rejection of a critical attitude and the absence of critical analytical thinking brings sectarianism closer to the phenomenon of racism, the ideological basis of which is Putinism and the ideology of the “Russian world”. Sectarianism is based on total control over the life activities of its followers. In contrast to sectarian ideology, free and conscious choice of one’s religion, tolerance of religious beliefs of fellow citizens is the basis of Ukrainian religious culture.

Falun Gong is a new religious movement that emerged in China in the 1990<sup>s</sup>. The founder of the teaching is Li Hongzhi, who tried to combine the traditional Chinese gymnastics of Qigong with elements of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Based on teachings of Li Hongzhi, the “Falun Gong Study Society” arose, which was declared heretical, obscurantist and banned in China on July 22, 1999. Researchers of the Falun Dafa phenomenon emphasize that until 1999, the Chinese authorities were sympathetic to this teaching and practice, perceiving it as a medical system. In 1993, Li Hongzhi (real name Li Lai) received the main award of the Oriental Health Fair in Beijing. By the way, more than 50 qigong schools presented their achievements there. Kateryna Tyshchenko notes that the Chinese State Bureau of Physical Education conducted physical and psychological examinations of 12,553 Falun Gong students in various cities of the country from 1992 to 1999. It was found that in

the period from 2-3 months to 2-3 years of classes, 77,5 % of practitioners were completely cured of their illnesses and another 20,4 % significantly improved their condition (Tyshenko, 2006).

Active criticism of the teachings began in 1997. As a result of accusations of the negative social impact of his teachings and the beginning of persecution, Li Hongzhi left for the United States. Gradually, the movement acquires a political-oppositional character.

In Taiwan and Hong Kong, the ban did not apply and does not apply now, so a large number of Falun Dafa followers emigrated to these regions. The recent aggressive statements of the Chinese authorities regarding Taiwan have greatly alarmed Falun Gong practitioners who have emigrated to this territory.

Since 1994, Li Hongzhi has carried out missionary missions to the USA, Canada, Australia, Europe and other countries in order to spread the teachings outside of China. Currently in New Ark, he continues active preaching and educational activities. It bears fruit. We are not referring to the rate of growth of the number of followers of the Falun Gong movement in the world, they are not high. It is the regional spread and the ever-growing protest sentiments associated with the condemnation of inadequately cruel methods of persecuting practitioners, violations of their civil rights and freedoms by the Chinese authorities. Scientists note that atrocities against Falun Gong practitioners in China are constantly confirmed and condemned by numerous international organizations. In particular, they are in UN reports, numerous resolutions of the US Congress and reports of the US State Department on human rights violations, the human rights report of the European Parliament, the International Federation for the Protection of Human Rights and the World Organization Against Torture, the International Association of Human Rights Organizations, etc. (Tyshenko, 2006).

Currently, the Chinese authorities are trying to create a positive image of the country, which is necessary for carrying out a liberal policy of openness and economic reforms. However, the unjustified large-scale repression of Falun Gong allowed the international community to make sure once again that the totalitarian principles of the Communist Party's interaction with religious communities remained unchanged. In revealing studies about the Communist Party, it is emphasized that the brutal systematic repression of Falun Gong, which covers all layers of Chinese society, has completely dispelled the delusion about the improvement of human rights. Currently, many people are beginning to wonder why such a bloody and insane persecution could have happened in China. Why, after public order restoration after the chaos of the Great Cultural Revolution 20 years ago, the country plunged into this nightmare again? Why is Falun Gong practiced in more than 60 countries of the world, which supports the principle of "Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance", subjected to repression only in China and nowhere else in the world? What is the relationship between Jiang Zemin and Chinese Communist Party during these repressions?" (Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party, 2007).

The fact that totalitarianism in many countries of the world continues its attack on the democratic rights of citizens and its largely unjustified struggle against the rights and freedoms of various neo-religious entities is evidenced by the following fact. In a report on freedom of religion presented by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinkin on June 2, 2022, it was said that in relation to the



believers of such religious organizations as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Majlis of the Crimean Tatars, Hizb ut-Tahrir, followers of the Muslim theologian Said Nursi, the Church of Scientology, Falun Gong and numerous evangelical Protestant groups that were recognized as "extremist", the Russian authorities resorted to persecution, detention, imprisonment, torture, physical violence and confiscation of property (radiosvoboda.org). We note that Putin's regime, showing its totalitarian character, harshly persecutes Falun Gong adherents, labeling them "extremists".

Instead, we consider it absolutely necessary to introduce a fundamentally scientific approach to the analysis of the phenomenon and provide recommendations to the authorities only on the basis of the obtained results.

Statement of Li Hongzhi that he is based on responsibility to society and those who learn from him in the whole process of law instruction and teaching Qigong practice ([https://uk.falundafa.org/books/ZhuanFalun/zfl\\_03.htm](https://uk.falundafa.org/books/ZhuanFalun/zfl_03.htm)) testify to a responsible attitude to the moral basis of those ideas and practices that he offers to his followers. Kateryna Tyshchenko emphasizes that despite constant comparisons with the White Brotherhood and other totalitarian sects, it is quite difficult to find their signs in Falun Gong. Practitioners do not leave home, do not make any donations, do not impose their righteousness on others and do not have objects of worship (Tyshenko, 2006).

However, this does not relieve Falun Gong of its shortcomings and certain features that prompt us to treat it with some caution. In particular, sectarian claims, which are inherent in the teachings of Li Hongzhi, can include his messianic claims, which are related to the statements that the author of the teachings came to us to reproduce the fundamental principles of the existence of the universe: truth, goodness, patience, can be attributed to the features of the sectarianism inherent in the teachings of Li Hongzhi. A significant drawback is the fact that millions of Falun Gong followers believe it is right to refuse medical care and be treated with breathing practices.

There are also tragic facts. Individual practitioners committed suicide in an attempt to "start the dharma wheel". They stuck a knife in their stomach and twisted it. Li Hongzhi is also actively accused of opposing the divine to scientific teachings about nature and society, but at the same time he insists on the scientific nature of his teachings. Note that similar accusations can be made against any traditional religion, especially in our time, when many works of Christian theologians have been created about the rationality of faith and the scientific nature of the biblical narrative about the origin of the world, which, however, does not lead to their prohibition. What is certain is that the Christian Church remains an important tool for preserving the national identity of Ukrainians and cultural memory in the conditions of aggression.

However, it is also important that religious affiliation does not determine the completeness and depth of the religious culture of Ukrainians. Sensory perception in combination with an emotional and perception of the world leads to the perception of the fundamental principles of being in combination with the idea of divine omnipresence. An accompanying element of everyday religious consciousness of the average Ukrainian is a mystical attitude that leads to occultism, belief in sorcery and witchcraft.

In periods of crisis, the archaic basis of religious faith comes to life and provokes a significant reformatting of the entire picture of the religious

worldview. Sociology has proven that during periods of crisis, belief in: various prophecies and omens increases significantly (up to 32 %); corruption, evil eye, witchcraft (28 %); extrasensory perception (2 %); astrology (15 %); levitation (4 %); poltergeist and spiritualism (5 %). Falun Gong in Ukraine was registered as a public organization in 2014. Regarding the status of a public organization, researchers of the Falun Dafa phenomenon have questions. Problems arise in connection with whether to perceive this phenomenon only as a health practice or as a religious system. Recognition of the teaching as a neo-religious phenomenon will require another registration and examination. As of August 24, 2022, Falun Gong was active in our country (Public Organization “Falun Gong in Ukraine” – youcontrol.com.ua). The Falun Dafa Information Center in Ukraine constantly reports current news about the activities of followers and points of practice. Before the beginning of the racist aggression, Falun Gong was organizationally represented in the following cities: Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Kramatorsk, Vinnitsa, Donetsk, Konstantynivka, Lysychansk, Lviv, Lutsk, Rivne, Chervonograd, Poltava, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Pereiaslav, Bakhmach, Konotop (<https://uk.falundafa.org/>). Mariinsky Park in Kyiv was one of the permanent places where practitioners gathered before the hot phase of the war with Russia.

Ukrainian human rights organizations take care of the fate of Falun Gong followers. Thus, the representatives of Kharkiv human rights group emphasize that the persecution of Falun Gong serves as the CCP’s testing laboratory for its tyranny, and the longer it continues, the stronger the threat becomes for all of us. The crimes of Nazism taught humanity a harsh lesson. At that time, Nazism was condemned, the whole world publicly repented that it would no longer allow such a manifestation of evil. Therefore, even now, people of conscience are waking up and uniting in their movement against the inhumane criminals of the Chinese Communist Party (Krasnokutsky, 2012). Opposing aggressive practices and manipulative propaganda attacks used by totalitarian power structures in totalitarian countries is a necessary condition for achieving peace.

**Conclusions.** As a result of the study, we state:

– to date, the scientific religious community of Ukraine has not achieved yet a satisfactory understanding of the specifics of new religious movements, and, therefore, it is necessary to deepen scientific research both in the entire field of neo-religious teachings and movements in general, and in particular, Falun Gong;

– on the basis of the results of scientific research, develop the correct forms of interaction between society and the state with new religious formations, sects and cults.

Also, summarizing the results of solving the problems posed in our article, we believe that Ukrainian students connect the significance of the neo-religious movement Falun Gong with the process of democratization of our social life and religious culture of Ukrainians.

In general, young people condemn aggressive totalitarian state policies, primarily racist ones, not caring much about researching the theoretical work of the founder of the Falun Gong movement, Li Hongzhi, focusing mainly on the social manifestations of the followers of the teachings. The vast majority of respondents believe that the state should be tolerant towards new movements, and finally create a political strategy based on a well-thought-out legislative and

regulatory framework. During the registration of new religious groups and various organizations, qualified legal and religious expertise must be conducted.

The general conclusion from our intelligence is the statement that anti-totalitarian tendencies in Ukrainian religious culture are fully formed. Evidence of this is the character of the perception of the oriental neo-religious teaching of Li Hongzhi by the community and the peculiarities of the functioning of the Falun Gong movement in Ukraine.

*Conflict of Interest and other Ethics Statements*

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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**Ірина ГРАБОВСЬКА, Світлана КАГАМЛИК, Тетяна ТАЛЬКО**  
**ФЕНОМЕН ФАЛУНЬГУН У КОНТЕКСТІ РОЗВИТКУ**  
**АНТИТОТАЛІТАРНИХ ТЕНДЕНЦІЙ У РЕЛІГІЙНІЙ**  
**КУЛЬТУРИ УКРАЇНЦІВ**

**Анотація.** Дослідження феномена Фалунь Дафа у контексті сутнісного протистояння релігійної культури українців агресивній релігійній риторичі рашистського тоталітаризму в умовах війни росії проти України і пов'язаних з нею трансформацій української спільноти є актуальним. У контексті розуміння важливого впливу України на формування нового світового порядку слід уважно приглянутися до нетрадиційних для нашої спільноти релігійних систем, які від 70-х–90-х рр. минулого століття активно поширюються на українських теренах і впливають на розвиток релігійної культури українців та свідомість наших співгромадян. Це набуває важливого значення і з огляду на те, що процес розвитку релігійної культури безпосередньо пов'язаний з виникненням нових символічних систем, які не лише відображають зміни у сфері релігійності, але й впливають на формування нових сенсів суспільного буття.

У ході аналізу було виявлено, що знайомство з китайською культурою через дослідження нетрадиційної релігійної течії Фалуньгун спонукає українських науковців і студентську молодь до визнання існування сильних тоталітарних тенденцій у діяльності китайської влади і Комуністичної партії Китаю. Агресивна політика тоталітарної влади викликає осуд і спонукає до засудження практик переслідування за релігійні переконання. Висновується необхідність протистояння з боку неорелігійних організацій виявам державного тоталітаризму. В умовах воєнного опору рашизму це є підтвердженням необхідності протистояння тоталітарному агресорові.

Акцентується увага на тому, що держава повинна відноситися до нових рухів толерантно, створити політичну стратегію, яка базуватиметься на продуманій законодавчій і нормативно-правовій базі. Під час реєстрації нових релігійних груп та різних утворень повинна проводитися кваліфікована правова і релігієзнавча експертиза.

Можна стверджувати, що антитоталітарні тенденції в українській релігійній культурі є цілком сформованими. Свідченням цього є зокрема і характер сприйняття орієнтального неорелігійного вчення Лі Хунчжі спільнотою і особливості функціонування руху Фалуньгун в Україні.

**Ключові слова:** релігійна культура, агресор, війна, рашизм, тоталітаризм, фалуньгун, Фалунь Дафа.

**Submitted:** 23.06.2022

**Revised:** 09.08.2022

**Accepted:** 06.09.2022