

**STUDIES ON
HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM** 

**GLOCALIZATION OF BUDDHISM
佛教全球本土化研究**

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and
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EDITOR'S PREFACE: THE GLOCALIZATION OF BUDDHISM

Volume three of *Studies on Humanistic Buddhism* contains fourteen articles relating to the glocalization of Buddhism. Glocalization here refers to the spread of Buddhism globally as it situates itself locally. An increased flow of people, goods, and information has allowed Buddhism to rapidly spread across the world, and for greater interaction between Buddhist traditions. Concomitant with Buddhism's globalization is its localization. As Buddhism settles into new environments, there is an acculturation process. The people who bring Buddhist teachings to a new area must acculturate to the local society in order to come up with skilful means to impart Buddhist teachings in a manner that is appropriate to the dominant culture, and that empowers them to carry on the Buddhist teachings themselves.

The first article is by Venerable Master Hsing Yun. In "The Key to Promoting Localization is not to 'Discard' but to 'Give'—My View on 'De-sinicization'" the Venerable Master addresses the issue of "de-sinicization" in Taiwan. The issue arose as politicians used ethnicity and place of birth as a political tool. He points out that, in an era of multiculturalism, de-sinicization does not make sense. People should be able to embrace foreign cultures without discarding their own. He urges people to live together in mutual respect and tolerance instead of division. Beyond the situation in Taiwan, he goes on to advocate for localization wherever Fo Guang Shan members go. They should integrate into the local community rather than forming ethnic enclaves.

In "The Localization of Buddhism within Globalization," Chen Chien-Huang looks at the localization of Humanistic Buddhism through cultural and educational endeavors. Drawing from an understanding on the sinicization of Buddhism when it arrived in China from India, Chen discusses the dilemma of preserving the basic teachings while catering to the need to adapt to the local context. He then provided insights into how Venerable Master Hsing Yun dealt

with these challenges in the worldwide transmission of Humanistic Buddhism.

Alison Jameson investigates the localization of Buddhism in the state of Arizona in the United States in the article “Transcending Borders: Using Regional and Ethnographic Studies to Envision the Future of Humanistic Buddhism.” She found challenges to the localization of Buddhism in the context of geographically scattered and isolated populations with few Buddhists. She studies the differing responses to these challenges in groups of various Buddhist traditions. She concludes that, for Humanistic Buddhism to localize in such areas, flexible approaches must be employed. Such approaches must seek to bridge the divide between different Buddhist traditions, as well as reach out to non-Buddhists. In regard to outreach, she suggests that “you don’t even have to call it Buddhism,” lest the label alienate people who might be interested in learning more. She sees that it is necessary to break attachments to the barriers separating not only Buddhists from non-Buddhists, but also within the Buddhist community as a whole.

In her article “Engaged Buddhism and Humanistic Buddhism: A Comparison of Principles and Practices,” Sallie King discusses two international forms of Buddhism: Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism. The three major organizations of Humanistic Buddhism include: Tzu Chi, Fo Guang Shan, and Dharma Drum Mountain. The founders of all three of these organizations were influenced by the Buddhist reformer and modernizer Taixu. Engaged Buddhism includes movements and forms of Buddhism that emphasize engagement with current issues in the world. Representatives of Engaged Buddhism are the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Soka Gakkai, and the “ecology monks” of Thailand. King finds more similarities than differences. Both Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism actively engage with the problems of the world rather than withdraw from it. She concludes that, in the global sense, both share fundamental principles. The differences arise from the various localized social, economic, and political situations within their societies.

Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya investigates the localized nature of the issues addressed by Japanese Engaged Buddhist groups working in Cambodia and how they have been globalized via transnational networks in the article “Transnational Networks of Dharma and Development: Engaged Buddhism in the Era of

Globalization.” Three aspects are analyzed: 1. transnational voluntarism, 2. glocalization of Engaged Buddhism, and 3. multiculturalism. Mukhopadhyaya concludes that Engaged Buddhist movements are the consequence of, as well as a response to, globalization. The flow of people, resources, and information has facilitated international networking. Moreover, local social action groups are exposed to a global consciousness. Globalization has shown Buddhists the diversity within the Buddhist world, and has also introduced them to new ideas.

Tang Zhongmao’s paper “On Modernity and Tradition in Humanistic Buddhism: From Master Taixu to Venerable Master Hsing Yun” looks at the historical circumstances that led to the development and internationalization of Humanistic Buddhism. Taixu updated Buddhist concepts based on tensions between the traditional and modernity in Chinese Buddhism in the early twentieth century. Taixu modernized Chinese Buddhism and inspired the next generation of Buddhist leaders, but did not build any lasting institutions. One of those who was inspired by Taixu, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, built Fo Guang Shan, the largest organization of Humanistic Buddhism, and then guided its internationalization. Tang concludes that Humanistic Buddhism has been able to modernize while remaining true to the original intents of the Buddha, to “remain unchanging, yet adapt to circumstances.”

Wu Guangzheng’s article “The Modernization and Globalization of Humanistic Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism” also sets the development of Humanistic Buddhism within its historical context. In China, modernization meant transforming from an agrarian and closed society to an urban and open society. Wu suggests more research into the modernization, internationalization, and localization of Chinese Buddhism is needed. Specific suggestions include: 1. combining documentary research with fieldwork, 2. taking an interdisciplinary approach that includes the humanities and social sciences, 3. integrating microscopic studies with macroscopic research, and 4. collaboration between academics and religious practitioners to combine theory and practice.

Venerable Miao Guang’s article “Issues of Acculturation and Globalization Faced by the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order” examines Fo Guang Shan’s acculturation strategies as it enters new areas. In its spread across the world, Fo

Guang Shan has managed to mainly avoid marginalization or separation with a mixed acculturation strategy of integration and assimilation. Aspects of the acculturation strategy include: having local abbots manage local temples, offering Buddhism as a non-exclusive religious belief, teaching in the local language, an attitude of “make yourself at home wherever you are,” respect for cultural values, and accepting diversity. The acculturation of Fo Guang Shan has in large part been successful. However, Venerable Miao Guang does see several potential challenges in the future. The generation that drove Fo Guang Shan’s internationalization is aging. Will changing values and loss of Chinese language ability of future generations of Chinese immigrants lead to a dramatic change in patronage? Another challenge to be confronted is the amount of cultural maintenance and assimilation that can be allowed so as to efficiently achieve acculturation without substantial changes in Fo Guang Shan’s values. In the process of introducing Humanistic Buddhism to the culture of settlement, will conformity prevail? Or will freewill give a broader direction to their future development?

Jens Reinke, in line with Wu Guangzheng’s suggestions for research, and picking up on one of Venerable Miao Guang’s concerns for the future, considers the global spread of Fo Guang Shan from a transnational perspective in “Placing Buddhist Modernism within a Global Context: The Global Spread of Fo Guang Shan.” He examines Fo Guang Shan as a transnational non-state actor in a worldwide context rather than from that of a single nation state. Reinke uses a multi-sited ethnographic research method. He conducted field research at Fo Guang Shan temples in Taiwan, mainland China, South Africa, and the United States. Humanistic Buddhism and the Fo Guang Shan order developed within the particular context of modern Chinese and Taiwanese history. Fo Guang Shan is the contemporary actualization of Republican era Humanistic Buddhism that emerged as a critical response to the Chinese Buddhist tradition. As Fo Guang Shan globalized, it had to face the issue that the concept of modernity is itself localized. In the United States for example, modern Buddhism is considered to be that practiced by Buddhists of European descent, while Buddhism practiced by Asian immigrants is considered to be traditional Buddhism. To unify this dichotomy of traditional and modern, Reinke proposes the concept of multiple modernities that emerge out of global connections and plurality instead of an all-encompassing entity that disseminated out of Europe. He proposes that, in

order for Humanistic Buddhism to further diversify within and beyond the global diaspora communities, there is no need to neglect its Chineseness. If the notion of Chineseness promoted by Humanistic Buddhists is an open, inclusive, and cosmopolitan one, one that is aware of the diversity of modern Buddhist religiosities under today's global condition, Humanistic Buddhists in the future will not only be modern but also be truly global.

“Fo Guang Shan's ‘Localization of Buddhism’ within the Process of the Internationalization of Buddhism” by Wang Bin describes how Buddhism entered China from India and took root during the Eastern Han dynasty. As it acculturated in the context of a Confucian and Daoist culture, a sinicized Buddhism developed. Wang points out that a similar localization and acculturation process is taking place now as Fo Guang Shan spreads Chinese Buddhism around the world. Wang sees Venerable Master Hsing Yun's principles and strategies for localization as crucial for the future of Chinese Buddhism outside of the Chinese context. By treating the Dharma as a culture in its exchanges with Western societies, Fo Guang Shan has been able to disseminate internationally by acculturating and localizing. Other principles of localization as espoused by Venerable Master Hsing Yun include the translation of Buddhist texts and training Dharma teachers of high caliber. They not only have to be proficient in languages, cultures, and social customs to serve as the foundation for cultural exchange, but must also be capable of adopting suitable skilful and expedient means that are acceptable to Westerners, so as to find ways to appropriately integrate the Dharma into Western culture. Wang believes education, combined with promoting multicultural exchange and mutual respect, will help to drive the spread of Buddhism in the West.

A case study of Fo Guang Shan's localization in Australia is provided in Li Li'an's article “The Brilliant Achievements of Humanistic Buddhism in Australia.” Li found that the infrastructure for future localization and development is already in place. There are eleven Fo Guang Shan temples in Australia. There is also the Nan Tien Institute, a fully accredited provider of higher education that cultivates scholars who can communicate between Chinese and Western cultures. Li finds that Fo Guang Shan is developing its own Australian style. Unique Australian institutions have developed, such as the system of lay Dharma teachers. Buddhist activities in Australia—such as the Buddha's Birthday Project, open days,

meditation classes, and monastic life—all have their own sets of norms, which are woven within the Australian community. He even found that Fo Guang Shan monastics have developed an Australian style. Li describes the monastics as active, hard working, open minded, sunny and cheerful in disposition, and integrated into modern Australian society.

In “A Study of Humanistic Buddhism Returning to India: Observations and Reflections on the Fo Guang Shan New Delhi Educational and Cultural Centre,” Qiu Yonghui recounts the journey of Fo Guang Shan and Venerable Master Hsing Yun in bringing Humanistic Buddhism back to India, homeland of the Buddha. Qiu followed the work of the New Delhi Educational and Cultural Centre in propagating Buddhism through education, charity, and cultural exchange, and discusses the challenges and opportunities for Humanistic Buddhism to thrive in the Indian environment where Hinduism is the mainstream religion.

Fumihiko Sueki raises the issue of whether Buddhism can be too localized in “The Localization and Spread of Japanese Buddhism.” Sueki asks whether the changes Buddhism underwent in the course of localizing in Japan were original innovations resulting from acculturation or merely accommodating and conforming to the Japanese culture. Sueki points out changes to the Buddhist tradition that might affect the vitality of Buddhism. The greatest change is secularization. There is secularization of monks, who can marry and consume meat. There is also secularization of Buddhist concepts such as intrinsic enlightenment and Buddha-nature. The localization of Christianity is given as a cautionary example of the “quagmire of Japan” where new religions face a challenging environment in which to acculturate and therefore struggle to take root. The author concludes with a question and a suggestion: “What really happens to the Japanese in accepting foreign philosophies and religions? It is precisely because Buddhism is so deeply embedded in Japan that we have to cautiously revisit this issue.”

Yang Minkang explored the localization of Buddhism by focusing on Buddhist music in the article “The Localization of Music during the Late Stages of Buddhism’s Spread—A Comparison of the Buddhist Music of the Dai People and the Japanese.” He compared and contrasted the localization process of Buddhist music in Japan and among the Dai people of China, both at the end of

the routes by which Buddhism spread. The preservation and evolution of Buddhist music in the contexts of an open versus a closed society was examined. Yang also employs the concepts of “great tradition” and “little tradition” first developed by anthropologist Robert Redfield. The great tradition of Buddhism is the orthodox version that is textually based and practiced by monastics. The little traditions are local heterodox blends of folk beliefs and Buddhism as practiced by the laity. Yang finds that these two traditions are layered and often blend together.

As the bodhi seeds of Buddhism spread across the world, they must grow and adapt to their local ecosystem. They must be carefully nurtured by both local and migrant monastics and devotees. Then they can eventually flower and bear fruit that is suited to the local conditions. The flowers and fruit of various places might look and taste slightly different, but all carry on the heritage of the bodhi tree under which the Buddha became enlightened. To continue the metaphor, as bodhi seeds spread geographically they must localize in each place, and because of globalization these localized varieties also interact with each other, the process is not linear. The articles in this volume show both the opportunities and challenges to Buddhism presented by glocalization. Venerable Huifeng summed up the challenges and opportunities:

But you must understand, the way Western society perceives Buddhism differs from that of the East, so it probably won't work if one tries to employ those methods here. Although the Master [Hsing Yun] started from zero and created this religious order of Humanistic Buddhism, but after all, Buddhism was originally present in Chinese culture, while it is a stranger to the West. Perhaps this requires a greater degree of “true emptiness producing wondrous being” than was present when the master began his efforts back then. Let me cite an example. When a tree is cut down, if the roots are still present, it will still be able to

grow branches and leaves again within a few decades;
but the West never had this tree, and so I must go back
and plant some seeds.¹

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Notes

1 Fu Zhiying, *Bright Star, Luminous Cloud: the Life of a Simple Monk* (Hacienda Heights, CA: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2008), 155.