

**STUDIES ON  
HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM** 

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

Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism, Taiwan  
and  
Nan Tien Institute, Australia

# FO GUANG SHAN'S "LOCALIZATION OF BUDDHISM" WITHIN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF BUDDHISM

**Wang Bin**

*Associate Researcher, Jiangxi Academy of Social Sciences*

## **Abstract**

Localization is the primary reason that Buddhism flourished in China. Venerable Master Hsing Yun's emphasis on adapting Buddhism to local cultural practices is crucial to Fo Guang Shan's success in spreading the Dharma overseas. This paper discusses the process of localizing Buddhism in the West, focusing on the philosophy and methodology of localization, as well as the ways in which Fo Guang Shan has successfully localized in Western countries.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, localization, internationalization, globalization, Fo Guang Shan, Venerable Master Hsing Yun

## **1. Foreword**

By analyzing the historical process of Buddhism's dissemination, one can gain an appreciation of why Buddhism has become so influential in countries with disparate cultures and histories. Buddhism has become one of the major global religions. Apart from its emphasis on profound compassion and its philosophy of inclusive tolerance, an important contributing factor to its success has been its adaptation to local cultures and traditions. Among the three major Buddhist traditions of South Asian, Northern, and Tibetan, South Asian has flourished in regions that are relatively similar to Indian traditions and cultures. However, South Asian Buddhism has a limited scope of influence. Conversely, Northern Buddhism (including the regions of China, Japan, and Korea) and Tibetan Buddhism have, despite being in regions where the cultural norms differ appreciably from the Indian culture, have larger spheres of influence. The process of Buddhism's dissemination can be understood as that of the gradual localization into regions with different social and cultural backgrounds. Localization plays a decisive role

in the dissemination of Buddhism.

## **2. Localization of Buddhism in China**

Buddhism was initially introduced to China during the early Eastern Han Dynasty. The early monks arriving in China were outsiders, and the Buddhist sūtras they brought were not written in Chinese. The language barrier was the initial obstacle to the dissemination of Buddhism in China. Therefore, the translation of the Buddhist sūtras was truly the start of Buddhism's localization in China.

As more sūtras were translated into Chinese, Chinese people's interest in Buddhism gradually grew, and more Chinese renounced lay life to become monks. However, both the early translated works and the Chinese people's understanding of Buddhism were still relatively limited, and sometimes there were significant errors. This continued until the Eastern Jin Dynasty, when Kumārajīva's translation of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras became available. This translation included many traditional Chinese terms, while capturing both the terminology and the significance of the terms of the original. This created a framework for the Chinese to understand the Buddhist message on the basis of their original concepts. At that time, the religious landscape was largely Daoist, and the practice of understanding and discussing the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras from a Daoist perspective began. Today we know this period as Geyi Buddhism. Geyi Buddhism might not have been accurate in its understanding and interpretation of the philosophy of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, and in fact it created many divisive views. However, it had a profound effect on furthering the dissemination and understanding of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and other Buddhist doctrines.

Moreover, while the interpretation of Buddhist theories from scholars such as Hui Yuan and Emperor Wu of Lian are typical of Buddhist hermeneutics from a Chinese paradigm, we should recognize that these interpretations were also profoundly influential and significant. Although doctrinally not quite identical to the Indian Buddhist understanding, the Chinese interpretation of Buddhism became widely accepted. This process of generating a localized interpretation and understanding was crucial to the spread of Buddhism in China.

In the course of Buddhism's dissemination in China, the influence of the concept of Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-nature) found in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* is particularly noteworthy. The concept appears to have been marginalized and never valued in Indian Buddhism, but it has been influential in China. One reason seems to be that the concept of the Tathāgatagarbha is similar to ideas in traditional Chinese culture, making it far easier to accept for Chinese than that of the Madhyamaka (Three Treatise School), which was much more influential in Indian Buddhism. The Chinese understanding of the Tathāgatagarbha concept was an important step in the localization of Buddhism in China. This culminated in the formation of the Tiantai and Huayan schools that were influenced by the *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, and also the founding of the Chan School which encompasses aspects of both Chinese and Indian culture. These Chinese schools interpreted the theories of Indian Buddhism in a way that formed a Buddhist system of practice with Chinese characteristics.

In this process, the precepts of Indian Buddhism were also adapted and adjusted, an example being the formation of the Chan School's monastic rules (pure rules). Instead of the Indian monastic practice of doing alms rounds, Chinese monastics upheld the principle of "a day without work means a day without food," and practiced "combining Chan with agricultural work." This was also part of the localization process, as Buddhism adapted to the local Chinese traditions and social practices.

The characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism also exude an obvious localized ethnic character. Since its introduction into the Tibetan region in the seventh century C.E, Buddhism began merging with aristocratic power. Tibetan kings were viewed as the embodiments of buddhas and bodhisattvas who possessed supreme authority in both secular and religious domains, whereas in Indian Buddhism such a model that merged politics and religion did not develop, despite Buddhism's prosperity and close links to aristocratic patronage. Tibetan Buddhism integrated with traditional Tibetan folk concepts and customs to become the religion of the entire Tibetan population. Therefore, the majority of Tibetan households have members who become monastics. The traditional Tibetan deities gradually came to form a massive system of divine beings under the command of a single Buddhist system. In addition, Tibetan Buddhism also developed its unique system

of reincarnation of living buddhas. It is precisely because of Buddhism's gradual localization that it has such a strong foothold among Tibetans.

In summary, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism have both undergone a long process of localization which culminated in distinctive Buddhist models with ethnocultural characteristics. This process of localization is the most important reason why Buddhism has taken root in China.

### **3. Localization is Key to Buddhism's Successful Globalization**

In some developed Western countries, Christianity is the mainstream religion. Although Buddhism began disseminating in the Americas and Europe from the nineteenth century C.E., it has had limited influence due to differences in history, culture, etc. Of the different Buddhist traditions, Westerners tend to be influenced most by South Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. By comparison, Chinese Buddhism has had limited influence. Chinese Buddhism's dissemination efforts in the past were scattered, and the methods were relatively inflexible. As a result, no systematic program of dissemination was implemented, even after a long period of time. In the last three decades, however, Chinese Buddhism has expanded its influence exponentially in the West, with statistics showing that it is now the fourth largest religion in the U.S. In the process of disseminating Chinese Buddhism in the West, Venerable Master Hsing Yun and the Fo Guang Shan Order under his leadership have played a critical role. The building of the Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles was a milestone, marking a new era in the dissemination of Chinese Buddhism to the Western world. Through the diligent effort of Venerable Master Hsing Yun and countless disciples over three decades, Chinese Buddhism has come to flourish in five continents. This is the attainment of the grand vision of "the Buddha's light shining universally on the three thousand realms; the Dharma stream flowing across all five continents." Achieving such success in propagating the Dharma beyond China in three short decades is intricately linked to Venerable Master Hsing Yun's global vision and strategy. Part of his strategy is localizing Buddhism so that Buddhism takes root in societies with differing cultural contexts. With regard to the localization process of Buddhism in China, the Venerable Master said:

Going back to the time when Buddhism was first disseminated from India to China, most Indian *bhikkhus* in China were engaged in sūtra translation, leaving the responsibility of building temples to native *bhikkhus*, and that is how we got to the Chinese Buddhism of today. If at that time the Indians—such as Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaratna—had not blended into the local culture and cultivated local disciples, how would we have the distinctive Chinese Buddhism as we know it? Even the arrival of Bodhidharma and his transmission of the great Dharma to Hui Ke was part of the localization of Buddhism.

The process of Buddhism's localization during its dissemination in China eventually made it into an inseparable part of Chinese tradition, or in other words, a fundamental pillar of Chinese culture. Against the backdrop of contemporary society's move towards modernization and globalization, Buddhism must go through the same process of localization in its dissemination into Western societies. This is especially true given the fact that Westerners are more likely to approach Buddhism as a philosophy of life rather than a faith. They tend to see it as a part of a foreign culture or a subject for academic research, thus limiting their understanding and acceptance of Buddhism to some degree.

Similarly, due to the differences in historical and cultural backgrounds, there will be inevitable misunderstandings and misinterpretations by Westerners in regard to the true meaning of Buddhism. When teaching Chinese Buddhism in Western societies, one must begin by understanding Christian traditions and social norms, and then make meaningful adaptations. Only then can genuine understanding and acceptance of Buddhism be possible. In this sense, the localization process of Chinese Buddhism in the Western world is necessary for the dissemination and growing the influence of Humanistic Buddhism as promoted by Venerable Master Hsing Yun. The Humanistic Buddhist approach to education tailors the teaching of principles to the aptitudes of the learner. Using this approach, Buddhism's localization in Western societies will expand the breadth and depth of its practice.

In his writings, Venerable Master Hsing Yun repeatedly emphasizes the significance of localization in Buddhism, and elaborates on how to achieve this in Western societies. In his opinion, Buddhist teachings and methods of enlightening sentient beings must keep up with today's societal progress. In more concrete terms, Buddhism must adopt skilful and expedient means which are relevant to modern society in order to be effective in its dissemination, especially in relation to each country's or region's language, social customs, and habits. Based on this understanding, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has exhorted Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) members of different countries and regions to cultivate the causes and conditions for localization, to shoulder the responsibility of the Dharma's localization, and to spread Buddhism all over the world.

The work of localizing Buddhism can take multiple forms. Specifically, the four objectives of Fo Guang Shan—to propagate the Dharma through culture; to foster talent through education; to benefit society through charity; and to purify human minds through spiritual cultivation—are all applicable in disseminating Buddhism and increasing its influence in Western societies. At the same time, people who propagate the Dharma need to be of a high caliber, and be versatile in their methodological approaches. As Venerable Master Hsing Yun points out:

One who propagates the Dharma has to be social: they should be lively, cheerful, optimistic, enterprising, and proactive in interacting with others.

To localize and to root oneself in the local community, it is necessary to utilize local resources and assimilate into local society. It is especially important to gain information, thus reading newspapers, listening to the news, and reading magazines are necessary daily tasks. Without knowledge of current affairs, you will be irreleva...Apart from improving one's linguistic abilities, propagating the Dharma overseas also requires one to understand local customs and etiquette. Fellow Dharma practitioners can also share current

affairs and news updates with each other, or organize seminars and reading groups to share their thoughts.

In reviewing the process of Dharma propagation in France, Venerable Miao Da raised the following key challenges Fo Guang Shan faced initially: 1. the language barrier; 2. cultural differences; 3. religious perspectives; 4. the characteristics of devotees; 5. and precepts, rules, and rituals. Other groups propagating Chinese Buddhism in Western society encounter these issues on a daily basis too. Objectively, as traditional Chinese Buddhism was historically practiced in East Asia (in countries such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam) with close connections to traditional Chinese culture, the methods used in Dharma propagation tended to be uniform because the receiving culture shared much in terms of their societies, written language, and ways of thinking.

When working in contemporary Western societies, the distinct differences in society, language, and ways of thinking must be recognized. Therefore, in disseminating Buddhism to the West, one should expect, both in principle and practice, that localization will lead to Buddhism being revolutionized and modernized. From very early on, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has spoken of this, predicting that Buddhism's localization in the Western world will lead to its modernization. As Venerable Miao Da concluded, the modernization advocated by Venerable Master Hsing Yun is an important reference point for the dissemination of Buddhism in Western society.

More specifically, the propagation of Buddhism should be established on four fundamental dimensions:

- i. Liberating the living before liberating the deceased. This corrects traditional Chinese Buddhism's misplaced emphasis on the dead over the living, and turns it towards "an emphasis on raising the quality of life, and on helping people build a positive mindset towards their daily life."
- ii. Service before prayers. This corrects the overemphasis of traditional Chinese Buddhism on praying to buddhas and bodhisattvas for prosperity and fame, which leads to the phenomenon of faith being built upon

personal desire and gain. Instead, religious faith should be grounded upon “promoting the spirit of service and giving in service to society and all beings.”

iii. Daily life before enlightenment. This corrects the traditional Chinese Buddhist tendency towards retreating into seclusion and abandoning worldly responsibilities in order to seek liberation from life and death. Instead, one has to seek liberation through living in daily life.

iv. Enterprises before temples. This emphasizes the transformation of the temple’s function, by “turning monasteries into schools, so that the public can be welcomed into the Dharma, see the benefit of it, and eventually abandon suffering and realize happiness.

#### **4. Factors that Promote the Localization of Buddhism in Western Societies**

Similar to the process of localization of Buddhism in China, localization in Western societies involves several factors. We learn some of the important principles and methods of localization through Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s writings.

##### **4.1 Uphold the Principles of Respect and Tolerance**

Respect and tolerance are core values promoted by Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan. This is especially necessary to avoid resistance from Westerners who might misunderstand Dharma propagation as a form of cultural invasion. Once when Venerable Master Hsing Yun delivered a speech at Cornell University in the United States, professor John McCrae approached him afterwards, saying, “It is okay to say you are here to propagate Buddhism, but the constant mentioning of Chinese culture makes it sound like you are here to conquer American culture.” This comment moved Venerable Master Hsing Yun, who later recalled that:

Upon hearing the comment I had a realization: In the same manner that Buddhists offer incense and flowers

to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, I should respect others' cultures. I am here only to be of service. Therefore, we need to be mutually respectful and allow the existence of differences between countries and cultures. Just as the Pure Land of Lapis Lazuli in the east and the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss in the west each have their respective uniqueness and excellence, so forest Buddhism and Humanistic Buddhism each have their own style and character. The world will only be colorful if we embrace similarities while celebrating differences.

In light of this, Venerable Master Hsing Yun emphasizes that one must apply respect and tolerance in one's daily life, which is extremely important in teaching Buddhism in Western society. In fact, respect and tolerance are the prerequisite principles in achieving the localization of Buddhism. As Venerable Master Hsing Yun points out, "The localization that I refer to and advocate makes contributions, is friendly, is harmonious, adds to, and neither excludes nor rejects." He further went on to say:

Therefore, immigrants should have a philosophy of rooting themselves locally no matter where they go. They must localize and integrate into society and not establish themselves into ethnic enclaves within their host country. In the past, the Chinese have in their business and religious propagation emphasized the promotion of Chinese culture no matter where they went. This is patently wrong, because Europe, America, and Australia all have their own cultures. We should respect local culture and have Chinese culture engage in a harmonious exchange with them, and not to invade them. Therefore, every country and race, and even Buddhism from hereafter, must localize no matter which part of the world they may go.

This process of localization is not motivated by, or a tool for, cultural invasion, but aims to bring about the mutual prosperity and development of the local culture and Buddhism. Venerable Master Hsing Yun said:

Now we will speak about developing Buddhism through localization, because Buddhism is not a tool for a country to invade another's culture. Instead, they should coexist, develop together, and share their glories. Therefore, in practicing Humanistic Buddhism, BLIA has to develop a localized Buddhism for as long as it remains. ·

To respond to the needs of sentient beings, we must continually break through limits in the current method of Dharma propagation, and bring Buddhism to both the countryside and bustling capital cities. When overseas, we should advocate for a localized Buddhism and cultivate local talents (non-Chinese), as well as respect the country's traditional culture and customs without comparing them to Chinese Buddhism. We must see things from the perspective of Dharma propagation, for foreigners come largely for the sake of Dharma and not to become Chinese. We should be tolerant and respectful of these locals who wish to follow the Dharma, only then can we draw these talents in. ·

We observe the great importance of respect and tolerance that Venerable Master Hsing Yun advocates in Fo Guang Shan's practice of localization, and it further plays the role of ensuring that Buddhism indeed localizes.

#### **4.2 Translation of Buddhist Texts**

The dissemination of the Buddha's teachings relies on texts. Their accurate translation into Western languages and the faithful transmission of the Buddha's

teachings is indeed the starting point for the localization of Buddhism in Western societies. From very early on, Venerable Master Hsing Yun clearly recognized the importance of translating Buddhist texts into Western languages. Even in the early years of Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan when the conditions were very poor, Venerable Master Hsing Yun started his attempts to organize the English translation of Buddhist texts. For example, in 1962 he established the committee for the *Bilingual Buddhist Series* to undertake the English translation of Buddhist texts. As Fo Guang Shan began Dharma propagation in the United States, he established the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center at Hsi Lai Temple, where Buddhist texts were translated through collaboration between Chinese and locals, and which introduced Buddhism to Westerners in multiple languages. After more than thirty years' effort, Fo Guang Shan has published many works, including those of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, in over twenty languages, including English, Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Korean, Thai, and Portuguese. These are widely circulated around the world, and serve as an important foundation for the localization of Buddhism.

### **4.3 The Localization of Dharma Teachers**

Training local Westerners to teach Buddhism is a pillar of localization, and is an important aspect of the Dharma propagation efforts of Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan.

In the process of propagating the Dharma in Western countries, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has observed that even though he is committed to cultivating monastics through the establishment of Buddhist colleges, qualified monastics able to manage temples are still in short supply compared to the continually growing number of temples. As a result, Fo Guang Shan has been unable to meet the demand of devotees. Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that only by localizing Buddhism can the problem of a severe shortage of monastics be fundamentally solved. The model adopted by Venerable Master Hsing Yun is to make local monastics responsible for local temples. This means selecting outstanding local students from all over the world, sending them to Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College for training, before sending them back to their home country to propagate the Dharma. This has also become an important part of the

localization of Fo Guang Shan's international Dharma propagation.

In April 2001 at the "First Meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Board of Directors of the Buddha's Light International Association" in Johannesburg, South Africa, Venerable Master Hsing proposed four transformations for humanizing the Dharma, improving lives through reading, equalizing monastics and lay people, and localizing monastic establishments. He explained:

To "promote localization of monastic establishments" means that all the hundreds of temples and Dharma centers, as well as the associated work of Dharma propagation that have been created through the joint effort of Fo Guang Shan's followers and members of the BLIA do not belong to any single individual, but rather constitute the shared wealth of everyone involved. Furthermore, it is the wish of all those who belong to Fo Guang Shan that within the next twenty to thirty years, the various temples around the world will be "localized."

He further explained:

Suppose among Fo Guang Shan's overseas branch temples, Hsi Lai had an American monastic as its abbot, Nan Tien and Chung Tien had Australians, Nan Hua had an African, and all other locations had locals as their abbots. Now, if Fo Guang Shan develops Buddhism to this extent, what a grand occasion that will be! Therefore, I hope that starting from today, in the next twenty to fifty years, we will guide the local monastics towards taking charge of the local temples, and in doing so, the Dharma will surely develop faster. At present, students of the Buddhist College of Fo Guang Shan are of various nationalities. In the future, we hope to attract students of many nationalities, so

that they may all become Fo Guang members, help to organize monasteries, to cause the Buddha's light to shine universally, and to spread the Dharma over the three thousand realms. I think this is the best way to practice the Buddha's way.

#### **4.4 The Localization of Principles and Ethics**

An overarching emphasis of Western society is on human rights, and the promotion of uniqueness and individualism. This is in fact the source of the principle of disobedience that prevails in Western society. Therefore, in the process of propagating the Dharma in the West, we should avoid the tendency of attempting to force people to submit to absolute authority. It is especially true that we should avoid conflict as much as possible when there are differences in cultural principles. For this reason, it is very important to advocate for multicultural harmonious coexistence.

In a March 2006 discussion of ethnic issues from a Buddhist perspective at the University of the West in the United States, Venerable Master Hsing Yun expressed:

I have traveled the world for many years and have always advocated localization, which respects local culture and helps Buddhism develop its unique characteristics according to each locality's differing cultural ideas, geographical environment, and social customs. The localization I advocate does not discard, but gives. Thus, when I build temples on the five continents, I hope to bring a more fulfilling spiritual life to the locals through Buddhism. For example, when constructing Hsi Lai Temple, I felt that the United States had advanced technology and many religions, and introducing Buddhism would provide the people yet another option. My understanding of localization is to serve, be friendly, increase options,

and not reject or negate.

In today's world, every region has its indigenous people, and they each have their unique cultures. We should respect and protect indigenous culture and not violate them...I should respect the culture of others. We are here only to contribute and support, just as a Buddhist offers fragrant flowers to the buddhas and bodhisattvas...Cultures should not be violated, but instead there should be an interchange of ideas. At present, all countries are absorbing other cultures. As the saying "tolerance makes greatness" tells us, any country in the world which wishes to be distinguished must be all-embracing—the more culture the country embraces, the greater it becomes.

#### **4.5 Diversity in the Content and Methods of Dharma Propagation**

There are some people in Europe and the United States who are on the one hand curious and interested in Eastern cultures, which includes Buddhism, while on the other hand harbor some measure of negativity towards Eastern history and culture. In particular, there is some Buddhist teaching content that has a strong religious flavor which is often resisted. For example, Pure Land practices which center upon chanting the name of the Amitabha Buddha is immensely influential in Chinese Buddhism, but yet has not gained acceptance among Westerners. Venerable Master Hsing Yun points out that, "Westerners generally feel that the Chinese seem to all engage in Pure Land practices, but Americans cannot easily accept them because they emphasize faith as the entry point to Buddhism, which is not a suitable method for Westerners." In contrast, Westerners have a higher level of acceptance and understanding of Chan, thus Fo Guang Shan mainly organizes Chan-related activities to target Westerners in the process of teaching the Dharma in Western societies.

Hsi Fang Temple in San Diego, California completed in 1989 was the second major Fo Guang Shan temple built in the United States after Hsi Lai Temple.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun observed that there was a period of time when the proportion of Westerners that visited the Hsi Fang Temple was significantly higher than that of other Fo Guang Shan temples in the United States. This was especially true of its participants for training events such as English meditations and Dharma classes. Therefore, Venerable Master Hsing Yun had the idea of building a Buddhist college there for Americans with the purpose of creating the conditions for Westerners to study Buddhism by tailoring training to the American lifestyle and culture. It is hoped that locals can then propagate the Dharma in the United States.

Western Christian missionary methods are often lively and diverse. This approach is very important as it aims to arouse people's interest, so they willingly come in contact with and come to understand the religion. The Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki and others introduced Zen Buddhism to Western countries in the 1960s. Zen has had some impact on Western society, such that the philosophy of modern western society might have been somewhat affected by Zen principles and practices. There is some understanding and even inclination towards Zen among Westerners, and this is a foundation that Chinese Buddhism can borrow and build upon. Further integration of scientific principles and methods that are well-accepted in the West, such as psychology and medicine, or integrating Dharma principles in different types of activities, can be important methods for Fo Guang Shan's propagation of the Dharma in Western countries.

For example, the Miami Chapter of the BLIA has since 2003 organized "temple open house" events, attracting local participation through activities such as tea appreciation, meditation, stone rubbing, Dharma discussion, free Chinese medical clinics, or through Chinese cultural activities such as lion dance, diabolo, fan dance, tai chi, or musical performances. In addition, English reading groups are held from time to time so that the local people can immerse themselves in the peace and calm of Buddhism. These events are making an impact, and in some cases even city mayors have participated. At the same time, Venerable Master Hsing Yun pays close attention to using music to skilfully propagate the Dharma. Under his guidance, Fo Guang Shan's Buddhist music, which is based on Buddhist hymns, has been performed in many countries and has been very well-received, while successfully portraying the grace and essence of Eastern art to Westerners.

## **5. The Significance of Promoting the Localization of Buddhism in Western Societies**

The internationalization of Buddhism under Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan has shown us that the localization is critical to its dissemination. The significance of localization is immense, and is discussed more concretely below.

### **5.1 Promoting Buddhism so that the Dharma Truly Integrates into Western Society**

The translation of Buddhist texts is the starting point and foundation of Dharma propagation in Western societies. As more Buddhist texts are made available in multiple Western languages, the understanding of Buddhist principles and doctrines will gradually deepen. Only after Westerners understand the truth of Buddhism can it fully penetrate into Western societies. Yet, the translation of Buddhist texts is but a primary step. Developing a deep understanding of Buddhist doctrine also relies on Dharma propagators 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 truth of the Dharma into Western culture. This is not a process of diluting the Dharma or the foundational principles of Buddhism in order to cater to Western culture and social customs. Instead, the foundational principles serve to support the bridging of cultural gaps. To truly have an impact on Western societies, the Dharma must be fully integrated using culturally appropriate methods, just as happened historically in China. The efforts in localizing Buddhism by Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan have become an important driving force for the gradual integration of Buddhism into Western societies and cultures.

### **5.2 Promoting Multicultural Exchange and Mutual Respect**

As Venerable Master Hsing Yun has repeatedly pointed out, the Dharma can serve as a conduit for cultural exchange, its introduction to the West merely

provides a new choice to the already multi-religious and multicultural societies. It is not intended to be competitive or invasive. In other words, Dharma propagation in Western societies is not meant to replace or challenge the survival of traditional Western culture, but to share with Westerners the opportunity to deeply experience the wide embrace and great spirit of compassion that Buddhism presents through the process of East-West cultural exchange and interaction. This is also of great value and significance in promoting harmonious coexistence and mutual respect between multiple ethnicities and cultures in Western societies.

### **5.3 New Explorations in Buddhism's Dissemination and Development**

Buddhism went through a process of localization as it spread into China. The principles, models, and methods of Buddhism from an Indian cultural setting gradually bridged the cultural gap through the process of sustained interaction with Chinese society and culture. The process of disseminating Buddhism in Western societies will also be similarly challenged by differences in the contexts of society, culture, and religion, hence flexible adaptation is a must. New issues will arise that were not present in the Chinese case, and these issues will require an open mind. This is a new challenge for Buddhism, which has matured over the last two millennia in the context of Chinese society. In a sense, the dissemination of Buddhism in Western societies is an exploration into completely new circumstances, in which localization has been shown to be important in the overseas teaching of the Dharma by Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan. This exploration not only provides much valuable experience in Dharma propagation, but more broadly speaking, will drive the spread of Chinese Buddhism in the West.

### **5.4 An Effective Path for Advancing the Globalization of Chinese Culture**

As proposed by Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan, treating the Dharma as a culture in its exchange with Western societies has proven to be an effective way to address the needs of this new era. As an important component of traditional Chinese culture, Buddhism is gradually gaining more traction in Western cultures. This method of developing and promoting Buddhism in Western societies can be an important reference for the globalization of other aspects of

Chinese culture. It serves as an effective path and store of experience for the promotion of Chinese culture in its entirety to the West, and for coexistence and shared glory between itself and Western people and culture.

The journey undertaken by Venerable Master Hsing Yun in his many years of actively promoting Humanistic Buddhism globally has gone hand-in-hand with the gradual one that Buddhism has taken in localizing across the world. The principles and experiences regarding the localization are of important and practical significance. As Cheng Gongrang's assessment of the philosophy of localization advocated by Venerable Master Hsing Yun shows:

This philosophical ideal of localization is not only one of the most unique theories in Venerable Master Hsing Yun's theoretical system for the internationalization of Humanistic Buddhism, but it is also a concrete action plan, roadmap, and timeline for the endeavors in Dharma propagation of Fo Guang Shan's overseas temples. These philosophical ideals are undoubtedly significant in setting a theoretical marker of progress for the future development and internationalization of Fo Guang Shan Humanistic Buddhism.

## Notes

- 1 回想當初佛教從印度傳到東土，印度比丘到中國來大多從事翻譯經典的工作，建寺廟的責任則讓給中國比丘去做，所以才有現在的中國佛教。假如當時印度的迦葉摩騰、竺法蘭等人，不融入當地的文化，不培養當地的弟子，哪裡會有現在中國佛教的特色呢？甚至當初達摩祖師東來，將大法傳給慧可，只為了本土化。-Ed.
- 2 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," in *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23 (September 2004): 1-22.
- 3 身為弘法布教者，要具有社會性格，活潑、開朗、樂觀、進取、主動與人來往交流。-Ed.
- 4 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Hsing Yun Diary 42 - Examining Thoughts* (1996/7/12) (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1997), 47.
- 5 要本土化、在當地生根，必須要懂得利用當地資源，融入當地民情社會，尤其對資訊要懂得掌握，看報紙、聽新聞、讀雜誌，是每天不可少的功課，若沒有時事的觀念，易被淘汰。在海外弘法，除了要加強語言的訓練外，也要懂得當地民情風俗、進退禮儀。師兄弟間，可以不定時的彼此做時事報告、新知報告、讀書心得報告等座談，來交換心得。-Ed.

- 6 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Hsing Yun Diary 42 - Examining Thoughts* (1996/7/19) (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1997), 69.
- 7 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23 (September 2004): 1-38.
- 8 「你來美國弘法可以，但是不能老是拿中華文化來壓迫美國人，開口閉口都是中華文化，好像是來征服美國文化的。」-Ed.
- 9 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23, trans. Venerable Miao Guang (September 2004): 1-38.
- 10 當時我聽了心中就有一個覺悟：我應該要尊重別人的文化，我們來只是為了奉獻、服務，如同佛教徒以香花供養諸佛菩薩一樣。所以對於不同的國家、文化，大家要互相尊重，要容許不同的存在，就如東方琉璃淨土有琉璃淨土的特色，西方極樂世界有極樂世界的殊勝，甚至山林佛教有山林佛教的風格，人間佛教有人間佛教的性向。能夠「異中求同，同中存異」，世界才會多采多姿。」-Ed.
- 11 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23 (September 2004): 1-38.
- 12 「所謂『本土化』，我所提倡的本土化是奉獻的、是友好的、是融和的、是增加的，不是排斥的，不是否決的。」-Ed.
- 13 因此，對於過去華人走到世界任何地方，不管做事或是傳教，都要強調『發揚中華文化』，這句話是不對的！因為歐洲有歐洲的文化，美洲有美洲的文化，澳洲有澳洲的文化，我們應該尊重當地的文化，用中華文化與當地的文化融和交 流，不要用我們的文化去侵略別人的文化。所以每個國家、種族，都要本土化，乃至今後的佛教，大家來自於世界各地，也一定要發揚本土化。」-Ed.
- 14 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23 (September 2004): 1-38.
- 15 「現在講到用『本土化』來發展佛教，因為佛教不是用來做為一個國家侵略他人文化的工具，而是要同體共生，共同發展，共存共榮。所以佛光會奉行人間佛教，只要在人間，都要發展當地的佛教。」-Ed.
- 16 Venerable Master Hsing Yun's speech at the First Meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Board of Directors of the Buddha's Light International Association on April 19, 2001 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 17 「為因應眾生需要，現在的弘法方式必須要不斷突破，將佛法推動到鄉村、國家會場。在海外則要多倡導本土化佛教，培養當地人才（非漢語系人士），並尊重其傳統文化和習慣，不要以中國佛教的標準來要求。要有弘法的眼光，因為外籍人士大多是為佛法而來，不是為準備做中國人而來。對有心親近佛法的外籍人士要包容、尊重，才能攝受人才。」-Ed.
- 18 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Hsing Yun Diary 34—The Path of Leading the Masses* (1995/3/13) (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1997), 45.
- 19 Translation of the four transformations is adapted from Zhiying Fu, *Bright Star, Luminous Cloud: The Life of a Simple Monk* (California: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2008), 153. -Ed.
- 20 「所謂『寺院本土化』就是凡佛光山的信徒和佛光會的會員，在世界共創的數百間寺院道場與弘法事業，不為某一人所有，此乃大家的共財；然而佛光人有一心願，即在二十年、三十年之間，將使世界各地的寺院予以『本土化』。」-Ed.
- 21 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way,"

*Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, no. 23 (September 2004): 1–38.

- 22 Translation of the four transformations is adapted from Zhiying Fu, *Bright Star, Luminous Cloud: The Life of a Simple Monk* (California: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2008), 153-54.-Ed.
- 23 「假如現在佛光山海外的分別院，西來寺是由美籍的出家人當住持，南天寺、中天寺由澳洲籍的出家人當住持，南華寺由非洲籍的出家人當住持，其他的各個地方都是由當地的人住持；如果佛光山現在把佛教發展到這個程度，那將是一個怎麼樣的盛況呢？所以我希望從現在起，二十年到五十年間，讓我們輔導當地本土的出家人來負責本土的道場，如此佛法必定能更加快速的發展。尤其目前在佛光山佛學院受教育的學生，各國弟子都有，未來希望更擴大種族的吸收，使其都能成為佛光人，將來組織寺院，發展佛光普照，使佛法真正傳播於三千世界。我想，這也是最好的『行佛』之實踐。」-Ed.
- 24 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," in *Collection of Humanistic Buddhism Papers* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 774-75.
- 25 「多年來我遊走世界，一直在倡導『本土化』，就是尊重當地文化，也就是要讓佛教依各地的文化思想、地理環境、風俗民情之不同，發展出各自的特色。我所推動的『本土化』不是『去』，而是『給』，所以我在五大洲建寺，就是希望透過佛教，給當地人帶來更充實的精神生活。例如，建設西來寺的時候，就是覺得美國科技發達，宗教也多，假如能夠再增加一種佛教給人民選擇，不是更美好？所以我的本土化是奉獻的、是友好的、是增加的，不是排斥的，不是否決的。」-Ed.
- 26 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "A Buddhist View of 'Community Issues,'" in *Humanistic Buddhism Series Contemporary Questions Symposium* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 32.
- 27 現在舉世各國都有原住民，而每一種原住民都有他們特有的文化，我們對於少數原住民文化，要尊重它、保護它，但不能侵略它。我應該要尊重別人的文化，我們來到這裡只是為了奉獻、供養，如同佛教徒以香花供養諸佛菩薩一樣。文化不容被侵略，但是文化是可以交流的。現在舉世各國都在吸收他國文化，所謂『有容乃大』，世界上任何一個國家要想雍容華貴，就要有『泰山不辭土壤，大海不揀細流』的胸襟，包容愈多種文化，國家就愈是偉大。-Ed.
- 28 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "A Buddhist View of 'Community Issues,'" in *Humanistic Buddhism Series Contemporary Questions Symposium* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 31-32.
- 29 「西方人士大多只知道，中國人好像都是修淨土法門，美籍人士不容易接受淨土，是因『淨土』強調以『信』做為宗教入門，不適合作為西方人士的入佛法門。」-Ed.
- 30 Zen is Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word *Chan*. Therefore Zen Buddhism is the Japanese version of the Chinese Chan Buddhism. -Ed.
- 31 「『本土化』的這一思想理念不僅成為星雲大師人間佛教國際化思想理論體系中最富特色的一個理論，而且通過規劃佛光山海外道場國際化弘法事業的『路線圖』及『時間表』，也成為大師落實其人間佛教國際化思想理論的具體行動方案。這些思想理念的提出，對於此後佛光山人間佛教國際化的進一步拓展及深度發展，無疑具有理論指標的意義。」-Ed.
- 32 Cheng Gongrang, *A Study of Venerable Master Hsing Yun's Thoughts on Humanistic Buddhism* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 2015), 553.