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**THE LOCALIZATION OF MUSIC
DURING THE LATE STAGES OF BUDDHISM'S
SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD
—A COMPARISON OF JAPANESE AND DAI
BUDDHIST MUSIC**

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Abstract

This article begins with a discussion of several common elements and similar phenomena found in the history of music in the Buddhism of the Dai people of China and in Japanese Buddhism during the late stages of the spread of Buddhism around the world. Then, using these clues, the relevant documentary materials available in Chinese are used to further describe the early localization of music in Japan. Finally, based on a comparison of field surveys and relevant documentary data, a comparative analysis of these two schools of Buddhist music is made, taking into account their status and respective conditions within the opposed courses of globalization and localization, and in relation to being either a transmitter or receiver of musical ideas.

Keywords: Dai people, Southern Buddhism, Northern Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism, Buddhist music, localization, globalization

Buddhism originated in India and developed into the two main branches of Southern and Northern Buddhism, the latter of which further branched into Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. In the later stage of Buddhism's spread, several important historical phenomena and common elements relate to the Buddhism of both the Dai people of China and the Japanese people. First, both regions were at either end of the route along which Buddhism spread. The Dai region of China was the terminus of the southern route along which Buddhism spread, while Japan was the terminus of the northern one. Second, the introduction of Buddhism to the Dai region of China and to Japan both happened between the fifth and seventh centuries. Third, at that time the two regions were comparable in terms of social, economic, and cultural development, though a gap grew between them over

time. Fourth, although some written records exist documenting the introduction of Buddhism into Southeast Asian and China, the specifics of the localization process and evolution of music (such as chanting, the sinicization of Buddhist music, and the adaptation of Pali sūtra recitation by the Mon and Dai peoples) have been lost through time. However, it is possible to find traces of a lively transmission of music in both the Dai region and Japan.

1. The General Course of the Spread and Acceptance of Buddhist Music

From the beginning of the Common Era (C.E.) until the end of the nineteenth century, Indian Buddhism spread into East and Southeast Asia. When Buddhist culture arrived in an area, it underwent a process of resistance and integration with the local (religious) culture. Northern and Southern Buddhism both encountered their own difficulties in the process of dissemination, with each demonstrating its own cultural characteristics. Despite this, at the end of the nineteenth century they both faced the primary conundrum of Buddhism and Buddhist music's role as a disseminating culture (foreignization) or an accepting culture (localization), and sharing Asia as its primary region of activity and influence. However, since the nineteenth century, in Buddhism's later stages of developmental history, it has had at least two confrontations with global cultural trends outside of Asia. The first was during the time of the Meiji Restoration in Japan, when the spread of modern Western culture (including music) came through colonialism and the worldwide spread of Christianity. This not only had a great impact on Japanese Buddhism and its music, but also penetrated into the Buddhist cultures of China and some regions of Southeast Asia. At that time, because the region of China where the Dai people lived was an isolated inland area, it was not yet affected by Western culture. The second major confrontation between Buddhist and Western culture came in the late twentieth century. Western culture rode the momentum of economic globalization to once again enter Asian countries, but also encountered strong resistance from localization movements in these countries. In the confrontation between globalization and localization, the Dai region of China, as well as other minority areas, were not spared, and Buddhist culture (including music) bore the brunt. Around a century apart, the Dai region and Japan, as terminal points in the spread of Buddhism, have both experienced the most serious existential threat since the introduction of Buddhism. Because of the obvious gaps in time and

space between the two, the impact and consequences of the two confrontations are quite different as can be observed from the present condition of Buddhism and Buddhist music in these two regions.

2. The Eastward Movement of Northern Buddhism and the Localization Process of Japanese Buddhist Music

In the first century C.E., Indian Buddhism developed from the Sthaviranikāya (Sect of the Elders) and the Mahāsāṃghika (the Great Saṅgha) into “Hīnayāna” and “Mahāyāna” Buddhism. Later, as Buddhism evolved into its southern and northern branches, it grew into one of the world’s three major religions. Chinese Buddhism became the main part of Northern Buddhism. Buddhism was introduced into China from the western regions during the Eastern Han Dynasty. Fundamentally, it was a combination of the establishment of ceremony (ritual) and the creation of music (chanting and Buddhist music). Today, although we know there has been a process of translating Buddhist texts from India, and the evolution of Buddhist chanting, and that later Buddhist music was mainly written in the Chinese language and in a native musical style, we only vaguely understand this transformation process. I think even the “Chants from Fish Mountain” that were thought to be conclusive evidence contain some traces of folklore. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China, the latter’s Buddhist music had already been totally sinicized both in language and musical style, and carried the characteristics of a Buddhist cultural variant and a derivative cultural transmission. Since then, the localization of Japanese Buddhist music has shown a clear tendency toward Japanization. Today, there is sufficient historical evidence to explain both the maintenance of tradition (such as the Ōbaku and Pure Land schools) and the dramatic evolution (such as popularization and Westernization of Buddhist music). These are some of the main features of the processes in the development of localized Buddhist music in Japan.

In the middle of the sixth century C.E., when the Three Kingdoms of Korea were in power, Baekje (one of the kingdoms) sent a number of Buddhist statues, scriptures, banners, and other items to Japan’s Yamato court as a tribute to Emperor Kinmei for his military assistance. Both Japanese and Chinese academics recognize this as the official beginning of Buddhism in Japan.¹ During this early

period after Buddhism's introduction into Japan, its concepts of negation, world weariness, and monasticism were rather difficult for the Japanese of the time to accept. In Japan at the time, both those for and against Buddhism interpreted it to be about "foreign spirits." It was regarded as a set of shamanic rituals not significantly different from Shintō, which were aimed at preventing disasters and bringing blessings. Even the aristocrats of the imperial court who warmly welcomed Buddhism essentially hoped that, like the spirits they were familiar with, the Buddha would bring the benefits of preventing disasters, bringing blessings, and protecting the country. This is evidenced in a 743 C.E. edict which stated a "desire to rely on the spiritual strength of the Triple Gem, to mutually exalt heaven and earth, to cultivate prosperity for many generations, and glorify all living things,"² which shows the belief that Buddhism and Shintō could both work in parallel and are both effective in protecting the country.³ We can thus tell that the flourishing of Buddhism in Japan in the early period was similar to the period when Buddhism was first propagated in China. It complied with the strong demand for corresponding religious and cultural forms that functionally supported the establishment of a feudal mode of government. At the same time, as the aristocracy's acceptance of Buddhism was based on their belief that it was similar to Shintō, the seed of a harmonious relationship between Buddhism with Shintō was planted.

In the seventh century C.E. (606 C.E.), Asuka-dera, Shitennō-ji, Shingou-ji,⁴ and other temples were being constructed in Japan. Every year the temples would have Dharma services on the eighth day of the fourth month and the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which is the origin of the Buddha's birthday and the Ullambana festivals. It is generally acknowledged that Japan already had simple Buddhist ceremonies and ceremonial music at this time. According to a 720 C.E. entry in the *Chronicle of Japan Continued*: "Because the tones for the ritual chanting were disorderly at the time, the emperor issued an edict setting the Tang monk Daorong's tones as the benchmark to standardize chanting."⁵ In 736 C.E., during the famous Nara period of Buddhism in Japan, the Tang monk Daoxuan went to Japan, and together with monks from India⁶, Lâm Ấp,⁷ and Campā⁸ transmitted the Buddhist teachings and chanting styles from various lands. Based on this, music scholars in Japan believe that Daorong and Daoxuan were the earliest Chinese monks to teach Buddhist chanting in Japan.⁹ During this period,

Buddhist ceremonies and ceremonial music were gradually unified. According to the *Chronicle of Japan Continued*, on the ninth day of the fourth month of 752 C.E., Tōdai-ji Temple held a ceremony for the newly installed Daibutsu (large Buddha statue), which included chanting mixed with dancing and music. There were 200 masters of sacred words, 200 shakers of the rings on the metal staff, 10 chanting leaders, and 10 flower-scatterers who conducted four Buddhist rituals. The scale of this spectacle was a first since the spread of Buddhism to Japan, thus establishing the reputation of the Nara *shōmyō*.¹⁰

Starting around the eighth and ninth centuries C.E., there was a trend toward the merging of Buddhism and Shintō in Japan. Its expression in the belief system was the emergence of the “benevolent deities who protect the Dharma” (that is, spirits who support and protect the Dharma). In the Heian period, Tendai and Shingon were the main representative schools of Japanese Buddhism. Using their ascendancy, the founding masters of the two schools, Saichō (Tendai) and Kūkai (Shingon), established the doctrines of Sannō Shintō and Ryōbu Shintō respectively. Each had its own protector deities, such as the Tendai’s Shinra Myōjin and Sekizan Myōjin, and Shingon’s Seiryū Gongen. Some scholars believe that these two schools reflect the idea that Shintō and Buddhism are from the same root, and emphasize Buddhism as central and Shintō as auxiliary. The concept of interdependence and tolerance between Shintō and Buddhism has long influenced the Japanese view of the two.¹¹ This is also an important ideological basis for Japanese Buddhist music becoming increasingly localized—its local expression was in the emergence and popularization of *wasan*.¹² At that time, performances during the Japanese New Year had already blended together Chinese court music such as “Long Live the Emperor”¹³ and Chinese folk songs and dances such as “Foot-Stomping Song”¹⁴ with Japanese Shintō music such as “Outa,”¹⁵ making it difficult to recognize the different ethnic elements within the music. In music for religious sacrificial rituals, the relationship between the two types of ritual and ritual music were complicated because of Emperor Kanmu’s ambiguous attitude towards Shintō and Buddhism. In some circumstances, the ritual music of Shintō and Buddhism were still distinguishable. For example, during the public memorial service for Emperor Kanmu’s mother, Buddhist mourning ceremonies were held and Buddhist scriptures were recited throughout Japan, but these activities were banned in Shintō shrines.¹⁶

The once prominent Nara *shōmyō* was nearly lost. In the early ninth century, the Japanese monks Kukai and Saichō brought back the ritual music of the newly emerging Buddhism of Tang Dynasty China after they went there to study. This was the origin of all contemporary *shōmyō* of the various schools of Buddhism in Japan. Among these, the monk Ennin made an anthology of the ritual music and *shōmyō* of the Tendai School founded by Saichō at Mount Hiei. This became a major source of Buddhist music for Mount Hiei and Kyoto Ōhara.

Ennin was one of the junior members of the “eight great monks who traveled to the Tang Dynasty,” yet his experience of visiting Tang Dynasty China to study and his successors’ passing on the study of Buddhist music has been an important topic of study for those interested in Japanese Buddhist music, and an essential resource for the study of Japanese musical history. Ennin’s *Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang China in Search for the Dharma*¹⁷ (hereinafter *Pilgrimage to Tang China*) has been lauded by Western scholars as one of the three major travel accounts of the ancient East. In the book, from the perspective of a foreigner seeking the Dharma, Ennin observed and documented in detail eight Buddhist ceremonies. These included a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Master Zhi Yi’s death at Kaiyuan Temple in Yangzhou, the national observance day ceremony of the death of Emperor Jingzong of Tang, an offering ceremony for the forty-two noble ones at the Chishan Fahua Temple,¹⁸ Silla ceremonies of sūtra-teaching, daily lecture, chanting ceremony, and the ceremonies of food offering, and offering for the seventy-two noble ones at Zhulin Temple at Mount Wutai. Among the more detailed descriptions are those of the Silla (Korean) monks stationed at the Chishan Temple and the ceremonial proceedings at Zhulin Temple at Mount Wutai.¹⁹ A detailed analysis on the six of the ceremonies from a Buddhist music history perspective was presented in the Oxford edition of *History of Japanese Music*.²⁰ Some Japanese scholars believe that Ennin’s in-depth study of the Tang Dynasty Buddhist rituals during his ten years in China led to the systems of chanting of Esoteric and Pure Land schools being combined with the Nara *shōmyō* from the Saichō era into a new *shōmyō* system. These Buddhist ceremonies are the antecedents of contemporary Mount Hiei ceremonies of liturgies. Among them, the Chanting of the “Buddha’s Name Melody”²¹ now practiced in the Halls of Perpetual Practice²² of the Pure Land

School is said to have originated from the “Five-Toned Chanting of the Buddha’s Name”²³ of Mount Wutai’s Zhulin Temple.²⁴

Korea was a transit point on the route that Chinese Buddhism took to Japan in ancient times, so the Japanese Buddhist community has always paid close attention to developments in Korean Buddhism. It is worthwhile to note that in *Pilgrimage to Tang China* Ennin made more detailed descriptions of the ceremonies held by the Silla monks at Chishan, and compared them with Buddhist ceremonies in Japan. According to Ennin, there were around forty Korean monks stationed at Chishan Fahua Temple then. All of the sūtra recitations and penitential offerings, except for the morning and evening liturgies for confession, followed Korean customs and were conducted in the Silla voice. In terms of sūtra chanting, there was solo chanting, chanting in pairs, and group chanting. All of the solo chant leaders used Chinese melodies (Tang music) for chanting and *gāthās*. The chanting for “Praise the Buddha’s Name” and others that were chanted in groups (in unison), followed the Silla style.²⁵ Korean scholars have made the comparison that: “During that time, in China there was Indian style chanting and newly created Chinese-styled ‘Chants from Fish Mountain’, while in Korea new Korean chants were influenced by the Chinese ones.”²⁶

The end of the Heian period and into the Kamakura period was an era of great change for *shōmyō*. Foreign and local music went through both conflict and harmonization to create a new style of Japanese music, leading to substantial changes to *shōmyō*. According to Japanese scholars, during this period, Tendai *shōmyō* had already completely lost all traces of its Chinese origins. The “Chanting of the Buddha’s Name Melody”²⁷ and “Chanting of the Name with a Prolonged Voice”²⁸ that Ennin brought back from China were modified by the influence of court music ensembles²⁹ and the melodies of sung ballads³⁰ such that none of the former style was evident.³¹

Entering into the Meiji era, being confronted with the strong expansion of Western colonialism and Christian culture, there was a call from within the Japanese Buddhist community (particularly the monk Ogurusu Kōchō) for “the three-nation alliance of Japan, China, and India in an appeal to all Buddhists of Asia to unite.”³² The intent was to curb the expansion of Western religious culture.

However, due to the negative response of the Buddhist community in China and other countries this appeal had little effect.³³ The Japanese Buddhist community was also significantly affected by the introduction of Western music. The Buddhist schools each produced new versions of “Buddhist hymns” or “Buddhist songs of praise” (the term *shōmyō* was no longer used). This caused some Japanese scholars to lament: “Now Japan has completely lost connection to traditional (Buddhist music) tunes.”³⁴ However, based on recent studies by Chinese scholars, the above conclusion might not be entirely correct. For example, research done by Zhou Yun found that the *shōmyō* of the Ōbaku School in Japan still preserves a considerable amount of Chinese melodic elements.³⁵ This will be discussed further below.

Without doubt, the modernization of culture brought about during the Meiji Restoration affected the development of modern Japanese Buddhist culture and music, and it also influenced neighboring countries such as China and Korea. For example, research by Korean scholars shows that under the influence of Japanese Buddhist music, Korean Buddhist music beginning in the twentieth century appeared to be “Buddhist songs using Western musical scores.” Some Buddhist songs were even accompanied by Chinese music, and there were even Korean language Buddhist songs in a symphonic style with piano accompaniment.³⁶

3. Cultural Personality and Localized Characteristics of Southern Buddhism in Yunnan and Southeast Asia

The early history of the introduction of Buddhism and Buddhist music into Southeast Asia is unclear, and there is no definitive record of the introduction of Buddhism into the region of the Dai people. However, as Southern Buddhism as a whole maintains a more traditional system of ritual, doctrine, and scripture (*sūtras*), the ceremonial music still retains part of the Pali scriptures/chanting system that dates from the period of early Buddhism. Other parts of the scriptural literature clearly show traces of the process of translation from the Pali system to the Dai language/Dai music system. Therefore, the preserved cultural facts can be used to make up for the lack of historical records. The following will focus on a comparison of the similarities and differences of the two main schools of Buddhism and use this to discuss the cultural personality and localized characteristics of Southern Buddhism and its music.

3.1 The Southern Spread of Buddhism and the Characteristics of Its Distribution

In terms of the general history of Buddhism's introduction into Southeast Asia and Yunnan, around the fourth century B.C.E., Buddhism had already split into the more conservative Sthaviranikāya and more liberal Mahāsāṃghika schools. In the first century C.E., after more subdivision and integration, the various schools of Buddhism evolved into two large systems: Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. Part of the Hīnayāna system, the Theravāda schools spread south from Avanti and later arrived in Sri Lanka, which became the center for the spread of Theravāda. After the second and third centuries C.E., it gradually spread through the Indochina Peninsula, through countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Via Myanmar it further spread to the Dai, Blang, De'ang, Va, Achang, and other ethnic regions in southwestern Yunnan Province of China. Today's Chinese ethnohistorians generally believe that the earliest introduction of Theravāda into Xishuangbanna was in the late Sui or early Tang dynasties during the seventh century C.E., and then spread to Dehong, Linchang, and Jingu from the thirteenth century C.E.³⁷ Because of the obvious geographical relationship between these regions, they can all be considered as part of a Theravāda cultural sphere that transcends regions, ethnicities, and national boundaries.

There are some obvious differences between Southern and Northern Buddhism that can be identified by the characteristics of their dissemination and distribution. When Mahāyāna Buddhism journeyed to China from India, it was refined and reformed in the great cauldron of Chinese culture. A massive Northern Buddhist culture sphere was formed gradually through continuous reformation and evolution, and through ceaseless dissemination to its neighboring countries. Although each country's Buddhist culture sub-sphere has unique features (such as localization of scriptures and chanting styles), it is based on a basic cultural system. These secondary cultural centers, which are primarily based on Chinese Buddhism (India being the original cultural center), clearly point to their roles as host or receptor, and feature obvious man-made religious and cultural characteristics.

In cultural and social terms, Buddhist culture has clear distinctions between "orthodox" and "heterodox." The "orthodox" aim to remove themselves from the dust and defilement of worldly affairs, whether they are located in a famous

temple in the mountains or in a small rural shrine. This demonstrates their identity as part of the “great tradition.” Outside of the Buddhist “orthodoxy” there are many folk beliefs (or folk religions) that have distinct Buddhist elements blended with regional styles and native “little traditions.” In this regard, the localization of Japanese Buddhism and Buddhist music happened primarily at the “orthodox” level.

In comparison, although the cultural sphere of Southern Buddhism has a relatively wide geographic distribution, a large population of devotees, and has a cultural system based on the Pali language Tripitaka and discourses, among its many ethnic and regional sub-spheres, there is no obvious center of cultural radiation as found in Northern Buddhism. Rather, the Buddhist cultures of each country and ethnic group are relatively distinct and self-contained. Moreover, because of their integration with, and absorption of, a relatively large amount of ethnic and local native religious and cultural elements, a structure of loosely related Buddhist cultures is formed. Therefore, Southern Buddhism has the cultural characteristics of man-made religion and local, ethnic (pre man-made religion). The original Pali Buddhism of India continues to be the main ideological system and dissemination method of Southern Buddhism, and some of the more conservative teachings of early Buddhism are still maintained. In terms of social structure, although monastics mostly live in temples, they are usually located in the center of villages, towns, and cities, blending in harmoniously with secular life. Monks tend to be from the local area, and there is fluid movement between secular and monastic life. The religious lives of monks and the laity are intimately related in certain communities. Therefore, in either theoretical or practical terms, Southern Buddhism does not appear to have the distinction between “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy” discussed above. In modern times, Buddhist groups in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other places have advocated using the modern religious ideas of Western Christianity to obtain the best cultural dissemination, and to get out of the stereotypical “orthodox Buddhism” in order to take root among the people. The ideas and methods bear traces of returning to early Buddhist teachings. In this regard, Southern Buddhism, which still exists in the Dai region of China to some extent, reflects the ideas and cultural realm being pursued today by Buddhist groups in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

3.2 The Harmonious Relationship Between Southern Buddhism and Native Beliefs

In terms of the mutual relationship shared with native beliefs, the obvious difference between Northern Buddhism (in China, Korea, and Japan) and Southern Buddhism is that Northern Buddhism has gone through many trials and tribulations and has not been able to occupy a dominant position at a national level like Southern Buddhism. Taking China as an example, from one perspective, in terms of the “great traditions,” Buddhism can only meet Taoism as an equal, while there has also been a certain degree of mutual integration between these religions and the Confucian culture. From another perspective, in terms of the cultural or societal levels of “great and little traditions,” Buddhism is also layered with various folk religions with elements of Buddhist beliefs. As a result, between the “great traditions” (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism) and “little traditions” (folk beliefs), a pattern of pluralism and mutual overlap has developed. With Southern Buddhism, there are relatively limited cases of elements from “little traditions” of native ethnic or regional religious beliefs,³⁸ and in terms of its “great tradition,” it is more complete where it crosses ethnic, regional, and national borders. In terms of its rituals, not only is its “great tradition” closely knit with its local or partial “little traditions,” but both levels also layer and blend into each other yet can be clearly distinguished in terms of which is primary or secondary.

Both Northern and Southern Buddhism have had intense, complicated, and competitive relations with indigenous religious beliefs in their respective histories. Today however, the situations of these two schools of Buddhism are very different. For instance, at the “orthodox” level, although there are some spirits (such as the Eight Legions)³⁹ that are symbols of pagan beliefs that were subsumed by Northern Buddhism, they mainly relate to events from before Buddhism entered China. These beliefs therefore reflect the result of competition between Buddhism and native religions in the early period. Evidence of conflict with indigenous religions after Buddhism was introduced into China can be found within Taoism and other folk religions. However, few traces of assimilation can be found in Chinese language Buddhist texts and ceremonies, unlike Southern Buddhism in Southeast Asia and Yunnan (and even Tibetan Buddhism).

Unlike the overlapping relationship between the “great and little traditions” of Chinese Buddhism, Buddhist culture is not only the paramount faith in some of the traditional cultures of ethnic minorities in Yunnan and Southeast Asia, but it is also the result of a process of the long conflict and struggle between foreign and local beliefs. These struggles are reflected and preserved in Buddhist culture, including ceremonies and ritual music. This is one of the significant social features that have been a part of some Southeast Asian cultures since the introduction of early Buddhism from India. In this regard, and in terms of their cultural forms, the Dai people of Yunnan share a certain degree of similarity with those of many other countries in which Southern Buddhism is the major religion. Taking Sri Lanka, a significant site in the dissemination of Southern Buddhism, as an example, some Chinese scholars point out that the traditional Buddhist scriptures and *bhikkhus* form the core of its “great tradition,” while the “little traditions” of the common believers are comprised of cultural circles centered around village life, including worship of the pre-Buddhist Hindu gods and spirits on the island.⁴⁰ In his book *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*, Gananath Obeyesekere divides the rituals texts of Sri Lankan villagers into three worlds: Buddhist concepts of the world of material form (*rūpa*), the world of desires (*kama*), and the world of formlessness (*arūpa*). According to the traditional explanation of the Lankadvīpa (proto-Sri Lankan) people, these three worlds represent the realms of humans, demons, and Buddhist deities. The site of the ceremony takes the form of an arena in which these three worlds meet and interact.⁴¹ The “little traditions” of the Dai people in Yunnan are largely similar. For example, both Buddhist beliefs and belief in gods can be found together in many Dai festivals and ceremonies, in which Buddhism takes the role of victor and ruler while the local gods and spirits are the subjugated and then become protectors of Buddhism, yet both groups are equally important to the Dai people’s system of belief. So, in ceremonies, both monks and ritual specialists⁴² are performers and protagonists. They are respectively responsible for the cultural interpretation of Buddhist beliefs and Buddhist music (represented by the Pali scriptures and chanting), and beliefs in gods and spirits and spiritual music (represented by Dai language prayers and songs). On the same stage, they perform a cultural drama representing an external culture (great tradition) and an indigenous culture (little tradition). To compare with the situation of Japanese Buddhism mentioned above, when Buddhism was introduced, it also experienced fierce competition with the indigenous religion Shintō. Traces of this competition

are preserved in subsequent theoretical expositions and liturgies. Similarities are found in the early history of Southern Buddhism in Yunnan and Southeast Asia. In this regard, this phenomenon appears to be related to the synchronous social, economic, and cultural development of the two places.

3.3 The Geographic Spread and Temporal Transmission of the “Great and Little Traditions” of Southern Buddhism

Compared to Northern Buddhism, with a scriptural melodic system that has gone through extensive changes, the “great tradition” of Southern Buddhism in Southeast Asia, including that of the Dai, Blang (Bulong), Palaung (Ta’ang), and Wa people is distinguished by a nearly uniform use of a scriptural system based on the Pali language and its closed core rituals,⁴³ resulting in the preservation of a liturgical music with a basic melodic system that is stylistically uniform. According to the eminent monk Buddhaghosa (fifth century C.E.), the Pali Tipitaka of Southern Buddhism uses Magadhi, the language spoken by the Buddha himself. Furthermore, the Buddha was of the opinion that monks should learn the scriptures in Magadhi.⁴⁴ From the first century C.E., Hīnayāna Buddhists in Yunnan and Southeast Asia have been using Pali as the scriptural language, and the original Tipitaka recorded in the Pali script. This is why most Buddhist scholars believe that the Southern Theravādan Buddhism in China and Southeast Asia has directly inherited the cultural legacy of early Buddhism in ancient India.

Corresponding to the “great tradition” described above, Southern Buddhism’s “little tradition” of music contains overlapping and coexisting elements of man-made religion and folk religious beliefs such as the worship of ancestors, gods, and spirits. In its method of transmission, there is a conversion from scripture to chanted lyrics resulting in the unique cultural phenomenon of a parallel yet non-conflicting existence of written and recited scriptural texts. This is exemplified by the concurrent use of the original Pali Tipitaka and scriptures either translated, interpreted, or transliterated into the local language, as well as modified versions of the sūtras, in places where Southern Buddhism has spread, including Yunnan in China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. These versions are integrated with different forms of music and chanting of the scriptures based on the scriptural language of different places, resulting in a rich and diverse system of “dialects”

that varies according to ethnicity and place. For example, in Dai Buddhist music, apart from the common chants, there are many scriptures and chants shared by the monastic and lay communities in festivals and ceremonies that generally use the Dai language, but sometimes also contain Pali elements. The contents are primarily based on the folklores, fables, prayers, and hymns found in Buddhist scriptures.

3.4 The Current Situation of the Ceremonial Music of Southern Buddhism in Yunnan

During the Meiji period when Japanese Buddhism was modernizing, the Dai region of Yunnan Province in China and most areas in Southeast Asia were still geographically and culturally isolated. Only in the past twenty to thirty years has Southern Buddhism in Yunnan faced the issue of transforming from a closed Buddhist tradition to a more open and modern religious culture. Since the 1980s in particular, communal religious festivals that were banned during the Cultural Revolution have been revived. Religious themes have also been reappearing in Songkran Festival ceremonies, although mainly in the villages. In recent years, there has been an influx of commercial popular culture into Thailand, Myanmar, and China. A revolution in the cultural and artistic framework and an invasion of consumerism has led dance troupes at state and district levels to change their traditional performances. The influence of economic modernization marked by globalization has also driven changes in the concepts and conduct of monks in regard to Songkran ceremonies. The above factors have more or less dissolved the dualistic relationship of official culture/popular culture and religious/secular in traditional Dai music, resulting in a diverse, multi-layered, and mutually encompassing social, artistic, and cultural scene. Taking Songkran as an example, the following four evolutionary spheres operate at the official and community levels, with different cultural symbolic significance:

- Primary sphere: economic—cultural sphere of agrarian ceremonial rites
- Secondary sphere: religious—cultural sphere of folk beliefs and rites
- Tertiary sphere A: political—cultural sphere of state power and secularity
- Tertiary sphere B: economic—global tourism commercial and cultural layer⁴⁵

4. A Brief Comparison of Dai Buddhist Music and the Localization of Japanese and Korean Buddhist Music

As discussed above, in the course of the development and spread of Buddhism, compared to the image of a conservative or unchanging Southern Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism was more adaptable to historical trends in terms of theoretical exegesis, language, text, and music. However, as a man-made religion approaches maturation, there are always some internal constraints that restrict its external development, i.e., its internal regular pattern. In this sense, comparing Japanese, Korean, and Dai Buddhist music⁴⁶ reveals some intriguing common cultural features. For example, according to research by Chinese scholar Yun Zhou, the *shōmyō* of the Ōbaku School contain three representative styles of melody. The Chinese style melody is represented by the “Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem” (56.6%), the Japanese style melody by the “Praise of Holy Water for Altar Purification”⁴⁷ (6.6%), and a fusion melody represented by the “Hungry Ghost Offering Ceremony #4” (36.6%).⁴⁸ Japanese scholars posit that there are three styles of Buddhist hymns in Japan: *bonsan* that use Chinese characters to transliterate Sanskrit material, *hansan* based on Chinese poems with Chinese pronunciation, and *wasan* that is chanted in Japanese.^{49,50} In addition, according to studies on Japanese Buddhist history, the first thirteen abbots of the Ōbaku School founded by the Chinese monk Yin Yuan (1592-1673 C.E.) were Chinese. The Ōbaku Pure Rules stipulate that the Chinese language should be used for chanting the Buddha’s name, sūtra recitation, and for conversation, and that Chinese temple standards should apply to meals and daily life.⁵¹ Therefore, it can be inferred from the discussion of the *shōmyō* of the Ōbaku School above that Chinese melodies should make up the majority of *hansan* and *bonsan*, and that Japanese and merged styles constitute a larger portion of *wasan*. Likewise, Korean researchers found that their country has three types of Buddhist music sharing similar characteristics with the Japanese *shōmyō*: Buddhist hymns in the original language (Chinese); the so-called *pyongyeombul*⁵² chanted by monks not specializing in Buddhist hymns, which is a category of “Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem” sūtra tunes that also use Chinese; and songs praising the Buddha which are translated from Chinese classics translated and chanted in Korean. Moreover, these scholars believe that the names of the instruments used in Korean Buddhist music came from Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures. To find the original names, you must bypass

the Chinese language scriptures and enter the domain of Sanskrit and Pali.⁵³

Unlike the Japanese and Korean Buddhist chanting discussed above, which are expressed in three languages (Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese) and two scripts (Chinese and Japanese), the Southern Buddhism of the Dai people in China and in most of Southeast Asia generally only use two languages or scripts, Pali and the local language. In terms of melody and tone, there is a general principle that lyrics generally follow the tones of the language. In tonal languages like Dai and Thai, the tones and the melodies match. In non-tonal languages like Pali, a style closer to recitation is employed. Taking the Dai chanting as an example, in addition to the morning and evening chanting scriptures in Pali, almost all Dai Buddhist ceremonies have a specific set of chants “butuo, namo (Triple Gem), sinha (Five Precepts).” Almost all of the content of this type of Buddhist chanting comes from the Pali scriptures and are chanted in Pali. Furthermore, Buddhist scriptures in the Dai language adapted from Jātaka or other Buddhist stories, as well as chants used to appeal to natural religious spirits and the chanting of folk beliefs are done in the Dai language. Some of these scriptures contain Pali elements, but the Pali parts are spelled phonetically in the Dai writing. In terms of melody, the Pali language chants are in a recitation tone and the Dai language tunes are usually chanted or sung. In terms of its performance, I once classified Dai Buddhist ceremonial music and performance contexts into three levels: core, intermediary, and peripheral, and categorized the Dharma services as open or closed. Closed ceremonies at the core level (such as morning and evening chanting) are mainly composed of recitation and chanting in Pali. For open ceremonies at intermediary and peripheral levels (such as Buddhist festivals) various types of chanting are used.⁵⁴

Comparing the types of tunes mentioned above, there are two common features. First, if we regard the language of the Buddhist scripture or melody being disseminated (such as Sanskrit, Pali, or Chinese) as a primary factor, and take the recipient language (such as Japanese or Dai) as a secondary factor, then within Japanese, Korean, and Dai Buddhism, the language or musical style that is relative more stable and less prone to change is aligned with the primary factors, while the less fixed and evolving are aligned with the secondary factors. Second, as discussed previously, in the course of the development of Buddhism, Hīnayāna Buddhism and the Pali scriptures preceded Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Sanskrit

and Chinese scriptures. So in terms of primary factors, the Pali classics and tunes have a longer history and tradition. Likewise, compared with Northern Buddhism, Southern Buddhism shows a more conservative nature and relatively fixed characteristics.

Another common feature is that in the ceremonial music of the Dai people and the *shōmyō* of the Ōbaku School, the chanting is either only accompanied by percussion instruments or unaccompanied. In modern Buddhist music in the Han regions of China and in most of Japan, there is accompaniment with orchestral instruments. I believe that the choice not to adopt instrumental accompaniment in simple ceremonies across most regions of South Buddhism is a remnant of the most fundamental characteristic of rituals that began during the period of early Buddhism.⁵⁵

What then can we make of the *shōmyō* of the Ōbaku School? From Professor Yun Zhou's point of view, it might have been the Japanese people's preference for tranquil and simple music that caused orchestral music to fade and eventually disappear from the liturgies of the Ōbaku School.⁵⁶ My view towards this differs. Although we see a growth in Chinese Buddhist temples employing orchestral music to accompany chanting or to strengthen the sense of religiosity beginning in the Qing dynasty, even today many temples across China do not do so. In addition to the quality of its music and its unique blend of religious and secular music, another important reason for the reputation of Zhihua Temple and Wutaishan Buddhist music is the introduction and promotion by contemporary scholars. Therefore, tranquil and simple musical effects should be a traditional practice and aesthetic requirement that everyone tends toward, whether in the orthodox Buddhism of China or Japan, or in the sects of Southern Buddhism.

5. Conclusion

Compared with other world religions, Buddhism has a large number of believers from many regions of the world. But its most distinctive features are its degree of cultural transformation and its level of divergence. Yet despite a two thousand year separation and a geographic distance of thousands of kilometers between the Dai region of Xishuangbanna in China and Japan, there are common

features that can be traced back to the source. This demonstrates the vitality and longevity of Buddhism. Buddhist ceremony and ritual have been the carrier of belief, and have therefore played a great role in preserving Buddhist cultural traditions.

Regarding the transformation from a closed to a more open modern religious society, the arrival of Southern Buddhism in Yunnan was about a century later than Buddhism entering Japan. In the context of the confrontation between localization and globalization, Japanese Buddhist music has quite a bit of experience of “going against the current” as Japan was a step ahead in the process of globalization. This process can provide insights for the upholders of Buddhism in other developing countries. And what of the Southern Buddhist music in Yunnan, which is still deeply embedded in the local culture? Its relatively closed and isolated environment is seen as unfavorable from an economic point of view. Yet perhaps this will bring an unexpected ending, referred to in the saying, “when the rites are lost, look for them in foreign lands.” Those in developed countries (such as Japan) who seek Buddhist cultural traditions they have lost in modern society might be able to find the ideals they pursue.

Notes

- 1 Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 38; and, Yulie Lou and Zhang Zhigang, *A Chinese-foreign Exchange History of Religion* (Changsha: Hunan Education Press, 1998), 104.
- 2 「欲賴三寶之靈威，乾坤相泰，修萬代之福業，動植咸榮」-Ed.
- 3 Zengwen Yang, *A History of Japanese Buddhism* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1995), 45; and, Dazhe Zhang, *Contemporary Shintō* (Beijing: Oriental Press, 1999), 6.
- 4 It is uncertain which temple the author is referring to (螭剛寺).-Ed.
- 5 (續日本紀 [Shoku Nihongi]) -Ed.
- 6 (天竺) -Ed.
- 7 (林邑 An historical kingdom in present-day central Vietnam.) -Ed.
- 8 (瞻婆 A historic state in present-day India.) -Ed.
- 9 Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); and, Yulie Lou and Zhang Zhigang, *A Chinese-foreign Exchange History of Religion* (Changsha: Hunan Education Press, 1998), 311.
- 10 *Shōmyō* (聲明) is the Japanese adaptation of Buddhist chanting and music. -Ed.
- 11 Zhang Datuo, *Contemporary Shintō* (Beijing: Oriental Press, 1999), 14.
- 12 和讚 (chants or hymns in the Japanese language) -Ed.
- 13 《萬歲樂》 -Ed.

- 14 《踏歌》 -Ed.
- 15 《大歌》 -Ed.
- 16 Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); and, Yulie Lou and Zhang Zhigang, *A Chinese-foreign Exchange History of Religion* (Changsha: Hunan Education Press, 1998), 95.
- 17 入唐求法巡禮行記 or *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* -Ed.
- 18 赤山法花院 (Juksanbub in Korean) is located in Shandong Province in China. -Ed.
- 19 For details, see Ennin, *Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang China in Search for the Dharma*, trans. Ping Pan (Taipei: Foguang Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd., 1998).
- 20 Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 312-16.
- 21 音曲念佛法 (On Kyoku Nenbutsu in Japanese) -Ed.
- 22 常行堂 (Jōgyō Dō in Japanese) -Ed.
- 23 五會念佛法 (Goè Nenbutsu in Japanese) -Ed.
- 24 See Nakanishi Kazuo, "Musical Characteristics of Pure Land Rituals in Japan," in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 143-196.
- 25 For details, see Ennin, *Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang China in Search for the Dharma*, trans. Ping Pan (Taipei: Foguang Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd., 1998), 81-88.
- 26 See Runzhi Hong, "Korean Buddhist Ritual and Buddhist Music," in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 225-36.
- 27 音曲念佛法 (On Kyoku Nenbutsu in Japanese) -Ed.
- 28 引聲念佛 (Inzei Nembutsu in Japanese) -Ed.
- 29 雅樂 (*gagaku* in Japanese) -Ed.
- 30 郢曲 (*eikyoku* in Japanese) -Ed.
- 31 Nakanishi Kazuo, "Musical Characteristics of Pure Land Rituals in Japan," in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 143-96.
- 32 「日本、中國、印度三國聯盟，號召全亞洲佛教徒團結一致」 -Ed.
- 33 Lou Yulie and Zhang Zhigang, *A Chinese-foreign Exchange History of Religion* (Changsha: Hunan Education Press, 1998), 454.
- 34 Nakanishi Kazuo, "Musical Characteristics of Pure Land Rituals in Japan," in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 143-96.
- 35 See Zhou Yun, "The Eastward Movement of Buddhist Music and Its Japanization," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Position of Chinese Music Research in the New Century* (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2001), 553-76.
- 36 See Eung-ki Kim, "Types of 'Buddhist Chanting' in Korean Buddhist Music and their Prospects," in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 213-25.
- 37 *General Situation of Yunnan's Religions*, ed. Sijiu Yan (Kunming: Yunnan University Press, 1991), 10-11.
- 38 Robert Redfield first proposed this widely utilized mode of analysis in his book *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1956]).
- 39 The eight groups of spiritual beings (*deva* 天, *nāga* 龍, *yakṣa* 夜叉, *gandharva* 乾闥婆,

- asura* 阿修羅, *garuḍa* 迦樓羅, *kimnara* 緊那羅, *mahoraga* 摩睺羅伽) are represented in Buddhist scriptures as having been demons (*māra*) who were against the Buddha initially, but were subdued by his compassion and *samādhi*. They then became guardians of the Dharma.
- 40 Lidao Song, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics in Theravāda Countries* (Beijing: Religions Culture Press, 2000), 44.
- 41 Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 53.
- 42 波占 -Ed.
- 43 The author advocates that ceremonial activities related to Buddhism be divided into three categories: (1) closed worship services conducted by monastics, (2) open worship services where monastics and lay people participate together, and (3) non-Buddhist public celebrations during festivals.
- 44 Liangjun Guo, *The Buddha and Early Buddhist Thought* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1997), 2.
- 45 For details see Minkang Yang, “Music of Theravada Buddhism in Chinese Festival Ceremonies in the Context of ‘Localization’ and ‘Globalization,’” in *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Position of Chinese Music Research in the New Century* (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 2001), 822-40.
- 46 In order to have a relatively comparable scale, the examples in this article are all taken from temple ceremonial music rather than from folk belief rituals influenced by Buddhism.
- 47 潔壇淨水讚-Ed.
- 48 See Zhou Yun, “The Eastward Movement of Buddhist Music and Its Japanization,” in *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Position of Chinese Music Research in the New Century* (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 2001), 553-76.
- 49 (Japanese) Takashi Iba, *History of Japanese Music*, trans. Lang Ying (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 1982), 83.
- 50 Based on this, Chinese scholar Xiaodun Wang believes that Japanese Buddhist music has three categories: Sanskrit, *gisan*, and *shōmyō*, which represent three stages in the history of the development of Japanese Buddhist music. See Xiaodun Wang, “Buddhist Music in the Records of Ancient Japanese Monks,” in *2000 Buddhist Philosophy Research Papers Collection-Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Foguang Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd., 2001), 193-211.
- 51 Yulie Lou and Zhigang Zhang, *A Chinese-foreign Exchange History of Religion* (Changsha: Hunan Education Press, 1998), 119.
- 52 平念佛 -Ed.
- 53 Eung-ki Kim, “Types of ‘Buddhist Chanting’ in Korean Buddhist Music and their Prospects,” in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 213-25.
- 54 See Minkang Yang, *Chinese Folk Songs and Rural Society* (Changchun: Jilin Educational Press, 1992); “Features of Cultural Circles and Cultural Clusters of Chinese Theravada Buddhist Music,” *Musicology in China* 4, (1999): 103-14.
- 55 Minkang Yang, “Musical Instruments and Instrumental Music of the Ethnic Minorities of Yunnan and Their Relationship with Early Buddhist Music,” in *Collection of Buddhist Research Essays 2000: Buddhist Music 2* (Taipei: Fo Guang Culture Co., Ltd., 2001), 371-402.
- 56 Ibid.