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RECRAFTING ROLE MODELS: A DISCUSSION OF THE CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION OF BUDDHIST LIFE EDUCATION THROUGH THE COMIC *THE TEN GREAT DISCIPLES*[1]

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1. Preface

As an aspect of social life, religion has the adaptive function of helping humans overcome psychological and daily obstacles, attaining inner stability and peace of mind; the integrative function of consolidating group cohesion through common beliefs, bringing out the organizational power of human communities; and the cognitive function of solving the enigma of ultimate meaning, answering fundamental questions on life, the universe, existence, and morality for humans.[2] These three functions of religion imply its capacity to meet the three essential needs of survival, community integration, and addressing the ultimate concern in life, hence its importance cannot be understated.

Although religion can steady people's minds and stabilize society through these three functions, how do people react when they find that the religious philosophy formed through their assumptions and judgment about themselves, society, and the universe is incompatible with objective facts, i.e. when they are threatened by abnormal phenomena? In response, people either maintain such ideas through control over religious rituals, promote them through personal mystical experience, idolize freshly created deities, sustain them by reinterpreting existing religious doctrines, or transform them through the establishment of new religious dogma. In this way, religious activities are continuously reestablished in response to different conditions, whether they be people, events, times, places, or objects. In this process, the way in which the image of religious figures is crafted often has a profound impact.

As a medium to craft the image of religious figures, hagiography differs from other types of biographical writing in that it is guided by religious ideas and encompasses literary interpretation, the recounting of history, and teaching through discussion of a person's life. In the process of propagating religious doctrine or encouraging religious cultivation in believers, different forms of literary expression are often used to achieve the auxiliary purpose of propagating and awakening faith in the teachings, as well as encouraging the virtuous through transformative teaching. In particular, the biographies of

religious figures who attained enlightenment often tend towards divine and extraordinary. This not only shows the correlation of literary narrative and religious transformative teaching, but also derives and creates new meaning through continuous rewriting and interpretation. It also directly responds to the needs of the social collective and reflects the adaptability of religious dissemination.

As a result of religious practitioners differing in their application of religious doctrine, their biographies not only present varied content in terms of what their life teaches us, but also present a rich palette of doctrines and role models in history. Therefore, we often find hagiographies to be unique in their features, particularly in constructing and crafting the image of the "saint," and various themes which surround this concept. An example would be distinguishing between the doctrines of different religious traditions or schools through how religious figures are portrayed as sacred and how they achieved such sacrality. At their core, hagiographies define the sacredness of the protagonist's character, and thus they emphasize the protagonist's biography in order to tell a particular narrative.

The construction of a religious figure's sense of sacredness is intimately related to the process of creating hagiography. The significance of sacredness also drives the construction of the images and iconography of religious figures through the adaptation, editing, and compilation of their hagiography. This writing strategy involves the question of how sectarian authority and ideology interacts, and the issues it generates, such as who has the authority to interpret religious doctrines. This shows that hagiographies are not merely a record of the modality of spiritual practice internal to a sect/religion, but can also reveal the characteristics of religion in different cultural contexts through time and across space.

Apart from analyzing the narrative structure of the text, research into a hagiography also needs to clarify how the author is reflected in it, and the related religious, spiritual, and political issues at the time of writing.[3] As Benoît Vermander mentions in "Saint Francis Xavier: From Missionary

History to Hermeneutical Strategies," the history of hagiographic studies in the West is divided into three stages of practical, critical, and interpretative.[4] The hermeneutics of hagiography refers to the critical reading of such works, focusing on discovering the textual strategy of narrating and praising the saint's life, and observing how this strategy creates resonance with the institutional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of the narrative environment.[5]

In today's postmodern environment, creeds, religious denominations, and sacred narratives have been "deconstructed," and the events in hagiographies have been challenged. This has led to the post-denominational world's desperate demand for imitable characters and role models. Consequently, many religions have attempted to recraft the image of saints, and have offered new modalities of saintliness and new casts of characters in the hope that devotees will be inspired and their enthusiasm revived. Simultaneously, the greater freedom in interpreting hagiographical materials in contemporary times has allowed devotees to freely draw from the practical lessons in the saints' life stories to benefit their own lives. After analyzing the role models that have emerged from the current trends, Vermander finds that "Saints' are relevant not only because of their deeds and historical importance but also the material of their life is the stuff of a group's narrative that continues and evolves with time and space. The narrative process itself sometimes changes the boundaries of the group…"[6]

Therefore, we can say that as a type of biography, hagiographies are meant to achieve three kinds of functions of religion—adaptive, integrative, and cognitive. Using these three functions, the construction of sacred religious figures is used to strengthen rationality of religious doctrines, the orthodoxy of religious sects, and popularity of transformative teachings. In other words, the biography of Buddhist monks uses monastic imagination (僧侶的想像) to shape the paradigmatic action (典範化的行為) of the saints for religious and moral purposes, thereby creating the image of ideal types (理想類型) in the hagiography to shape the opinions of members of the religious community.[7] This process is a mutual negotiation with the temporal and spatial circumstances of the period. In other words, reshaping the paradigm

of sacredness is often a response to questions raised by people of an era about religious doctrines or religious figures.

This paper, through the lens of the comic *The Ten Great Disciples*[8] and its adaptation of the biographies of these monastics, employs the method of textual analysis, and studies how the contemporary image of these saints is adapted and recrafted through adapting Venerable Master Hsing Yun's book that goes by the same title, and forms the structure for the model of applying Buddhist life education in today's society.

2. Image Representation: Cross-Referencing Comic Strips and Historical Photographs

As we discussed above, Fo Guang Shan published the comic *The Ten Great Disciples* based on an adaptation of Venerable Master Hsing Yun's book by the same title using a combination of graphic illustrations and text in order to popularize transformative teachings in the context where different forms of media are diverse and prevalent. The volumes not only recraft the image of monastics, but also respond to contemporary questions about religion. The second section of this article will address how people's image of monastics is recrafted by exploring the way in which biographies are adapted in response to these questions. The third section explores the modality of applying Buddhist life education derived from the recrafted image as a response to contemporary issues.

Looking at biographies as a form of narrative, biographers use this literary form to analyze the protagonist through a variety of media, and this also reflects the literary styles of biographers of different periods. As new historicist and American Shakespearean Stephen Greenblatt wrote in *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, "To understand who Shakespeare was, it is important to follow the verbal traces he left behind back into the life he lived and into the world to which he was so open. And to understand how Shakespeare used his imagination to transform his life into his art, it is important to use our own imagination."[9] In other words, biographies

are not only about portraying an accurate record of the protagonist's life, but also the biographer's imagination of them and his affairs. Writing a biography is thus a hermeneutic process.

The adaptation of a biography is not only the reproduction of the story (content) and discourse (expression) of the adapted text,[10] but also the re-interpretation of the biography by the adaptor. Often, through the use of different forms of media, the author can create different experiences for the reader. The following will explore this adaptation using comic strips and historical photos.

2.1 Perceiving Symbolic Meaning: Citing Facts Using Buddhist Photography

The book *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* states that images are used to represent nature, society, and culture to create meaning and a variety of emotions. It can be claimed that they simultaneously represent the world of imagery and that of abstraction concept, as is especially the case of illustrations which have always been employed by religions to reenact supernatural acts. Representation is therefore a process by which we construct the context of the world around us and create meaning from it. We learn the rules and conventions for representation within our culture. The rules and conventions differ between each representational system, and thus systems such as paintings, photography, and television imagery are imbued with differing cultural meaning.[11]

The Ten Great Disciples uses mutually-referential comic strips and historical photographs. It is unique in its presentation of a common religious code while employing different representational systems, each system with its own cultural meanings and abstract conceptions. This common code highlights the record of ideal spiritual practices, and reveals the distinct traits of a religion under differing cultural, temporal, and spatial contexts.

How do the representation systems of photographs and illustrations

convey information? In *Another Way of Telling: A Possible Theory of Photography*, John Berger states that illustrations are similar to a "translation" of an object's appearance, in that the illustrators make connections with real or imagined models consciously and systematically based on existing graphical vocabulary. However, photography is instead a "citation" because it has neither its own language nor any external one which it can convolute or contort. Photographs are often cited as facts to remove doubts as to the existence of objects.[12]

Take for example the photo in the chapter "Śāriputra, Foremost in Wisdom." The illustrator inserted a photo on the page to the right of a painting. In this photo, we find a large grey stone sculpture of a reclining Buddha with his eyes closed with a South Asian Buddhist *bhikṣu* wiping the statue's face with a towel. The sculpture only depicts the Buddha's upper body with its robes revealing its right shoulder in the South Asian Buddhist style. It lies on its right with eyes tightly closed and wears a gentle smile. In contrast, in the center we find a *bhikṣu* wearing reddish-brown monastic robe with his back to the viewer; his left hand is clutching the statue's right wrist and his right hand is wiping the statue's left cheek with an orange cloth (see Figure 1 in the Appendix).[13]

The photo is in itself meaningless—its depiction a momentary creation of the reflection of light, a mere trace of what is being represented, and an isolated appearance of a disconnected moment in time. Because meaning is generated by connections, when we endow meaning to an event, we are responding to both its known and unknown aspects, i.e., when we consider a photo meaningful, we imbue it with a past and a future.[14] This assignment of meaning does not exist in the primal perception of the sign but its interpretation, that is in turn built upon the significance and meanings in the context of one's society, history, and culture.

Therefore, the signs depicted in the photograph, such as the Buddha statue and the *bhikṣu*, belong to a Buddhist cultural system, and whether viewers can distinguish if they belong to the tradition of South Asian Buddhism or

Northern Buddhism depends on their pre-existing understanding of Buddhist culture. Focusing only on the imagery without looking at its corresponding text, Buddhists will find themselves mentally recollecting, respecting, and making offerings to the Buddha when viewing this photograph of a *bhikṣu* cleansing the Buddha statue. It has the further effect of causing the viewer to engage in self-reflection: seeing in the image the external removal of dust helps to imagine the internal clearing of defilements and afflictions so as to purify their mind. In other words, the interpretation of the perception of the photo's signs can have the effect of purifying the viewer's life. This is also the way that the artist and editor crafts the paradigmatic action of saints, which in turn sets norms for members of religious communities and creates ideal types in hagiographies. In this process, viewers recraft the archetype of the saints through interpretation of the signs' meanings.

2.2 Representing Abstract Concepts: Translating Buddhist Graphical Vocabulary

Compared to the presentation of Theravādan Buddhist symbols in the photographs above, the comic strip is based upon an existing graphical vocabulary, which consciously and systematically interprets the existing or imagined model of a saint. This can be seen in the illustrator's depiction of the Buddha and Śāriputra in "Śāriputra, Foremost in Wisdom" on the page left of the above photograph. The Buddha is modeled after the Buddha images found in Chinese Buddhism, and is commonly seen in the depiction of Amitābha Buddha in pictures of the Three Noble Ones of the West: with characteristics like the blue conch-tuft in the hair, red ceremonial vestment, jade ornament around the neck, swastika on the chest, long earlobes that extend towards the shoulders, and the white *ūrṇā* curl between the eyebrows. Śāriputra, however, wears an all-white shirt and green lower garment, atypical of Buddhist garments (See Figure 2 in the Appendix).[15]

The illustrator intentionally uses his familiarity with the vocabulary of modern comics and his image of ancient saints to translate the Buddha into a figure who is understandable to contemporary audience using the Chinese

Buddhist symbol of Amitābha Buddha in the Three Noble Ones of the West. The character of Śāriputra is based on the design concept of characters common to Japanese *manga*, with features such as thick eyebrows, large eyes, a strong physique, and accentuated symbolic characteristics.[16] However, distinct from the style of Japanese *manga* illustrations, the illustrator Kok Hayun, as the principal student of the renowned Taiwanese comic artist Chen Uen, has inherited the latter's ink-painting technique, including the use of large areas of splash-ink. One such example is the illustration of Pūrna pouring out nectar on page sixty in the book, another is the use of the technique of mixing color ink and oil paint (See Figure 3 in the Appendix).

The re-illustration of *The Ten Great Disciples* is a new interpretation of the symbols of the contemporary image based on the stories and characteristics of the saints. The illustrator uses contemporary media and cultural symbols to express an interpretation of the abstract concept of the sacredness of the ten saintly disciples. For example, the presentation of each character starts with a close-up portrait of the protagonist's head (See Figure 4 in the Appendix), and ends with a full-body image. Each saint is depicted with distinct physiques, facial expressions, and movements (See Figure 5 in the Appendix).

Employing Roland Barthes' proposition that symbols are constructed from signifiers (images, sounds, text) and the signified,[17] we examine the interpretation of the symbols of Buddhist saints and the translation of abstract concepts by decoding the portrait of each character's head.

Take Śāriputra, who is foremost in wisdom. He is portrayed with a monk's shaved head, with an expression of concentration with knitted eyebrows and penetrating eyes, and earrings. The dark shades of the colors on the face bring out the light behind his forehead. In terms of the signifiers, a shaved head is a symbol of Buddhist monks, the appearance of earrings made of gold and coral beads indicates a Buddhist monk that is not in Chinese tradition.[18] The abstract concept of wisdom is represented by the radiating light at the top of the head, the focused expression, and a penetrating gaze. The image conveys that, in addition to the external appearance of monasticism and facial expression,

wise Buddhist saints are also represented by the symbol of radiating rays of light, which signifies the light of wisdom. It symbolizes that the wise ones are not only capable of self-reflection and self-awareness, but also able to illuminate others with the light of wisdom (See Figure 4 in the Appendix).

Likewise the image "Understanding Emptiness 1" depicts Subhūti, foremost in the understanding of emptiness. The illustrator represented the abstract concept of emptiness by using a white crown and white eyebrows. The *bindi* between the eyebrows is not only an ethnic Indian symbol, but also denotes the initiation of wisdom and the third eye.[19] This wisdom is attained by the understanding and practice of emptiness. Distinct from Śāriputra, who also represents the light of wisdom, in these contexts the emphasis is on Subhūti's wisdom attained through his self-realization of emptiness (See Figure 6 in the Appendix).

In addition, the full-body image at the end of each story sets the tone for each protagonist's story and characteristics, and functions as an interpretation of the protagonist's life. For example, the chapter "Kātyāyana, Foremost in Discourse" concludes with the story of Kātyāyana advising King Muṇḍa using a broken tree branch, in which the the king is awakened from being grasped by grief due to his queen's death. In Kātyāyana's full-body image on the same page, the top third of Kātyāyana's image shows him spreading his two arms outward. His facial expression shows fury, with angry eyes and a reproaching roar. The bottom two-third of the image depicts a split tree trunk in black ink, within which four skeletal heads of Indian royals were depicted (See Figure 7 in the Appendix).[20] The graphical symbols in the story include the tree, royalty, and Kātyāyana. The illustrator translated the tree branch into a trunk, but how was the abstract concept of Kātyāyana's being "foremost in discourse" presented? The illustrator translated the ability to express oneself dialectically in discourses into the bodily action of a shattering roar, thus converting the auditory presentation of sound into visual imagery, directing the meaning of being foremost in discourse towards the sacred image of being able to shatter wrong views, attachment to ignorance, and rebirth.

In summary, the book uses media such as photographs and drawings to represent the images of saints in two ways. First, citing from photographs of Buddhism to help the reader make meaning of the symbols in their own cultural contexts, and second, using graphical vocabularies to translate and re-express abstract Buddhist concepts.

3.   Recrafting Role Models: The Inter-relation between Life and Text

How is the aim of reconstructing role models achieved through the interlinking and cross-referencing of the text of the biography and its media such as photographs and graphics? Joyce C. H. Liu mentioned that artistic texts often contain multiple narratives and a multi-layered symbolic system, within which is embedded multiple citations. Each "text within a text" is connected to elements within its culture or art history, and the ideologies or background meanings they are linked to, thus creating intertextuality.[21] We observe this in how the comic *The Ten Great Disciples* explicates the overlapping narratives and meanings of the saintly disciples via the interlinking of multi-layered symbolic systems of photography, graphics, and text. Yet the narration and conferral of meaning is negotiated within the temporal and spatial background against which the story takes place. As contemporary editors and readers reconstruct the role models of saintly disciples by using the elements of their biographies to narrate and continually interpret their biographies in real space and time, it connects us to these saints, answers contemporary questions regarding religion or religious figures, and transforms the boundaries of this group.

3.1 Filling the Gaps in the Meaning of Life: Cross-references between Text and Graphics

In the book the inter-relationship between images and text can be divided into: intertext between the text and graphics that outlines the story of the biography and intertext between Buddhist terminology and graphics. However, these four are also cross-referencing. An example of the first pair

is the editorial foreword's mention that, "The comic sections in the book correspond to the earlier story without featuring any text to allow the reader limitless space for contemplation." In other words, the reader has the role of taking in and understanding the material, gleaning the story from the graphics. The meaning of the graphics is also interpreted through the story. The readers are then able to better answer related questions that arise in their personal lives.

For example in "Pūrna: Foremost in Teaching the Dharma," the illustrator portrays Pūrna holding a bottle up high, with water pouring out. The flow of the water is presented with the splash-ink method, and its bright yellow color dazzles in contrast to the deep blue of Pūrna's robes (See Figure 3 in the Appendix).[22] In the text, the story has Pūrna teaching the Dharma to a doctor. He asked the doctor, "A doctor may be able to cure bodily illnesses, but how can they cure illnesses of the mind such as greed and anger?" The doctor was puzzled and asked Pūrna, "Can mental illness be cured?" To which Pūrna answered, "The Buddha's teaching is like the nectar of Dharma water, which cleanses the defilements of the minds of sentient beings." In terms of the cross-references between text and images, the bright yellow flowing water represents the Buddha's teaching being akin to the nectar of Dharma water, while Pūrna is the one who propagates the Buddha's teachings and brings the sweet nectar to sentient beings.

The questions of what the Buddha's teachings are and how inner defilements can be cleansed require further exposition, which is closely related to the individual's pre-existing knowledge of concepts such as the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, the Five Precepts and the Ten Wholesome Actions, the Six Sense Organs, the Five Aggregates, and the Thirty-seven Steps to Enlightenment. The response to these questions is not only an explication of the protagonist's story, but also an interpretation of the reader's life experience. In terms of the intertextuality of the story's text and graphics and the terminology's text and graphics, on page fifty-four of the same chapter[23] we find an explanation of the term "purity": "Our residence, clothes, food, body, and especially our mind have to be pure and clean. When

the former few are dirty they can be cleansed with water, but what can be done when the mind is defiled? It has to be cleansed with Dharma water. The Buddha said, 'Cease all evil, practice all good, purify one's mind…' Purity is the absence of unwholesome thoughts of greed, hatred, and ignorance." Here the Buddha's teachings are summarized as ceasing evil and practicing good, and further explained as purity being without the unwholesome thoughts.

From this perspective, internal defilements and internal illness refer to greed, anger, and ignorance, which are also mentioned in the Buddhist terminology of suffering explained in the same chapter. "Conditions that afflict the body and mind include the three physical sufferings of aging, sickness, and death, and the three mental sufferings of greed, anger, and ignorance. They are the classic examples of sufferings of the body and mind."[24] In other words, the unwholesome thoughts of greed, anger, and ignorance are the main causes of mental illness, and only the Dharma can cleanse and purify one's mind. Therefore, in the process of cross-referencing text, graphics, and terminology, readers fill the gaps in meaning and respond to questions on the suffering in their own lives and how to relieve them.

Likewise, the cross-referencing of text, graphics, and terminology of emptiness in "Subhūti: Foremost in Understanding Emptiness" features the story of a Brāhmin asking Subhūti how the concepts of empty and emptiness can be explained, given that it is apparent that everything in the world exists. Subhūti answered with the simile of a house, which is made up of various causes and conditions, including the four elements—earth, water, fire, and wind, as well as the architect and builder. When the house is torn down, not only does the form cease to exist—it cannot even be called a house any longer. This is emptiness. Subhūti further cited the examples of stones and mounds. Stones may form mounds or houses according to different causes and conditions. Therefore, mounds have no self-nature, they can be said to be empty. The graphic on the same page shows Subhūti and an elderly Brāhmin, with the former throwing a stone to the mound to gesture his response to the question on emptiness and existence. The lower left part of the image captures the moment of the Brāhmin's realization (See Figure 8 in the Appendix).[25] There

is a statement about the term emptiness on the page to the right, "Emptiness is not nothingness, but in fact includes existence. Existence, however, depends on causes and conditions. Once we understand the true meaning of emptiness, it is essential that we believe in cause and effect and extinguish unwholesome thoughts and actions. Thereby, we can realize that from true emptiness comes wondrous existence."[26] That things inherently empty in nature is explained on the left page in the same spread: "Self-nature exists, forms, and determines itself, i.e., it cannot be changed by any external causes or conditions. Such a thing, however, does not exist in the universe, thus we say that all things are inherently empty in nature and have no permanent self-existence."[27]

In cross-referencing text, graphics, and terminology to explain emptiness, the meaning of the graphics is circumscribed by the text. The act of throwing stones is beyond a simple action. Stones, mounds, and houses are used as metaphors to explain the absence of an unchanging permanent nature. Everything in this world exists due to causes and conditions, and is inherently empty of self-nature, which is in turn the meaning of emptiness. In addition to the interpretation offered to explain the Buddhist terminology, the meaning of the term is elaborated in questions regarding inherent nature and how to attain the state of true emptiness and wondrous existence. The editor proposes three ways to realize the latter: understanding the true meaning of emptiness, believing in cause and effect, and eliminating unwholesome thoughts and actions.

This section attempts to explain the profound concept of true emptiness and wondrous existence in a way that is easy for contemporary readers to understand. Yet the questions of how to extinguish unwholesome thoughts and actions, to believe in causes and conditions, and to understand the true meaning of emptiness require the readers to make their own interpretations according to their understanding of the Dharma. The process of interpretation not only fills the gaps of uncertainty and discontinuity in the life stories of Buddhist saints, but also constitutes the readers' self-reflections according to their understanding of the text and in reference to their life experiences. In the process, readers gain understanding of their own life experiences and the

meaning of the Dharma, connecting themselves to the Dharma, and shaping the quality of their lives.

3.2 Constructing Role Models of Life Education: Conversations between the Protagonist and the Reader

The editor of this comic specifically mentions its readership and speaks to the various ways they may receive the book: "(1) young children may view the pictures while listening to their parents read the stories; (2) adolescents and older children may read the book on their own. Phonetics [Phonetic spellings that sometimes accompany Chinese characters.] were not included to encourage them to build a habit of using the dictionary; (3) for the general readers and Buddhists alike, this book is an expedient introduction to Buddhism. The reason for the adaptation of the book into comics becomes apparent here, namely, to cater to two main categories of audience: children and learners who have an interest in Buddhism. Moreover, the adaptation aims to: (1) enhance parent-child bonding; (2) facilitate children's linguistic training; and (3) nurture the interest of those beginning to learn about Buddhism.

It can be said that recrafting role models through the adaptation of the story of *The Ten Great Disciples* was meant to enlarge the scope of its audience, extending the readership and learnership of Buddhist teachings from adults to children, thus taking the Dharma beyond temples and academia into the rooms of the public. Through the cross-referencing of text, graphics, and terminology, saintly role models are sustained, enhanced, and summoned, and contemporary questions about Buddhism more easily answered.

In regard to the receptivity of the readers, the recrafting of role models is meaningful in three ways. First, by encouraging parents and children to read together, it becomes a shared model of the transmission of wisdom-life. Second, by facilitating children's linguistic training, it serves as a pedagogical model. Third, by enhancing the beginner's interest in learning Buddhism, it builds saintly models for Buddhist practitioners. Together, these three implications of recrafting role models mean that the contemporary application

of Buddhist life education can be developed from the biographies of the Ten Great Disciples.

3.2.1   Adopting a Common Model for Wisdom-Life

Drawing insights from the Buddha's teachings, the Ten Great Disciples practiced diligently, developed their self-awareness, and transmitted the Buddha's teachings with the spirit of the Buddha's wisdom-life. For example, after the Buddha entered into *nirvāṇa*, Mahākāśyapa assembled the five hundred *arhats* in the first Buddhist Council, during which Ānanda recited the *sūtras*, Upāli recited the *vinaya*, and Pūrna recited the *Abhidharma*, thus completing the first collection of the *Tripiṭaka*.[28] When parents tell their children about these Buddhist characters, stories, and objects, they are establishing excellent models for living a wisdom-life of the Dharma, just like the saintly disciples of the Buddha.

3.2.2   A Pedagogical Model

The Buddha was an educator, and the ten disciples were his best students. Their dispositions towards learning are worthy of emulation. Once Aniruddha dozed off during the Buddha's sermon. When the Buddha pointed out his problem, Aniruddha changed his attitude immediately and began to energetically apply himself to learning and training.[29] Another example is Rāhula, foremost in esoteric practices, who misled people with dishonest words. The Buddha used the simile of a footbath to admonish him. If the heart is filled with the defilements of dishonesty, it cannot be filled with the Dharma however good that may be. From then on, Rāhula did not lie anymore, and eventually accomplished great esoteric practices.[30] Therefore, regardless of the level of the student, the comic not only can inspire them to foster the habit of self-learning, but also help develop their character using the saintly disciples as role models, as if directly guided by the Buddha himself.

3.2.3   Saintly Models for Buddhist Practitioners

Regardless of their knowledge of Buddhism, both the general public and Buddhists understand Buddhism through their individual preconceptions. Those who intend to study Buddhism can look to the Ten Great Disciples as saintly role models of the spirit and attitude required to learn the Dharma. For example, in order to solve issues related to transcribing some discourses, the learned Kātyāyana willingly sought others' advice. Upon accepting the Buddha's teachings, he was able to let go of his past achievements, thereafter regarding the Buddha as his lifelong mentor as he sought to propagate the Dharma with every effort.[31] Another example is Śāriputra, who despite being a renowned scholar at the age of eight, was willing to travel and to seek out teachers to pursue the truth. Even after establishing his own school and becoming a master, Śāriputra was ready to give up all his achievements for the truth he sought.[32]

Therefore, the cross-referencing of text, graphics, and terminology aims to recraft a contemporary image for Buddhist saints, but more importantly to inspire the reader to emulate the virtuous ones. This kind of inspiration becomes possible when a mutual dialogue between each reader and the role model is made possible. Through this dialogue, readers reflect upon themselves in reference to the life of others through understanding the story, and thus further comprehend their own life experiences. This helps readers form connections between themselves and the people, events, and society around them, simultaneously molding the quality of their characters, expanding the cultural realm of Buddhism, and sustaining their wisdom-life.

4. Conclusion

This paper, through the lens of the comic *The Ten Great Disciples* published by Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise and its adaptation of the biographies of these monastics, demonstrated through a textual analysis of the adaptation, how the contemporary image of these saints is reshaped using different media, and lends to the construction of a model for Buddhist life education in today's society. By undertaking the analysis of visual iconography and symbols, it was postulated that this comic employs a

combination of various systems of media to reshape the contemporary image of these saints. It further showed how photographic and graphic systems of media were employed to visually represent the image of the saints. The book begins by using actual photography related to Buddhism to assist readers in understanding their symbolism in relation to their cultural background. It then uses a graphic vocabulary to translate and represent abstract Buddhist concepts. After analyzing the images, this article discussed a model for Buddhist life education in two parts. The first part looked at the interaction between words and pictures and how they help readers explore how to fill in gaps, and in so doing develop one's life purpose. The second part examined how, through comprehension and reception of this comic, readers explore a model of life education that is constructed based on their own understanding. The three implications of this are: a common model for pursuing wisdom-life, a pedagogical model, and a model of the saint for Buddhist practitioners.

This article proposes that the comic *The Ten Great Disciples* explicates the overlapping discourses and meanings of the Buddhist saints using the interlinking of multi-layered symbolic systems of photography, graphics, and text. The discourse and assignment of meaning is negotiated within the temporal and spatial background in which the story takes place. Contemporary editors and readers reconstruct the role models of saints by using the elements of their biographies to narrate and continually interpret them in real space and time. This all serves to help the reader put into practice the ideals of life education in contemporary Buddhism.

Notes

1 This article's original English title was "Role Models: Using the Comic Book *The Ten Great Disciples* as Buddhist Life Education for Modern Day Practice." Here we have modified it to better reflect its Chinese title. -Ed.

2 See religious anthropologist Melford Spiro's 1964 and 1987 discussions of the three critical functions of religion as found in Li Yih-Yuan, *Selected Writings on Religion and Myth* (Taipei: New Century Publishing Co. Ltd., 1998), 115-6.

3 Thomas O'Loughlin, *Hippolyte Delehaye: The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), x-xi.

4 The citation from Benoît Vermander is most likely: "In pre-modern times, hagiographies were primarily narratives often including miraculous events; the "Bollandistes," they evolved into attempts at critical reconstruction; they have now often become interpretative records of a Saint's

life, and the hermeneutic dimension has been made explicit." See Benoît Vermander, "The Hagiography of St Francis Xavier: from Mission History to Hermeneutic Strategies," *Erenlai Magazine* (2007): 1. -Ed.

5 The Catholic Encyclopedia defines "hagiography" as: "The name given to that branch of learning which has the saints and their worship for its object. Writings relating to the worship of the saints may be divided into two categories: (a) those which are the spontaneous product of circumstances or have been called into being by religious needs of one kind or another (and these belong to what may be called practical hagiography); (b) writings devoted to the scientific study of the former category (and these constitute critical hagiography)." Vermander proposes a third category of hermeneutic hagiography, i.e., "the attempts at re-interpreting the life of saints in the light of the challenges proper to the time and space." See "The Hagiography of St Francis Xavier: from Mission History to Hermeneutic Strategies," (2007): 14.

6 Vermander, "The Hagiography of St Francis Xavier: from Mission History to Hermeneutic Strategies," (2007): 15.

7 John Kieschnick believes these biographies represent "not only reflections of shared perceptions of the monk; they were also an attempt to shape opinion" and an attempt to instill the ideal types of Buddhist practitioners: the ascetic, the Chan eccentric, and the scholar-monk. He proposes that it is through the crafting of these three images that Buddhists could engage in an image-war to win the minds of the general population. John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 111-43.

8 Kok Haoyun and Wang Mei-Chih, *The Ten Great Disciples* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1998).

9 Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 14.

10 From the perspective of the narrative structure that Chatman proposes, the narrative text comprises two abstract levels of story and discourse. At the level of the story, it is split into the form of content—made of events and existents (characters and settings)—and substance of content which the author can cite and model after. At the level of the discourse, there are a variety of styles of expressions [i.e., structure of narrative transmission], such as chronological or the reverse, as well as its substance of expression, including its manifestation as textual or cinematic. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 26.

11 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, trans. Chen Pinxiu (Taipei: Faces Publications, 2009), 32-5.

12 John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling: A Possible Theory of Photography*, trans. Zhang Shilun (Taipei: Faces Publications, 2009), 98-101.

13 Kok Haoyun and Wang Mei-Chih, *The Ten Great Disciples* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1998), 22.

14 John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling: A Possible Theory of Photography*, trans. Zhang Shilun (Taipei: Faces Publications, 2009), 94-5.

15 Kok Haoyun and Wang Mei-Chih, *The Ten Great Disciples* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1998), 23.

16 In *Lectures on Comics*, we find that the three major characteristics of comics are exaggeration, omission, and distortion. For example, a character's height might be increased or distorted, and such distortion becomes their characteristic. (Yi Shui Xianglin, *Lectures on Comics* (Taipei: Ching Win Publishing, 1997), 54-5.

17 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*,

trans. Chen Pinxiu (Taipei: Faces Publications, 2009), 49.

18 Kok Haoyun and Wang Mei-Chih, *The Ten Great Disciples* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1998), 1.

19 Ibid, 72.

20 Ibid, 120.

21 Joyce C. H. Liu, *Eight Essays on Literature and the Other Arts: Intertextuality, Counterpoint and Cultural Interpretation* (Taipei: San Min Book Co., Ltd., 1994), 24.

22 Kok Haoyun and Wang Mei-Chih, *The Ten Great Disciples* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1998), 60.

23 Ibid, 54.

24 Ibid, 63.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid, 22.

29 Ibid, 35.

30 Ibid, 108.

31 Ibid, 102-3.

32 Ibid, 4-8.

涅槃

只要我們肯立志行善，把以前的行為，思想完全修正，由惡到善，止息貪瞋癡等一切煩惱，由染污到清淨，不必再進入輪迴，就叫涅槃。
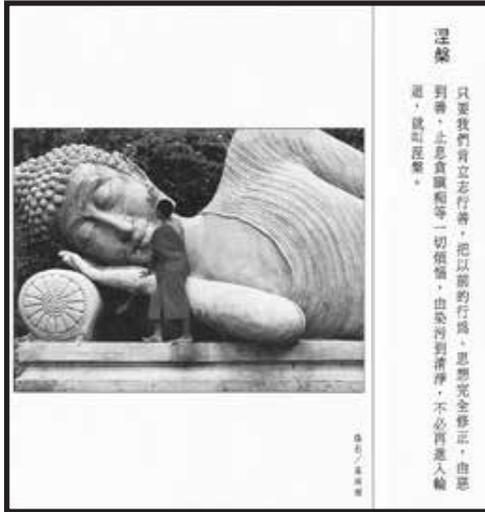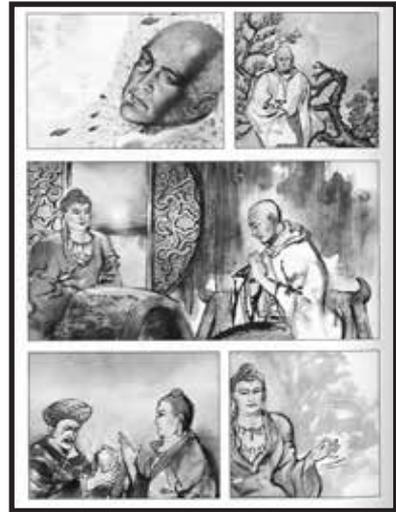
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Comic Book: *The Ten Great Disciples*,
Illustrated by Guo Hao-Yun,
and rewritten by Wang Mei-Chih.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Comic Book: *The Ten Great Disciples*,
Illustrated by Guo Hao-Yun,
and rewritten by Wang Mei-Chih.

Figure 8

Comic Book: *The Ten Great Disciples*,
Illustrated by Guo Hao-Yun,
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