First Enticing With Desires: A Material Approach to Fo Guang Shan and Humanistic Buddhism

by

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Abstract

This study explores the little-examined dimensions of a highly influential Buddhist organization, Fo Guang Shan (佛光山), which was founded in Taiwan and established more than 200 branches on all five continents. Through ethnographic research focusing on Buddhist materiality – its aesthetic framing through material forms and modern techniques – the study argues that Buddhism as a practice of mediation is "sacred in between" (Barrie 2005). In particular, an examination of its construction of urban monastic space, aesthetic foodways, re-contextualization of musical practice and creative ritual performance, enables a tangible understanding of Humanistic Buddhist thought. As an extension of Chinese Buddhism, Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism should not be understood as a process of secularization. By examining the concrete forms of Fo Guang Shan's cultural products and its various re-interpretations of traditions, we will see an active transformation initiated within the Buddhist community in response to the influences of modernity and globalization in our contemporary world.

Keywords: Fo Guang Shan, Humanistic Buddhism, Material religion, Mediation

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Bo Li. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, project name “First Enticing with Desires: The Contemporary Chinese Buddhism in Practice-a case study of Foguangshan,” No. MS3_Pro00031609, renewed on July 25th, 2014.

Acknowledgments

Almost four years ago, I buried my profound grief of the sudden loss of my beloved father into hundreds of days in the library and a single goal of passing the national examination for graduate school in China – the result did not look promising. While finding comforts in books, I barely remembered my dream of going abroad. As a single child, staying back to keep my mother company seemed like a natural and only choice. In the following year that my father left us, we relied on each other more than ever before. My mother, however, unwilling as she was, insisted that I applied for programs abroad. There is no way to know how much courage and insights it took to make such a decision. Even so, after I left home, people around all witnessed her amazing independence and her efforts to live her everyday to the fullest. I am so proud of having such a brave mother. I could not have experienced the world and gained knowledge unprecedently without her extraordinary support. My gratitude to her is beyond words.

My supervisor Dr. Jean DeBernardi enlightened me with her insightful advice, offered me timely suggestions throughout my study and extended me professional courtesy whenever there was an opportunity, all of which had made my three years in University of Alberta a productive and enjoyable journey. Of course, without the generous financial support from the Department of Anthropology and University of Alberta, the trip across Pacific Ocean and years of study in this beautiful country would seem hopeless.

The completion of this study would not be possible without my informants at Fo Guang Shan. They are the heroes of this thesis and are now an important part of my memory. I am especially indebted to Venerable Miaoyu, whose compassion and courtesy became the most

precious memory of my life. Cynthia Lau, with whom I have developed a lifetime friendship, offered generous assistance at every stage of the study's development.

I am flattered by Professor Venerable Guangxing of Hongkong University, whose personal charisma and learning I admire with great respect and who generously turned over his research files and academic collection to me. Dr. Irene Lok of Hong Kong University offered advice and assistance during my stay in Taiwan and always patiently answered my questions on Facebook. Michelle Borowitz, PhD student of the Department of Anthropology, Univeristy of Alberta, kindly read my thesis and steered me to the right path of writing in English.

I regret not being able to mention every single force that helped me along the way. In light of a Buddhist view, it is the synergy of conditions, that is, the interdependence of things and people that made this work possible.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

Born and raised in an atheist country, I was educated under an absolute Marxist Materialism, which firmly predicted that with the advances of science and technology, the illusions of religion would eventually become extinct. For some reason, I was never been convinced by that prediction. Maybe because none of my family is really atheist, or because of my innate affection for religious spaces, from an early age I visited a Buddhist temple on a yearly basis with my parents. I also paid visits to many other religious sites, such as the local Taoist temple, mosque, and almost all the churches in the area. This early interest did not convert me into a religious person like the title character in Yann Martel's best-selling novel, "The Life of Pi"[1] (2004), but eventually prompted me to choose an academic life in the hope to observe different forms of religious life more clearly. Although the survival of religions in Mainland China does not look promising, in a superficial way the sign that religion is disappearing is not obvious either. Devotees are far from dying out and many religious spaces (especially Buddhist and Taoist temples) look to the tourist industry to keep them afloat. For most of the common Chinese, religious practice is as easy as burning a few incense sticks and asking for the blessings from a divine power. And I was confirmed in this way of religious practice when I visited India a few years ago, the only foreign country I had ever been to prior to coming to Canada.

Upon arriving in Canada, it was very natural for me to look for temples, not out of pious belief but out of curiosity.[2] For a time, people in downtown Edmonton might have witnessed a

[1] The Main character, Piscine ("pi" for short), was born in a Hindu family. But he also developed interest in Christianity and Islam as well， and converted to those traditions respectively.

[2] In the meantime, I was also motivated by an assignment in my Urban Anthropology class. In searching for the subject for both my thesis project and course paper, I started wandering around religious sites in Edmonton. This course paper, of course, also contributed an initial foundation for my fieldwork on Fo Guang Shan.

Chinese girl walking around and asking passers-by the same question: is there any temple around here? I did find a few on my own but the results were usually disappointing, until one day, I walked into a bookstore in Chinatown and asked the same question to a lady working inside. In a friendly manner, she told me the name of a Buddhist monastery she often visited: "Fo Guang Shan." After several weeks of disappointing experiences, I kept my expectations low, but out of politeness, I showed interest in her suggestion and asked her to write down the name of the monastery for me. The three Chinese characters stayed on the back of a bus schedule for some time before I finally decided to have a look.

I casually followed the vague address she indicated for me and almost missed it. But, there it was: a red brick building embedded into its bigger surroundings. Its plain, cubic design indicated its previous identity as a storage house. Who would have expected there would be a temple inside? On top of the building was a sign: "International Buddhist Progress Society of Edmonton" in English. The Chinese sign, which was more confusing for me, read "Fo Guang Shan Edmonton Lecturing Hall." It was not even a temple!

I was intimidated by its appearance, hesitating whether or not to go inside.

In the following seven months, the monastery became my second home. I did not see the lady from Chinatown bookstore even once, although she told me that she often visited this temple. When I mentioned her name, no one had heard of her. I began to think like a Buddhist: the condition (yuan) is subtle; when the conditions are ready things/people cross paths.

To think like an anthropologist, however, Fo Guang Shan is a fertile field. It is big, much bigger than I expected. Of course, the one in Edmonton is only a three-story building, but there are another 200 branches all over the world – a transnational Buddhist organization that I had

never heard of. Their highly unconventional aspects overturned my previous impression on Buddhism as well. To begin with, please consider the following vignettes:

> In front of five solemn statues of Buddha, a group of youngsters dressed in their most casual clothes are dancing hip hop. It is Buddha's birthday, and people organized a party to celebrate this important day, as well as to entertain themselves. Other shows include a comedy on Buddha's life story, a children's poetry reading, and, singing.
>
> Inside a three-story brick building, there is a simple but delicate lobby, a receptionist's desk, a shrine, a library, a Chan hall, a classroom, an office, and a dining hall. This place is normally referred to as a temple. But this time, the aroma of incense is moderate and the fortunetellers' business never goes well here.
>
> A group of young adults, dressed in similar tee shirts, are cracking jokes and, every now and then, laughing out loud. In front of them are all the musical instruments that one can think of in a modern band: a set of digital jazz drums, a bass, two guitars, a keyboard. There is also a lead singer. At this moment, the musicians are having fun playing *the Grand Gathering at Lotus Ponds* 蓮池海會 on their drums and keyboards, a piece of Buddhist chanting music that features a flowery rhythm and melody.[3] Everyone seemed delighted with this "creolization" of their religion and these western instruments. Even the nun, who has been standing beside the musicians, smiles approvingly.

The above scenes are from the typical daily life at Fo Guang Shan Edmonton, while the organization's franchise model implies that all its branch temples share the same values and practices --- a brand new vision of Chinese Buddhism: the bold interpretation of traditions, the sophisticated application of modern media and the active engagement with the outside world. The way that Fo Guang Shan shapes the relationship between Buddhism and modern world deserves our attention.

As a matter of fact, Fo Guang Shan is not an isolated case but is part of a larger movement of "Humanistic Buddhism." From the early Republican period to the end of the civil war in 1949, the era of chaos saw a group of Chinese Buddhists emerging in response to their

[3] "Flowery rhythm and melody" (*hua ban* 花板) is a kind of style in Chinese Buddhist music, which, comparing to plain style, features with more upbeat and complicated drumming.

collapsing religion. However, the movement was not able to survive in Mainland China until some Mainland Buddhist elites relocated in Taiwan with the Nationalist Party. In the following decades, the conditions for Humanistic Buddhism's growth matured. By the end of Nationalist's Martial Law, a couple of Humanistic Buddhists groups soon sprung up around Taiwan Island, and gradually expanded to the global stage.

In Chinese context, "Humanistic Buddhism" (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教) is the word that these active Buddhist groups use to refer to themselves. In early English works in regard to this Buddhist phenomenon in Asia, Sallie B. King and Christopher S. Queen, for example, call it "engaged Buddhism", which accurately reveals the essential qualities of Humanistic Buddhism:

> To most people in the West, the term "Buddhism" means a religion of introspective withdrawal. Yet the reality of contemporary Asian Buddhism is often something very different. "Buddhism" in contemporary Asia means engagement with social and political issues and crises at least as much as it means monastic or meditative withdrawal (Queen & King 1996: ix).

Contrary to putting more emphasis on "other-worldly" matters, engaged Buddhists advocate a Buddhism that focuses on the present life; and instead of isolating from the secular world, engaged Buddhists engaged in social affairs. Though according to the founder of Fo Guang Shan, Master Xingyun, Humanistic Buddhism is a return to Buddha's essential teaching, it is far beyond a simple duplication. That Chinese Buddhists stood up for themselves and progressively engaged in social affairs is very uncharastic in the history of Chinese Buddhism. This made us to contextualize the movement into its historical and social conditions of the time, and consider the phenomenon as an active transformation from within the Chinese Buddhist community,

Four of the most influential Buddhist strongholds in Taiwan are locally referred to as the "Four Mountain Heads" (*si da shan tou* 四大山頭). Three of them[4] are commonly thought to be representatives of Humanistic Buddhism. Tzu Chi, a grass-root Taiwanese organization, is known as "Compassionate Relief" in the English-speaking world. As its name indicates, it conducts charity practices under the Buddhist conception of compassion, and its members regard themselves as following the path of bodhisattvas. Although there is still controversy as to whether Tzu Chi is directly inherited from Humanistic Buddhist thought, the revolutionary way that Tzu Chi practiced Buddhist teaching naturally made it fall into the category of the Humanistic Buddhist movement. Fa Gu Shan, another influential Buddhist group from Taiwan, is well known for its scholastic activities and mediation. The adherents of this organization are mostly intellectuals who made the organization a popular spot for holding Buddhist academic activities. Fo Guang Shan is ranked the head of the Four Mountain Heads. Despite the fact that all four organizations have expanded abroad, Fo Guang Shan remains the most influential and comprehensive, with the strongest focus on religious activities. During a conference at Fo Guang Shan headquarters (Kaohsiung, Taiwan), some scholars from Mainland China agreed that if Chinese Buddhism on the Mainland did not consider changing its method of proselytizing, the devotee market would be taken over by Christians sooner or later. To a great extent, Fo Guang Shan provides valuable example of how Chinese Buddhism can sustain its lifeline in this contemporary world and spread religious messages more efficiently.

Nevertheless, this study is not interested in analyzing the vast dimension of Fo Guang Shan's globalization and modernization. Instead, as the vignettes reveal, I will examine several material dimensions of the organization, which is the hybrid of both traditional Buddhist values

[4] Besides the three I mentioned in the passage, the fourth one, the Zhong Tai Chan Monastery, is a rather traditional Buddhist group.

and Fo Guang Shan's modern outlook. As some scholars held, "through examination [of religions'] cultural products we come to notice the different kinds of relationships that exist between how these products are portrayed and intended by their creators, and how they actually go on to be perceived and experienced in wider society" (Petsche 2013).

Materiality embraces much more than value-free objects since the application of material objects is often embodied in a much larger context. Fo Guang Shan disseminates Buddhism through cultural products, reproducing religious practices with modern techniques. As a member of Chinese Buddhism which is known as rejecting worldy matters and reclusing from secular life, Fo Guang Shan's intensive involvement with contemporary world certainly brings about a great deal of criticism and questioning. Meanwhile, the organization also produces voluminous sub-narratives as a form of self-defense and the quest for legitimate balance between traditional and modern Buddhism. By examining the material dimensions of this Buddhist organization, we can not only examine the philosophies that underpin its movement, but also take a closer look at a time of globalization and social change in which the interactions and communications between different cultures and social sectors become highly dynamic.

Our world is in constant change and so is Chinese Buddhism. Only in this time of accelerated globalization and modernization does the transformation in a slowly changing field become more prominent and visible. Therefore, instead of looking at this case from the point of view of secularization, I will argue that the acculturation has occurred on a broader platform and the "secularization" may well be understood as an active transformation of Chinese Buddhism and the better realization of its role as a religion.

The thesis is organized into three parts. In the first part, I examine the historical and social conditions under which Humanistic Buddhism originated (Chapter 1) and what spirit is behind this new paradigm of Buddhist practices, especially those of Fo Guang Shan (Chapter 2). The second part, consisting of four chapters, is based on my ethnographic materials on four cultural objects of Fo Guang Shan, in which negotiations between modern reinvention and traditional Buddhist ethnics are ongoing. The four are, respectively, urban monastic space (Chapter 3), the aesthetic foodways (Chapter 4), reinvented musical practices (Chapter 5) and the ritual performance (Chapter 6). The third part, leading to the conclusion, involves a discussion of a few key notions in Mahayana Buddhism. These notions are believed to form the foundation of Humanistic Buddhist practices.

Methodology

The study is an experiment with multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork. Aside from the materials I collected at Fo Guang Shan Edmonton (11/2011 – 6/2012), I felt compelled to look at other branches of this transnational organization. Thus, from June 2012 to September 2013, I visited Fo Guang Shan's branches in Los Angeles, San Diego (June 2012), Vancouver, Toronto (February and September 2013), and the Kaohsiung headquarters in Taipei Vihara, along with other branches in Taiwan (April 2013). Due to time and financial limits, I only had a hurried and cursory glance at most of these locations.

My participation-observation mainly in Fo Guang Shan Edmonton as well as some short sojourns in other Fo Guang Shan branches contributed to the core part of this study. I conducted in-depth interviews and casual conversation during this period. Meanwhile, because Fo Guang Shan actively expresses itself through modern media, such as newspapers, books, and the Internet, this information in the public domain also became an important source for my writing.

As a famous Buddhist story goes, when the blind men were asked to touch an elephant and then describe it, they all failed to recognize the whole elephant. The one who touched the elephant trunk believed that the animal was something long. The one who touched the legs envisioned an animal as a big pillar. Some scholars are concerned that it is easy to commit the same mistake with the huge elephant like Buddhism – any personal efforts to study it seem as trivial as touching just a small piece of it. However, even if we are not able to cover the whole truth, the trunk is still an elephant's trunk and the legs are also an elephant's legs. They are not the whole story, but at least they are part of it.

Part 1

From Idealism to a Global Cause

Chapter 1 The Dynamics in the Transformation of Contemporary Chinese Buddhism: From Mainland to Taiwan

> Mainland China may physically be situated where the Middle Kingdom once was, but the periphery is now where that Kingdom's cultural legacy thrives. The geographic centre has become marginal, the margins and outlying regions transformed into cultural centres.
>
> --- Chandler, 2005

Fo Guang Shan is remarked as an actualization of Humanistic Buddhism. While Taiwan is where today's Humanistic Buddhism flourished, the origination of Humanistic Buddhism is inseparable from the Mainland China of the early Republican period (the 1920s). In other words, the rise of Humanistic Buddhism has to be attributed to the social and historical conditions in both Mainland China and Taiwan.

In this chapter, I will provide some historical sketches on how Humanistic Buddhism came into being, what made Taiwan an ideal place for it to flourish and, more specifically, what were the historical conditions and political climate that shaped today's Fo Guang Shan.

Taixu's Reform and Early Chinese Buddhist reform

The emergence of Humanistic Buddhism was embedded in a larger Buddhist movement from the Post Qing (the late 1800s) to the early Republican period (the early 1900s) when the "Middle Kingdom"[5] was facing domestic crisis and Western forces. Meantime, Christian missionaries gradually gained a market in the Chinese public, while many local religions were declining and confronted with increasing public resentment. Under such circumstances, progressive Buddhists, as one of the many local religious forces, started to seek changes (Pittman

[5] The ancient China used to think it was in the centre of the world, and thus called itself the Middle Kingdom.

2001: 40). Among them, a monk called Taixu 太虚 (1890 – 1947) was recognized as the most prominent one.

Taixu 太虚 (1890 – 1947) played a significant role in contemporary Chinese Buddhism. He was internationally recognized as "the Buddhist Pope of China" (Payne 1945: 274) or "the Saint-Paul of Chinese Buddhism" (cf. Yu-yue Tsu 1927:44).

In Taixu's time, many Buddhist monasteries served as funeral caterers, and the sangha lacked a basic Buddhist education (Pittman 2001: 89). Looking at this with great bitterness, Taixu started to conceive a "new Buddhism" – instead of focusing on the dead, Buddhism should focus on the living; instead of retreating from [the] secular world, Buddhism should engage in social affairs.

Interestingly, Taixu did not choose Jiangsu and Zhejiang[6] - where he grew up and there had been a long tradition of Buddhism – as his frontline, but located himself in central China. In this extensive area, "Hankou and Wuchang[7] … are perhaps the most important centres of the so-called Buddhist revival…"[8] (Pratt 1924: 12-3)

Taixu's success in central China can be attributed to the local cultural and historical conditions, which share much common with the Taiwan before the 1980s. While his reform may have been too radical for the more conservative Jiangsu and Zhejiang, it found its appeal in Hankou and Wuchang. To begin with, Hankou is a town that had been under Western colonization and also had active ferry trades. As one of the harbors along the Yangtze River,

[6] These two provinces are located to the east coast of Mainland China.

[7] Hankou and Wuchang are now two administrative districts of Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province. In late Qing and early Republican period, the city was not yet officially established, thus it is more common to see these two names used independently.

[8] It was recorded that Taixu's lectures attracted hundreds of local followers. There, he opened his renowned Wuchang Buddhist Institution (*Wuchang Foxue Yuan* 武昌佛学院) as a major realization of his vision on Buddhist education, and his followers spontaneously organized themselves to support the reform (Pittman 2001).

Hankou in Taixu's day resembled Shanghai in many ways and thus enjoyed a rather high degree of openness. More importantly, the memory of the Great Revolution of 1911 still hovered around the city and its restless people by the time Taixu arrived. Known also as the Wuchang Uprising, the epoch-making Revolution turned over the imperial rulers, ending the 2000-year Chinese monarchy.

Since this region had recently experienced a revolution, there was a transformative climate and, hence, an ideal site for progressive reforms. And so was Taiwan in the pre-Humanistic Buddhist era. Both had just experienced colonization and upheaval; both were open to new possibilities.

Religious as the format is, the political and social dimensions in Taixu's reform are also highly visible. He firmly believed that Mahayana Buddhism[9] was not only the hope to save Chinese society, but also an ideal solution to world peace as well as all the other problems facing humanity. While Fo Guang Shan's global influence is still increasing, Taixu had already conceived the globalization of Chinese Buddhism almost 100 years ago. He travelled to Europe and the United States, lobbying with his Buddhist blueprint. Although it seemed like a promising path at the time, like many avant-garde pioneers in human history, Taixu did not live to see the final realization of his dream, his Buddhist utopianism.

Today, Taixu's efforts can hardly be observed on Mainland China, not even in the old reform centre. However, if we look at today's Taiwan, it is no longer easy to say that Taixu's reform is totally impractical. Among his followers, Master Xingyun (Fo Guang Shan), Shengyan (Fa Gu Shan), and Zhengyan (Tzu Chi) in particular have successfully put Taixu's ideal into practice in Taiwan. After almost a century, Taixu's effort proved to be worthwhile; the once peripheral region of China has become a centre of Chinese culture.

[9] Chinese Buddhism is part of Mahayana Buddhism.

Transformative Religio-scape in Taiwan

Pre-Humanistic Buddhism era

Throughout most of the Imperial era, the vast region that we call "Taiwan" today was a forgotten corner. Colonization marked its grand history; what makes us remember it is its recurrent separations. Under such historical circumstances, Chinese Buddhism did not have any significant impact on Taiwan until the late 1600s, when the country was recovered from Dutch rule, and a massive number of mainlanders immigrated soon afterwards.

The Buddhism of Southern Min,[10] in particular, formed the basis of Taiwanese Buddhism. Even though the early promotion heavily relied on unorganized individual efforts – as indicated by Taiwanese scholars Wang Jianchuang and Li Shiwan – a mature foundation for Buddhism had already been formed before Japanese rule (Wang & Li 1999:29).

Ironically, 50 years' colonization (1895-1945) did not bring a hammer blow to local Buddhism as it did with local popular religions. While the latter were perceived as superstitious, Buddhism was considered compatible with the Japanese social ideal. It is, after all, a religion shared by Japan, Mainland China, and Taiwan. Therefore, local Buddhism was preserved as a cultural medium in favor of colonization (Wang & Li 1999: 31); in the meantime, Japanese Buddhism was introduced (Goosaert and Palmer 2010: 210-1) to enforce Japanese ideology.

However, the missionaries of Japanese Buddhism did not live up to their expectation. Either the number of devotees registered as Japanese Buddhists or the actual impact of Japanese Buddhism was insignificant. As Jiang Canteng, a Taiwanese Buddhist scholar says, this may be due to the language barrier, different ways to do Buddhism, a lack of prior communication, and anti-colonization spirits (Jiang 1996: 114). Moreover, as a cultural identity lasting over 1000

[10] Min, today's Fujian Province, lies to the southeast of Mainland China off the west coast of Taiwan Island. It is the most adjacent province to Taiwan.

years, the Chinese root of Taiwanese Buddhism could not be easily altered. Chinese Buddhism, generally more conservative and socially withdrawn, contrasted with the "secularized nature" (Wang & Li 1999: 48 - 51) of its Japanese counterpart. This ultimate difference contributes the incompatibility of Japanese Buddhism in Taiwan.

In terms of social engagement, however, Taiwanese Buddhism is profoundly impacted. A good example is the prosperous education causes. The School of Soto[11], in particular, not only established schools for general education, but also universities for specialty Buddhist education. In addition, this sect of Japanese Buddhism initiated the "Buddhist Youth Association" by following the example of Christianity and gained a success.

These distinguished characteristics of Japanese Buddhism—being politically motivated, educationally centreed, and socially involved (by engaging in an assortment of non-religious affairs)—considerably affected the social practices of Taiwanese Buddhism, altering it from the traditional path of Chinese Buddhism (Kan 2004: 511; Wang & Li 1999: 48). The live scene of Buddhist education, philanthropy, and political engagement that we see in today's Taiwan, then, is not an accident, nor solely a creation of Mainland Buddhists.

Even so, Mainland Buddhism's authority continued during Japanese Rule. Buddhist experience from Mainland is valued and Taiwanese monks sought opportunities to study across the strait:

> (Ven.) Luo Miaoji was junior to Ven. Benyuan, but he possessed mainland experience (in Buddhism). He paid a visit to the mainland in 1923 and studied in the Wuchang Buddhist Institute of Master Taixu. During this time, he expanded his network among both sangha and laypeople, which greatly benefited his Buddhist career (Wang & Li 1999: 41)

[11] A sect of Japanese Buddhism.

In the meantime, attracted by advanced scholastic activities that Japanese Buddhism brought forward, Mainland monks also made trips to Taiwan. Among them, Taixu was especially influential. Since Japanese Buddhism perfectly matched Taixu's own reforming idea, it thus became an inspiration for his reform. His visit in 1917 made an impression on Taiwanese society:

> In his one and half month sojourn in Taiwan, Taixu intensively visited monasteries, and engaged himself with all kinds of religious, cultural activities. A great deal of his everyday itineraries and content of sermons were covered in newspapers, which made him the most popular religious figure of the time (Wang & Li 1999: 45).

The positive impact of this trip was mutual. Taixu learned about the system of Japanese Buddhist education, and was informed about the most recent achievements in Japanese Buddhism, both of which are said to have greatly benefited his reform on the Mainland, especially at the Wuchang Buddhist Institute. As for Taiwan, great importance has been attached to Taixu's reform ever since (Wang & Li 1999: 46); in other words, long before the Humanistic Buddhism era, Taiwanese society had been visibly exposed to Taixu's influence.

In a way, Buddhist education and social engagement from both Japanese and Taixu's influences reinforced the formation of the characteristic of Taiwanese Buddhism. On the flip side, although in the last few years of colonization Japan exercised a much more forceful religious policy, in fear of "Taiwanese loyalties to Mainland China," it unexpectedly created a transformative religious landscape (after the deconstruction) in which new religious groups were bred (Goosaert and Palmer 2010: 210-1).

Nationalist Martial Law

The place we call Taiwan today[12] had been the "backwater frontier" of Chinese, Dutch, and Japanese rule (Weller 2000: 477). Only 11 years after Chinese Imperial court elevated it to provincial status, Taiwan was ceded to Japan for 50 years of colonization. By the time it reverted to Chinese control after the Second World War, Taiwan once again become a backwater frontier heavily influenced by Japanese language and values. The political and identity crisis were worsensed in 1949 when Communist victories forced the Nationalists to flee to Taiwan (Weller 2000: 478). This highly transformative history created a transformative climate in Taiwan, which was ideal for new experiments.

In 1949, in particular, with the retreat of the Nationalist government in the war against the Communist Party, millions of people evacuated to Taiwan. These people were "soldiers, members of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) [National Party] and the intellectual and business elites" (Goosaert and Palmer 2010: 213). Fearing the penetration of Communist power, the Chiang Kai-shek government imposed strict constraints on every aspect of Taiwanese society, declaring Martial Law right after KMT's evacuation. Thousands of people suspected of having anti-KMT or pro-Communist Party tendencies were imprisoned, tortured, or even executed. In his book on Taiwanese Buddhism after the Civil War, Taiwanese scholar Kan Zhengzong illustrated this history in detail. He mentioned that the "white terror" shrouded every corner of Taiwan, with no exception made for Buddhism. Temples were confiscated and a number of Mainland monks were captured and jailed. More than once, Master Xingyun related in his autobiography the hardships of upholding his faith in those times (Kan 2004). Even so, a group

[12] Taiwan, formerly known as Formosa, has a history of various kinds of "colonization." The first officially documented colonizers may have been Dutch and Spanish, and their administration did not last for long in the early 16oos before Zheng Chengong (Koxinga, as he was called by the locals), an official of the Ming Dynasty, expelled them and established his government on Taiwan for a few decades. Qing took over the island in 1683, putting it under the jurisdiction of Fujian (Min).

of elite monks from Mainland China, men with a strong sense of their mission, tenaciously struggled for Buddhism's survival. Being "not able to bear the decaying of the supreme religion" (*bu ren sheng jiao shuai* 不忍聖教衰), they vigorously initiated Buddhist education, disputed public humiliations of the religion, and made their voices heard by the rest of society.

Even under Martial Law, Buddhism in Taiwan still fared much better than Buddhism in Mainland during the same period. For one thing, "the elites brought with them the KMT tradition of hostility toward all religions," which to a certain extent saved "the highly secularized, modernist churches such as Christianity (especially Protestantism) and *reformist Buddhism* (my emphasis)" (Goosaert and Palmer 2010: 214). The paradigm inherited from Taixu's "Buddhism for Human Life" easily fell into the latter camp. According to Master Xingyun, the six years following the relocation of the Nationalist government (1949-1952) saw a remarkable development of Buddhism. He summarized six manifestations on the prominent transition toward Humanistic Buddhism:

1. From deification to "Buddhist-ization"：converting temples or superstitious groups. For instance, a comprehensive reform of Zhai[13] Jiao;
2. From chanting sutra to education: Ven. Cihang's Buddhist Institute opened up a new ethos in which temple-based schools were established one after another;
3. From silence to publicity: giving sermons and preaching dharma became a trend; bit by bit, journals and television proselytization opened up a new prospect [for Chinese Buddhism];
4. From the laxness in precepts to the standardization of precepts: in 1953 the first (national) Full Precepts Assembly was held;
5. From Sangha to laypeople: each group performed its own method of disseminating Dharma;
6. From temple to society;

[13] Zhai Jiao, literally Vegetarian Religion, is a folk religion that mostly shares Buddhist beliefs but no Buddhist sangha are involved in its practices. The members of the religion are predominantly lay females. When Mainland elite monks arrived in Taiwan with their progressive thoughts, they commonly held that Zhai Jiao was backward and could be misleading due to its resemblance to Buddhism. Thus, for a period of time, these reformist monks devoted themselves to rectifying the local confusion between Zhaijiao and Buddhism. See more details in Kan Zhengzong. 2004. *Revisit Buddhism of Taiwan: Buddhism of Taiwan in Post-war Period*. Taipei: Darchen Publisher.

7. From sutra-less to sutra: printing and revised sutras;
8. From self-practice to mass practice;
9. From Buddhist chants to popular songs; and
10. From Japanese to Chinese: divorced from Japanese Buddhist style, such as language, clothing, and loose precepts.
    (cf. Kan Zhengzong 2004: 52-3)

The direct actions of the Buddhist community were uncharacteristic and drew a lot of public attention, which was exactly what they were expecting – to declare their existence, to establish their legitimacy, and to reconstruct their lost confidence.

By the time Venerable Yinshun arrived in Taiwan,[14] an "indisputable fact" is that Japanese and local Buddhism had practically been replaced by Mainland Chinese Buddhism (Kan 2004: 54-5). However, the real turning point occurred during a political competition between the Communist party and the Nationalist Party.

To be fair, neither the Communist Party nor the Nationalist Party showed much respect for religion, but while the Cultural Revolution was ruthlessly wrecking religions on Mainland, the Nationalists were more than happy to provide a contrast by doing the opposite – supporting religion. In 1966 Communist China started a national-wide social movement that lasted for 10 years. Under the slogan of "eradicating the old and foster the new" (*po jiu li xin* 破舊立新), the movement eventually evolved into a catastrophe for Chinese traditional culture. To the

[14] The time coincided with the arrival of the Venerable Yinshun (印顺) (1952). This most eminent student of Taixu is commonly thought of as the one who really upheld his "Buddhism for Human Life." In an age of turbulence, Yinshun first moved to Hong Kong and then settled in Taiwan for the last 50 years of his life. Lan Jifu indicated that although Yinshun's Humanistic Buddhism incubated in Mainland China, Yinshun himself was not able to formulate grand scheme of ideas publicly due to political and social upheaval. It was in Taiwan that Yinshun started to become a productive Buddhist writer and developed his teacher's concept into "Humanistic Buddhism." Long before Martial Law had ended and Yinshun had established "Humanistic Buddhism" in theory, a Mainland-dominated Buddhist pattern had been set. This pattern, although not yet called "Humanistic Buddhism," was transformed in the same direction. Today, Ven. Yinshun is highly spoken of more in terms of his intellectual contribution (Lan 2007: 1) as strengthening the foundation of Taiwanese Buddhism and systematically developing Humanistic Buddhism. This no doubt provided a strong *theoretical support* for Buddhist practice of the day.

Nationalists, however, this unrest meant a perfect opportunity to turn around their notorious public image in Taiwan. Thus, not by coincidence, from 1966 the Nationalist government set about a social movement of "revitalizing Chinese culture." Buddhism, as a glorious part of Chinese culture, naturally became an object to be saved (Kan 2004: xxvii). At that time, the destiny of Buddhism on both sides of the Taiwan Strait began to diverge, eventually moving poles apart.

Taking off to the Global Stage: Fo Guang Shan as a representative

With the foundation laid by the Mainland Buddhist forerunners, conditions for the rise of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan finally coalesced with the coming of Ven. Yinshun and the Cultural Revolution. After the metamorphosis stage during the Martial Law years, Humanistic Buddhism broke out of its cocoon as soon as Martial Law was lifted in the late 1980s. From then on, religions in Taiwan entered into a high-speed development period. The Taiwanese religious landscape presented a scene of "hundreds of flowers blooming" and those competitive groups emerged to form their "mountain stronghold." As Robert Weller pointed out,

> when the government stepped back from its uncompromising paternalistic moralism, it left an empty field in which anything seemed possible. This new space, added to Taiwan's irresolvable political position, has fostered the religious creativity we now see there (Weller 2000: 479).

In 1966 and 1967, Tzu Chi, Compassionate Relief, and Fo Guang Shan – two of the four Buddhist Strongholds in Taiwan—were founded in succession, Together with Fa Gu Shan and Zhong Tai Chansi, they become the "Four Mountain Heads" (*si da shan tou* 四大山頭) in Taiwan. Tzu Chi (Compassionate Relief) enjoys a strong international reputation because of its philanthropic causes, and Fa Gu Shan (Dharma Drum Mountain) gains popularity through its intellect-oriented services and Chan meditation. Zhong Tai Chan Si (Zhong Tai Chan

Monastery), by contrast, is a more traditional Buddhist group, which encourages the renounciation from the secular world. While all four have been expanding abroad, Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi, and Fa Gu Shan are commonly regarded as the successors to Master Taixu and Yinshun's Humanistic Buddhism. Among them, Fo Guang Shan is the most comprehensive organization, as it includes a bit of everything. The group devoted itself to the dissemination of Buddhism through diverse approaches. Domestically, Fo Guang Shan is the "Head of the Four". Internationally, Fo Guang Shan's assets and influence could be ranked in the top 500 globally.

Taixu initiated Humanistic Buddhism and Yinshun further developed it, but it was Xingyun who put it into real practice. Therefore, Xingyun's Fo Guang Shan provides a concrete example of the ideal of Humanistic Buddhism. An examination of Fo Guang Shan's practice significantly improves our understanding of this new form of Buddhism, which largely remained as an ideal before the time of Xingyun.

From 1953-1961, Xingyun was invited to give sermons in a remote village in Taiwan. He settled in the village and started his visible efforts of spreading Buddhism. During those days, his creative and enthusiastic personality started to make an impression. When he realized that plain sermons were too boring to attract his uneducated audiences, he made a series of reforms. Using a projector, opening a kindergarten, organizing a youth singing team and a reciting Buddha group, to name only a few, were relatively fanciful at that time and, as a result, attracted a number of Xingyun's initial followers. Meanwhile, he had already begun to publish a number of literary works, which laid the foundation for Fo Guang Shan's later "promotion of Buddhism through culture" (以文化弘揚佛法) (Fo Guang Shan 1987: 27-8).

In 1967, Xingyun sold his cultural service centre in Kaohsiung. With this money, he purchased a small hill in a nearby county to construct a Buddhist institute and monastery. When breaking ground on May 16, he named the hill "Fo Guang Shan," or Buddha's Light Mountain, and announced the four objectives of the organization: spread the Dharma through culture, cultivate talents through education, benefit society through philanthropy, and purify the mind through cultivation. (F.G.S. World Wide Web)

From 1977 to 1986, Fo Guang Shan started to take off toward a larger stage, during which its Religious Affairs Committee and the Committee for the Editing and Publishing of the Buddhist Tripitaka were established. The division of work within the organization thus became more specific, and the Order of Fo Guang Shan finally grew to a rounded system.

Simultaneously, Fo Guang Shan extended overseas. Hsi Lai temple, the largest Buddhist temple in North America, was founded in Los Angeles in 1988. Three years later, Buddha's Light International Association of the Republic of China (Taiwan) was officially established (F.G.S. World Wide Web; Fo Guang Shan 1987: 29-35). Now there are more than 200 branch monasteries as well as other auxiliary institutions all over the world, scattered around North and South America, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and even Africa.

Although Xingyun had the foresight to institutionalize the structure of Fo Guang Shan and passed down his chair as early as the 1980s, he remains the spiritual leader. His name is ubiquitous in the Fo Guang Shan community and his ideas are still the greatest driving force behind the Fo Guang Shan's practices. On March 11, 2013, the ninth abbot of Fo Guang Shan was conferred, but Master Xingyun's influence is no less predominant.

Chapter 2 A Pedigree of Humanistic Buddhism: from Taixu to Xingyun

An established view is that Humanistic Buddhism, posited by Taixu, developed by Yinshun, and put into practice by Xingyun, Shengyan and others, has become the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism. However, although voluminous discussion had been carried out on "Humanistic Buddhism" and related groups, no consensus had been reached on its definition.

It is worth noting that Humanistic Buddhism did not remarkably develop Buddhist philosophies. Humanistic Buddhism may be taken for granted as a brand new form of Buddhism. The Buddhist views, however, of both Taixu and Xingyun lie squarely within traditional Mahayana thought, and represent a highly encompassing attitude toward all different Buddhist sects. In fact, rather than philosophical innovation, Humanistic Buddhists show much more interest in how to *practice* Buddhism in a world of great transformation. Taking a closer look at their discourses, we find that apart from packaging Buddhism with modern linguistic techniques, the principle doctrines of Chinese Buddhism remain unchanged. That is to say, Humanistic Buddhism is not a new Buddhist school, but rather, a new practice paradigm that reorients Buddhist focus from other worlds to this world.

Despite the fact that the interpretations of Humanistic Buddhism from each of these Buddhist organizations varies widely, they still claim to be and are considered successors of Taixu's "Buddhism for Human Life." That is to say, the understanding of the notion of "Humanistic Buddhism" should be embedded in the individual cases such as Tzu Chi, Fo Guang Shan, and Fa Gu Shan. In this chapter I will discuss the notion of Humanistic Buddhism in its social and historical context, including it within Xingyun's mode of Humanistic Buddhism.

Taixu's "Buddhism for Human Life": From Religion of the Dead to Human Religion

"*Renjian fojiao* (人间佛教)," or Humanistic Buddhism, is developed from Taixu's "*rensheng fojiao* (人生佛教)," or "Buddhism of Human Life." As mentioned earlier, Taixu was deeply concerned that Chinese Buddhism had deviated too far from the right path, excessively focusing on funeral rituals and preparation for the next life (Pacey 2005:447). Thus he sought to develop a series of reforms to shift Buddhist attention from attaining rebirth in an after-life Pure Land to the betterment of human society here and now. (Pittman 2001: 222).

Taixu first proposed the term in his "Instructions on China's Revolutionary Sangha (*dui zhongguo geming seng xundaoci* 對中國革命僧訓詞)" in 1928 (Jiang 1992: 172), and announced four visions for contemporary Chinese Buddhism: first, the Path of Bodhisattva - the foundation *Buddhism for Human Life* - should be human being oriented, should be established through Bodhisattva, and eventually leads to Buddhahood; second, under the spirit of *Mahayana's Buddhism of Human Life* (*dacheng de rensheng fojiao* 大乘的人生佛教), a modern Buddhist sangha institution should be reorganized to accommodate the current reality of Chinese society; third, new devotees should be recruited and old devotees civilized by promoting *Mahayana's Buddhism for Human Life*, that is, a modern institution for Buddhist laypeople should be established; and fourth, *Mahayana's Buddhism for Human Life* should be shared with the Chinese public so that every walk of society could experience Buddhist benevolent teaching, thereby cultivating a national ethos of "10 kinds of wholesome behavior[15]" to the extent that the whole human world could eventually become a realm full of "10 kinds of wholesome behavior"

[15] These are the ten kinds of wholesome behavior expected of lay practitioners in Mahāyāna, including: not killing; not stealing; not committing adultery; not lying; not speaking harshly; not speaking divisively; not speaking idly; not being greedy; not being angry; not having wrong views (Muller; Nakamura, Hirakawacf, cf. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism).

(Mangeng 2006a:18-9). Taixu ultimately emphasized that "the only role model is Buddha; the accomplishment of cultivation lies in personhood; the accomplishment of personhood is the accomplishment of Buddhahood; this is the real truth (*yangzhi wei fotuo, wancheng zai renge, ren cheng ji fo cheng, shi ming zhen xianshi* 仰止唯佛陀, 完成在人格, 人成佛即成, 是名真現實)" (Yinshun 2011:426).

Notably, Taixu repeatedly labeled "Buddhism of Human life" as "Mahayana's Buddhism for human life." This seems to stress that Buddhism for Human Life is not something novel, but is either intrinsic in Mahayana Buddhism, or firmly grounded on the basis of traditional thought. As Don Pittman indicated, Taixu wanted "Chinese Buddhism to be built on an "essential dimension of their Mahayana heritage that had been overworked and inadequately developed" (Pittman 2001: 104).

Yinshun's Humanistic Buddhism: Practicing Buddhism in Human Realm

While Taixu's "Buddhism for Human Life" countered Chinese Buddhism's obsolete emphasis on "death" or "ghost," his student Yinshun more thoroughly dragged Buddhism back to the human world by speaking against deities:

> Buddhism is a religion, but… if (Buddhism) could not attach importance to the human world, putting so much more attention on ghost and animal, then it would be close to "ghost religion", emphasizing on souls and death; if (Buddhism) values celestials…it would be close to "god religion", emphasizing on [sic] deities and longevity. Deities and ghosts are either separable or inseparable to the extent that Buddhism became full of deities and ghosts at the same time… Not only [Chinese Buddhism] had a tendency of dead ghost[s], but also the later stage of Indian Buddhism had a tendency to confuse (Buddha) with deities…. Therefore I especially put emphasis on *"*human realm*"* (*renjian* 人间) as an antidote: this will not only heal the death and ghost deviation but will also heal the god and longevity" (Yinshun 2010: 101-2).

The term "Humanistic Buddhism"[16] or "Buddhism in Human Realm" had appeared already in public beginning in the 1930s and had been used frequently by other Buddhist figures on the Mainland (Yinshun 2010: 102). However, Yinshun is the first person to have developed the term systematically, fixed it officially, and promoted it to the public.

"Appropriate in principles and right for capacity" (*qili qiji* 契理契机) are the two properties Yinshun saw as the most essential for practicing Buddhism. "Qili" is the term used to refer to the fact that the sermons on Buddhist Dharma should be in accordance with the ultimate participles of Buddhism; "Qiji" means that the teaching of Dharma should acknowledge the audience's intellectual capacity so that different people can understand and hence be benefited**.** Only a Buddhism that satisfies both conditions can adapt to the times and simultaneously agree with Buddha's true teachings.

In Yinshun's words, if Buddhism only pursues the rationality and philosophies, it would be "too high to be popular" (*qu gao he gua* 曲高和寡). On the contrary, a Buddhism that is blindly catering to the taste of the populace would also stray far away from the truth. Therefore, he proposed that "Humanistic Buddhism" should be an ideal form of Buddhism satisfying both requirements. According to Stuart Chandler, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, Xingyun, also emphasized the quality of "*qili qiji*" when he put forward his plans for Fo Guang Shan (Chandler 2004:33).

Yinshun was a research-based scholar monk. Jiang Canteng once described him as "splendid in thoughts but weak in action." Mangeng, a scholar monk from Fo Guang Shan, made

[16] Renjian fojiao is literally "Buddhism in human realm." It was popularized and then commonly recognized as "Humanistic Buddhism" in English. The first time I saw this translation was in Fo Guang Shan English publications. Here in the discussion of Yinshun, I will use "Buddhism in human realm" and "Humanistic Buddhism" interchangeably.

a similar observation. Even though Yinshun acknowledged that Buddhism is not separate from the secular world in theory, he did not talk about anything practical (Mangeng 2006a: 25). Some say that this is greatly due to Yinshun's inward personality as well as his fragile health. Yet given that Yinshun is such an influential figure, one that is positively recognized by both Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese, conservatives and progressive activists, he has no doubt provided strong theoretical guidance on public opinion that laid foundation for the later Humanistic Buddhist practice in Taiwan.

Humanistic Buddhism in "Xingyun Mode"

It is undeniable that Taixu incubated the idea of Humanistic Buddhism, but Xingyun is the one who eventually actualized it (Manyi 2005a; Li 2007). I will illustrate Xingyun's Humanistic Buddhism through several aspects of his Fo Guang Shan.

Buddhism as a Human religion

Xingyun confessed bluntly "the reason why I advocate Humanistic Buddhism is to carry on Master Taixu's ideal of 'the accomplishment of personhood is the accomplishment of Buddhahood (人成即佛成)'" (Xingyun 1993: 149). His interpretation of this concept is much more encompassing than those of either Taixu or Yinshun (Mangeng 2006b: 1):

> Humanistic Buddhism doesn't belong to any particular person. It cannot be attributed to Master of the sixth patriarch[17] just because he once said "Buddhist dharma exists in this world so it should be understood from everyday life"; it cannot be attributed to Master Taixu just because he said "the only role model is Buddha; the accomplishment of cultivation lies in personhood; the accomplishment of personhood is the accomplishment of Buddhahood; this is the real (仰止唯佛陀, 完成在人格, 人成佛即成, 是名真現實)." Humanistic Buddhism is in everyone's mind, everyone's Way and everyone's principle. Humanistic Buddhism is the original intention of Buddha, and is the purification and sublimation of everyone's life. Any Buddhist teaching that could lead to Nirvana is Humanistic Buddhism (Xingyun 2001: 47).

[17] The sixth patriarch of the Chinese Chan tradition, Huineng

As can be seen from the above quotation, Humanistic Buddhism is rather self-evident to Xingyun --- It exists independently from any discussion or academic research. The addition of "humanistic" is merely to re-emphasize that the Buddhism of Buddha's time was a case of "dealing with secular affairs with a recluse mind," and thus was intrinsically "humanistic." Xingyun mentioned several times: "Buddha was born in [a] human realm and cultivated in [a] human world; he attained enlightenment in [a] human realm and disseminated Dharma in [a] human realm. All teachings of Buddha are human-centreed. Thus we can say that Humanistic Buddhism itself is the original teaching of Buddha. (Xingyun 2001: 46)

He further clarified that:

> Buddha taught Dharma for forty-nine years, giving over three hundred sermons. He was not making [a] speech to celestial beings or ghosts, or to beings in the hell or animals. Instead, he was preaching to *human being[s]* (my emphasis). A Buddhism with all its teachings aiming for human being[s] is of course "Humanistic Buddhism" (Mangeng 2005d: 7).

Thus Xingyun concluded that Humanistic Buddhism is Buddhist dharma *per se,* and Mahayana's bodhisattva path is Humanistic Buddhist practice *per se*. Only after Buddha entered Nirvana did Buddhists put more emphasis on studying profound doctrines and neglected the sociality as well as the contemporaneity of Buddhism (Xingyun 1992).

Indiscriminate view and Pragmatic Use

Just like Taixu, Xingyun held an indiscriminate view about all eight traditions of Chinese Buddhism[18], and adopted highly comprehensive Buddhist practices. Manyi, another

[18] Under Mahayana Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism evolved into roughly eight schools: 1) Mi Zong, or the Esoteric sect or True Word School, practice through a mantra or true words of Buddha and bodhisattavas; 2) Weishi Zong, or the school of "Consciousness-only," emphasises the power of the human mind; 3) Sanlun Zong, or the Three-

scholar monk from Fo Guang Shan, noted that when Fo Guang Shan was newly founded, Xingyun sent his first disciples to study different strains of Buddhism, which covered primitive Indian Buddhism, and Chinese schools such as Tiantai, Huayan, Weishi, and Sanlun. Regarding Esoteric Buddhism, due to its radically different nature Fo Guang Shan's acceptance of this School is mainly expressed in its frequent communications with Tibetan Buddhist communities. In a way, Xingyun is trying to fuse all traditions together and turn Fo Guang Shan into an amalgam of Eight Schools of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism.

Xingyun designed both the Meditation Hall and Amitaba Hall in the initial Fo Guang Shan architecture complex. These halls represent Chan School and Pure Land School respectively (Manyi 2005a: 6). These two schools hitherto enjoy the greatest popularity in Chinese society because they are more accessible to the public. For one thing, the Chan School emerged and developed by resisting while absorbing Taoism and Confucianism, which made it especially acceptable for Chinese people. More importantly, Chan's simplified doctrines and "wordless" (meditative) practices lowered the threshold of Buddhism for ordinary Chinese.

However, the most popular form of Buddhism in China and Japan is Pure Land (Jones 2000: 87). For the majority of its devotees, Pure Land Buddhism describes a perfect kingdom far in the west. A Buddha named Amitaba created this land through "the purity of his own conduct and consciousness," for the "express purpose of drawing it to beings that…have no chance of escaping the vicissitudes of birth and death through their own study and practice." Among the 48

Treatise School, was named as such "because of its reliance on three Indian śāstras, which had formed the basis for the Indian Madhyamaka (i.e., middle school) doctrine," and therefore "is seen as the transmission of Madhyamaka thought in China" (DDB); 4) Huayan Zong, or the Flower Ornament School, is perhaps the most influential among the indigenous Chinese schools. "Though Taixu envisioned promulgating all the eight schools, he based his faith on Huayan thoughts" (Xingyun 2005: 3). This school has profound impact on the philosophical tendencies on both Chinese Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism; 5) Lv Zong, or the Vinaya School/school of Precepts, as its name suggests, emphasizes Buddhist precepts; 6) Tiantai Zong, or the Lotus Sutra School, based its teaching on the Lotus Sutra and well-organized Buddhist philosophies; 7) Jingtu Zong, or the Pure Land School, adopts an expedient approach to cultivation through reciting Amitaba's name, that is, to achieve the status of Pure Land by relying on his power; 8) Chan Zong, or the Meditation School, is based on meditative practices instead of words.

vows that he made to save sentient beings from this world of suffering, one of them implies that people can gain rebirth in Pure Land by having faith in Amitaba and calling his name (Jones 2000: 87-8). This is good news for millions of Chinese and Japanese commoners because an expedient path to salvation is opened in front of them, leaving them hope that "even if they lacked the intelligence, motivation, leisure, and resources to practice…they could…come to the Pure Land in the next life" by relying solely on the power of Amitaba's vow (Jones 2000: 88; Chandler 2004). That is why a major practice among Pure Land devotees is reciting Amitaba's name tirelessly. Compared to other abstruse philosophical Buddhist traditions, Pure Land Buddhism suddenly made the attainment of Buddhahood accessible to ordinary people, which is why the public found it so appealing.

Chandler, in his *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, emphatically discussed Xingyun's Pure Land view. Although Xingyun did propose that the "the crux of understanding (of Buddhism) lies in dharma; the crux of (Buddhist) practice lies in the parallel cultivation of Chan and Pure Land" (*jie zai yiqie fofa, xing zai chan jing gongxiu* "解在一切佛法,行在禪淨共修") (Manyi 2005a:5), Chandler's writing struck me as if Xingyun were a Pure Land School practitioner. He singled out Xingyun's theological views and practices without referring to the basic principles of Humanistic Buddhism, discussing Fo Guang Shan without taking into consideration its practical purposes.

On the one hand, Xingyun was ordained as the 48th successor of the *Linji* School (臨濟宗), one sect of the Chan School. As Mangeng pointed, Xingyun's ideology is rooted in the Chan tradition but is not confined within it (Mangeng 2005). Even though Xingyun does have his own interpretation on how to attain the status of Pure Land, he may well develop it on the base of his

construction of Humanistic Buddhism, rather than revolutionizing Pure Land School alone. On the other hand, I highly doubt that "Fo Guang Shan has long emphasized Pure Land devotionalism over Chan meditation" (Chandler 2004: 58) Not only did Chandler not provide sufficient evidence about Fo Guang Shan's "focus" on Pure Land, he also failed to notice an important idea of Xingyun – to offer what the public needs - which I have found a coherent logic in Fo Guang Shan's practices.

Xingyun once clearly mentioned in his book that the predominant practice in today's Taiwan is still the Pure Land tradition, and it is a common practice for even the monasteries of the Chan or Vinaya traditions to adopt Pure Land practice (for example, chanting Amitaba) in order to attract followers (Xingyun 2008: 5). By the same token, Xingyun's emphasis on Pure Land (practice) is strategic too – to open an easy path for the public by offering what is the most accessible.

In this respect, we can see an astonishing consistency between Xingyun and his spiritual mentor Taixu. According to Pittman, Taixu is personally a great advocate of Chan Buddhism but only adopted Pure Land practice on occasions when he was dealing primarily with people who had little education (Pittman 2001). He left the impression with his assistants that he wanted to concentrate on the Pure Land School because this was "all the ignorant people could understand" (Reichelt 1954:81). Thus we can infer that Taixu and Xingyun adopted Pure Land Buddhism to a large extent for pragmatic reasons. Regarding the term "Pure Land," in the context of Fo Guang Shan as well as other Humanistic Buddhist representatives (like Tzu Chi), its connotation points far beyond the borderline of Amitaba's kingdom, broadly referring to an ideal status being of human society.

It seems to me that Chandler's over-emphasis on Fo Guang Shan's Pure Land practice is

an epistemological matter: he understands Humanistic Buddhism as a new Buddhist sectarian movement rather than a form of practice. Ideologically, Humanistic Buddhism is nothing more than a synthesis of Mahayana Buddhism, while Humanistic Buddhist practitioners such as Xingyun hold a rather pragmatic view toward a particular practice so as to attract followers. Therefore, a helpful question for us to ponder in an effort to understand Humanistic Buddhism is *not* which Buddhist school underlines their action, but rather, how can we practice Buddhism effectively in contemporary world.

Life-style Buddhism and Buddhist style life

If Taixu identified "human life" as against "other-worldly" and if Yinshun identified "human realm" as against deification, then Xingyun further brought Buddhism down to earth and identified "life-style."

He singled out the qualities that he believed Buddhism should foster to help its followers survive and develop in the contemporary world, reasserting that Humanistic Buddhism is the kind of Buddhism that weighs "entering the world" over "retiring from the world," life over death, joy over suffering, modernity over antiquity, community over isolation. He firmly believed that only through "humanization" and "life stylization" (*sheng huo hua* 生活化) could Buddhism be able to influence people's everyday lives. Such is the Buddhism needed by human beings, which, for Xingyun, would also ensure Buddhism a promising future (Mangeng 2006b: 5-7).

Xingyun made his ideal as evident as one of Fo Guang Shan's mottos: "to life-stylize Buddhist teaching; to Buddh-icize everyday life" (*fofa shenghuo hua, shenghuo fofa hua 佛法生活化，生活佛法化*). He attempted to fuse Buddhism with people's daily lives, breaking down the rigid segmentation between religion and non-religion. Understanding that most Chinese

people regard religion as something to choose only after getting old, or as an act of retreating from the secular world, Xingyun proposed that the point of believing in Buddhism is, in effect, to seek guidance for one's daily life.

Meanwhile, he held that Buddhist dharma should also be tested in real life situations. According to Xingyun, it makes much more sense to bear compassion in an everyday manner than to simply escape from secularity and reality. That, Xingyun believes, is the point of cultivation (Xingyun 1992).

The transformation in perspective is accompanied by a transformation in methods of spreading Buddhism. Manyi summarized a few features of Humanistic Buddhism in the Xingyun mode. For example, he identified that the language used for delivering sermons is different (*shuofa de yuyan butong* 說法的語言不同), by which he meant that instead of preaching profound dogmas, Fo Guang Shan practitioners use the vernacular language (Manyi 2005a: 7).

The methods of teaching and education are also different (*honghua de fangshi butong* 弘化的方式不同). In Fo Guang Shan, importance has always been attached to education. In Xingyun's own words, he wished "to fuse temple with school and to fuse school with temple (*siyuan xuexiao hua, xuexiao siyuan hua* 寺院學校化, 學校院化)." This more or less explains why Fo Guang Shan's first building is neither Buddha's hall nor the Great Compassion Hall (for Kuanyin bodhisattva), but a Buddhist college. As introduced in the previous chapter, Xingyun founded Shoushan Buddhist College in 1963:

> Thereafter, the number of students increased so much that the school could not hold any more. [In] 1967 I bought a piece of land that was not in very good condition but pretty cheap. I built Fo Guang Shan there and moved the college, changing Shoushan Buddhist College into East Buddhist College. (Xingyun 2013 Facebook)

Taixu once analyzed each character in the Chinese word "religion." He said: "What today

calls [sic] a 'religion' (*zong jiao* 宗教) in ancient times was called 'education' (*jiao hua* 教化)" (Cited from Pittman 2001: 213). According to Taixu, education is an intrinsic function in Buddhism (as well as in other religions). This understanding must partly contribute to Taixu's perseverance in initiating Buddhist education during his reform.

Xingyun's Buddhist education, however, is much more integrated. The boundaries are blurred between education and other functions carried out in a Buddhist monastery. Xingyun not only literally turned the Buddhist temple into school by opening up Buddhist colleges in the temple, but also incorporated Buddhist teaching into the context of monastic space. From a picture on the wall, to the chairs standing along the doorway, nothing is wasted in an effort to educate visitors: education permeates every corner of the monastery. People in Fo Guang Shan sometimes compare their monasteries to a three-dimensional Buddhist textbook. We will come back to this topic in the next chapter.

Innovation in Institutionalizing Monastic Order

Scholars of religious studies show more interest in Xingyun's theological aspect as well as his position on the ideological spectrum of Humanistic Buddhism. How he actually *does* Buddhism, however, receives little attention, as if this is merely an appendix of ideas. There certainly are people enthusiastically introducing Fo Guang Shan's practices, as shown above, but according to my best observation, people like these are mostly from Fo Guang Shan's own community.[19] Rather than going deep in analyzing the mode of practice, these kinds of narratives remain on the surface, more or less acting as quest to legitimize Fo Guang Shan's practices. On the flip side, however, these narratives could be useful sub-narratives for text analysis.

[19] The articles written by Fo Guang Shan "insiders" (scholar sangha, for instance) are published in the format of academic journals. Pumen Journal, for example, is a journal for Buddhist studies issued by Fo Guang Shan.

Like his teacher Taixu[20], Xingyun has long been discontented with the lack of unity in Chinese Buddhist communities and thus paid a lot of attention to reforming monastic order. With reference to traditional monastic rules and his modern vision, Xingyun and his Fo Guang Shan developed a highly mature institutional structure and managerial operation, which not only helped this Buddhist organization grow internationally, but also established a reliable foundation for its sustainable development in the "human realm."

To a large extent, Fo Guang Shan's practice is to create a benign institutional environment for Buddhist talents. It functions in combination with Fo Guang Shan's educational system. A ranking system is developed to evaluate both sangha and lay members. Although ranking is nothing new in Chinese Buddhism, Fo Guang Shan has its own system and terminology. The five ranks for Sangha are:

1. Pure Grade (*qingjing shi* 清淨士): six ranks, one to two years/rank
2. Study grade (*xue shi* 學士): six ranks, two to three years/rank
3. Practice grade (*xiu shi* 修士): three ranks, four to six years/rank
4. Open rank (*kai shi* 開士): three ranks, five to ten years/rank
5. Master (*da shi* 大師) or Elder (*zhang lao* 長老)
   (Lin 2001: 144; English translation from Jones 1999)

And the three basic ranks for lay members are:

1. Pure Grade (*qingjing shi* 清淨士): six ranks, one to three years/rank
2. Study grade (*xue shi* 學士): three ranks, three to six years/rank
3. Practice grade (*xiu shi* 修士): three ranks, five to eight years/rank
   (Lin 2001: 144; English translation from Jones 1999)

The ranking will comprehensively examine the individual's "education, seniority, experience, specialty, ordination level, cultivation grades, school grades, social activities and so

[20] Venerable Mangeng mentioned in his article that, Taixu, in his twilight years when reflecting his lifetime Buddhist reforms, implicated what the most essential is the melioration of sangha institution. According to him, this would provide sufficient guarantee to everything else (Mangeng 2006c: 1-2).

forth" (Lin 2001: 144). It is clear that the verification of an individual is not confined to religious quality, but also to social ability. A system like this directly associates with Fo Guang Shan's self-positioning in our contemporary world. Since Humanistic Buddhists no longer locate themselves far from secular society – physically and spiritually - they need to be versatile, i.e., be good at both religious affairs and social affairs. As Xingyun clarified:

> …So how to cultivate talents? (We) should combine the best parts from [the] monastery with the best parts from the society, making sure that Buddhist talents are not only prepared with traditional qualities, but also modern humanistic personalities (*xiandai de renjian xingge* 現代的人間性格); not only progressing in Buddhist cultivation, but also equipped with professional abilities; not only guiding the mass spiritually, but also knowing how to get along with people harmoniously…" (Lin 2001: 143)

Moreover, this system also effectively avoids the drawback of traditional monasteries, in which sangha are ranked exclusively by age. In so doing, Fo Guang Shan could not only ensure equality among sangha, but also mobilize laypeople to participate in religious affairs.

A formal board, the Religious Affairs Committee, is in charge of the ranking, the process of which combines a standard evaluation and recommendation. As Jones accurately put it, "[The] Fo Kuang Shan (i.e., Fo Guang Shan) system operates more like [a] military review board than like the monastic system of the past" (Jones 1999: 193; Mangeng 2006c: 5). The Fo Guang Shan human resource management has successfully supported the organization's development and expansion. Almost every year, a couple of new branches spring up in different corners around the world. Sometimes the new branches are the result of mergers or Fo Guang Shan's absorbing other temples. Xingyun testified that:

> … (Fo Guang Shan) didn't expand purposely, but there are many temples experiencing bad management, so they unconditionally passed over their temple to Fo Guang Shan. Also many of our devotees gave up their house lease and land deed, inviting us to open monasteries there. Why would they be willing to contribute so much property to Fo

> Guang Shan? Because they know we have a very good system and institution. These years I see that the development is too fast, so I had declined some (offers). Otherwise Fo Guang Shan could have even more branches. (Lin 2001: 143)

Nevertheless, concerns about the future development of Fo Guang Shan still exist as the popularity and cohesion of religious groups heavily relies on their charismatic leaders. Venerable Zhengyan of Tzu Chi, Shengyan of Fa Gu, and Xingyun of Fo Guang Shan are all cases in point. The fact that Fa Gu Shan began to go down after Ven. Shengyan deceased drew our attention to Tzu Chi and Fo Guang Shan since the latter two are most likely to face the same problem. Some members of Tzu Chi confessed to me that they worry about what will happen to the organization's future after Supreme Person Zhengyan (*Zhengyan Shangren* 證嚴上人) passes away. This Buddhist nun possesses great charisma that has become a key factor to sustaining the organization. Although Xingyun is not worshipped as much as Zhengyan in Tzu Chi, he is, without a doubt, a charismatic leader as well.

As early as 1967, when Xingyun had just founded Fo Guang Shan, he established a rule that the tenure of each abbot is six years. Reappointment is allowed through a democratic process (Mangeng 2006c:8). However, although Xingyun resigned from his position in 1985, when he was in his fifties, and Fo Guang Shan welcomed its ninth abbot in March 2013, it is still common to hear the question "when will Master Xingyun resign?"

Throughout the Fo Guang Shan community, no matter who you talk to, the name Xingyun is ubiquitous. Unlike people in Tzu Chi, whose attitude towards Zhengyan is full of awe and enchantment, members of Fo Guang Shan can depict Xingyun in cartoon images on

children's notebooks and toys. There is even a specially designed website called the "noodles[21] of Master Xingyun." Despite various efforts to institutionalize Fo Guang Shan and de-glamorize Xingyun, the Master is, though very often in an unreligious way, greatly revered by the adherents and acts as Fo Guang Shan's absolute spiritual leader.

Money as an Issue

Buddhism is known for its rejection of worldly materiality. The simplification of material life is associated with virtue, as is, at times, poverty. Consequently, rich temples nowadays are thought of as commercialized and morally degenerate. As a wealthy Buddhist group and an influential social entity, Fo Guang Shan is an easy target of public criticism.

In a way, Fo Guang Shan has transformed Buddhism's relationship with money. Jeremy Carrette and Richard King raised a typology of spiritualties according to their relation to capitalism. When placing spiritual groups on an axis according to their attitude toward capital, four types will be identified. At opposite ends of the axis are a total rejection of capitalism ("revolutionary or anti-capitalist spiritualties") and "capitalist spiritualties," where capitalism is embraced without hesitation. In the middle camp are "business ethnics/reformist" spiritualties and "individualistic/consumerist" spiritualties. The former "seeks to find ways of synthesizing traditional religious understanding with the values of business and consumer culture." It emphasizes "the integration of ethical values into the dominant culture" (Carrette & King 2011: 65-7). Fo Guang Shan falls somewhere around this point.

More than once Xingyun advocated a re-evaluation of the Buddhist perspective on secular wealth. For him, capital is "the most effective socio-political ideology for actualizing

[21] "Noodles," can be translated into Chinese as "粉丝"[fen si], which is a homophonic word of the English word "fans."

'true equity"' and he "sees nothing wrong with making money and becoming rich" (Chandler 2004:92-5). As far as he is concerned, being poor is not necessarily synonymous with having the right views. While Mahayana Buddhism encourages a simple life, a monastery cannot survive without money:

> Humanistic Buddhism should anew its assessment on the value of properties…. As long as the wealth is legal and agrees with the right path of Buddhism, it should be the more the merrier; as long as it could benefit the society and as long as it contributes to the family happiness, Buddhists are all encouraged to pursue it…. Being rich is not a shame while poverty may also court crimes (Xingyun 2012:52-8)."

Although Xingyun used "snake" as an analogous to money to imply that money is the source of all sufferings, he also indicated that "clean property" (*jingcai* 淨財) is an asset of cultivation (Mangeng 2006c: 20-1).

In practice, the specific way that Fo Guang Shan deals with money is interesting. Chandler shows that "the apparent wealth of Fo Guang Shan is somewhat illusory in character, as it is principally tied up in assets, leaving an extremely tight budget for operations." Xingyun does not shy away from the fact, and said, "I don't accumulate money but I know how to use it," to the extent that "I often used up the money for next year and even the year after next year" (Mangeng 2006c: 22; Fu 1995:156). Venerable Cihui, one of the first disciples of Xingyun, confessed that, "Master Xingyun has really no money!" According to her, the Master believes that human beings all have the weakness of greed. Xingyun would be no exception if he saved his money in a bank, accumulating it rather than investing it in Fo Guang Shan. In his philosophy, the value of money can only be realized when it is being used (Cihui 2003:347).

"Enterprization" is another institutional goal that Fo Guang Shan is striving for (Manyi 2005d: 31-4), which consequently leads to a reassessment of the notion of "enterprise" in the

Buddhist context. Xingyun discussed the inner association between Buddhism and enterprise, arguing that Buddhism values the enterprise ideas from long ago. According to Xingyun, when Buddha first established the sangha community, there was a spirit of enterprise. Even more, Xingyun thinks that monastic rules in Chinese Buddhism highly resemble modern corporate thinking, which means that, "enterprise" is not exclusively an industrial concept, but is also compatible with the contemporary development of Buddhism (Cited from Mangeng 2006c: 22).

Being the world's largest Buddhist organization and a successful business, Fo Guang Shan has financial power and social influence that rival the world's top 500 companies. As Taiwanese scholar Jiang Canteng described, Fo Guang Shan is metaphorically a huge department store, a franchise with one-stop service from birth to death (Jiang 2006: 393-4). Some scholars have applied a business model to explain Fo Guang Shan's success in the religious market.

Take the "Blue Ocean Strategy," for example. This marketing theory generally refers to the strategy that aims at an unknown market (in contrast is the "Red Ocean," the existing industry and visible market), thinking "out of the box" to explore a new portion of the market. In a society in which popular religions have been predominant for centuries, Taiwan has temples (supply) that far exceed its people's need (demand). Therefore, Chinese religion researcher Li Hujiang raised the question of "how could Fo Guang Shan accommodates itself with the civil society in a secular world and, at the same time, preserves (sic) Buddhist ideals of letting go of sufferings and gaining happiness, and eventually attract the followers?" (Li 2010:109) To answer the question, he then looked at Fo Guang Shan from several aspects of Blue Ocean Strategy.

In a market, some products serve the same purpose but come in different forms, which then create alternatives for customers. A religious site is a product that mainly serves spiritual activities. However, Fo Guang Shan differentiates itself by appealing to diverse needs of

different "customers," meeting every specific demand from its "market" (which includes Buddhists and non-Buddhists). Whoever visits a Fo Guang Shan temple will always receive actual benefits, which could be small souvenirs like a key chain and USB key, or a free meal. In this way, contrary to promising an invisible reward in the next life, Fo Guang Shan offers instant gratification to its "customers" here and now (Li 2010:109-110).

Besides paying attention to its "returning customers" (Fo Guang Shan adherents), Fo Guang Shan also considers non-followers as its "potential market." For instance, Xingyun initiated a Buddhist knowledge examination in his early years in Taiwan in order to upgrade the level of Buddhist education. Now, this examination has evolved into a large-scale social event, through which Buddhist talents that stand out will be award scholarships, even if they are not Fo Guang Shan followers or even Buddhist (Li 2010:111).

Another example of marketing occurs at Fo Guang Shan's branch temple in the Philippines. I couldn't help wondering how an alien religion like Buddhism could survive in a Catholic country. When I came into contact with the Filipino youth delegation group in Taiwan, I saw such a group with more than a dozen people, none of whom were Buddhist (they were still pious Catholics!). They became active members of Fo Guang Shan not out of a religious belief but mostly based on the recognition on a universal value - compassion for sentient beings. Fo Guang Shan believes that as long as these people can learn loving-kindness and gain happiness through the temple, it doesn't really matter whether or not they choose to convert to Buddhism. The liberal attitude toward other religious beliefs and the flexibility with devotee market, significantly help Fo Guang Shan to expand abroad.

Negotiation between Modern and Tradition

Fo Guang Shan is surely a pioneer in utilizing new technology and modern media, but Xingyun and his Fo Guang Shan also maximize their efforts in preserving Buddhist precepts and disciplines. Chandler describes Xingyun as a modernist in outlook "whose modernization has concentrated on two areas: the appropriation of new technology and the institutionalization and democratization of monastic life" (Chandler 2004: 70-71).

In the beginning of his Buddhist career in Taiwan, Xingyun realized that if Buddhism was to find its way in the modern world, it should be popularized. The story goes that Xingyun once played a black-and-white movie during a sermon, which attracted a lot more people than usual. That made him realize that gimmicks like movies may be exactly what Buddhism needed. In the following years, Xingyun organized a Buddhist youth singing team, composing contemporary songs to attract young people to join. The effect proved to be welcome, and music and singing have now evolved as part of the mainstream culture in Fo Guang Shan's youth community.

Modern media is common among religious groups in Taiwan nowadays (Kan 2004: 57-8), and Xingyun's Fo Guang Shan was at the forefront. In fact, Fo Guang Shan made the first attempt to broadcast Buddhism through television. It has been written that the young Master Xingyun learned about the effect of television proselytization (very likely from Christianity), and he decided to purchase an hour each week from a television station. It should be noted that this decision came when Taiwan was under Martial Law and the political climate was sensitive. However, after a few twists and turns, Xingyun eventually succeeded in broadcasting Buddhism, in 1979. Two years later, government officials commended Xingyun's program for having a positive influence on "purifying society" and youth mental development (Kan 2004: 344). In the

following years, other Buddhist organizations also set up their TV programs using satellite TV (Kan 2004: 348).

There is a tendency to associate religious groups' application of modern media and the corruption of secularization. Given that Buddhism is known for its objection to worldly matters, Xingyun's modernist outlook is certainly confronted with critics for being against the traditional Buddhist ethnics. In response, Fo Guang Shan produced a large number of sub-narratives, either in popular literature or in academic articles, in a quest for a legitimate balance between tradition and modernity. These sub-narratives thus become important sources to understand how Humanistic Buddhists negotiate between their traditional values and their efforts to popularize Buddhism.

However, does modernization necessarily undermine the sacredness of religion? Does the relationship between the religion and the rest of the society change with the presence of modern techniques? Is it possible to talk about religion, Buddhism in particular, through an alternative framework other than secularization?

In the following chapters, the four most distinctive aspects of Fo Guang Shan are examined. They are the cultural products inherited from traditional Buddhism and are modified to accommodate the modern public. All embody the conflicts between traditional Buddhist values and the contemporary need for Buddhist proselytization. Instead of arguing about the secularization of Buddhism, I look at the Fo Guang Shan as a case of Buddhist transformation in our contemporary world.

Part II

Enticing with Desires:

Studies in Space, food, Music and Rituals

The four topics – space, food, music, and ritual - chosen to be discussed in this part are not the only innovations made by the Fo Guang Shan group. They are, however, the four most distinctive aspects that have both traditional and innovated dimensions, being both sacred in their original context and secular in their modified context. When Fo Guang Shan has attempted to bring all four into our modern era as mediums for religions transmission, the result has been a constant negotiation between traditional Buddhist values and modern Humanistic Buddhist practices. Fo Guang Shan produced a large number of discourses, either in mass media or in academia, to justify and explain their actions. This is in part because they place "educating the public" as a priority, but it is also a reaction to the critics who claim that Fo Guang Shan fails to present Buddhism in a "proper way," and is secularizing the religion.

The accusation of the "secularization" of religion is commonly seen, because Buddhism has long been imagined as a field of "sheer sacredness." In particular, the criticism that Fo Guang Shan is re-interpreting those traditional aspects is to a great extent a rehash of an old debate between the sacred and the profane. Because sometimes "human[s] reveal themselves in situations that appear to be of a different quality than ordinary [situations]," the ordinary -- our "normal behavior" or "a social cross section" – forms the basis to compare "a possibly sacred condition and a profane one" (Colpe 1987: 7971). A religious site is such a place, where traditionally people go to seek something different or something that will transcend their ordinary lives. This search contributes to the stereotype of religion as the only source of the sacred while the secular, or the ordinary, is expected to remain outside religion.

The dichotomy between "sacred" and "profane" or "secular," however, has been proved to be not neatly in opposition. The relationship that the sacred and profane have with religion is

also problematic. In the meantime, a new approach emerges by adding a mediating variant, buffering the tension between the "sacred-profane" binary.

Durkheim described the heterogeneity of the two realms – the sacred and the profane – as "absolutely two separate genres" to the extent that "it often degenerates into a serious antagonism." According to Durkheim, the two worlds are separate because "man's notion of the sacred is always and everywhere separated from his notion of the profane by a sort of logical gulf between the two, the mind radically rejects any mingling or even contact between the things that correspond to these realms (Durkheim 2001:38-9). However, the seemingly two heterogeneous genres never actually remained separate – antagonist, but mingling together – as the "impersonal reason" (religion, the ideal, the sacred that is beyond human realm) is "simply another name for collective thought" (Durkheim 2001:341). He also raised the possibility of trespassing from one realm to another. This cognitive process involves an alteration in the states of consciousness, which is made possible by rituals that "transport people to the plane: the plane where secular ideas are found to have become the perfect" (cf. Paul Heelas 2012: 480).

To trace the linguistic origin, the Latin predecessors of "sacred" and "profane" are "sacrum" and "profanum." The former "belonged to the gods or was in their power" while the latter was literally "in front of the temple precinct," "'to bring out' the offering 'before the temple precinct' in which a sacrifice was performed" (Colpe 1987: 7964). That is to say, the spatial connotation of "profane" "doubtless first derived from the use of the area outside the sacrum" (Colpa 1987: 7965-6). In other words, "sacred" and "profane," these two concepts in their earlier usages are applied to two locations that are distinct yet existed side by side. Colpe also believes that "the boundary between the two spheres may prove to be movable or even fictitious" (Colpe 1987: 7964). Their interrelated relationship reveals to us, as some pointed out,

the impossibility of a complete secularization due to the countervailing process of sacralization: "the two processes are more symbiotic than conflicting" (Demerath 1999: 3).

Though the "sacred-secular" binary has been discussed in relation to religion, the latter is often not squarely fit into this framework laid down by scholars. In that framework, the role of religion has been hard to trace. In fact, the loose relationship between religion and the sacred is gradually manifesting in our modern era, in which religion is often discovered with a hybrid practice of both the sacred and the profane. Being a once predominant source of the sacred, religion has been habitually thought to be the synonym of the sacred. It becomes a habit to logically associate the two terms together. The original spatial context may be used to distinguish the sacred and the profane spheres, but it would be less helpful in distinguishing between "religion and non-religion" (Colpe 1987: 7964). Although the two set of binaries may share some overlapping properties, they are by no means equivalent. This comparison becomes especially problematic when "one is forced to find attributes that suggest religion's links to altogether different concepts, aside from those having to do with the quality of lying beyond a specific boundary." In these cases, the attributes of holiness are no longer enough (Colpe 1987: 7964).

Some scholars further hold that the relationship between the sacred and religion is not as close as that between the sacred and the secular. Although "sacred-secular" are "long-standing poles at [the] opposite of a widely accepted continuum," religion seems to be the "outlier" (Demerath 1999: 3). To be more precise, religion is not a synonym for sacred. Instead, as proposed by distinguished American sociologist Jay Demerath III, religion should be regarded as only one of many sources of the sacred. Though this view clarifies the arbitrary link between the

sacred and religion, it is still limited in helping us to narrow our understanding on the subject under this study.

People tend to preface the Humanistic Buddhist movement represented by Fo Guang Shan with the word "new," as if when Humanistic Buddhism is being called a "movement" and "non-religious" strategies are employed throughout the phenomenon, it is perceived as something new. Nevertheless, this statement that "the contemporary religions are the creation of something 'new' cannot be historically justified," according to American history and religious studies scholar Colleen McDannell, because the "mingling has occurred throughout its history" (McDannell 2011: 139). Those who practice religion are not always aware of the categories of "sacred" and "profane." As a result, they may believe these categories to be the constructs of scholars. "By looking at what they do but not what they think, we cannot help but notice the continual scrambling of the sacred and the profane" (McDannel 2011: 132). In this sense, confining religion to the sacred framework will only constrain "our ability to understand how religion works in [the] real world" (McDannell 2011:132).

So far we have made two points clear: 1) the boundary between the sacred and the profane (or the secular) is fluid, not rigid; 2) religion is not necessarily, and especially not exclusively, associated with the sacred. The questions we should ask right now are: where, then, is the religion situated in relation to the sacred and the profane? And in what ways can religion mingle with both the sacred and the profane?

The third variant in the equation – mediation – requires the user to think out of box. "As content cannot exist without form, a message is always mediated" through materiality, claims cultural anthropologist Birgit Meyer (Meyer 2009: 12). She effectively raises the opinion of

"religion as media" so that the entangled relationship between the sacred, religion, and the profane suddenly becomes revealed to us. In other words, religion is instrumentally lying on the border of two different spheres, being "sacred in between" (Barrie 2005). Therefore, a dynamic transformation should be expected within a religious site.

Meyer attested that: "…religion can be best analyzed as a practice of mediation, to which media, as technology of representation employed by human beings, are intrinsic" (Meyer 2009: 11). She extended the notion of "media" from its conventional form of "modern devices" such as "film, video, radio, photography, television and internet," to other religious materiality including "incense, herbs, sacrificial animals, icons, sacred books, holy stones, rivers, human body" (Meyer 2009: 11). By so doing, Meyer is able to show that various applications of media in religions existed long before our contemporary world:

> What looks like media to an outsiders' perspective may be fully embedded in religious practice, such as…icons in Byzantine Catholicism (James 2004), the Torah in Judaism (Stolow 2007), photographs in spirit possession (Behrend 2003; Morris 2000), audiocassettes and lithographs in Hinduism (Pinney 2004) or television and computers in Pentecostal Churches (de Abreu, de Witte, and Sachez). To take another look at these phenomenon, it may well be that the mediation itself is sacralised instead of the other way around (Meyer 2009:12).

If the religious application of media is intrinsic to the nature of religion, then what's wrong with applying new media technology in contemporary religions?

On the other hand, however, the medium is not to be reduced to the "technologies" (McLuhan, cf. Meyer 2009: 12). This can be understood from Bruno Latour's differentiation between "intermediary" and "mediator". Unlike "intermediary," which is a "middleman" role that doesn't affect communication from either side, the mediator has its own subjectivity and

special quality, playing a role as a transmitter and bridge builder. Religion is such a mediator with its own subjectivity and deployment of technologies, bridging the logical gap between the sacred and the profane. The communications between the two realms thus depend on the very action of this mediator. Of course, it is not easy to say that technologies that are employed by a religious group are value-free. Technology never "comes in a 'purely' instrumental or material form – as sheer technological possibility at the service of religious imagination" (Van de Port 2006: 23), but is "to be embedded in the latter through an often complicated negotiation process in which established authority structures may be challenged and transformed" (Meyer 2009: 14).

This third approach is the one that I am going to apply to my case of Fo Guang Shan. Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism seemingly contradicts Buddhism's traditional value of fundamentally opposing secular joy and material desire. For one thing, Fo Guang Shan's sophisticated application of modern media and innovative use of traditional media are often controversial in that no effort is made to discourage but rather to invoke strong sensorial experiences. For another, to different degrees the technologies and media used go against some Buddhist precepts. Therefore, it is possible to observe the constant negotiation between traditional values and modern Fo Guang Shan in the organization's application of new media and especially, when it is reinventing traditional media.

The four aspects in this part concern traditional media. They are, on the one hand, playing essential roles in Buddhist material culture; on the other, they have been significantly reinvented by the Fo Guang Shan group as a means of transmitting Buddhism in the contemporary world. Taking the view of mediation, Humanistic Buddhism is thus a practice of media, while its reproduction of early medium (monastery, food, sound, and ritual) is, in effect, a "re-mediation"

with modern techniques (high-rise, restaurant, modern theatre, etc.). Fo Guang Shan approaches these mediums in various ways and interprets their actions by referring back to classic texts.

In this section, I will first draw attention to Fo Guang Shan's construction of its urban monasteries as well its interior monastic space, exploring the philosophies (including Fo Guang Shan's interpretations of Humanistic Buddhism) embodied in these concrete buildings. In Chapter Five, I will discuss Fo Guang Shan's foodways as a further exploration of the organization's art of proselytization. Chapter Six will focus on Fo Guang Shan's efforts to re-contextualize traditional Buddhist musical practice from monastic life as well as attempts to compose contemporary Buddhist music. The last chapter will examine a classic and essential aspect of religion, ritual, in the sense that when ritual is being downplayed in our time by its Buddhist counterparts, Fo Guang Shan is acting in exactly the opposite way – innovatively staging and performing rituals to increase its spectacularity. We will see that these four aspects are not irrelevant. In the system of Fo Guang Shan proselytization, the four instrumental aspects are increasing in depth.

As the "religion as media" approach suggests, the reason for a religion to adopt new media or to reproduce old media through the new one may be intrinsic to that religion. This particular nature for Buddhism will be further explored and compared in Chapter Seven, in which we will see that Mahayana Buddhism, as the foundation of Humanistic Buddhist practice, provided essential theological justification for Humanistic Buddhism's contemporary experiments.

Chapter 3 Creating Open Buddhist Space: A Doorway of Humanistic Buddhism

Thomas Barrie once observed that it is not enough to explain what the architecture is (its form, materials, and organizations), but why it is and how it is experienced (Barrie 2005: 39). In this chapter, I will examine the physical context in which religious life takes place. I argue that Fo Guang Shan's architecture, being an immediate self-definition, embodies its purposeful effort to put forward its interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism. In particular, I examine how a building, either in the traditional style or in modern high-rises, can be wielded as an instrument of proselytization. Moreover, the construction of these urban monastic spaces and their scrambling of both religious and non-religious elements reveal a dynamic transformation occurring within the Buddhist community and its positive response to the ongoing social changes of urbanization and modernization.

Frissons

> *Oct. 27th, 2011 Thursday*
>
> *Location: Fo Guang Shan, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*
>
> I have to admit that my "typical" image of a (Buddhist) temple cracked down at that moment – the asymmetry between imagination and the real image in front me almost annoyed me. I hesitated but somehow (as an anthropological student) I still decided to push in through [the] glass door (not a big red wooden gate) to take a look. I felt intimidated by its "untraditional" look and name, and more precisely, by the strangeness it presents as a Buddhist temple and also such an intimate distance it sudden draws itself to the secular world. I simply had no idea how to behave within such an atypical temple.
> The entry is equipped with several closets and a shoe shelf. A lady in a pink suit standing in the lobby greeted me nicely and directed me to take off my shoes. And then there you go - a clean, shiny lobby, the layout and furnishing of which is dedicatedly arranged. Like most Buddhist temples in China, there is also a place for purchasing *fa wu* literally, Dharma Goods but the one in here is just a small counter in the corner. However, the artistic style of those statues came to my attention – the divine figures on display were

> not any kind I had seen before, which surprisingly showed a taste that I would describe as *avant-garde*.
>
> The other thing that made me feel "unusual" is the receptionist desk. That's definitely not something I had expected to see in a temple! In my experience, there were usually a bunch of elder female *jushi* (Buddhist laypeople), some selling tickets at the box office,[22] some selling incense sticks, and some waiting in the shrine for merit money. But, none of these existed in this temple.

The passage above is an excerpt from my journal on my first encounter with a Fo Guang Shan monastery in Canada. As I recalled, the interior design of the monastery presented a huge contrast to the ones that I used to know - its entrance with a mat and closets instead of a high threshold,[23] its Dharma Goods retail counter with an artistic taste rarely seen in Buddhist temples, its slight smell of incense, and its clean and simple lobby. In addition, there was this unused amiable atmosphere - the ready greeting from the receptionist, which, together with the architecture, soon broke down the invisible gap between divinity and the profane. As a first-time visitor, I exclaimed, as later I heard many times from others: "It doesn't look like a temple at all!"

Buddhist Temple in High-Rise

[22] Pretty much all Buddhist temples (as well as Taoist temples) in Mainland China required a ticket to access.
[23] In traditional Buddhist monasteries, there is usually a high threshold at the gate of each shrine.

Figure 1： Looking at Taipei Vihara from Mazu Temple

Located in urban Taipei, Fo Guang Shan's Taipei Vihara is a "forest"[24] in a high-rise. It occupies a busy spot of the Wusongpu area, right beside a major train station. It is said that this early branch of Fo Guang Shan started from only bits and pieces, and then bought other spaces over the years. Now in this 14-floor office building, all the spaces above the fifth floor belong to Fo Guang Shan. Considering the high land prices in this capital city, a Venerable did the math for me: "at this location, just imagine you are staying in a hotel. The cost would amount to a couple of thousands New Taiwan Dollars (appx. 73 CND) per night!"

An amazing Mazu temple is located only four blocks away from Fo Guang Shan, housing the favorite deity of the Taiwanese people - Mazu. During my sojourn in Taipei Vihara, I either liked to look upon the dedicated-looking Mazu temple from the high-rise Buddhist monastery, or look at the metropolitan Buddhist monastery through the flying roof of the Mazu temple.

[24] "Forest" is a term in Buddhism referring to the aggregation of the Sangha, especially in the Chan/Zen tradition. When the Chan tradition emerged in southern China, there was no fixed place for the Sangha to stay. Instead, they lived a dependent life in other monasteries, in caves, or under trees. Although later a Chan master started the practice of building a physical monastery for the Chan sangha, it had already become natural to refer to Chan monasteries as "forests" (tsung lin).

Their co-existence seemed to me a hilarious contrast between the traditional and the modern. Both of them are prominent forces in leading local religious life – while the Mazu temple remains a stronghold of local folk religion, Fo Guang Shan claims to be a rising star through its high profile. The Mazu temple is a major one in the city. Its three-story high building is incredibly splendid, which implies that it was in the limelight in the past. Now, Fo Guang Shan's high-rise monastery stands in a distance in a highly visible manner, establishing new sacred authority by embracing urbanity and modernity, and at the same time, establishing the new order of "orthodoxy faith" (*zheng xin* 正信) as opposed to the popular belief that the Mazu temple represents.

Even so, streams of people still pour in to worship their goddess, suggesting that the temple is still at its peak of faith. However, the social classes of "incense guests"[25] at the two religious sites are different. The Mazu temple receives a large number of subaltern Taiwanese; Fo Guang Shan, on the other hand, gathers a large number of multiethnic members, which mainly reflects the Taiwanese middle class (Madson 2005).

Constructing Urban Monastic Space

In one of his treatises, Xingyun cast light upon the differentiation between urban monasteries and mountain monasteries. He indicated that the geographical isolation of Buddhist monasteries often implied a mindful mind rejecting worldly confusion and secular enticement. In fact, the Sanskrit word *aranya,* which later became a synonym of Buddhist monastery, originally referred to a status of being free from conflicts, a quiet field far from human settlement.

[25] "Incense guest" (xiang ke), commonly refers to the visitors who pay the visit to the temple for religious purpose. As burning incense sticks is a major activity in worshiping, these visitor are thus called so.

Buddha's disciples once followed this ancient idea, living in the forest, by the river, or even among the tombs.

However, Xingyun put much more emphasis on the significance of the urban monastery and the role of urban bhiksus (monks). According to him, an urban monastery is nothing new but had existed since the time of Buddha. He termed the bhiksus, who cultivated themselves in urban areas, as "human realm bhiksus," connecting them with Humanistic Buddhist practice in the contemporary era. He also interpreted Buddha himself as a typical "human realm bhiksu":

> Buddha cultivated in this human world, gained his enlightenment in this human world, giving sermon[s] in this human world and entered nirvana in this human world – he could be regarded as a role model of "human realm bhiksu" (Xingyun 2003: 2).

The unique advantage of urban monasteries lies in their close relationship with an urban area, which is both economically and culturally developed.

Xingyun thus believes bhiksus in the city have better resources and can become more skillful in dealing with the masses:

> …Buddha especially instructed…. the "human realm bhiksus" [to] have the responsibility to guide and attend (those *aranya* bhiksus). From [a] financial aspect, this must be for the reason that "human realm bhiksus" lived closer to…urban area, and thus they have a better off life; from the aspect of teaching and educating.... because "human realm bhiksus" conducted the Way of Buddha on busy streets, they had their unique experience in guiding the public. In fact, no matter [whether a person is an "*aranya* bhiksu" or "human realm bhiksu," all their cultivations and manners should be guided under the connotation of "Humanistic Buddhism… (Xingyun 2003: 2)"

Unfortunately, mountains in today's China are to a great extent merely a geographical concept, and do not necessarily isolate one from worldly troubles.

Meantime, urbanization is an overwhelming process that has been accelerating for decades since the industrial revolution. Even those monasteries that were originally built in the mountains or in suburban areas could barely avoid falling prey to tourism or being flooded by

urban high-rises. In this sense, Buddhist monasteries may have to face such a reality: there is simply no way to escape from the "Red Dust"[26] world. In front of this reality, Xingyun held that it would be very unwise to be either overly involved with secular life or completely isolate oneself from reality, and encourages Buddhist practitioners to walk out of jungle and step into the cities. (Xingyun 2003: 31).

Urbanization poses on-going transformation on human settlement including the context of monastery locus, which also implies a significant shift in the relationship between the Buddhist monastery and the rest of the urban space.

Large populations, cultural diversity, convenient transportation, to name only a few, could be threats to Buddhist cultivation. However, it seems to Xingyun that arming Buddhist monasteries against all these changes is rather pointless. Rather than retreating farther away from urbanity and modernity, Fo Guang Shan embraces the changes, reassesses them as great resources and opportunities in the sense of disseminating Buddhism, and therefore keeps its practices in line with urban landscape and the new social order.

When discussing a church of French religious minority in east London, Sheppard described it as "bold in scale and quietly dignified in expression" (Sheppard 1957: 222, citied from Kershen & Vaughan 2013: 18). This "discreetness with quiet prominence" also applies to a lot of Fo Guang Shan monasteries. Instead of placing its monasteries "away from the regulating eyes of the mainstream community," Fo Guang Shan established itself in large buildings in the heart of the city, "displaying their prominence and confidence in *no* uncertain ways" (Dodsworth & Watson 2013: 7).

[26] "Red Dust" is a Chinese term to refer secular world.

When choosing a specific location inside a city, Fo Guang Shan has made a practice of strategically locating its monastery on the edge of the commercial heart of the city and in close proximity to a public transportation terminal. Let's take a look at the following examples:

Taipei Vihara (Taiwan)	Away from downtown Taipei, right beside a major train station
Jiaoxi Vihara (Taiwan)	Directly in front of the Jiaoxi Train Station
Edmonton branch (Canada)	Downtown, a five minute walk/drive from the Light Rapid Transit station
Vancouver branch (Canada)	In suburban Richmond, next to the SkyTrain rapid transit train station and on the top floor of a major Chinese supermarket
Toronto branch (Canada)	In suburban Mississauga, next to the first bus stop on a major road which connects Mississauga and Toronto
Los Angeles Branch (United States)	On top of a hill in suburban Hacienda Heights, where there is a big Chinese community

Table 1: a few examples of Fo Guang Shan branches, urban locations

As shown in Table 1, although Fo Guang Shan indeed establishes itself widely in big name cities, the specific location it chooses within the city are subtle. Among these examples, all but Edmonton and Jiaoxi branch are actually far away from city center, lying on the marginal end of urban area but still maintaining a close connection with it through public transportation. Further examination also will suggest that these "marginal locations" as opposed to commercial hearts of cities are within residential hearts – being adjacent to devotee resources. For instance, Richmond, near Vancouver; Mississauga, near Toronto; as well as Hacienda Heights, near Los Angeles; are all small satellite towns where large Chinese communities reside. The Edmonton branch locates right in the central area. However, the capital city of Alberta, Canada as it is, its urban centre is not as busy as downtown Vancouver or Toronto; in a city where individual vehicles are heavily relied upon, downtown Edmonton does have the city's most convenient public transportation connection.

As for Jiaoxi, a small county near Taipei, the heart of the town is where its main train station is, which entitles the location an incomparable advantage. Plus the renowned local geothermal resources, the monastery promotes itself by capitalizing on its proximity to both an underground hot spring and the transportation core. The Abbess at this vihara explained: "You see, we are right beside the train station. What do you think are those travelers' most desirable needs? After a long and tiring journey, we often want a place to stop over and have a hot shower. This is why we choose this wonderful location so that *the first sight* of those travelers is Fo Guang Shan's greeting."

I would term these locations "junction-ized space." It is indeed a transient space, but the word "junction" better reveals its subjectivity that is capable of controlling an encounter. As some studies have shown, this type of space, which is easily neglected, could be very productive because it could generate both public and domestic emotions (Hillier 1996, cited from Kershen & Vaughan 2013: 12). Take my staying at Taipei Vihara (Taiwan), for example. I took a train to

Figure 2: Xingyun's "one-stroke calligraphy". The picture was taken outside the Fo Guang shan Tapei Vihara, Taipei, Taiwan. This side of the monastery faces the entrance of a major local train station.

commute between downtown Taipei and its suburbs. Every time I got off at the Song Shan Station where the monastery is located, I could not avoid the sight of a greeting sign that faces

the train station entrance. The neon light sign was a reproduction of Master Xingyun's calligraphy, black ink against a red background, making it stand out easily.

The entrance of this train station in Taipei is such a transition spot. A gap often existed between "from there to here," while Fo Guang Shan takes advantage of its lack of uncertainty, filling the gap with Buddhist related contents. The messages are not aggressively pushing religion to the public, but implacable enough to remind the passersby of the existence behind it.

It is exactly the hold of such "middle ground" – either the entrance of a train station like the above, or marginal end of city centre in a broad picture – that Fo Guang Shan penetrates its way to the ordinary public. Like Kershen and Vaughan commented on other cases, this space generates an emotional exchange in our unexpected "foreground networks," and hence arouse religious affection in public life (Kershen & Vaughan 2013: 12).

All in all, instead of reasserting their aloofness by establishing a distinct look or locating themselves far away from cities, a majority of Fo Guang Shan monasteries embrace urbanity with ease, making themselves at home in urban settings. Though Xingyun and his disciples found evidences of urban monasteries in Buddhist histories, Fo Guang Shan's construction of urban forests may well represent a repositioning of Buddhism itself in the modern era.

Constructing Urban Monastic Space

A comprehensive and constant localization had taken form since Buddhism was officially introduced to Chinese culture 2000 years ago, and monastic architecture may be the most direct manifestation of Buddhist localization. Most of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries we see today are unique architectural forms incorporating both Indian characteristics and Chinese art (Bao & Xiao 1999: 3).

Unlike Tibetan and primitive Indian Buddhism, the most common form of Chinese monastic architecture that has survived to date is the "longitudinal axis" complex (*zong zhou shi* 纵轴式), which assigns shrines along an imaginary central axis. Ideally, a monastery located in a mountain area would spread its sections successively from south to north.

The "longitudinal axis" structure emerged as a cultural response to the centripetal structure, which gradually could not keep up with the growing complex of monastic compounds. Since each compound was centripetally independent, this created a loose structure on the whole. The longitudinal structure employed an orderly arrangement of compounds circled by shrines from south to north. This arrangement is believed to possess the clear advantage of guiding visitors and helping them to reach their "peak of faith" progressively (Bao & Xiao 1999: 18-9). In addition, the south-north cardinal points correspond to the classical principle of Chinese geometry, while an invisible rank formed by the complex can also be seen as a direct effect of the Confucian style of hierarchy. Below is a comparison of traditional monastic design and Fo Guang Shan Edmonton's layout.

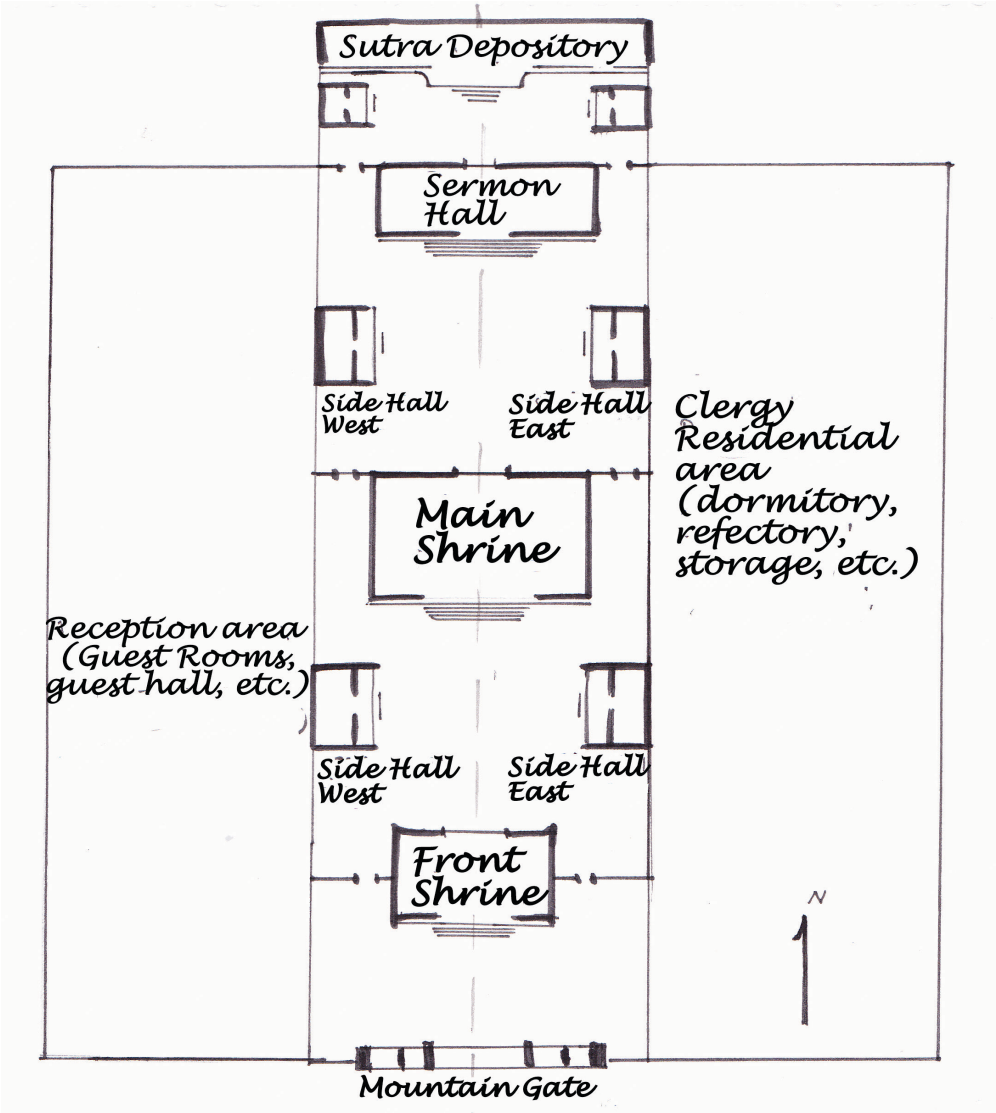


Figure 3: From south to north, the monastic complex usually starts with a "mountain gate" which is also called "Three Gates" and has three gateways symbolizing three kinds of "emptiness" in Buddhism. The gate/gates are followed by two mains shrines housing major figures of Chinese Buddhism. The third one in the row, the Great Buddha's Hall (*da xiong bao dian* 大雄宝殿), is the central shrine where the Shakyamuni Buddha is placed. This Buddha is usually accompanied by other forms of Buddha[27] or his major disciples. The four Great Bodhisattvas, especially Avalokitesvara, or Kuanyin, are commonly seen in the same shrine but are also placed separately in side shrines in many other cases. The ensuite is a sermon hall, a place where sermons and lectures on Dharma take place. The sutra depositary is situated at the end of the building. The monastic living section is traditionally arranged on the left side, including monastic apartments, the refectory, kitchen, and storage room. This area is not open to the public. The right side is a public/social area, equipped with spaces such as a guest hall and guest rooms.

[27] Representing different realms and natures, there are different qualities and thus different presentations of Buddha.

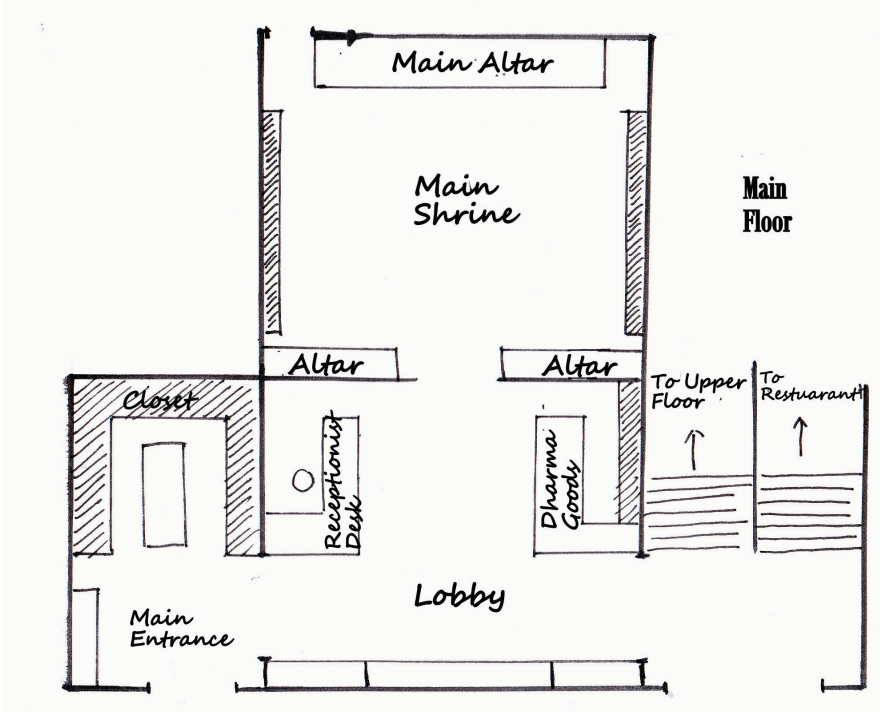


Figure 4: Fo Guang Shan Edmonton, main floor layout

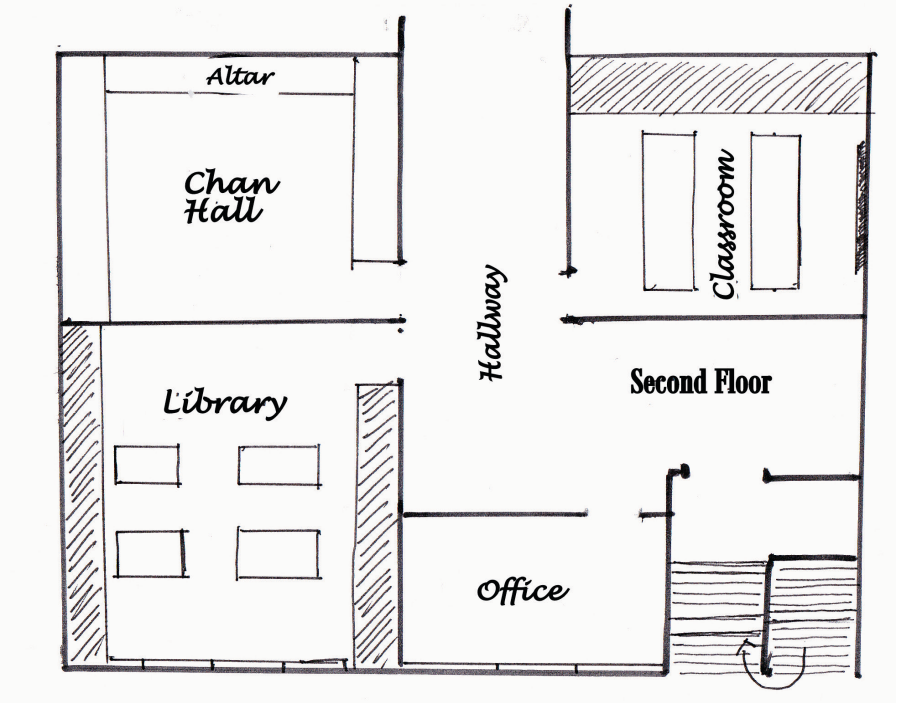


Figure 5: Fo Guang Shan Edmonton, upper floor layout

The Fo Guang Shan monastery in downtown Edmonton is built in a three-story brick house. Its main shrine, or Tathagata Hall (*ru lai dian* 如来殿) (Figure 4), houses five statues of

Buddha, as well as two of the Four Great Bodhisattvas[28]— Avalokitesvara and Ksitigarbha — on back altars facing the Buddhas. This lack of a complete collection of Buddhist saints is just one example of what makes the Edmonton monastery different from a traditional temple. As with its many other urban monasteries, Fo Guang Shan Edmonton condenses all of the main Buddhist figures in the same shrine. Nevertheless, a south-north axis can still be spotted — two bodhisattvas are placed on each side of the axis, the central lane of the shrine is intentionally left blank, and the receptionist desk where the guests are greeted is placed on the west end of the lobby. In other words, the main floor layout follows the traditional pattern in a minimalist manner, revealing a design of modern simplification.

The traditional layout, however, is completely deconstructed when it comes to other parts of the monastery. The refectory is in the basement, which functions as a vegetarian restaurant during weekdays. On the upper floor, except for the Meditation Hall, other traditional spaces (like the sermon hall, front shrine and sutra depository) are missing. Instead, visitors will find a library, a classroom and an office. Is such radical modification merely a passive response to the limited urban space? The following examination of these "other" parts of the monastery will reveal that the arrangement is often deliberate rather than compromising, a design to ensure an active engagement with secular world rather than passive retreat to the "other world".

A New Experience of Monastic Space: Scrambling the Sacred and the Secular

When traveling to any one of Fo Guang Shan's more than 200 monasteries, one may find an incredibly rich interior with a harmonious juxtaposition of both secular and sacred elements.

[28] The Four Great Bodhisattvas are Avalokitesvara (Kuanyin), Ksitigarbha, Manjusri and Samantabhadra. They represent great mercy, great wish, great wisdom and great practice respectively.

Each monastery is different in layout, but all the monasteries share a pattern of spatial designation.

A Fo Guang Shan monastery typically includes spaces from two heterogeneous genres: sacred spaces, such as the main shrine and meditation hall; and secular spaces, such as the library, classroom(s), restaurant, office and, sometimes, an art gallery. Major monasteries (like Taipei Vihara) usually have the full configuration, whereas smaller branches may have at least a main shrine, library, office and a space that can be used as an activity room or classroom.

Taipei Vihara of Taiwan is a typical case. Below is a chart of its interior:

14th Floor	Fo Guang Shan Taipei Vihara Main Shrine Spiritual Corner
13th Floor	Fo Guang Shan Open University Humanistic Culture and Education Foundation Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation
12th Floor	Meditation Hall; Meeting Room Dining Hall
11th Floor	Fo Guang Shan Open University Taipei Campus
10th Floor	Fo Guang Yuan Taipei Art Gallery Waterdrop Tea House Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund
9th Floor	Beautiful Life Television station
8th Floor	Buddha's Light International Association Gandha Samudra Travel Service Co.
7th Floor	Cloud and Water Dormitory
6th Floor	Fo Guang Shan Open University Taipei Campus (providing Adult Education programs)
5th Floor	Merit-Times News Agency
(other organizations)	
1st Floor	Tzu Chi (Compassion and Relief)

Table 2: Taipei Vihara contour

The patio structure inside the building allows visitors to have a full view of this department-store style Buddhist monastery. With the main shrine located on the top, the other

floors cover assortments of aspects from living to eating, from news agencies to a TV station, and from a school to a charity group. In a way, the spatial representations with very different sensory experiences are scrambled in a single monastery. The visitors take elevators from their classroom (Fo Guang Shan's adult education centre) to the main shrine, or from meditation hall to the art gallery.

Spatially, the "scramble" seems random and overwhelming, but the architecture could not be understood without physically experiencing it. In the latter case, there was an orderly designation in terms of sensorial experience. Fo Guang Yuan (or Buddha's Light Affinity) Art gallery is a case in point. The gallery exhibits art works with both Buddhist and non-Buddhist themes. The exhibition was set up along each side of a long winding path. At the end, the gallery meets with the Water Drop Teahouse – Fo Guang Shan's vegetarian restaurant – at a small junction where Dharma goods are displayed for sale. Compared to the cheap, mass-produced Dharma goods[29] often seen in many Chinese temples, every piece of merchandise here is either a designer's work, or has been carefully selected. The taste and style inherent in these objects somehow elevates them above mere commercial goods; it is as if they were part of the art exhibition. People can enjoy the exhibition or have a meal in the teahouse without being reminded that they are in a Buddhist temple.

When walking through the teahouse area, visitors are unlikely to miss the art gallery. Likewise, when the visit to the gallery comes to the end, it is impossible to miss the teahouse: its doorway is wide open and welcoming. As in many other Fo Guang Shan monasteries, Taipei Vihara offers a rich sensory environment, where visitors need not limit themselves by just

[29] Dharma Goods can include statues of Buddhist figures, incense, sutra books, and other things for religious worshiping.

looking at the building, but can also "taste the building" (Barrie 2010: 16) by engaging in experiences in the different spaces.

This aesthetic experience is accessible to anyone who happens to drop in. Some visitors may not even know that the temple exists at first, but could eventually find out the shrine by simply following their curiosity. One Venerable explained:

> Many people (who came to our monastery) are not Buddhists. They came to see Fo Guang Yuan (Art Gallery) and then unintentionally walked to our shrine…. That is to establish connections with Buddha's light through art!

In this sense, the very existence of either an art gallery or restaurant is not a heedless installation. Rather, they are curatorial Buddhism – Buddhism that is aesthetically displayed and being experienced by ordinary people. Doing so increases the chance for outsiders to encounter Buddhism.

In smaller monasteries, to become versatile requires flexibility. Fo Guang Shan Edmonton is an example of how space can be used skillfully. As there is not enough space for an independent teahouse or school facilities in the Edmonton building, certain features have to be abandoned, or certain rooms turned into versatile space. In this case, the border between the sacred and the secular becomes a matter of opportunity.

Take the main shrine, for example. As a primary space where most of the religious activities are held, it is sometimes used for secular purposes. On Chinese New Year's Eve, for instance, praying cushions are removed to make space for a lively market. Beautifully decorated long tables are lined up along two sides of the shrine. On Chinese New Year's Eve, foods and handicrafts are for sale, and games are organized for families. People can walk and talk freely,

dressing in their casual clothes. The atmosphere in the main shrine, opposite to the solemnness, became incredibly lively[30].

Another sacred space, meditation hall, also transformed its identity of throughout the week. It is an empty, spacious, and plain room, with only a medium-sized Buddha statue at one end. The hall is sacred when mediation and small rituals are conducted. Most of the time, however, the space is not used for religious purposes, which makes it ideal for recreational activities. Every Saturday morning, children's classes take place in the hall, as some devotees send their youngsters to the temple for half-day care. One of the features of Fo Guang Shan is that local monasteries are encouraged to organize their own educational programs. When these educational programs take place, the mediation hall is once again turned into a classroom, either for yoga or martial arts. The charge for these courses is usually very low. Sometimes the courses are free, as the real purpose is to enrich the lives of Fo Guang Shan devotees and attract non-devotees to the temple.

The refectory is used in much the same way as the meditation hall. Before 2009, this simple dining hall was for the clergy and lay volunteers, only opening to the public on Sunday when a free lunch would be offered after the weekly service. It was not until the new abbess came was the refectory turned into a teahouse as a way to welcome the public and generate extra revenue for the monastery. It turns out that the teahouse started to play a useful role in proselytization (see next chapter).

What distinguishes a Fo Guang Shan monastery from a regular Buddhist monastery isn't so much the layout – both will have an office, library, and dining hall – but its high level of openness. As far as we can see, most of the spaces in a Fo Guang Shan monastery are accessible

[30] The market fair during Chinese New Year is traditionally called a "temple fair" (*miaohui* 庙会), and remains a folk custom in some parts of Chinese society. While the event is usually held on the streets outside a temple, it is obviously not feasible to do so in a downtown district of a Canadian city.

to everyone. The sutra depository in a traditional monastery is not open to the public, but Fo Guang Shan's library is a public space where Buddhist books in vernacular languages are available. By maximizing its public spaces, Fo Guang Shan minimizes the sealed image of a Buddhist monastery.

The Fo Guang Shan monastery is not only a place for worship, but also for social experiences. In a discussion of religious buildings in east London, Kershen and Vaughan depicted a similar picture: "neutral external appearance, internal galleries, and lack of ostentation making them ideal for conversion" (Kershen & Vaughan 2013: 22). In other words, it is often not the main shrine that keeps visitors coming back, it is those non-religious spaces, which effectively buffer the tensions from sacred space and open the monastery to a much wider population. Visitors feel free to stay for non-religious purposes, such as browsing in the gallery, having a vegetarian meal, or looking at books on spirituality, without feeling pressured to convert. To a certain extent, this juxtaposition of both sacred and secular elements is to weigh psychic implications over practical side. The secular spaces in the monastery seem to fill the gap between two heterogeneous worlds, setting up a common base between Buddhism and its guests.

Baby Monks' Silent Invitation

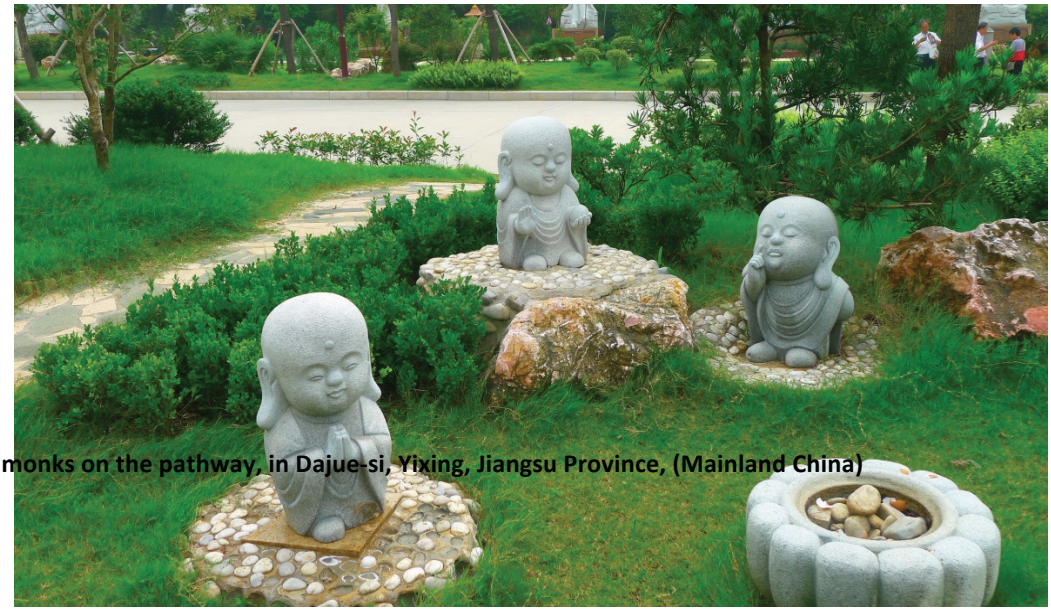
Fo Guang Shan's urban monasteries are rarely secluded. A door that is always open directly to the local streets implies an open attitude towards the public. In so doing, Fo Guang Shan silently delivers its greetings through its architecture and interior arrangement. This can be observed from a few more details.

A long corridor stretching from the entrance to the main hall is very typical in a lot of religious architecture. The pathway is an extension of the doorway, which creates a strong transition from "outside" to "inside," allowing a visitor to embrace the sacred hierarchy of the

Figure 6: A series of sculpting of baby monks in Fo Guang Shan, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

building. Most of Fo Guang Shan's urban branches, however, do not have such a pathway (perhaps in the Taipei Vihara and Vancouver branches, it is the elevator that plays this role). Rather than solemnness and progressive sacredness, Fo Guang Shan's pathway offers a quite unconventional experience.

Among the landmarks common to every Fo Guang Shan monastery are statues of baby monks (*xiao shami* 小沙弥). These adorable baby monks are chubby and are always sculpted in casual postures. Some are carrying a big piece of tofu, some are exercising, some are about to take a bath, some are playing chess, and so on and so forth. Their vivid body language depicts everyday life in a monastery in a highly approachable manner.



ɡure 8: Baby monks on the pathway, in Dajue-si, Yixing, Jiangsu Province, (Mainland China)

Figure 7: Taipei Vihara. Several "baby Buddhas" are placed in front of an elevator door. A friendly welcome can be sensed once the door is open.

The existence of these baby monks contrasts greatly with the solemn and sometimes tedious monastic atmosphere. They are most commonly distributed along the way leading to the shrine, or are scattered around the corners of the monasteries. In an urban monastery, where there usually is not a long path, you can also see the baby monks at the corner of staircases or at the main entrance.

When the construction of a new branch in New Zealand was complete, Fo Guang Shan's news media reported the arrival of a batch of baby monk statues:

> After going through (New Zealand) Customs…the adorable baby monk (statues) couldn't wait to head to their home in Fo Guang Shan North Islands…. In the meantime, landscaping is being completed on the pathway. The baby monks fit well with the surrounding garden landscape, which suddenly glorified the whole Zen garden, infusing the monastery with infinite vitality (Fo Guang Shan News webpage[31]).

In a way, the baby monk plays an essential part in forming an amiable aura in the monastery.

Even without language, these statues are able to deliver the most straightforward welcome to visitors. The news article below reports that Fo Guang Shan's baby monks were made into lanterns, placed in government buildings:

> "How come these cute baby monks appeared in the service centre of Kaohsiung municipal? I see! It is for the '2013 Kaohsiung Lantern Art Festival.' The dean of the service centre.... said, people came to us when they have difficulties, but [this] icy government architecture often created fears among them. [The baby monks] could not only bring a peaceful atmosphere for people who came as well as the office clerics, but could also pacify the public with their adorable look. Therefore, he hoped that with the

[31] http://www.fgs.org.tw/news/news_content.aspx?news_no=20080925003166

> glamour of these baby monks, we could promote Master Xingyun's idea of social harmony" (Fo Guang Shan News webpage[32]).

Children are a cross-cultural symbol of innocence and people intend to respond positively to the sight of a cute, chubby, helpless child. The baby monks roll these qualities into one, playing a vital role in creating a harmonious ambiance in Fo Guang Shan. They are formally architectural decorations, but are essentially diplomatic devices to communicate with viewers. The news in brief below echoes this point:

> Fifty-two students from Farmborough Road Public School in suburban Wollongong…. walked thirty minutes to Nantien Temple[33] for a journey of religion…. The baby monks' statues in the garden soon attracted their attention and sparked their curiosity. Kids asked questions about various postures of these baby monks, and couldn't help hugging them. (Fo Guang Shan News webpage[34])

"It is difficult to think of a nihilistic touch," says Juhani Pallasmea, a famous architect, because straight and predominant formality and visual languages often truncate our "depth of experience" (cited from Barrie 2010: 24). In this sense, Fo Guang Shan's baby monk, as part of architectural design, is both "a means of communication and a medium of spiritual engagement," playing the role of "an intermediary to *co-join* separate worlds" (Barrie 2010: 46) .[35]

[32] http://www.fgs.org.tw/news/news_content.aspx?news_no=20130126000003
[33] Fo Guang Shan's Australia branch
[34] http://www.fgs.org.tw/news/news_content.aspx?news_no=20080925004046
[35] The origin of the baby monk statue is unclear. Little information about its designer has been found and nothing similar could be spotted in religious sites on Mainland China. However, "religious dolls" are not uncommon in Taiwan. Cute versions of various religious figures can be found in local temples and even street shops. Apparently, a cultural ecology of leisure and entertainment exists in Taiwan, which is probably a result of Japanese influence, as we can see similar religious representations in that country. I'm afraid that the discussion on Taiwan's cultural ecology is beyond the range of this study, but we should understand that Fo Guang Shan's baby monks fit into a broader picture of Taiwanese popular culture.

Contextual Education and sacred fulcrum

The Fo Guang Shan group's primary and foremost emphasis is on education. This emphasis is also expressed in the group's monastery's spatial arrangements. The classrooms and library are important spaces, but the architecture of the building itself also performs the function of teaching.

In the main shrine of the Hsi Lai Temple - a major Fo Guang Shan monastery in North America – the outside walls are decorated with hundreds of miniature Buddhas carved on colorful pottery tiles. Under each Buddha are names of donors and/or the names of their family members. A common way to fundraise in Chinese Buddhist monasteries is to lease parts of the building, such as the threshold, memorial stone, and pillar foundation. These miniature Buddhas are certainly part of Fo Guang Shan's revenue, but they are also given the responsibility of "teaching." According to Fo Guang Shan, repeating images serves as "an auspicious way to understanding and reinforcing Buddhist concepts," and the numerous statues "represent the universality of the Buddha nature that resides everywhere, and in everyone" (Fo Guang Shan 2000:19). In an interview with a BBC TV reporter, Venerable Miao Xi summed up:

> It's a Chinese practice – people make an offering, and they too have their name and family there. It's their Buddha. And it's also a form of supporting the temple and they come in and say: "I have a Buddha in there!" It's like a connection between the Buddha outside and Buddha inside (BBC 2011).

As a basic teaching in Buddhism, the "Buddha outside" refers to the common people, as every sentient being is believed to have a Buddha nature. In light of this perspective, by establishing a connection with the architecture, the individual also formally establishes a link with Buddhism. The architect Thomas Barrie might call it "a coition between space and ourselves" (Barrie 2010: 16).

Likewise, the wall painting in the main shrine of Taipei Vihara (Taiwan) is more than a decoration. It is a *Dunhuang* style color painting in which Four Great Bodhisattvas are displayed from the east end to the west end, in a particular order: Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha, Manjusri and Samantabhadra. A Venerable explained the meaning of this sequence:

> The first bodhisattva that comes into sight is Kuanyin (Avalokitesvara), because this is the bodhisattva of great compassion. Everyone should start from here – a compassionate heart, the very basic and essential in Buddhism. Once you have the compassion, you need to have great determination to put it into practice, which is exactly what Bodhisattva Dizang (Ksitigarbha) tries to teach us, as he once made Great Vows to save all the beings in hell, to relieve all the sufferings in the world. But it is not enough to just have the determination. You also need wisdom. So Bodhisattva Wenshu (Manjusri) represents this part that one should have good knowledge. After all these, you need to put into practice! That is why there's Bodhisattva Puxian (Samantabhadra) at the end of the painting roll. So this whole shrine is a *contextual education*….If Buddha is an educator, then this building itself is a complete *contextual education* (of Buddhism)…when Master (Xingyun) was designing this Tathagata Hall (main shrine), (he) considered its educational function (Italics added)".

The newly built Buddha's Memorial Centre in its Kaohsiung headquarters (Taiwan) is another typical example of "contextual education." After almost a decade of planning and construction, this huge "Buddhist theme park" was completed at Christmas of 2011. In a way, the whole complex is embodied with Buddhist teachings and implications, and is said to be "an architecture that is able to preach dharma" (Ruchang 2011: 248). Aside from naming each tower for a particular Buddhist terminology, Xingyun talked about the significance of this memorial centre:

> In order to house the Buddha relic, we built this memorial centre, but this is not to tell everyone how magic the Buddha relic is. Instead, it is through this action of veneration, to bring out the compassion and wisdom of Buddha, so that people could *experience it concretely* (Italics added) (Xingyun 2011: 27).

Unlike iconography, architecture is not just a static block but is "dynamically moved to, through, and around" (Barrie 2010:39-41), which actively "leads" the visitors from vista to vista

Figure 10: Greeting Hall of Buddha's Memorial Centre

and from context to context. How the designers arrange the order of the symbols and the space in which the symbols are embodied largely determines what the visitors will "see" and "get."

This Memorial Centre in Kaohsiung adopted the traditional principle in its construction. Four main compartments are on the central axis, which are, from south to north, the Shrine of Kuanyin, Golden Buddha Shrine, Jade Buddha Shrine (where the Buddha relic is placed) and the sutra platform.

As its name indicates, however, Buddha's Memorial Centre is not a temple in the traditional sense. Although the traditional framework is followed to some extent, Buddhism is represented in a brand new way through these architectural styles.

The "Greeting Hall" is a good example (Figure 10). The role of this building is equivalent to that of the "mountain gate" in a regular temple. From the picture we can see that the basic architectural elements of a "mountain gate" are preserved – three gateways that represent liberation. Going through the door symbolizes the contextual shift from the realm of secular to

the realm of Bodhi (wisdom). This Greeting Hall, as the first station of the Memorial Centre, is also expected to "transform" the visitors:

> When the visitors from afar, get off their cars and get ready to walk out of the secular world full of noises, thereafter entering into a pure and clean realm, the Greeting Hall is such a transitioning space for (them) to adjust their mind (Pan & Xingyun 2011: 210).

In order to achieve this, the Greeting Hall of the Memorial Centre is created not only as a symbolic transit station, but also into a physical one where various human needs are considered and responded to so that the visitors can get prepared both mentally and physically. With convenient stores, a teahouse, and other spaces for people to have a rest, the space provides services that would normally be considered "secular." But on the other side of the building, windows are widely open toward another world – the sacred world of Buddhism, stretching beyond the secular realm:

> The future would see an era and society of hospitality. When people enter the Greeting Hall, receiving the various services there, they could see - through the big glass window - the great Buddha statue and the stupas, which could immediately strike our soul (Xingyun 2011: 211).

The Greeting Hall occupies the borderline between the secular realm and the sacred realm, breaking up the continuum of the piece of land underneath. Its window, in this case, is like a fulcrum "between the space you occupy and the 'other world' you can see through," mediating "between here and there," and presenting a world "distorted by perspective" (Unwin 2007: 25).

In this sense, the Greeting Hall provides the visitors with concrete preparation for spirituality. As Xingyun said, the picture he envisioned for those resting in the Greeting Hall was a vision stretching from they were to where they were heading. Thus, through the window of the Greeting Hall – an interpretive lens shaped by Fo Guang Shan, visitors could enjoy their secular

leisure time while at the same time envisioning the greatness of a Buddhist world lying beyond ─ a physical link between two opposing realms.

Religious places are commonly perceived as sacred settings for devoted cultivation and spiritual connection, and most of the time, they are. However, Fo Guang Shan's monastic buildings offer different options. They not only blend themselves into an urban context, but also scramble both sacred elements and secular elements in one monastic space.

The architects argue that "the only humane starting point for the organization of the space around us, more than peripheral, is inhabited in us," which is to say, the *ideological landscape of human beings* (italic added) – landmarks, coordinates, hierarchies, boundaries – serves as the ultimate motivation when we build something concrete on earth (Bloomer & Moore, cited from Barrie 2010: 24). In other words, our own innate geometry has been applied during the construction of a building (Unwin 2007: 25). From this perspective, Fo Guang Shan's various monastic spaces are an immediate self-definition. They are embodied with Fo Guang Shan's interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism – engaging with the human world, positively responding to ongoing social changes regarding urbanity and globalization, and eventually connecting people with Buddhism. In this sense, Fo Guang Shan's monastery itself is a gateway to Buddhism.

Chapter 4 Fo Guang Shan Foodways – "Eating our way back to Buddha"[36]

Buddhism traditionally rejects eating out of joy; food is only a tool needed for survival. Chinese Buddhism, in particular, practices strict vegetarianism more than other Buddhist traditions. This nature of abstinence distinguishes Buddhism from the rest of the Buddhist world. However, Fo Guang Shan once again takes an unusual path – along with preserving authentic monastic foodways within the community, Fo Guang Shan has also developed a distinct food culture in the public arena, where food service is elevated to an aesthetic experience and transformed into an expedient means of proselytization. In this chapter, I will examine how a Chinese Buddhist precept has been remade into a popular dinning culture, and how the new food practices strike a balance between modern needs and traditional ethnic issues.

Ritualistic Consumption

To begin with, vegetarianism is not intrinsic to Buddhism. There are actually very few original precepts concerning which kinds of food are forbidden. In a way, there are as many food practices in Buddhism as there are nations and indigenous cultures where the religion has taken root (M. King 2006). Vegetarianism remains a hallmark only of Chinese Buddhism. As Kieschnick pointed out, "The importance given to vegetarianism throughout Chinese Buddhist history stands out as an anomaly in the history of Buddhism in Asia as a whole" (Kieschnick 2004:186).

Food is a source of great human desire, but its role in Buddhism is never glorious. Eating is not meant to be enjoyable. Rather, it is meant to provide energy for survival. Shakyamuni

[36] "Eating our way back to godhead" is a phrase that Anna King cited in her study on the contemporary food practices of a Hindu organization (A.S. King 2012: 440-465). I adapt this phrase – "eating our way back to Buddha" - to indicate a similar food path taken by Fo Guang Shan.

Buddha rejected eating anything in the first place; he believed in asceticism as a way toward wisdom, only to realize that extreme self-denial could not lead him anywhere better. He was basically only skin and bones when he decided to finally accept a bowl of goat milk offered by a shepherdess. Not long after, he achieved Buddhahood.

While the goat milk was certainly not the key to Shakyamuni's enlightenment (it never did become a sacred food in Buddhism), food plays a role in Buddhist teaching; it is a necessary instrument for attaining Buddhahood. But at the same time, Buddhists are taught to consume food without referring to its worldly desires. In terms of this, the "Five Contemplations" (*wu guan* 五觀) can help us with a better understanding:

1. Consider the work that went into the food and where it came from.
2. Reflect on one's virtue and conduct, and whether they merit this offering.
3. *Guard* the mind against faults, greed in particular.
4. Regard food as wholesome *medicine* for healing the weakened body.
5. **For the sake of attaining the Way, I shall receive this food**.

(Translation from Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, 2010)

The taste of food is absent, and the pleasure of eating is avoided. There is no gastronomy to be appraised; there is only the food needed for survival. In fact, the refectory hall in a Buddhist monastery is called the "Five Contemplate Hall" (*Wu Guang Tang* 五觀堂). Fo Guang Shan's Five Contemplation Halls usually have these words carved on the central wall to remind diners what they should keep in mind while eating.

Similar to a grace that Christians perform before meals, there are also hymns to chant before and after meals in Buddhism:

> "When eating (my) meal, (I) should [be] thinking of all the sentient beings; the delight of Chan is (my) food, fill (myself) with the joy of Dharma."

e 11: Water Drop Teahouse noodles. Penang
er Drop Teahouse Facebook page

While Buddhists are being deprived of secular joy, emphasis is given to the nourishment of the mind. Chanting is meant to remind those who are in cultivation not to overly indulge in the taste of food but to settle one's mind in peace and freedom, *taking Buddhist Dharma as spiritual food* (Xingyun, official Facebook, July 16, 2013). Fo Guang Shan has composed its own chants:

> Compassion and alms giving fill the entire Dharma world/ cherish the blessings and establish connections so as to benefit all sentient beings.
> (Enjoy) the serene of meditation/ observe the precepts, (behave) without discrimination and with forbearance/ modestly, being grateful and wishful.

Before every meal, the Fo Guang Shan abbess leads the mass to chant the above lines. If people miss the collective chanting, then recite silently on their own after being seated. Although not a single word concerns food *per se*, a ritualistic beginning imbues the dining process with a sense of sacredness. In so doing, dining is integrated into the daily cultivation of monastic life.

Aesthetic Food

Once again, in monastic context, food is reduced to a tool for survival and mind practice, and eating is detached from its worldly context, incorporated as a Buddhist precept. However, Fo Guang Shan has extended its food practice beyond the border of the monastery, reaching into the public by developing a new arena, the Water Drop Teahouse. Instead of ritualistic contemplation, the teahouse presents Buddhist food in a highly aesthetic manner.

The name Di Shui Fang, or Water Drop Teahouse, is taken from a Chinese idiom, "the benefit of a drop of water is to be returned with a spring of water" (*di shui zhi en, yong quan*

xiang bao 滴水之恩，湧泉相報), the idea of which is to acknowledge even the most trivial kindness offered by others. The founder of Fo Guang Shan, Xingyun, came up with this name to honour one of his own experiences. It is said that once the young master had been seriously sick, on the verge of dying, and his own master offered some pickled vegetables to Xingyun:

> Just half bowl of pickled vegies (sic) was already very precious in those years when almost everything was in short [supply]! I know it was the silent care and expectations from my master. So I ate this half bowl of vegies (sic) with tears in my eyes. And I also made a vow in my heart, that I would devote myself to Buddhism, in return for the loving kindness of my master.

This story of the "half bowl of pickled veggies" is considered the origin of the restaurant and the spirit of "giving", which are considered central to Fo Guang Shan's food practice. Now that Fo Guang Shan has teahouses all around the world, Xingyun sees them as "a way of giving something back for the accomplishments of all living beings" (Xingyun 2010: 4). Considering that "alms giving" is one of the Six Paramitas, or the Six Perfections, in Buddhist teaching, this aspect of the Water Drop Teahouse is more of a modern representation of Buddhist practice.

When it comes to serving food in the teahouse, Fo Guang Shan is far from traditionalist. Contrary to the missing role of food in traditional accounts, dishes are central in this environment (Figure 11, 12), which highlights the desirable quality of the food. Food materials are dedicatedly prepared, matched, and served; even the photos are taken with high standard of quality. Who will deny the fact that these dishes look appetite arousing?

I once had a meal in a Buddhist monastery in Mainland China, but the dishes were impressive in the opposite way. Now I can only recall how unpleasant it was to finish the lunch, looking at the black dry veggies distributed in my bowl without knowing what I was actually eating. For a minute, I deemed that vegetarianism was not my cup of tea. The food in these dishes was clearly designed only to nourish the body, fulfilling the very teachings of Buddha.

By contrast, dishes at the Water Drop Teahouse are inviting. Apparently, the food originally served at Five Contemplate Hall may have been good enough for monastic residents, but it was far from satisfactory for the modern public, whose dietary habits and dining requirements are radically different. Xingyun said:

> If we are to say that vegetarian food is better than non-vegetarian food, we have to make sure that we can cook tasty food before we expect others to enjoy it. This is why I encourage all Fo Guang Shan branch temples to cook good vegetarian food, so that all those who come to pay homage to Buddha can enjoy eating vegetarian food (Xingyun 2010: 29).

Rather than downplaying the aesthetic value of food, Xingyun openly recognized that food is a form of art: "[I]t's important not to neglect anything about the food's appearance, fragrance, and taste." Also because the flavor of vegetarian food is more subtle (i.e., not as strong as meat dishes), he stressed that certain processing skills are required to bring out the flavor of these vegetarian materials (Xingyun 2010: 29).

Apart from straight veggies, "meat" can also be observed in those dishes. Fake "meat," made from gluten or tofu, successfully imitates the appearance, texture, and even taste of real meat such as beef, chicken, and fish. These "meat" dishes are often so vivid that diners don't realize they are not eating meat, unless someone tells them so.

In addition to taste, other techniques are used to promote the teahouse. A "delicious" picture, for example, is one way to present food aesthetically. One can easily find photos (as the

above shows) on social media. These photos are obviously taken with professional cameras and are post-processed. As for the presentation, not only are the serving pieces chosen specifically for their appearance, but one or two pieces of Buddhist knickknacks are displayed by the dish to make it even more aesthetically appealing. So far, these vegetarian dishes all look "joyous, blissful" and are a "celebration of food" (A.S. King 2012: 442), a significant contrast to the ascetic image in which the sensory enjoyment of food is to be (at least mentally) avoided.

Dual arenas: Religious Cultivation vs Hospitality

The Water Drop Teahouses are a public extension of a Buddhist foodway, where food is separate from monastic life and re-contextualized in a separate arena. Understanding that it is not feasible to promote lifetime vegetarianism to the public, the idea behind the teahouse is to have people eat vegetarian "as much as possible," helping them to see that it is actually pleasant to be a vegetarian. This means that serving food prepared exclusively for monastic residents is no longer appropriate. Along with this re-contextualization of Buddhist vegetarianism, Fo Guang Shan radically transformed food to accommodate the public taste. One such example of this is using a meat substitute. Whereas a lot of people welcome this alternative because of its rich taste, some others question the use of fake meat as being hypocritical: if you practice vegetarianism, what is the point of making vegetarian food look like meat? If you are still craving meat, why not just eat the real thing?

Meat substitutes were widely used in China in the past, and still are. Critics are still vocal about the practice. Xingyun rationalized the decision to use fake meat: "If you wish to lead others to the Buddha's wisdom, first give them what they desire" (*yu ling ru fo zhi, xian yi yu gou qian* 欲令入佛智，先以欲勾牽). He then said:

> People who created such dishes do not do so for the sake of vegetarians. Instead they do so to encourage everyone to eat vegetarian food, and thus *coax* them to learn more about vegetarianism (italics added).

He implied that the Water Drop Teahouse is such a place, serving for the purpose of "coaxing" people into a vegetarian diet. He further referred to traditional Chinese culture, in which lavish meat offerings are stressed in certain ceremonial rites and thus "not only does substituting these offerings with vegetarian mock-meat dishes eliminate the bad karma that comes from killing, but it also satisfies people's expectations for how such offerings should be made" (Hsing Yun 2010: 17- 8).

This view is in line with what Kieschnick observed. He said that imitation meat was "in part in response to the needs of a laity that kept a vegetarian diet only on particular days, and wished to maintain their standard diet throughout"; it is "a means to accommodate meat-eaters and *entice* them to take up vegetarianism themselves" (Kieschnick 2004: 205).

Dishes served in Water Drop Teahouse share in common of being attractive, or secularly pleasant, which seems to go against Buddhism's traditional food values. But based on the above perspective, the teahouse is acting as an expedient connection between traditional Chinese Buddhism and modernity. By re-contextualizing Buddhist food in a public arena, a "sporadic vegetarianism" is generated, balancing between Buddhist practice and modern needs. In other words, the audience of this kind of vegetarianism is different from the monastic one. The latter is part of the Buddhist long-term mind practice; while Fo Guang Shan's aesthetic foodway is constructed only as a touchstone for the ordinary public.

Figure 13: Fo Guang Shan sangha lined up to dine. At Fo Guang Shan headquarter.

This differentiation in food practice is quite obvious if we take a comparative look at Fo Guang Shan's daily meals. When a meal is only offered for the "insiders" — Fo Guang Shan Sangha and regular lay volunteers — fake meats and beautiful dishes are rarely seen. Also, the way in which food is served and consumed contrasts greatly with what transpires at the teahouse.

My numerous dining experiences at the Fo Guang Shan Edmonton headquarters support this argument. The differences became most apparent during my sojourn at Fo Guang Shan headquarters in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Staying at Fo Guang Shan for an academic conference, we, the guests, were offered three meals a day in addition to snacks between each session. The food hospitality was never casual. However, I was surprised that when we asked the volunteer students[37] to join us, they refused, telling us that these foods were only for the guests.

In fact, more than one person strongly recommended that I eat with the sangha. The Five Contemplation Hall of Fo Guang Shan headquarters is located on the first floor of the guest house where we stayed. Early in the morning when I went downstairs, I could hardly tell that some 200 people were dining inside. There was absolute silence and solemnness in the air; the

[37] The students are currently enrolled in Fo Guang University.

highly unified colors of the black or yellow robes blurred the boundaries between these individuals; long benches and tables were neatly lined up in rows, leaving out an empty middle aisle with an altar at the end, with the Five Contemplations carved on the wall. The energy released from this dining hall was so powerful that I unconsciously lower my noise and couldn't help slowing down my breath.

For sangha, dining is not easy practice. They are called to meals by the sound of a wooden plank[38]. On hearing this, sangha and novices line up in front of the hall. Almost immediately the lively, laughing atmosphere disappears, leaving only silence.

Here, we can clearly see a double standard in Fo Guang Shan's foodway system. The organization knowingly offers very different food services for outsiders and insiders. While food is still served and consumed in a traditional manner in the monastery, only guests are treated to beautiful food and a pleasant dining environment. As mentioned earlier, I didn't have a good impression of dining in the monastery. Although that was indeed quite an experience with strict monastic rules, for a non-Buddhist like me, it was far from hospitable. On the contrary, mealtime at Fo Guang Shan nearly became the most anticipated moments for guests like us.

Buddhist Message Hidden in Food

Figure 14: Water Drop Teahouse, Penang, Malaysia. Source: Penang Water Drop Teahouse Facebook page. The Chinese words on the picture are: "books, coffee, culture."

[38] The plank is a time-indicating instrument that is, of course, also used on other occasions such as the beginning of the Dharma service.

Food consumption in the Water Drop Teahouse is holistic. Often operating in combination with art galleries and bookstores, the Teahouse not only offers physical food, but also claims to "enrich the spiritual life of devotees" (Xingyun 2010:4) and to provide a space where modern people can purify and settle their minds (Water Drop Teahouse of Malaysia, official Facebook). The design of the Camphor Tree Water Drop Teahouse (Kaohsiung, Taiwan) is an impressive one (Figure 15). Located in the woods near Buddha's Memorial Centre, the teahouse occupies a quiet and picturesque spot. The windows are wide open and an artificial pond is nearby. The building of this teahouse is infused with its designer - Venerable Ci Rong's special consideration. She explained her idea:

> We hope to provide to those who come here, whether to just do some sightseeing or to pay homage to Buddha, a reposing garden with both religious inspiration and [a] natural scene. On holiday, the whole family could drive here, visit the Memorial Centre and take a rest in here for the whole day." (Pan 2011: 208)

e 15: Camphor Tree Water Drop Teahouse.
ce: internet.

Bigger monasteries usually have bigger and nicer teahouses. Take the one in Taipei Vihara (Taiwan) - Fo Guang Shan's first Waster Drop Teahouse - for example. As seen in the sketches of Taipei Vihara in the previous chapter, the Teahouse is connected to an art gallery and a small section of dharma goods. Together they formed a cultural area in which the dining experience is imbued with a strong flavor of Buddhist aesthetics.

Figure 16： The place mat featuring a Chan painting by the famous Chinese artist Feng Zikai and illustrated by Buddhist artist Ven. Hongyi

Those place mats are where the dishes are placed and most importantly, in the front sight of the diner. They are printed in color, and each depicts a religious theme. Venerable Hongyi, a Buddhist master known for his distinct artist and musical talents illustrated the place mats with captions and poems. Lines in these captions are short and easy to read but interesting to contemplate. In creating such a table setting, a direct but not heavy-handed communication is established between Buddhism and the diner.

Decorations are exquisite. Accessories including mini bonsai and baby Buddhas are placed in the corners or on the tables, subtly creating a peaceful atmosphere. Small green plants are displayed in delicate vases or plates; baby monks and baby Buddhas, as always, are themselves the embodiment of the fun of childhood and a vivid expression of monastic life. These representations of "smallness" can always be observed at different Fo Guang Shan locations. Small as the details are, they are by no means unnoticeable. On the contrary, they highlight the delicacy of the restaurant, conveying both a natural sensation and frank naiveté.

They also seem to be able to generate a feeling of "inwardness," which gives this dining space a hint of privacy and security.

Alternative Billing

Money is always a sensitive topic, as if the word could pollute spirituality. Buddhism, in particular, left us an impression of being materially impoverished. It is still such a common view that rejecting money is associated with moral superiority. Thus, it is not surprising to see harsh criticism and suspicion directed toward an extremely rich Buddhist group like Fo Guang Shan.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, Fo Guang Shan does not shy away from money. Xingyun has more than once justified the use of money, stressing the importance of having a proper income when practicing Buddhism in the contemporary world. Even though he thought about giving away food for free, which has been realized to some extent, he did not think it was practical for all the teahouses to do so at this same time.

Yet, many teahouses are still not run like real businesses; they continue to explore the balance between "money" and "Buddhist values." To that end, they have come up with alternative ways of "billing," which incorporate Buddhist concepts in an attempt to significantly reduce the commercial sense of the teahouses.

Generally speaking, the billing process at a teahouse is as simple as possible. In order to do this, the menu is limited. Portion sizes are equal, as are meal formats (for example, the teahouses offer combos that include noodles or rice accompanied by tofu products or veggies). Unifying the dish format makes it possible to unify the price. Instead of leaving the bill for guests after their meal, a common practice is to sell meal vouchers beforehand. All of the vouchers have the same value and each voucher is valid for one dish. During lunch hour at the Water Drop Teahouse in Edmonton, for example, a great number of diners show up, most of

whom are Westerners working nearby. For a lot of them, six dollars is a fairly reasonable price for a full and nice meal, while for some regular adherents of Fo Guang Shan, having meals in the teahouse is just another way to support their community.

Interestingly, in many teahouses that adopt this type of billing, guests have to share a big table with others as all the tables are the same (large) size with the same number of chairs. At Hsi Lai Temple (Los Angeles, US), I saw the exactly the same tables and chairs as those in Edmonton and San Diego. I was then told that they are all designed and manufactured in Taiwan; even the distance between two chairs is accurately calculated so that a table of diners can have an intimate but proper space. The first time I dined in the Teahouse in Fo Guang Shan Edmonton, I was led to share a table with a stranger. A few minutes later another stranger joined us and we easily started a conversation. By seating all guests whether they know each other or not, the teahouse generates a sense of community.

In the newly built Water Drop Teahouse in Buddha's Memorial Centre at Fo Guang Shan's Kaohsiung headquarters in Taiwan, I experienced a brand new way of "paying" for my meal. This teahouse is clean and sparsely furnished, and looks like any other mid-range restaurant. However, not only is no menu is offered here (you eat whatever is available), neither is there a fixed price for each dish. When two local Taiwanese invited me to the restaurant, I was not aware of any of this, and was ready to buy vouchers as I had at other teahouses. But after all the dishes were placed on the table and I had finished eating, I found no one to turn to. I then waited for my bill, but nothing happened until my Taiwanese friends stood up to leave and urged me to do the same. They stopped at a big donation box not far from the dining area and I realized, "this is my 'bill!'" I asked how much money would be appropriate to leave in the box. They said, "It's really up to you! Throw inside the amount (of money) you think (is okay)." I

started to wonder whether anyone would notice even if I simply left without dropping any money.

The donation box – official name "merit box" (*gong de xiang* 功德箱) – is a common sight in almost all Chinese Buddhist monasteries, and how much "merit" money you donate is very personal. I had not had any problem during my previous encounters with donation boxes, as I did not feel I had "taken" anything (at least physically) from Buddha or the bodhisattvas. In those situations, I could just offer a random amount of money without much concern. Now that I had eaten this wonderful meal — and a meal, in my mind, always comes with a price — I was at a loss as to how to evaluate an appropriate "price."

In a situation such as the one I encountered at the teahouse in memorial centre, the straightforward money-goods exchange relationship is transformed into a "giving and giving back" relationship. When no price is being charged, food is "offered" rather than being "sold" — an offering from a Buddhist monastery and it feels like a *tangible benefit* from Buddhist divinities (italics added). In this way, a pure commercial activity is heavily diluted with spiritual flexibility. My inability to evaluate the value of my meal was not only due to the absence of a set price, but also because of the subtle gratitude I felt at being given a "free meal," and the freedom to choose my payment.

As far as I know, the teahouse above and Camphor Tree Teahouse (Kaohsiung, Taiwan) are the only ones currently adopting this way of "billing." They are regarded as representatives of the Buddhist spirit of "giving":

> Recalling with gratitude for the thousands of supports and loving kindness received during the construction of Buddha's Memorial Centre, [these two teahouses] thus offered delicious food without fixed menus and prices, to repay the society. [Through this, we are] hoping to lead an ethos of recognizing kindness, feeling grateful for the kindness, and paying gratitude to the kindness, and therefore, providing a piece of Pure Land where

> both devotees and the public could conveniently have meals." (*The Buddha Memorial Centre Newsletter*, issue 5, 2012, p9)

"Pan-foodway": Compassion and Gateway of Salvation

"Simple food, hospitality, making connections and spreading dharma"

--- Water Drop Teahouse, official Facebook page

The teahouse is a prominent arena for popular Buddhist food, but it is not the only one. The spirits in the citation above actually apply to a much broader food practice in Fo Guang Shan: food has become an indispensable element in forming the interface between Fo Guang Shan and the wider public. I call this Fo Guang Shan's "pan-foodway."

Although Fo Guang Shan's pan-foodway is almost invisible compared to its other major causes, it is in effect filling every non-religious moment and playing a subtle role in Fo Guang Shan's proselytization.

The community never seems to tire of producing and offering good food for and to its members and guests. Many community members frequently talk about food; it is part of their common vocabulary, whether they realize it or not. A former student of Tsunglin University[39] joked to me:

> "Before, the only reason that we were so excited about attending those guest lectures is the snacks offered over the break!"

Undoubtedly, food is always appealing in various occasions and in different cultures. How many times have we seen an enticing advertisement like this: "attend the event and there will be refreshments!" "You will get fed" may seem extraneous to the event, but if food were not a useful inducement for participation, why would it always take up precious space in a short announcement?

[39] Tsunglin University, whose predecessor is Shoushan Buddhist College, is the starting point of Fo Guang Shan's Buddhist education. It was the first building of the Fo Guang Shan headquarters in Kaohsiung, and is now one of Fo Guang Shan's global institutions.

In fact, food is central to proselytization in particular religious sects, most notably in a contemporary Hindu organization, food, due to food's ideological significance in Indian religious philosophies (A.S. King 2012). With regard to Fo Guang Shan, proselytization through food is not as prominent as in Hindu practices, but it is certainly used in Fo Guang Shan's global communities as an expression of hospitality (or "compassion" in Buddhist vocabulary) for laypeople, and also as an expedient means to attract new members.

In my fieldwork, quite a number of people were "introduced" to Buddhism via their dining experiences in Fo Guang Shan monasteries. Food itself might not inspire people's religious interest directly, but it creates a tangible means by which people are able to connect with Buddhism.

Xingyun recognized the phenomenon that "the condition for a good number of people entering Buddhism was simply a vegetarian meal they had in the monastery" (Manyi 2005b: 2). He illustrated this using an example of a former president of Taiwan. This president liked having meals at the Xuebao Monastery (雪寶寺) since the flavor and style of vegetarian dishes in this monastery appealed to him. It was said that because of this, the affinity between the president and Buddhism was established[40].

In order to establish more affinities in the public, Fo Guang Shan stresses the importance of "saving and guiding the sentient beings with vegetarian food" (*su cai du zhong* 素菜度眾). It is also reported that the Master himself often suggested that staff members "made the best vegetarian food offerings to the public with a 'happy spirit' (*huanxi xin* 歡喜心)" (Manyi 2005b: 10). A typical case in point is the Chaoshan Guest Hall at Fo Guang Shan's headquarters in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where a free vegetarian lunch is served to the public nearly every day.

[40] Xingyun, *Ru Shi Shuo* (*Explains This Way*)

When I first arrived at Fo Guang Shan, I was led there for lunch by an enthusiastic adherent.[41] "We'd better get there early," she urged me before we departed. "Otherwise there will be too many people in line." So it was. Even though we arrived before the lunchroom opened, the local villagers, who were obviously familiar with the place and the process, had already lined up in front of the dining hall. Many of them took their own containers. For more than 40 years, this food court has consistently served the local public. I could see that there was quite a good variety to the dishes. There was also a big pot of soup, and the volunteers were friendly and patient. When the hungry diners soon devoured most of the food, I heard the volunteer assure the guests who had not been fed: "Don't worry. We will have more later." It is therefore not really surprising to learn that a lot of volunteers come from the ranks of those hungry villagers.

For some members, giving out free food is a direct manifestation of Buddhist notion of "compassion." When I asked a young member to describe Fo Guang Shan in a few words, she stressed the word "compassion" with the following example:

> "I don't think there's another temple or place where they offer free lunch. Because that is…from what I know is that…Master Xingyun, because he went to a temple and someone gave him a free lunch, at the temple when he was just…I think a kid? Teenager? That's why he said… [Turned to Chinese] If he had that ability, he would want to offer that (free food) to everyone. And maybe because you come to temple, that's when you have the *yinyuan* (condition), to become a Buddhist. So I think this is great."

According to Xingyun, "anything that is helpful and can be beneficial to people, belongs to Humanistic Buddhism, and is the gate for saving/guiding the sentient beings (*du zhong de fa men* 度眾的法門)" (Manyi 2005b: 29-30). This somewhat explains why food offering is so

[41] Since we visited Fo Guang Shan as special guests, to attend the conference, we were not arranged to have meals in the Chaoshan Guest Hall, since it's more like a food court to the public, but were offered a special place to dine. I happened to come across this lady upon my arrival, so I had the chance to experience a typical lunch as a "regular guest."

common in Xingyun's Humanistic Buddhist practices. Food was omniscient when I visited different Fo Guang Shan locations. The food is not necessarily fancy, but decent. Recalling my first encounter with Fo Guang Shan's Edmonton branch, I was treated to lunch by the Venerable after only a short conversation. "Since you are here, how about staying for a lunch? I treat you!" I was then led to the Water Drop Teahouse and ordered cheese rice[42] from the menu. This became my primary image of this friendly Buddhist temple. I was also glad to think that, even if I didn't want to go to the shrine, I could always visit this restaurant. In the following numerous days I spent there, "come back for a meal" was something I loved to hear and indeed made me feel at home.

Food is especially appealing to younger people, and its effect is often most obvious in such cases. A little boy I knew from Fo Guang Shan Edmonton occasionally came with his mother. Once after he tried out the snacks offered during teatime, he came very early the next morning, telling people: "I want to have breakfast here!" Of course, he was then offered a nice breakfast. Now he is an active member of Fo Guang Shan, an affiliation he maintained even after moving to another city with his family (there is also a Fo Guang Shan branch in that city). It is hard to say that it was all because of food that he fell in love with at the monastery. However, I clearly remember that after that day, his affection grew for this place, as well as for the people inside.

Similarly, another elder member told me, half-jokingly, how she became a member of the community:

> At the beginning I didn't even believe in Buddhism. It was when this temple just opened here and this friend of [mine] told me there would be free food… so of course I came and

[42] Rice stuffed with tofu and veggies, baked with a thick layer of cheese on top. People at the Edmonton Fo Guang Shan teahouse call it "cheese rice" for short.

> also tried to get extra vouchers for my family. Then I started to do volunteer [work] here and then [became a] member of the lay association… See that's how I ended up here. The lesson is: never greed for food!

At the Edmonton monastery, free lunch is offered every Sunday after the Dharma service, which is also a time when the monastery becomes crowded. Not all of the diners have participated in the service. I observed that some people came to the teahouse after leaving the service and others simply came for lunch. But none of this seemed to bother those who run the Fo Guang Shan monastery. From the perspective of Buddhism, what is important is to make (positive) connections with anyone who comes to "meet" Buddhism and to make them feel the compassion of giving.

Nevertheless, whether or not a person will eventually enter the gate of Buddhism also heavily depends upon that particular individual's own condition and capacity. For instance, a young member told me about her first encounter, which is similar to that of the elder member who I quoted on page 101:

> …I came to Di Shui Fang (Water Drop Teahouse) for lunch. Later, because I do a volunteer job here and heard lots of people talking about Fo Guang Shan, then I got to know it…I mean, I knew this name, but I didn't know it is an entire…network... My roommate took me here. Her friends took her here and then she took me here… I had nothing to do at home. I killed my time by watching [television] and one day passed like that. And I was feeling down at that time, so I decided to busy myself. That's how I came to be a volunteer.

The Water Drop Teahouse has become popular through word of mouth. However, most of the visitors are one-time diners. As the above account shows, although the girl was introduced to Fo Guang Shan by her friend, and her friend was also introduced by someone else, only she alone became a regular member in the end. This probability may remind us of the idea of "destiny," but it is not exactly the same. According to Buddhism, a single force does not produce a result. If the Water Drop Teahouse could be seen as one condition created by Fo Guang Shan, then "had nothing to do" and "feeling down at that time" are the conditions within the girl

herself. This may be an oversimplified explanation for why the girl finally stayed while her friends did not. But the *yinyuan* (因緣), or "cause and conditions,"[43] is an essential Buddhist view, which implies a multi-directional effect.

Since the cause(s) and condition(s) of others are not predictable, Fo Guang Shan's attempt is to create conditions that people can afford. Food is such an outlet, through which Buddhism has established a point of interface with the wider public. Another typical case can be found on the 12th floor of Taipei Vihara. Whenever you go, taking a seat at one of those tables, a volunteer lady dressed in traditional costume sets a bowl of *laba* porridge (臘八粥)[44] in front of you. This service is available almost 24 hours and seven days a week.

Eating in Buddhism is the "Middle Way" between extreme asceticism and overindulgence, both of which can impede cultivation. Other than that, food is primarily secular in nature, and eliminating cravings for it is part of Buddhist cultivation. This chapter discussed Fo Guang Shan's food practice, which provides a cheerful and comfortable dimension to a traditionally ascetic religion. Though desires and strong sensorial experience are primarily rejected in Buddhism, this dining sphere is designed to bring out certain feelings among diners. "Peaceful, settling, delight of Dharma," to name a few, are the most welcome emotions.

[43] According to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, the basic meaning of *yin yuan* is "cause and the condition." The character *yin* refers to "a main cause (Skt. *hetu*), which directly incurs a result," while the character *yuan* refers to "an indirect cause" (Skt. *pratyaya*), which helps or participates in producing the result. The explanation further indicates that in "the narrower context of consciousness theory, it refers to the seeds…that are the most direct cause for any given mental event" (cited from DDB). This concept will be talked about further in Chapter Seven.

[44] Laba Porridge (*la ba zhou* 臘八粥) is a Chinese tradition derived from Indian Buddhist culture. I have related the story that Buddha gained enlightenment after accepting a bowl of goat milk from a shepherdess. The porridge is a cultural alteration to the goat milk taken by Buddha while "laba" is the date – December 8th in the lunar calendar – when the enlightenment is believed to have occurred. The custom was originally practiced to commemorate this important date in Buddhism, but now the tradition is practiced in a lot of regions in Chinese society separate from the context of Buddhism.

Nevertheless, Fo Guang Shan's aesthetic vegetarianism does not require giving up asceticism in eating, but rather, it develops Buddhist vegetarianism into an "aesthetic asceticism." By reforming the tastes, appearance, dining environment, and even the way of billing, the ancient form of vegetarianism is re-enchanted and re-animated in the modern era. This has greatly expanded the number of those who practice a Buddhist diet in the contemporary world.

Fo Guang Shan's food practice can be observed on a broader level. "Giving" is one of the superior merits in Buddhism and, therefore, offering food became the most straightforward way to realize Buddhist compassion. Xingyun and his Fo Guang Shan use food as a proselytizing instrument. Though no obvious proselytization can be observed, the role of food in drawing people's attention to Fo Guang Shan and Buddhism is significant. This reminded me of a piece that I heard about Judaism: Jewish parents would spread honey on books and give them to their children, in order to leave an early impression to the innocents that knowledge tastes sweet.

Chapter 5 Passage of Sound: the Sacred-Secular Duality of Fo Guang Shan's Musical Practice

Unlike the foodway, where the continuum between the tradition and the contemporary forms is prominent, two distinctly different arenas were identified in Fo Guang Shan's musical practice. On the one hand, traditional Buddhist music continues to be practiced and is re-contextualized on stage. On the other hand, contemporary Buddhist music is invented and especially active. In this chapter, I will examine these two different arenas. I argue that Fo Guang Shan, while boldly experimenting with modern concepts and techniques, carefully maintains the sacred and the secular as separate properties. Through both lines of "sound" products, Fo Guang Shan's Buddhism is able to meet a much wider population.

Chinese Buddhist psalmody, Monastery, Sacredness

Chinese Buddhist psalmody, known as *fanbai* (梵唄) in Chinese, is not "music" in the contemporary sense, but is a kind of chanting. It is traditionally employed in monastic life as part of liturgical routines, Buddhist festivals, and other ritual occasions. *Fanbai* is not only the musical expression to eulogize the greatness of Buddhist saints,[45] but it is one that is believed to have spiritual power.

Fanbai is imbued with unusual qualities that transcend our secular world. The word *fan* (梵) in *fanbai* indicates the religion's Indian origin,[46] and also connotes the exquisite voices (*weimiao yinsheng* 微妙音聲) of those prestige figures in Buddhism. Buddha himself was said to

[45] Like other world religions where musical expressions (e.g., chorales) mostly eulogize the greatness of their religious founder, *fanbai* is also the "song or verse praising the virtue Buddha" (Muller; Jones, cf. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism).

[46] *Fan* (梵) is the same character in the Chinese word for "Sanskrit". As the Chinese Buddhist cannons are mainly translated from Sanskrit texts, *fan* is almost an analogy of India/Buddhism. In addition to Sanskrit, the Pali is another important written language of Buddhist cannons, which are in fact more ancient than Sanskrit classics.

have 64 kinds of subtle voices with five supreme qualities: correct and straight (*zhengzhi* 正直), gentle and refined (*he ya* 和雅), clear and pure (*qingche* 清澈), profound and complete (*shen man* 深滿), and resonant and far-reaching (*zhoubian yuanwen* 周遍遠聞) (Chen 2002:138).

A prominent monk from the Tang Dynasty list the merits one can achieve by practicing *fanbai*:

1) Understanding Buddha's great virtue better
2) Becoming well-versed in Buddhist sutras
3) Purifying the organ of speech
4) Improving the thoracic cavity
5) Inducing calm and confidence in the multitudes
6) Longevity

(Yinjing, *Nanhai Ji Gui Zhuan*, or *Commentaries on Dharma from the South Sea*, cf. Li 1992: 82-3)

Fanbai not only serves the purpose of sutra chanting, but is also a sacred form of music that can profoundly influence its chanters. In a ritual context, it is used to signify the ritual proceeding and to purify disciples' minds, serving as a means of "ceasing chaos and keeping the ritual in [a] solemn atmosphere" (Chinese Buddhist association 1981: 379, cf. Li 1992: 82).

This aspect of *fanbai* is most clearly manifested through a unique form of performance – "free style." Performers (the chanters) are encouraged to generate their own spontaneous expression. Every single chant is a piece of impromptu work.

This form of expression is grounded in a fundamental teaching of Buddha — nothing stays forever (wu chang 無常) — everything in this world, even that is seemingly inflexible, is in constant change and changes at different rates. This "emptiness" is the very nature of our world.

In this perspective, the sense of existence and the rigidity of boundaries are dismissed; one's real focus in chanting is not the contents of the sutra, but his/her own voices, the flow of mind and body senses. What really matters becomes each unique moment of "here and now".

As Chen Biyan, a Taiwanese ethnomusicologist, showed, a chanter can *directly* experience the very essence of the world phenomenon – the uncertainty of things and the interconversion between the five basic elements of "self" [47]: physicality, emotion, conceptualization/thinking, action, and cognition. These made *fanbai* an expedient means to enter deep meditation (Sk: Samadhi; italics added) (Chen 2002: 143-5, 2003b: 4, 9). In other words, *fanbai* is a subjective and creative process in which the communication between one's voice and mind is ongoing. That is to say, when *fanbai* is being performed, it is simultaneously being constructed and re-constructed.

Unfortunately, during recent decades, attempts have been made to rationalize *fanbai* by fixing its notes and rhythm, because the unpredictable free-style is not considered "good" or "tidy" (Chen 2003b: 9). Since free-style is directly associated with *fanbai*'s religious significance, the rationalization (good for mass production) could fundamentally undermine its spiritual power. How to both popularize *fanbai* and maintain its spiritual qualities, then, became a question that Fo Guang Shan commits to answer. In the following sections, we will see a series efforts made to reproduce *fanbai* while also preserving its most essential qualities.

[47] The Five Accumulations (*Wu Yun* 五蘊; Skr: *skandha*) is a fundamental concept in Buddhism. The five accumulations/elements are in constant change and cannot stay the same forever. In *Faxiang*, by Shi Cizhuang, pp.131-2.

From Monastery to Theatre: Fo Guang Shan's Re-interpretation of *fanbai*

Buddhist music has long been regarded by Chinese ecclesiastical orders as the driving force behind the dissemination of Buddhist messages (Tian 1994: 63). To better achieve this purpose in the contemporary world, Fo Guang Shan's practitioners have not only preserved traditional *fanbai* within the monastic community, but are also developing it in the public domain. As Venerable Yongben commented, Fo Guang Shan's *fanbai* is orthodox Buddhist tradition combined with Xingyun's modern conception:

> It values high-tech recording and modern art, which at the same time, upholds the authenticity of the ancient Buddhist chanting (Rushiwowen[48] Facebook May 6 2013).

Rushiwowen Company reiterated that *fanbai* is the kind of musical work that should reach people's hearts on a profound level. Fo Guang Shan's modern reproduction of *fanbai* involves two parts: a CD recording and a live concert.

Buddhist soundtrack: Domesticize fanbai

Rushiwowen Ltd.[49] is an audio-visual company operated by Fo Guan Shan. A Fo Guang Shan devotee started the company in 1997, in the hopes of "taking over the mission of spreading Dharma like Ānanda[50]" (Ye 2009:83).

[48] Rushiwowen (company) is Fo Guang Shan's social sector, responsible for Buddhist musical products. See section below for more details.

[49] Rushiwowen official webpage: http://www.vg.com.tw/

[50] "*Rushiwowen*" (如是我聞; Skt: *evaṃ mayā śrutam)* is a phrase commonly used to start a sutra. Its literal meaning is "such is what I heard (from the Buddha)."[50] Ānanda, one of Buddha's prominent disciples, is said to have been the first person to have used it. "Since Ānanda had attended all of Śākyamuni's lectures, and was said to have a powerful memory, he was asked, after the Buddha's death to recite these, so that they could be written down for posterity." The purpose of this line is to influence the "subsequent students of the scriptures to believe that what is being taught was actually spoken by the Buddha" (cited from DDB).

Rushiwowen's goal is to "repackage the traditional music" and "to spread dharma via music." In descriptive language on its official Facebook page, the company reaffirms the transcendent nature of Buddhist music:

> Buddhist music is precisely one of the cultivation approaches in Buddhism, because it could lead us to the realm of kindness. Amidst the peaceful, fresh, graceful, and natural sound, Buddhist music could enable us to understand the essence of Buddhism as well as the mind power of a complete human life, experiencing the sovereignty within Buddha nature. (*Rushiwowen* official Facebook)

The company produces Buddhist related music in five categories, *fanbai* being a major one that comprises up to 60% (48 out of 80 CDs) of the company's products. *Crystal Stream of Dharma, Mahayana Sutra Chanting Classic* (*Fa Yin Qing Liu* 法音清流) is a *fanbai* series consisting of 22 CDs. In addition to the polished and professional package, the albums also offer *fanbai* in modified lengths and styles so that "busy modern people"[51] can still enjoy it without having to endure hours of tedious chanting. This contrasts with another *fanbai* series, "*Buddhist Fanbai,*" which is apparently more strongly targeted to Buddhists.

Different targeting audience results in different language styles. The introductions on "Crystal Stream of Dharma" CD series are characterized by their personalized and descriptive wording. Below is an example from a CD called Amitaba Sutra:

> Amitaba, meaning infinite lights and infinity life/ When the Buddha's name is heard, the isolation occurs/Transcending time and space/Feel Amitaba by your heart…
>
> In this half an hour (CD), we offer you the prayer of Pure Land, so that you are able to reassure the faith in your life in a short piece of time. Follow the affinity and follow the heart, every day is a good day. In addition, we also offer you in this disk some easy listening to enjoy, wishing the solemn and peaceful Dharma sounds could purify your body and mind, and render you with infinite pleasure of Dharma and calmness.

[51] Rushiwowen website: http://www.vg.com.tw/

Likewise, the "Seeds of Compassion" CD series is family-oriented, featuring a short sutra and children's voices:

> Rushiwowen…. hopes that through the harmonious and innocent children's voice[s], clean and easy soundtrack, the listeners could be soaked in the air of compassion, the warm and festive atmosphere of family union. The simple melody, easy to listen [to] and to remember, could be played at home every day, which is also a good recipe for improving family harmony.

The recording technique indeed removes *fanbai* from its original context, which means that it loses a significant amount of religious efficacy. In traditional *fanbai* practice, singers are also the listeners, as the chanting is supposedly an interactive process within each individual. However, this "singer-listener" relationship ruptures in CDs since recorded product allows little participation for its consumers, and the recorded *fanbai* is also reduced to spiritual easy listening.

Nonetheless, it is more than a simple reproduction, but an attempt to "teleport" a transcending realm into other social spaces as well (personal, office, family etc.). In this regard, although *fanbai*'s ritualistic function is absent, the "Buddhist atmosphere" is "domesticized" in listeners' everyday lives.

Buddhist Choir: "participatory spectacle"

Founded in 2002, the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir (*Fo Guang Shan fanbai zansong tuan* 佛光山梵唄讚頌團) is said to be the first in the Buddhist world. For years, the group has devoted itself to exploring new ways to present *fanbai* to a wider public.

As we already know, *fanbai* has never been a pure artistic work in showcase; rather, it is a spiritual practice through sound and coexisted with monastic life. Thus, turning *fanbai* into a theatre performance separates it from its primordial and commensal cultural context of being

re 17. The background is created by projector.
rce: Ye Qingfang, 2009, photo 4-2-4

heard before or after a sermon, during daily routine prayers, and at big dharma assembles (Ye 2009: 62). Moreover, *fanbai* is no ordinary music; it is believed to have powerful spiritual effects that can purify one's mind. Therefore, Fo Guang Shan's staging of *fanbai* has to address the following questions: how to perform *fanbai* without its co-existing context; and, perhaps more importantly, how to develop *fanbai*'s religious effects in the ruptured "singer-listener" relationship.

In practice, these two questions are intertwined. To cope with them, Fo Guang Shan came up with a series of strategies and techniques, which I term "participatory spectacle" staging. In this mode of staging, the purpose of the performance is to create a spectacle for the audience to appreciate, and to engage the audience's mind throughout the elaborate performance. The leader of the Choir, Venerable Yongfu, stated the goals as follows:

> "Through all kinds of staging effects, (we would like) to *embody* (my emphasis) Buddhist dharma in these programs, bringing the audience to the unique space of peaceful monastic life. Due to the limitation of the space on stage, we thus create different situations and contexts by applying multiple tools such as projectors, computer effects so as to deepen the contents of our performance and to convey thoughts, to inspire the audience, and to correspond to Buddha and Bodhisattva's pure mind. (Yongfu, or Ye[52] 2009:152)

The expected effect is a kind of incarnation of the Way of Buddhism, an

[52] Ye Qingxiang (an author) is the secular name of Venerable Yongfu. This is her master's degree thesis completed in Foguang University. I put Ye in the citation, as this is the name she put in on the cover of her thesis. As the person in charge of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir, she upheld the role as a Buddhist sangha and she strongly showed this stance in her writing. I would, instead of using this literature as an academic source, treat it as a "subcultural narrative" in which "insiders" actively narrate themselves through academic approaches to "explain" and to "display" themselves in this formal and "authoritative" way.

ambiance that could "spark sensations like meditation, wisdom, clear, melodious, pure, deep, far-reaching, admiring, peace" (Ye 2009:152), or, as Xingyun described:

> Being strong, but not fierce; soft, but not weak; pure, but not dry; still, but not sluggish, and able to help purify the hearts of listeners (Xingyun 2006:22).

Figure 18： Source: Ye Qingfang, 2009, photo 4-2-16

In order to achieve this effect, the choir simulates a monastic environment on stage by using props and projectors, placing the Buddhist drum and bell against a projected background of either morning or evening – an image of a solitary monastic life. Modern stage lighting is sophisticatedly applied in order to create a vivid scene and a feeling of spatial and temporal change. In this regard, modern theatre avails Fo Guang Shan to rebuilding an ideal and aesthetic monastic space on stage.

The physical construction of monastic life is still the easy part. How to redevelope *fanbai*'s religious effect, however, is much harder. The original "singer-listener" unity in an individual is now replaced by the "performer-audience" dichotomy between Fo Guang Shan sangha and audiences, the majority of whom may not be Buddhists at all. A unique advantage of Fo Guang Shan's choir is that all the performers are selected from its sangha. Their daily cultivations can be seen as a rehearsal, which provides a firm monastic foundation for their performance on stage. Choir leader Ven. Yongfu was clearly aware that a *fanbai* performance is distinctly different from an ordinary musical performance, because it would be impossible to get the feelings right with just a short period of time of imitation and technique practice. Instead, performing *fanbai* requires a long process that includes monastic experience and a relatively good knowledge of Buddhism.

This means that these sangha performers have two conflicting identities on them – on stage, they are first of all performers who present *fanbai* in an aesthetic manner, but they are also monks and nuns who are supposed to practice *fanbai* as cultivation. Even so, the conflict between cultivation and performativity is believed to be overcome through special training and a designated routine set right before each performance (Ye 2009: 148). "During the collective training, he or she should do their routine work, such as, chanting sutra, paying homage to Buddha, reciting mantra, doing meditation," said Ven. Yongfeng. She then explained her own experience in the performance:

> In the one or two months of training period (before the performance), if (I) could settle (my) mind and spend even more time in inner reflection, (I found it) would ensure the sacred and realistic characteristics of the performance and (the effect) is even more dramatic (Ye 2009: 142).

Even in the restroom of the theatre, these sangha performers are instructed to "close their eyes to meditate, to observe their own mind and to recite mantra so that they could gather their attention and get ready for the performance." Through this procedure, the sangha could "practice mindfulness, and…. make offerings to the 'future Buddha' (in the audience)."

The choir's slogan is "to promote Dharma and to enlighten sentient beings through sound and voice." By contextualizing their rehearsal in everyday cultivation and, in turn, by transplanting monastic cultivation on stage in an aesthetic manner, the performers complete a comprehensive transformation. In this sense, the performance is no longer merely a spectacle, but also a direct presence of each sangha's mental state and actual cultivation:

> When the performers modeled Bodhisattvas in their consciousness and utter[ed] their voices with the guide of compassion, the stage, then, is turned into a spectacular ritual work. And both the performer-sangha and the audience-future Buddha are lifted (Ye 2009: 148).

Due to contextual limits, traditional *fanbai* no longer adapts to the increasing competition and challenges in the contemporary spiritual market. By lending this Buddhist cultivation with form of modern theatre, it is extended to the public domain, which could thus influence a much wider population, of whom this Buddhist organization has been strongly aware. Their reform in musical practice echoed with their other efforts for the same token – to disseminate Buddhism in our contemporary world.

Contemporary Music-Making

The modern staging of *fanbai* is no doubt an active move to reach out to new audiences. However, *fanbai* in theatre remains a relatively upper-class activity and the peculier cultural context that it coexisted with set a limit from further popularizing. Contemporary music, in comparison, is more versatile and easy to popularize.

The predecessor of the Fo Guang Shan choir was the Youth Buddhist Singing Team (*Qingnian Fojiao Geyong dui* 青年佛教歌詠隊), which Xingyun organized almost 60 years ago. For the young Master, the significance of music in spreading Buddhism was rather obvious – solemn and sacred as *fanbai* is, it is not accessible enough for ordinary people:

> Generally speaking, to study sutra is the job and cultivation for those ~~a~~ few learned monks or Buddhist laypeople, and scholars who do research in philosophies. The majority of common people do not have time and patience to explore those profound Buddhist theories. But (most of the) people have the most convenient connections with music. A piece of sacred song or a pious praise of Buddha could often lift the spirit to a holy and pure level." (Xingyun 2003: 8)

In the following years, he wrote lyrics and had them composed into pop songs. Unlike contemporary Christian music (CCM), which has already taken shape into an independent genre, contemporary Buddhist music remains a slow-growth category largely due to the discouraging

attitude toward sensory desires codified in Buddhist teachings. Even so, contemporary Buddhist music continues to develop in response to the changing needs of both contemporary society and the Buddhist community.

Occasional Versatility

The worldly goal and reforming vision of Fo Guang Shan have led to its engagement with the rest of the society. Their Buddhists are now active in various social occasions beyond monasteries. This means that *fanbai*, whose close relationship with monastic space sets a boundary, can no longer catch up with the non-religious needs of Fo Guang Shan as well as other progressive Buddhists.

Take for example an academic conference that I attended at Fo Guang Shan headquarters (Kaohsiung, Taiwan)[53]. The opening ceremony took place in a modern conference hall. Upon commencement, everyone was told to stand up and sing a song called "Song of Three Jewels[54]" (*San Bao Ge* 三寶歌). Most of the attendees were Buddhist scholars and there were also many Buddhist sangha (two identities are overlapped in a lot of cases). Apparently, chanting a piece of "Praise to Incense[55]" or "Great Compassion Mantra[56] would have been untimely - neither the content nor the style of these *fanbai* were appropriate, and might have led to a sense of sacredness, but an awkward sacredness. Therefore, "Song of Three Jewels," a contemporary song with Buddhist-related content, was perfect for the occasion. Except for a slight feeling of novelty, I did not see there was any incompatibility.

[53] As education and Buddhist studies are held great importance in Humanistic Buddhism, and Fo Guang Shan for that matter, scholastic activities are part of their routine.
[54] The *Three Jewels* of Buddhism commonly refers to "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha".
[55] The praise of Incense (*Lu Xiang Zan* 爐香贊) is a piece of *fanbai* which is chanted to start most of the Buddhist rituals. Though short in length of its content, the pace of chanting is extremely slow.
[56] The Great Compassion Mantra (*Da Bei Zhou* 大悲咒), a popular Buddhist spell related to Bodhisattva Kuanyin, is the Chinese transliteration of its Sanskrit version.

The history of "Song of Three Jewels" can be traced back to the early Republican period. So far as we know, Taixu was disgusted by the lifeless image presented by Buddhism in his time. Greatly concerned for the future of Chinese Buddhism, he initiated the "Buddhism for Human Life" movement in the hope of rediscovering the vitality of this religion. Along with his other efforts, he realized that other than traditional sutra chanting, there was no music that could inspire and motivate the public and, at the same time, represent the spirit of Buddhism. In 1930, Venerable Hongyi (弘一), known for his music and art talents, was invited to compose a melody to go with lyrics by Taixu. The result is "Song of Three Jewels," which is regarded in the Chinese Buddhist world as a milestone of "modern music entering into Buddhism" (Miaoyue 2006b: 5).

Buddhist pop

Contemporary Christian Music bands aim to deliver the messages of God and evoke the love for Him among their listeners, which means that they were not born to satisfy different contexts, but developed largely for the purpose of spreading gospel. Likewise, Fo Guang Shan's contemporary Buddhist music industry has no trouble making "the creative connection between faith-based messages and what were once thought of as secular musical genres." (Chang and Lim 2009:1)

Xingyun himself has limited knowledge of music, but he organized a youth singing team in the hope of attracting young people to study Buddhism. In fact, many of Xingyun's first disciples began their affinity with Fo Guang Shan through this team and later they became founders of Fo Guang Shan causes. As Fo Guang Shan's Ven. Miaoyue asserted, making popular songs does not mean that Buddhists are giving up traditional *fanbai,* but rather that they are

adding to fanbai and trying to attract a different demographic (Miaoyue 2006a, b). Given that the capacities of people differ, Fo Guang Shan chose to adopt a wide variety of musical styles in an effort to reach as many people as possible.

"Happy Song" (*Huanle Song* 快樂頌), for example, is an album covering a wide range of music styles such as pop, rock and hip-hop. The song "Auspicious[57]" (*Ji Xiang* 吉祥) is an impressive work. It elaborates on Fo Guang Shan's "Three Goods" (*San Hao* 三好) movement — "say good words; do good deeds; have good minds." The music video for this song is interesting not because it is particularly innovative, but because of the way that it flies in the face of stereotypes of Buddhism. A group of teenagers in T-shirts, sweatpants, and African-American-style caps dance against the high-rise monastery (Taipei Vihara) on a busy street in the capital city of Taiwan. Few people can relate this image to the image of Buddhism in their heads. Every time I showed the video to others, I could see only surprise on their faces. They seemed to be thinking, "This is unbelievable." The music is pure R&B and the dance is pure hip-hop – there is nothing to be surprised about. However, it was made at a Buddhist monastery, and these fashionable street dancers are real Buddhists. The video embodies at least two important messages from Fo Guang Shan: Buddhism can exist in an urban space (Buddhist temple in high-rise, see Chapter Three), and Buddhism can totally belong to the young generation.

re 19: The album cover for
ɔpy Song"

[57] For a better experience, I highly recommend checking out this song on YouTube (link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSzbwXWAV94.)

So it does. "Auspicious" became especially popular among Fo Guang youth[58]. A search for the song on YouTube reveals a great number of videos directed at Fo Guang Shan's global youth divisions. On the celebration of Buddha's birthday in 2012, the youth division in Edmonton also choreographed its own hip-hop dance based on "Auspicious." Young members got together after school or work, practicing the dance with great effort. They did not seem to really care about the final performance on Buddha's birthday, but enjoyed the process of being together with peers, doing something that average teenagers would do. When the day came, people saw a group of young girls and boys, dressed in hoodies and sweatpants, dancing in front of five golden Buddha statues.

"Where there is Dharma there is way[59]" (*you fofa jiu you banfa* 有佛法就有辦法) is another example of Fo Guang Shan reaching out to youth. Taiwanese teen idol Shen Jianhong was invited to sing the song. Besides the vernacular lyrics, the song includes perhaps the most popular mantra of Buddhism - "oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ" - in its chorus. The six syllables are familiar to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Chinese societies. Its repetition in the chorus shows a strong characteristic of Buddhism. However, just like "Auspicious," except for the content of lyrics, everything else in this music video is imported from the non-Buddhist world.

This song set its background against Hsi Lai Temple – a branch monastery in Los Angeles, US[60]. The young idol, dressing casually, led the singing with maybe a hundred other

[58] In Fo Guang Shan, the active young members are called Fo Guang youth (*fo guang qingnian* 佛光青年, or "*foqing*" 佛青 for short), which roughly refers to the unmarried members under 40 years old. The majority are in their 20s and early 30s. There is also an official group, Buddha's Light International Association – Youth Association Division (BLIA YAD), for the youth in each branch monastery.

[59] Again, to better experience the novelty, please take the advantage of modern media. Check out the video through this link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xjsdtpg4LFQ, or search "有佛法就有办法".

[60] Interestingly, in Taiwan, Fo Guang Shan presents itself as being modern, urban and global, while in the West, Fo Guang Shan tends to express its cultural identity – being Chinese, exotic, and ancient.

kids. They danced around the temple, in a hip-hop that has incorporated Buddhist mandras (hand gesture) – an unexpected creolization. As commented by Li on other cases, Fo Guang Shan's popular song is a perfect example of "how, in modern Buddhist practice, traditional behavioural patterns are acculturated under western influence" (Li 1992: 87).

The first I watched MTV was when a young member in the Edmonton youth division shared it on Facebook. I did not disguise my shock at that moment, commenting, "I have never thought Buddhism could be sung in this way!" The young people thought that I totally overreacted. Later in the temple, girls giggled about my reaction and told each other what I'd said. As I started to learn more about the group, I realized that pop songs are a substantial part of the Fo Guang youth culture. Young members share their common favourite songs and perform them on different occasions. This partly contributes to their community identity.

The advantage of making contemporary music becomes clearer when songs are composed for even younger ones. A CD called "Hip Hop Buddha - Be My Love" ("嘻哈佛, Be My Love") is an example. Its introduction says:

> There is finally a music album specially for kids! When Master Xingyun wrote lyrics for them, he met the pop music composer Li Bingzong. In this way, the wisdom of Buddhist words is amazingly appropriated into pop songs so that our children could easily pick up some Buddhist songs, becoming a "*ha fo* little Bodhisattva" (*ha fo xiao pusa* 哈佛小菩薩)! (*Rushiwowen* official website)

The word "*ha fo* (哈佛)"seems like a double-entendre. For one thing, "ha fo" is the Chinese transliteration of "Harvard," a world class university that a lot of Chinese parents would like to send their children for education; "ha" also emerged recently as a verb meaning "being a

big fan of," and "fo" is "Buddha," so "ha fo" is a popular way to say "being a big fan of Buddha."

We can see that Fo Guang Shan's music products cover a network stretching from modern office workers to pious devotees, from high-end audiences to ordinary CD listeners, from kids and teenagers to adults. Indeed, the making of contemporary music is indeed a secular activity, but if we consider the actual effect of these songs, it is not easy to conclude whether it is Buddhism being secularized, or it is our daily life being "Buddhist-ized."

Establishing Connections through Music

In response to questions and doubts, Buddhist classics are sought to provide evidence of the early utilization of music in Buddhism, while some people maintained that it is just the external (form) that has been modified rather than the internal (religious nature and faith) (Miaoyue 2006a, 2006b). Interestingly, CCM practitioners adopted the same argument when they were confronted with the same situation — to distinguish between "mode and message," "form and content." CCM supporters held that music is just the *mode* to carry the message and a *form* to contain the contents. Since "mode" and "form" are neutral, music is also a value-free container, having nothing to do with morality (Chang and Lim 2009:397).

The "form and content" dichotomy is an effective defense for CCM as the real question is whether contemporary music was in conflict with the sacredness of the church. However, this is not the case when it comes to contemporary Buddhist music. As far as we know, singing and dancing are considered as disturbance to mind practice, according to early Buddhist precepts. This means that music by its nature is *not* a neutral form that is free from moral judgment.

In response to this challenge from Buddhist ethics, Fo Guang Shan first of all argued that the capacities among sentient beings are all different from one another. In other words, using a single method to promote Buddhism is impractical. Instead, Buddhism should provide convenience — a lower threshold — for the average population (Miaoyue 2006b: 28). More importantly, the value of music isn't so much its melody or lyrics but its ability to connect listeners and Buddhism.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, creating conditions, or establishing connections (*jieyuan* 结缘), is an essential idea in the proselytization of Chinese Buddhism (Mahayana), which is similar to Christian missionary work to some degree but is far less "aggressive." In Chinese Buddhism, a connection is made for now and it is believed to gain full development once all proper conditions are gathered. Music is such a condition. Whether or not the music can affect an individual spiritually is not the most important aspect for the moment being. What matters is that this "seed" planted by music may sprout at any time in the future.

Ven. Yongfu, the leader of the Fo Guang Shan *fanbai* choir, pointed out that the starting point of this choir is to create "conditions for people to step onto [a] Buddhist path in a delightful way" (Ye 2009: 118). The slogan of *Rushiwowen* - "to extensively save masses via the voice of the Brahma; to widely establish affinities (connections) through music" (*yi fanyin guangdu shifangzhong, yi yinyue guangjie shifangyua* 以梵音廣度十方眾, 以音樂廣結十方緣) – reveals the significance of music in Fo Guang Shan.

Venerable Cihui was an early member of Xingyun's youth singing group. She recalled how she started her affinity with Buddhism:

> In those days when Master (Xingyun) led the Buddha Chanting Society in Yilan, there were various activities to attract young people. But his (sermons on) Vimalakirti Sutra or the regular assemblies all bored me and I didn't feel like continuing…the only things that I established affection with were singing and excursion, as well as (a Chinese literature) class. (Fu 2007:75)

The Venerable was a still young girl when she joined the group, but now she is already an Elder in Fo Guang Shan. Ironically, it was because of these "secular opportunities" that she began her "sacred career."

Meantime, the fact that most of the Buddhist sutras are diverse in languages and style makes it hard for them to find a niche in the popular market in a time of globalization and among young generation. Music, however, just like food, is a vernacular language. In this sense, contemporary music should *not* be a neutral carrier, but its value precisely lies in its "vernacular expression." After all, people have different ways of experiencing spirituality, and sometimes seemingly secular activities can generate sacred effects (Kraus 2009).

Revisit the Notion of Music in Contemporary Chinese Buddhism

When contextualizing "music" in a specific culture, we often find that the term is not universal. Similar to Islam, the introduction of the concept "music" to Chinese Buddhist discourse (Ch: *yinyue*) is relatively recent. Ethnomusicologist Chen argues that linguistic change can mean a transformation in the monastic culture that is embedded in a larger social change (Chen 2002). Other scholars have also indicated "when a linguistic item operates in a linguistic system, it is there to establish its current relationship with the time and space" (Briggsand and Banman 1992, cf. Chen 2002:147). The fact that "music" is interchangeable with "*fanbai,*" in Robert Young's words, "preserved the historical condition of cultural interactions" (cf. Chen 2002: 146). In other words, what lies behind this choice of language is the dramatic shift in the

given social circumstance and social relations, i.e., Chinese Buddhism in the process of modernization.

The opening of the contemporary era in Chinese history dates to the First Opium War (1840-1842), an era that symbolizes significant change in the relationship between China and the rest of the world. Since the time of the Opium War, Chinese society has opened in order to meet the increasing economic and political demands of industrialised countries. The dream of the "Middle Kingdom"[61] was shattered and the domestic social and political order also changed dramatically. Religion, as one social organ, was unexceptionally impacted and was obliged to react accordingly (Chapter 2).

According to Young, the globalization of imperial capital forces and the unification of "time"[62] undermined the localities of a culture (cf. Chen 2003: 147). The Buddhist terminology system, as well as its cultural practice, was born with such a strong Buddhist locality. These Buddhist vocabularies later became more and more difficult for social members to accept, because the cultural practices of a given society are now largely shaped by a modern educational system and global mass communication. Under such circumstances, many traditional Buddhist terms either exist without reminding people of their religious contet,[63] or have completely lost their popularity.

Contrary to *fanbai*'s being "traditional" and "liturgical," "music" is "modern" and "social" (Chen 2003b). In this sense, using the term "music" calls off the once defined boundary

[61] For a long period of time in the history, Chinese used to think their country was the centre of the world, thus calling the territory as "Middle Kingdom" - Zhong Guo – the Chinese name of China till today.
[62] Gregorian Calendar
[63] In modern Chinese language, there are a great number of Buddhist words being used in people's everyday lives without being acknowledged and without people realizing the religious implications of those words.

between the sacred religion and the secular society, creating an open end from religion to the public.[64] This thus broadens the interface between the Buddhist community and the rest of society. In other words, the word "music" is a linguistic technique, which structured the Buddhist sangha's modern discourse and provides the sangha with a source to participate in the interaction of the contemporary world (Chen 2002: 136-7); music is itself the very *action* that the Buddhist community seeks for modernization and for recognition from the rest of society.

[64] In our case of Fo Guang Shan, music is consciously employed throughout its history, playing a distinct role in proselytization. Whereas in some situations (especially when in front of the general public) the term "music" is adopted as a general reference to both traditional *fanbai* and contemporary Buddhist music, within the monastic context (among the insiders) there are strict limits to how *fanbai* can be used.

Chapter 6 "Beautiful" Buddhism: Performative Rituals' Entertainment and Efficacy

Although rituals are generally downplayed in the new religious movements in Taiwan, Fo Guang Shan, on the contrary, revitalizes and reinvents Buddhist rituals with various theatrical crafts. This re-enchantment of Buddhism not only could be observed on a daily basis, but is also celebrated on broader level as social drama. With the help of modern techniques and media, ritual - the traditional mediator between the secular and the sacred - is remediated again. In so doing, ritual's religious efficacy is strengthened and is imbued with entertaining capacity as well, and thereby, realizes greater influence in the modern world.

Ritual and performance

Recent views hold that rituals do not merely reflect culture like a passive unit plugged into a society, but "give birth to new views and relations" that can redefine the given society and culture (Geertz 1973, cited from Alexander 1997:140).

Victor Turner might be the greatest advocate for ritual's subjectivity. In his theory, ritual is "a transformative self-immolation of order as presently constituted, even sometimes a voluntary *sparagmos* or self-dismemberment of order, in the subjunctive depths of liminality" (Turner 1982: 83). This liminal quality of ritual separates participants from their everyday structural identity and, consequently, creates an ambiguous status so as to prepare the ritual participants to "undergo a transition" to their new identity and social order (Turner 1982: 80-5). The role of ritual as a transition or mediator is prominent.

The relatively new studies further approach ritual with more detailed examinations of its subjective dimensions. In particular, the focus is put on the "experiential and performative" aspects of ritual, such as light, stage, and chorus (Claus 1997: 191), or its "physical, bodily, and

gestural features" (Alexander 1997:142), and even musical choreography, costumes, use of ceremonial space, iconography, artistic style, etc. (Turner 1982: 12). As Schechner pointed out, rituals are "performative acts," which don't merely "dramatize society and culture" but also involve "a showing of doing" (Schechner 1977).

Both archaeological and anthropological data show that rituals (either sacred or secular) and performance have gone hand-in-hand throughout history. In a way, the two are more than analogies but are substantially identical, for "ritual defined in [the] most general and basic term[s] is a performance, planned or improvised" and "ground in the everyday human world"(Alexander 1997: 139). Rituals "can occur separately or alternatively (more or less rapidly), but…predominantly they occur together" (Rostas 1998: 85). More specifically, according to Schechner, ritual usually involves one or more of the performance genres, which are theatre (narrative), music (sound), and dance (movement) (Schechner 2004:7042). The first genre, theatre, is sometimes equivalent to "drama."

Ritual and performance are also differentiated from each other in certain ways. For instance, there is an absence of intention in ritual: "the actors both are and are not the authors of their acts" as they are just "copying, reproducing what they have been taught by others," while performance is the conscious or intentional effort put into the acting, sometimes more than necessary and even over-doing. Performance, generally speaking, is "interesting to watch" (Rostas 1998: 86-91). Rather than distinguishing ritual and performance from the perspective of intention, for Schechner, therein lies a dyad of different emphasis existing between ritual and performance: ritual emphasizes efficacy, and performance emphasizes entertainment and aesthetic qualities (Schechner 2004: 7042). The table below shows a complete juxtaposition:

Efficacy–Ritual	Entertainment–Aesthetic
Human and nonhuman audience	Human audience
Audience participates	Audience observes
Audience believes	Audience appreciates
Serving the divine	Serving the market
Eternal present	Historical time
Revealed truths	Invented fictions
Transformation possible	Transformation unlikely
Trance possession	Self-awareness
Virtuosity downplayed	Virtuosity valued
Collective creativity	Individual creativity
Criticism discouraged	Criticism flourishes

Table 3: Robert Schechner. "Drama: Ritual and Performance." *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2004. Pp. 7043.

Claus also stressed the differentiation that the audience makes between ritual and performance respectively, as ritual's "stage" does not "separate a passive audience from the performer" as in most theatres, but draws its performance from the interaction between the central actor and the "active chorus of participants" (Claus 1997: 197). However, the distinction between ritual and performance is by no means oppositional. Instead, qualities on both sides reinforce each other in an intertwined manner: "throughout the world, rituals are made from all the varieties of aesthetic performance," and these ritual performances are hence not only "efficacious," but are also "beautiful and pleasure-giving" (Schechner 2004: 7042-4).

As some scholars have indicated, craft or technique is inherent in acting (Hastrup 1998:34-7) and is "an integral part of art's peculiar power of enchantment" (Gell 1992, cited from Hastrup 1998: 30). This means that "power of acting" can be acknowledged in the context

of ritual. For some scholars, the "theatrical" devices, such as stage, light, and chorus, are key to understanding the effectiveness (or the "efficacy," in Schechner's words) of ritual, as "the effectiveness is rooted in the emotions that precede the performance" (Claus 1997: 196). In other words, performativity and rituality are mutually complemented, with performativity "outwardly communicat[ing]" with rituality (Rostas 1998: 92).

In the following sections, I take a close look at Fo Guang Shan's re-inventions of rituals through some cases, exploring how the efficacy and the pleasure-giving of rituals are created through "secular technology."

Ritual, Re-enchanting Buddhism, and Sparking Curiosity

"You know other (Buddhist groups) in Taiwan right?" said a young female member of Fo Guang Shan. "No matter [whether the groups are] Tzu Chi or Fa Gu (two of the four major Buddhist groups in Taiwan)…. none of them are like Fo Guang Shan - our rituals are fancy." She told me this bluntly, in a matter-of-fact tone.

Indeed, Tzu Chi, which focuses on philanthropic activities, does not show much interest in Buddhist ritual. It barely even has temples, but does maintain offices to manage its local charities. Fa Gu Shan, on the other hand, emphasizes intellectual activities such as Buddhist studies and meditation.

In fact, as a response to science and modernity, a lot of contemporary religious groups tend to reduce the traditional religiousness to spiritual or intellectual activities. Ritual, in particular, is experiencing devaluation (Madson 2007: 4-5). However, Fo Guang Shan emphasizes a "rich liturgical practice" that involves "reviving traditional Buddhist ritual practices" and "publicizing those practices in ways that will teach and inspire the people around the modern world" (Madson 2007: 54). In order to do this, Fo Guang Shan criticually preserved

the tradition and reinvented some of them to accommodate modern values,[65] since the purpose is to create a joyous public celebration for the majority who do not yet understand what Buddhism is, or as Chandler described, is "sparking people's curiosity." This is one of the four primary methods that "the master and his disciples have relied [on] to carry out their ambitious objectives" (Chandler 2005: 162). Instead of "proselytizing aggressively" like some religions (which is not intrinsic in Buddhism either), Fo Guang Shan chooses to "attract attention" by "creating impressive structures and organizing large-scale events" – "accentuating the uniqueness of both Buddhism and Chinese culture" (Chandler 2005:176).

That is to say, Fo Guang Shan is re-enchanting an ancient religion in a time of disenchantment (global market reduces exocitism; scientific thinking reduces the charm of religion, etc.). Ritual staging is one of the major techniques that Fo Guang Shan used to present Buddhism and to confer it with an aesthetic and pleasure-giving image. I would illustrate this point with the following example from Fo Guang Shan Edmonton.

[65] Personally, I think the only monastery that compares to the "fanciness" of Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan is Ling Yan Shan, another major Buddhist community. This old-school monastery is renowned for its strict monastic regulations and portrays itself as a loyal successor of authentic Pure Land Buddhism. The devotees in this community strictly follow traditional monastic rules. When a regular devotee from Ling Yan Shan visited Fo Guang Shan for the first time, he was surprised and commented Fo Guang Shan's practice as being "too loose".

Figure 23: Settings for Buddha's birthday: Three baby Buddhas stand in an

Dramatize Religious Festival: a Showcase of Buddha's Birthday

At Fo Guang Shan Edmonton, big occasions always take place in the main shrine. Not only is the ritual is carefully prepared, but a set of theatrical rules is strictly followed throughout the event to ensure formality and efficacy and, sometimes more importantly, spectacle.

Big occasions include important Buddhist festivals and cultural festivals. Buddha's birthday, for instance, is one such supreme event, which is an all-day celebration at almost every Fo Guang Shan monastery[66]. As the celebration approaches, there is a festive and busy atmosphere throughout the whole monastery.

In East Asian countries, Buddha's birthday is usually celebrated in late April or May.[67] It is also commonly known as the "Bathing Buddha Festival" (*yu fo jie* 浴佛节) because a central

[66] Generally the ordinary weekly service only lasts around two hours in the morning while the bigger ones can take as long as two to seven days. The situation also varies from place to place, depending on the level of the branch monastery.

[67] Different regions celebrate this festival on different dates. While East Asian Buddhists celebrate on Shakyamuni's birthday, Southeast Asian countries – where the festival is known as Vesak – celebrate in commemoration of the three most important days in Buddha's life: his birth, enlightenment, and death.

Figure 21: girls in costumes

activity on this day is to pour buckets of water onto a Baby Buddha statue, symbolizing a cleansing of the dust on our true Buddha nature.

The bathing area, the central stage of the event, requires a lot of detailed work. A small artificial pond is set up with an baby Buddha standing inside, decorated with flowers and lights. Fresh flowers are clustered around the pond while some artificial lotus float on the water. A few days before the event, this pond is set up in the main shrine in front of the Buddha altar. At that time, the colorful lighting and mist effect are tested to ensure that they are working properly. The final work (Figure 20) is indeed one of a kind - the beautiful setting easily attracts people's attention as they walk by.

Costume, a necessity for any performance, is also a highlight. Ethnic outfit including Manchu *qipao* (representing Chinse in this context), Japanese kimono, Korean hanbok, Indian sari, and Thai female dress were worn during the ritual. From the simple material and alternated design, it is obvious that these costumes are not standard, everyday traditional outfits, but are special costumes for theatre use.

Young girls, especially, are fascinated with these dresses, not only because they are beautiful, but also because this is one of only a few occasions where people can dress in something delightful, something other than black Buddhist robes.

Figure 22: girls in costumes are bathing Buddha

I noticed the countries that these costumes represent are the ones with long traditions of both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. Given Humanistic Buddhism's inclusive vision, I assumed that this showcase of costumes virtually staged an unredeemed scene – the unification of different Buddhist traditions – on an occasion like Buddha's birthday. My assumption was confirmed by a person in charge, who said, in a half-joking way, "We are pretending to be from these countries!"

Even so, not everyone seemed to know what he/she was doing. When I asked some people why they were dressed as they were, most hesitated before giving their answers. After I shared my suspicions with them, a young member said:

> Yeah, they do represent different traditions. Maybe a respect…. I'm not sure. For me it's beautiful to the outsiders. When they see this they'd be like "wow!" 'Cause every time of this year, there are people watching from aside. Shifu (the venerable) would become very strict with the rehearsal…. basically I feel this is made to be a show for others to watch.

"Show" was a less respectful but precise term. In fact, the event had been announced during weekly services well in advance of the date. I remember that on one occasion, the Venerable warmly told everyone to bring friends and family here, which made me realize that the festival was intended for a much wider audience – non-Buddhists are also invited to participate and to "watch."

The "showbiz nature" of this religious event was further confirmed by the repeated rehearsals. Bathing Buddha and making offerings – the central actions in this "show"–were rehearsed several times beforehand. Girls of similar heights were paired in a row. They waited outside the shrine until they heard the sound of the Dharma instrument. Then they marched into the shrine

along the middle path toward the central Buddha.[68] When a pair of ritual performers reached a certain point in front of the altar, they turned squarely and walked onto it, precisely timing their every movement. *Ling gu* (鈴鼓), one of the Dharma instruments, would serve as signals for everyone's next actions.

Most of these ritual performers were community members – lay volunteers who come to the monastery on a regular basis. If the ritual were only for the adherents (i.e., the performers and the audience were one and the same), then the rehearsal would have been unnecessary. After all, a rehearsal is necessary only when audience is not made up of the performers. Clearly, these rehearsals were to prepare for a wider audience, one most likely composed of non-Buddhists and non-Fo Guang Shan Buddhists in particular.

When the time came, the "performers" lined up in front of the "audience." However, the event did not start right away. The ritual host–the Venerable–gave a brief introduction on the event procedure and asked for cooperation from every participant. This is a common practice in every large-scale event, as only adherents have a good knowledge of the ritual process, and ritual performance involves the performance of both actors (adherents) and audience (drop-in ritual participants). Thus, the coordination from the non-adherents audience depends on their understanding on the general ritual procedures. Only after this short speech did the ritual begin with a solemn silence. The audience (general participants) was asked to enter the shrine after the performers (rehearsed adherents).

[68] The middle path is an area where people are not allowed to casually walk through. It is in the visual field of the central Tathagata Buddha and invisibly separates the East end from the West. Normally when one wants to cross from one side of the shrine to the other, he or she has to circle around from outside of shrine (i.e., exiting from the door on one side and entering from the door on the other side). In the case where there is only one entrance, one would pause to make a bow before crossing, which is a simplified manner to show respect like saying "pardon me". On only situation when the middle path is used without any caution is during a ritual.

Each ritual that I attended at Fo Guang Shan monasteries was a spectacular piece. They are not only services for spiritual purpose, but also a showcase to attract outsiders. Before rushing to the conclusion that Fo Guang Shan's Buddhism has degenerated to some kind of showbiz spectacle, it is necessary to remember the common approach in Fo Guang Shan's proselytization process: taking advantage of human desires to spark people's interest. As Chandler explains:

> When a news reporter from Wollongong, Australia, asked Fo Guang Shan's current abbot, the Venerable Xinding, how the organization planned to spread Buddhism among non-Chinese Australians, he replied, 'people will increasingly come simply through human curiosity. Seeing the beautiful temple, they will be drawn to see what goes on inside.'" (Chandler 2005: 171)

He then argued that Fo Guang Shan clerics generally share an attitude, in which "the very splendor of Buddhism, and the impressive way in which it is propagated by Fo Guang Shan, will naturally excite people's interest" (Chandler 2005: 172).

In previous chapters, this approach has led us to see a specially designed religious space, elaborate foodways and music making. Now regarding ritual, Fo Guang Shan once again employs the same strategy – to reenchant Buddhism with aesthetic rituals, actualizing a Pure Land image in front of the masses. An elder immigrant from Hong Kong, when asked about her first encounter with Fo Guang Shan, wistfully replied:

> That was when I just came to Canada. I used to go to temple a lot in Hong Kong and then I came here…. some friend introduced me to Fo Guang Shan. So I came. It was the Emperor Liang Repentance Service that time I remember, and as I looked at the service I thought "how beautiful it is! I've never seen such a beautiful ritual in my life!" From that time on, I started to come regularly.

However, Fo Guang Shan's beautiful rituals also risks of contradicting Buddhist ethics.

In Chinese Buddhism, any material form is an illusion generated from our organ senses, and any attempt to seek true Buddhism by indulging in a sensory experience is in vain, like

trying to reach a destination after seeing the mirage. Given this context, it is not unusual for some to question Fo Guang Shan's reinvention of ritual performance.

The strategy of *jiejia xiuzhen* (借假修真)[69] is a common explanation. The literal translation is "utilize the false to cultivate the true." It is a strategy of cultivating the true reality through provisional practice. In terms of Fo Guang Shan's reinvention, aesthetic ritual is such a temporary instrument, and human desire is its starting point. Since aesthetic ritual provides a good experience for people, it helps to lead them to Buddhism through an easy gate, tactfully creating a Pure Land image and convincing people it is a world that they want.

Medium and Re-mediation: the Making of a New Pilgrimage Centre

On Christmas 2011, while millions were immersed in the festive atmosphere of Jesus Christ's birthday, another significant portion of people on earth gathered at Dashu County, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, to celebrate the coming of Buddha's tooth relic and the opening of a grand memorial centre.

That a significant day for the Buddha coincided with one for Jesus may not be a coincidence; it could be a conscious arrangement by a group of Buddhists with a "liberal attitude." On such a global platform, they let this important date of Buddhism overlap with an important date of another religion, celebrating the material part (Buddha's relic) of their religious founder and, perhaps, alluded to a symbolic unification between these two global religions. Either way, the grand occasion was embedded into a larger background, connected to the other parts of the globe through diversified approaches that we will see below.

[69] This concept will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Sacred Medium and Miraculous Response

A Buddha relic is an object of reverence and fascination for both Buddhists and many non-Buddhists, because, as John Kieschnick pointed out, it allows the ordinary person "to experience Buddhism in a manner that is at once powerful and intimate, without the immediate intervention of learned intermediaries explaining what should be felt, what should be understood" (Kieschnick 2003: 24). As other sacred objects, a relic renders the religion *tangible and proximate*. In this sense, the Buddha relic, like sacred images and statues, is an ancient medium in Buddhist practices used to connect the devotees and divine figures. However, these religious objects are by no means "mute referents" to a holy man, merely representing divine power, but the "repositories with sacred power" themselves (Meyer 2011: 62; Kieschnick 2003: 31).

The time-honored sacred objects are now in a curious situation. On the one hand, Buddhist monasteries are no longer the only entities allowed possessing a piece of a Buddha relic; possession, has been "democratized" to ordinary households, with some people even having their own relics at home. Regardless of the authenticity of these household relics, their private holders claim the relics physically belong to Buddha and are a proud possession. When I asked an informant what Fo Guang Shan's Buddha relic means to her, she shrugged and said:

> Well I don't think it is a big deal, 'cause we also have one at home. Someone gave it to my mom. Now it even has babies.[70]

The relics possessed by renowned monasteries or monks, however, can still generate public interest.

Not only among Buddhists do the "numinous power" and "the miraculous response" of the relic exert the kind of charm "unmatched by statements of doctrines or philosophical

[70] A piece of relic bone can sometimes grow a number of small bead-like objects on its surface. People call this "regenerated relic."

principle," but has become highly attractive even to those who showed little interest in Buddhism *per se* (Keischnick 2003: 31). Moreover, the portability of the relics actually provides a "tangible way of transporting Buddhists devotional practices and concomitant religious doctrines to new regions" (Kieschnick 2003: 30). These facts make a Buddha relic an ideal medium even today, especially for a Buddhist organization such as Fo Guang Shan, that places a high priority on proselytizing.

According to Fo Guang Shan, the Buddha relic that is now residing in its memorial centre (Kaohsiung, Taiwan) is one of only three surviving tooth relics. While the other two are in Sri Lanka and Mainland China respectively, this third one was said to be kept in Tibet, but the temple that housed it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. A Tibetan monk, Kunga Rinpoche, then brought the relic to India, where it remained until 1998, when Xingyun was conducting the full precepts in India (Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan official website).

It is interesting to note that while Fo Guang Shan interprets Buddhist teachings to accommodate modern science, it has adopted a rather traditional attitude regarding the Buddha relic. A few miraculous marvels were said to have occurred as the relic was being escorted to Taiwan:

> What has to be mentioned is, Kunga Rinpoche originally planned to depart on (April) 6th (of 1988). I was worried that problems would crop up unexpectedly, so I hoped he could arrive one day earlier in Bangkok. In the end, he arrived in Thailand via Nepal on the 5th, and the airport of Nepal closed down the next day due to political unrest. When the news came, we all felt very fortunate….or else things could be complicated. It seems that in the unseen world, Buddha was giving us a hand to bring the relic to Taiwan. (Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan official website).

The relic's arrival was a national event in Taiwan, where it received extensive attention from all sectors of society, including a police escort from the airport to the monastery. However, it was the change of weather that attracted Master Xingyun and others' attention:

> …the highway was all empty, plus that police clear[ed] the way in front, [and] we proceed without hindrance. When the car was running on the road, it suddenly started to rain. But, what [is] marvellous is, when our car went down from [the] Yuanshan slip road, the rain stopped all of a sudden, as if [in] a specially made water purification (ceremony)." (Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan official website)

Ven. Cirong also mentioned this experience:

> I clearly remember, when I stepped down from the car, I could still feel a couple of raindrops. But, in an instant, it stopped! The ridiculously heavy rainfall was just like cut by a knife, clean-cut and clear. (cf. Xingyun and Pan 2011: 35)

When the relic arrived at Taipei Vihara, Master Xingyun recalls:

> What is especially incredible is, when the Buddha relic…arrived at the Songshan train station (near Taipei Vihara), it was already dark. Suddenly a streak of golden sunshine radiated through the sky, illuminating the whole Songlong Road (by the side of Taipei Vihara) as if there were gold spreading on the ground. Dr. Zhao, as our (television) host on the spot, was amazed, and he cried: "such a golden light avenue!" Together with him was Venerable Yikong, she said: "this is (the so-called) 'Buddha's light illuminates all things (*fo guang pu zhao* 佛光普照),' so this is Buddha's light Avenue (*fo guang dadao* 佛光大道)!" (Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan official website)

The stories about the relic's miraculous journey were not only re-printed in various print media, but were also broadcast live on television. It is said that "a lot of people watching in front of TV were all grasped by this supreme scene, feeling the blessings from Buddha's Light" (Fo Guang Shan official website). Whereas Fo Guang Shan has been clearly aware that ours is an era of science[71], the group uncharacteristically reported an account of a miracle to the public. This move is risky, but also not without benefits. Against Fo Guang Shan's consistent rationality, their account of miraculous responses looked even more salient and convincing.

This sort of situation is similar to what occurred during the early days of Buddhist missionaries in China, when "it was not enough to introduce concepts, rituals and beliefs," and

[71] For example, Fo Guang Shan over and over again emphasize that Buddha is not a god but a human being. They are also against certain practices in popular religions, such as fengshui (geomancy) and the use of a spiritual medium.

"sceptics and devotees alike wanted *tangible evidence* of the efficacy of the new religion" (Kieschnick 2003: 32; italics added). Under such circumstances, miraculous powers were demanded. This also reminds me of one chapter in *Life of Pi,* in which clerics from three religions encounter each other and get into an argument about their various beliefs. While the Hindu pandit criticizes Christianity and says Christians know nothing about religion, the Imam says:

> "Christians strayed long ago from God's path."
> "Where's God in your religion?" snapped the priest, "You don't have a single miracle to show for it. What kind of religion is that, without miracles?"
> (*Life of Pi*, pp.67)

Miracles are part and parcel of some religions. In Buddhism they are not associated with God, but rather are manifested to draw people's attention to this most direct contact with transcendent power. In ancient China, miracles perhaps contributed to the initial recognition to Buddhism, and in today's Fo Guang Shan, they are said to have re-enchanted Buddhism, and re-introduced Buddhism into a world predominant with scientific thinking.

An Enduring Performance and Every Party

The miraculous arrival of the Buddha relic in 1998 was just the beginning of a ten-year social drama of making a new pilgrimage centre in Taiwan. In a world where yesterday's discovery is forgotten by tomorrow, 10 ten years is too long to expect to hold the public's attention. For that reason, in addition to the cornerstone-laying ceremony in 2003[72] and the opening ceremony in 2011, the official chronology of the project was marked by a succession of rituals and ceremonies, which connected the future pilgrimage centre with other parts of the world, and conferred the sacred architecture with an on-going importance.

[72] In 2001, Fo Guang Shan gained a piece of land as the construction site but not until 2002 that the land was officially handed over to Fo Guang Shan.

For instance, on January 15, 2004, according to the chronology of Buddha's Memorial Centre:

> "To felicitate the 90th birthday of Thai Sangharaja,[73] nineteen golden Buddha statues were manufactured and bestowed to nineteen Buddhist countries. The Thai Sangharaja appointed Fo Guang Shan as one of the offering sites.... (The golden Buddha) was sent to Fo Guang Shan via a delegation group.... The Dharma Service (for greeting Golden Buddha) took place at the reserved site of Buddha's Memorial Centre, symbolizing the merge[r] of Northern and Southern Buddhism, as well as international friendship." (Xingyun and Pan, 2011, Chronology page)

Less than two months later, the future site of Buddha's Memorial Centre greeted another distinguished guest. The then-vice-president of Taiwan, Lv Xiulian, visited the Gardening Exposition held at the memorial centre-to-be and made offerings to the Golden Buddha. Over the following few years, other Taiwanese political figures visited the site.

Politicians were not the only ones joining the celebration. In order to collect "treasures" for an underground palace,[74] Fo Guang Shan held a press conference (Jan. 4th, 2010) to recruit items from the whole Taiwanese society. Gradually, the project of constructing a memorial centre turned into a party that involves the whole society, where religious leaders were hosts, and politicians, scholars and other members of the society were invited to participate. As Meyer observed, in the context of a church community, charismatic community-making is "an enduring performance that is never complete – a breathing body – truly in the sense of aesthetic formation" (Meyer 2009: 21).

The performance became increasingly intense as the opening date approached. From October 8th to January 20th, 2011, hundreds of artists were invited to create paintings that reflected the memorial centre's theme. Meanwhile, a grand full-precepts ritual service was held

[73] National Sangha leader. The position exists in some south Asian countries.

[74] The underground palace (*di gong* 地宫) is the basement level of Buddha's Memorial Centre. In Master Xingyun's conception, the palace is used to store the most typical cultural artefacts from every generation and will only be opened every one hundred years.

at the site to celebrate the completion of the memorial centre (November 4th, 2011). The 48-day services welcomed more than 500 novices from 12 countries and regions, including the United States, Canada, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. In so doing, the event further expanded its global participation.

Domestically, from December 1st to 22nd, a team of mendicants carried the Buddha's relic with them, conducting a walking tour around Taiwan Island. A hundred mendicants were dressed in traditional style mendicant robes and bamboo hats, walking along busy Taiwanese streets with alms bowls in their hands. Everywhere they went, local government officials and business elites would show up to greet them. Of course, I could not possibly have known these details if it were not for the 21-day news coverage from Fo Guang Shan's own television media. The scene looked joyous and festive, common people were interviewed and rituals were broadcast.

When the tour was underway, I was in Fo Guang Shan's Edmonton branch, in Canada. But I felt no less informed than if I had been in Taiwan. The news "campaign" involved every member of the community, both home and abroad. In addition, the Venerable (Edmonton) had the news (online video) organized and edited into a whole piece so that we could be updated of the event in a timely manner. This video was later played in the main shrine one day after a Sunday service. Although most of the members were not able to be in Taiwan in person, they were informed with the most recent activities in Taiwan.

To a certain extent, the long-distance participation also occurred on a physical level, thanks to Xinguyn's conception of "millions of Heart Sutra entering Dharma body" (*bai wan Xinjing ru fa shen* 百萬心經入法身). To celebrate the construction of the memorial centre, Fo Guang Shan initiated a global sutra-writing project. Once a million copies of the Heart Sutra were collected, they were put into the top part of the memorial centre.

The Heart Sutra is the shortest sutra in Buddhism, which made it possible for Fo Guang Shan to mass-produce a toolkit for this global activity. In an envelope, there was an ink brush pen, a piece of Heart Sutra, and a thin piece of calligraphy paper. All a participant needed to do was to cover the paper on Heart Sutra and duplicate the characters underneath. This smart design made it possible to accommodate unpredictable factors that would prevent people from participation, such as bad handwriting, an absence of tools, the wrong size paper, and writing mistakes. A toolkit simplified this huge project. As for me, even though I was millions of miles away from the sacred place, I still felt as if my writing was able to reach the centre.

Epilogue: Making a New Pilgrimage Centre through Modern Media

Before I was able to visit the memorial centre personally, I had already experienced the site virtually. In fact, there was so much information on this impressive complex that it was overwhelming. Besides the 24-hour and 7 days a week updated news reports from Fo Guang Shan's own news media, I found a free iPad application called "Buddha's Memorial Centre," which, though made with relatively low quality, presented a 3D panorama accompanied by simple captions.

As someone who researches Fo Guang Shan, I am in a situation where I have actually wound up with too much information. My job required me to sort out the most useful parts in the ocean of information. There was a period of time when I felt lost, but all that information also made it possible for me to sit at home writing a paper about the memorial centre even though I was on another continent and only managed to visit Taiwan once during the 10-year construction period. Even so, I cannot take the full credit for picking out the most important narratives A book at hand is called *Buddhist Kingdom in Human Realm: a Chronicles of Fo Guang Shan Buddha's Memorial Centre*, the one that I often relied upon.

I bought the book on a visit to Fo Guang Shan's Vancouver branch and did not expect it to become one of my major sources for writing this section. To some extent, this book is exactly what I am looking for – the most valued narratives put together by Fo Guang Shan itself. When I read the first line of the book – "When you came to the memorial centre: 543 A.D…." and went through a vivid chronology of this 10-year project, I realized this is a written history approved by Fo Guang Shan, and embedded into the longer history of Buddhism.

The first edition of the book was published on December 9th 2011, around two weeks before the opening ceremony. This means that when the book was written, the historical moment had not yet occurred. By December 30th 2011 (five days after the opening ceremony), the book was in its third printing.

I was truly amazed that history could be generated at such a rate, that it could be recorded at almost the same time that it occurred. Of course, the recording of history is no less important than the production of history, for historical narrative is a source of legitimization of that particular historical moment (also depends on who records it). Apparently, Fo Guang Shan has turned its historical writing into a means of memorizing as well as a propagation of a collective memory. 10 years of bits and pieces of history were unified into a book[75] that was distributed to Fo Guang Shan's global monasteries so that the global community could have a shared memory. It is not surprising to hear someone talking about the memorial centre vividly even if he/she hasn't been there.

However, there are questions about the authenticity of Fo Guang Shan's Buddha relic. Not everyone is convinced about the source of the relic or the identity of its original guardian, Kunga Rinpoche. Some others question the legitimacy of Fo Guang Shan's possession of this

[75] Refers to *Buddhist Kingdom in Human Realm: a Chronicles of Fo Guang Shan Buddha's Memorial Centre*

relic. The accusations and questions are not unreasonable; some are worth consideration. However, does authenticity really matter when producing public influence?

Some relics discovered from old Chinese stupas[76] have turned out to be "horse teeth, charred bits of bones, coral chips, and pebbles" and the like (Kieschnick 2003: 36). At a time when information didn't travel quickly and people didn't have the scientific knowledge they do today, the authenticity of these relics was not challenged.

Buddha relic is trivial in size. For most ordinary people, the chance to see it face to face is rare. The tooth relic at Fo Guang Shan's memorial centre is contained in a clear box high up on the altar. All we can feel is the distance in between that is filled up with taboos, the splendid decorations, the grand architecture that is used for consecration, and a series of marketing compaigns before it arrived. If we still remember the privately owned Buddha relics in some households, it is not difficult to realize that what really makes us feel reverent toward this object is the deliberately designed ambience.

It is precisely this ambience that the reputations of many monasteries were built upon. Throughout history, a Buddha relic was not merely an object of religious significance; it also had a significant relationship to power. A relic is useful not only to attract more reverence and donations for the monastery, but also to endow monks and laypeople that support the relic with a "general sense of pride and self-worth" (Kieschnick 2003: 44).

According to Master Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan has good reasons to house this tooth relic:

> When he (Kunga Rinpoche) heard that Fo Guang Shan [made a significant contribution in promoting Chinese and Tibetan cultural communication] and overcame a lot of hardships to host the "World Buddhism, Excotoric and Exoteric Conference" as well as World Buddhist friendship conference…. he was touched by the efforts that Fo Guang Shan had made to promote world Buddhist communication. He especially acknowledged Fo Guang Shan as a righteous site for Humanistic Buddhism…. so he believed that I have the ability

[76] A kind of Buddhist tower

> to guard this Buddha's tooth relic…. hoping I could carry it back to Taiwan, offering it, so that the proper Dharma could last forever, shining the relic once again." (Xingyun, Fo Guang Shan official website)

The relic has been a sacred object for worship since ancient times. In a way, its reputation and power are not only based on the fact that it is the immediate presence of the material Buddha, but also on hundreds of years of hype. By the time Fo Guang Shan had the relic, it was first and foremost regarded as an acknowledgement and honour for the organization's hard work in bringing together the Buddhist world. But at some level, Fo Guang Shan's acceptance of this sacred object was like buying a speculation stock. Regardless of doubts and questioning, the group not only adopted the traditional narrative of the miraculous responses surrounding the relic, but also re-mediated this old religious medium through modern mass media, turning it into a social drama on global scale. In this sense, the authenticity of the Buddha's relic is not the point. Rather, it is how the relic was framed and staged that matters most to both Fo Guang Shan and the mass public. It is a risky but critical act to re-introduce Buddhism to modern society in this way.

The relic, indeed, could bring remarkable attention to the monastery that houses it, and enhance its reputation. However, for an ambitious organization like Fo Guang Shan, which was already influential around the world by then, the reputation was not affected by relic itself, but by the social drama generated by staging the relic. In that sense, the relic was just a trigger through which the construction of a new spiritual centre of Buddhism was made possible:

> Two thousand and six hundred years ago, Buddha gave his sermon in Lingjiu Mountain and many disciples just meditated and cultivated in the caves of this mountain. Now, there is also a Lingjiu Mountain in Buddha's Memorial Centre, where there are six hundred small caves…In such a small layout, there are desks, beds, washrooms, providing devotees [with a space] to sit and cultivate. The hardware function is connecting with spiritual symbols, because it enables us to practice on our own, without

Figure 23: A panorama of the memorial centre. Source: Fo Guang Shan official web page

> worries, while the current moment, and the current place, is the Lingjiu Mountain. (Pan 2011: 182)

When Fo Guang Shan escorted the Buddha relic all the way from Nepal to Taiwan, and embodied the Buddhist history in its architecture (Chapter Three), it effectively connects itself with the power centre of Buddhism. In this grand performance of staging the relic and constructing the memorial centre, Fo Guang Shan successfully made a new pilgrimage centre in East Asia. As Xingyun commented:

> I've been to Lin Mountain (Lingjiu Mountain) in India six times, and every time I felt excited, as if I got closer to Buddha. [I hope] Buddha's Memorial Centre can restore the scene like in the Buddha's time when millions of people and celestial beings [were] presented, to listen to (Buddha's) sermon, becoming a real spiritual construction of historical significance. (Xingyun 2011: 183)

Chapter 7 "First Enticing with Desires/Thereafter Leads him to the Wisdom of Buddhism" – Expedient Means as a Doorway

When Taixu first put forward his "Buddhism for Human Life," he repeatedly stressed that this was firmly grounded on the existing Mahayana Buddhism ("Mahayana's Buddhism for Human Life). Indeed, both "Buddhism for Human Life" and its contemporary configuration, Humanistic Buddhism, witnessed progressive innovations in Buddhist practices, but no new development in Buddhist philosophies. That is to say (again), that Humanistic Buddhism is essentially a new paradigm of *doing* Buddhism while its philosophies lie squarely in Mahayana Buddhism.

So far I have spent most of my time discussing the seemingly controversial practices of Fo Guang Shan, during which I also mentioned a few. In this chapter, I pull these ideas together, trying to understand "the nature of the beliefs that justify or support the kinds of practices one is engaged in and their relationship to one's actions" (Laumakis 2008:64). However, instead of seeking answers in a particular Buddhist school – please be reminded that it is unwise to do so with a Buddhist organization with a highly inclusive vision – I examine a few key words from Mahayana Buddhism that are significantly relevant to Fo Guang Shan's practices.

Mahayana Buddhism

Hundreds of years after Buddha entered nirvana, divergence started incubating among his disciples and followers. Two "Great Schisms" started to polarize on a range of issues. In one camp, the Elders insisted on an ancient compilation of Buddha's teaching; among the numerous sub-schools that they formed only the Theravada School survives to date. The opposing camp is a revolutionary new movement, which later became known as the Mahayana.

In practice, the fundamental difference between Mahayana and Theravada is that the former places great emphasis on saving others while the latter seeks personal salvation. In a lot of Mahayana texts, it is not uncommon for Theravada's practices to be devalued as incomplete.

Expedient Means: a Doorway to Buddhist Wisdom

According to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DDB), "expedient means" or "skillful means" (*fangbian* 方便; Skt: *upāya*, *upāya-kausalya*) is defined as a "method that is convenient to the place, or situation, opportune, appropriate," and "teaching according to the capacity of the hearer, by any suitable method, including that of device or stratagem where there is benefit to the recipient" (Charles Muller, Gene Reeve, cf. DDB). The concept is generally unique in Buddhism, and is one of the fundamental ideas in Mahayana Buddhism (Laumakis 2008: 60).

The notion of "expedient means" is directly related to Shakyamuni Buddha. In many texts, the Shakyamuni Buddha was described as a skillful teacher who was aware that his audiences and disciples all had different intellectual capacities. As recorded in *Anguttara Nikaya*, he stated that "there is a gradual training, gradual practice, gradual progress; there is no penetration to final knowledge in an abrupt way" (Anguttara Nikaya p.203; cited from Laumakis 2008: 59-60). Other sources also indicated that Buddha's teaching was surprisingly accessible: for instance, the language he used varied according to the languages spoken by his audiences, and the quality of his voice was like the "roar of lion" (*shizi hou* 獅子吼) so that the people sitting far away could hear him. These are a few techniques that Buddha used to adapt to his listeners.

The Buddha needed to adapt his teachings because the truth of Buddhist Dharma was so profound that people could easily get confused and overwhelmed. Therefore, the Buddha brought

forward his teaching to the public in a simplified form, which is *upāya-kausalya*, or skillful means.

The hymn in the title of this chapter – "first enticing with desires/thereafter lead him to the wisdom o Buddhism" – perfectly sums up the concept of "skillful means". I was first exposed to the phrase in the context of food. For a long time I had been wondering why fake meat is used in a vegetarian diet. Then one day I was struck by this answer: "I guess that's the definition of 'first enticing with desires and thereafter leads him to the wisdom of Buddhism.'" I was then related with the story of Master Kuiji (窺基), a renowned Buddhist monk who was the disciple of Master Xuanzang (also known as Master Tripitaka in some literature works).

Kuiji was nicknamed "Three Carts Monk" (*san che fashi* 三車法師) for a story told about him. Supposedly, he raised three unreasonable conditions to agree to become a monk. According to *Memoirs of Eminent Monks of Song Dynasty* (*Song Gaoseng Zhuan* 宋高僧傳), Xuanzang noticed this young man because of his righteous and solemn appearance and believed him to be a promising talent. Xuanzang lobbied Kuiji's father, a noble court person, several times before reluctant approval was granted. However, Kuiji himself then set forth three conditions that had to be met before he would become a monk: first, he did not want to refrain from sexual desire; second, he did not want to refrain from meat and the five pungent spices; and third, he wanted to be allowed to eat after noon[77]. Even though all three conditions severely violated Buddhist precepts, Xuanzang "thought to first entice him with desires and then guide him to the wisdom of Buddhism, thus approved his requirements" (Zang xian yi yu goqian, hou ling ru fozhi, yiang er ken yan 奘先以欲勾牽, 后令入佛智, 佯而肯焉). On the way to the monastery, three carts supposedly followed behind Kuiji: a cart of wine, a cart of meat, and a cart of beautiful girls.

[77] Not eating after noon (*guo wu bu shi* 過午不食) is a percept in Buddhist monasteries that has existed since the time of Buddha.

"**First** entice with desires and **then** guide him to the wisdom of Buddhism" — can be seen as a generalization of Mahayana-style missionaries. The temporal order therein ("first" and "thereafter") reveals a process in which desires are availed as an initial opportunity – an expedient means – of Buddhist proselytization.

Expedient means resembles the doorway in a building. As a piece of architecture, a doorway is easily ignored once we walk through it. The process is short and temporary, but is also a critical transient stage – a transition from outside to inside. Often when we go through a doorway, we are conscious of our transformation in space, environment and sometimes identity; we may also subconsciously realize that we are now in a place that is sometimes radically different from where we came from. At any rate, we tend to forget what it was that led us through all these (mostly psychological) transformations.

Unlike a wall, a doorway is not responsible for defining borders but is instead an opening in the wall, as if telling outsiders, "here is an access point to the inside." When someone is about to enter a doorway, he/she is reminded to be ready for the change, no matter how slight and minor the change will be. Thus, a doorway plays a vital role in inviting and transforming the status of a visitor. The style of a doorway determines one's experience of "going through" and the psychological changes that occurs in this process.

The non-physical doorway is even harder to observe. In our case, it is the doorway stretching from the "non-Buddhist world" to the "Buddhist world"[78], or from the secular to the transcendent world. The hymn mentioned in the title of this chapter precisely reveals such a mediating process in operation. Though Chinese Buddhism does not have "aggressive" missionaries as some Christian religions do, various strategies employed to attract non-Buddhists

[78] I mentioned in Chapter Five that the formation of the world population is simple because of our common Buddha nature. There are basically two kinds: Buddha and Buddha-to-be, in terms of the degree of awakening; or, Buddhists and future-Buddhists, in terms of religious beliefs.

are always evident. This is based on the intrinsic view that: 1) everyone has the potential to be enlightened – we are not Buddha yet, only because our true Buddha nature is tainted by some false views (e.g., our clinging to the material life and physical enjoyment); and 2) as previously stated, Buddhist Dharma is too deep to express straightforwardly. Therefore, the notion of upāya, or "expedient means," is pivotal for us to understand Mahayana's and Fo Guang Shan's proselytization.

The hymn comes from the *Vimalakirti Sutra* (wei mo jie jing). The sutra was one of the principle Mahayana texts that emphasized the theme of "expedient means" as well as a few other important concepts. In a way, few classics rival Vimalakirti Sutra in terms of its widespread and profound influence (Lai 1997:279). This classic is also one of Xingyun's favorites, for its philosophical and literature value and humanistic characteristics (Mangeng 2005b: 35). In fact, Xingyun's blueprint of Humanistic Buddhism is based on this sutra.

Vimalakirti was a layperson who was portrayed as having great Buddhist wisdom, preaching Mahayana teachings every chance he had, and mercilessly debating with bodhisattvas and arhats. Buddha later revealed that Vimalakirti actually had been a bodhisattva in his previous life and had been reincarnated in this world[79] to save people and help them achieve Buddhahood.

In the eighth chapter of the sutra, as a response to the questions regarding the Bodhisattva Path, Vimalakirti wrapped up with a long hymn in which he chants:

> Sometimes incarnating as prostitutes/ seducing those lechers
> First Enticing with Desires/thereafter leads him to the wisdom of Buddhism[80]

The hymn was about the role of a bodhisattva and his deeds of salvation in the secular world. In fact, the invention of the concept "bodhisattva," which is unique in the Mahayana

[79] According to Buddhism, there are "worlds" other than the domain of Buddha (also the one we are residing in). Each world has its own different nature and characteristics and this one we are currently in, called saha world, is "the world that must be endured" (cf. DDB).

80 Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Eight.

tradition, particularly confirmed the Mahayanist worldview and is a direct expression of upāya, or "expedient means." In simple terms, a bodhisattva can be understood as someone who is on his way to becoming a Buddha, or who has already achieved Buddhahood and chooses to stay behind to save other sentient beings. It is a living status that blends the transcendent with the secular:

> Various Ways are there in this world/ bodhisattvas present themselves accordingly, within this world of desires 世間眾道法，悉欲中出家
> Responding to the needs, answering to the confusions, without letting themselves fall into improper views 因以解人惑，而不墮邪見[81]

In other words, bodhisattvas are renouncing the world and are simultaneously in this world; they do not avoid the imperfections in this world. Though they have the ability to achieve (and may have already reached) the level of nirvana, they are not in a rush to go in there, but choose to remain in this realm to save sentient beings. I would say that the role of a bodhisattva *per se,* is a doorway between Buddhist truth and this provisional world[82].

In fact, the distinction between a bodhisattva and Buddha is ambiguous, as a bodhisattva is often described as having as great a power and enlightenment as Buddha. However, a bodhisattva stands out for his direct relationship with sentient beings. That notion greatly extended the range of Buddhist practices from Buddha alone to thousands of bodhisattvas, and from sangha alone to laypeople (like Vimalakirti), and thus created a link between Buddha and Buddha-to-be. In this way, a mediating mechanism between Buddhism and the rest of the world was established.

[81] Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Eight.
[82] According to Buddhism, the world we live in and the life that we cling on are illusory, and are thus provisional in relation to the Buddhist Truth.

The original story of the hymn is actually from the *Avatamasaka Sutra* (*Hua Yan Jing* 華嚴經), which related that a bodhisattva disguised herself as a prostitute and guided those who desired her physical beauty:

> Should anyone come to visit me out of his desires, I would teach him the Dharma; after he heard these, he would discard his greed….; ……
> Should anyone hold my hand, he would discard his greed….; … …
> Should anyone embrace me, he would discard his greed….;
> Should anyone kiss my lips, he would discard his greed….[83]

In this piece, we see that the bodhisattva is actually using human desire to achieve the goal of eliminating desire. Who would expect a religion to adopt something that it strongly discourages for its own good?

The same strategy can be better observed in the story of "burning house" in another Mahayana classic. The story compared the Buddha to a parent who tried to figure out a better way to save his children from a house on fire. Because the children (sentient beings) were so preoccupied with having fun, they failed to realize their dangerous situation. The parent (Buddha) thus decided to promise them that new toys awaited them outside the house, so that they would be willing to come out.

It seems contradictory that the parent lied to the children in order that they see the real truth. But in other words, the purpose of enticing with desires is not to encourage desires,[84] but to

[83] Avatamasaka Sutra

[84] In the course of the evolution of human culture, human desire is a cross-cultural theme. It is a concept always associated with emotions, feeling, passion, lust, greed, attachment, craving and so forth, and thus on those occasions where "reason is set over against and valued above either will or emotion," desire is usually be perceived as "spiritually problematic" (Delatre 2002:2303). In many religions, there are plenty of discourses about how the desires should be handled (negatively or positively). In Buddhism, early evidence showed that desires are not desirable. In particular, *tanha*, a word usually translated in English as "desire," is regarded in Buddhism as the cause of sufferings (skt: *duhkha*). To achieve the ultimate freedom from suffering is to leave behind all desires of this world. These basic teachings did leave us an impression of Buddhism being a religion of ascetism. However, it is not sufficient to say that Buddhism holds a completely negative attitude toward "desire." As some scholars have pointed out, the English word "desire" has a much broader semantic implication, while the original word "tanha" is

build a temporary path from confusion to the enlightenment. This is perfectly described by the term "utilizing the false to cultivate the true" (a translation from Stuart Chandler). The word "jia" (假) is prevalently translated as "provisional"[85], and is in many situations "interchangeable with the notion of 'expedient' (*fangbian* 方便)". In this sense, "expedient means" can be interpreted as "methods of practice and teaching that are not ultimately true, but are used nominally — or 'provisionally.'" (Muller, cited from DDB). In fact, the actual "content of Buddha's enlightenment is not expressible in language" at all. Thus, any sort of teaching on the "unspeakable" Dharma that occurs through language is itself a provisional strategy, a skillful method (Muller, cited from DDB).

The importance of "expedient means" is reiterated in Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism. This is a phrase that is often used to describe Master Xingyun's conception. Xingyun himself also emphasized the use of "expedient means" when promoting Buddhism in our contemporary world. However, expedient means should not be used without a thorough understanding of the concept. Lowering the threshold of Buddhism could indeed increase its public accessibility, but it also poses challenges to maintaining quality. In a way, the abuse of "expedient means" could lead to the kitsch and even real secularization of a religion.

For one thing, the concept of "upāya", or "expedient means" could be very misleading in modern Chinese. While "upāya" was translated as *fangbian* (方便) in ancient Chinese, "fang bian" in contemporary Chinese most commonly means "convenience." "Upāya" is surely meant

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more "restricted in meaning," connoting the kind of desire "that has become perverted in some sense, usually by being excessive or wrongly directed." The aim of these desires is usually "sensory stimulation and pleasure." Apparently, not all desires fall into this category. Another word that should be noticed is *chanda*, which renders a relatively positive view on desires, and usually refers to goals such as attaining enlightenment, being helpful to others and so on (Keown 1996: 49).

[85] The word is a translation of the Sanskrit word *prajñapti,* which means "nominal," referring more to the fact that something exists "only in reference to the name assigned to it," something "unsubstantial" and lacking "inherent existence."

to create convenience, but it is much more than that. Its current English translation is "expedient means" or "skillful means," which more or less indicates its complexity. That is to say, "upaya" is not equivalent to convenience without principle, but is a skillful strategy employed in certain situations with profound considerations. Therefore, "upāya" cannot be fully established without another important dimension: prajna, or wisdom.

When Vimalakirti was teaching the practice of upāya, he never talked about it as an isolated notion, but always in reference to prajna, because the two concepts are interdependent. When bodhisattvas carry out salvation in this world, they use skillful means as a tool. However, without the support of wisdom, skillful means is no different from other worldly strategies, which would not lead to any transcending results. The path of a bodhisattva would dissolve in the secular world. In other words, skillful means and wisdom are two dimensions on one foundation (Cheng 2012: 182-188). Any practice of upāya, no matter how unconventional, should be conducted with a transcendent goal. Moreover, there is a temporality when practicing "upāya". It is, after all, a provisional method that is used to lead to the final wisdom.

Jieyuan 结缘

According to the DDB, *jieyuan* (结缘) forms "a cause or basis", "a connection, e.g., for future salvation," and "a tie with a Buddha" (cited from DDB). It basically refers to the act of establishing a positive connection with others. It can be seen as a purpose of upāya, the Buddhist way of dealing with the world.

Based on a fundamental recognition that "all things are subject to the principle of cause and effect," there are believed to be "conditions/circumstances that aid the causes that produce an effect." These conditions (indirect cause, secondary cause, associated conditions) are called pratyaya, or yuan (缘) (cited from DDB). Moreover, the law of "dependent arising" stresses that

everything is in association with one another in certain ways. In this case, "yuan" is critical in forming and deforming various kinds of relationships.

Chandler discussed Fo Guang Shan's practice of "jieyuan" in the context of a scandal in which the organization was once involved. During the 1996 presidential election in the United States, news broke that Fo Guang Shan entertained one of the candidates at the Hsi Lai Temple, its major branch in North America. The organization suddenly became the focus and was suspected of having a political agenda. Chandler, by examining the notion of *jieyuan*, offered a rational explanation for Fo Guang Shan's involvement (Chandler 2004; 2005). In the context of Fo Guang Shan, *jieyuan* rests on the assumption that there is a sharing Buddha Nature among all of us and that those who have proper roots will spontaneously seek out the Dharma once they have had even the slightest exposure to it (Chandler 2005:172). In a way, the practice of *jieyuan* is like planting a seed of Buddhism in one's heart, or offering assistance in helping the seed to sprout. In most situations, this seed could be so trivial that it is not even worth noticing. But with such a seed (condition), becoming a Buddhist or becoming aware of Buddhist truth is then a matter of time and opportunity, no matter how long it may take.

Xingyun and his Fo Guang Shan highly value the idea of *jieyuan*:

> …if "cause" is to become the "effect," there is a critical condition in between, that is *yuan* (condition 緣). If you plant a seed in the soil, there should be sunlight, air, water and other assisting conditions, and then it is able to bloom and bear fruit. *Yuan* is such an important condition from cause to effect. Therefore when we are getting along with others, or hoping to make achievements, we should know how to seize *yuan* and always remember to widely establish positive "yuan" with others (*guang jie shan yuan* 广结善缘) (Xingyun, official Facebook 2013).

"Before achieving the Way of Buddha; first making connections with people" (*wei cheng fodao, xian jie renyuan* 未成佛道，先結人緣) – this is a common saying in Fo Guang Shan communities. From the last few chapters, we have seen that Fo Guang Shan consciously creates

opportunities for the public to get in touch with Buddhism, mostly through Buddhist-related events. However, there are also non-Buddhist "conditions." For instance, you can always find a rich variety of recreational activities in different Fo Guang Shan locations. These non-Buddhist activities can be children's Sunday classes, Chinese martial arts classes, the art of Chinese knot classes, to name a few. The participants in these groups are not necessarily Fo Guang Shan members. Sometimes even local festivals like Family Day or Mother's Day are also observed in the monastery.

Unlike vegetarian food or Buddhist music, recreational activities bear little religious messages. For instance, newcomers who visit the monastery for Chinese knot class, will often stop by the library and main shrine "by the way". I always asked my interviewees a question: what is the "yinyuan" (cause and condition) for you to come to Fo Guang Shan? The answers were always surprisingly simple. Let's recall some of the answers from previous chapters:

> Many people (who came to our monastery) are not Buddhists. They came to see Fo Guang Yuan (Art Gallery) and then unintentionally walked to our shrine…. (Chapter Three)

> It was when this temple just opened here and this friend of [mine] told me there would be free food….so of course I came and also tried to get extra vouchers for my family. Then I started to do volunteer here and then the member of the lay association. (Chapter Four)

> …I came to Di Shui Fang (Water Drop Teahouse) for lunch. Later, because I do volunteer job here and heard lots of people talking about Fo Guang Shan, then I got to know it… (Chapter Four)

Here are some that were not included in earlier chapters:

> My grandparents brought me here…the Dharma service was so boring for me. Then my grandmother heard there was this children's class, so she sent me there. I made friends with other kids and became more willing to come.

> My mom first came here for that…. Chinese knot class and then she made friend with J's mother. That's how they started to do volunteers here.

> My wife had some tapes from Fo Guang Shan, so I used to listen to them in my car. But I'd never been to any Fo Guang Shan temples by that time, just listening to the tape. Then my wife became a volunteer here. She said they needed someone in the kitchen. I had had some experience in running a restaurant before. So one day my wife asked me to help out…. Little by little I became a frequent member.
>
> Before, my grandmother came here every week. She's pious. But I was very rebellious and don't give a heck to come. Sometimes I would drop off my grandmother here or pick her up but never go inside. In fact I was a Christian. The first time I went in was my grandmother's funeral; I think that was the "yinyuan" she gave me. Not long after that, my mom came home and told me that Shifu (the Venerable) needed someone to teach drumming in the temple. It turned out that they were not looking for someone to teach but someone to learn and take over the job of drumming on dharma services. So Shifu then taught me how to drum. I was reluctant at first but gradually I became happier to go.
>
> My mom brought me there when we just immigrated to Canada. Actually I had no idea where she was going to take me to. I thought it was a restaurant coz she said there's food! But it turned out to be a temple. I was very small and the temple love young people. Me and my sister were then "1captured" by Shifu (the Venerable) and were taught how to play Dharma instruments.

We can see that whether the activities are directly related to Buddhism does not matter, because they can all provide the chance for people to start their connection with Fo Guang Shan and Buddhism – they are the very action of *jieyuan*.

The "causes and conditions" can be so different for different individuals. Some look like coincidence, and some even look like a "con." There are also some that do not produce any effect at all. At any rate, *yinyuan*, or condition, plays an essential role in Buddhist proselytization. It stresses bidirectional effects in the formation of a relationship, which from one point of view explains why Buddhism never chose an aggressive way to proselytize; even if Fo Guang Shan arranges everything else, the decision of whether or not to become a Buddhist is left to the individual.

Nonetheless, overstressing external factors may lead to unfavorable situations for Buddhism. This seemed to be the situation with most of the traditional Buddhist temples. Fo Guang Shan, on the contrary, actively creates conditions, reaching out to the public. At a time when even the spiritual market is facing fierce competition, Fo Guang Shan's efforts have no doubt overturned the passive image of Chinese Buddhism.

Li Yiyuan, a Taiwanese sociologist and anthropologist, proposed three levels of culture: spiritual, community, and material (Li 1996:101). Fo Guang Shan's Venerable Miaoyue held that Master Xingyun's "cultural approach" to Buddhism follows this path from top to bottom; that is, it promotes Buddhist literature to inspire a harmonious society, and eventually people can deal with everyday material life using Buddhist wisdom (Miaoyue 2006:17-8). However, the order seems reversed to me: Fo Guang Shan approaches the public from everyday needs and common desires; then it penetrates Buddhist culture with communal power; and eventually leads the individual onto the path of Buddhism.

Buddhist Transcendence

As far as we can see, Mahayana's practices are closely associated with secular life. It can be said that the very emergence of this school of Buddhism comes out of its inclusive vision of the relationship between Buddhist cultivation and the rest of the world. Until now we have been talking about the worldly practices of Mahayana Buddhism, but what about the transcendence?

In fact, the notion of "transcendence" in Buddhism does not necessarily mean physically leaving the secular realm; most of the time it refers to a mental process. As some scholars have indicated, it is common to misunderstand the Buddhist idea of "transcending the world" as "leaving this physical world", when it actually means "transcending all worldly matters" while living in the physical world (Guang Xing 2011: 52).

A concept called the "five aggregates" (ch: 五蘊 skt: *pañca-skandhaka*) is key to understanding Buddhist transcendence. Form, feeling, perception, impulse, and consciousness - it is the attachment to these five aggregates that is considered to be the source of suffering. Given that the Buddhism is about the truth and cessaation of suffering (*duhkha*), it is thus a central action in Buddhist cultivation to eliminate our clinging to these five aggregates. Therefore, the world that Buddha meant to transcend is "not the objective world, but a psychological one which is perceived and experienced by our senses" (Guang Xing 2011:63). Nirvana thus mainly refers to a final stage when we are able to overcome our craving of worldly desires and gain an "absolute extinction of annihilation" of "the flames of delusion," which leads to an "extinction of all misery and entry of bliss (Muller, cited from DDB) – a Pure Land right here and now.

The "non-duality" philosophy illustrated in the Vimalakirti Sutra further dissolves the invented boundaries and oppositions between this world and the other (transcending) world. Whether good or evil, existence or non-existence, delusion or enlightenment, there is no absolute differentiation. In this perspective, the dichotomy of the secular world and sacred world is not even an issue for Buddhism. When mundane and trans-mundane, or entering and renouncing the mundane world, all become undifferentiated (*rushi chushi yi er bu er* 入世出世一而不二) (Lai 1997:279), transcendence is a psychological transformation which can occur in the current world and in all kinds of secular situations.

Conclusion

Religious practices in Chinese societies are highly syncretic. It is not unsusual to see the same person participating in different religious groups. People can go to a Buddhist temple today and to a Daoist temple tomorrow. Meanwhile, I have seen members of Tzu Chi at a Fo Guang Shan monastery on big occasions, dressing just like other Fo Guang Shan adherents. I have also seen members of Fo Guang Shan at a Tibetan Buddhist monastery right after attending a service at Fo Guang Shan. It means that it would be arbitrary and insufficient to say that those who frequent Fo Guang Shan monasteries are all Humanistic Buddhists. An effort to identify who are (not) pure Fo Guang Shan followers is also unlikely to meet great success. Therefore a more realistic approach is to look at those who openly claim to be Humanistic Buddhists and to look directly at the practices that are conducted under the flag of Humanistic Buddhism. After all, Humanistic Buddhism is not a new Buddhist sectarian movement that makes significant developments in Buddhist philosophies. It is, instead, a synthetic way of *doing* Buddhism in our contemporary world under the creative interpretation of traditional Buddhist thought.

Let's review some basic points about Humanistic Buddhism:

- It interprets traditional Mahayana teachings in accordance with modern ideas and stresses that re-interpretation is a "return" to the essence of Buddha's teaching
- It shift the attention of Buddhism from "other world" to the present world we live in
- It shifts the crux of Buddhist cultivation from the "next life" to this life, and is concerned with people's everyday lives and social welfare
- It demystifies Buddhism by emphasizing the humanity of Buddha and its close relationship with human realm
- It emphasizes human life as an essential condition to achieve Buddhahood
- It focuses on education, academics, and other intellectual activities
- It stresses that Buddhism should keep pace with times and adapt to the capacity of its audience
- It advocates a comprehensive view of different schools of Buddhism and promotes conversations between different sectarians

Humanistic Buddhism was initiated by Taixu, systematically developed by Yinshun, and largely put into practice by Xingyun. From his early years in Taiwan, Xingyun realized the importance of popularizing Buddhism with new methods. The idea behind Fo Guang Shan practices is simple: providing what the masses need. This, in turn, is associated with a key concept of Mahayana Buddhism: the gateway of expedient means. Every detail in the monastery is designed as a possible gateway to Buddhism.

By embracing urbanity and modernity, Fo Guang Shan has created a monastic space where non-religious and religious elements co-exist. Moreover, the group has revitalized Buddhist traditions while simultaneously re-contextualizing them for the public. Not only is traditional *fanbai* re-built on a stage for a larger audience, contemporary Buddhist music is produced to further popularize Buddhism. Also, rituals remain an indispensable aspect of monastic life. The performative and mediating nature of ritual is rediscovered and re-mediated through modern mass media. In so doing, Fo Guang Shan has re-enchanted Buddhism and brought it back to life in our modern world.

Desire as Mediator

The framework I used in this study is based on Birgit Meyer's "religion as media," Rather than struggling with whether religion has undergone secularization, this view reassesses religion as a practice of mediation. Echoing Meyer, I argue that if mediation is an intrinsic part of religion, the application of using media in a religion is natrural, and the scramble of both sacred and secular elements is also understandable.

Architectural perspective attests to the role of religion from a more direct angle (Figure 24). Religion, like its physical representation in the world (church, monastery, mosque, etc.), is "something in between," like a "doorway" providing us with bridge from the secular to the

transcendent, binding the ignorant and the enlightenment: being "sacred in between" (Barrie 2010).

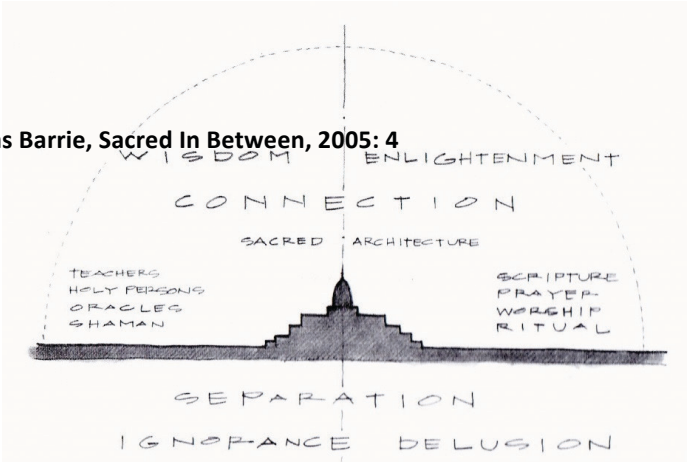

Figure 24: Thomas Barrie, Sacred In Between, 2005: 4

As many voices echoed, religion today is being eroded by a new world, which to a large extent refers to the influence of the modern media. Fo Guang Shan's use of modern media has led to criticism and doubts, some of which question whether the organization's innovations violate Buddhist ethics. Buddhist views hold that nothing in material form can stay forever and that indulging in the sensorial enjoyment of the five organ-senses can be destructive to one's cultivation. Given these views, it is not surprising that Fo Guang Shan's cultural products such as delicious food, beautiful rituals and sensorically rich music are under question.

However, if we look at Buddhism as a mediator, the question becomes: what is the medium used by Buddhism? One of the characters of bodhisattvas, as described in the Vimalakirti Sutra, is that they immerse themselves in the secular world and turn this world of desires and sufferings into a site of Buddhist salvation. Traditionally, the medium in a religion may include oracles, shamans, spiritual leaders, and prayers. Buddhism certainly does have its own instruments. But more precisely, in Mahayana Buddhism or Humanistic Buddhism, it is *human desires* that are ultimately used as mediators – the very qualities that everyone has and

that Buddha want us to eventually give up. In this perspective, the seemingly secular activities can also achieve sacred results.

Aesthetic Style as Community Binder

Xingyun's Fo Guang Shan is devoted to the overall aesthetic representation of Humanistic Buddhism. In the context of our study, the conventional notion ("the beautiful in the sphere of the art") of "aesthetic" is of limited use. Instead, "the much older and encompassing" Aristotle's notion of "aesthesis" is an ideal definition. It refers generally to the "organization of our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it" (Meyer and Verrips 2008: 21; Meyer 2011: 166-7).

In a given community, aesthetic style implies a "shared mode of perceiving and experiencing the world," which is based on "a common interpretation of these forms and meaning" and the "capacity of these forms to induce a particular common aesthetic and style." Community will thus evolve around these shared experiences and mediated cultural forms. In this sense, "style" is the key to shaping persons and "landing them a showed, recognizable appearance," i.e., community identity (Meyer 2010: 9).

Even though Fo Guang Shan monasteries offer a public-friendly spatial layout and greeting mode, new visitors are not always free of concerns. Though the monasteries have physically eliminated the "gap" between spaces of different natures, it is the invisible grid around the existing community that prevents newcomers from further sharing the monastic space. The grid can usually be identified by the group members' uniforms, their language style and, more invisibly, the fashion of liturgical activities. These all create a salient group style that can leave visitors feeling slightly uncomfortable.

That sense of discomfort can also affect Fo Guang Shan members when they visit other Buddhist sites, particularly if the members are young and have experienced their socialization in the monastery. When I was invited to attend Tzu Chi's celebration of Buddha's birthday, I went with a young girl from Fo Guang Shan. Edmonton's Tzu Chi club is located in the basement of a building whose simplicity greatly contrasts with Fo Guang Shan's fanciness. Devoted to philanthropic causes, Tzu Chi is a new form of Buddhism that typically downplays the religion's ritualistic dimensions. Thus, the celebration of Buddha's birthday at Tzu Chi turned out to be a minimalistic ceremony. Even the central part — bathing Buddha — was replaced by offering flowers. The girl, who had grown up in the Fo Guang Shan community, was clearly uncomfortable. She said to me, "I think I so get used to Fo Guang Shan's style. This is strange to me and I don't think I like it." Indeed, compared to Fo Guang Shan's strong aesthetic formation, Tzu Chi is poor in imagery and shows loose boundary. But for this same reason, it is not uncommon to see Christians participating in Tzu Chi's activities.

How Fo Guang Shan manages to be an encompassing community while being aesthetically rich, is that its "openness" is also one of its aesthetic styles. For instance, the "open-concept monastic space" of Fo Guang Shan temples and the receptionist on duty will soon take over newcomer's discomfort. A young member compared her experience in a more traditional temple:

> …you feel like "may I attend?" kind of thing. There's not always the ceremonial attendant…like the one in the black robe. Like we (refer to Fo Guang Shan) will…invite us in. So when you come…we will say "okay, do you want to participate in anything?" Or there's like shijie (female member) in the pink[86].

[86] In Fo Guang Shan, the volunteers on duty dress in pink uniforms

Compared to Christian religions, Fo Guang Shan's outreach and proselytization program is not active. However, a culture of voluntary reception has formed within its monastic space. Under such conditions, newcomers soon realize that they have moved from their own structuralized status (in Turner's sense) into the stage of *communitas,* where community is bounded, ritualized, and undifferentiated. After some time, these newcomers will be integrated into the new structure of Fo Guang Shan. It is this constantly-generated *communitas* on the entry level that functions as an invisible but critical transition to convert the new members.

Religion is the Image of Society Itself

Linguistic change in monastic life has directed us to look at the "new" instead of the "old." Ironically, "return" is another tricky word that directs us to believe in the "new" in the name of the "old." Many contemporary movements commonly claim to be "returning" to the original, only to find that these "returns" are often immediate reactions toward the contemporary world and reinterpretation of classics.

This study examined several cultural objects, exposing their connections to both the past and the present. However, what we are seeing through these objects is the broad vision of Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism, which itself is a reflection of contemporary Taiwanese society, and the transformative demands within the Chinese Buddhist community. When we label Fo Guang Shan as westernized, globalized, modernized, and say that it practices diversified approaches, uses the media, elects the abbot democratically, and fuses the sacred and the secular, what are we talking about? The passage below may help to answer that question:

> Religious actors practice their faiths within the larger context of a secular society and thus inevitably interact with that society. For some religion[s], this interaction can lead to adaptive practices as elements of secular culture are appropriated by innovative religious movements in a dialectical process. (Parsons 1989: 209; cf. Chang and Lim 2009)

The combination of religious and secular functions has enabled Fo Guang Shan to accommodate the rapid social change driven by modernization and globalization. The brand of the times and society is profoundly seared on this Buddhist organization. Just as some scholars have argued, what matters is "not the gradual vanishing of religion, but its transformation" in our contemporary world (Meyer 2009: 17).

Future Prospect: Crossing the Strait

From struggling for survival to flourishing around the globe, Fo Guang Shan offers a valuable example of promoting Buddhism in our modern world. However, the only regret that Xingyun might still have is Fo Guang Shan's development in Mainland China.

Born and raised in a small village in Jiangsu Province, Xingyun moved to Taiwan in 1949 while His family remained on the Mainland. In the 1980s, Xingyun managed to make several trips home from Taiwan and succeeded in uplifting the social status of Buddhism in Mainland China. Unfortunately, the situation took a sudden turn in 1989, when he was believed to have associated with activists involved in the Tian'an Men Square uprising. This was a sensitive period on the Mainland. The promising vision brought by Xingyun's visits is nearly all wiped out. As a result, Xingyun and Fo Guang Shan have taken a much more conservative approach with their development on the Mainland. Their branches did not appear in China until very recently.

As predicted by some scholars, with China slowly opening up, the major Humanistic Buddhist groups from Taiwan will very likely enter the Mainland and begin to "compete for their share of the Buddhist market, just as they have already done in Taiwan" (Pacey 2005: 458). Indeed, signs have shown a trend in which the alternative trajectories — models and practices of religion that developed at the periphery of the Chinese world — have been reaching the

Mainland (Goosaert and Palmer 2011). For example, the original site of the Dajue Monastery, the home monastery of Master Xingyun,[87] was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. But beginning in 2005, Fo Guang Shan started to prepare for its reconstruction. Years later, in 2010, the grand monastery of the classic Chinese style was finally completed. Since then, Fo Guang Shan has established vegetarian restaurants in Yangzhou and Beijing, a library in Suzhou, a cultivation centre in Nanjing, and an audiovisual company in Shanghai.

None of these names are included on Fo Guang Shan's official website. A review of the websites of these Mainland institutions also reveals no connection to Fo Guang Shan, and the personal glory of Xingyun is tremendously downplayed. It is also interesting that none of businesses are directly related to religion and take the "neutral form" like restaurant and library.

Clearly Fo Guang Shan's development on the Mainland is low profile and is proceeding carefully. Although Xingyun, as a religious individual, is now better recognized on Mainland, his Fo Guang Shan and Humanistic Buddhism are still unheard for most of the Mainlanders. Likewise, Tzu Chi has also been in China for more than twenty years, but it is by no means as prominent there as it is in Taiwan and other parts of Asia. One condition under which it was allowed to enter Mainland was its promise to the Communist government that it would not disseminate religion and would focus only on charity. For an organization with a much more religious nature, the situation is much more difficult for Fo Guang Shan. When I was trying to connect with the Dajue Monastery to tell them about my research on Fo Guang Shan, I received a cold welcome. The venerables were cautious and defensive, implying to me that it has been uneasy for the Master to earn a position on Mainland and develop Fo Guang Shan peacefully. I had to give up my plan to do interviews and left the monastery after only a short stay. I realized

[87] Master Xingyun was sent to the Qixia monastery in Nanjing at the age of 12. Because this monastery was not a "certified" ordination site according to the Buddhist standard, Xingyun was ordained in the name of his master's home monastery: Dajue Monastery in Yixing. Both Nanjing and Yixing are in Jiangsu Province.

that the day when Humanistic Buddhism becomes part of Chinese religious life is still unclear. As I left the Dajue Monastery, the young members enthusiastically escorted me to the gate. From the manner in which they treated me, I could sense a strong "Fo Guang" personality shared by many youth in Fo Guang Shan monasteries around the world – a community mark that I am familiar with. I may not be as optimistic as some scholars are, but somehow I felt this was, at least, a good start.

When looking at the achievements that Fo Guang Shan has made, it is in the first place surprising to hear Xingyun's confession that he is actually rather pessimistic about the future of Buddhism. Nevertheless, considering that Buddhism's prosperity in Taiwan may be just a temporary phenomenon and once the charismatic leaders of these Buddhist groups pass away, it is hard to predict where Humanistic Buddhism would be led.

It is reported that Xingyun instructed his diciples to bring Buddha's Memorial Centre to the next stage: reducing its value as a tourist attraction and restoring its function for Buddhist cultivation (Zheng 2012:28). Indeed, various innovations have been made out of the notion of "expedient gateways" for the sake of proselytization, but this could also lead to the indulgence in the material enjoyment. After all, the distance between popularization and the secularization is so close, and how to popularize Buddhism without undermining the true meaning of it becomes an ongoing issue. In this sense we should not get too excited with Humanisitc Buddhism. As an open-ended structure, its long term development needs to be closely watched.

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