

Taiwan Buddhism Revitalization and Global Expansion 臺灣佛教的全球發展

C. Julia Huang 黃倩玉

Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan
國立清華大學人類學研究所

This paper will focus on the Buddhist revivalism in Taiwan, and its global expansion. It will consist of three parts: The first part will briefly describe the historical background for the global positionality of Taiwan Buddhism since the 19th century. The second part will describe the major revitalization since the 1980s and the ensuing global expansion. It will provide an introduction to the three major groups that have significant development outside Taiwan: the Buddhist Tzu Chi (*Ciji*, Compassion Relief) Foundation, Foguan Shan (Buddha's Light Mountain), and Fagu Shan (Dharma Drum Mountain). In addition, the two exemplary Buddhist women's initiatives will be briefly introduced: the Xiangguang Si (Incense Light Temple), and the Sakyadhita (The Daughters of Buddha) Taiwan. It will highlight each major group's distinctive model of global expansion: Tzu Chi's humanitarianism, Foguan Shan's monastic order, and Fagu Shan's intellectualism.

Part three will summarize the characteristics of the global expansion of Taiwan Buddhism: 1. All of them share the root of humanistic Buddhism and actively promote engaged Buddhism in the global arena; 2. The major expansion did not take off until the 1980s when Taiwan underwent rapid democratization and economic prosperity; 3. Each of the major groups builds on some transnational social space that is part and parcel of the Taiwanese and Chinese diaspora; 4. Women played an important role in the global initiatives, which is unprecedented in the history of the Chinese diaspora and to a certain extent in the history of global Buddhism. To illustrate the summary of the four characteristics, I will heavily rely on my fieldwork in the Tzu Chi's Malaysia division, focusing on how the local efforts in shifting from the initial diasporic development to the ecumenical practice in a Muslim-majority society.

Based on the characteristics summarized in part three, in part four the paper will conclude that the global expansion of Taiwan Buddhism is a result of the Buddhist universalism in the new conditions brought about by globalization. These new conditions include the transnational and diasporic population, the new concepts of, and models for, non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations, and the increasing significance of laity in world religions.