

Rethinking the Religious and the Secular in a Chinese  
Context: The Public Faces of Foguangshan in  
Contemporary Taiwan

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Rethinking the Religious and the Secular in a Chinese Context: The Public Faces of Foguangshan in Contemporary Taiwan

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## **Abstract**

The present research attempts to conceptualize and theorize the social engaging phenomenon of a contemporary Buddhist organization – Foguangshan – from a sociological and cultural perspective. This approach sees the growing presence of religion in contemporary society as a multi-facet social process that involves dialectic exchanges with various actors in the public realm, and acknowledges that a full understanding of the social presence and significance of a religious actor in a society cannot be realized only by the examination of their religious beliefs and practices but also the conceptualization of these religious expressions in search for the meanings and implications underneath.

The study acknowledges that despite the existence of abundance studies on Taiwanese Buddhism and Foguangshan, they are mostly historical and philosophical in nature; theoretical analysis of the social engaging mentality of these Buddhist communities and their interaction with the society is insufficient if not inattentive. The present research, therefore, would like to confront this issue by taking a dialectic approach that draws a connection between the socially

engaging Buddhist community of Foguangshan with current social and cultural theories.

Specifically the paper will conduct a theoretical examination of Foguangshan and its interaction with the Taiwanese society by investigating their multiple aspects of publicness. This includes 1) how Foguangshan understands and imagines the public; 2) their strategy in engaging and penetrating into the public; and 3) how the people of the general public in return receives and responds to the social presence of the monastery. What this research tries to reveal is that while Foguangshan has been successful in expanding and penetrating into various public domains of the Taiwanese society, the outcome of their particular strategy in engaging with the public might result in an identity crisis beyond the intention of the monastery – an ambiguous public image between being religious and secular.

From our case study of Foguangshan in Taiwan the contemplation of these topics would be contextualized in a contemporary Chinese setting, and by doing so allows a cross cultural examination of the validity and universality of existing models of secularization and public religion. Hence the outcome of this study would not only provide an in-depth sociological and cultural understanding of the various public aspects of Foguangshan in relation to the contemporary history of Taiwan, the contextualization of this Buddhist phenomenon within a Chinese context could also further our understanding on how the particular social and cultural history of Taiwan, its Chinese cultural roots, and the religiosity of Chinese Buddhism have contributed to the unique way Chinese religions adapts and negotiates with modernity.

## 摘要

本研究試圖從社會及文化角度，對當代佛教組織佛光山及其社會參與現象作概念化及理論化的分析。此方法視當代社會宗教增長現況，為一個牽涉公共領域中不同行動者的多層面社會過程，及相信一個對社會及宗教現狀的全面理解，並不能單靠對宗教信仰及其思想習俗的探討而獲得，而是更需要對這些宗教表象背後的意義和引伸作出概念化的整理。

本研究指出，儘管現存對台灣佛教及佛光山之研究非常豐富，然而，這些研究多屬於歷史及哲學性質，因而頗為缺乏對這些佛教團體的社會參與現象作社會學的理论分析。本論文直面這個問題，透過辯證方法把佛光山及其社會參與現象與當今社會及文化理論連接起來。

本論文將會透過研究佛光山的不同公共面貌，對佛光山及其在台灣社會的社會參與作理論性的探究，這包括：(一)佛光山如何了解及想像公共這一概念，(二)他們參與及滲透公共領域的策略，及(三)大眾市民如何接收及回應佛光山的公共存在現象。本研究嘗試揭示正當佛光山成功地擴張及滲透台灣公共領域之際，他們採取的獨特策略卻做成了對這當代佛教團體的一個身份危機 – 一個游離於宗教與世俗之間的不明確公共形象。

本研究亦嘗試延伸到有關於宗教當代社會學中更廣闊的課題，特別是宗教與世俗之間的界線，以及現代化當下之社會變遷的探討。從對台灣佛光山的個案研究，這些課題將會落實於當代中國脈絡中，作全面性的思考，這樣便能給現有對世俗化和公共宗教的既有理解中，展開一個有效性和普遍性的跨文化檢驗。因此，本研究的結果不但提供一個對佛光山不同公共層面的社會及文化的深入理解，也進一步加深我們認識及了解台灣特殊的社會及文化歷史、中國文化根源、及中國佛教的宗教性、如何促成中國宗教對現代化過程作出獨特的適應及協調。

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale of Research

The importance of the concept of secularization within the field of the sociology of religion cannot be overlooked. It serves as a foundation and a point of departure for contemplating the development of religion in our contemporary society under the impact of modernization and globalization, galvanizing a proliferation of researches in the fields of social science and religious studies in the past century. Despite the refutation of the initial conception of secularization that depicted a linear and irreversible decline of religion, the continuing existence, reexamination, and debate about the concept within the academic field is a testament that it is still relevant and has much to offer in the study of religion and social change. Gradually moving away from a thesis that predicts and interprets an inevitable process of religious decline within modern societies, a refined understanding of secularization recognizes the importance of different contingency factors that could possibly lead to multiple and alternative forms of religious change as society negotiates with modernization, and not necessary heading towards a single direction of religious decline. This departure from the early secularization thesis have led scholars to adopt a more refined approach that uses it as a conceptual and analytical tool in studying religion and as a point of reference in explicating their analysis on contemporary religious development. All these studies demonstrated that a refined and elaborated understanding of secularization, ridding its previous predictive denotation, could be a useful and capable tool for understanding modern religions from a sociological perspective.

The persisting existence of the concept of secularization is not only an

illustration of its analytical potency in examining modern religions, it tacitly suggests that while the concept has been contentious, there seems to have no better alternatives that could capture the intriguing yet precarious situation of religion in our modern society; whether in investigating aspects of religious growth and decline or in terms of religious change and development, the idea of secularization seems to be a good place to start the discussion. More importantly the fundamental question raised by the discussion of secularization has yet to be satisfyingly resolved: what is the impact of modernization towards the development of modern religions? If there are multiple outcomes of religious development in relationship to modernization, what are the factors that contribute to the similarities and differences between diverging cases?

The matter becomes more complex and problematic when the investigation is taken into a global level. The original theoretical construction of secularization was developed among the European scholars, with most of the well-recognized and elaborated studies that based on European histories and associated theories and data. As a result the findings of these studies were mostly confined within its own geographical and cultural boundaries. The early secularization scholars such as David Martin had already identified such limitation of the application of the concept, and called for the need of a cross-cultural examination in assessing its universality and validity in a global scale.<sup>1</sup> The scholars who acknowledged the importance of historical contingency elements as factors that could lead to multiple outcomes of secularization and religious development also concurred with the notion that investigations on the patterns of secularization in other

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<sup>1</sup> David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), 142-144.

non-Western societies is essential to validate the universality of the concept. Despite so, it seems that such a notion has not met with much response and there is still a frustrating shortage of comprehensive studies that inspects secularization in non-Western societies. Reviewing on Rob Warner's recent book *Secularization and its Discontents*, Paul-Francois Tremlett critically and succinctly commented that "what this record or testament [on theories of secularization] reveals is ... the amazing lack of sustained, critical research interest anywhere outside of North America or Europe ... [and] the extremely problematic tendency to discuss secularity and secularism only in terms of the presence or absence of religion."<sup>2</sup>

While there are scattered studies on secularization in non-western societies, mostly in Islamic societies and India, the numbers are very few and most of them were incomprehensive short essays in forms of journal articles.<sup>3</sup> The reason for the lack of comprehensive empirical research outside of the Christian societies might be manifold, but it is obvious that most of the studies on secularization were done by Western scholars in places where Christianity is the dominate faith – Europe and the Americas, with a lack of efforts made in partaking rigorous empirical research in other societies that could enable them to apply and test the concept of secularization. The situation has not been helped by the hesitation, or even rejection, of non-western local scholars to accept and incorporate the concept of secularization into their own studies of religion. That end from the local counterpart is perplexing. In particularly, many Chinese scholars seem to

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<sup>2</sup> Paul-Francois Tremlett, "Book Review", *Culture and Religion* 13, no. 4 (2012), 491.

<sup>3</sup> One of the well known scholar that articulates the relationship between Islam and the secular is Talal Asad, please see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003); for secularization in India, see: Qiu Yonghui & Ou Dongming 邱永輝 & 歐東明, *Secularization in India* 印度世俗化研究 (Chengdu: Bashu Shu She, 2003).

question and doubt the universality and validity of the concept of secularization in understanding religion and culture in contemporary Chinese societies even before any rigorous research on the matter has been conducted. They confronted that the concept of secularization is essentially a western product that is contingent to the specific political, cultural and religious development of modern Europe, and as a result inapplicable to Chinese societies, which has a very different religious landscape, state/religion relationship, and boundaries between the public and private sphere, so much so that the application of the idea of secularization in examining religions in China would be an arbitrary appropriation inattentive to local contexts.<sup>4</sup>

While it is undeniably that China has its own distinctive social and religious landscapes, the lack of studies on the concept of secularization could only result in an ever cycle of obscurity in understanding secularization in a Chinese context. We are still uncertain whether a process of secularization had ever taken place in modern China: if it did then in what form did it happened? What are its similarities and differences with the secularization process in other societies? And if such process did not happened then what are the reasons for that? Without a thorough examination of secularization in China, we could never gain certainty of the applicability and validity of the concept within a Chinese and global context. More importantly, to overlook such an examination is also a missing opportunity to use the analytical capacity of secularization as a resource in assisting us to understand religion and religious change in modern China.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Szonyi, "Secularization Theories and the Study of Chinese Religion," *Social Compass* 56, no. 3 (2009): 322-323.

While it is not the wildest dream for this study to deal with the many ramifications of issues that the examination of secularization can unfold on the understanding of religions in China – topics such as state/religion relationship, secularism, Chinese religiosities, modernization in China – this study will try to take an initial step towards a better understanding of these issues through an examination of the process of secularization in modern Taiwan. This study will focus on the case of Taiwan and one of its local contemporary Buddhist organizations – Foguangshan (FSG)<sup>5</sup>, and examines how its rapid rise in becoming a national and transnational religious force can reveal to us about the process of secularization and religious change as this Chinese society went through the process of modernization. In using the tripartite analytical framework of public religion from Jose Casanova, this study will look into the various public faces and public presence of FGS within the Taiwanese society and worldwide, and from there examines the process of secularization in terms of religious privatization, religious decline, and structural differentiation within Taiwan.

The analysis of this study follows the refined version of the concept of secularization in which it is not confined in the vision of religious decline or increase, but acknowledges the possibility of the existence of different or sometimes contradicting patterns of religious change in modern Taiwan. This approach sees the religious phenomenon of FGS as a multi-faceted social process that involves dialectic exchanges between the forces of modernization and globalization, and local forces such as the religious communities of FGS of

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<sup>5</sup> The term Foguangshan (佛光山) can refer to both the Buddhist organization and the geographical location of its main temple in Kaohsiung Taiwan. For the clarity throughout this paper, the abbreviated version of “FGS” will be used to refer to the organization while “Foguangshan” will refer to its main temple in Kaohsiung.



Taiwan. Such dialectic awareness acknowledges that while the broader social forces have their significant influence towards religious development, those religious communities are not helpless in their fate and are capable in every mean to make a difference. We hope that the result of this study could contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the public and social aspects of FGS and modern Taiwan, and extend the scholarship of the sociology of religion outside the current geographical boundaries to a Chinese inquiry.

## **1.2 Literature Review – Existing Works on Foguangshan**

Studies of contemporary Buddhism in China and Taiwan, as well as other modern forms of Buddhism throughout South Asia, have caught the attention of scholars both within and outside the discipline of Buddhist and religious studies. Among them, those that pertains to FGS and other contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism can be categorized into three main areas: 1) studies that directly deals with Taiwanese Buddhist communities; 2) studies that are not directly aimed at these Taiwanese Buddhist communities but are nevertheless closely related, such as studies on Chinese Buddhist philosophies and studies on religions in modern Taiwan; and 3) studies on the development of Buddhism within modernity in general. It should be explained in advance and clearly that there is an abundant amount of scholarships on contemporary Chinese Buddhism on both Taiwan and Mainland China; however they are mostly historical, anthropological, and doctrinal in nature and are predominately written in Chinese. While there are also sufficient English literatures on contemporary Buddhism, many of them have mostly overlooked the Chinese region, with focuses more on other Southeast

Asian regions or the modern form of Buddhism in the West.<sup>6</sup> More importantly there is a genuine lack of theoretical studies on the contemporary religious phenomenon of these Buddhist communities in the modern Chinese context, in particular from a sociological perspective in comprehending their development in relationship to the issue of modernization and secularization at a social level. It is in acknowledging this academic gap that motivated this study: a specific academic gap in which existing theories from the sociology of religion have not been thoroughly applied and examined in a Chinese context, while on the other side empirical studies have mostly overlooked these theories altogether. The following will go through some of the main academic works relevant to this study – on FGS and contemporary Taiwan Buddhism – to make the above point apparent.

### **1.2.1 Theories on Chinese Secularization and Modern Buddhism**

In a handful of literature devoted to the process of secularization in China, Michael Szonyi attempted to look for a Chinese model of secularization in a special issue of *Social Compass* in 2009.<sup>7</sup> The article took on a very similar approach with this current study, which recognizes the lacking of any rigorous research on secularization and its application in China makes the question of the understanding and validity of secularization unknowledgeable in the Chinese context.<sup>8</sup> Szonyi engaged with the main respondents of the concept of secularization – those who rejects, see its limitation, and attempts to refine – by

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<sup>6</sup> These include the stream of works on the Engaged Buddhist Movement in Southeast Asian by Christopher Queen and others, most noticeably: Christopher Queen, Charles Prebish & Damien Keown, eds, *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); and Christopher Queen & Sallie B. King, eds, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Szonyi, “Secularization Theories,” 312-327.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

examining different aspects of secularization in terms of the religious market of China, the possibility of unbelief, differentiation, patterns of individual religiosity, privatization, and as political ideology. He discovered that while the process of secularization in China and the conventional theory shares many common grounds, the historical contingent factors of China make the process to diverge in contrasting ways.

More importantly, Szonyi's analysis of the Chinese case has shown the analytical capacity of an investigation of secularization towards the understanding of the relationship between religion and the society. Szonyi demonstrated that a viable way to facilitate our understanding of secularization in China hinges on the understanding of the concept as a political discourse tied to colonialism and globalism, in which the process of secularization in China is in a sense really a form of westernization and closely tied to the projects of modernity and the making of nation states.<sup>9</sup> Therefore one important implication of the study of Chinese secularization is how states and religions around the world responses to the imposition of the hegemonic master narrative of western modernity.

While Szonyi's article were analytical in nature without much new and concrete material to extend the current understanding of secularization in China, he has laid out the theoretical ground for the application of the concept in the China case very similar to the foundational assumptions of this thesis, including the recognition of the continuing capacity of secularization as a useful tool in understanding the religious history in modern society and the awareness that the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 322.

concept itself is a construction from a Western model based on its histories.

On the theoretical understanding of the global Buddhist movement worldwide, David McMahan's *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* is an interesting work that elucidated the various ways different global Buddhist cultures innovatively adapts and negotiates with the force of modernization.<sup>10</sup> McMahan stressed on the existence of different Buddhist cultures worldwide with unique features attuned to the same forces of modernity but relative to the specific social and cultural situations. This relativity is the driving force that propelled these Buddhist communities to have their own way of adaptation and negotiation towards modernity, and not just a passive receiver of the process.<sup>11</sup> According to McMahan, the forces of modernity comprise three specific components: western monotheism, rationalism, scientific naturalism, and Romantic expressivism.<sup>12</sup> These three discourses of modernity constitute the inescapable stances of our time – a shift toward world affirmation, interiority, reflexivity, self-scrutiny, and psychology – with religions such as Buddhism inevitably incorporating these stances as they negotiate with modernity.<sup>13</sup> The consequence of this negotiation is a process of detraditionalization, demythologization, psychologization, and scientific rationalism within modern Buddhism.

McMahan argued that the embracement of a rationalistic and scientific approach can be appropriated by a form of romanticism that could lead to

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<sup>10</sup> David L. McMahan, *The Making of a Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

reenchantment; an organic force in providing meaning to life and existence in a way that is compatible to modern science and technology.<sup>14</sup> This Romanticism forms a hybrid of modernity and Buddhism often expressed in the form of art and culture, such as the Buddhist-Romantic hybrid form of Zen Buddhism that appropriates its modern expression within art forms such as musicals, dramas and visual arts, and where concept of interdependence are appropriated with the current enthusiasm of global interconnection in providing new understanding of life and death in the concept of *karma* and rebirth, and where religious practice of meditation was translated along a subjective nature of spirituality and psychoanalysis practices.<sup>15</sup>

McMahan predicted two trends of future development of Buddhism in postmodernity. The first is the continuing development of privatized spirituality that further extend the subjectivism and privatization of meditative traditions towards forms of New Age spirituality; the second is in forms of transnational social movements reacting against the surging modern western ideologies such as human rights, social justice, and equality, in combination with the traditional Buddhist language of suffering, compassion and liberation<sup>16</sup>. This postmodernist reaction to the force of globalization was the impetus behind the internationalization of the Buddhism communities that reorient their tradition to function within multiple systems of the society, including the ideological, political, social, commercial, etc.<sup>17</sup> What McMahan suggested regarding this globalized form of Buddhism in postmodernity is that Buddhist cultures are not

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 122 -123.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 255.

only passively configured by the trends of its surrounding environment, but have the capacity to challenge, critique, augment, and offer alternatives to the dominating social and cultural value of its time.

Christopher Queen took McMahan's point more specific to the modern Engaged Buddhism phenomenon that has emerged in the past decades of Southeast Asia. In a couple of introductory chapters on his edited publication on this subject matter, Queen delineated the emergence of Engaged Buddhism as a Buddhist liberation movement in reaction towards the challenges of modernity and the impact of the confrontation between the local society and Western civilization – a Buddhist phenomenology resulting from the vigorous interaction of Asian, European, and American values in the post-colonial era.<sup>18</sup> This Buddhist phenomenon can be represented in three specific dimensions – the personal, the doctrinal, and the institutional. By personal it meant the existence of popular leaders as the head of each of these Engaged Buddhism community, who took unconventional paths in symbolically shifting the entry of Buddhism into the world with a focus on rationalization and a this-worldly orientation directed to political and social goals.<sup>19</sup> By doctrinal it meant the reinterpretation and a new reading of traditional Buddhist doctrines concomitant with the paradigm shift of the leaders. Queen referred this doctrinal change as “scripturalism” identified by Clifford Geertz, which described “a heighten reliance on ancient teachings in rapidly changing times ... [in] the form of new popular reverence for scripture ... and public figures to reinterpret ancient teachings in the light of modern problems.”<sup>20</sup> What such reinterpretation aim for is to provide the source of

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<sup>18</sup> Queen & King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 2; Queen, Prebish & Keown, *Action Dharma*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Queen & King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

legitimacy to the orientation of these Engaged Buddhist movements towards a social, economic, and this-worldly orientation, the core features that distinguishes them from other Buddhist communities. And by institution it meant the rise of these Buddhist movements as a form of voluntary association guide by the exemplary leaders and a common vision for a new society, and the harnessing of modern methods of education, mass communication, political influence, modern marketing, and activism.<sup>21</sup> Therefore this phenomenology of Engaged Buddhism is a distinctive form of modern Buddhism in Asia that shifts from a transmundane definition of liberation to a mundane one with a new focus on the cause, varieties, and remedies of worldly suffering and oppression, all expressed consistently in its leadership, doctrinal interpretation, and forms of organization.

What Queen is trying to argue was that these Engaged Buddhism, the phenomenology of liberation movement, is a unique Buddhist expression in modernity not typically seen before in the social history of Asia.<sup>22</sup> He debunked two historical reconstructions to prove this point: there never existed any primitive counterculture committed to social reform from below as featured by these Engaged Buddhism, nor does it resemble to the power politics of a Buddhist state committed to social change from above which was common throughout Asian history; the Engaged Buddhism we witnessed today is a short one, shaped and styled only after the year 1880, and “has taken a form of an unprecedented counterculture: local, voluntary association, regional and international networks, and globalized NGOs committed to service and activism.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore Queen listed three features as characteristics of contemporary engaged Buddhist

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20; also in Queen, Prebish & Keown, *Action Dharma*, 21.

leadership: 1) high-profile personalities whose careers straddled and blended the East and West; 2) dauntless activists for cultural renewal, social change, and an ecumenical World Buddhism; and 3) honored by their followers as saints and bodhisattvas.”<sup>24</sup> While the personal, doctrinal, and institutional dimensions of the engaged Buddhism demonstrates a distinctive form of modern Buddhism unprecedented in the history of South Asia, Queen stressed that this distinctiveness and its significant debt to thoughts and actions associated with non-Buddhist culture does not discredit its authority; but the challenges these modern Buddhism faces would likely be a problem of identity and continuity with its tradition.<sup>25</sup>

Although none of these three works dealt directly with the contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist communities, they have illustrated some important perspectives that could be widely useful to the understanding of modern forms of Buddhism in Taiwan. Szonyi has grounded the concept of secularization on a Chinese context, explaining that the validity and usefulness of the term most rely on the recognition of the importance of local historical and social context, in which the secularization that went through in China could not be apprehensible without considering the political aspect of the negotiation with westernization during the modernization process. McMahan and Queen have provided details on the impact of modernization towards religious change of modern Buddhism, both arguing that under the global trend of modernization, Buddhism have to adapt in ways similar to other religious traditions – by means of rationalization, demystification, an orientation towards worldly affairs, and a focus on action on a

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<sup>24</sup> Queen & King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



transnational level. Queen's work provided evidence that this global trend of religious adaptation could also be witnessed in the Engaged Buddhism phenomenon in Southeast Asia doctrinally and institutionally. The contribution of these works lies mostly on theorizing the intricate relationship between modernization and religious change in a Buddhism context, paving some initial theoretical foundations for other more specific studies on a local scale.

### 1.2.2 Western Literatures on Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism

More specifically to the works of Taiwanese Buddhism, Stuart Chandler's book *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* is thought to be the only English academic literature solely dedicated to the study of FGS. The book provided a great account on the Humanistic Buddhist philosophy adapted and promoted by Hsingyun as well as a detail description of the organization and structure of the monastery, seeing both the philosophical and institutional characteristic of FGS as an illustration of a religious adaptation towards the forces of modernization and globalization. Philosophically Hsingyun promotes a new Buddhist vision that consists of a this-worldly and humanistic orientation by a reinterpretation of Chan and *Pureland* philosophy and practice, crystalizing in the "Active Chan" practice and a "pure land in the human realm" religious ideal.<sup>26</sup> Similar to the questions asked by other scholars regarding whether the new worldly orientation illustrated by different contemporary Buddhist communities is a traditionalist or modernist

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<sup>26</sup> Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth, the Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 47-49; for a Chinese articulation of this philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism, please see Xue Yu 學愚, *Ren jian fo jiao: Xingyun da shi ru shi shuo, ru shi xing* 人間佛教: 星雲如是說、如是行 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shu ju Xianggang you xian gong, 2011), 98-103, 127-128.

adaptation, Chandler argued that FGS suggests a syncretic outlook of both the modern and the traditional, illustrated by the way Hsingyun was able to balance modern techniques – technology, modern institutionalization and administration, adaptation of contemporary political ideals – with traditional sources and wisdom.<sup>27</sup>

Chandler continued to elaborate on this syncretic characteristic of FGS in terms of its embracement of modern principles such as equality, democracy and wealth, and in terms of its modern institutionalization.<sup>28</sup> In the same way, Chandler also highlighted another aspect of FGS in the continuation and preservation of Chinese heritages – such as the Confucius traditional values of filial piety and *li* (禮) – by incorporate them into its Humanistic Buddhist philosophy and rituals.<sup>29</sup> Philosophically it promotes a soteriology that emphasis on the present world and a secularized Buddhist practice with a this-worldly interpretation of the *dharma* that breaks down the boundaries between monastery and general society; institutionally he argued that when a religious organization like Foguangshan appropriates a method from the secular society it has sacralized that method and secularized itself, even though Hsingyun see both as an expedient means (方便法) to bring people to Buddhism.<sup>30</sup> The very core of Chandler’s book is to delineate how this philosophical and institutional reorientation of FGS illustrates the way it adapts towards modernization and globalization, and how its philosophical values of impermanence,

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<sup>27</sup> Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 70; the same discussion between a traditionalist and modernist view can also be found among the scholars of Engage Buddhism, for more please see Thomas Freeman Yarnall, “Engaged Buddhism: New and Improved? Made in USA of Asian Materials,” in Queen, Prebish & Keown, *Action Dharma*, 286-319.

<sup>28</sup> Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 5, 81-84, 91-104, 234-235.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 237-252.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

interdependence, and vow to universal liberation is compatible with the postmodernist values of globalistic identity.

Unfortunately this is the only English academic publication that solely contributes to the study of FGS, which dwarfs from those that were dedicated to Ciji (or Tzu Chi) – its contemporary Buddhist counterpart in Taiwan.<sup>31</sup> Other studies on FGS can be found in journal articles and within chapters of publications, placing alongside other fellow Taiwanese Buddhist organizations such as Ciji and Dharma Drum Mountain to be jointly examined as a holistic contemporary Buddhist phenomenon in Taiwan. The works of Andre Laliberte and Richard Madsen are two that exemplifies such approach in studying FGS as part of a larger religious phenomenon in modern Taiwan.

Laliberte's book focused on the aspect of political participation among the Buddhist organizations in Taiwan and examined the factors that can best explain the variations observed in the range of political behaviors these organizations adopts.<sup>32</sup> In *The Politics of Buddhist Organization in Taiwan*, Laliberte argued that macro-level variables such as theology, culture, and state policy cannot provide a satisfying explanation for the different political behaviors illustrated by

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<sup>31</sup> Some of the better-known works on Ciji are: Julia Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009). Others include Yao Yushuang, *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism: Origins, Organization, Appeal and Social Impact* (Boston: Global Oriental, 2012); Mark O'Neill, *Tzu Chi: Serving With Compassion* (Singapore: John Wiley, 2010); Elise Anne DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2010), among others English books and thesis. Most of these works adapted a very similar approach with Chandler in providing a detail account of the biography of Ciji's leader Zhengyan, the distinctive institutionalization of the organization and its lay female community, their social service provision especially their extensive relief work services. The theoretical aspects of these works mainly connects the phenomenon of Ciji with modernization and gender issues, while their public aspect and its implication to the contemplation of the process of secularization at large often not their central concern, although they do make theoretical connections.

<sup>32</sup> Andre Laliberte, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan: 1989-2003* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

the Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC), FGS, and Ciji, with all three organizations having a very similar lineage from Chinese Mahayana tradition, Confucian influence, and facing the same political environment.<sup>33</sup> He therefore looked for other explanatory variables that could give a better account for the contrasting political behaviors of these three Buddhist organizations, in particular the catalyst of leadership and organizational characteristics.

Going through a brief case study of all three organizations Laliberte concluded that the evidence does not find the organizational characteristics – their amount of material resources, lay support, and ethnic and gender congruency between leaders and followers – to have any significance in determining the political behaviors of these Buddhist organization; it is the leadership that has the most compelling influence, with the variables of the availability of resources and lay support matters only once the leaders decide to commit to political involvement.<sup>34</sup> Laliberte demonstrated this in comparing the contrasting political attitude between FGS and Ciji, both adhering to the strand of Humanistic Buddhist philosophy and have similar abundance amount of resources and lay support. Ciji’s leader Zhengyan adopts an apolitical attitude in which form of selfless social services are considered more important than the “perplexities” of politics.<sup>35</sup> Hsingyun, on the other hand, believes that Buddhist have a duty to act directly by becoming involved in politics, although with limitation, seeing it as one of the viable ways to achieve its religious ideal in bringing a *Pureland* in this world. But different from the strategy adopted by the BAROC, FGS uses its own authority and resources in participating in politics

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 109-112.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 111.

instead of lobbying the Kuomintang (KMT), making FGS having a more wavering relationship with the political party.<sup>36</sup> From this comparison of the political attitude between Hsingyun and Zhengyun, Laliberte concluded that it is leadership that matters the most in determining the political behaviors of the Buddhist organizations and its members, who are all ardent and passionate followers of their charismatic leader.

Richard Madsen's *Democracy Dharma* focused on the aspect of democracy among the prominent religious groups within the context of religious renaissance, and from the case studies of these groups looked at how religion affects movements towards democracy, and how progressive forms of religion are bred.<sup>37</sup> Regarding democracy, Madsen argued that there is a mutual causation between the renaissance of these religious groups and Taiwan's transition to democracy, in which the early phase of democratization had encouraged such religious renaissance to happen while this religious renaissance also helped to make the transition successful with the religious group producing a moderating, healing, and solidarity influence.<sup>38</sup> This claim posted great challenge to the secularism promoted by liberal political theories, which are skeptical about the capacity of religion in playing a positive public role within a modern, liberal democratic state.

Madsen's case study on Taiwanese Buddhism also posted other questions regarding the civil society envisioned by liberal theories. The intricate

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 71, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

relationship between the religious group and the state has shown that the Taiwanese civil society has not been as independent of the state as anticipated by these theories, with the religious groups studied in the book – FGS, Ciji, Dharma Drum Mountain, and Enacting Heaven Temple – all showing a general cooperative relationship with the authority while maintaining their autonomy. Madsen saw this relative lack of independence between the religious groups and the state as a positive factor to the development and consolidation of democracy in Taiwan, where they helped to smooth some “rough edges” out of the potential conflicts between the people and the state through the democratization process, and act between them by nurturing a cooperative attitude and a spirit of public engagement among the people.<sup>39</sup>

Madsen also saw these religious groups as offering hopes to the world with their progressive promises in overcoming the regressive perils of religion in the modern world. As most of the religious movements seen today are causing cultural division and conflicts and threatening world peace, the religious groups in Taiwan seem to demonstrate its capacity in providing transcendent meaning, universal morality and human interconnection by a form of “ecumenical nationalism”; a sense of national community that respects both pluralism and international order that encourages the affirmation of a distinctive identity in the global community through peace and love, and an universal ideal and vision that transcends all ultimate reality.<sup>40</sup> What Madsen proposed, again, was the mutual causation between religious movements and the boarder social context: while the changing social landscape and structure of the democratized Taiwan encouraging

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 137-139.

the development of a religious renaissance, the religious groups have also played a significant role in contributing to the democracy transition and the formation of a sense of nationalism among the modern Taiwanese citizens.

Madsen's articulation of the relationship between the religious groups and democracy in modern Taiwan echoes with the work of Robert Weller. In inspect to the case of China and Taiwan, Weller explained in *Alternative Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* that the expansion of the civil domain of the society does not necessarily follow and reproduce the western imagined form of civil society and civil values, but can take alternative form by mediating with the process of modernization and modifies the importing modern values with its cultural roots.<sup>41</sup> Both the local culture and the incoming modern values are mediated in the process of adaptation and appropriation, which creates a form of "Chinese way of modernity" – in the civil domain this creates a "Chinese form of civility" and in the religious domain it appears in the form of the modern Buddhism in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism today.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the role of religion in the civil life of Taiwanese societies, Weller explained that religion has always served a communal function to the local community, providing a platform for independent voices similar to a local public sphere and a place of concentration of social capital. While this geo-communal function of temple religion still serves today, its social significance and configuration had been somewhat affected by the process of modernization, including the destruction of local community structure by increased social

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Weller, *Alternative Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xiii, 138-139.

mobility and urbanization, and with the emergence of consumerism that leads to alternative form of entertainment from temple communal lives. While modernity has caused disruptions towards temple religion and its communal functions, it did not led to a decrease in religion but the emergence of two contrasting form of modern religiosity: an individualized form of religious practices that strip off old customs and morality and embraces the individualism and utilitarianism of modern capitalistic culture; and an organized, universalized form of religion similar to western voluntary congregation that are deeply dissatisfied with “the crisis of morality breakdown” of contemporary social life and attempts to resolve it by reinstating tradition morality. Weller called this a “split cultural responses to expanding market economy.”<sup>43</sup>

Don Pitman provided a different but important source to the knowledge of FGS and the other contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism. His *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism* was a study of the modernist Chinese monk Taixu, the initiator of the Humanistic Buddhist philosophy who Hsingyun, Zhengyan, and Shengyan of Dharma Drum all conceded to inherit.<sup>44</sup> The book provided a detail biography of Taixu and the historical reasons that motivated his drive to modernize Chinese Buddhism both philosophically and institutionally. The result was the creation of a philosophy “Buddhism for human life” (人生佛教) that attempted to make the religion more effective and relevant in responding to the circumstances of the modern era, objectives that became the very core of the Humanistic Buddhist philosophy almost entirely preserved and passed on to his later generation of advocates including Hsingyun.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



Pitman also placed the endeavor of Taixu into a historical perspective, stating that Taixu's attempted reformation of the Chinese Buddhist community was a correspondence to the modernizing cultural movement at the same period of the Republican reign. As those intellect tried to reform China by blending the essence of Chinese traditional culture with the modern ideologies of modern western civilization, Taixu was doing the same by incorporating these modern ethos with traditional Chinese Buddhism. Hence, Taixu's proclamation for "Buddhism for a human live" was a respond to the historical and social demand of his era, and a necessary maneuver to address to the impact of the force of modernization. Pitman claimed that Taixu's humanistic reorientation of Buddhism was congruent to the prominent features of the religious trends of the modern period identified by scholars such as John Randall and Joseph Kitagawa, in which the forces of modernization would propel changes within religion including an ethicization of religion and a this-worldly soteriology.<sup>45</sup> This locates the emergence of Taixu's Humanistic Buddhism and his Taiwanese successors in a historical and theoretical perspective; it was the specific history of modern China that was the impetus for the emergences of this trend of Buddhist revival, which corresponded to the wider trend of religious adaptation towards modernity. So the success of FGS and other Taiwanese Buddhism was build upon Taixu's vision to reform Chinese Buddhism according to both the particular and universal demand of the twentieth century; the future success of Buddhism (and most likely for all other religion) depends on its ability to contextualize and indigenize within the specific national, ethnic and cultural setting as well as on its ability to adapt and incorporate the universal stances of modernity.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

All the above literatures have contributed to the understanding of FGS in different ways. Chandler provided a thorough study of the organization and structure of the monastery, and Pitman gave a detail historical and philosophical account of the pioneer of Humanistic Buddhism and reformer of Chinese Buddhism in the person of Taixu, both placed within the theme of religious adaptation towards modernity. Laliberte, Madsen, and Weller have all dedicated different lengths of their works in investigating the political aspect of FGS and contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, with the previous two examining the case of FGS in terms of political participation and its contribution to democracy respectively, and Weller providing exposition on the role of the Taiwanese Buddhist communities in performing a civil and communal function for the people of Taiwan. But as witnessed, all of these works were not particularly theoretical in nature, and the subject of focus is on the religious groups rather than on the theorization of this Buddhist phenomenon in relations to the society, which have all been the least of attention paid among the studies on contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism.

### **1.2.3 Chinese Literatures on Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism**

There are also abundant Chinese literatures that cover topics on contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan and China, with Jiang Canteng, Deng Zimei, Kan Zhengzong, Xue Yu among some of the prolific Chinese scholars on contemporary Chinese Buddhist history and philosophies; most of these works, as mentioned, mainly covers the historical and philosophical aspect of the Chinese

Buddhist movements in contemporary China.<sup>46</sup> These abundant works covered large and detail grounds on the history of contemporary Chinese Buddhism on both straits as well as the modern Humanistic Philosophy that modern Chinese Buddhist such as Taixu, Yishun, and others had spawn and promoted in the past century. However useful they are in the understanding of contemporary Chinese Buddhism, we will not go through these all literatures as the historical and philosophical aspects of FGS and Hsingyun are not the focus of this study (chapter three will briefly go through these topics as the background study). Nevertheless it would be useful to look at a couple of Taiwanese scholars, including Qu Haiyuan and Ding Renjie, who have endeavored to examine the theoretical and sociological aspects of the contemporary religious movement in Taiwan.

It is hard to overlook the works of Qi Haiyuan if we are to examine the field of the sociology of religion in Taiwan. His many publications have contributed both quantitatively and qualitatively to the sociological study of modern religions in Taiwan, including topics concerning the trends of religious developments in modern Taiwan, local folk religions, new religious movements, politics and religious legislations, religious practices and social actions, etc. With such a wide ranch of topic it is difficult to pin down his work to any single perspective.

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<sup>46</sup> Some of the works among these contemporary Chinese Buddhism scholars include: Deng Zimei 鄧子美, *Chao yue yu shun ying: xian dai zong jiao she hui xue guan zhao xia de fo jiao* 超越與順應: 現代宗教社會學觀照下的佛教 (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2004); Kan Zhengzong 闕正宗, *Zhong Ddu Taiwan fo jiao: zhan hou Taiwan fo jiao* 重讀台灣佛教: 戰後台灣佛教 (Taipei: Da qian chu ban she, 2004); Jiang Canteng 江燦騰, *Ren shi Taiwan ben tu fo jiao: jie yan yi lai de zhuan xing yu duo yuan xin mao* 認識臺灣本土佛教: 解嚴以來的轉型與多元新 (Taipei: Taiwan Shang wu yin shu guan, 2012); and Xue Yu, *Ren jian fo jiao*; with Deng's *Chao yue yu shun ying* offers some theoretical analysis of the philosophies and practice of the contemporary Chinese Buddhist, mostly in connection with the works of Max Weber.

Nevertheless one of his focal point is to place the religious development into the larger framework of social change and transition in twentieth century Taiwan (社會變遷). Qu has been endeavored to conduct different researches on the topic of social change for the past decades in collaboration with other scholars, which locates the changes among the religious spheres inseparable from the large change and transitions of the Taiwanese society.

These studies have been collected in his two-volume edited publication *Zong jiao, shu shu yu she hui bian qian*.<sup>47</sup> Following the work of Robert Wuthnow, Qu suggested that there are three factors that could affect religious development in a society, including 1) the phase of world order in which the society is located; 2) the political and economical circumstances, and 3) the situation of secularization within the society; with (1) having an overall influence on all other factors, (2) affecting (3), and all three contributing to religious change.<sup>48</sup> Qu defined secularization as a process that leads people and societies to lean towards rationality and an increase of bureaucratization caused by the spread of capitalism in the society. With the spread of rationalization and bureaucratization across different domains of the society, it further enhances the process of secularization and eventually hinders the development of religion in the society.<sup>49</sup> Although Qu did not see secularization as a term that is negative to religion, the logic of his connection between world orders and religious changes – as illustrated above by his progressive impact from (1) to (3) and ultimately religious changes – did seem to suggest that as societies enters the phase of modernity with an increasing

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<sup>47</sup> Qu Haiyuan 瞿海源, *Zong jiao, shu shu yu she hui bian qian. Vol. 2, Jidu zong jiao yan jiu, zheng jiao guan xi yan jiu* 宗教、術數與社會變－基督宗教研究, 政教關係研究 (Taipei: Gui guan tu shu gu fen you xian gong si, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

influence of capitalism, secularization is an inescapable trend in affecting the development of religion.

However Qu did not articulate clearly about the intricate relationship between the overall social circumstances, process of secularization, and religious change of contemporary Taiwan. In his case study on Taiwan, he described the mid-twentieth century as a significant transformation phase of world order for Taiwan with the end of the World War, the arrival of the Mainlanders, and the increasing influence of Western powers in particularly the U.S., which led to a strong desecularization trend on the island in leading to the huge growth of religious groups in the decades that follow.<sup>50</sup> But at the same time he attributed the stagnation of Christianity from the 1960s onwards to the secularization force caused by the economic growth and increasing living standard of the Taiwanese society.<sup>51</sup> If we refer back to his framework of world order phases, which depicted how the political and economical circumstance of a society would affect the process of secularization and eventually on religious change of a society, it is incomprehensible how there can be a contrasting secularization and desecularization force occurring in Taiwan under the same macro situation of modernization.

Comparing to Qu's more generic approach to the overall religious landscape of contemporary Taiwan, Ding Renjie's sociological examination of religions in modern Taiwan focused more on specific contemporary Buddhist communities on the island. His article in 2006 investigated the social engaging philosophy and practice of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism from a Weberian model, and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

examines how the contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan might be a new form of “social agency” (行動者) that differs from the classification of “other-worldly mysticism” as well as the “inner-worldly asceticism” type of the Protestantism.<sup>52</sup>

Ding attributed the inner-worldly reorientation of contemporary Buddhism as a reaction that is concurrent to the cultural response of the larger society towards modernity. He referred to the early work of Robert Bellah which depicted how traditional society responds to the confrontation of Western modernism: on one side is the total acceptance of “westernization” (全盤西化) in secular forms of liberalism, nationalism, socialism and in religious forms the embracement of Christianity; on the other side is a form of internal cultural transition (轉化) that attempts to retain its tradition and culture under modernization and takes the form of traditionalism, reformism and neo-traditionalism.<sup>53</sup> In Ding’s interpretation the core issue that is behind these different cultural responses is how societies retain their “identity” (認同) when facing the force of modernization that emphasizes the “progressive” (進步) aspect of social evolution. Bellah saw identity as the core element to sustain a society, and Ding recognized religion to be a provider of meaning and value of an ethnicity or a community as a stable and sustaining source of identity.<sup>54</sup> Therefore in facing the advance of western modernity a religion can be a viable source to retain the identity of a society by either embracing Christianity (westernization response) or readjust its traditional belief systems in according to modernism (transitional response).

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<sup>52</sup> Ding Renjie 丁仁傑, “Progress, Identity, and the Inner-worldly Shift for the Approach of Salvation: ‘Human Realm Buddhism’ and Its Varieties” 進步、認同與宗教救贖取向的人世性轉向：歷史情境中的人間佛教及其行動類型初探, *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 臺灣社會研究季刊 62, June (2006): 37-99.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Ding described that the endeavors of Taixu and Yinshun in reinvigorating Chinese Buddhism was a similar cultural response described in Bellah's work, and from analyzing their philosophies he categorized Taixu as a neo-traditionalists and Yinshun as a reformist.<sup>55</sup> Ding's reading of Taixu was similar to the viewpoint of Don Pitman, that he was a religious thinker alongside the other intellects of his period who painstakingly tried to modernize China during a time of international threat. In a time when the Chinese were in demand for a form of cultural identity amidst their transitional response towards modernity, Taixu attempted to interpret Buddhism as a local religion that has been indigenized through centuries of assimilation with Chinese culture in competing with other Chinese intellectuals who themselves were trying to rejuvenate Confucianism as an answer to their search for nationalistic identity. In another words Taixu placed Chinese Buddhism not only as a local religion but a cultural core that can be identified with Chinese nationalism. Ding believed his urge for a new modernized Buddhism paralleled to the social desire for the construction of a new China that would incorporate Western modern culture within its own cultural system.<sup>56</sup>

Ding did not elucidate clearly what kind of "social agency" contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism is in terms of the Weberian classification as he argued that although Taixu's successor Yinshun was trying to promote a demystified "anthropocentric Buddhism" that consisted of a "transcendental non-dualistic" religiosity, other successors who tried to actualize his Humanistic Buddhism have

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 78

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 54.

all expanded in diverging ways due to different leadership, organization structure and membership which could not be placed together under a same classification.<sup>57</sup> By identifying the different approaches the successors have progressed philosophically and institutionally after Taixu and Yishun, Ding made a categorization of these successive contemporary Buddhist communities, categorizing Ciji as “Public Buddhism”, FGS as “Progress Buddhism”, and Dharma Drum Mountain as “Present Buddhism”.<sup>58</sup> While he did not make detail explanation for this categorization, it is questionable to make such a clear-cut categorization since all of the three Buddhist groups have a public, progressive and present nature in their humanistic philosophy and approach towards the society.

In another article Ding Renjie explored the social participation practice of Ciji in relation to political and civil participation.<sup>59</sup> He argued that the social participation as encouraged by Ciji is different to both the Habermasian conception of civil participation and Jose Casanova’s framework on public religion, in which the formation of Habermas’ civil society is enabled by the collective discursive participation within the public sphere, while Casanova discerned that the contemporary revival of religion on a public level took place on a discursive level where religion attempts to react against the privatization process by challenging the public domain by discursive means.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to these “western” form of social participation which relies heavily on discursive

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 54 & 63.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>59</sup> Ding Renjie, “Emergence of Civil Society or Reproduction of Traditionality? The Buddhist Tzu-Chi Association in Taiwan” 市民社會的浮現或是傳統民間社會的再生產—以台灣佛教慈濟功德會的社會實踐模式為焦點, *Taiwanese Journal of Sociology* 台灣社會學刊 38, June (2007):1-15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 14-15.



mode of participation such as critics and commentaries, he identified Ciji's form of social participation as a "somatic model", in which they encourage a way of participation on the basis of action; their religious ideal of remedy and reconstruct the society, which is the reason behind social participation, is to be done by action and not by words.<sup>61</sup> Ding recognized this emphasis on action to be heredity of the traditional Chinese cultural mixture of Confucianism and a state/religion/morality synchronized political culture.<sup>62</sup> So the "somatic" mode of social participation of Ciji can be represented as a Taiwanese revitalization of a Chinese form of civil society, a form of social participation that does not base on expression and discussions but acts based on morality and care. This is in stark contrast, or even antithetic, to the Western form of discursive model of civil participation; it is the reason that the Western form of civil society cannot be created in Taiwan – and probably not in any Chinese society following Ding's reasoning – and that these society will create its own "alternative civility".<sup>63</sup>

Ding provided us with some perspectives to explore the association between the social participation practice of religious organizations and civil participation and obligation. First is the importance of action as a mean for social participation among contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist organizations as mentioned above, with Ciji's apolitical stances attributed to both their avoidance in participating in political affairs, and their emphasis on social participation through action and not words (which was consistent to the analysis of Laliberte and Madsen above). Secondly he used Ciji's approach of social participation and generalized it as an alternative form of Chinese civility in contrast to the globalizing force of western

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 16-18

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 48.

liberal form of civil society and highlighted how the Chinese understanding of civility is heavily influenced by Confucian morality. The traditional Confucian morality of dignity, righteousness, filial piety, and collective good is intermixed with the concept of public/community in a Chinese sense (公), a form of traditional Chinese moral civility that is lost and overshadowed by western cultural imperialism of the twentieth century. Ding argued that as modern society is plague by a moral crisis, Ciji embraces these traditional Chinese morality into their religious system, and present itself to be a contemporary form of Chinese Buddhist community that rediscover these lost traditional Chinese morality and re-appropriates them according to modern conditions. From this perspective these Buddhist organizations is not only a religious organization that serves religious purposes, but also provides morality, meanings and cultural identity to their followers, and most importantly a communality that helps the construction of a civil community based on religious impetus.

Qu and Ding are only within a small group of local scholars who have attempted to comprehend the contemporary religious landscape of Taiwan from a sociological perspective and have spent effort in connection theories to empirical studies. Among the myriad of studies and researches conducted by Qu, we cannot underestimate his contribution to the understanding of local religions of Taiwan, but in terms of this study, his articulation of the process of secularization was brief and still hold to the more conventional understanding of the term as religious decline in the general society, which was not helpful to explain the complexity displayed by the increasing role and social presence of different religions within a seemingly secularizing society. Ding also did not conduct a thorough investigation into the matter of secularization in modern Taiwan,

however his detail examination of specific cases as illustrated in his work on Ciji was conducive to a theoretical and sociological understanding of the modern religious landscape of Taiwan.

## **1.3 Main Theme and Structure of Dissertation**

### **1.3.1 Main Theme and Objective of Research**

In terms of quantity there are indeed many publications that studied on the religious landscape of modern Taiwan and the contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist groups in particular.<sup>64</sup> But as demonstrated above, while these academic studies are not lacking, they are mainly historical, doctrinal, and anthropological in nature. Within the English literature only Chandler's book was dedicated fully to the investigation of FGS, with other studies related to the monastery found in chapters among publications that studies broader topics of the religious movement in contemporary Taiwan (as in Laliberte, Madsen, etc). Theoretical studies that articulates the recent development of contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan, in particularly on FGS, are lacking and can only be found sparsely in different case studies and indirectly from a handful of works that dealt with the modernization and contemporary Buddhism (as in McMahan and Queen), or in a few literatures that do not deal directly with the case of FGS (as those on the study of Ciji), or those written in Chinese and unknowledgeable to English readers due to language barriers (as in Ding). A comprehensive theoretical

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<sup>64</sup> Other noticeable works on Taiwanese religion that were not covered here include: Lu Yunfeng, Byron Johnson & Rodney Stark, "Deregulation and the Religious Market in Taiwan: A Research Note," *The Sociological Quarterly* 49 (2008): 139-153; Zhai Jiexia Elisa, "Contrasting Trends of Religious Markets in the Contemporary Mainland China and in Taiwan," *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 1 (2010): 94-111; and books considering the role of religion in identify formation and democratic participation in modern Taiwan: Paul Katz & Murray Rubinstein, eds., *Religion and the Formation of Taiwanese Identities* (N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003); Kuo Cheng-Tian, *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan* (N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2008).

examination of FGS from a sociological perspective is scarce, not to say a thorough examination of the religious phenomenon in modern Taiwan and its relationship to the process of secularization. This study would take up this task in examining the complex relationship between the contemporary Buddhist community and the modern Taiwan society. A result of such task would not only provide a glimpse of the validity and relevancy of the concept of secularization in non-western societies, but also provide alternative insights for the sociological understanding of religion in modern societies.

In sum, this study would like to investigate the relationship between religion and society in modern Taiwan through the lens of the extend version of secularization. This extend version of secularization do not adhere to the obsession with the decline or increase of religion, but acts as an analytical tool to investigate the changing forms of religion and the different roles it is able to assume with the society, with the awareness of the possibility of multiple patterns and outcomes determined by different contingent factors.<sup>65</sup> This investigation would concentrate on the development of FGS in modern Taiwan, and would follow Casanova's tripartite analytical framework in looking at the ways the modern monastery "deprivatizes" and assume different public roles in the society. From there we will see how the examination of the increasing public presence and significance of FGS can tell us about the process of secularization and religious change in modern Taiwan. The outcome of this research would be valuable in examining the validity of the concept of secularization in Taiwan and in suggesting alternative ways to understand the relationship between religion and

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<sup>65</sup> Jose Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective", *The Hedgehog Review* 8, No. 1-2, Spring/Summer (2006): 17.

society that is uniquely distinctive to the Taiwanese scenario. This framework would also provide an account in explaining the phenomenon of the resurging Buddhist community in modern Taiwan and discuss how the religiosity of contemporary Buddhism, with its unique religious concept of a this-worldly orientation and the idealism of a *Pureland* in this world, can be a catalyze in contributing to the differing patterns of secularization in the Taiwanese society; demonstrating that the direction and content of a religious community can itself play a significant dynamism in its influences and impact on the society.

Specifically this research would like to answer three questions in progression:

1. What are the different public faces of FGS within the Taiwanese society, and how is it similar and different to Jose Casanova's tripartite model of public religion?
2. Is there a process of secularization – in terms of structural differentiation, religious decline, and privatization – in twentieth century Taiwan and how does it diverge from the European experience described in the dominant theories of secularization?
3. What does this investigation of FGS and secularization tell us about modernization and religious change in a Chinese context, and how does different historical, social and religious factors contribute to this result?

### **1.3.2 Methodology and Structure of Dissertation**

This study will be theoretical in nature combined with a detail case study conducted with a mixture of different methodologies. It begins with a theoretical summary on the concept of secularization and public religion within the field of

the sociology of religion and a historical overview of the history of Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan. Subsequently other approaches will be applied to capture the different forms of publicness of FGS within the Taiwanese society, including a media study that comprises a thematic analysis in comparing the different religious discourses presented within the contents of a selected series of FGS publication and the popular secular newspapers circulating in Taiwan, and an ethnography study that the researcher has conducted in Foguangshan, Kaohsiung in 2013. The last two approaches focus on the receptive perspective and investigates how the publicness of FGS is conveyed to and being experienced by the public, and how other forms of publicness of the monastery – its form of exposure and imaginaries – are being shaped by other social actors in the society uncontrollable by the religious organization.

This study is also well aware of the historical factors that contributed to the outcome of the research. It is aware that the particular political and social history of Taiwan during the past century was influential to the development of the religious landscape in modern Taiwan, and that the emergence of FGS as well as any process of secularization cannot be comprehensible in separation from the Taiwanese history, its cultural heritage with China, and its particular negotiation with the arrival of modernization in the twentieth century. This historical awareness is consistent with Casanova and other scholars that recognize the importance of historical contingent factors that could possibly lead to multiple forms of modern public religions and process of secularization.

After this introductory chapter we will take a detail look at the construction of the concept of secularization within the field of sociology of religion, and

review how it has developed initially as a theory in predicting the irreversible process of religious decline under modernity into a more flexible analytical concept in exploring multiple forms of religious development and manifestation within modern societies. The later half of the chapter will look into the details of the works of Jose Casanova, and see how he has followed the refined version of secularization in inspecting religious changes in modern society. The resulting tripartite framework of public religion has been one of the most significant contributions of Casanova towards the field of the sociology of religion and further explanation will be made in the chapter regarding the detail of his framework as well as explaining why it was employed in this study to examine the case of FGS and the process of secularization and religious change in Taiwan.

Chapter three will conduct a brief review of the history of Buddhism, in particular histories related to FGS, in twentieth century Taiwan. Such a review will provide the necessary background before commencing a detail application of Casanova's model in examining the various public aspects of FGS in contemporary Taiwan. One of the main objective is to demonstrate that the emergence and growth of FGS and their social presence and success in penetrating into the society have been a result of the particular modern historical development of Taiwan in the past century. The chapter will also take a look into the process of structural differentiation – one of the core component of secularization – in modern Taiwan and take a first glimpse on how different contingency factors of the society has affected the way the process of differentiation, secularization, and modernization is being appropriated and negotiated in the Chinese society.

Subsequent chapters will be dedicated to the application of Casanova's tripartite model in examining the different public faces of FGS in the Taiwanese society. Chapter four will start with a theoretical analysis that directly places FGS within Casanova's framework of public religion and examines where the monastery fits into the tripartite model of a public religion at the state, political and civil level, and explores how the different historical factors laid out in chapter three contributes to the similarities and difference between the case of FGS and Casanova's model. This initiative analysis will argue that the way FGS engages into the society is congruent with Casanova's argument that the deprivatization process of modern religions are performed at the civic level, with any attempt on the state and political level incompatible with modern principles and social structure of differentiation. Next, the chapter will go on to inspect other public aspects of FGS that are present in the society, including its physical presence displayed through its hundreds of temples and branches erected worldwide, and its institutional establishment illustrated in the way the monastery have penetrated into the public domain through the provision of varies social and cultural services.

Chapter five will start with a review on the discursive aspect of modern religion and its significance in the study of modern religions in the society. In illustrating the secularist ideal of the exclusion of religious contents from the public sphere as a form of secularist consciousness that contributes to the process of secularization, this chapter will examine whether the growing public presence and religious contents of FGS in the Taiwanese public sphere is a violation towards this secularist ideal. From highlighting different scholar's recognition of the significance of the discursive aspect of religion, the chapter will conduct a



thematic analysis between a publication series from FGS and the secular newspapers of Taiwan, claiming that the former generates a form of “controlled” contents from the religious organization and the latter a form of “uncontrolled” contents, generating two different and somewhat contradicting image of the monastery among the public.

Chapter six will commence a final inspection of the publicness of FGS with a more subjective and experiential approach from an ethnographic study that the researcher had personally undertook in Foguangshan in the spring of 2013. The purpose of this ethnographic approach is to provide an alternative aspect to see how the publicness of FGS could be personally experienced in real life situation. The field study will be consolidated into a discussion of three aspects – the people, the temple and the community, and the Spring Festival – from the observation and materials gathered during the period as the researcher participated as a volunteer inside the monastery. This ethnographic study would continue from chapter five in considering the receptive aspect and investigates the publicness of FGS from a reception pointed of view. It will conclude with a discussion regarding the particular religiosity of FGS that could be experienced by the interaction with its members and inside its activities.

The last chapter will make a final analysis regarding the concept of secularization in our Taiwanese case study. By consolidating the different public faces of FGS – philosophically, physically, institutionally, discursively, experientially, and in terms of Casanova’s tripartite model – the conclusion will make a last analysis on the public engaging phenomenon of the monastery, and elaborates on the ways FGS manifest itself as a modern public religion, how its

public presence and deprivatization process within the society reveals to us in reference to the process of secularization in modern Taiwan, and more broadly on how this case study inform us about Chinese religiosity and its adaptation towards modernity.

All in all, the intention of this paper is not limited to an analysis and theorization of FGS's socially engaging phenomenon within Taiwan, but reaches out to broader topics in relation to religion and contemporary society, including the validity and application of the concept of secularization, religious change under modernity, and the boundary between the category of religion and secular. Hence the outcome of this study would not only provide an in-depth sociological and cultural understanding of the various public aspects of FGS; the contextualization and theorization of their social presence would also further our understanding on how the particular social and cultural history of Taiwan, its Chinese cultural roots, and the religiosity of Chinese Buddhism, have all contributed to the unique way Chinese religions adapts and negotiates with the process of modernization and secularization.

## **Chapter 2: Secularization and Public Religion**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

After laying out the rationale of this thesis in the introductory chapter, this chapter will take a detail review on the construction of the concept of secularization within the field of sociology of religion, and see how it has developed from a theory in predicting the irreversible process of religious decline under modernity into a more flexible analytical concept in exploring multiple forms of religious development and manifestation within modern societies. This transition is what separates between the classical understanding of secularization as a theory, and the refined or extended version of secularization as an analytical tool. Precisely the difference between them is not on the meaning of the term secularization, which regards to the decreasing significant of religion at the social level, but on the flexibility of the outcome and result of this social process; the former predicts an inevitable decline while the latter allows different degree of changes at different domains and level of a society in which the end result does not necessarily have to associate with a general decrease of religiosity in a society. The complexity of the latter version makes the concept of secularization an effective tool to examine the social status of modern religions.

The later half of the chapter will take a closer look into the works of Jose Casanova to see how he has masterfully employed the concept of secularization in inspecting the growing presence of religion in modern societies, and formulated a framework that could be applicable in examining different public aspects of modern religions in different societies. The analysis at the end will take a critical look at Casanova's framework of public religion, and explain how the

model can be expanded by recognizing other public dimensions of modern religions, and how it can be made more applicable to examine the diverging religious landscape in different historical and social contexts.

## **2.2 The Early Conception of Secularization**

The components that constructed the concept of secularization can be found in the early works of social theorists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Marx only addressed religion very briefly throughout his works; his famous quote on religion as “the opium of the people” has become widely recognized as his predominant view on religion, one that certainly has a secularist touch on it. In his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, the passage before this quotation described religion and the related sufferings as “... the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions,” before leading to “it is the opium of the people.”<sup>66</sup> This shows that his conceptualization of religion is more complex than the negativity suggested with a single reading of his famous quotation; his description is more of a critique of modern society than one that is purely directed to religion – it is an “opium” for the people as a solace for the sufferings brought upon by the oppression and exploitation of modern economics. Nevertheless when placed into the broader context of Marx’s work, religion is seen only as a false consciousness and by the time the ideal society of socialism arrives through the success of class struggle the oppressed would be liberated and that no longer need the opium of religion to act as the heart in the society.<sup>67</sup> This illustrates a similar form of evolutionary

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<sup>66</sup> Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, edited by Joseph O’Malley (Cambridge University Press, 1977), introduction.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

sequence to the theory of secularization in which as the society development into its ideal direction, socialism in Marx case, religion will naturally vanish; a view that religion is superfluous and redundant as its social function disappears.

Similar to Marx, Durkheim did not address the concept of secularization directly, but his view of a regressing social significance of religion can be seen in his description of a modern situation where religion could no longer perform its function in upholding social solidarity and cohesion. For Durkheim, religion is essentially the objectification of the collective and the representation of their realities; it is eminently social as a symbolized expression of social sentiment and idealization.<sup>68</sup> Through systems of beliefs and rites religion acts as a carrier of the whole of a communal reality and sustains the proper functioning of the society; both operates as forms of socialization and social control towards the collective. The relationship of religion and the society is so intimate within Durkheim's work that Ivan Strenski asserted their bond through the expression "Religion  $\equiv$  Society."<sup>69</sup>

But by the evolution of human beings, a new era emerged that elevated the status of reason and science and rivaled religion in the realm of speculation and more broadly as an understanding towards reality. The individualism brought forth within industrial societies was detrimental to social solidarity and cohesion, and dissuaded individuals to embed into social networks such as religious activities; religious activities and practice gradually diminished. This not only resulted in a recession of religion in place for science to takeover, the eventual

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<sup>68</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (NY: The Free Press, 1965), 22.

<sup>69</sup> Ivan Strenski, *The New Durkheim* (NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 14-17.

breakdown of the collective aspect of the society have also led to a vacuum for meaning and identity, which is the fundamental element for different social pathologies, articulated in Durkheim's earlier work on suicide and the concept of anomie as social problems of modern society.<sup>70</sup> Hence Durkheim saw modernity not so much as the triumph of the enlightenment of men, but was more concerned with the problems caused by the regression of religion and the entailing detriment of social cohesion and solidarity.

Max Weber had a more direct and influential impact to the construction of the concept of secularization, in which his description of the development of religion in modernity and his concepts such as "disenchantment", "rationalization" and "this-worldliness" all been taken up by subsequent scholars as important facets of the secularization thesis. For Weber the advance of rationality in modern society was the core social process leading to the decline of religion. Rationalization was seen as the main catalyst for modernization that grew from the sphere of the economy to other sectors of the society, with the growing mentality of rational calculation and the emerging domination of bureaucratic organization dominating modern life. As this rational mentality spread across to other sphere of life it affected not only the economic aspect of ones modern life but also its epistemology towards world understanding. The world is now explained by a new this-worldly rationality with previous comprehension of reality through magic and mystery collapsing. Such intellectualization of world understanding is what Weber described as the "disenchantment of the world."<sup>71</sup> Although this disenchantment does not mean

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<sup>70</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study of Sociology*, translated by John Spaulding & George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951).

<sup>71</sup> One of the original quotes from Max Weber on disenchantment comes from his "Science as a

that the old mystical narratives of religion has been totally casted out, they are now severely devalued and religion has lost its previous unquestionable status in world understanding in the way for science; it became the irrational under such rational society. Secularization is so intimately related to rationalization and disenchantment in Weber's work that Swatos and Christiano described them as a "double-sided rationalization-disenchantment process" in which secularization is both the process and the result of the process.<sup>72</sup>

In Marx, Durkheim and Weber we can already identify some of the ideas that were core to the conception of secularization formulated in successive decades, such as the decline of religion under modernity, the decreasing social significance and functionality of religion in modern society, and the forces – such as rationality – that caused such process. Comparatively Weber had a more direct influence to later scholars of secularization. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber demonstrated that it is not only the forces of modernity that affects religious development, religion can also contribute to the configuration of the society. Weber argued that there is a certain secularization root within Christianity, and while the emergence of Calvinistic Protestantism can be seen as a demonstration of the force of modernity, the new this-worldly asceticism and predestination theology of Calvinistic Protestantism had been conducive for the rise of capitalism in modern society.<sup>73</sup> This inner-worldly worldview turn the focus of the piety from the yawning for the transcending

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Vocation" (1918-1919), where he wrote: "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'" For details please see Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.

<sup>72</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Stephen Kalberg (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2002), 212.

<sup>73</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*.

world to an orientation towards the secular world, and one that was not short of a rationalistic cost-benefit calculation mentality. What this offered for later scholars of secularization is the consideration of other factors in contribution to the process of secularization apart from a single facet of modernization, and a seed for the recognition of multiple form and process of secularization.

### **2.3 The Early Scholars of Secularization and its Critics**

In embracing the idea that the commencement of the modern era will bring great challenge to the viability of religion from the earlier social theorists, different scholars continued to build on this foundation and made the concept of secularization as the main focus of investigation of religious change in the modern society within the field of the sociology of religion, eventually the secularization thesis was constructed. Some of the main interlocutors of the theory of secularization after the mid-1950s included Thomas Luckmann, Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson, Karel Dobbelaere, Steven Bruce, David Martin, Richard Fenn, among others. They inherited from earlier sociologists of religion, in particular Weber, the belief that the effect of modernization in contemporary societies is an inevitable process secularization and religious decline.

One of the well recognized works on secularization among the early group of secularization scholars was Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*. *The Sacred Canopy* was divided into two parts: the first part was a theoretical delineation of the vital functions religion play in upholding the strength of the *nomos* in the process of social objectivating and individual internalization; the second part looked at how such function of religion and its capacity in world construction and maintenance has been undermined in modern Europe – a process of



secularization. Berger gave a clear definition of secularization in the book, stating it as: “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”<sup>74</sup> More specifically he delineated three aspects of the secularization process observable in the modern history of Europe: (1) a social-structural process in which on the societal and institutional level there was a retreat of the Christian Church from the social domains where it previously exercised control and influence; (2) the secularization of culture and symbols in which the totality of cultural life and ideation, including forms of arts, philosophy, and more importantly the way we understand reality, is affected by a secularity that diminishes the religious contents in all these categories; and (3) the subjective side in the secularization of the consciousness, where there is an increasing number of individuals in the modern West who do not see religious contents as the only viable way to understand the world and their lives.<sup>75</sup> From here we see an early categorization of the process of secularization at a structural/institutional level, cultural level, and epistemological level, a categorization akin to that taken up by later scholars such as Jose Casanova.

Following Weber, Berger also identified the rationality of the modern society as the core component in leading to the process of secularization. The root of rationalization came from modernization, and is concomitant with the surging capitalism and the industrialization of the society. While the original ‘locale’ of the spirit of rationalization was originated in the economical sector, Berger stated that the secularizing potency of the capitalistic-industrial rationality is “not only

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 107.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108.

self-perpetuating but self-aggrandizing,” and consequently other sectors of the society would be infected by such rationality resulting in different levels and forms of secularization depending on their “closeness” and “distance” from such process.<sup>76</sup> The political sphere was particularly open to contagious, and as the modern state is increasingly occupied with the political and legal requirement of modern economy and modes of production, it must reconfigure its structure and ideology to this end; secularization then passes from the economy to the political in a “near-inexorable process of ‘diffusion’.”<sup>77</sup> So for Berger the decisive variable for secularization was not the particular form of institutionalization of the society or the specific change of state structure and constitutional system, but rather the dissemination of rationalization that was the prerequisite for any modern industrial society.<sup>78</sup>

The major consequence of secularization is the shattering of the plausibility structure both at the social level in the religious power in maintaining the *nomos* and at the individual level in understanding reality. The result is the arising of a problem of “meaningfulness” in both the institutional level of the state and economy and the everyday life of the individuals, and a “crisis of credibility” and the widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality.<sup>79</sup> Berger argued that the result for religion will be “polarized” between the most public and most private sectors of the society, namely the state and the family.<sup>80</sup> Despite religion losing much of its world constructing and maintenance capacity in the social level, it continues to have a considerable credibility of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 128.

reality within the private sphere of the family and small networks in a voluntarily way. The world construction and maintenance capacity of religion is thereby restricted to “the construction of sub-worlds.”<sup>81</sup> In this respect Berger identified the consequences of secularization as the privatization of religion and the emergence of a religious market in modern society.

A contemporary of Berger and one whom he had a long working relationship, Thomas Luckmann, shared the same stance on the predominating process of privatization among religion within modern society, stating in his *The Invisible Religion* that: “the social basis of the newly emerging religion is to be found in the ‘private sphere.’”<sup>82</sup> Luckmann argued that the dominant themes of modern society, including autonomy, self-expression, self-realization, the mobility ethos, etc. have become a kind of a modern sacred cosmos for the modern citizen in which the autonomy became something to be worshipped.<sup>83</sup> Moreover modern social differentiation segmented the society into different specialized functional domains with the religious institution being just one among many others. Therefore religious institutions would need to face competition with other autonomous secular domains in performing nonreligious roles for the individual, and this segmentation would result in the traditional religious institutions becoming increasingly irrelevant to the global claims of universal norms.<sup>84</sup> Under both circumstance, the sacred status of the autonomy and the rise of an individualistic mentality enabled individuals to have their freedom to search for their ultimate significance, which are now primarily performed in the private

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 107.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., chapter VII.

sphere. With the social-structural change of differentiation, individual's quest for salvation and life meaning can no longer rely on the now differentiated religious domain but have to be constructed and integrated with other secular domains. Therefore, modern religiosity is individualized and personalized and withdrawn to the private sphere of the self; it becomes privatized and invisible in public life. In sum, Luckmann saw the modern sacred cosmos as a symbolization of a social-historical phenomenon of individualism and the main catalyst for the bestowing of new importance upon the structural phenomenon of the private sphere.

Another protagonist of secularization in the same period was Bryan Wilson. For him secularization is a process of religious decay under the backdrop of a transition of human's social composition from "community" to "society" in the modern era.<sup>85</sup> The core factor in the process is the structural differentiation of the modern society in which the close association of structure and function that existed in traditional societies no longer holds.<sup>86</sup> In advanced societies multiple institutional spheres have developed out of a previous predominating institution of the Church functioning over almost every domain of the society. The differentiation process not only eradicated religious involvement in other domains of the society but more importantly it demonstrates the lost of the supremacy religion once had had over the society.<sup>87</sup>

Concurring with many of his contemporaries Wilson also followed Weber in seeing rationalism as an important catalyst for the secularization of modern

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<sup>85</sup> Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

society in *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Rationalization features along the advancement of science procedures and technology; as modern individuals became more and more committed to the rationalistic organization of everyday life with technology providing an efficient way to achieve different ends, eventually there will be an increasing tendency to look to technological rather than other forms of solutions – moral and ethical values, religion, etc – when confronted with problems and difficulties. The further people rely on technology of their everyday life the more their modes of thought and actions are driven by rational modes. The increasing rationality and the reliance of science and technology had severely diminished the interpreting capacity of religion on both the individual cognitive and social level.

The process of social differentiation and the encroachment of rationality and technology are associated by other related modernization forces that caused the decay of religion in the society, including: (1) the emergence of the modern state and its growing effectiveness and capacity to encompass the purview of religion in the society; (2) the change of social organization from communal structure and localism to a societal system which is based on rationality; (3) the growth of communication and mass media which “widen the horizons of the ordinary man”; concomitantly (4) the available of new technologies; (5) the spread of contemporary ethos such as the ideology of quality and democracy; (6) the massive expansion of education; and (7) a growing “sense of freedom in the moral sphere” by internationalization (or better know now as globalization) which facilitates the free-flowing of ideas.<sup>88</sup> The expansion of these modern forces is a great challenge to the maintenance of older forms religious patterns.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 125-128.

What resulted is the growth of a modern ethos that causes men to become unconcern about the supernatural, the conceptions of a transcendent order, and of ultimate value.<sup>89</sup> Wilson did not expect religion to disappear altogether in the modern society under these modernization forces; it would survive and linger in the private domain of the individuals in particular. But on the societal level religion can only operate in the interstitial places of the system, a statement similar to those from Berger and Luckmann.<sup>90</sup>

The concept of secularization has become a central theme within the field of the sociology of religion because of its powerful capacity in inspecting the relationship between religion and modern society. Gradually the conception of secularization in these early works was consolidated into a thesis that predicts an inevitable, irreversible, and unilinear social process in which religion would gradually recede as society modernizes. However, as well documented by Olivier Tschannen and Sharon Hanson, a critical problem with the concept of secularization lies on the inconsistency of definition and understandings articulated from scholars of various fields, leading to a growing confusion and division among different usage of the term. Tschannen argued that despite the seemingly theoretical incompatibility between the myriad models of secularization, the degree of coherence between them was generally underestimated and they shared a very broad set of assumptions and analytical categories.<sup>91</sup> He summarized across the writings of various scholars and listed differentiation, rationalization and worldliness as the three core exemplars of the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>91</sup> Oliver Tschannen, "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 4 (1991): 395-415.

secularization paradigm – as we also have seen from Berger, Luckmann, and Wilson’s work above.<sup>92</sup>

In her 1997 article Hanson commented on why the concept of secularization had spawned so much debate since its appearance within the academic field.<sup>93</sup> The first reason to cause such equivocality was the issue of definitional ambiguity. Hanson commented that different scholars had different definitions of secularization and understandings of religion, but as people came into dialogue on the topic of secularization they often used different sets of definition and conceptualization of the term and overlooked the problem and confusion such practice can make.<sup>94</sup> This is coupled with an improper handling of historical data by the researchers in application to the construction of secularization. Hanson argued that they often made inappropriate use of historical data by incorrectly juxtaposing contemporary and historical data, and often applied data from a different geographical and cultural location in analyzing other societies.<sup>95</sup> She concluded that the confusion in definition and lack of rigorous application of historical data were the main culprits in hindering the progress of the secularization debate and the proper evaluation of alternative theories such as desecularization.<sup>96</sup>

Apart from Tschannen and Hanson’s rather mild comments on the concept of secularization, other scholars were more critical about the intrinsic logic and the validity of the concept, with the “supply-side” theory of religion from Stephen

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 404-406.

<sup>93</sup> Sharon Hanson, “The Secularization Thesis: Talking at Cross Purposes”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12, No. 2, (1997).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 169.

Warner and Rodney Stark among the most relentless. In Warner's "Work in Progress Towards a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," he argued that the sociology of American religion is a "new paradigm" of understanding religion in modernity in contrast to the "old paradigm" of those secularization scholars.<sup>97</sup> Warner was unsatisfied by the prediction made by the old paradigm that religion could only become either increasingly generalized in a pluralistic world or devolved into the marginal and private sphere. He stated that many empirical evidences had been inconsistent with such predictions and in particular the American case suggested strong countering data. Religion in America illustrates high rates of religious affiliation within a modernized and strongly pluralistic society, and Warner argued that pluralism and the rise of an open market for religion does not necessarily result in the demise of religion. He further commented that the American case is a demonstration that the study of religion does not necessary need to conform to the grand narrative of Eurocentric classical secularization theory; a new paradigm for the study should treat empirical data in a new framework and without the baggage of the prescriptive and predictive metanarrative of secularization.<sup>98</sup>

Other scholars were also invigorated by contrasting religious developments in America in contrast to the prediction made from the secularization thesis. As evident in various national surveys since the late 1940s, there seemed to be an increase both in individual beliefs and practices among Americans. From a national poll conducted for 50 years in the late twentieth century across America, Andrew Greeley reported in *Religious Change in America* that 90 percent of the

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<sup>97</sup> Sharon Hanson, "The Secularization Thesis: Talking at Cross Purposes," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12, No. 2 (1997), 1045.

<sup>98</sup> Rob Warner, *Secularization and its Discontent* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 69.



respondents claimed that they believed and prays to God.<sup>99</sup> Rodney Stark in particular has been one of the most outspoken critics of the secularization thesis. In different collaborations with William Sims Bainbridge, Stark was invigorated by the works of Stephen Warner and the empirical situation of religion in America and proposed a new theory of studying contemporary religion from an economical principle that examines the supply side rather than the demand side of religion in a free religious market.<sup>100</sup> While Stark agreed with Berger in the notion that modernization and its social reconstruction process would inevitably lead to a more pluralistic and diversified society and an emergence of a free competing religious market, they saw diverging result from the appearance of such free religious market. For Berger the emergence of a pluralistic religious market was a result of a de-monopolization of a previous single religious monopoly, where people are now free to choose among various definitions of reality offered by different religious suppliers or the choice of other non-religious forms of definition. The emergence of such religious market is an illustration of the decreasing social domination of religion in which religious traditions are no different among other “market competitors”. On the other hand, as the society and the people are being more secularized it affects the preferences of the consumers to look for religious products that can be consonant with their secularized consciousness.<sup>101</sup> Therefore the impact of the emergence of pluralism is the de-monopolizing of the religious market where different religious groups seek by different means to “maintain their particular subworlds in the face of a

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<sup>99</sup> Andrew Greeley, *Religious Change in America*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>100</sup> Rodney Stark & William Sim Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Rodney Stark & William Sim Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

<sup>101</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 145.

plurality of competing subworlds.”<sup>102</sup>

In contrast, Stark argued that the de-monopolizing of the religious market and the freeing of the market would increase the supply of religion. Based on the rational choice theory and assuming that the demand for religion is more or less constant in all cultures, Stark explained that the increasing supply of religion in the market will encourage competitions leading to religious revitalization and innovation, resulting in the spawn of religious denomination, sects and cults.<sup>103</sup> As stated in the proposition of Stark’s theory on religious mobilization, a competitive and pluralistic religious market will lead to a higher religious participation, therefore the increasing supply of religion will drive up religious participation in a society.<sup>104</sup> Stark admitted that religion and the society will continue to be affected by secular forces but what result would be anything but the destruction of religion. He suggested that the secularization theory is not only ineffective in the study of religious development in modern times, but that the theory was plainly useless to an extent that it should be carried “to the graveyard of failed theories.”<sup>105</sup>

Despite sustaining such relentless attacks from different fronts, the concept of secularization remained an important part of the field of the sociology of religion up until this very day. One of the reasons for the continuous presence, and perpetual debate, of secularization in the academic is because of its capability in inspecting and scrutinizing the development of religion in modern societies.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>103</sup> Stark & Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 434-445.

<sup>104</sup> Rodney Stark & Laurence Iannaccone, “A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the ‘Secularization’ of Europe,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33, no. 3 (1994): 230-252

<sup>105</sup> Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999), 270.

What Stark and the aforementioned scholars had directed against is not on the ideas that modern society will undergo a social reconstruction process with secularization playing a part in the process, but on the nature of the thesis of secularization that predicts a unilinear and irreversible outcome of religious decline withholding the possibility of any alternative scenarios. As Peter Beyer later pointed out in retrospective on the concept, a key problem evident within earlier works of secularization, and reasonably subjected to considerable criticism in recent decades, is that there is a tendency to generalize local factors and cases and apply them as universal modes in examining religious situation in other societies and cultures, as seen with the unsuccessful generalization of the European experience of secularization on the American case.<sup>106</sup> However Beyer also reminded us that the concept of secularization remains a useful medium to gain insight into how religion will develop under modernity; its value is not and never has been its predictive capacity but in offering a useful description of the societal situation with respect to religion.<sup>107</sup>

## **2.4 The Flexible Understanding of Secularization and the Turn Towards Historical Contextualization**

Later scholars had pointed out that the idea of secularization that the early protagonists outlined were not as rigid and invariable as the critics had portrayed. As argued by Warren Goldstein in his 2009 article, most of the secularization models did not promote a predictive theory of a linear pattern of secularization but were rather conscious of the possibility of multiple patterns of secularization. Goldstein was not satisfied by the criticism made by Warner against the “old

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<sup>106</sup> Peter Beyer, “Secularization from the Perspective of Globalization: A Response to Dobbelaere,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999), 292.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

paradigm” secularization scholars, and argued that most of those theories did not promote a linear secularization process but follows three other patterns of secularization: the cyclical/spiral, the dialectical, and the paradoxical.<sup>108</sup> More specifically Goldstein highlighted the dialectical pattern among most of the core works of the old paradigm of secularization in which religious change is driven by various conflicting and countering forces and can result in both the advance and reversal of secularization; in another words both secularization and sacralization can occur simultaneously.<sup>109</sup>

Goldstein suggested that the works of the early secularization scholars were not as inflexibility as commonly perceived; they did not predict the same process of secularization to be universally identical in different societies nor had they insisted that the process would be unilinear or irreversible. In *Sacred Canopy* Berger claimed that: “While secularization may be viewed as a global phenomenon of modern societies, it is not uniformly distributed within them. Different groups of the population have been affected by it differently.”<sup>110</sup> Wilson declared that his description of the secularization process was: “only to document and to illustrate social change, and to organize that documentation into a general pattern which provides some explanatory apparatus for each individual instance,”<sup>111</sup> and that “the actual patterns in which it is manifested are culturally and historically specific to each context ... the indicators of secularization may be specific to particular culture.”<sup>112</sup> The association of the scholars of the “old paradigm” with the rigid secularization thesis might be a result of selective

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<sup>108</sup> Warren Goldstein, “Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm”, *Sociology of Religion* 70, no. 2 (2009), 158.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 108.

<sup>111</sup> Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 148.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.,152.

reading on the works of these sociologists, or due to the fact that their elucidation of the force of secularization was so convincing that other parts of their work were overlooked. Nevertheless the rereading of these earlier works has revealed that the conception of secularization was not as inflexible and inattentive to variations. Later scholars have refined their understanding of secularization with a more flexible vision that recognizes the possibility of different forms and outcomes of secularization in different societies, and the awareness of the importance of the contingent factors that could cause such variations.

*In God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Steve Bruce showed such awareness of historical contextualization in relation to the process of secularization, pointing out at the very beginning of the book that: "there is no one secularization theory, rather, there are clusters of descriptions and explanation that cohere well."<sup>113</sup> Regarding the process of secularization, Bruce shared similar thoughts with his predecessors in seeing the modern process of industrialization, individualization and rationalization as challenges towards religions, leading to the secularization of the West, or Britain in his case. The advancement of science and technology in modernity has encouraged a rationalistic orientation towards the world among the individuals and a sense of mastery over one's life. These factors created a general relativism that every philosophy and ideology, religious or secular, are supposedly equal in their claim for truth; it is only a matter of choice.<sup>114</sup> This is what Bruce considered to be the biggest challenges to the status of religion.

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<sup>113</sup> Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

Bruce defined secularization as a social condition manifest in “(a) the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious role and institution; (b) a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions; and (c) a decline in the extent to which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such belief.”<sup>115</sup> But as he outlined in the early pages of his book secularization is not an inevitable process for every society. As there are forces that are in favor of pushing societies towards secularization, Bruce also acknowledged the existence of “counter-tendencies” of cultural tendencies and transition that can retard and prevent the process of secularization.<sup>116</sup> Therefore even with those social forces brought by modernization that propels a secularization trend within a society, the result also depends heavily on local factors such as the state of diversity and egalitarianism embedded among the public consciousness, and how healthy and stable such diversity and egalitarianism can be sufficiently sustain within the governing state.<sup>117</sup>

The secularization story that Bruce narrated, then, is only a historically and geographically specified explanation of a cluster of changes regarding religion and society specific to Western Europe since the Reformation. He pointed out that whether such account can have any implications for other societies is itself an empirical matter. He does not see the secularization paradigm to be universal, nor is it a single grand-theory; and precisely secularization is a social process, it cannot be uniform.<sup>118</sup> There will be very different forms of secularization in

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 175.

different societies and culture.

David Martin also highlighted the factor of historicity in opposition to a universal trend of secularization and religious decline. In *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*, Martin contemplated the fundamental question within sociology on what will happen to religion under the conditions of modernity, and suggested that modernity is characterized as a scenario of mankind shifting from the religious to the secular.<sup>119</sup> He identified social differentiation as the most useful element in the paradigm of secularization, but the examination of such a process must still be conducted with the recognition of a number of key historical filters that could crucially direct, deflect or inflect secularization in various ways.<sup>120</sup> Considering the historical circumstance of Western Europe, Martin proposed that secularization was so vigorous and penetrative because Christianity had been intertwined with the structure of power for so long that propelled the Enlightenment to undermine such status quo.<sup>121</sup> This led to a social differentiating process where the Church no longer have the capacity to preserve their establishment in different sectors of the society which were eventually taken over by secular controls.

By examining the historical account of Western Europe, Martin suggested that one could indeed trace certain systematic patterns of secularization in terms of social differentiation in relationship to modernity, although one should also be cautious not to generalize such changes into grand theories and arbitrarily

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<sup>119</sup> Martin, *On Secularization*, 18.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

applying them to other diverging history and culture.<sup>122</sup> Apart from this awareness and attention to historical contingencies and multifold forms of secularization patterns, Martin went further and advanced that such analysis of multiplicity cuts across the conventional paradigm of secularization, in which the multitude of secularization processes is a manifestation of different routes of religious adaptation towards modernity and varying understandings of the status and power of modes of being; hence offering a glance of alternative forms of modernity and ways of being modern.<sup>123</sup>

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart offered a different approach in formulating their idea about the process of secularization under modernity. Their theory of secularization in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* developed further from the conventional understanding of secularization as a process in response to social forces such as rationalization and differentiation, and proposed that it is individual consciousness and feelings of vulnerability and security that are the key factors in driving the increase or decrease of religiosity. They proposed a “Theory of Existential Security and Secularization” in which the sense of existential security, including the level of economical and human development as well as socioeconomic equality, is the predominating factor that affects cultural practice and beliefs.<sup>124</sup> Based on such proposition and by an analysis of the World Value Survey conducted between 1981 to 2001, they argued that the systematic erosion of religious practices, values, and beliefs had occurred mostly among more prosperous societies while in more impoverished

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>124</sup> Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).



societies higher rates of religiosity are driven by a sense of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks.<sup>125</sup> Following this line of logic, the increasing number of nations and societies that became modernized and industrialized will not lead to an overall decreasing of religiosity on a global level, due to the fact that the rate of population growth in poorer societies, who tends to be more religious, would most likely outnumber these richer societies.<sup>126</sup>

Norris and Inglehart's theory of existential security have moved further away from the classical conceptualization of secularization; not only that different societies would have their own historical filters that could bend the secularization process into different directions, their theory has broken the theoretical connection between modernization and secularization altogether. N. J. Demerath III discussed about this paradoxical relationship in his article "Secularization and Sacralization Deconstructed and Reconstructed". Demerath III laid out five areas where scholars ought to clarify before using the term secularization, including: 1) the question of degree of secularization; 2) which level of the society it takes place; 3) the difference scale of measurement used in examining secularization; 4) the universality in varying societies and culture; 5) and the differentiation between secularization as religious decline or religious change.<sup>127</sup> The last point is of particular importance because once secularization is being understood as religious change rather than religious decline, that there could be many varying possibility including both the conventional expectation of religious decline as well as scenarios where secularization is not mutually exclusive to the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>127</sup> N. J. Demerath III, "Secularization and Sacralization Deconstructed and Reconstructed," in *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by James Beckford & N. J. Demerath III (London: SAGE, 2007), 61-65.

maintenance or even increase of religiosity in certain avenues of the society.<sup>128</sup>

Demerath III's contribution to the understanding of secularization also includes his analysis of the source of secularization and how the process is appropriated onto the society. This is framed by two fundamental distinctions: between secularization coming from an internal or an external source, and whether they are imposed directly or indirectly. The intersection of these two distinctions results in four different scenarios of secularization: 1) emergent - internal/ non-directed; 2) coercive - internal/ directed; 3) imperialist – external/ directed; and 4) diffuse - external/ non-directed.<sup>129</sup> This typology again highlights the pivotal role in which local factors are crucial factors in determining the way secularization operates in the society; the result of religious decline, maintenance, or increase, as well as the source and forms of the process, are all subject to a combination of variables.

Bruce, Martin, Norris and Inglehart, and Demerath III are some of those scholars who adopted a refined version of secularization; one that has departed from the uniform evolutionist conception of secularization predicting an irreversible social progress that results in religious decline, to another that acknowledges the importance of considering different historical and local factors that could lead to different forms and patterns of secularization and religious change. The acknowledgement of these contingency factors allows a more flexible approach in treating the concept of secularization as an analytical tool to investigate religious development, adaptation and negotiation with modernity.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

This has resulted in the formulation of different ways and models in understand religion in modernity, such as Luckmann's idea of the privatized religion, and more recently Grace Davie's idea of "believing without belonging" and Callum Brown's articulation of the significance of discourse and religious development.<sup>130</sup> In particular Jose Casanova's book *Public Religions in the Modern World* is a well documentation of the precarious relationship between modernization, secularization and religious change. Not only did he made a revise review of the conception of secularization and introduced a new framework of public religion in challenging the privatization narrative of secularization, he also conducted several brief but concise case studies to demonstrate that his framework of public religion is not just theoretical postulation but is supported by empirical evidences. The clarity and comprehensiveness of his studies, his sensitivity towards historical and cultural contingencies, and his continual revisit and revision of his own researches, made the works of Casanova to be one of the best examples in applying secularization as a analytical base in examining modern religions.

## **2.5 Jose Casanova and his Model of Public Religion**

In *Public Religion*, Casanova shared the same concern with all the scholars that have been reviewed above: to understand and articulate modern religious development under the impact of modernization and secularization. In looking into detail of the continuous public presence of religion in the present modern world, he suggested a framework of public religion to articulate such phenomenon against the privatization thesis of secularization. *Public Religion*

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<sup>130</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009); Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*.

starts with a revisit to the concept of secularization. In summarizing a host of existing studies on secularization, he listed out three main categories of secularization: as social differentiation, as religious decline, and as privatization.<sup>131</sup> Various critics of secularization above have illustrated that the understanding of secularization as religious decline has failed to describe the state of religion in different contemporary societies, but many scholars, including Casanova, acknowledged that the social differentiation aspect of secularization still remains as a valid component of secularization in describing modern religious development in relation to modern societal transformation.<sup>132</sup> The third core component of the concept of secularization, the privatization thesis, was the main thrust of *Public Religion*. Against the privatization thesis that predicts a retreat of religion from the public domain, Casanova's empirical researches suggested otherwise, with his case studies demonstrating that religions still plays a very salient role in the public domain of the society. Therefore his model of public religion was constructed on a flexible vision of secularization that investigates the multiple possibility of religious development in our modern world dominated by secular forces, turning away from the previous conception of the linear relationship between modernization and religious decline.

Casanova's tripartite model in *Public Religion* is a description of the locality of modern religions within the public domain of the society. Based on the degree and scope of their deprivatization process and the roles they are able to assume in the public domain, modern religions can become public religion in the state,

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<sup>131</sup> Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 20.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

political or civil level of a society.<sup>133</sup> A religion is public in the state level when it assumes the role of a state or national church; a religion assumes its public form in a political level when it becomes politically mobilized against other religious or secular movements, or institutionalized as a political party competing with other religious or secular bodies, both to advance their ideal and material interests in the political arena; and a religion assumes a public role in the civic level when it enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society in order to participate in open public debates about the *res publica*, that is, about public affairs and the common good.<sup>134</sup> Casanova also delineated three common motives, or features, for these modern religions to enter the public domain and assume different roles in the society: 1) to protect the freedom of religion and all other forms of modern freedoms and rights; 2) to question and contest the absolute lawful autonomy of the secular spheres and their claims and organization without regard to extraneous ethical or moral considerations; and 3) to protect the traditional lifeworld and the “common good” from administrative or juridical state penetration, and in the process opens up issues of norm and will formation to the public and collective self-reflection of modern discursive ethics.<sup>135</sup> By placing modern religions in such a model it provides us with a structured framework to examine the public engaging phenomenon of modern religions, and facilitates the assessment on their different forms of “publicness” displaying within a society – their public roles, function, exposure, significance, etc. What Casanova was suggesting is that the increasing public existence of religion in our society demonstrates a deprivatization process against secularization; a religion can gain

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 63-66.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 61; Jose Casanova, “What is a Public Religion?” In *Religion Returns to the Public Square*, edited by Hugh Heclo & Wilfred McClay (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson, 2003), 116-118.

<sup>135</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 57-58, 228-229.

its publicness and cement its location in the public society in terms of the degree it is able to deprivatize, emerging as a public religion.

The framework of public religion provided a comprehensive and intricate linkage in the discussion of secularization, religious privatization, and the emerging publicness of religion. The capacity of the framework is not only in its ability to map, investigate, and understand the public engagement of modern religious organizations in a society, but equally on its capability in elucidating the multiplicity and complexity of the relationship between religious development and modernization. To Casanova, the locale of the religion in the public, their “publicness”, is arbitrary: a religion can assume different roles at different levels of the society and this publicness can have different intensities and could manifested in different forms. Moreover there is no fixed boundary of this location of religion within any level of the public domain: religion can “transform” or “change in their type of publicity” according to different factors, circumstances, and context.<sup>136</sup> These difference outcomes are not only the result of the inherent differences between different religions – with their differences in tradition and organization as well as ways of adaptation and negotiation towards modernization – but also of the specific social, political and cultural factors of the society where these religions are situated. This means that the scope and degree of religious deprivatization and the resulting types of public religion can be multiple and contingent. In such manner the emerging public religion is historically contingent to their host society as well as dependent on the way it negotiates and adapts towards the process of modernization.<sup>137</sup> Therefore

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 220-221.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 215 & 223.

Casanova's model is congruent with the principle that takes an objective view in acknowledging and respecting the complexity of the religion/society relationship. He encouraged other studies in applying his model in examining modern religion in cross-cultural settings to explore other forms and process of deprivatization, which he believed could extend the scope of the understanding of public religion upon different historical trends.

## **2.6 The Continuity of Casanova's Work and a Global Examination of Secularization**

From the above we can see that Casanova's work in *Public Religion* has provided us with a new framework to continue the investigation of the subtle relationship between modernization, secularization, and religious development; one that is more flexible, inclusive of diverse outcome, and aware of local and contextual elements. Casanova has continued to revisit and revise his idea on public religion in his later works, expanding to incorporate broader topics about the categories of religion and secular, public and private, and religious development on the global level. In an article reviewing his 1994, Casanova pointed out that the most important contribution of the book was "the critique it offered to prescriptive theories of privatization of religion and to the secularist assumptions built into social theories of Western modernity and into most liberal theories of modern democratic politics."<sup>138</sup> But in retrospect he acknowledged that there were three main shortcomings in this model of public religion: 1) Western-Christian centrism; 2) the limitation and restriction of modern public religions within the three levels of the public domain, predominantly within the

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<sup>138</sup> Jose Casanova, "Rethinking Public Religion," in *Rethinking Religion and World Affair*, edited by Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan & Monica Duffy Toff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25.

civil level; and 3) a neglect or overlook of the actual or possible transnational public dimensions.<sup>139</sup> From reviewing Casanova's retrospective critic of his *Public Religion*, and his subsequent work on secularization and contemporary religious development, three issues emerge that might be crucial in the continuing application of the conception of public religion in understanding the growing public presence of modern religions in different societies, and the study of modern religious development in general.

### **2.6.1 The Clarification of the Concept of Secularization**

One of the issues regarding the debate on secularization is the matter of definition, something that has been continuously discussed similar to what Sharon Hanson has raised two decades ago. Such awareness of definition not only helps to understanding the meaning of secularization itself, but also extends to clarify and distinguish its relation to the concept of the secular and secularism. While it is indisputable that secularization and secularism are closely related, an analytical distinction between the two would be helpful towards a more profound deconstruction of the relationship between secularization process and modern social transition. From Casanova, the category of secular itself can be understood as something that is "other than" the religious; it is always relative to some definition of religion or the religious, the opposite of "religious", and as a residual category."<sup>140</sup> Secularization is therefore a process in which something religious becomes secular. Casanova has been rather consistent with his definition of secularization where he identifies it in three different connotations: a)

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>140</sup> Jose Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," in *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer & Jonathan Van Antwerper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.



the progressive decline of religious beliefs and practices; b) the privatization of religion, c) a social differentiation process of the secular sphere.<sup>141</sup> While the first connotation has already been commonly refuted, the other two have also been hugely undermined by different critiques, not least his own idea of the deprivatization process in *Public Religion*. Nevertheless he acknowledged that the processes of the theory of differentiation still remains as an identifiable source of secularization in certain societies, especially in Europe, in which its long-term historical processes of social differentiation and the relegation of religion into its own specific sphere can still be recognizable.<sup>142</sup> On a global level Casanova also maintained that the concept of secularization is still useful not only as a way to analyze and reconstruct the transition of European societies as it enters modernity, but also as an analytical framework to examine the historical transformation of other religions in other societies under the process and condition of modern structural differentiation, as long as the outcome of such examination is not predetermined by any form of grand theory.<sup>143</sup>

The process of secularization is closely associated with the existence of the ideology of secularism in the society. Secularism can be referred as any of a whole range of worldviews and ideologies in relation to the opposite of the religious.<sup>144</sup> Casanova identified multiple historical forms of modern secularisms, including different normative models of legal-constitutional separation of religion and the state; different types of cognitive differentiation among science,

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<sup>141</sup> Jose Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective." *The Hedgehog Review* 8, No. 1-2 (2006), 7.

<sup>142</sup> Jose Casanova, "Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective," in *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Future*, edited by Grace Davie, Paul Heelas & Linda Woodland (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003), 17-19.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>144</sup> Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 66.

philosophy and theology; and different models of practical differentiation among law, morality, and religion.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Casanova gave an analytical distinction between secularism as statecraft doctrine and secularism as ideology. Secularism as a statecraft doctrine means the principle of the separation between religious and the state, but such principle of separation does not entail any presupposition towards or against religion or biases against any religious organizations. Once the state holds explicitly a particular conception of “religion” one enters the realm of ideology.<sup>146</sup> Casanova distinguished two types of this secularist ideologies: 1) “secularist theories of religion grounded in some progressive stadial philosophies of history that relegate religion to a superseded stage”; 2) and “secularist political theories that presuppose that religion is either an irrational force or a non-rational form of discourse that should be banished from the democratic public sphere.”<sup>147</sup> Both ideologies embrace a certain form of evolutionist mindset that confirms the superiority of the modern secular mentality over the earlier form of societies where religion played a salient role. Put it simply, secularism ideologies assert that to be secular is to be modern, therefore implying that to be religious is to be un-modern.<sup>148</sup>

Casanova saw this form of stadial consciousness that relates being secular to human flourishing, progress, and modern, as a historical inheritance from the Enlightenment of Western Europe.<sup>149</sup> Such a stadial consciousness made secularism as a natural outcome of becoming modern and not an existential choice for modern individuals or societies. Casanova argued that it was the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 59; stadial here means pertaining to or existing in successive stages of a given culture, society, etc., as often used in archeology and sociology.

spread of this secularist stadial consciousness that was the crucial factor leading to the process of secularization during the modernization of Western Europe, which resulted in the later view that generalized the consequence of modernization with secularization and the decline of religious belief and practices.<sup>150</sup> In contemplating modernization and secularization in a global perspective, Casanova identified the presence or absence of this secularist stadial consciousness to be critical in determining whether process of modernization is accompanied by a secularist consciousness that relates secular with modern and religion with backwardness. In societies where such secularist stadial consciousness is absent or less dominant, modernization may not engender a desire to discard religion in place for social progress and development, and hence detaching the connection between modernization and secularization.

### **2.6.2 Historical Contextualization and Multiple Forms of Secularization**

Throughout this chapter we have time and again witnessed scholars such as Casanova in highlighting the importance of historical and contextual factors in contributing to the varying forms of secularization and religious development in different societies. While the case of Western Europe shows that it was the presence of a distinctive secularist stadial consciousness that caused the widespread process of secularization and signs of religious decline in the society, the different trends of religious development in American and other societies have made many scholars to reevaluate the dominant narrative of European mode of secularization so much so that they now consider the European case to be the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

exception.<sup>151</sup> Casanova identified the existence of a distinctive form of mentality in modern Europe that propelled the process of secularization – a mentality he called the Enlightenment critique of religion (ECR). Casanova identified three dimensions of this critique: 1) a cognitive one against the metaphysical and supernatural worldviews of religion, one that is similar to the secular stadial consciousness above; 2) a political and social one against ecclesiastical institutions; and 3) a subjective expressive-aesthetic-moral one against the idea of God itself.<sup>152</sup> He saw the presence of ECR to be vital in causing the process of secularization in modern Europe, a cognitive, subjective, political, and social mentality that distinctly appeared collectively in modern Europe. It would be curious whether other societies who do not embody such religion-critique mentality will undergo a similar process of secularization. Even if a similar form of critique does exist it is anticipated that the resulting form of secularization will be determined by the local context of the society under investigation, with the result likely to vary from the European model. With the original conception of secularization being modeled under the European context, it is regarded to be overloaded with multiple historically sediment meanings related to the particular historical process of transformation of Western Christendom.<sup>153</sup> Whether this form of secularization can be directly applicable to other societies and religious tradition is very much questionable, and requires further examination of the particularities of the society under study, including a thorough investigation of its state/religion relationship, social structure, pattern of modernization, and local culture and religious communities, etc.

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<sup>151</sup> Casanova, “Beyond European”; see also Grace Davie, *Europe, the Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002).

<sup>152</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 30.

<sup>153</sup> Casanova, “Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms,” 18.

The acknowledgement and awareness towards historical and contextual factors is essential to continue the inquiry of the analytical validity of secularization and the understanding of religious changes in modern societies. The first step of this attentive awareness towards the study of modern religion on a global level should begin with the recognition that the fundamental assumptions and the conceptualization of secularization has been predominantly constructed by the particular Christian history of Western Europe, including its particular pattern of social differentiation in reaction to the ecclesiastical authority.<sup>154</sup> The rethinking of secularization beyond the West should be conscious that both the “secular” and “religion” are products of particular theological and modernist construction. But while acknowledging the historical and contextual contingent factors, one must not overlook the fact that under the force of globalization, all processes of secularization and differentiation in any society are all dynamically interrelated and mutually constituted under the same shadow of modernization.<sup>155</sup> This could be related to the concept of “multiple modernities” where common traits of modernity are embraced by societies without the expense of local traditions, and where these traits are transformed in adjustment to local culture.<sup>156</sup> In terms of religious adaptation to modernization one can find within many religious communities forms of internal metamorphosis that are distinctive to their religious traditions and the local culture, but shares similar traits that are transmitted through the universal influence of globalization.<sup>157</sup>

What all these implies for the study of contemporary religion is that while

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<sup>154</sup> Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization,” 11.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>157</sup> Jose Casanova, “Globalization and the Free Exercise of Religion Worldwide.” In *Challenges to Religious Liberty in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Gerard Bradley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147.

the impact of the process of modernization is inevitable to any society, local factors including the different models of state regulation and management of religion, the form and degree of pluralism in the society, and different patterns of state/religion relationship, can all be decisive in determining how modernization is being approached and appropriated in that particular society.<sup>158</sup> With all these contingent factors at play Casanova saw the proper boundaries between the religious and secular in world politics today to be difficult to define, and it will continue to remain disputed and problematic in determining how, where and by whom such boundaries would be drawn. What he proposed is to think of the process of secularization, of religious transformations and revivals, and of sacralization as “ongoing, simultaneous, mutually constituted – rather than mutually exclusive – developments.”<sup>159</sup>

### **2.6.3 The Connection between the Public and the Private in the Understanding of Modern Religions**

In a 2003 edited chapter “What is a Public Religion?” Casanova again elaborated on his model of public religion, in particular on the political and civic level of his model. Elaborating from the work of Hugh Heclo, Casanova argued that the impact of religion on the civil level of the society could be further elaborated on the behavioral, institutional and philosophical level.<sup>160</sup> The behavioral refers to the impact of the private religiosity in affecting individual public choices and decisions, institutional refers to the ways in which religious

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<sup>158</sup> Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” 61.

<sup>159</sup> Casanova, “Globalization and the Free Exercise,” 144.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 123; see also Hugh Heclo, “An Introduction to Religion and Public Policy,” in Hugh Heclo & Wilfred McClay, eds, *Religion Returns to the Public Square* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson, 2003), 11-12.

organizations compete in the civic arena to advance their interests, and philosophical refers to “the intersection of religion and policymaking that involve ideas and modes of thought bearing on the fundamental ordering of a society’s public life.”<sup>161</sup> This elaboration shows that there can be further layers under each analytical levels of the public religion framework, in particular his articulation on the interaction between individual/behavior religiosity, the religious organization, and the society at large, highlighting the multiplicity between different actors in determining the result of religious adaptation in modern society.

Casanova described this individual behavioral level to be one the most fundamental factor in leading modern religion to assume its public role in the society, because religion would not be much relevant to the public “unless it is relevant in the life of the individual citizen as a norm of conduct, as a motivational source of civic engagement, or as a discursive or normative resource for the citizen’s public voice and public choice”<sup>162</sup> From here Casanova’s focus is not only on the religious organization and its interaction with the society, but also considered a more substantial matter on how the private religiosities and religious demand of the individuals affects the deprivatization of the religious organization and the role it assumes in the society. The focus has also shifted towards the receptive aspect of the public and their responses to the growing public presence of religious contents, and the strategies that these religious institutions adapt in response to these receptions and in meeting the needs and demands of those in the society. This leads to the boarder issues concerning the elusive relationship between the category of the public and private; in terms of

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<sup>161</sup> Casanova, “What is a Public Religion?,” 123; Hecló, “An Introduction to Religion and Public Policy,” 5.

<sup>162</sup> Casanova, “What is a Public Religion?,” 12.

this study on public religions, it points out that the publicness of modern religions would be determined by its connection to the private and internal aspects of the individuals. The introduction of this behavioral/individual dimension in relationship to public religion hints that the ability for religion to deprivatize and assume a public role is also critically determined by its relevance to the religious demands of the modern individuals.

Apart from this individual/behavior aspect of the individual that is influential in determining the public aspect of religion, other scholars have also identified other dimensions of religious public presence in modern societies that could be conducive in understanding the religious landscape of different societies. Paul Chambers and Andrew Thompson demonstrated this by the examination of the public role of different faith groups in Wales under Casanova's framework of public religion.<sup>163</sup> Borrowing from Casanova's concept of secularization and the three analytical level of the state, political and civil level of public religion, Chambers and Thompson argued that sociologists tends to overlook the increasing group participation, interventions, and contribution to discourses of morality and ethics were all indicators towards the public significance of religion in many modern societies. In examining these indicators their study has shown that there is an increasing participation of the Wales faith group in the civil sphere of the Wales society.<sup>164</sup> An interesting aspect of their study is that they did not confine their focus only to Casanova's tripartite model but discovered other factors that could affect the public engagement of local religious group in Wales. They discovered that networking and collaboration between religious groups and

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<sup>163</sup> Paul Chambers & Andrew Thompson, "Public Religion and Political Changes in Wales," *Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.



other social organizations were influential factors in affecting public participation of modern religions. In terms of the degree and extent of social networking and public participation, these religious groups can be placed within a spectrum that ranges from an intra-faith religious group, to inter-faith religious groups, to faith groups associating with secular bodies, and to faith groups participating in the wider society and culture<sup>165</sup>. The location of religions within this continuum will indicate their involvement and participation as a public religion in the larger society. From the Wales case study, Chambers and Thompson demonstrated a trend for faith groups to move from a more privatized form of small faith groups into larger communities of a wider societal scale, and an urge for different religious groups to remake and transform themselves along this direction towards an increasing public role.<sup>166</sup>

From Chamber and Thompson's study we can see that although Casanova's model of public religion has been constructive in our understanding of the development of modern religion in our society, his model and typology of public religion is far from completely comprehensive. The model is inherently limited in its capacity in accounting other forms of publicness within or outside of its tripartite framework, and it failed to articulate the factors that motivates modern religions to deprivatize into the public society, including the doctrinal and philosophical motives of the religious groups, and the demand and private religiosity of the individuals in the society (all of which Casanova later acknowledged himself). The inclusion of these aspects could well advance our understanding of the relationship between individual religious demand and the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 37.

public institutional religious landscape; coupled with an awareness of historical contextualization and other contingency factors, the model of public religion could conceivably be expanded as a vital and effective tool to examine the public presence of religion in cross-cultural scenarios.

## Chapter 3: Buddhism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Taiwan

### 3.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter has gone through an overview of the main theoretical frameworks of the present study: from the historical construction of the concept of secularization to the works of Casanova and his framework of public religion in applying the analytical aspect of the concept of secularization in understanding religious development in different modern societies. Before we start a detail application of this theoretical framework to the case of FGS and the Taiwanese society, this chapter will first conduct a review of the history of Buddhism, in particularly FGS, in the past decade of Taiwan. Such a review will provide the necessary background before the examination of the various public aspects of FGS in relation to Casanova's model of public religion. The importance of this historical review is to demonstrate that the emergence and growth of FGS – as well as the other contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist communities – and their success in penetrating into the society would not be possible without the particular modern historical development of Taiwan in the past century, highlighting that the current scenery of FGS and its presence in the society was only enabled by the result of the specific historical, political and social circumstances of twentieth century Taiwan. As elaborated in the conclusion of his work, the case study conducted by Casanova in *Public Religion* has shown the importance of the historical and social factor in diverting modern religions to assume different roles in their respective society at different levels, and only from there could it be possible to make an accurate and sound analysis of these modern religious developments. This chapter concurs with such awareness of history.

Particular focus will be made on the distinctive pattern and form of the process of differentiation. As discussed in the previous chapter this process of structural differentiation of modern societies is one of the main component of secularization, and this historical review would be a good place to investigate whether such process has taken place in Taiwan as it experienced modernization, and if so what are the similarities and difference to the existing model and understanding of differentiation. By making comparison and delineating similarities and differences this investigation of differentiation could also draw attention to the significance of contingency factors in affecting not only the religious landscape of a society, but also the way process of differentiation, secularization, and modernization is being appropriated and negotiated in diverging societies and cultures.

## **3.2 Social Differentiation and Religion in Modern Society**

### **3.2.1 Social Differentiation in the Sociology of Religion**

Differentiation is one of the key elements in Steve Bruce's paradigm of secularization. For Bruce there are two forms of differentiations, structural differentiation (S2) and social differentiation (S1), both playing a major role in the process of secularization at the societal and individual level.<sup>167</sup> He saw structural differentiation as a necessary outcome of modernization, the "fragmentation of social life as specialized roles and institutions are created to handle specific features or functions previously embodied in or carried out by one role or institution."<sup>168</sup> Following Talcott Parsons, the process of differentiation

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<sup>167</sup> Bruce, *God is Dead*, 1-7.

<sup>168</sup> Bruce, *God is Dead*, 8; see also Talcott Parsons, "Evolutionary Universals in Society." *American Journal of Sociology* 29 (1964): 339-357.

leads to specialization and systemic autonomy, making differentiated systems to be able to generate their own dynamics, values and rationality.<sup>169</sup> Therefore each individual system is not supposed to confuse and transgress into the spheres of another differentiated systems. In societies with a social structure of differentiated system, the influence of religion is now confined in its assigned differentiated religious system among many others, with its religious contents restraint to infiltrate and infringe into other systems.

More specific to the history of modern Europe, structural differentiation and increasing specialization of the society has the direct effect of secularizing many social functions that were formerly dominated by the Christian Church. The spheres of education, health care, welfare and social control were all once exclusive domains of the Christian institutions, with the political and economical spheres also heavily under the influence of the ecclesiastics.<sup>170</sup> Under the affect of the process of modernization, the society underwent structural differentiation where these domains emancipated from religious authority. As the functions of the society became increasingly differentiated and specialized it also had a similar affect towards the social life of the individuals, a process of social differentiation (S1) in which people became divided and separated from each other. Structural differentiation led to a greater range of occupational opportunities and lifestyles and eventually to the creation of new social classes. The social structure became more fluid with increasing social mobility, traditional integrated organic or communal conceptions of the moral and supernatural order began to fragment, and individuals are allowed the freedom to generate different metaphysical and

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<sup>169</sup> Raf Vanderstraeten, "Talcott Parsons and Enigma of Secularization," *European Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2012): 69-84

<sup>170</sup> Bruce, *God is Dead*, 8.

salvational systems suited to their own interests, hence an indirect but equally powerful effect on the secularization of modern societies.<sup>171</sup> David Martin also depicted a similar process of differentiation where each social sector becomes specialized, with the hub diminishing and each social function forms a distinct specialized area.<sup>172</sup> As far as religion is concerned, the long history of intimate interaction between the Christian Church with the state and legitimation, political bodies, associations for work, voluntary associations, socialization and cultural identity, is now being disconnected as process of differentiation has led to the emergence of different social sectors in claiming the role in performing these specialized social domains and functions.<sup>173</sup>

Despite such a view on the process of differentiation and its affect on religion, both Bruce and Martin do not see differentiation as something inevitable but could be retarded or prevented by means of cultural defense. As mentioned in chapter two Bruce saw the counter-tendencies of cultural defense and cultural transition as capable forces in inhibiting the general spread of secularization. He used the case of the Catholic Church in North Ireland to illustrate that religio-ethnic groups were able to infiltrate their influences and preferences into specific differentiated spheres of the educational and economical sector.<sup>174</sup> Martin also highlighted the factor of cultural defense in affecting the process of social differentiation. Analyzing Edward Shils concept on the center and the periphery, Martin argued that urban centers, generally the core areas of secularization, often encounters various kinds of sub-cultural resistance in the

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>172</sup> David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1978), 69.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>174</sup> Bruce, *God is Dead*, 32-34.

peripheries with religion likely to be incorporated as part or whole of its system in resistance. The result and degree of the process of differentiation varies according to this center/periphery cultural matrix in which it occurs.<sup>175</sup>

What the factor of cultural defense and its capability in inhibiting the process of differentiation demonstrates is that from early on exponents of secularization were already sensitive to the variables that could affect the outcome of the process of modernization and secularization, meaning that they were aware of the possibility of multifold forms of differentiation process and religious development. As Martin's cross-cultural case studies in the U.S., Canada, Holland, and Germany has showed, social differentiation and secularization in general is not an inevitable trend but could appear in different ways according to historical and cultural circumstances.<sup>176</sup>

### **3.2.2 The Multiple Forms of Differentiation in the Works of Jose Casanova**

For Casanova, differentiation is one of the three core aspects of secularization, and one that remains as the most valid component of the process in modern societies. Casanova agreed with his precedents in seeing differentiation as one of the primary distinguishing characteristics of modern structure, in which the main societal system of the state, economy, and other major institutional spheres such as science, education, art, develops its own institutional autonomy and intrinsic functional dynamics. Religion has to accept this modern principle of structure differentiation of the secular spheres, and follow the same dynamic in developing and becoming one of the many autonomic differentiated spheres

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<sup>175</sup> Martin, *On Secularization*, 78-82.

<sup>176</sup> Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, 205-206.

among others.<sup>177</sup> Putting differentiation into his framework of public religion and process of deprivatization, he demonstrated how the structural trend of differentiation has been an external force in propelling the privatization of religion, and how, as gathered from his empirical studies, religions attempted to assume public role in the political level in resisting such process of disestablishment and differentiation of the secular sphere and in defense of religious freedom.<sup>178</sup>

However Casanova did not go into much detail regarding the concept of differentiation in *Public Religion* as the focus was on the deprivatization thesis of modern religions against secularization, stating that he only attempted to analyze some aspects of the process of differentiation through his case studies, in particular the different patterns of the separation of church and state. From such analysis Casanova made an initiated claim that established churches are incompatible with modern differentiated states and that the fusion of the religious and political community is incompatible with the modern principle of citizenship, therefore declining the prospect of the proper establishment of public religion in both the state and political level. Therefore Casanova made a conclusion on *Public Religion* that the main thrust of modern public religion is to be found in the civic level where religion can assume its public role without infringing these modern principles.<sup>179</sup> At the end of this study we will examine whether this conclusion could also be applied to the case of FGS and Taiwan.

Casanova's conclusion made in *Public Religion* suggested that he is well

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<sup>177</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 212.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 215, 218-219.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 212-213.



aware of the historical factors in shaping different scenarios of religions adaptation towards the process of differentiation and secularization.<sup>180</sup> Casanova made further elaboration of the importance of the awareness of multiple forms of differentiations, secularizations and modernities in an essay published in 2006, where he questioned the relatively uncontested understanding of differentiation as a single process of secularization, and whether it is “appropriate to subsume the multiple and diverse historical patterns of differentiation and fusion of the various institutional spheres that one finds throughout the history of modern Western societies into a single teleological process of modern functional differentiation.”<sup>181</sup> Such question lead us back to his argument of the possibility of multiple forms of differentiation dissociated from a general theory of differentiation and secularization that was analytically constructed from the historical foundation of Western Europe, and challenges the general theories of global modernization that fails to pay attention to diverse (non-Western) forms of adaptation to modernity and patterns of differentiation.

In comparing the case of Europe and American in the past centuries, Casanova described how modernization in Western Europe had led to the process of differentiation in the disestablishment of the religious institution and the relegation of religion to its own differentiated sphere. In contrast there was little historical evidence of any tension of American Protestantism with the American Enlightenment, neither had there been any anti-religious component arising from the growth of capitalism or between the state and the religious communities.<sup>182</sup> Such comparison confirmed the significances of history in leading to impact of

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., conclusion.

<sup>181</sup> Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization,” 7-22.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 11.

modernization and the resulting process of differentiation and secularization. It also helped to delineate the specific factors that contribute to the diverging outcomes, particularly the state of state/religion dynamic and whether forms of secularism such as the Enlightenment critique of religion exist within the society. Casanova stated that it becomes even more difficult and challenging when the investigation is extended to non-western societies or other religious traditions such as Confucianism or Taoism, which do not seem to have high tension with “the world,” with no ecclesiastical organization, and have always been worldly and secular.<sup>183</sup>

This research will try to see how the case of FGS and the development of Taiwanese Buddhism in the past century can help validate the claims made by Casanova and others above. Nevertheless Casanova has provided some crucial pointers to look at in conducting investigation of diverse patterns of differentiation and secularization: the historical relationship between religion and politics, the intrinsic philosophy and institutional structure of the religious tradition involved, and the specific correlation between modernization, secularization and the society under consideration. The following will go through a brief history of FGS in Taiwan, before taking a preliminary glance at the pattern of structural differentiation in Taiwan.

### **3.3 Buddhism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Taiwan**

The history of Taiwan in the twentieth century can be divided into three phases: the era of Japanese conquest at the first half of the century; retrocession and the reign of the Kuomintang (KMT) government in the mid century; and the

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

lifting of the martial law from 1987 to the present day. There are a few concepts that could guide us through the historical course of modern Taiwan and facilitate our understanding about the religious development on the island. First is what Charles B Jones described as “political dislocation” and “social change”.<sup>184</sup> “Political dislocation” refers to the repeated changes of sovereignty in Taiwan, with each of these shifts bringing changes and challenges to those on the island: for the new arrivals on the island they became part of the new ruling minority; to those who were already there now find themselves living under a new regime. Different regimes brought with them different philosophies and measures towards religious practices on the island, resulting in constant changes in religious regulations with the religious communities often facing oscillating support and suppression from different ruling authorities. “Social change” refers to those developments that were associated with the process of modernization – urbanization, economical and industrial development, improved communication, etc. These development affected religious development through providing a greater accessibility of different regional religion to people from all across the island, where local temples and deities now find themselves with the capability enlarge their sphere of influence.

Another important factor affecting the development of Taiwan and not least on its religious landscape is the arrival of successive waves of immigrants, first from the South Pacific islands, subsequently by the Chinese, Japanese and other European colonial immigrants, who came to the island along with their religions and deities from their own society. The affect of the incoming of these early

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<sup>184</sup> Charles B Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, edited by Philip Clart & Charles B Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003), 10.

immigrants on the religious landscape of Taiwan was the importation of their corresponding religions from their original locations. Winston Davis distinguished two specific forms among these incoming religions – *locative* and *adventitious* religions – differing from each other in ways the settling migrants can experience continuities or discontinuities with their previous lifestyle.<sup>185</sup>

Locative religions were deities that the immigrants brought with them to Taiwan that could serve to maintain their ties with their original hometown, kinship, clan or occupational groups. These were closed-group communities in which the members are drawn according to their social and familial relationship and cannot be recruited or converted. One of such example is the Longshan temple in Taipei where the members were port settlers of Mengjia. They are devotees of the bodhisattva Guanyin and the founders of this temple all came from the same counties from the Fujian province, also known as the Sanyi, and they maintained connection to the original temple by periodically taking the deity back to the Mainland. In contrast the adventitious religion were those that do not draw their members on basis of origin, clan and other markers of social location but rather through voluntariness and the acceptance of a certain set of doctrines or practices. These forms of religion transcend any ethnicity and clan, the best examples being Buddhism and Daoism. There is little evidence that adventitious forms of religion were very active on the island before the arrival of the Japanese as Taiwan was only a peripheral and scattered province in the frontier without any attraction to eminent Buddhist and Daoist figures.<sup>186</sup> Occasionally there were immigrating monks from the Mainland but they were either refugees disguised as monks to

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<sup>185</sup> Winston Davis, *Japan Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 30-32; see Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” 12.

<sup>186</sup> Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” 15.

flee from Mainland China, or monks who were very average in their education, training, and observance in Buddhist precepts.<sup>187</sup> Several sects of popular Buddhism did arrive on the island starting from the mid-Qing period, which later Japanese officials later lumped together under the name “Zhaijiao.” Despite their self-identification as part of the Linji line of Chan Buddhism and shared many similar belief and doctrine with Chinese Buddhism, current scholars identifies them more as a millenarian faith centered on the female creator deity the Unborn Venerable Mother (無上老母).<sup>188</sup>

These factors – political dislocations, social changes, successive waves of immigrate – were all influential in affecting the development of religion and the general society in the past century of Taiwan. The following historical review of the development of contemporary Buddhism and religious policies in Taiwan will provide us with a better picture of how the local factors, the politics, the social, and the individuals, worked mutually in contributing to the shaping of religious landscape of modern Taiwan, and how the process of differentiation and secularization have operate along such track.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>189</sup> As mentioned the historical review in this chapter is only to provide a brief account of the modern history of Taiwan since the period of Japanese occupation, and particularly those that has been influential to the development of Taiwanese Buddhism and FGS. Therefore it is beyond the reach and intention to provide a detail historical account that include the modern history of Chinese Buddhism and other ramifications of Taiwanese history, albeit recognizing that they all played an influentially role in leading to the current religious landscape of Taiwan in different ways. For succinct and tidiness purposes, the chapter has found references for basic historical facts and information from a few sources, mainly from Philip Clart & Charles B Jones, eds, *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Charles B Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State, 1660-1990* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999); Jiang Canteng 江燦騰, *Taiwan fo jiao shi* 臺灣佛教史 (Taipei: Wu nan tu shu chu ban gu fen you xian gong si, 2009); and Huang Qingsheng 黃慶生, *Taiwan zong jiao li fa* 台灣宗教立法 (Taiping, Taichung: Tai ping ci guang si, 2005). For further information on religion in modern China, see Yoshiko Ashiwa & David L. Wank, eds., *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009); Chau Adam Yuet, *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation* (Milton Park, Abingdon; New York:

### 3.3.1 Japanese Colonization Before 1949

The history of Taiwan in the twentieth century can be briefly divided into three phases: the era of Japanese Conquest at the first half of the century, retrocession and the reign of the new-coming KMT Government in the mid century, and the lifting of the martial law from 1987 to the present day. Taiwan was ceded to Japan after the Manchu government surrendered after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Throughout the fifty-one years of colonial rule the Japanese government have taking up various measures in an attempt to assimilate Taiwan into Japan, causing notable effects towards the religions in Taiwan.

In the initial stage of Japan's occupation since 1915, the Japanese authority took a paternalistic and laissez-faire stance towards the local religions. The motive of this political attitude can be seen as an approach to win the trust and acceptance of the local population to stabilize the society and to see religion as a bridge to infiltrate into the inlands. They did not see the need to impose State Shinto or to repress native religious practices and institution during this period; the only requirement for the religious communities was to register any temples, shrines and associations under the appropriate government office. At this early phase we can see the different treatment towards Buddhism from other religions, as the Japanese recognized Buddhism as a representation of a shared heritage between Japan and China. The consequence was that it allowed the active

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Routledge, 2011); David Goossaert & David A. Palmer, eds., *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Paul R Katz, *Religion in China & Its Modern Fate* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014); and Mayfair Yang Mei Hui, ed., *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). For the history of Buddhism in modern China, see the classic from Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); and for the topic concerning Taiwanese Buddhism and local politics, see Paul R. Katz & Murray A. Rubinstein, eds., *Religion and the Formation of Taiwanese Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) and Kuo Cheng-Tian, *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

cooperation from many Taiwan Buddhists with the Japanese government, in which the Buddhist found it both necessary and favorable for their survival and development. Several of the most prominent Buddhists took this opportunity to founded new temples and subordinated them administratively to the lineages of Japanese Buddhism.<sup>190</sup>

The year 1915 marks as a watershed concerning the Japanese attitude towards religion in Taiwan. This was the year of the Xilai Hermitage Incident (西來庵事件) that almost erupted into a major anti-Japanese uprising.<sup>191</sup> Despite the failure of the uprising, it fostered the government to take more vigilant of the local religious situation, with the Japanese officials realizing the urge and necessity to carry out a more detail investigation in the nature of religion in Taiwan. Immediate after the uprising the then head of the Interior Ministry's Shrine Bureau Marui Keijiro was directed to conduct a nation-wide survey of all shrines and temples, and during the investigation Mauri became increasingly dismayed over the state of Buddhism in Taiwan and saw the need for a central organization in assisting the Japanese control.<sup>192</sup> On the side of the Taiwanese religious groups they felt the need to find ways to distance themselves from seditious movements in order to prevent possible prosecution from the government, as now many religious assemblies and meeting places became suspicious among the local officials. This led to the formation of different religious association during this period, in which those local religious groups who wished to pursue their practices in peace tried their very best to avoid any suspicion of uprising by forming different island-wide religious associations with

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>191</sup> Jiang, *Taiwan fo jiao shi*, 75.

<sup>192</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 75.

charters that included specific requirements of good citizenship and pledges members not to engage in seditious activities.<sup>193</sup> This fostered the formation of organizations following the years of 1915 such as the Patriotic Buddhist Association and the Buddhist Youth Association.

Most of these associations also affiliated with different Japanese organizations to gain further trust from the Japanese authorities. Furthermore Mauri saw the need for an island-wide “ecumenical” religious society to bring the religious organization together and to provide the members with direct government supervision and credential, so in 1922 all the leaders of Taiwan Buddhism and Zhaijiao were brought together to form the South Seas Buddhist Association (SSBA).<sup>194</sup> It was imperative for these Buddhists organization to become members of the SSBA to avoid suspicion and oppression. This second period marked a phase of increased interaction and cooperation between the Japanese government and local religious groups and the strategy of the formation of different associations as a way to maintain a stable relationship between the two.

The affects of The Marco Polo Bridge incident and the imminent outbreak of the World War directed Japan to take a rapid acculturation program on all its colonial territories. This “Japanese movement” aimed to “Japanize” the local Taiwanese people by banning any Chinese dialect in print and in public, the enforcement of a Japanese dress codes, adaptation of Japanese names, and banning Chinese cultural activities. Religious-wise the people were both lured

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<sup>193</sup> Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” 23.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



and forced away from their traditional Chinese religions and convert to State Shinto, which was further intensified by the “temple-restructuring movement” (jibyō seiri).<sup>195</sup> The movement was based on the belief from the Japanese authority who were convinced that traditional Chinese religious beliefs revolves around temple practices, and unless these temples were brought in line with Japanese values and beliefs all other measures to eradicate Chinese culture would be useless. They were adamant that any remaining symbol of Chineseness among the Taiwanese population was an obstacle for the full assimilation of Japanization. From a practical perspective, many local officials considered the temples to be holders of cash and real estate so its confiscation can be understood from an economical sense.

However the Japanization movement had not executed with a central planning across the island with the local officials given the freedom and authority to decide how the enforcements should be carried out. Some took very lenient measures while other took more drastic steps on closing and demolishing temples and destroying religious images. The movement was unevenly executed and eventually the outcome in terms of temples closure was not massive.<sup>196</sup> The temple restructuring measures was also aimed specifically at Daoist temples with its affect on Buddhist temples being comparatively small.<sup>197</sup> This was due to the reason that the official policy in Taiwan during that time was to encourage Buddhism. On top of that the affiliation of those Taiwanese Buddhist communities with Japanese associations and their membership with societies such as the SSBA made them in better relations with the Japanese authorities and

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 83-85.

<sup>196</sup> Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” 25-26.

<sup>197</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 83.

forestalled them from confiscation or demolition. This made Buddhism and their temples to suffer less comparing to those Daoist temples during the movement.

Another impact of the Japanese occupation was the fostering of the process of modernization in Taiwan. Soon after Japan seized control of Taiwan they started to improve the basic public infrastructure of the island, most significantly the railroad system and the construction of roads and bridges. These infrastructures greatly improved the accessibility of almost every part of the island, most significantly the connection between the northern and southern part of Taiwan, which was previously disconnected and isolated from each other. The vast improvement of regional connections allowed greater accessibility to local temples for the increased travelers and eventually, the possibility for some of the temples to ascend in becoming island-wide pilgrimage sites.<sup>198</sup> Many Buddhist temples rose to prominence as ordination sites and were able to draw enough visitors to rely on them as significant source of income. The improved mobility of the Taiwanese people and the appearance of these large pilgrimage sites provided a better opportunity for the adventitious religious group to set root on the island, shifting the earlier religious appearance that was mainly locative in nature. Some new temples built during the first two decades of the century were designed to be pilgrimage sites catered for local or ethnical followers as well as devotees from varying geographical and cultural backgrounds, demonstrating features typical of an adventitious religion over those of a locative religious cult.

The improvement of transportation, together with the advancement of communication with the installment of telephone and telegraph system, the

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<sup>198</sup> Jones, "Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period," 28-30.

introduction of uniform currency and measurements, and other social process of modernization and urbanization led by the Japanese, have brought an unexpected outcome of the emergence of a pan-Taiwanese consciousness. The increased geographical connection and human mobility all served to bring the people of Taiwan together and reduced the likelihood of individual identity based on locality, clan and dialect that was common feature of Taiwanese settlements before the Japanese occupation, and facilitated the formation of a broader, pan-Taiwanese consciousness. In terms of religious development the emergence of those nationwide pilgrimage sites and the ability of the deities of local temples to break out from their previous parochial boundaries all contributed to the formation of pan-Taiwanese religious groupings. This can be seen as the antecedent factors that paved the way for the establishment of the nationwide Buddhist communities such as FGS and Ciji.

### **3.3.2 Kuomintang and the Martial Law**

During the Japanese colonization KMT was occupied with its own affair in Mainland China. The defeat of Japan in the Second World War saw the return of Taiwan back into the hands of China, but soon after KMT was defeated in the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and retreated to the island of Taiwan, starting the long political struggle of the sovereignty and governmental legitimacy between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Taiwan was the last ground of retreat for the KMT but the island itself was in turmoil suffering in social and economical hardship after the devastation of the Japanese rampage and the World War. The retreat of KMT along with large

amount of refugees from the Mainland had resulted in a severe ethnic division between the local Taiwanese and the incoming governing authorities and immigrants, provoking numerous local uprising against the KMT, which crystallized in the 228 incident. These movements have invoked the new government to implement a martial law on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1949 to prevent Taiwanese nationalism; a white terror that stretched for almost four decades, by far the longest martial law exercised by any authority.<sup>199</sup>

Under the martial law every aspect of the Taiwanese society was under strict control from the KMT. There were no distinction between the government and the KMT party with other political parties outlawed and individuals being persecuted and incarcerated by the KMT. Every government and public property were interchangeable as the property of the party, and every aspect of the society was being severely checked by the authority; the freedom of speech, press and publication, assemblies, and not least religious practices were under the heavy surveillance of the authority. Corporatist institutions were set up in 1952 under the authority of the party to ensure and overlook the compliance of different social groups as well as transmitting members of the government into these groups.<sup>200</sup>

In terms of the right to associate among the people, only one representative organization was recognized, licensed, and in some cases established by the ruling party itself across every sector of the society. In exchange for the exclusive representation of its respective sector, the representing organization must

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<sup>199</sup> Jiang, *Taiwan fo jiao shi*, 328-330.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 330-331.

conform to the regulation and operate according to the interest and demand of the regime, such as exercising certain controls on the selection of its leader. The main function of the corporative institution was to prevent any challenge to KMT rule or policies.<sup>201</sup> With only one state recognized organization to represent different interest groups in the society, the religious communities were branched under the control of a single religious organization that was approved and manipulated by the government; the Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC) was entitled to represent the Buddhist community in Taiwan. The Provincial Police Administration was organized to assure these regulation and other governmental controls were being uphold. Many religious organizations and individuals were suppressed, prosecuted and imprisoned out of government scare of conspiracies during this time of militant supervision. This was a time when the religious market was strictly regulated by the state in which all religious organization were often seen as places of conspiracies and were often abused by the authorities. It was a difficult period for the religious communities with many religious followers hiding their faith for their own wellbeing.

The establishment of the BAROC was essential for the Taiwanese Buddhist communities during that period. Taiwanese Buddhism faced a series of challenges amidst the social instability and turmoil after the withdrawal of the Japanese, such as the repatriation of the Buddhist temples and shrines left from the Japanese settlers,<sup>202</sup> and a leaderless Buddhist community after the

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<sup>201</sup> Andre Laliberte “Religious Change and Democratization in Postwar Taiwan: Mainstream Buddhist Organizations and the Kuomintang, 1947-1996,” in Clart and Jones, *Religion in Modern Taiwan*, 163.

<sup>202</sup> The first law issued by the Ministry of Interior in 1945 – Daifang Zhengfu Jieshou Chuli Riren Simiao Ciyu Zhuyi Shixiang [Articles for Attention in the Takeover and Disposition of Japanese Temples and Shrines by Local Government] stated that any Chinese citizen whose home has been taken over as a Japanese temple should get his or her property back and all Chinese temples

evaporation of the SSBA.<sup>203</sup> Also, after incidents of nationalistic upheaval such as the 228 incident and the corresponding government's repression, the Buddhist communities recognized the need for a central corporation to comply to the governmental requirement and act as a channel of communication with the authority. Most of the remaining Buddhist communities joined the BAROC sensing the need to convince the authorities of their loyalty and to ensure their safety, resulting in the Taiwanese Buddhist institutions becoming completely superseded by the BAROC during the martial law.

The dominance of the BAROC over the Taiwan Buddhist landscape was an outcome from the KMT's corporatist structures prevailing during the period of martial law. Despite the need to follow the guidelines prescribed by the ruling authority, BAROC was able to receive the privilege of being the exclusive representative of Buddhism in Taiwan. In addition, it was able to receive various kinds of rewards in exchange for its cooperation with the KMT, including the ability to retain their temple property, relaxes on taxations, exemption from the affects of land reform, and in particularly the repeal of the Procedure for Handling of Funds Raised by the Public Work and Charity Undertakings of Temples (省寺廟集資辦理公益慈善事業辦) in 1969 that gave the BAROC a

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should revert to their former governing body. Only Japanese temples build during the occupation could be taken over for government use. A second measure passed by the Executive Yuan in 1957: Taiwan sheng Guoyou Tezhong Fangwu Dichan Qingjie Chuli Banfa [Measures for the Disposal of Special National Properties in Taiwan Province], demonstrated the intention from the government in taking over the management of these temples permanently as "special national properties" rather than return them to the religious institutions." The subsequent Taiwan Sheng Jieshou Riren Simiao Caichan Qingjie Chuli Banfa [Act for the Disposition and Handling of Japanese Temples Taken Over by Taiwan Province] in 1959, called for the provincial government to set up a deliberative panel to handle each case; while the Guoyou Caichan Chui Banfa [National Properties Management Act, 1961] gave this responsibility to a committee on national property management within the Executive Yuan Council. The intent of these measures was clear: the government was to take over the temples. These measures was instructive in demonstrating the limitation of the BAROC in influencing governmental decisions they do not completely agrees, contrary to the popular criticism of the organization as a KMT organ.

<sup>203</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 99.

large freedom in handling and managing their public funds.<sup>204</sup>

The dominance of the BAROC was further strengthened with the organization performing as the sole communication channel between the authority and its Buddhist members. It was responsible in transmitting instructions from the KMT to its members of the *sangha* and lay followers, and where messages and concerns from its members were conveyed to the authority. Performing in such a role the government would have to rely on the BAROC to maintain contact with the temples and Buddhist organizations.<sup>205</sup> Moreover the government often seeks advices from the BAROC on any proposals and policies in relation to religious matters. It also overlooks the commencement of annual ordination sessions, giving it the monopoly over clerical entry and essentially a huge control over the Buddhist community.<sup>206</sup>

With the changing social environment by the end of the marital law, there were increasing criticism and frustration towards the control of the BAROC over the Buddhist communities. A group of young and energetic clerics and lay followers, including the popular Hsingyun and Zhengyan, emerged and decided to work outside the perimeter of the association. The appearance of these reformist monks had many appeal to the large growing number of lay followers and galvanized the formation of *sangha* and other Buddhist communities outside the BAROC. Being stranded in a conservative ideology and an image as an institution serving the interest of the ruling party, the BAROC no longer receive mass support from the Buddhist communities. Its influences and importance

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 143-145.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 145-151.

gradually diminished in comparison to the emerging new Buddhist communities.

### **3.3.3 Democratization after 1987**

There was a change in the political and social scenery in Taiwan since the 1970s. Domestically, the social and economical prosperity caused by the economical boom have generated a group of wealthy middle class that started to demand for improving freedom and participating opportunities in the society. Across the trait the change of leadership with a more liberal leader Deng Xiaoping led the PRC to adopt a more conciliatory approach towards Taiwan. On the international level, the end of the Cold War had destabilized the previous relation and attitude between the U.S., the PRC and Taiwan (ROC); critically when the U.S. switched its recognition from Taipei to Beijing, Taiwan lost its seat as the legitimate holder of China to the PRC government in the United Nation. To cope with the growing demand from the new middle class domestically coupled with the changing political circumstances internationally, president Jiang Jinguo recognized the need for reform to secure the future of Taiwan, and the KMT finally made the decision to uplift the martial law in 1987.<sup>207</sup>

In particular, the enactment of the Law on Civic Organization in 1989 had further liberalized Taiwan as the government gave up on restricting the establishment of different civil groups and political parties.<sup>208</sup> The new law permits all religious groups to exist legally and the government would not impose prohibitions on the establishment of religious groups, despite still required to

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 180-182.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 182.



register under the Ministry of the Interior. The result of this law was in many ways even more striking than the ending of the martial law in which it engendered a rapid expansion of many civic association groups of various nature and background in Taiwan. With the lifting of the martial law and the legal assurance of the freedom of civic organization, there was an instant reaction among the religious community and a dramatic growth in the emergence of religious organizations in the 1990s. Myriads of Buddhist organizations had benefited from the new pluralistic situation alongside the rejuvenated folk religions. The previously banned religions had also reemerged and found new grounds to flourish, epitomized by the resurging Yiguando and the spawn of a host of new religious movements.

The proliferation of Buddhist organizations and groups also led to the pluralization of the Buddhist community with the emergence of divergent ideas and institutions outside of the BAROC influence. The tendency towards pluralization had its seed spread as early as 1968 with the appearance of the first alternative organization in the Chinese Buddhist Layman's Association.<sup>209</sup> Its formation was a reaction towards the low hierarchical status of the laities within the BAROC regulation, and with the increasing pluralized and democratized environment granted by the above external factors, it provided the opportunity for these lay association and individuals to rise and assume important positions previously reserved for the clergy and regulated under the BAROC. Coupled with the emergence of those monks and *sangha* communities seeking opportunities outside of the BAROC, the democratization had provoked a proliferation of

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.,179-180.

Buddhists agencies as well as an overall increase of religious participation.<sup>210</sup>

Before looking into these emergent Buddhist monasteries in details, particularly FGS, we would first go through the various religious policies that were exercised throughout the last century of Taiwan to explore how the changing political circumstances and leadership have affected religion through legal means.

### **3.4 Religious Policy in Taiwan**

With the frequent change of political control and circumstances in Taiwan in its short modern history, such instability has led to the emergence of many policies and regulations towards religion that were often incomprehensive and biased. As seen from the previous section the wavering international and social situation during the Japanese colonization had caused the Japanese government to take different measures on the local religions. The exercise of the martial law by the KMT also had a huge impact towards the religious landscape of modern Taiwan. The most influential of all religious policies implemented by the KMT was the introduction of the right of religious freedom in its Constitution of the Republic of China. The rights for freedom of religious belief of the Taiwanese people has been stated and protected in its Constitution since it began effective on December 25, 1947. In chapter II of the constitution regarding the basic rights and duties of the people, article 13 clearly states that: “The people shall have freedom of religious belief.”<sup>211</sup> The right of the freedom of religious belief is also supplemented by the clause on equal rights of article 7 “All citizens of the Republic of China, irrespective of sex, religion, ethnic origin, class, or party

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<sup>210</sup> Interestingly this conformed to Rodney Stark’s argument that co-relates increasing religious participation with the emergence of a pluralistic religious market. Please see section 2.3 of chapter two for details.

<sup>211</sup> The Constitution (Republic of China), art. 13.

affiliation, shall be equal before the law”; the rights of expression in article 11 “The people shall have freedom of speech, teaching, writing, and publication”; and the rights of assembly in article 14: “The people shall have freedom of assembly and of association.”<sup>212</sup> Although these rights are being limited by article 23 in the same chapter, stating that “all the freedoms and rights enumerated in the preceding articles shall not be abridged by law except such as may be necessary to prevent infringement upon the freedoms of others, to avert an imminent danger, to maintain social order, or to promote public welfare.”<sup>213</sup> This right of the freedom of religious belief is still effective today and has been the state’s guiding principle and attitude towards the exercise and practice of religion among its people. Apart from the Constitution, other religious policies adapted by the KMT have also affected the religious belief and practice of the Taiwanese people in other ways. Many of these regulations, similar to the Constitution, was implemented by KMT in Mainland China before their relocation to Taiwan, some of them survived and remained effective as the political body moved to the island. While some regulations were short living and never made it to Taiwan, as we will see below, they still had great impact to later religious regulations and the practice and regulation of religion in general.

### **3.4.1 Ordinance Before 1949**

The first religious policy adapted by the KMT was the Temporary Regulations on Temple Regulation (寺院管理暫行規則) exercised on June 20, 1913.<sup>214</sup> Such regulation did not give a detail account on the legal status of

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, art. 7, art. 11, art. 14.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, art. 23; see also Huang, *Taiwan zong jiao li fa*, 46, 108.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 182-183.

temples, or legal processes of registration and other proper procedures related to temple operations. Another ordinance, the Regulating Temple Act (管理寺廟條例), was issued two years after the Temporary Regulations on Temple Regulation on October 29, 1915.<sup>215</sup> This ordinance contained 31 articles comparing to its precedent 24, and was suggested to president Yuan Shikai because the previous regulation was unable to stop temple lands and properties being raided, and that some of its articles were too vague to be properly interpreted and executed. In comparison the new ordinance provided a wider guidelines and definition apart from performing purely as a regulation of temple properties, such as regulations related to temple personnel and administrations. While the government viewed the new ordinance as a protection of religious practices and as a tool to ensure the separation of religion and state, others disagree, seeing it as an additional and a more comprehensive act from the government to regulate temple activities. Specifically the enactment of the ordinance rose huge reaction from the Buddhist communities, seeing it as an “evil act” to control both Buddhism and Daoism, and provoked master Taixu to petition in Beijing in appealing for the abolishment of this ordinance.<sup>216</sup> It is not surprising to see the reactions and worries from Taixu and other religious members towards this ordinance. Looking into specific articles of the ordinance, article 7 mandated that all temple properties should be taxed in according to the hitherto tax system, showing that the government still wished to extract financial benefits from temples; article 14, 15, and 16 all granted the government the power to interfere with temple affairs, including the mandates that temple meetings and decisions must be reported and validated by the officials, and the supervision of the contents of religious speeches and

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 185.

meetings; all demonstrated the direct interference of temple operation and the transgression of the separation of religion and state.<sup>217</sup>

Upon the heavy protest from various religious groups, the Beiyang Government agreed to amend the ordinance in 1921, reducing the regulation and control on temple activities and internal affairs, and enhancing regulations in protecting temple properties.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless the principle of the amended ordinance did not deviate much from its predecessor; the government still played the prominent role in supervising and regulating over religious matters, which could be seen as a violation of the principle of the separation of religion and the state. As described by Dongchu in his *The Contemporary History of Chinese Buddhism* 《中國佛教近代史》, the implementation of the Regulating Temple Act has caused a huge impact towards Buddhism and Daoism, with many temple properties being seized and their land confiscated.<sup>219</sup> Such acts were further supported by the secularist project to modernize China under the slogan of “overthrowing superstitious” (打倒迷信), resulting in many temple artifacts being destroyed and up to three hundred thousand monks being forced to return to secular life.<sup>220</sup>

After the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China unified China after the success of the Northern Expedition in 1929, it announced the Temple Regulation Act (寺廟管理條例) to investigate, rectify and gather statistic of the temples and shrines across the whole nation. Although this act was conducive to a

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<sup>217</sup> For details of the ordinance please see *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-189.

<sup>219</sup> For details please see Dongchu 釋東初, *Zhongguo fo jiao jin dai shi* 中國佛教近代史 (China: Zhong hua fo jiao wen hua guan, 1974).

<sup>220</sup> Huang, *Taiwan zong jiao li fa*, 2005, 191.

better understanding of the condition of temples nationwide, it was not capable in protecting temple under the huge anti-superstition campaign that were swiping across the nation. The content of the Act was basically an inheritance of the previous Regulating Temple Act, with seven of its twenty-one articles exactly the same as the former act and four of it with very similar contents. Therefore the essential mentality and result of this new Act was very similar to the other ordinances beforehand: the mentality to extract financial benefit from temple properties, interference of temple affairs, and a transgression of the religion/state separation principle. Due to the recurring shortcoming of the Act to properly address the religious situation and the concerns from the religious community over the many flaws of the Act, the Ministry of Interior referred the new Temple Regulation Act to the Executive Yuan for a reexamination.<sup>221</sup> The Act soon became a history after just six month of implementation.

After a few months of reexamination and deliberation between the Executive Yuan and the Nationalist government, a new Act of Supervising Temples (監督寺廟條例) was announced on December 7, 1929.<sup>222</sup> This version contained thirteen articles, which was a significant cut from the 25-article version proposed by the Executive Yuan to the Nationalist government. The twelve articles that were eliminated consisted mainly of those that were difficult to execute due to over-assertive or abstractive contents, and articles that infringed on religious affairs. From the perspective of protecting religious freedom and the autonomous of religious affairs from state intervention, the Act of Supervising Temples took a significant step in upholding these principles comparing to previous ordinances.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless most of the article in the Act consisted of contents that were related to the management and operation of temple properties, so it still did not deviate from the previous ordinance that positioned itself as a temple property regulating ordinance.<sup>223</sup> Apart from the mentality in regulating temple properties, another feature that is conspicuously recurring among the many religious-directed ordinance that had been executed in this short period was the unfair treatment between religious groups from the ordinances, in which the usage of the term “temple” within the regulations meant that only those religious groups with temples as the center of operation, namely Buddhism and Taoism, were under the regulation while other religious communities with different form of infrastructure and organization were being placed outside the jurisdiction of these ordinances.<sup>224</sup>

### **3.4.2 Ordinance After 1949**

The reason to go through religious policy before the retreat of the KMT into Taiwan is that the final ordinance exercised in the Mainland before 1949, the Act of Supervising Temples, came along with the National Government and remained effective on the island; in fact it is still the only main ordinance regarding religious affairs that is effective up to this very day. Apart from the Act of Supervising Temples, another regulation, the Temple Registration Regulation (寺廟登記規則), implemented on January 4, 1936 that instructed the exercise of nation-wide temple registration every ten years, also arrived in Taiwan across the strait with the Nationalist government and remained as an active policy managing religious affairs on the island.<sup>225</sup> The fact that these two policies are still active

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.,196.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 203.

today with no amendments after seventy years of political and social changes had caused great concern among many domains of the society. These concerns questioned the ambiguousness of the legal status of these two regulations and their relevance and effectiveness towards the current social and religious landscape. Qu Haiyuan specified some major defects concerning the Act, including the infringement over religious affairs and operations and the transgression of the principle of the separation of religion and state.<sup>226</sup> Specific to the case of Taiwan, the unequal treatment of the Act towards Buddhism and Taoism was a violation to the Constitution of the Republic of China that assures the “freedom of religious belief”; equally fatal is its over emphasis on the regulation of temples which overlooked other aspects of religious practices and the usage of the term “temple” that neglected other forms of religious community, making it unsuitable and inapplicable to other existing and new emerging forms of religious organizations that had spawn since Taiwan underwent the democratization process from the 1980s.<sup>227</sup>

Upon such longstanding criticism of the Act of Supervising Temple, there were continuous demands for the abrogation of the act. Despite such heavy criticisms, especially from religious communities, there were also voices that recognized the effectiveness of the act in protecting religion, especially helping temples to obtain a legal entity and safeguarding temple properties from forceful seizures. They saw the value and necessity of the Act as long as there are no other laws or ordinance that could perform such function. From such a point of view, then, the fundamental problem concerning the effectiveness of the outdated Act

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<sup>226</sup> Qu Haiyuan 瞿海源, ed., *Taiwan Zong jiao bian qian de she hui zheng zhi fen xi* 台灣宗教變遷的社會政治分析 (Taipei: Gui guan tu shu gong shi, 1997), 455.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.



and the demand for its abrogation lies on the need for a new religious ordinance. Since the Nationalist Government relocation to Taiwan, the government has been working continuously on a new religious ordinance as they also recognized that the existing Act of Supervising Temple was not enough to address the changing social and religious condition and that many of its contents were a direct violation of the Constitution regarding religious freedom. From 1957 onwards there were different versions of drafts of a new religious ordinances proposed from the government, members from the legislation Yuan, as well as individuals of different social backgrounds.<sup>228</sup> Despite such endeavors none of these drafts were successful in gaining sufficient support for it to go through, facing strong resistance from sections of the society worrying that the legislating of a religious ordinance would actually bring more regulations to religious practices.

Apart from the inherent deficiency of the Act, two other factors have also led to a demand for a religious specific ordinance to replace the Act. The first was the emergence of many new religious communities after the democratization of Taiwan. The appearance of these religious communities, epitomized by the previously banned Yiquando and other imported religions from overseas, had brought along many diverse mode of religious organization and practice that the existing Act was not able to deal with. While the KMT was able to regulate and control different religious institutions through the martial law, the democratization that came after meant that the government now need to deal with religious matter according to legal basis, and this is exactly what was lacking. The threat these thriving new religious community posed to the existing religious

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<sup>228</sup> Details of these drafts can be found in Huang, *Taiwan zong jiao li fa*, 215-228.

traditions, together with the occurrence of many religious related scandals, have only made various sectors of the society to appeal for a new religious ordinance that can cope with these new circumstances. One can see the ambivalent mentality from the public: they demand for more controls over religious matters but at the same time worries for the possible deprivation of the freedom of religious practices. The term “temple” as described in the Act is also ineffective in dealing with the many new forms of religious groups emerging in the society, many of which consisting forms of belief, practice, and organization that are miles away from any relation with the category of “temple”, making the Act obsolete in handling the shifting religious landscape of modern Taiwan.

The second factor that prompts the public demand for a new religious ordinance is the complication and confusion regarding the registration and legal status of different religious organization raised by the emergence of two new laws that came into effect after democratization – the Civil Association Act (人民團體法) and Civil Code (民法). During the martial law period the formation of civic associations were under severe control and restriction from the KMT, and under the corporatist apparatus the party had the authority to enforce such control with the formation of corporatist institution to overlook different sectors of the society and to transmit governmental rules and personnel into these social groups. Under such system religious organizations would have to register themselves under the particular corporatist institution approved or directed formed by the government, such as the BAROC for the Buddhist groups. And for the proper registration of religious groups under the legal system during this period, only the Act of Supervising Temples and the Temple Registration Regulation were in placed as the proper channel for any religious communities to register, and with “temples”

the only available entity to be registered. The situation changed after the introduction of the Civil Association Act and the Civic Code, both laws were not specifically directed to deal with religion but they have a huge influence to the organizational and legal status of religious communities and practices. The revised Civil Associations Act, enacted on January 1, 1988, stipulated in article 7 that: “Two or more civil associations of the same level and the same category may be organized within the same organization area unless otherwise limited by law. However, their names shall be different from one another.”<sup>229</sup> The enactment of the Act gave different religious communities the freedom they had not experienced during the martial law period and the Japanese occupation. Religious organizations can now register as civil associations without the previous political and geographical restraints, as long as they comply with the legal requirements and procedures as stated in the Act. The Act allows different members of the society to register legally as an “associations” (團體) of three categories: occupational (職業), social(社會), or political (政治) association.<sup>230</sup> Religious organization can register under any of these three kinds of civil associations but most religious bodies would register under social associations, as article 39 mentioned that association composed of individuals and (or) associations for the purpose of promoting religion (or charity) is found under the category of social associations.<sup>231</sup> Apart from registering as an association, the Civic Code also allows religious organizations to obtain a legal status by establishing itself as a “corporation” (社團法人) or a “foundation” (財團法人).<sup>232</sup> Both the Civic Association Act and the Civic Code had a direct influence on the

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<sup>229</sup> Civil Association Act (ROC), art. 7.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., stated particularly in art. 4.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., art. 39.

<sup>232</sup> Civic Code (ROC).

religions in Taiwan in providing them different choices of legal status and hence, their legal obligations and ways they are structured and operated.

In summary, apart from the status of registering as a “temple,” religious organizations can register as any form of the three social associations, or declare itself as a juridical person of a “corporation” or “foundation,” depending on whether they would like the formation to be based on “members” or “funds”. The consequences of the existences of these ordinances and the possibility for religious organizations to obtain different form of legal status made it difficult for the authority to manage religious affairs as religious communities registered according to a certain ordinance would have different entitled rights and obligations. The complexity also caused confusion among the public in conceptualizing and recognizing religious organizations within the society, who are often perplexed by the ambiguity between the status of religious organizations, charities and profit-making company. In addition the existence of all these ordinances has lead to an unintentional result in causing unequal treatments between religious communities. While religious organizations now have the liberty to choose which ordinance to conform and register – which itself contains unequal treatment as establishment of different legal status would entail different right, obligations and regulations, Buddhist and Taoist organizations are also obliged to follow the Act of Regulating Temples and Temple Registration Regulation while other religions are exempted from such regulations. As a result, if a temple wishes to establish a foundation it must first complete the temple registration process before further procedure; similarly if a temple that has already form a foundation would like to make any changes to their registration, they must do so in compliance to both the Temple Registration Regulation and

the Civic Code, resulting in double regulation and restriction. To be concise, any religious community can be register as a legal entity through the Act of Supervising Temples, the Civil Associations Act, or the Civil Code; the entities that the organization would be able to obtain by these channels would be “temples”, “social associations, and “juridical person” or “foundations” respectively. The choice a religious organization chooses to registered would affect their legal status, rights and duties, organizations, taxations, etc.

Looking back at the government policies of Taiwan, there is the Act of Supervising Temples that has been effective for almost a century and remained the only religious-directed regulation in effect, while ordinances and regulations, such as the Civil Code, has also played a major role in the organizational structure and legal status of these religious communities. The existence of an old and outdated act and the diffused sets of complicating and overlapping regulations on religious organizations were the main reasons to propel both the government authorities and people from the religious and academic communities to push for a new law solely for religious matters. The plan for a new religious law has been put forth for over four decades, and despite the enthusiasm from all parties and with numerous drafts and attempts to finalize it, it never pass through legal procedure and the law never came into fruition. There are various factors that caused the inability to finalize the law: the complicated administration procedure coupled with the involvement of a wide range of members from different sectors of the society; the differences between government bodies and religious communities in defining religion, religious organization, and religious practice, and their different approach towards the understanding of the protection of religious freedom and equality; and the involvement of numerous religious

organizations from different religious and cultural background; all makes it nearly impossible to come up with a unanimous policy that can satisfy the diverging interests.

### **3.5 The Establishment of Foguangshan and its Growth after Democratization**

#### **3.5.1 The Growth and Success of FGS**

The democratization of Taiwan after the lifting of the martial law gave a huge impetus to the proliferation of the Buddhist community. With the emergence of a host of young and talented monks and nuns, coupled with the growing lay community eager to participate, these new emerging Buddhist communities were able to appeal to a huge number of members and amass large amount of financial and human resources from the public. Among them are the four major mountains: FGS, Ciji (慈濟基金會), Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), and Chung Tai Chan Monastery (中台禪寺). They were able to benefit from the free religious market enabled by the democratization and absorbed large amount of followers, with each claiming to have accumulated up to a million of followers in Taiwan today.

Philosophically the leaders of these modern Taiwanese Buddhist communities can be seen as the direct inheritance of Master Taixu and Yinshun and their traditional/modern hybrid Humanistic Buddhism. The Humanism Buddhism that emphasizes on the present human life and the society around us is a core philosophical composition common among FSG, Ciji and DDM, but they diverged in the way they express such contemporary Buddhist philosophy and the

channels they take to engage in the society. Each of them has their own “specification” in their involvement in the society, which is also how the local Taiwanese public generally identifies them: Ciji is dominantly focused on charity and relief works, DDM focused on education and in particular meditating practices, while FGS is more diverse and involves in many social and cultural aspect of the society. Their choices of focus does not mean that they do not involve in other kinds of services but only a matter of different degree – they all participate in cultural, charity and educational services. The differences in their way to engage in the society are more of a strategical decision to absorb different followers and not a major difference doctrinally and philosophically.

Hsingyun was born Li Guoshen (李國深) in Jiangdu, Jiangsu Province in 1927. His childhood was spent almost entirely within the hardship and uncertainties of war and turmoil in Mainland China. His father disappeared in 1937 and in the same year Hsingyun left home at the age of eleven to study under Venerable Zhikai, who was the forty-eighth generation of the Linji lineage (臨濟宗) of the Chan School, in the Dajue Temple on Qixia Mountain near Nanjing.<sup>233</sup> Hsingyun went on to receive full precept there in 1941 at the age of fourteen and remained at Qixia Mountain to study at the Qixia Vinaya School (栖霞寺律學院). After the War of Resistance against Japan in 1945 he was admitted to the Jiaoshan Buddhist Studies Institute (焦山佛學院), which was one of the best Buddhist educational institutions in China.<sup>234</sup> After completing his courses he embarked on a busy career as a journalist, editor, school principle and the abbot

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<sup>233</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 185.

<sup>234</sup> Fu Chiyung, *Handing Down the Light: The Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*, translated by Amy Lui Ma (Hacienda Heights, CA: His Lai University Press, 1997), 7-61, 483-84; see also Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*, 62.

of the Huazang Temple in Nanjing.<sup>235</sup>

After the CCP took control of Mainland China in 1949 it impelled Hsingyun to leave Nanjing and flee to Taiwan. However as a young Buddhist monk of twenty-three with no source of support he found himself struggling in his initial time in Taiwan, even being arrested and detained for several weeks for being suspected as a spy from the KMT military authority.<sup>236</sup> As more people within the Buddhist circles started to recognize his boundless energy, devotion, and diligence, his fortunes improved with the increased demand for his service on various projects and responsibilities. After working as an editor-in-chief for Venerable Dongchu's Buddhist periodical *Rensheng*, and as a chief of educational affairs for the Taiwan Buddhist Lecture Society, Hsingyun relocated to the Leiyin Temple at the eastern coastal town of Yilan. During his time there the energetic young monk initiated many innovative services to the people of this small and impoverished town where many of its dwellers were poorly educated. He organized a Buddha-recitation society, a dharma-propaganda society, the first youth Buddhist choir in Taiwan, co-established a Buddhist Sunday school, a kindergarten, and Taiwan's first Buddhist dharma-propagation radio program.<sup>237</sup> At the same time he devoted his time organizing dharma lectures and wrote books on Buddhist history and doctrine aimed towards the mass public. His success and ability was acknowledge within the Buddhist circle of Taiwan to an extent that in 1952, he was being elected to the board of directors and the standing committee of the BAROC at the tender age of twenty-five, which he

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<sup>235</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 186.

<sup>236</sup> Fu, *Handing Down the Light*, 83.

<sup>237</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 186.



declined as he thought he was too young and inexperienced.<sup>238</sup>

His activism and achievement had gathered him many disciples and followers within a very short time. His entrepreneurship and outgoing personality also enabled him to develop many networks and contacts across the island, as a result receiving even more invitations to preach and lecture all over Taiwan. There was a huge demand from his followers for the founding of a permanent institution, and Hsingyun found a permanent place of land in Kaohsiung where he first founded the Kaohsiung Buddhist Hall in 1955, the Shoushan Temple and the Shoushan Buddhist Studies Institute in 1962, and eventually with the purchased of a bamboo-covered mountain in the Ta Shu rural district, the temple of Foguangshan in 1967.<sup>239</sup>

This was just the beginning of the phenomenon growth of FGS. Years after the first temple erected in 1967, hundreds of temples and branches were established all across Taiwan and in many major cities worldwide. The organization has also reached to many sectors of the society in providing all kinds of social services: several secular education institutions were set up by FGS worldwide, a conglomeration of media enterprises are operating daily that reaches to many parts of the world; the recent opening of the spectacular Buddha Memorial Center right next to its Kaohsiung headquarters has once again placed FGS under the spotlight among the people of Taiwan and worldwide.

In the next chapter we will go into details on these different institutions and

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 186; see also Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*, 64.

<sup>239</sup> Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 186-187.

branches and analyze their public presence and functions within the Taiwanese society. Also, the organization and structure of FGS will not be covered in this study, as it is not our main concern and have already been well documented in Stuart Chandler's *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*. But before that it would be necessary to go through a review of the philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism adapted by Hsingyun that translated a "new" Buddhist orientation towards this world.<sup>240</sup> It is this re-orientation that propelled FGS and its members to engaged and participate in the society, and hence the philosophical motivation for the monastery to deprivatize into the society. The following narration is only brief and selective for the purpose to provide a philosophical foundation for the understanding of FGS's social engaging phenomenon.

### **3.5.2 Humanistic Buddhism and the Orientation Towards the World**

The Humanistic Buddhism promoted by Hsingyun has its origin from the philosophy of "Buddhism for human live" (人生佛教) from the Chinese monk Taixu during the early twentieth century. Taixu was an avid reformer in Mainland China painstakingly attempting to modernize Buddhism to save it from its continuous wane during the Republican Period. His objectives was to reinvigorate Chinese Buddhism and to make the religion more effective and relevant in responding to the circumstances of the era; objectives that became the very core

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<sup>240</sup> The main debate regarding this focus on the world and worldly affairs is whether such philosophy is from modern or traditional sources; modern in terms of a form of internal secularization within religious organizations in adapting modern forms of management and operation and a global trend of social activism, and traditional as a rediscovering and return to the social engagement that had long been advocate from Shakyamuni himself, something that had been eclipsed at the later stage of Buddhist development in China. Such debate is significant in its own ways among Buddhist studies in China as well as the Engage Buddhism phenomena in Southeast Asia, but another issues that could not be dealt in this study. For details regarding this philosophical discussion between the mundane world and transmudane world in the Humanistic Buddhism of FGS, please see chapter two of Xue Yu, *Ren Jian Fo Jiao*, 65-160. (See also Thomas Freeman Yarnall, "Engaged Buddhism: New and Improved?" in note 27)

of the humanistic Buddhist philosophy wholeheartedly embraced by later generations of prominent monks in modern Taiwan including Hsingyun.

Viewing from a historical perspective, Taixu's attempted reformation of the Chinese Buddhist community was adjacent to the modernizing cultural movement at the same period of the Republican reign. As those intellectuals tried to reform China by blending the essence of Chinese traditional culture with modern ideologies under the historical backdrop of an increased confrontation between China and the modern Western powers, Taixu was doing the same by trying to incorporate modernity into traditional Chinese Buddhism. Hence, Taixu's proclamation for "Buddhism for a human live" was a respond to the historical and social demand of his era, and a necessary maneuver to address the culture of modernity that was sweeping across the world. Don Pitman placed Taixu's humanistic reorientation of Buddhism towards modernity to be congruent to the prominent features of the religious trends of the modern period identified by scholars such as John Randall and Joseph Kitagawa; namely the evolvement of an ethicization of religion and a this-worldly soteriology.<sup>241</sup>

Taixu's project to rejuvenate Chinese Buddhism and his persuasion of the importance for Buddhism to engage in the society was constructed on a narrative that condemns the modern way of living. Taixu saw the lost of moral principle amidst scientific and technological advancement as the fundamental dilemma of the modern secular life.<sup>242</sup> This lost of moral principle was due to the breakdown of religious and theological ethical system as a consequence of scientism, while

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<sup>241</sup> Pitman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, 3.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

other (secular) philosophically derived ethical principles were intrinsically relative to time and space so it is also ineffective to provide a viable universal ethics in the face of modern scientism. Taixu stated that any remedy for this modern ethical crisis must be based on “a careful examination of the relation between religion and culture.”<sup>243</sup> The viable remedy must fulfill three requirements in regarding such religion/culture relationship: 1) it must contain a cultural ethos that seeks to transcend both internal (individual) and external (the world) realities; 2) it must be universal and transcendent to any ethnocentric particularities of local culture; and 3) it must be compatible and harmonious to science (modernity). Taixu suggested that Buddhism was the one that best illustrates these three characteristics among other cultural or religious system worldwide and that it was the most suitable remedy towards the modern ethical crisis.<sup>244</sup> He stressed that the *dharma* is the ultimate truth that transcends all things historically and existentially, and encompasses all spheres of human civilization ahistorically. Therefore the *dharma* comprises all truth and knowledge of all periods of human history including the present era of scientism and positivism of modernity. Therefore Buddhism do not have any conflict with the modern society, but in the contrary, has the ability to provide a useful and appropriate system to understand and overcome the different challenges brought by the emerging individualism, materialism and other problematic issues under modernity. Under such context Taixu suggested to overcome the world-weary and world-casting perception towards Buddhism at that time and promoted an active social participatory and integrative form by proclaiming the concept of

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 163-166.

worldly-bodhisattva (今菩薩行), a way to attain Enlightenment through worldly participations of social service and altruism.

In the later years of his life Taixu spread this concept of world-oriented Buddhism through different publications and demonstrated how this can have an ethical and practical impact on the society that could ultimately achieve to transform the present world into a *Pureland*. To achieve this it was also necessary to implement certain degree of institutional and structural reforms within the Buddhist community, which Taixu had addressed but failed to complete. In explicating these modifications within Buddhism, Taixu reminded that in taking the approach of worldly participation it should also be caution not to go into an extreme in neglecting the religious rational and ideal behind all actions. Taixu accentuated that this reformation was implemented "according to the core of Buddhism in accommodating the thoughts and cultures of the modern trend" add if "this core of Buddhist thought and religiosity is lost, it will result in extreme secularity and the lost of value of the existence of Buddhism."<sup>245</sup>

Yin Shun continued Taixu in promoting a form of Buddhism that would be relevant to human life and the present society, in particular he put effort in promoting the role of rationality as an important and necessary element within Buddhism. Deng Zimei emphasized that one of the ways to interpret Yin Shun's view on the topics of the belief and religiosity of Buddhism is his focus on de-traditionalization, demythologization, and rationalization.<sup>246</sup> Yin Shun stated that the intention of Humanistic Buddhism is the "reinvigoration from the

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<sup>245</sup> Chen 陳兵 & Deng Zimei 鄧子美, *Er Shi Shi Ji Zhongguo Fo Jiao* 二十世纪中国佛教 (Beijing: Min Zu Chu Ban She, 2000), 239.

<sup>246</sup> Deng, *Chao yue yu shun ying*, 163-177.

tutelage and hypnosis of tradition, and to strive according to the genuine *dharma*.”<sup>247</sup> He went further in explicating the importance of rationality within the *dharma* among Buddhism by stating that “Buddhism and its *dharma* is not a belief, but a religion of rationality. Therefore the enlightenment of truth, or the directions for practice, are all conduct through rationality in obtaining a rich and proper content.”<sup>248</sup>

The above have demonstrated that Taixu and Yinshun did not only advocate the philosophical aspect that emphasized on the present life and society among modern Chinese Buddhist, but also acknowledged the need for institutional and organizational changes within the Buddhist community to make this transformation possible. Although these philosophical and practical proposals were not achieved during the time of Taixu and the early period of Yinshun, they were adapted and actualized by the later Taiwanese Buddhist community, including FGS, after the democratization of Taiwan. Deng made a summary of the prevalent features of the contemporary Buddhist communities active in China, and it is possible to see their strong heritage from the humanistic ideas promoted by Taixu and Yinshun: including 1) the alternation of emphasis on the dead and reinvigorates the attention on the alive and the present life, with an emphasis on the human aspect and rejects the traditional mythologization on the dead and spirits; 2) the redirection on the focus towards the present world, and aim for ethical and spiritual enhancement of the general public through the participation in politics, economics, educational and social services; 3) the institutionalization

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 167, 172; for detail words of Yin Shun, please see Yinshun 印順, *You xin fa hai liu shi nian* 遊心法海六十年 (Taipei: Zheng wen chu ban she, 1985).

<sup>248</sup> Deng, *Chao yue yu shun ying*, 173; for detail words of Yin Shun, please see Yinshun, *Cheng fo zhi dao* 成佛之道 (Taipei: Zheng wen chu ban she, 1985).

of Humanistic Buddhism and the implementation of different organization and management methods according to secular institutional models.<sup>249</sup> FGS and Hsingyun embraces Humanistic Buddhism wholeheartedly both philosophically and institutionally, which could be succinctly seen in his own words:

*"the Buddhism of the pass encourages the believers to leave their home and family to practice in remote isolation, which resulted in the lost of humanity and the fall of Buddhism"; "Humanistic Buddhism is the incorporation of the classical time of the Buddha and the modern Buddhism"; "Buddhism of the post-industrial era should focus on this-world and transform the wit of the Buddha from the temple to everyone's industries"; "modern Buddhist industries should comprise of factories, farm, banks and offices"; and the deify of modern Buddhism by "interpreting dharma by modern language; modernize and technologicalize missionary methods; modernizing and life-orienting of Buddhism practices; and the modernizing of temples."*<sup>250</sup>

### 3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the necessary background to investigate the case study of FGS in Taiwan with a historical overview of Buddhism in twentieth century Taiwan, including a review of the religious policies implemented and exercised during this period, and the development of FGS and its Humanistic

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<sup>249</sup> Deng, *Chao yue yu shun ying*, 163-167.

<sup>250</sup> Chen & Deng, *Er shi shi ji Zhongguo fo jiao*, 249-250; for details of the words of Hsingyun, please see the articles "Ren jian fo jiao de jiben si xiang" 人間佛教的基本思想, "Wo men ying zhi de nu li fang xiang" 我們應知的努力方向, and "Fo jiao ru he xian dai hua" 佛教如何現代化, in Hsingyun 星雲, *Xing yun da shi jiang yan ji* 星雲大師講演集 (Kaohsiung: Fo guang chu ban she, 1994).

Buddhism philosophy in the past few decades. The importance of this historical review is to demonstrate that the emergence and success of FGS, along with other Taiwanese Buddhism, would not be possible without the specific historical and social circumstances that occurred throughout the historical course of contemporary Taiwan. The political dislocations of the authoritative governance in the period of Japanese colonization and the martial law, which had suppressed the religious and cultural aspiration of the Taiwanese, have spread the seed for the Taiwanese people to strive for freedom, political autonomy, and cultural identity; the rapid social changes of modernization begun during the Japanese governance and erupted during the 1970s and 1980s, led to the growth of a capitalist economy and the democratization of the society, both conducive in allowing a political liberalized environment for the establishment of different religious communities and the emergence of freedom and autonomy among the people in searching for their religious and cultural needs.

The historical review also provided a glance of the religion/state relationship of modern Taiwan, one that witnessed a general trend of state dominance over religious affairs. Before the democratization of Taiwan the state had always assumed the dominating role over religious affairs, from the fluctuating policies adapted by the Japanese government over the religious communities, to the closed control and censorship of religious affairs during the martial law. Even after the democratization where religious association and individuals obtained the freedom to exercise their religious rights, they were rights that were enforced by the policies in effect. These policies were also incomprehensive, outdated, and biased towards different religious groups on the island, and with the government sluggish to rectify these deficiencies, the religious communities can only try their



best to make their voice heard by the authority. And as demonstrated by the reaction from the religious communities towards the exercising religious policies such as the Act of Supervising Temple, these policies seems more as a constraint than a measure to facilitate and protect the liberty of the religious institutions.

Such a review of the state/religion relationship of Taiwan in the past century also brought us back to the question regarding the comparability of the process of differentiation between modern Taiwan with the existing models of this process. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the process of differentiation is understood as a fragmentation of social life into different specialized and autonomous domains in performing the functions previously carried out by one overarching institution. Specifically the process of differentiation in the history of modern Europe involved the disestablishment of the institution of the Roman Church and the emancipation and differentiation of different spheres from its previous domination, with the Church now receding to become a specialized sphere of its own among other spheres. In contrast, no religious institution have ever been able to establish such authoritative role over the society in the history of Taiwan; as we have seen religion has always been playing second fiddle to the state and remained within its own specialized religious sphere as a part of the larger society. However this does not mean that the process of differentiation did not happened in modern Taiwan. The democratization of the island during the late 1980s has lead to a similar process of differentiation, as different domain of the society gained their autonomy from the previous authoritarian era of the martial law and emancipate from the constraint of state dominance. What is distinctive to the case of Taiwan is that the process of differentiation was a disestablishment of the overarching political domination of the state over the

society, and not from any religious institutions as it was in modern Europe.

The elaboration of this Taiwanese form of differentiation will continue in the next chapter. But the brief analysis above has already lead us to see the potential such investigation on the process of differentiation could have in the sociological understanding of modern Chinese societies. The articulation of the concept of differentiation can only be intelligible within the past century of Taiwan, as before that the island was only a provincial part of Mainland China and historically and politically insignificant for any concept of differentiation, secularization or modernization to be applicable. But if we stretch our inquiry to the history of China at large, we can see that the state has always had the utmost dominant force over the society, with different religious organizations and communities always succumbing under state authority. If any similar process of differentiation occurs in China under the influence of modernization, it is very likely that it will happen in a way that resembles to the case in modern Taiwan: a differentiation of different spheres from the control of the state authority with religion continuing to play its specific role within its assigned domain. However, how this process will operate in the Mainland China, and why religious institution has never been able to challenge the state in assuming a more dominating role in both Chinese societies, is out of the scope of this study.

## **Chapter 4: Institutional Publicness of Foguangshan and Social Differentiation in Taiwan**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

The previous historical review of twentieth century Taiwan has shown how the ending of the martial law in the late 1990s had led to the democratization of the society and a favorable condition for the growth of religions communities in Taiwan. We have also reviewed other factors that have be influential to the success of the Buddhist communities during this transition, including external factors such as the economic boom, the associated improvement of the people and the rising of a new middle class, a liberated population searching for communal association and a form of collective identity, as well as the internal philosophical reorientation of the Buddhist communities with an emphasis towards worldly affairs that became attractive to this emerging population.

The expansion of these contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist organizations, in particularly FGS, seems to have raised questions about the fundamental question of the concept of secularization: that modernization will lead to a process of secularization in the society where there will be a decreasing social influence of religion. But as explained in chapter two the value of the concept of secularization is not on predicting the demise of religion in the modern era, but its capacity in measuring the religious change and as a reference point in examining religious development in modern society. The previous chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of such examination, in which the investigation of the process of social differentiation in modern Taiwan, a core component of secularization, had led us to realize that such process of differentiation is distinctive to the one from

the original European model; a differentiation process from the dominance of the state and from a religious institution, with religion playing different roles within these contrasting disestablishment process.

The present chapter will continue the exploration of our case in FGS within the general religious resurgence in modern Taiwan. A feature of the religious resurgence phenomena on the island is not only the huge increase of membership of different religious communities, but also the significant increase of public exposure and functionality of these religious communities in the society. This lead us back to Casanova's work in *Public Religion*, in which FGS and other Taiwanese religious organizations were participating in the society in ways resembling to Casanova's idea of "deprivatization". The present chapter will look into detail of this deprivatization process of FGS to help us gain better understand and eventually theorize this public engagement phenomenon of the Buddhist monastery. This will be done first by adapting Casanova's tripartite model of public religion and investigate the deprivatization of FGS in each of the state, political and civil level. After that we will continue to explore the publicness of FGS by decomposing its public engagement into specific categories, looking first into its institutional establishment in the society in the past few decades before exploring other aspects of publicness in subsequent chapters.

## **4.2 Foguangshan as a Public Religion**

### **4.2.1 Foguangshan as a Public Religion in the State Level**

In Casanova's model a public religion in the state level are religions assuming public roles as forms of established state churches or national

churches.<sup>251</sup> Strictly speaking established state religions are public only in one of these three senses: (a) premodern medieval sense of ‘representative publicness’, (b) early modern etatist sense of the ‘publicness of administrative state authority’ and (c) ‘mobilizational state religions’ that takes over the modern state and its legal framework and shaping it in a theocratic-totalitarian direction.<sup>252</sup> Casanova admitted in *Public Religion* that it is difficult to find a public religion at the state level in the modern era, as such form of public religion would be inconsistent with modern universalistic principles and with modern differentiated structures.<sup>253</sup> This form of public religion can only assume its publicness in pre-modern eras where the church and state are still heavily interconnected in institutional forms such as theocracy and caesaropapism. Particular to the history of Medieval Europe, such form of church/state relationship has mostly shattered as the Roman Catholic Church transformed from a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution and voluntarily disestablishment, and by the spread of the modern structural trend of differentiation and the formation of secular regimes under the force of globalization and colonialism.

It becomes complicated when we try to fathom of a public religion in the state level in society outside Europe, in which there are fundamental differences in church/state relationship and diverging forms of religious traditions and governance under consideration. Fundamentally Casanova’s framework of public religion was constituted from the distinctive history of Christianity that comprised of a long history of interplay between the state or the ruling authorities with an established and organized religious institution that had a wide distribution

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<sup>251</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 218.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

across the society, and where the latter was somehow able to assume a dominating role over most if not all of the domain of the society and its people in the vicinity at a certain period of time. It is a question whether these elements were present in any other societies apart from medieval and early modern Europe. We may find similar attributes in societies such as some Islamic sovereignty where the forms of governance had intricately connected with religious authorities, or in forms of caesaropapism in imperial China if we follow John Lagerwey's claim that China is a religious state,<sup>254</sup> but both would most likely be in a very different model and religious institution/state relationship from the Christian counterparts.

As we stream down our focus to the Chinese societies the dissimilarities became more apparent. No religious tradition had ever established any significant form of institutional organization that was capable and strong enough to challenge the ruling authority, and there was no historical period of China where a religious organization or community was able to dominate over the ruling authority and assume roles anywhere near to the state level. Even in historical periods when the ruling authorities had strong support for a particular religious tradition and officially augmented it as a national religion, such as the accession of Buddhism during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty, these periods were short lived and were never fully accepted by all parties of the literati and the common people; more importantly the ruling authority had always been in control in making the decisions related to religious affairs with the religious community only playing a passive role.

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<sup>254</sup> John Lagerwey, *China: A Religious State* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

A perspective that would be helpful in describing such a religious ecosystem in China is the “state religion” thesis proposed by Sino-scholars such as Anthony Yu.<sup>255</sup> The meaning of “state religion” in this sense is different from the state level of public religion espoused by Casanova. While Casanova’s state level of public religion is a process opposite to religious privatization in describing the ability for religious institutions to assume public roles by forms of mobilization and legitimization and ultimately achieving influential status at a state level, the state religion thesis by Yu describes the state imperative to subscribe all forms of religion under its authority, thereby the recognition of religion being predominately under the influence of the state. Yu argued that “for more than two millennia, the core ideological convictions shaping and buttressing imperial governance also direct correlatively the purpose and process to regulate, control, and exploit all rivaling religious traditions whenever it is deemed feasible and beneficial to the state.”<sup>256</sup> The state/religion relationship in this sense is the absolute predomination of the state over religion; hence it is somewhat inconceivable for any religion in China to assume a public role in a state level under such state/religious relationship.

A similar residual form of this Chinese religion/state relationship can be found in the history of contemporary Taiwan, as we have seen in the previous chapter. As early as the Japanese colonial rule we can see the authority of the colonial regime taking command of the religious landscape in Taiwan: the Acculturation Program had both lured and forced the local Taiwanese away from their traditional Chinese religions to State Shinto, with other religious regulations

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<sup>255</sup> Anthony Yu, *State and Religion in China: Historical and Textual Perspectives* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005).

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

such as the temple-restructuring movement and frequent campaigns of nation-wide survey of shrines and temples in regulating local religious communities. The state control of religion continued after the end of Japanese colonialism and the occupation of Taiwan by the Kuomintang with its decision to exercise a martial law that led to substantial impacts to the Taiwanese religious landscape and every level of the society. Under the martial law every aspect of the society were being severely checked by the authority: the freedom of speech, press and publication, assemblies, and not least religious practices were under heavy surveillance. Many religious organizations and individuals were suppressed, prosecuted and imprisoned out of government scare of conspiracies during this time of militant supervision. This was a time when the religious market was strictly regulated by the state with religious organizations and activities being seen as places of conspiracies and religious members finding themselves abused by the authorities.

The uplifting of the martial law in 1987 provided a new democratized and pluralistic environment for the religious communities. Especially with the enactment of the Law on Civic Organization in 1989 in lifting the restriction on the establishment of all kinds of civil groups and political parties, there was an instant reaction among the religious community and resulted in a dramatic emergence and growth of religious organizations in the 1990s. FGS and many other Buddhist organizations were now given the freedom to roam across different domains of the society. Despite the democratize of the Taiwanese society and the freedom for religious organization and practice, the state still withheld the predominant authority and the final word over policies and decisions that could readily affect the religious landscape with its power over the decision



in legal terms of policy initiation and enforcement.

Despite the emergence of religious organization such as FGS after democratization with such exponential expansion in terms of membership and institution, it has not been able to, nor is it their intention, to assume a public role to the extent of the state level. With the differing state/religion relationship and the particular structure and practice of religion in Taiwan it would not be possible, at least at the present status quo under a differentiated social structure and a modern liberal democratic form of governance and rule of law, for any religious community to assume a public role at a state level in Taiwan.

#### **4.2.2 Foguangshan as a Public Religion in the Political Level**

It can be seen from above that the state religion model of China with a diverging state/religion relationship has made it very difficult, if not impossible, for any religion to assume a public role at the state level. While the Taiwanese case has been consistent with this state religion thesis in describing the state/religious relationship within Chinese societies where the state has always had the predominating authority over the religious communities, the democratization of the island has provided a considerable degree of freedom for the religious communities to participate in the political sphere. This does not mean that religious communities have never had any influence towards politics throughout Chinese history, and it is difficult to overlook the close relationships that were formed between the state and the religious communities in specific historical periods. What the democratization in Taiwan has contributed in contrast to the previous eras and from the Mainland counterpart is that it has now

established a stable and legitimate structure in providing an open and free environment for any individual and groups, both secular and religious, to participate in politics. This structural transformation of the political sphere corresponds to the modern social structure and principle similar to the liberal and democratic ideal of the Western counterpart; a differentiated society where the politics operates with its own mechanics and values compatible to modern principles, resulted in the emergence of a political domain where every individual are in equal terms to participation. It is under such a circumstance where it is possible for religion to have the freedom and liberty to enter the political sphere in its own terms; it is also under such a background where the examination of any form of deprivatization process of modern religion at the political level would be possible and meaningful.

For Casanova, a religion can become public at the political level when it “becomes politically mobilized against other religious or secular movements, or institutionalized as a political party competing with other religious or secular bodies, both to advance their ideal and material interests in the political arena.”<sup>257</sup> What he found out from his case studies is that there are two main forms of religious mobilization in a political level: one is to resist the “disestablishment and the differentiation of the secular spheres” and “against other religions or against secularist movements and parties”; and the second in defending religious freedom, protection of human and civil rights, and the defending of the institution of democratic regimes.<sup>258</sup> While a full examination of whether FGS qualifies to be a public religion at the political level will arrive later in this section, it is

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<sup>257</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 61-62.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-219.

possible to take an initial look in the way the examination of such form of politically public religion is fundamentally different from the European case. This fundamental difference again is subjected to the different state/religion relationship found in the Chinese society. As the state religion thesis has argued, there was never a kind of theocracy existing in either Mainland China or Taiwan and therefore it is both impossible and unnecessary for religious institutions to resist against any form of political disestablishment or the process of differentiation in the modern era.

The case of FGS has been consistent with our elaboration that its relation with the political sphere is not intend to resist the process of differentiation or to defense themselves from other religious bodies. In fact the form of differentiation in Taiwan is a process in reaction to state dominance over the society and not towards religious authority, as the dominate sphere existing in pre-democratized Taiwan was the state in the form of the KMT and the Japanese colonial regimes. The differentiation process that happened after the martial law was actually a favorable condition for the religious communities, as religious communities are now liberated from the political constraints of the previous era and became independent to operate according to its own values and norms. Moreover the humanistic philosophy that FGS has adopted had led to a form of engagement, acknowledgment and compromises with other secular and religious agencies in the society; therefore it would not be necessary or consistent with their own philosophies to resist the process of differentiation or to defense themselves from other religious bodies.

It is the second form of political engagement in the defense of religious

freedom and the protection of human and civil rights that has been particularly salient in demonstrating the publicness of FGS within contemporary Taiwan. The leadership of FGS has been particularly concerned and involved in the politics that pertains to religious freedom with the Taiwanese governing authorities in the past decades. Hsingyun has been very verbal in voicing out his concern of the need for a new religious ordinance to substitute the outdated Act of the Supervision of Temples. Among other politicians and religious individuals who think that the establishment of religious ordinance would hinder religious freedom, Hsingyun has been adamant with his support for the legislation of such ordinance. Not only had Hsingyun published many articles that elucidate his thoughts in supporting the ordinance, he even drafted his own version with other politicians and handed to the authority in 1997. Although he has not been successful so far with these attempts he is still one of the key advocate for a new Religious Community Ordinance.<sup>259</sup>

FGS's footprint in the politics of Taiwan also involves other areas apart from their endeavor concerning religious freedom. Although it has not gone as far as founding their own political party, Hsingyun has not been shy in making various comments on political affairs. In 1998 his untraditional action to explicitly support the lay Buddhist Chan Luan in campaigning for the presidential election raised huge reactions among the Taiwanese society.<sup>260</sup> His habit in voicing out his political views did not faded despite criticism from various sectors of the society for his political engagement and he continued to be outspoken in later presidential campaigns. His comments and critics involving the scandal of the

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>260</sup> Lailiberte, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations*, 72-74.

presidency of Chen Shuibian demonstrated his will to mobilize his Buddhist community against social and political circumstances that he viewed as adverse to the wellbeing of the Taiwanese public; the explicit acquaintance from Ma Yingjiu with the monastery in his 2008 presidential campaign illustrated that politicians understood the significance of the support from the religious communities to their political prospect. Furthermore, Hsingyun himself has been directly involved in the political arena acting in different political position, such as serving as a member of the KMT's Central Committee and as an advisor on party affairs for many years after 1986. He was also the first monk to assume a government position in Taiwan in accepting the position of commissioner for the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in 1997.<sup>261</sup> With all these different form of engagement with the politics many critics have labeled Hsingyun as a “political monk”;<sup>262</sup> his overt stance towards the controversial Taiwan/Mainland relationship and his support of the One-China policy had only reinforced this image among the Taiwanese people.

There are many more examples that could demonstrate that FGS is not indifferent towards the political situation of Taiwan, including Hsingyun's display of his support, comments, and critics towards different politicians, political, social and national affairs, and not least his stances towards Mainland China/Taiwan relationship. Referring back to Casanova's model of public religion, these political involvements by FGS demonstrates both compatibility and deviation from those forms of deprivatization processes displayed from his case studies. While FGS did not hesitate to partake in the political arena to

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 69, 79.

advance their ideal and interests, they were not mobilized against other religious or secular agencies nor had they engaged the politics as an institutionalized body or political party. Despite FGS's embracement of the humanistic religiosity that verifies the secular world and alters the prevalent concept in pre-modern China in seeing Buddhism as indifferent to worldly affairs, it has never directly encouraged its followers to enthusiastically involve in political affairs but only acknowledges it as a viable way to engage and change the world. Moreover FGS has never attempted to involve and mobilize its resources in the politics as an institutionalized body or political party in representing the interest of its religious community; in contrary the engagement has always been taken alone by its leader Hsingyun with his involvement mostly framed as personal statements rather than representing the FGS community, although many people does make such association and we cannot overlook the significance and representativeness of Hsingyun personal influences. All these demonstrated that despite a similar form of deprivatization process within the political sphere, the approach FGS has taken in advancing into the political domain was distinctive from Casanova's model.

#### **4.2.3 Foguangshan as a Public Religion in the Civic Level**

The above analyze has shown that FGS cannot be placed as a religion assuming public role in the Taiwanese society at both the state and political level due to a history of state/church relationship where religion has always subsumed under the domination of the state, and that FGS has not regarded the political domain as the primary platform to pursuing its interest. This outcome is very much compatible with Casanova's conclusion from his case studies, which demonstrates that it is no longer possible for religion to assume public role in

both the state and political level under the modern social structures; ultimately only public religions at the level of civil society could be consistent with modern universalistic principles and with modern differentiated structures.<sup>263</sup>

Those religions that enters the public through the civil level can take three main forms: 1) religious mobilization to protect all religious and modern rights and freedom; 2) the engagement into the public to contest the claims of the secular spheres disregards any ethical or moral considerations; and 3) the insistence to protect the traditional lifeworld and initiate collective self-reflection of modern discursive ethics.<sup>264</sup> Resembling to the religious behaviors of Casanova's case studies, the social engagement of FGS in entering the Taiwanese public also showed attributes similar to these three objectives. The way Hsingyun has engaged in advancing his stances for religious freedom and his support for the legislation of religious ordinances has demonstrated that although these are politically related, the means FGS has taken to advance its interest in these matters were done through the civil level. Moreover, the approach in which FGS engaged with the political affairs related to religious matters was not done through institutional engagement or social activism, but rather by discursive means through different media outlets. In fact the media outlets at the civil sphere is the primary channel FGS adapts to interact with the society and the public in disseminating its interests and religious contents. The voices of FGS and Hsingyun were made public through different secular newspapers and magazines as well as FGS's own media outlet with its cable television and radio channels.<sup>265</sup>

Hsingyun is a proliferate writer and public speaker who understands the

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<sup>263</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 219.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58, 228-229.

<sup>265</sup> Xue Yu, *Ren Jian Fo Jiao*, 329-332.

advantage and need for modern religions to adapt towards the global informative era and recognize the resourcefulness of modern media in connecting to the public. We will see in later chapters how the harnessing of modern media technologies has been an effective channel in disseminating its religious discourses to the Taiwanese public.

It is exactly this discursive aspect performed by modern religions at the civil level of the public society that Casanova's case studies have highlighted. His thesis argued that it is the civil level of the public society where the contestation of modern religions is taking place, and where modern religions engages in process of deprivatization in "abandon[ing] its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in the ongoing process of contestation, discursive legitimization, and redrawing of the boundaries."<sup>266</sup> Concurring to Casanova's view from his analysis of the public participation of the Roman and American Catholicism, the discursive penetration of FGS into the public domain indicated that it is through such discursive means that modern religious communities finds the most success in penetrating and influencing into the public domain; it is also through this approach where the public presence of these modern religions can be compatible with modern forms of differentiated social structure and principles.

The brief analysis above in placing FGS under Casanova's framework of public religion has demonstrated both similarities and discrepancies from his model. The locality of FGS as a religion in a Chinese context cannot be simply placed under the same spectacles of the Christian counterparts where Casanova's

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 66.



model was based on. The differences in the state/religion relationship and distribution of power among Chinese societies, the distinct historical and political circumstances of Taiwan, and the different and disparaging philosophy and religious ideal of religious traditions distinctive to Christianity, all contributed to the result that FGS cannot and did not become a public religion at the state and political level due to reasons that are deviates from Casanova's case studies. On the other hand FGS displays a very similar feature to the conclusion made in Casanova's argument in *Public Religion* in which the discursive penetration of religious communities at the civil level is where the deprivatization process of religion takes place as a conducive mean to intervene and infiltrate into the public society. It shows that the religious institutions acknowledge the civil domain as a possible and effective channel to infiltrate and disseminate their religious discourses, and provides us with a premature understanding on the public engagement of FGS from a theoretical aspect.

Inarguably Casanova's model of public religion and his conception of the deprivatization process have provided us with a convenient framework in examining the public engagement of modern religions. However, as mentioned earlier, Casanova himself mentioned about the possible shortcomings of his model in being Eurocentric and restrictive within a tripartite model.<sup>267</sup> It is the aim of this study to try to address these two concerns, and to appropriate the concept of public religion in a Chinese context to facilitate our understanding of modern religious development in this part of the world. This thesis would also try to expand the concept of public religion and explore other aspects of publicness of modern religions, not only inside a vertical analysis on the state, political, and

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<sup>267</sup> Casanova, "Rethinking Public Religions," 26.

civil level, but also decomposing their publicness for thorough inspection. This includes the investigation of the religious philosophy and rationale that motivated FGS in deciding to participate in the society, and from a receptive perspective how the people in the public and the society at large responses and make sense of the increasing publicness of this religious community; both of which are outside of Casanova's model of public religion. We have explored some of these aspects earlier and will continue throughout subsequent chapters, with the remaining part of this chapter examining one the most palpable aspect of the public presence of FGS: its physical and institutional presence within the Taiwanese society. The chapter will end with a discussion that relates this institutional presence with the process of differentiation examined in the previous chapter.

### **4.3 The Physical Publicness of Foguangshan**

The presence of FGS can be felt readily all across Taiwan, with all kinds of buildings and infrastructures from its educational establishments in Fo Guang University and Nanhua University, to its mobile library vehicles roaming across the island. Nevertheless their vast number of temples are still the main public display palpable among the people of Taiwan, with its headquarter in Kaohsiung being the most spectacular with its many temples, traditional buildings, and hundreds of statues spread across hundreds of hectares of land on the side of a mountain located at the Dashu district (大樹區). The establishment of the headquarter in Foguangshan began when Hsingyun brought a piece of land called the Ma Zhu Yuen (麻竹園) in Dashu on May 16, 1967.<sup>268</sup> From that time on the master started to move his industries to this location, with the Eastern Buddhist

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<sup>268</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 8, Fo Guang Shan Monastery and Branch Temples* 佛光山開山四十週年紀念特刊－佛光道場 (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Educations, 2007), 13.

Seminary (東方佛教學院) first to be relocated to Foguangshan from Shao Shan temple in the same year. The teaching building of the seminary was one of the first buildings to be erected in Foguangshan alongside the Great Compassionate Shrine (大悲殿) and other smaller erections.<sup>269</sup> In 1972 the prime minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Kwun Yew was one of the first major public figures to visit Foguangshan, with the President of Taiwan Mr. Chiang Chingkuo paying his visit in the following year. The Great Buddha Statue, one of the tallest of its kind in Southeast Asia, was erected in 1975. 1981 was a major year for the temple with the Pure Land Cave (淨土洞窟) and the majestic Main Shrine (大雄寶殿) opening in celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FGS.<sup>270</sup>

Many new infrastructures have been completed since then, with the mountain currently comprising many temples, shrines, teaching and administration buildings, lodging buildings for visitors, restaurants, libraries, gardens and ponds, and many other facilities and infrastructure. To cope with its increasing followers FGS set up its first branches, the Fu Shan Temple (福山寺), in Chang Hua County in 1975. The Pu Men temple (普門寺) in Taipei city soon followed in 1977, which was the first sanctuary to be located in a modern building within an urban district.<sup>271</sup> Up to the beginning of 2014 there are approximately 56 branches all across Taiwan, with many of them coming in different styles and sizes, most noticeably the modern grand Taipei Vihara (台北道場) and the modern/traditional hybrid Sukhavati Temple (極樂寺) stationed at the heart of Keelung city. On December 25, 2011 the Buddhist Memorial Center (佛陀紀念館), a ten billion Taiwanese dollar park which covers over 100 hectares of land

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 30.

with a world tallest bronze Buddha Statue that stands at 108 meter tall, was completed and opened to the public.<sup>272</sup> The park is free of charge to the public with the provision of different services such as tour guides and electric shuttle vehicles. Together with the original Foguangshan temple next to it and the Fo Guang Avenue and its surrounding areas that connects to two, it is one of the biggest modern religious conglomerating infrastructures in Taiwan.

Apart from the temples, the lay institution The Buddha Light International Association Republic of China (BLIA ROC) was formed in 1991 to provide a platform for the lay community from across Taiwan. The oversea followers of FGS had a massive response towards the formation of such lay association in Taiwan, and urged for an association that can consolidate members from their own region and to build a better connection with the headquarter in Taiwan. Soon after, many oversea lay associations were rapidly formed in over sixty places worldwide, eventually on May 16, 1992, the Buddha Light International Association World Headquarters was officially formed and inaugurated at the Performing Arts Center, Los Angeles, More than four thousand representatives of the branch members from over forty-five countries gathered for the 1<sup>st</sup> BLIA General Conference, witnessing the inauguration ceremony and the election of its first president, Master Hsingyun.<sup>273</sup>

The first FGS oversea branch, the Hsi Lai temple (西來寺), was opened in 1978 in Hacienda Heights, California.<sup>274</sup> It is still one of the three largest and

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<sup>272</sup> Online at [http://www.fgsbmc.org.tw/BMC\\_intro\\_origin.php](http://www.fgsbmc.org.tw/BMC_intro_origin.php) (Accessed May 3, 2014).

<sup>273</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 6, Buddha's Light International Association* 佛光山開山四十週年紀念特刊—國際佛光會 (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Educations, 2007), 10.

<sup>274</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 8*, 126.

eye-catching FGS oversea branch together with the Nanhua Temple in South Africa FGS and the new International Buddhist Progress Society (IBPS) of Paris opened in 2012. Today there are over a hundred overseas FGS branches locating in every continent. Apart from these major temples there are also over two hundred chapters, thousands of branches, and over a million of members spread across the major cities of Asia, Europe, the Americas, Oceania and Africa, under the head of the BLIA World Headquarters. Its Taiwan headquarter, the BLIA ROC, has 500 branches alone and hundreds of thousands of members. Any individual and association can become a member of the BLIA under the regional chapter as long as they subscribe to the guiding principles of BLIA.<sup>275</sup> The association declares its primary objective as to serve the multitude by spreading joy and offering help, leading them to emphasize on providing various social services to the local people. Myriads of activities are constantly designed and provided in collaboration with the local communities and organizations such as schools, colleges, companies and corporation, and other Buddhist and religious groups. The local chapters and branches also work regularly alongside local government to participate in different governmental led and sponsored activities aiming to build a better connection with people and communities of the region, with a joint objective in improving the conditions of the society.

BLIA holds many events in different cities around the world and it is not difficult to spot them in the public as these events often involves huge numbers of

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<sup>275</sup> There are four guiding principles of BLIA: 1) We are indebted to the Buddha's teachings and sincerely respect the Triple Gem, we propagate to benefit all sentient beings and strive to enlighten the world; 2) we promote Living Buddhism and create a Buddha's Light pure land, we are pragmatic in worldly affairs and compassionate in providing relief to the world; 3) we observe established formalities and harmonize with the Five Dharma Vehicles, we cultivate the Three studies for a wholesome character; and 4) we work with an international outlook and engage in cultural and educational activities, we are broad-minded and respect the multitude. Online at <http://www.blia.org/english/about/decralation.htm> (accessed February 3, 2014).

volunteers and participants. The Annual General Conference Meeting attracts tens of thousands of BLIA members to fly from all over the world to the meeting venue to participate in this most important event of the association. The meeting has been held continuously since its first one in 1992. Most of the time the meeting were held in Taiwan, either in Foguangshan Kaohsiung or other large public venues such as at the Taipei International Convention Center (2000) and the new Taipei Multi-functional Arena (2006). Others were held in oversea venues in cities of large BLIA member concentration: the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting was held at The Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles in 1992; in Vancouver at the University of British Columbia in 1994; in the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre in 1995; and in the following years the 5<sup>th</sup> at Le Palais des Congres, the 6<sup>th</sup> at the Hong Kong International Trade and Exhibition Centre, and 7<sup>th</sup> in Toronto at the Regal Constellation Hotel, and in Tokyo International Forum, Japan in 2002.<sup>276</sup>

Other public events are also held across cities where BLIA branches are located. Especially in its homeland Taiwan, many large-scale events are being held in public venues at different cities every year. One of the most recognizable main event is the Chan, Pureland, Tantric Ceremony (禪淨密三修大會), which has been held annually since its first in 1993.<sup>277</sup> The Ceremony is an event for the BLIA members to gather and conduct collective cultivation (共修) by performing various rituals, chanting, praising the Buddha (讚佛) and listen to the dharma (聞法). To cater for its tens of thousands of members spread across Taiwan, the Ceremony is held separately in different days and in three cities in the north,

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<sup>276</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affairs Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, Vol. 6, 19-27.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

central and south – usually in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung respectively – to diffuse the crowd and lessen the commune time of the members. Every single one of these Ceremonies would have up to ten of thousands attending members with many local and regional officials, legislators, local tycoons, and other renowned people attending as guests.

Apart from the Chan, Pureland, Tantric Ceremony the BLIA also facilitates other dharma meetings and other activities held across the world, including: the International Youth Seminar on Life and Chan where thousands of youths from all across the world (Buddhist or not) gathers in Foguangshan for a two week experiential camp; charity events such as the “Seven Virtues Campaign Basketball Tournament” in 1994 with exhibition games played between the FGS basketball team, celebrity teams from Taiwan and Hong Kong, and a Legislative Yuan team; the enshrinement of the Buddha’s finger relic in 2002 where Hsingyun successfully negotiated with the Xi’an Famen Temple in Mainland China to bring the relic to Taiwan with millions of Taiwanese Buddhist participated to witness the relic tour across Taiwan.<sup>278</sup> The BLIA is also responsible in organizing the Buddha’s Light boys and girls scouts that have thousands of members worldwide, and also responsible for assisting the coordination and mobilization of its members in different relief works and cultural events in Taiwan and overseas.<sup>279</sup>

BLIA became a non-governmental organization (NGO) in special consultative status with the Economic and Social council (ECOSOC) of the

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 80-83.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 36-44.

United Nations (UN) in 2003.<sup>280</sup> The ECOSOC decided to grant the special consultative status to the BLIA as its Substantive Session in July of that year, and in December the Department of Public Information (DPI) also granted the non-government organization association status to BLIA. Upon receiving such status BLIA is allowed to designate an official representatives to the United Nations in its headquarter in New York and offices in Geneva, participating in varies meeting and conferences, and offering written or spoken reports and suggestions to the intergovernmental organization. BLIA could also receive the necessary assistance and eventual protection from UN and its related bodies while conducting its social works and projects on the field. Being the first Buddhist association among other NGO counterparts (Ciji was granted the same status in 2010)<sup>281</sup>, the government of Geneva showed their support for the involvement of Buddhism by granting a piece of land at Grand Saconnex to build a FGS Geneva Conference Center.<sup>282</sup> Accompanying with the other 2,300 NGOs recognized by the United Nation, BLIA and its subordinated chapters worldwide participates actively in supporting and promoting the work of the UN. It also acts as an agent between the UN and the grassroots level by providing information directly to the UN Secretary General, and other government members and NGOS, as well as disseminating UN news and information to its millions of members worldwide.

The physical presence of these hundreds of temples and branches worldwide, the frequent appearance of its members in all kinds of religious and non-religious

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>281</sup> From an online article “Tsz Chi Foundation Receives Special Status at UN ECOSO” at the website *The Buddhist Channel*; <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=48,9358,0,0,1,0#.Uw7sVfSSxss> (accessed February 13, 2014).

<sup>282</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 6*, 32.



activities in public venues, and the participation of the BLIA at different level of the society nationally and internationally, all illustrated that the publicness of FGS does not only confine within the geographical boundary within Taiwan but transgresses such limitation onto the global stage in assuming a transnational public role. The spread of its religious discourses through its media outlets at these oversea societies, and their active provision of different social services and relief works worldwide, have only increased the credential of FGS as a transnational institution. This corresponds to Casanova' description about the transnational level of public religions in which the present global condition enables all world religions to be reconstituted as deterritorialized global imagined communities detached from the civilizational settings where they have been traditionally embedded.<sup>283</sup>

#### **4.4 The Institutional Establishment of Foguangshan**

The physical publicness of FGS we have mentioned above can also be witnessed by the various social services that they provide in different society across the world. These service provisions not only display the national and transnational dimension of FGS, but also demonstrate a penetration into the society at an institutional level contrary to the process of disestablishment of religious authority as predicted in normative understanding of social differentiation and secularization. The intention for FGS to engage in the society through these social services was a direct reflection of Hsingyun's Humanistic Buddhist ideal in bringing peace to the present world by a Buddhist intervention in the society. And FGS strives to actualize this ideal by identifying and targeting four major facets of focus, as enlisted in their four main objectives: through

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<sup>283</sup> Casanova, "Rethinking Public Religions," 33.

culture, education, charity, and cultivation.<sup>284</sup> The following will look into details of these different services that FGS have undertaken to engage with the people of the society, and provide a brief history and description of the growth of these service from Hsingyun's early days in the 1970s to the present twenty-first century, where the institutional establishment of FGS have already embedded in many sectors of the Taiwanese society. The beneficiaries of these services are mainly within Taiwan but the extend of their services are reached to people on an international level.

#### 4.4.1 Culture

##### Publishing

Hsingyun has been engaged in publishing since his very early days as a monk in China. He has been the editor for different Buddhist publication that were published in both Mainland China and Taiwan, including periodicals such as *Bodhedrum* 《菩提樹》, *Human Life Monthly Magazine* 《人生》, *Awaking the World Periodical* 《覺世旬刊》, among many others.<sup>285</sup> He has also written many articles since his early time in Yilan in 1954, especially in writing two books *National Master Yulin* 《玉琳國師》 and *The Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* 《釋迦牟尼佛傳》, both of them so popular and gained such positive reception that they were later adapted into stage performances, radio and television series, movies, with the latter adapted as a musical play shown in Malaysia, Singapore

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<sup>284</sup> The four main objectives of FGS are: 1) to propagate Buddhist teachings through cultural activities; 2) to nature talents through education; 3) to benefit societies through charitable programs; and 4) to purify human hearts and minds through Buddhist practice. Online at the official website of Fo Guang Shan Monastery

<https://www.fgs.org.tw/en/Organizations/Objectives/> (accessed January 29, 2014).

<sup>285</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 4, Art and Culture* 佛光山開山四十週年紀念特刊—文化藝術 (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Educations, 2007), 12-14.

and other cities overseas.<sup>286</sup>

On other publication works, Hsingyun became the issuing person of the periodical *Awaking the World* 《覺世》 in 1962.<sup>287</sup> In 1977 a monthly magazine version, the *Awakening the World Monthly Periodical*, was published in parallel with the newspaper. Two years later the monthly periodical was renamed as the *Universal Gate Magazine* 《普門雜誌》 as the first Buddhist comprehensive publication, while the *Awaking the World Periodical* returned into a monthly periodical in 1995. The emergence of the daily newspaper the *Merit Times* in 1995 had a significant effect on the direction of both the *Awaking the World Periodical* and *Universal Gate Magazine*, with the former being merged as a supplement section of the newspaper, and the latter turning into a academic journal the *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* 《普門學報》.

In 1959 FGS founded its first publication house the Buddhist Cultural Service Center in Sanchung, Taipei, publishing many Hsingyun's written works as well as other Buddhist publications, canons and products. The Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise existing today was a restructuring of the former Fo Guang Publishing House, now publishing thousands of books and series with many receiving awards and recommendation from secular organizations.<sup>288</sup> Overseas the Buddha's Light Publishing (U.S.A) was founded in 2001 publishing hundreds of Buddhist publications and translations of Hsingyun's work in English, many of which could be brought in online stores such as amazon and borders; while in Malaysia the publication house Fo Guang Publication was founded in 1999

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 25.

responsible for translating and publishing the simplified-Chinese version of the publication for the Malay/Singapore audience, as well as the publication of oversea merchandizes and holding overseas cultural events.<sup>289</sup>

FGS has many exposure and outlets for its multiple publication industry. It has its own bookstore the Waterdrop Teahouse Bookstore (滴水書坊) opened all across Taiwan, it has its online bookstore where you can purchase and read many of its publications online, and FGS participates in all kinds of publication events and book exhibitions worldwide to display their publications and merchandizes. Hsingyun and his monks are also not shy in using different public events to showcase their publications, using them as exchanging gifts to different guests in public events, with the master handling a full set of Fo Guang Buddhist Canons to the Head of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Kuo Weifan, in a public event in 1995 being one of many examples.<sup>290</sup>

### The Media

Hsingyun has demonstrated his great vision and innovation since his early days by recognizing the importance of the advancing technology of media in spreading his word of Buddhism. As early as 1957 he has worked with Taipei Mingpen Radio in producing the first Buddhist radio show “The Voice of Buddhism” 《佛教之聲》. In 1961 the Yilan Station of the Broadcasting Corporation of China invited Hsingyun to start a new radio program, making his voice heard in both private and public broadcasting radios. Since then he has hosted made multiple radio programs for other radio broadcasters, including “The

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 46-48.

Gage of Faith” 《信心門》, The “Usefulness of Chan” 《禪的妙用》, “Wisdom in Life” 《生活的智慧》, etc.<sup>291</sup> In 1979 Hsingyun stepped into television broadcast in the first Buddhist television program in Taiwan, “Amrita” 《甘露》, on the Chinese Television System (中華電視公司), with programs such as “Talks on Buddhism” 《佛學講座》, “Chan of Hsingyun” 《星雲禪話》, and “Lotus Heart” 《蓮心》 among others to follow in different television broadcasters. In 1997 FGS opened its own private television channel (佛光衛生電視台), the first comprehensive religious and lifestyle channel in Taiwan with 24 hours of television broadcast without any interruption of commercial advertisements. In 2002 the channel was renamed as Beautiful Life Television (人間衛視), providing a host of religious, education, news, lifestyle and entertainment programs not only within the island, but also to international audiences that reaches to North America and Australia free of charge.<sup>292</sup> In line with the Beautiful Life Television, FGS established its own television program production house the FGS Television Center in 1999, producing different Buddhist programs, documentaries, and even a series of Buddhist education courses hosted by some of its most revered monks including the monastery abbots and Hsingyun himself.

FGS’s daily newspaper the *Merit Times* (人間福報) was first issued in April 2000. The newspaper can be found and purchased in many outlets across Taiwan, including convenient stores such as 7-11 and Welcome Superstore; it has different overseas edition that could be found across FGS’s branches worldwide. An online website of the *Merit Times* was also opened recently to cope with the emerging trend of online readers. It has a free digital version of the newspaper

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 64-68.

that could be read online and also contains other online articles and instant news updates on current and international affairs. In expanding its news network and coverage to an international scale, the Life News Agency(人間通訊社) was established in 2003, becoming one of the first comprehensive transnational news agencies in consolidating all kinds of news and information related to Buddhism worldwide.<sup>293</sup>

### Music

Music was another medium that Hsingyun has creatively incorporated into the cultural industry of FGS. Upon his arrival in Yilan in 1953, which was a conservative little county with little enthusiasm in Buddhism, the master decided to form a youth choir and use music to attract the younger members of the county.<sup>294</sup> Hsingyun's approach in promoting his music was to blend the tradition and the modern, the East and the West, with traditional Buddhist lyrics and eastern melodies mixing with modern arrangements and western musical instruments. As a result his Buddhist music was not as old-fashioned and boring as conventionally perceived towards religious music, but was seen as trendy and exciting. This was further assisted by the adaption of modern technologies in producing different on-stage effects during live performances that brought awe to audiences who never would have imagined that Buddhist performances could appear in such way.

Hsingyun's music and his youth choir gained many success and popularity. He also incorporated different dances, orchestras and stage productions into his

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 130.

music in producing different Buddhist operas, musicals and large symphony performances. Within a very short period of time Hsingyun's musical groups have found themselves from performing in front of villagers and in small community halls, to touring across Taiwan performing in renown concert halls, being broadcasted in national radios, and recording audio tapes and records to be sold nationwide. In 2006, under the support of the Foguangshan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education, the first Buddhist music orchestra, the Sounds of the Human World Buddhist Choir and Orchestra (人間音緣梵樂團), was formed with renowned professional musicians being recruited as musical directors, concertmaster, and other members of the orchestra.<sup>295</sup>

FGS has its own recording studio and production house to deal with its expanding music industry, with the Voice of the Ganges Company Limited (如是我聞文化股份有限公司) that records, produces, issue, packages, and sells its music in one single production line. The establishment of the recording house can be traced back to 1957 when Hsingyun was recording the first Buddhist music record with his young choir in Yilan, which was a set of six ten-inches record containing twenty Buddhist songs.<sup>296</sup> In 1978 a set of cassette tapes the "Complete Buddhist Hymns" was recorded aiming to facilitate the Buddhist followers in their daily chanting.<sup>297</sup> Owing to the success of these audio records and Hsingyun's dedication in Buddhist music, householder Mr. Jian Zhizhong (簡志忠) sponsored to formed the Voice of the Ganges in collaboration with the master in 1997; it has since then became FGS's own recording house in recording and issuing Buddhist music. The innovativeness and vision of Hsingyun is once

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 81-83.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 81-83, 130.

again proven by his adaption of music as a mean in promulgating its Humanistic Buddhism, with its Buddhist music records and different musical performing groups being a successful mean in attracting people worldwide towards Buddhism and Chinese culture.

### Arts

Hsingyun's interest in arts stems from his time as a nineteen-years-old student at Jiangsu Jiaoshan Buddhist Seminary (焦山佛學院).<sup>298</sup> The success of the exhibition inspired Hsingyun in realizing the effectiveness of using arts as a medium to spread the words of the Buddha. Since his arrival in Taiwan in 1949, Hsingyun had been searching and collecting different Buddhist antiques during his tour across the island, which showed his awareness and emphasis in arts in his early careers. After setting up a simple exhibition area inside FGS's Tsung Lin University in his early years in Foguangshan, he has founded different galleries including the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Museum (佛光山寶藏館), Fo Guang Shan Cultural Exhibition Hall (佛光山文物展覽館), the Hsi Lai Arts Gallery in the USA in 1988, and the Nian Tien Arts Gallery in Australia in 1998.<sup>299</sup> In 2002 FGS established the Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery Headquarter (佛光緣美術館總部) to oversee and manage the galleries that are now spread across Taiwan and abroad.<sup>300</sup> Apart from hundreds of Buddhist antiques and artworks own by FGS that are being exhibited, these galleries also collaborates with different artists and organizations to hold exhibitions of various contents, such as an exhibition of the world heritage Dunhuang Cave Arts at the FGS Cultural Exhibition Hall in 1991,

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 175, 182, 192-194.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 172, 192.



where even the President of Taiwan Mr. Lee Teng-hui came to pay a visit.<sup>301</sup>

	2003	2004	2005	2006
FGS Buddhist Museum	151158	156033	112819	132658
FGY Art Gallery Headquarter	234132	555460	221465	243515
Taipei Branch	266608	302810	253412	328210
Pingtung Branch	12948	15770	17283	20195
Yilan Branch	13791	13635	8005	9526
Hsi Lai Art Gallery USA	31158	29631	17604	15237
Nan Tien Art Gallery Australia	18000	48500	50000	62500
FGY Melbourne	10000	22000	32000	34000
Dong Zen Art Gallery Malaysia	121050	286217	1317537	766434
Total	858845	1430056	2030125	1612275

Table 1: Annual visitors to the Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries from 2003-2006. (No figure for the Changhua branch which was opened in 2001; new branches will also be opened in Taichung, Tainan, and New Zealand).<sup>302</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Education

Apart from managing the galleries the FGY Art Gallery Headquarter is also responsible in promoting art education. There are children art rooms in different galleries providing spaces to hold workshops and activities to promote arts to children. Different workshops and training courses are also provided for adult art lovers to enhance their interest and knowledge about arts. The operation of this

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 174, 199.

FGY Art Gallery Headquarter is a good demonstration on how FGS provides a holistic service to the society between culture, education and charity, in which many different foundations were being set up to raise money for the operation of many of the cultural and education industries. One of these foundations is the FGS Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education (佛光山文教基金會), which was founded in 1988 in celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FGS.<sup>303</sup> The foundation was founded under the permission from the Ministry of Education of Taiwan, and aims to promote various kind of cultural and education projects. It raises funding to sponsor many of FGS's music and art industries, including the publication of audio records and video types, organizing local and international chanting concerts, holding different art exhibitions, among many others. The foundation also focuses on education, playing a main role in raising fund for the founding of the Nanhua University and Fo Guang University, and other secondary school, primary schools and kindergartens across Taiwan.<sup>304</sup> It also funds many academic projects, such as organizing different domestic and international Buddhist academic conferences and workshops, sponsoring international exchange opportunities for local and oversea scholars and students, and the publication of academic papers for scholars and postgraduate students.

In the last two decade FGS has been putting increasing efforts in establishing its higher education establishment in Taiwan and worldwide. The Nanhua University in Chiayi was the first of their four higher education institution. Located in Dalin Township of the Chiayi County, it is the first private higher education institution established by FGS. After being approved by the Ministry of

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 110-115.

Education, it was founded in 1996 as the Nanhua College of Management consisting a Research Center of Philosophy, the Department of Information Management and the Department of Communication Management.<sup>305</sup> It was inaugurated as the Nanhua University by the Ministry of Education in 1999 and continued to expand with the establishment of the College of Arts, College of Management among other institutions. Up until today it consists of twenty-one academic departments and twenty-four graduate institutes.<sup>306</sup>

Fo Guang University is the other higher education institution founded by FGS in Taiwan. It is located in Jiaoxi Township of the County of Yilan and was opened in September 2000 after granting the approval from the Ministry of Education earlier that year.<sup>307</sup> The Schools of Humanities and Sociology were the first to be established during the initial stage of the institution and have now expanded into fifteen departments under the College of Humanities, College of Social Sciences and Management, College of Creative and Technology, College of LOHAS, and College of Buddhist Studies. The latter was the first college of Buddhist studies recognized by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, which was also the first religious college within a university in Taiwan that offers a formal degree of religious studies to its graduate students.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 3, Sangha and Lay Education* 佛光山開山四十週年紀念特刊－僧信教育 (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Educations, 2007), 98.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

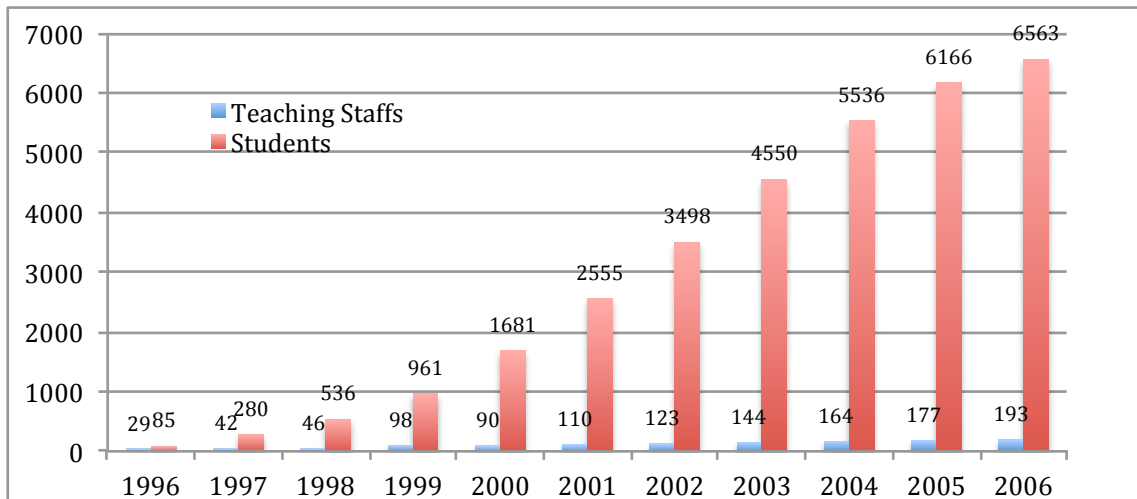


Figure 1: Number of teaching staffs and students in Nanhua University 1996-2006

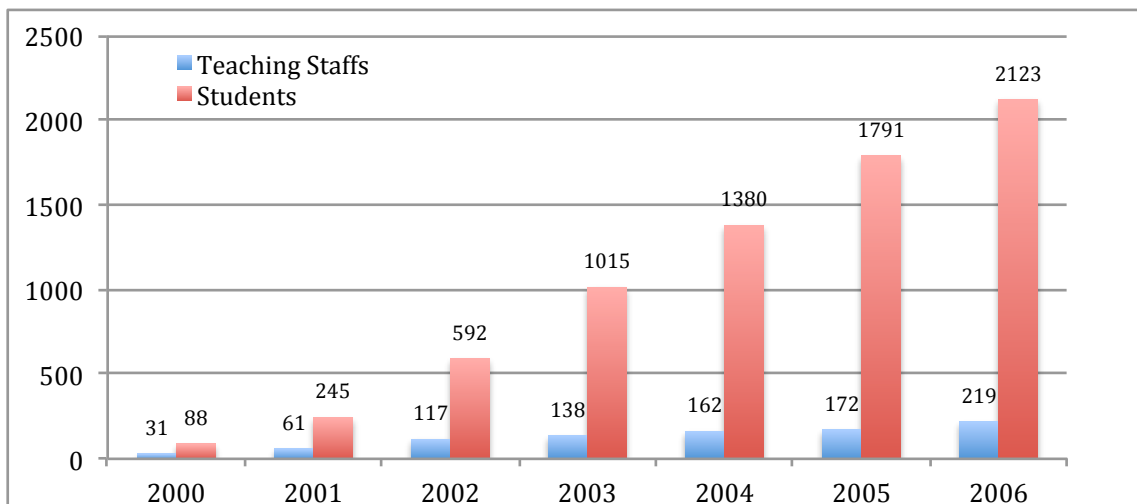


Figure 2: Number of teaching staffs and students in Foguang University 2000-2006.

Although with such a globalized network of higher education provision we should not overestimate their general influence to the education section of the Taiwanese society. All of them are non-mainstream private institutions, in particular the two overseas institutions, the University of the West in California, United States and Nan Tien Institution in Australia, both having only a few

hundred students. Nanhua University and Fo Guang University are two among the hundreds of private schools in Taiwan who could only attract the lower echelons of the high school graduates. Both campus are small and without much facilities and teaching equipment due to the lack of incoming funds; the biggest, and very likely the only, source of funds come from FGS, and it has stopped funding Nanhua after it was able to self-sustain in the past few years. Without the injection of additional funding it seems that Nanhua's growth has stagnant. Currently Nanhua has only around five thousand students while Fo Guang University has around two thousand, which is significantly fewer comparing to the public universities such as National Chung Cheng University which sits just next to Nanhua with around ten thousand students; the renowned private university Fu Jen Catholic University has well over twenty-five thousand students.

FGS also provides other secular education throughout Taiwan. Pu Men Senior High School (普門中學) was established in 1977 located in the same Dashu District of Kaohsiung City. It was originally founded in 1963 in the Gangshan Township as the Kaohsiung County Private Jeng-Chih Senior High School and later relocated to its current campus after the approval from the previous body of the current K-12 Education Administration of the Ministry of Education.<sup>309</sup> They currently have around 1,200 students studying in its senior high school, junior high school, and the vocational training department, with approximately 90 percent of its students living in the school hostel inside the school campus.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

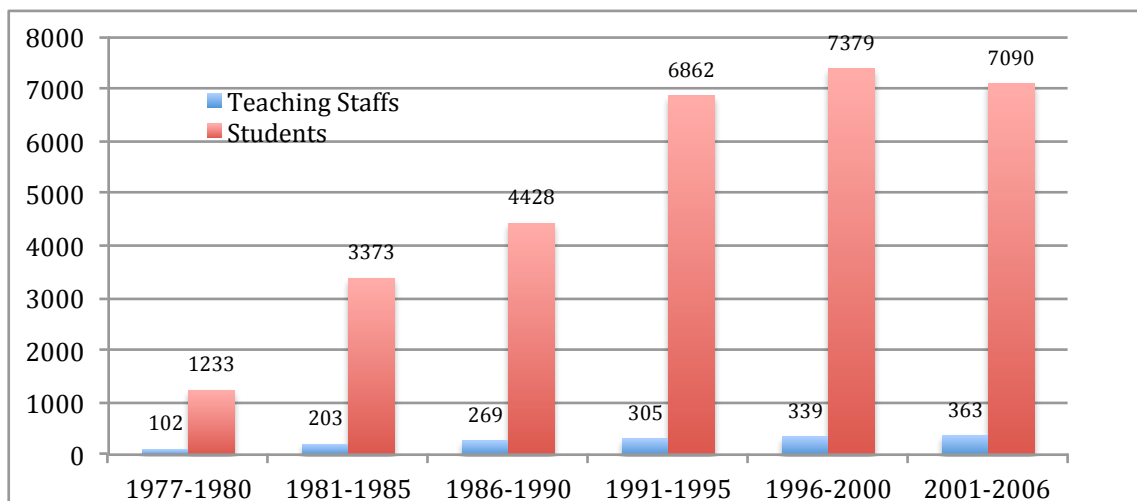


Figure 3: Number of teaching staffs and students in Pu-Men Senior High School 1977-2006

Apart from Pu-Men Senior High School, FGS is also an amble provider at the elementary education level. In 2002 the Yilan County Government entrusted the FGS Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Education to manage The Ren Wen Elementary School (人文國民小學), a first step of FGS into elementary education provision.<sup>311</sup> In 2004 the Jiun Tou Elementary and Junior High School at Nantou County (均頭國民中小學) was established as the first joint elementary and junior high school founded and funded by FGS, with the Junyi School for Innovative Learning (均一國民中小學) at Taitung city joining as the second in 2009.<sup>312</sup> Regarding education for younger children, Hsingyun has founded the Ci Ai Kindergarten (慈愛幼稚園) as early as 1956 in providing early childhood education for the children of Tochen, Yilan, which was a breakthrough move for the traditional county where education was not common among the population.<sup>313</sup>

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 122-125.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 127.

Three more kindergarten followed with the Ci Hang Kindergarten (慈航幼稚園), the Hui Chi Kindergarten (慧慈幼稚園) and the Little Star Kindergarten (小天星幼稚園) subsequently founded in the following decades.<sup>314</sup> With these Universities, elementary and high schools, kindergarten, together with the other community colleges and Buddhist seminaries established within FGS's branches across Taiwan, FGS has covered almost every level of educational services in providing educational services to both secular and lay members of the society.

#### 4.4.3 Charity

##### Children Services

As early as 1964, Hsingyun established a House of Charity (慈善堂) for charity services after founding the Shou Shan Temple (壽山寺), and later restructured it into the Charity Executive Office(慈善監院室) and relocated it to Foguangshan in 1993 to cope with the expansion of its charity services. The office finally became the Charity Office (慈善院) in 1997 that oversees the various social and charity services provided by the monastery worldwide.<sup>315</sup> To enhance the efficiency of its charity services provision FGS was granted the official approval from the Provincial Government of Kaohsiung to establish the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation (佛光山慈悲社會福利基金會) in 1989. Currently located in Shao Shan Temple it has grown into a national institution and has been subordinated under the Ministry of Interior since 2003.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 130-134.

<sup>315</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 5, Charity and Dharma Propagation* 佛光山開山四十週年紀念特刊-文化藝術—慈善弘法 (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Educations, 2007), 15.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 15.

FGS provides various kinds of social and charity services in different places nationwide and worldwide. One of the earliest services provided by the monastery was early-childhood service. In 1970 Hsingyun collaborated with Mr. Xu Huaisheng (徐槐生), an ex-manager of the Bank of Communication, in establishing the Ta Tzu Children's Home (or Da Chi Children's Home 大慈育幼院).<sup>317</sup> In the early period the Home was temporarily located at the site of the Eastern Buddhist College, and after the endeavors of Mr. Hsu and others in fundraising for the Home, it moved into a refurnished six-story building in 1991, with over 7000 square foot indoor and 3000 square-foot of outdoor areas for classrooms, offices, conference room, hostel, playgrounds, counseling rooms, etc.<sup>318</sup> The Home took in homeless children between the age of three to twelfth years old from local and overseas, mostly by referrals from individual cases and from government case files. In recent years the Home has been holding exchanging programs in giving opportunities for oversea children from other institutions to come to Taiwan to learn about Chinese culture and for international exposure.

Within its thirty years of operation, Ta Tzu Children's Home had taken over seven hundred homeless children of different ethnicities, many of whom have now grown up and become a member of the society.<sup>319</sup> In 2001 the Home expanded its services by founding the Ta Tzu Learning Centre in providing services to low-income and poverty families within the vicinity of Kaohsiung city. The objective of the center is to assistant junior high schools in conducting outdoor spiritual learning programs for their students, as well as providing

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.



training and courses for the teachers and parents. Some of the major forms of programs provided to the target children include cultural fieldtrips, different kind of art and skill courses and workshops, training camps, and volunteer works.<sup>320</sup> Many of these programs are designed according to FGS's focus on religious art and culture, combined with contents related to life education.

### Elderly Services

Elderly service is another area where FGS has been focusing on since their early years. In 1967 Hsingyun accepted the offer from the county governor of Kaohsiung to help takeover the Ren Ai Relief Center (仁愛救濟院), which the master later reassemble and registered as the Lanyang Foundation of Senior Citizen's Come I-Lan R.O.C.<sup>321</sup> In 1971 Hsingyun commissioned two graduates of the Eastern Buddhist College, Venerable Yi Rung (依融) and Shao Chueh (紹學), to volunteer and serve at the Center, which was later renamed as the Lanyang Ren Ai Senior Citizens Home (蘭陽仁愛之家).<sup>322</sup> Over forty years of hard work the center was reconstructed from a relief center into a comprehensive elderly home and care center with the additional construction of hostels and facilities. The senior home's main service in the early stage was to provide hostel and care services to homeless elderlies. In responding to the need of the community it later set up Taiwan's first elderly day care center the Longevity School (福壽學院), providing day care services and various kind of activities and workshops to any seniors members over the age of sixty-five.<sup>323</sup> In the past decade Venerable

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 32-36; more information can be found online at <http://tatzu.compassion.org.tw> (accessed February 15, 2014).

<sup>321</sup> Online at [http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/fgsastw8y/02/02\\_01.htm](http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/fgsastw8y/02/02_01.htm) (accessed February 15, 2014).

<sup>322</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 5*, 39.

<sup>323</sup> Online at <http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/fgsastw8y/01/> (accessed February 15, 2014).

Yongsheng (永勝) and Chuefang (覺方) have been helping to expand the elderly service to elderlies outside the hostel, establishing the “Community Care Bases” (社區關懷據點) in providing community services mainly to the elderlies at the Longtan community in Taoyuan, including service such as single elderly outreach, phone caring services, meal provision services, and holding different health and recreation activities.<sup>324</sup> In addition the Home is also being commissioned by both the county government and the Ministry of Education to provide two projects, the “Provincial Tour of Recreational and Leisure Activities” (全縣文康休閒巡迴活動) and “Jiaoxi Learning Center for Elderly” (礁溪鄉樂齡學習中心), that aims to organize an agreed amount of recreational activities and training workshops to elderlies within the selected districts.<sup>325</sup>

Apart from the Lanyang Ren Ai Senior Home, FGS has another elderly home the Fo Guang Senior Citizens Home (佛光精舍) located in Foguangshan, Kaohsiung. Opened in 1976 it was catered for those elderlies who opted to spend their late years living in a specialized and secluded environment for their Buddhist cultivation and training. The home currently host around eighty lay Buddhist seniors and a few elder monks and nuns.<sup>326</sup> They live a secluded lifestyle within the home spending the days reciting scriptures, meditate, and studying different canons. The home also holds different recreation activities for the elderly as well as providing medical and other care services by professional personnel.

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<sup>324</sup> Online article from the *Merit Times* dated 20/2/2011; <http://www.merit-times.com.tw/NewsPage.aspx?unid=218211> (accessed February 15, 2014).

<sup>325</sup> Online at [http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/fgsastw8y/02/02\\_01.htm](http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/fgsastw8y/02/02_01.htm) (accessed February 15, 2014)

<sup>326</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, Vol. 5, 45.

The Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation was also commissioned by the Kaohsiung county government to manage the Longevity Senior Citizen Home (or Evergreen Senior Citizens Home 高雄老人公寓崧鶴樓), which was owned by the Kaohsiung county government and funded by the Minister of Interior.<sup>327</sup> Being the first elderly citizen elderly apartment in Taiwan, it consists of 150 single and double rooms that can accommodate up to 180 elderlies, with social workers, nurses and other service staffs stationed in different floors of the citizen home. Similar to other elderly services of FGS, Longevity Home extended their services to the elderlies in nearby community, and in 2008 started a day care and care relief services to meet the needs of the aging population.<sup>328</sup>

#### Disaster Relief Services

Similar to other contemporary Buddhist communities in Taiwan, FGS has put many efforts in offering disaster relief services to victims within Taiwan and worldwide. The Emergence Relief Team (急難救助會) was established in 1976 to provide emergency services to the victims of sudden events.<sup>329</sup> Under the Society different relief service teams were formed to provide relief services to those in need. A Winter Relief Team (冬令救濟會) was formed in 1981, launching different winter relief programs every winter in aiding the low-income and weak members of the community to face the cold winter by offering financial and material support.<sup>330</sup> This winter program was extended to different FGS branches across Taiwan since 1984 and is now providing the same relief services in oversea branches. In terms of providing relief services to individual of specific

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>328</sup> Online from the website of the Longevity Senior Citizen Home; <http://www.sh.org.tw/> (accessed February 15, 2014).

<sup>329</sup> Fo Guang Shan Religious Affair Board, *Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Vol. 5*, 72.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 106.

cases, every FGS branch has a Community Service Team (友愛服務隊) that provides different care to those within their territory, with serviced clients including the elderly, the homeless, disabled, and hospitalized patients, etc.<sup>331</sup>

On an international level the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation has been collaborating with the BLIA in expanding the emergency relief services to the victims of major disaster events overseas. Its charity and relief services stretches over to almost every continent of the globe. Since the early 1990s FGS has been active in raising donations, materials, and giving financial aids to the victims of different natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, and helped provide relief services in founding schools, providing supplies and scholarships, and founding clinics and elderly homes for the victims.<sup>332</sup> FGS charity services and relief works also extends to nearby countries such as Mainland China, Thailand, the Philippines, USA, and Japan. Through such service it hope to bring peace and spread the dharma and compassion of their Humanistic Buddhism to those in need worldwide.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 76-105.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 130-202.

Country	Incidents involved
Mainland China	Great floods in South China and East China in 1991, 1992, 2005
Japan	The Great Hanshin Earthquake 1995 The Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami 2011
Thailand	Great flood in Northeast Thailand 2002
India	Gujarat Earthquake 2001 Kashmir Earthquake 2005
USA	The 911 Attack 2001; Hurricane Katrina 2005
Hondurus, Nicaragua, etc	Hurricane Mitch 1998

Table 2: A selection of major emergency relief works by FGS worldwide.<sup>334</sup>

### *Other Services*

FGS is also renowned for its medical services to the people of Taiwan at the grassroots level. During the time at Shao Shan Temple Hsingyun has already formed a volunteer medical team to provide medical care to the weak and poor within the vicinity. Identifying that the operating Fo Guang Clinic (佛光診所) was only able to provide medical services to those within a limited boundary, in 1983 Hsingyun formed an outreaching volunteer medical team that tours around to the villages outside of the Da Shu County by borrowing the school bus from the Pu-men Kindergarten.<sup>335</sup> In 1987 the master officially formed the Cloud & Water Medical Team (雲水醫院義診), expanding the medical team in both volunteer numbers and servicing areas.<sup>336</sup> The team currently has a team of medical vehicles touring in various locations of Taiwan. While it mainly serves the

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 206-207.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 52.

communities of its medical teams stationed in FGS branches across cities in Taiwan such as Taipei, Taichung, Chiayi, Tainan, Yilan, the team also tours frequently to remote towns and villages around the county of Kaohsiung, Pidong and Taidong. It also pays occasional visits to places as far as to the islands of Orchid Island (Lanyu), Green Island (Ludao), Matsu Island (Mazu) and Kinmen.<sup>337</sup> Also, the Yun-Shui Volunteer Medical Team often teams up with different disaster relief campaigns initiated by FGS in providing emergency medical services to the victims of these unfortunate events, such as during the 1999 921 earthquakes and the 8.8 Flood in 2009.<sup>338</sup>

Hsingyun has initiated services to the prisoners as early as 1956, and has continued to provide counseling, recreational and cultural services, and performs Buddhist ceremony to inmates across Taiwan.<sup>339</sup> In 1994 Ma Yingjiu, at the time the head of the Ministry of Justice, invited FGS to help and assist in providing services to drug addicts on the island, with Hsingyun instantly agreeing to provide different counseling and preventive services in rehabilitation centers and at the community.<sup>340</sup> On the other hand Hsingyun is also an active advocate of environmental protection and encourages the members of FGS to adopt an environmental friendly lifestyle. The BLIA frequently holds various environmentalist activities with its members, conducting recycling projects, tree-plantings, beach cleanup activities and other activities to practically carry out the environmentalist ideal as promoted by its leader.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 120.

## 4.5 Chapter Summaries and Discussion

The above has illustrated the social services that FGS had provided on both a local and international level. With an objective to advance the wellbeing of the people through cultural, education and charity provision, FGS's function as an institution of social service provision can be readily recognizable with its extensive network of services found in different domain of the society. This role as a social institution of social service provision, coupled with the physical publicness of its myriad of infrastructures through Taiwan and worldwide, demonstrates the increasing significance FGS is performing in the Taiwanese society, assuming different roles across the public domain.

Resonating to the beginning of this chapter with the theoretical examination of FGS in Casanova's model of public religions, we have found out that the case of FGS and Taiwan showed similar outcomes with the case studies conducted in his *Public Religion*, albeit along different paths and logic. For Casanova modern religions would not be able to assume public role at a state or a political level in contemporary liberal societies, as such form of public religion is incompatible with various modern principles and the differentiated structure of the society; only at the civil level can modern religions assume a public role without violating these modern principles.<sup>342</sup> Apart from being located at a democratized society of contemporary Taiwan, FGS maintains to be a public religion at the civil level for reasons that are due to many historical, political, and religious circumstances.

With a historical state/religion relationship where the state had always been superior and dominating over religious affairs, and the lack of any well

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<sup>342</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 219.

established religious institution to challenge such condition, no religious organization has ever been able to extend its influence anywhere near the state level throughout the history of China.

Doctrinally and philosophically, the religious focus on personal cultivation, renunciation, and indifference to worldly matters prevalent among the Chinese Buddhist communities during the pre-modern era had also resulted in a religiosity that do not encourage involvement in political matters, thus not a priority of interest for the Buddhist institutions to assume any role at a political level. Even after the emergence of a more worldly oriented philosophy initiated by Taixu and adapted by his followers, and with Hsingyun time and again acknowledging political participations as acceptable and compatible with traditional Buddhist philosophy as a mean to bring goodness to the people, the reservation towards politics is still latent among both the members of the contemporary Buddhist communities and in the eyes of the public. FGS as an organization has never been involved in politics institutionally as a party nor has any of its *fashi* or lay members attempted to become a politician or governmental office. And when there were incidences where FGS played a great role within political affairs, such as Hsingyun's public support for Chen Luan in the 1998 presidential election, such reservation towards political involvement resurfaced with critiques arriving from all different directions, even among his own followers.<sup>343</sup> Hence apart from the possible structural confinement for FGS not to assume a public role at the political level, it is also of the idea of appropriateness and the proper image of Buddhists that restricts FGS as an institution to engage directly in the political realm.

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<sup>343</sup> Laliberte, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations*, 72-76.



In occasions where FGS attempts to pursue their interests on matters related to politics, such as issues regarding religious freedom or policies related to religious affairs, they do so mostly through discursive means at the civil level. The opening of the public sphere after the democratization of Taiwan and the advancement of modern communication technology and media has enabled a free and assessable platform for FGS to disseminate their religious contents and interest. The fact that Hsingyun was able to take advantage of this social progress and build its extensive media and publication industry had made this discursive mean as one of the most effective way for FGS to gain publicity and penetrate into the society.

The establishment of this extensive media industry, and other institutional forms of social engagement such as the founding of different educational institutions and cultural centers, have enabled FGS to penetration and disseminate its values and discourses into the public society from different channels. This institutional deprivatization of FGS in the society and its increasing functionality within the Taiwanese society, however, does not necessarily contradicts the modern process of differentiation or suggest a form of de-differentiation process. As discussed in the previous chapter, the contemporary society of Taiwan is becoming a more differentiated society comparing to the period before the democratization where the society was mostly dominated by the state or the ruling authority. Despite the increasing penetration of FGS into different dominate of the society, such as the differentiated domain of the education and charity sector, we cannot see FGS influencing the autonomy of these social domains or causing any impact to the values, norms and operation of these specific secular spheres in a significant way. There might be an increasing

presence of religious discourse or values within these secular spheres as FGS participates more and more into these systems, they only participates as one among many other players within the system with very limited impact to the specific social sector, as shown with the peripheral role it plays on the secular educational sector. It would be difficult to see its impact to reach to the state level that could assume a dominating role over any other secular sphere and challenge their autonomy, but might in contrast sees the norm and rationality of these secular sphere affecting its operation as it engaged into these secular spheres. Therefore one should be aware not to arbitrarily connects a seemingly deprivatization process with any premature connection to religious resurgence or a de-secularization process, as the relationship between religion and society is far more complex and intricate, a subject that will further unfold in subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 5: The Religious Discourse of Foguangshan in the Public Domain

### 5.1 Privatization of Religion and Secularism

Casanova's analysis in *Public Religion* was a reexamination of the privatization thesis of secularization. As discussed in chapter two the privatization of religion was driven externally by the structural trends of differentiation, and internally by a secular consciousness described as the Enlightenment Critique of Religion (ECR) by Casanova.<sup>344</sup> The ECR the direct objective of the Enlightenment project, but a result from the historical transition of the period that produced different conditions that had directly and indirectly confronted and challenged the very idea of religion.

Many prominent thinkers of our modern times, political philosophers in particular, have also adapted a similar secularist stance towards the role of religion in the society. Liberal secularists believed that the ideal of a modern civil society should be a public space of neutrality where public participation should be based on rational reasoning and objectivity. Religious truth claims are tied to particular perspective of an individual or collective and therefore, should be separated to avoid interference with the rational debates in the public sphere.<sup>345</sup> Upon such principle of rationality and objectivity, although citizens have a right to rely on their religious views in advocating or supporting coercive laws and policies, they are also called upon by the moral obligations and excellences of citizenship to give priority to non-partial rational reasoning in discussing public

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<sup>344</sup> Casanova, *Public Religions*, 30.

<sup>345</sup> Maeve Cooke, "Salvaging and Secularizing the Semantic Contents of Religion: the Limitations of Habermas's Postmetaphysical Proposal." *International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion* 60 (2006), 191.

affairs. John Rawls believed that while various forms of ‘non-public’ religious reasoning and discourse could strengthen the ideal of public reason and for that cause should be encouraged, it should only be so in the condition that they are reasonable in accord to the rational reasoning of the public debates. Unless religious reasoning – so as other truth-claiming reasons – is willing to succumb to this principle, it should have no place in the public discussion within the civil society.

For Jurgen Habermas, the modern principle of the separation of the church and the state demands the state institution to operate with strict impartiality towards religious communities. It is as important to be precautionous of the boundary between governing authorities and religious communities as it is to uphold restrictive definition of the public use of reason within the civil domain from religious claims. The valid claims of the religious communities is held to be permissible only in the domains of the “weak publics” of civil society, which are demarcated from the formally organized public sphere of democratic legislation and decision making such as the bodies of the parliament and the judiciary.<sup>346</sup> Although Habermas presented a revised position in his later works that embraced a heightened appreciation of the semantic power of religious images, exemplary figures, and narratives, he still uphold the principle that public discussion of religious validity claims is deemed permissible only when meaning by truth is at issue; it may be possible to extract meanings from religious contributions that are meanings not just for individual citizens or groups of citizens but for all citizens, believers and non-believers.<sup>347</sup> From these liberalist points of view we can see

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 193; Jurgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no.1 (1996): 1-25.

<sup>347</sup> Cooke, “Salvaging and Secularizing,” 195-196.

strict restrictions, if not total banishment, of religious participation in their ideal of a modern public sphere. And from such a strict secularist consciousness towards public reasoning and discussion, religion is now preferably assigned to belong to the private sphere or pushed into the periphery of the public domain - the domain of the “weak publics”.

## **5.2 The Significance of Religious Discourses in the Public Society**

Despite the emergence of these different forms of secularism that “prefers” religions to retreat to the private sphere and a liberalist secularist ideal that deems religious languages to be inappropriate to occupy the space of the public sphere of reasons and neutrality, what is evidence in our daily life is that such secularist ideal were not accomplished in our modern civic society. The modern public religions illustrated in Casanova’s case studies and our study of FGS have demonstrated that religious institutions refused to be relegated into the marginal role as assigned by the liberalist ideology and manages to assume prominent public roles in various domains of the society.

One of the reasons for secularists to marginalize religion from the public domain is that they believed religion to be threatening to the consciousness and the differentiated structure of the modern societies. However, the current development of religion suggests that this is not necessarily the case. In contrary Casanova argued in *Public Religion* that: “there can be and there are public religions in the modern world which do not need to endanger either modern individual freedoms or modern differentiated structures.”<sup>348</sup> Precisely, many forms of public religion in our modern civil societies do not exists simply as

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<sup>348</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 215.

anti-modern religious critiques of modernity, but participates in forms that validates the fundamental values and principles of modernity of individual freedoms and differentiated structures; they are immanent critiques of particular forms of modernity from a modern religious point of view.”<sup>349</sup> Such form of modern public religion undermines the secularist’s presumption that the public involvement of religion threatens modern values and principles and demands for the marginalization of religion from the public domain.

Intriguingly what Casanova discovered in opposite to the liberalist ideology is that it is precisely at the civic level of the public sphere where modern religions are able to disseminate their religious discourses, and at this civic level where religion can become publicly involved in a way that is consistent with modern universalistic principles and modern differentiated structures.<sup>350</sup> The works from Richard Madsen and Robert Weller reviewed in the introduction have attested to this positive role of religion towards the promotion and maintenance of modern principles and values, as shown by the contemporary Taiwan Buddhist groups in fostering democratic consciousness and their communal function in upholding civil participation.<sup>351</sup> In recap from Casanova’s *Public Religion*, a public religion at the civil society level are religious groups that either agonically or discursively intervenes in the public sphere of civil society to take part in the ongoing process of contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of boundaries.<sup>352</sup> The later

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 221-222.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>351</sup> Please refer to section 1.2.2 in chapter one for details.

<sup>352</sup> Casanova, *Public Religion*, 65-66; this is Casanova’s adaptation of Seyla Benhabib’s interpretation of a Habermasian discursive view of the public sphere and the modern civil society, where boundaries between public and private, religious and secular, and all the functionally differentiated systemic spheres are “open for contestation, redefinition, renegotiation, and legitimation by means of discursive construction.”

part of this chapter will look into the different discourses of FGS that could be found within the Taiwanese public in relation to these processes.

Other scholars have followed Casanova's path in looking into the discursive aspect of religion in the public domain and offered other ways in which religious discourses could help understand the public role of religion in modern societies and against theories of secularization. David Herbert pointed out that the role of religious discourse is often neglected in the study of contemporary religion, where many contemporary understanding of religion, in particular the conventional secularization theory, have focused too much on the institutional and practical aspect of the public roles religion performs in the society, with the cultural aspect of religious influences on the contemporary society often being overlooked. He argued that religious discourses, meaning the way in which religious ways of thinking and representing, may nonetheless capture the public imagination and shape the way issues are discussed, and that many public debates of various societal issues are shaped by ranges of competing voices all speaking religious language.<sup>353</sup> Therefore the indication of the social influence of religion cannot be done by only measuring the structural aspects such as social differentiation or church attendance, but also culturally in ways religion influences the lives of the people. A good way to do so is to look into the texts and artifacts of popular culture and oral history and other forms of religious discourse in the public.<sup>354</sup> Again Herbert referred back to Casanova's case study on American Catholicism, where Casanova pointed out that the public impact of the Catholic bishops' statements in his pastoral letters was not to influence public

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

policy directly, nor that of political parties, but rather to bring the ethical resources of the Catholic tradition to bear on public debate in the level of civil society.<sup>355</sup> This example illustrates how religious discourses can be significant for modern societies without mobilizing for or against particular causes, but by improving public communication, by mobilizing non-partisan universalist discourses in the public sphere in support of marginalized groups, and at the same time strengthening its religious voices and presences in the public.<sup>356</sup> This also illustrates that religion is not against the modernization development of liberal democracy, but on the other hand can be constructive in enhancing public communication and civil participation.

The discursive aspect of religion in relationship to contemporary society can be further elaborated from what Callum Brown described as discursive Christianity. While Brown distinguished four roles of religion that have been envisaged by historical and sociological studies – the institutional, intellectual, functional and diffusive forms, he identifies a fifth form, the discursive, to be the more basic, higher-level form that religion takes in its operation within society.<sup>357</sup> This discursive religiosity is the prerequisite of all other roles of religion in society, as for any religion to have any social significance in a society, a ‘democratic’ society free from state regulation of religious habits, it must have a base of this discursivity.<sup>358</sup> The discursivity on the impact of religious development is examined in Brown’s study of the discourses and narratives among both the Christian communities and the public domain of the nineteenth

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 222-224.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 26-27, 222.

<sup>357</sup> Cullum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 12.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 13.



and early twentieth century Britain. From examining different media and symbols - novels, magazines, Christian tracts, and agencies - interviews with Christians, Brown found a general trend of Christian discourse, a discourse that related religious and piety with gender and identity formation, that was influential to the British public until the 1960s; it was the waning of Christian discursive power from this period onwards that secularization took place. The religious decline of contemporary Britain, therefore, is not an inevitable religious decline of the conventional secularization theory, but a “remarkably sudden and culturally violent event.”<sup>359</sup>

Brown then juxtaposed this British case with the American society to try to explain the diverging religious development in the opposite shore of the Atlantic, arguing that although the same discursive threat of the 1960s Britain is challenging the American religious community – secular discourses that is battling for legitimacy in the larger public, American religious communities, in particular American evangelicalism, are maintaining their position by pouring greater resources in sustaining the circulation of their religious discourses by means such as investing in private satellite and cable television networks.<sup>360</sup> Contrasting the discursive power of the religious communities of the British and American experience, Brown demonstrated that this discursive aspect can be one of the vital elements of the fate of religion in the contemporary society.

Congruent to the analysis of Herbert and Brown, as well as to Casanova’s acknowledgement of the discursive aspect of religion as a effective channel to

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 197.

engage and influence the society, FGS does promote a discourse that encourages public communication and mobilizes non-partisan universalist discourses in the public sphere in support of marginalized groups. FGS also recognizes the potency of modern media in disseminating their religious discourses, pouring great resources in establishing its media industry since Hsingyun's early days as a monk in Taiwan (as illustrated in the previous chapters). This chapter would follow the logic of Casanova and other scholars above who recognizes both the discursive aspect of religion as a common and effective channel for modern religion to assume public roles in the society, and the viability of studying these religious discourses as a way to make sense of the deprivatization process of modern religions and its relation to modern society.

The following section examines the religious discourses of FGS from a qualitative, thematic analysis of texts. The study will focus on two specific sources: the *Buddhist in Every Step* published by FGS and news clippings from secular Taiwanese newspapers. The *Buddhist in Every Step* (人間佛教小叢書 – hereafter “mini-booklet series”) is a series of little booklets containing essays on specific topics addressed by Hsingyun in various occasions. The early issues of the series could be traced to the 1990s, printed as individual booklets and placed in different FGS outlets – its temples, branches, schools, etc. – free of charge for everyone as a way of *jieyuen* (to form a connection between the common people with Buddhism 結緣). It was printed in a size small enough to put into ones pocket and ranges from around twenty pages up to seventy depending on the topic. FGS later became more organized with managing the publication of the booklet, compiling and editing them into a series. It was republished in the early 2000s with a new issue publishing every month onwards, which FGS was

generally able to maintain apart from a few missed issues in between.<sup>361</sup>

The series covers all kinds of contents concerning Humanistic Buddhism, including basic Buddhist philosophies, history, training, selected essays of Hsingyun, spirituality, and others. Most of the volumes cover topics that concern modern life and different issues and questions that one will encounter in their everyday life. This includes everyday topics such as disease and sickness (vol. 6), family issues (vol. 30), life and death (vol. 41), wealth (vol. 55), love (vol. 56), morality (vol. 97), and many more. The fact that the booklets could be obtained free of charge or in a very low price from different FGS temples and branches made it one of the most accessible outlet of FGS religious contents to the public besides its sold newspaper and magazines, which are mostly ordered by its own members. The contents in these booklets were also published as individual chapters within other FGS publications, including the two-volume *Collection of Essays on Humanistic Buddhism* 《人間佛教論文集—上下冊》 and the three-volume *Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism and Contemporary Issues* 《人間佛教當代問題座談會—上中下冊》.<sup>362</sup> Therefore with such repeating circulation these contents from the booklet is one of the highest circulating discourses of FGS among the public. With its high circulation, accessibility, and availability to both FGS's members and the general public, its diverse and comprehensive contents, and well structured and edited format, this series is a suitable publication series to examine the religious discourses that FGS is trying to disseminate to the general public. For the purpose of this current research the

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<sup>361</sup> The series had just reached its 118th issue in March 2014.

<sup>362</sup> Hsingyun, *Ren jian fo jiao lun wen ji* 人間佛教論文集 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2008); Hsingyun, *Ren jian fo jiao dang dai wen ti zuo tan hui* 人間佛教當代問題座談會 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2008).

booklets selected for this study are those that address topics related to the everyday life problems and concerns of the modern people regardless of their religious beliefs and background, and not those booklets purely Buddhist in nature.

The selected volumes include:

Vol. 7, Buddhism on the True Meaning of Democracy, Freedom and Equality 論

佛教民主自由平等的真義

Vol. 21, Buddhist View on Ethics 佛教對倫理問題的看法

Vol. 22, Buddhist View on the Economy 佛教對經濟問題的看法

Vol. 25, Buddhism and Harmonious Society 佛教與和諧社會

Vol. 33, Buddhist View on Politics and Human Rights 佛教對政治人權的看法

Vol. 37, Buddhist View on Applied Management 佛教對應用管理的看法

Vol. 39, Buddhism View on Environmentalism 佛教對環保問題的看法

Vol. 43, Buddhist View on War and Peace 佛教對戰爭與和平的看法

Vol. 100, Buddhist View on Social Problems 佛教對社會問題的看法<sup>363</sup>

The other source of study is the extraction of newspaper clippings related to FGS from the four major circulating secular newspapers in Taiwan: *The Liberty Times* (自由時報), *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報), *United Daily News* (聯合報), and *China Times* (中國時報). The selection was made because they are one of the most popular platforms of public communication and discourse dissemination among Taiwan, and a more manageable source comparing to other popular media

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<sup>363</sup> Due to different editions the booklets may differ in issues, meaning that volume 39: *Buddhism View on Environmentalism* may be published as volume 5 in the earlier edition of the series; volume 21 and 25 on ethics and social harmony were even taken out of the newest edition of the series. Nevertheless the contents in these different editions are more or less identical apart from some minor discrepancies in the introduction and other insignificant areas; for those issues being taken out their contents can still be found in other FGS publication, for instance the contents of volume 21 on ethics were included in the 1<sup>st</sup> volume of the *Ren jian fo jiao dang dai wen ti zuo tan hui* (see previous note).

such as television programmes and the Internet. The studying period stretches one year from December 25, 2012 to December 31, 2013, which overlap with the period of my ethnographic study in Kaohsiung. Three keywords were used to search within all sections of the selected newspapers during the chosen period with the Wisenews electronic system – 佛光 (Fo Guang), 星雲 (Hsingyun), and 佛陀紀念館 (Buddhist Memorial Center) – which generated up to a thousand newspaper articles after sifting away irrelevant and duplicated results.

The chapter will now continue by going through some of the major themes displayed from the discursive contents of the mini-booklet series and the secular newspapers, followed by an analysis of the contrasting discourses related to FGS presented by the two sources. The final analysis will conceptualize the discourses displayed by these two sources in what I called controlled discourses (religious contents controlled by FGS in the mini-book series), and uncontrollable discourses (contents that are open for interpretation from the public in the secular newspapers).

### **5.3 Thematic Analysis: FGS Discourses in the Mini-booklet Series**

#### **5.3.1 Themes I: Critiques on Modern Forms of Lifestyle**

A common theme that could be found within the *Buddhist in Every Step* mini booklet series is a repeating critic of modern life. This critic can be found frequently within different volumes, but most noticeably in the introductory section. The beginning of volume 100 *Buddhism's View on Social Problems* shows how this critic of modern life is often expressed in the series. The first paragraph of the booklet starts like this:

*“With the prosperity brought by technological and material advancement, the material life of the modern people are becoming more and more abundance, but relatively their mind cannot be satisfied and enhanced by this material abundance, and instead becomes more and more insufficient, empty, and even becomes agitated and terrified; in particularly the change in our social structure, the alienation of human relationship, the degradation of morality, and the deviation in value system production had caused the people to live in unease, and eventually derives all kinds of social problems. Therefore many people often laments: ‘Our society is sick.’”<sup>364</sup>*

From there the booklet continues to scrutinize the social problems people are now facing and ways that Humanistic Buddhism could provide to face and tackle these problems. But it is obvious from the way the booklet criticizes modern life that from the view of FGS, the cause of many of our social problems stemmed from the modern way of lifestyle and the related ideas such as materialism and individualism. This critic of modernity is repeatedly employed at the beginning of many booklets as a way to start the conversation. In volume 39 *Buddhism’s View on Environmental Problem* the booklet starts by saying that “... with the increased convenience of human life, and material abundance, this pleasant harmony [between nature and living beings] is being gradually destructed ... We humans who causes the devastation and harm towards the earth are now facing

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<sup>364</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 100, Buddhist View on Social Problems* 佛教對社會問題的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2012), 1.

our own wicked deed and had drew the revenge from the earth;”<sup>365</sup> and in volume 22 *Buddhist View on the Economy* starts with: “We now entered the age of digital technology, everyone is pursuing gain, profits, luxury and pleasure; or work through grey areas of the law.”<sup>366</sup> Similar ways of openings could also be found across the mini booklet series.

The critics of modern life could also be found within Hsingyun’s dialogue inside the booklet so much so that such critics are almost ubiquitous in every booklet being studies here that addresses on social issues. Again in volume 39 on environmental problems, Hsingyun commented that “[the current environmental crisis] is due to our greed and lack of focus in environmental protection, violating the norms of the natural cycle, causing all kinds of damage to the Earth and making it sick ... as modern men abusively catches and kills other species to satisfy their appetite, many amazing animals are now facing extinction.”<sup>367</sup> On management (vol. 37) he commented that modern men are suffering from depression and anxiety because “their life is too idle and stress-free making them to fancy and imagine different things; and in this new era people became sick because of eating too much delicious food, some became sick because of too much information, some because of too stressful in work, and some because of too much rage from disputes with others.”<sup>368</sup> In volume 100 he commented that “it is because the society changes so fast that caused the values of our society to

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<sup>365</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 39, Buddhism View on Environmentalism* 佛教對環保問題的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2007), 1.

<sup>366</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 22, Buddhist View on the Economy* 人間佛教小叢書—佛教對經濟問題的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong S, 2006), 6-7.

<sup>367</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 39*, 8.

<sup>368</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 37, Buddhist View on Applied Management* 人間佛教小叢書—佛教對應用管理的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2007), 36, 49.

degrade” and that “the corruption of modern social security ... to the rampant of terrorism and the opposition and conflict between religions and ethnicities, these are all man-made disasters ...”<sup>369</sup> The same volume also contributed the rise of divorce rate among modern people to the emergence of free-spirited mindset and the raise of feminism, and the degradation of the society on modern media.<sup>370</sup> On ethical issues (vol. 21) Hsingyun observed that “modern people stresses less and less on familial piety, and in particular on the problem of ‘generation gap’ which causes the relationship between children and parents of modern family to become alienated and shallow.”<sup>371</sup> The same volume also attributed some of the challenges modern society faces regarding social ethics and moralities on the new experiences brought forth by modern medical and scientific advancements.<sup>372</sup>

The modern forms of lifestyle continues to be criticized throughout other issues of the series: the presence of many “rich poor”(富有的窮人) who are spiritually deprived within our economically prosperous society;<sup>373</sup> the overuse of ambulances leading to growing greed and hypocrisy in the society;<sup>374</sup> the dominance of utilitarianism in modern society that led to a negligence over life education among the educational system.<sup>375</sup> All in all this kind of negativity towards modern life and society is a common narrative among the mini booklets, which itself is a collection of speeches and narrative given by Hsingyun in different public occasions. Interestingly this negativity towards our modern society is contrasted to the positivity that Hsingyun and the Humanistic Buddhist

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<sup>369</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 100, 4.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 40.

<sup>371</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 21, *Buddhist View on Ethics* 人間佛教小叢書－佛教對倫理問題的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, ???), 15.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>373</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 22, 11.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>375</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 21, 37.



philosophy hold towards the world: a world with the potential to be turn into a *Pureland* under the endeavor of the Buddhists. This positivity is in fact the very core of the FGS's religious ideal and their form of soteriology, in which Buddhists should not only long and strive for the paradise in the other world, but should endeavor to make the current world we are living in to become a paradise itself.

### 5.3.2 Theme II: The Embrace of Different Modern Ideas

In contrasting fashion to the critics of modern life, the *Buddhist in Every Step* mini-booklet series also shows an acceptance and acknowledgement toward many modern stances and idea from a Humanistic Buddhist point of view. A look at the topics of the mini booklets that are being selected here suggests that FGS sees these modern ideas, such as democracy, human rights, environmentalism, as topics that attracts the interests of their member and the general public, and therefore something that needed to be addressed and explained. These modern concepts and its mutual relationship were extensively articulated in volume 7 and 33, declaring FGS's recognition towards these ideas directly and succinctly that: "democracy is the trend of the era, freedom is the right of every people, and equality is a cognition that everyone should have."<sup>376</sup> FGS viewed ideas such as democracy, social equality and human rights as mutually affecting categories, where: "the most admirable thing about democratic states is that their people can enjoy the rights of freedom and autonomy,"<sup>377</sup> and that "democracy and freedom

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<sup>376</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 7, Buddhism on the True Meaning of Democracy, Freedom and Equality* 人間佛教小叢書－論佛教民主自由平等的真義 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2004), 36.

<sup>377</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 33, Buddhist View on Politics and Human Rights* 人間佛教小叢書－佛教對政治人權的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2007), 59.

is a public fortune possess by everyone of the society. It is only by having democracy and freedom can we have human rights, public opinions, and democracy.”<sup>378</sup>

Not only does FGS sees their Humanistic Buddhism as compatible with these modern stances, the mini-booklets suggests that in fact, many of these modern concepts and ideas have their roots and origins within traditional Buddhism. Volume 25 on social harmony suggested that the way towards social harmony could be found in the dharma, stating that: “the most thorough way that could experience the idea of harmony in Buddhism is equality. Equality brings harmony ... equality is a fundamental value of dharma.”<sup>379</sup> On modern democratic governance, volume 7 proposed that: “it is not totally wrong to say that the parliamentary system of our modern democratic society is inherited from Buddhist ideas.”<sup>380</sup> The modern idea of environmental protection can also be found in traditional Buddhist philosophies and scriptures; as pointed out in volume 39, Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes heavily on environmental protection, with a compassion philosophy that extends beyond human beings to every living and non-living being in the environment.<sup>381</sup> Again the booklet stated that environmental protection has its root from traditional Buddhist philosophies, where “before any country have implement any practical actions on environment protection Buddhism had already led the way in such aspect: as early as traditional Buddhist it has paid great attention to protect the environment.”<sup>382</sup> It

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<sup>378</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 7, 16.

<sup>379</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 25, *Buddhism and Harmonious Society* 人間佛教小叢書－佛教與和諧社會 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2006), 10.

<sup>380</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 7, 14.

<sup>381</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 39, 2, 32.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

also pointed out that one of the Buddha, Amitabha, is a renowned expert in environmental protection within Buddhism, in which his Western *Pureland* is a zero contaminated paradise full of gold, vegetation, glorious buildings, and well-planned public facilities.<sup>383</sup> This is the same with the Bhaiṣajyaguru in his Eastern *Pureland*, the Tusita of Maitreya, and all other Buddha and their *Pureland*; they are all places without any kind of pollution and contamination and therefore the best examples where ideals of environmentalism are best displayed.<sup>384</sup> These examples show that FGS is not shy in promoting its philosophy and its deities as pioneers of many modern ideas currently embraced by contemporary societies.

### **5.3.3 Theme III: On Politics and International Affairs**

The mini-booklet series also dedicated quite some attentions in addressing topics related to politics. On top of the two volumes on democracy and politics and human rights discussed above, volume 15 discussed about religious legislation and volume 43 on war and peace. From summarizing on the contents discussed throughout the series we can sum up some views of FGS towards topics regarding politics. First is the approval of politics as something that contains positive values and should not be completely discarded, as explained in volume 33 that: “the dark side and ugliness of politics is only its phenomena but not its essence.”<sup>385</sup> It also stated that it is the rights of the citizens of a modern democratic society to be involved in politics and that the people of Taiwan have

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 33; Amitabha is also mentioned in other issues of the mini-booklet series as forerunner of other modern concepts. He is described in volume 37 as “an architect adept to management” as shown in the way his western *Pureland* has been immaculately constructed and managed and its Amitabha Sutra as an early scripture on applied management. The volume also attributes the Universal Gate Sutra is the best management science of Avalokitesvara (*Vol. 37, 24*).

<sup>385</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 33, 3.

complete rights to involve in politics, which is something admirable about democracy.<sup>386</sup>

The booklets also clarified FGS's stance on politics participation: it is not only acceptable for Buddhist, but an obligation and duty for a democratic citizen and a way to express the concern and compassion of a Buddhist towards worldly affairs. This position was made very clearly in volume 33 where Hsingyun made a very assured "YES" in answering the question whether Buddhist can be involved in politics.<sup>387</sup> The volume also gave different examples on how Buddhism had historically been a positive companion with politics and with those who were in reign in different historical era. Even in modern times where the separation of church and state is something universally accepted, FGS is still positive that politics and religion could be mutually beneficial and that "Buddhism has not been separated from politics but had been maintaining a good relationship with it."<sup>388</sup> FGS's acknowledgement of politics does not go as far as succumbing Buddhism beneath it, but understandably still maintains a higher ground in claiming that Buddhism transcends politics, and that its acceptance and involvement in politic is only a display of Buddhist passion and concerns towards the society.<sup>389</sup>

The series also commented on different international affairs, in particularly being critical towards Japan and the U.S. The series was blunt in denouncing Japan for its refusal to accept its historical role during the Second World War,

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 30

<sup>388</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 33, 14-15.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.,31.

and their continuous attempts to distort history by revising their school textbooks as well as their act in visiting the Yasukuni Temple.<sup>390</sup> Volume 43 on war and peace was also critical on how the U.S. has been provoking and involving in various military campaigns in the past century, sarcastically saying that despite their involvement in various wars in Korean, Vietnam and the Middle East with the reason to uphold international peace, “many problems are still unresolved.”<sup>391</sup> It continued by advising the U.S. that despite being such a powerful nation on the global stage, “it still need to work harder on thinking about issue regarding civil rights, humanitarianism, freedom and compassion, and not only on science and weaponry,”<sup>392</sup> and if their war with Iraq continues to expand it will become something similar to the horrible conflict between Christianity and Islam during the Crusades”<sup>393</sup>

On China/Taiwan relationship, Hsingyun stated in the mini-booklet that with the people on both straits all being Chinese and having the same culture, language, and living style there is a strong bondage between them that cannot be separated.<sup>394</sup> Volume 33 continued to claim for the support of the unification by stating that only a very small number of people nowadays still upholds the narrow view of the independence of Taiwan, with the one billion Chinese worldwide including those people in both straits all wishing for a peaceful unification, and that “by a peaceful and unified China could the 1.3 billion

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid.,11; similar comments on Japan and on China/Japan relationship can find in p. 30, 39, 40 of the same volume.

<sup>391</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 43, Buddhist View on War and Peace* 佛教對戰爭與和平的看法 (Taipei: Xiang Hai Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2008), 27.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>394</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step, Vol. 25*, 8.

Chinese proudly arise in the world stage.”<sup>395</sup> The last part of this quote, a discourse anticipating the rise of China in the near future, could be commonly found in contents associated with China. In talking about a harmonious society volume 25 pointed out the importance of Buddhism to the future of China, with the *dharma* helpful in stabilizing the society and bringing love and peace between ethnics, and eventually towards a “harmonious society” (和諧社會) promoted by the General Secretary of the CCP Hu Jintao.<sup>396</sup> Only by a harmonious society can China become strong and only with a harmonious society can China truly become the international powerful nation leading the twenty-first century.”<sup>397</sup>

## **5.4 Thematic Analysis: The Exposure of FGS in Secular Newspapers**

### **5.4.1 Theme IV: FGS as a Tourist Attraction**

The most frequent exposure of FGS in the four newspapers is reports on different activities that were held in the temples and branches of FGS. While most would expect news reports on religious organizations to focus on their related religious events and activities, this is rather not the case for FGS. While reports related to these religious or spiritual events were also presented within the four newspapers being studied, such as reports on the ceremony of the appointment of the new FGS abbot in March and the “Million Heart Sutra Collection” (百萬心經入法身) activity held in February, they only appeared sparsely throughout the year and intriguingly mainly in China Times.<sup>398</sup> In

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<sup>395</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 33, 68.

<sup>396</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 25, 12.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>398</sup> “Sishi jiu sui xinbao heshang jie fuguangshan zhu chi” 49 歲心保和尚接佛光山住持, *China Times*, section A12 社會綜合, March 13, 2013.

comparison other activities that were held by FGS, which is not directly religious in nature, appeared frequently among the newspapers counting up to hundreds of articles a year. Most of these activities were cultural or education in nature, with reports of different art exhibitions, music performances, book fairs, and academic conferences being held in FGS venues frequently appearing within these newspapers throughout the year. Some of these cultural events were related to Buddhism, such as a Scripture Exhibition held in the BMC in September 2013 exhibiting the calligraphy of Venerable Wande (萬德) who secluded himself for three years and using his blood as ink to copy the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Diamond Sutra*, and the *Infinite Life Sutra*.<sup>399</sup> Others were events held by secular organizations who used FGS venues to convene the activity, such as the “Taiwan 21: Famous Artist Joint Charity Auction” held by the “Green 21 Taiwan United” formed by former Taiwan vice-president Lu Hsiulien in the Autumn of 2013.<sup>400</sup>

FGS appeared in these newspaper articles in two ways. One form of appearance came in articles that solely dedicated on that specific activities related to FGS, with details description of the activities, the renowned participants attending, and if so some quotes of their comments during the event. The other form of the appearance of these FGS activities came in reports of other stories. This is mainly found within travelling or lifestyle section that reported on regional attractions and entertainments, in which the FGS activities were reported alongside other activities that were held in nearby regions. For instance the

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<sup>399</sup> “Shiwu bu xuemo jingta fotuoguan zhanchu”15 部血墨經塔佛陀館展出, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, September 4, 2013; also in “Wande fashi laxue chaojing fougang zhan chu”萬德法師刺血抄經佛館展出, *China Times*, section C2K 高雄市澎湖新聞, September 4, 2013.

<sup>400</sup> “Bashi mingjia lianzhan yimai Lu Xiulian zhiyi” 80 名家聯展義賣呂秀蓮致意, *China Times*, section B2 中部新聞, August 26, 2013

“Chung Chen Sun’s Art Exhibition of Bamboo Painting and Calligraphy” (鍾正山竹文化書畫展) exhibiting in the BMC appeared in the “lifestyle section” (高雄都會生活) of the Liberty Times on April 9, 2013 alongside three other events that were held in the same period in Kaohsiung city, with each events given a couple of sentence of spaces.

Festive events that were held by FGS also attracted the attention of the press. The “Fortune and Peace Buddhist Wedding Ceremony” (幸福與平安) held on the January 1, 2013 had gain wide news coverage from all four of the popular newspapers.<sup>401</sup> The Ceremony was held at the BMC – in which the park dedicated one of its “eight towers” as a permanent venue in organizing and holding Buddhist weddings – with thirty-six pairs of couples participating in the ceremony. During the ceremony Hsingyun performed as the witness and former President Office Secretary Wu Pohsiung performed as the host. Most of these reports were brief and a couple of them only gave a little coverage on quotes from Hsingyun and his view on marriage, while all dedicated the section in reporting one of the participating couples who came all the way from the U.S. to conduct their marriage in a Buddhist ceremony.

Another event that received wide coverage from the press were reports covering the Light and Peace Spring Festival. The coverage of the Spring Festival in BMC stretched from early January to the end of March and can be roughly

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<sup>401</sup> “Airen yisheng yuandan Foguangshan daxi sanshi liu dui xinren ding zhongshen” 愛人一生元旦佛光大囍 36 對新人訂終身, *Taiwan Apple Daily*, section 地方版; “Xingyun dashi zhenghun zhufu sanshi liu dui xinren” 星雲大師證婚祝福 36 對新人, *The Liberty Times*, section AA2K 南部都會生活; “Sanshi liu dui xinren fohua hunli Xingyun: hunbou buyao zai kan yao yongxin xinshang” 36 對新人佛化婚禮－星雲：婚後不要再看要用心欣賞, *United Daily News*, section A13 綜合; and “Foguangshan fohua huali jianzheng sanshi liu dui xinren xingfu” 佛光山佛化婚禮見證 36 對新人幸福, *China Times*, section C2K 南部新聞; all on January 2, 2013.



divided into three phases. The first phase were reports that appeared in early January and covered brief information and attractions about the coming event in BMC, such as its firework showcase and its light decoration and it being a part of the “Lantern Festival decoration path” organized by the Kaohsiung City Tourism Board. They appeared in the newspaper sections on leisure and entertainments suggesting where to go and what to do in the coming Spring Festival. The second phase consisted of reports stretching from a few days before the event towards the second week after the commencement of the Festival in the BMC. The reports in this phase were similar to those in the first phase in providing information of the details and attraction of the Festival, this second phase provided a better description of what is going at the temple and the BMC, in particular the various light decorations that were installed and the activities that were organized at the venue. In many of these reports it mentioned how the Light and Peace Festival in FGS was a part of a series of the Kaohsiung City Spring Festival, where different local government officials, such as the City Mayor of Kaohsiung and the vice-president and the secretary of the Kaohsiung City Tourism Board, were all very supportive and delighted with the incorporation of FGS as a part of their Spring Festival series.<sup>402</sup>

Another feature of the news related to the FGS Spring Festival in the second phase were displayed by reports that gave information about the special transportation arrangement to deal with the expected travelers during the festive

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<sup>402</sup> “Gaoxiong denghui zhen tou, minge dou naore” 高雄燈會陣頭，民歌「逗鬧熱」, *The Liberty Times*, section AA4K 高雄都會生活, January 31, 2013; “Foguangshan denghui dengchang zhaoliang yipian anle erbai gongchi fोगuang dadao chahua jincu haiyou denglong giang, huwai shuizu guang chuyi dao shiwu meiwan shangyan yanhuo xiu” 佛光山燈會登場照亮一片安樂 200 公尺佛光大道茶花錦簇還有燈籠牆，戶外水族館初一到十五每晚上演煙火秀”, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, February 6, 2013.

season. The BMC was being identified as one of the top tourist attraction of the festive period and the Ministry of Transportation and Communication had planned to undertake special arrangement at important traffic locations in catering the expected increase of traffic flow, as well as negotiating with the regional public transport providers to increase their service on routes connecting to the BMC.<sup>403</sup> One of the news article from *The Liberty Times* during this period reported that the local police branch of Kaohsiung City has identified the BMC as the “top ten traffic congestion site” during the festive seasons among other tourists spots such as E-Da Theme Park and Chengching Lake, in which the local police force will work in line with the Ministry of Transportation and Communication to handle the expected heavy traffic during the period.<sup>404</sup>

The third phase consisted of reports midway through the Light and Peace Ceremony to the end of February. They were articles that reported on the recording breaking number of visitors to FGS and BMC during this festive period, with both the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* reporting that the BMC has topped as the most visited tourist spot in Taiwan during the spring festive period attracting over 2.4 million of visitors.<sup>405</sup> With E-Da Theme Park also joining the top ten list in third with 0.66 million and other popular tourist spots in Kaohsiung, the city has over seven million tourist visitors during this period altogether, making it one of the most if not the most tourist driven city of Taiwan. The

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<sup>403</sup> “Kending, fotuo guan chuanjie keyun jiakai” 墾丁·佛陀館春節客運加開, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, January 29, 2013.

<sup>404</sup> “Guonei shida yisai jingdian fotuo guan jingjie shu dao” 《國內十大易塞景點》佛陀館「警戒疏導», *The Liberty Times*, section AA1K 高雄都會新聞, February 7, 2013.

<sup>405</sup> “Yiqian wan renqi zouchun chuang jilu guoren ai qifu sanbai qishi wan renqi jibao san shengdi” 《1500 萬人次走春創紀錄》國人愛祈福 370 萬人次擠爆 3 聖地, *China Times*, section A3 焦點新聞, February 18, 2013; “Chunjie shida jingdian guoxiong zhan san ge fotuo guan diyi yida shijie disan haian gongyuan dijiu” 春節十大景點高雄占 3 個佛陀館第 1 義大世界第 3 海岸公園第 9, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, February 22, 2013.

*Liberty Times* also reported that the BMC is one of the “Top Ten Hottest Searched Temple” held by Taiwan Yahoo website during the Spring Festival.<sup>406</sup>

Apart from articles that reported on various activities that were being held in FGS, another form of FGS exposure in the newspapers appeared merely as a part of a larger informative description or promotion section related to tourism in Kaohsiung. A better understanding of this form of FGS exposure can be seen from those news reports during the summer of 2013, where there were many articles writing about different summer activities and tourist packages across Taiwan. Both Foguangshan and the BMC were being included as one of the visiting sites within those traveling packages or a part of a summer vacation deal offered by traveling agencies. One article from *United Daily News* reported on a Kaohsiung vacation package offered by the Kaohsiung Tourism Bureau where the BMC was included as a visiting site of their two-days Kaohsiung package.<sup>407</sup> Another in the *China Times* reported that one of the largest international cruise ship company The Princess Cruises has included Kaohsiung as their first Taiwan port within their Asian routes, and the Tourism Bureau has introduced a one-day Kaohsiung City travel package to those landing visitors and other travelers where “the number one visiting location in Taiwan” BMC has been one of the destination in the package.<sup>408</sup> Many articles throughout the summer (in fact during the period before any vacation period) have reported on various

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<sup>406</sup> “Chunjie shida miaoyu resou zinan gong jiguan” 春節十大廟宇熱搜紫南宮居冠, *The Liberty Times*, A14H 南投焦點, February 23, 2013.

<sup>407</sup> “Panxuan shida youcheng jiuyue fandan zhusu banjia” 拚選 10 大遊程 9 月飯店住宿半價, *United Daily News*, section B2K 大高雄綜合新聞, June 19, 2013.

<sup>408</sup> “Taiyang gongzhu hao liu yue ershijiu ri jiang tingkao gaoxiong gang” 太陽公主號 6 月 29 日將停靠高雄港, *China Times*, section C2K 高雄市澎湖新聞, June 21, 2013; the BMC has been mentioned as the “number one popular tourist site in Taiwan” (全台遊客人次數第一名觀光熱門景點).

Kaohsiung city traveling packages with either Foguangshan or the BMC included as one of the visiting location of the promotion; it was also easy to search through the newspaper for various summer deals offered by different hotels in Kaohsiung City that offers free transportation connection to the BMC. These news articles showed that many travel agency clearly saw BMC as something capable of attracting potential customers to their travel offers, a place that is fun and trendy (“夯”) among the Taiwanese at the moment.<sup>409</sup>

Apart from reports of FGS in relation to traveling and hotel deals and packages, there were also other scattered but sporadic articles associating FGS with regional tourism. An article of *The Liberal Times* in August 2013 reported that the city of Little Rock, Arkansas has become the sister city of Kaohsiung city, and that sixteen youths from Little Rock were selected to come to Kaohsiung to commence in a youth leadership camp with the BMC selected as one of their visiting spots during the program.<sup>410</sup> An article in *The Liberty Times* on August 18, 2013 reported the comments made by the president of the Kaohsiung City Tourism Bureau regarding the opportunity of Thai visitors coming to the city of Kaohsiung, and stating that the BMC and the E-Da Theme Park should fit the taste of the Thais, many of whom are Buddhist followers and have a fondness for great food and shopping.<sup>411</sup> FGS also appeared frequently inside news article related to food and drink recommendation, in particular reports on new and

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<sup>409</sup> For more example of news clipping on hotel deals please see “Fandian giang shujia dang fangjia xiasha wu she” 飯店搶暑假檔房價下殺 5 折, *Taiwan Apple Daily*, section A22K 大高雄社區新聞, June 1, 2013; more on traveling package please see “Zongpushi yiriyou guang laojie chang meishi” 「總舖師」1 日遊逛老街嘗美食, *Taiwan Apple Daily*, section A31K 大高雄綜合新聞, August 4, 2013.

<sup>410</sup> “Qingnian lingxiuying meiguo xuezi laitai jiaoliu” 青年領袖營美國學子來台交流, *The Liberty Times*, section A18K 高雄都會焦點, August 2, 2013.

<sup>411</sup> “Yao taikē kanxiaoya shifu chuji” 邀泰客看小鴨市府出擊, *The Liberty Times*, section A16K 高雄都會焦點, August 18, 2013.

attractive vegetarian food and restaurants. This can be seen from a news article from *The Liberty Times* in October 2013, reporting on a new vegetarian restaurant opening in the Taipei Arena, a branch of its original store in the BMC where it had been doing great business with an annual fifty-four million TWD income.<sup>412</sup> All in all most the news clippings associated with FGS were mostly associated with tourism, as informative reports of different activities and events happening in the main temple in Kaohsiung or other branches, while a large proportion of reports of this kind on the BMC were mostly related to local tourism of Kaohsiung City.

#### **5.4.2 Theme V: FGS Social Engagement and Social Services**

The second thread of news articles that were related to FGS in the studied year were those that reported on the various forms of FGS's engagement in the Taiwanese society. There were two main clusters of news reports of this social engagement: one were reports about the different "Hsingyun Awards" and donations that were given to different individuals and parties, and the other were reports on the provision of social services and volunteer aids by FGS members across the society. One can find many different kind of "Hsingyun Awards" being given out to people throughout the newspapers, such as the "Hsing Yun Education Award" (星雲教育獎) that were given to outstanding teachers, principals and other educators;<sup>413</sup> the presentation of the title "A Three Good Practicing School" (三好校園實踐學校) to those schools that had been actively

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<sup>412</sup> "Tuiguang shushi han lai fa haoyu"推廣蔬食漢來發豪語, *The Liberty Times*, section A20K 高雄都會焦點, October 11, 2013.

<sup>413</sup> "Xingyun jaioyu jiang dexhu dianfan shi Yang Jingyi ershi wan jiangjin quan juanchu"星雲教育獎得主典範師楊靜怡 20 萬獎金全捐出, *China Times*, section C2K 南部新聞, December 31, 2012.

practicing the “Three Good Campaign” promulgated by FGS;<sup>414</sup> and the “Hsing Yun Global Award for Chinese Literature” (全球華文文學星雲獎) that were given to the authors of outstanding literatures worldwide.<sup>415</sup> Another award that was reported in the newspapers was the “Hsing Yun Media Award” (星雲真善美新聞傳播獎) in praising the distinguished media people in the Chinese media industry. This award was originally presented only to those individual within Taiwan but gradually expanded to include Chinese media workers in oversea locations such as Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States.<sup>416</sup> All of the above awards were sponsored by the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund. Another observation from these newspaper clippings was how little religious related contents were involved in the reports. They seem like reports of an ordinary award presentation event without mentioning any description of its relationship with FGS or the rationale behind the creation of these awards by the monastery and Hsingyun. It is different to tell from these reports about how these awards are related to a religious organization and difficult to distinguish them from other secular awards.

Reports of social services provided by FGS also have a frequent presence in the newspapers. As outlined in the previous chapter FGS provides various kinds of social services to different people across different sectors of the Taiwanese society. One could find reports on FGS volunteers paying visit to an elderly home

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<sup>414</sup> “Gengzhong sanhao xiaoyuan sishi si xiao kaixin jieguo” 耕種三好校園 44 校開心結果, *China Time*, section A5 裂縫裡的光, May 12, 2013.

<sup>415</sup> “Quangiu huawen wenxue singyun jiang qiye shoujian fenwai gongxian jiang ji chuanguo zhengwen bayue di jiezh” 全球華文文學星雲獎 7 月收件分為貢獻獎及創作徵文, *United Daily News*, section E4 華東台商, May 7, 2013.

<sup>416</sup> “Zhenshan mei xinwen jiang banbao duo si jiangxiang 真善美新聞獎本報奪 4 獎項”, *United Daily News*, section A11 文化, October 29, 2013.

of a hospital in Zhushan, Nantou;<sup>417</sup> or a charity fair held by a local FGS temple and BLIA branch of Tainan to support other smaller scale charitable organizations;<sup>418</sup> or a blood donation event held by the Post Office Department of Sanchong, New Taipei City and the local branch of the BLIA;<sup>419</sup> or the donation of a thousand copies of books to the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology by the local BLIA.<sup>420</sup> An observable aspect of this category of newspaper clipping is that the exposure of FGS as reported included many other branches and units of the organization. Most of the reports on the provision of these social services were associated with the BLIA, in which the lay association has been the main player in mobilizing its lay members in carrying out different charity activities in the society. But one could also find other division of FGS involving in these social services in the news reports, such as the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation that mobilized FGS members and raising donation materials in supporting the relief work of the typhoon disaster in the Philippines in November of 2013;<sup>421</sup> or the involvement of the Fo Guang Scouts in participating in the environmental activity organized by the BLIA(ROC) in clearing up wastes and trash debris of a beach in Houling Township of Miaoli.<sup>422</sup> The appearance of these other division of the FGS organizational family demonstrated the many forms of exposure of FGS within the Taiwanese press.

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<sup>417</sup> “Foguang hui fang laoren meitian dou lai hao bu hao zhushan xiuchuang huli zhijia”佛光會訪老人每天都來好不好竹山秀傳護理之, *United Daily News*, section B2F 彰投綜合新聞, December 28, 2012.

<sup>418</sup> “Ju shankuan ruoshi tuanti bai tanwei”聚善款弱勢團體擺攤位, *The Liberty Times*, section A14D 台南都會焦點, January 13, 2013.

<sup>419</sup> “Zhouwu sanchong juanxue”周五三重捐血, *United Daily News*, section B2A 都會, May 1, 2013.

<sup>420</sup> “Foguangshan zenshu bingkeda qianyu ben”佛光山贈書屏科大千餘本, *The Liberty Times*, section A14B 屏東焦點, December 27, 2013.

<sup>421</sup> “Foguangshan yuanfei juan shiwan wuzi”佛光山援菲捐 10 萬、物資, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, November 13, 2013.

<sup>422</sup> “Shuiwei haibian chengtan jing wachu ... fei luntai”水尾海邊淨灘竟挖出...廢輪胎, *United Daily News*, section B1E 苗栗·運動, April 28, 2013.

### 5.4.3 Theme VI: FGS and Politics

Politics is the third theme regarding the appearance of FGS in the Taiwanese newspapers; news reports that involved politicians or comments made by Hsingyun on political or social issues. The first forms of this appearance were articles that reported on the presence of politicians at FGS temples or activities. Politicians of different ranks and from different background were often found to participate in various FGS events. The most high profile officials participating in these events would be the president of Taiwan Ma Yingjiu, who pays frequent visit to FGS, with one of it being his visit to the FGS branch in Jungli, Taoyuan that was reported in a February article of *China Times*.<sup>423</sup> The vice-president Wu Denyih is also a frequent visitor to FGS, accompanying Ma at the same occasion in Jungli, and also in other occasions such as his visit to the main temple in Kaohsiung for a personal meeting with Hsingyun in August 2013.<sup>424</sup> Foreign politicians and government officials were also found in different FGS visits and events, including a U.S. visiting group led by the Chairman of the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ed Royce, to the FGS temple in Kaohsiung in January 2013 where they were received with the highest reception by Hsingyun himself.<sup>425</sup> Officials from Mainland China also visited Foguangshan and met Hsingyun in many occasion, such as the meeting between Hsingyun and Hubei Committee Secretary of the CCP Li Hongzhong in June 2013,<sup>426</sup> and the Governor of the Shandong Province Guo Shuqing who visited the BMC in

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<sup>423</sup> “Ma jizu tan jingji jinnian chunyan feilai xiangxin weilai xiaolong yingchun xuanqian zhuankun” 馬祭祖談經濟今年春燕飛來相信未來「小龍迎春旋乾轉坤」, *China Times*, section A4 生活新聞, February 12, 2013.

<sup>424</sup> “Wu Dunyi hui Xingyun didiao kan lanqiu sai” 吳敦義會星雲低調看籃球賽, *United Daily News*, section B2K 大高雄綜合新聞, August 26, 2013.

<sup>425</sup> “Mei zongyuan Huo yisi fang gaoxiong Xingyun mobao jieyuan” 美眾院羅伊斯訪高雄星雲墨寶結緣, *China Times*, section A2 焦點新聞, January 28, 2013.

<sup>426</sup> “Taiwan reqing rushui Hubei fangwen tuan li tai” 「台灣熱情如水」湖北訪問團離台, *United Daily News*, section A14 兩岸/國際, June 3, 2013.



company with Hsingyun and the mayor of Kaohsiung City Chen Chu in November 2013.<sup>427</sup>

The reports of the visits of these politicians or government officials often included their comments and praises towards FGS. The minister of the Executive Yuan Yang Chiu-hsing commented in April 2013 that the BMC was one of the most important public infrastructures in the Kaohsiung County;<sup>428</sup> At the “Hsingyun Education Award” ceremony in the BMC in December 2012 vice-president Wu Denyih praised the “Three Good Campaign” of FGS and its important role in the education of the Taiwanese, lauding Hsingyun as a religious preacher and also a great educator;<sup>429</sup> Ed Royce pointed out that the religious freedom of Taiwan can be witnessed by his visit to FGS, and stated that “FGS is the number one treasure of Taiwan, democracy is the second;”<sup>430</sup> the Mainland Committee Secretary Li Hongzhong remarked at his meeting with Hsingyun that the opportunity was helpful for his understanding of intrinsic value of religion and arts.<sup>431</sup>

Hsingyun’s comment on different political topics can also be found in scattered newspaper clippings. Although these comments were sparse, they tend to attract wide coverage from all four newspapers. In a couple of public appearance including his book release event in April, Hsingyun made comments

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<sup>427</sup> “Shandong shengzhang laifang Chen Ju yingbin”山東省長來訪陳菊迎賓, *United Daily News*, section A25 兩岸, November 1, 2013.

<sup>428</sup> “Chunyou dahuo lai jin Yang Ai xing choushe jianxing hui”春遊大夥來勁楊秋興籌設健行會, *United Daily News*, section B1K 大高雄·運動, April 8, 2013.

<sup>429</sup> “Yangcho xiang zhu wei: fajue jiaoyu jie gandong renxin de zhenshi gushi”楊朝祥主委：發掘教育界感動人心的真實故事, *United Daily News*, section A13, 星雲教育獎, December 30, 2012.

<sup>430</sup> See note 422.

<sup>431</sup> See note 423.

on political issues regarding China, the Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant incident, and on former-president Chen Shuibian. Being asked to comment on the “China Dream” statement made by the president of PRC Xi Jinping, Hsingyun responded that “to make the dream come true, [one] must let its people be happy and safe;”<sup>432</sup> On the Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant he said that it would be difficult to determine the right and wrong regarding the situation but things that were obviously wrong should be amended,<sup>433</sup> on the situation of Chen Shuibian and his predicament during imprisonment Hsingyun commented that he should put down his pride and power of his past, and admit his wrongdoings and repent if he want to eradicate his sufferings.<sup>434</sup> On other political subjects, Hsingyun was being asked about his view of an incident where president Ma was being spotted snoring repeatedly in the operational center for the relief work on the flooding in Southern Taiwan, Hsingyun commented that being a president of Taiwan is a tough job and we should forgive Ma, a comment that Ma later acknowledged and appreciated.<sup>435</sup> On the heated incident between Ma and the President of the Executive Yuan Wang Jinping, Hsingyun commented that the incident had caused great damage to the KMT and Taiwan and encouraged both to reconcile. All these political comments made by Hsingyun were reported in all four secular newspapers.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> “Xi Jinping zhongguo meng ruoyao chengzhen ... Xingyun: yao rang renmin xingfu pingan” 習近平「中國夢」若要成真...星雲：要讓人民幸福平安, *United Daily News*, section A2 焦點, April 7, 2013.

<sup>433</sup> “Yibai wushi wanzi Xingyun xishuo bainian foyuan” 150 萬字星雲細說《百年佛緣》, *China Times*, section A18 文化新聞, April 3, 2013.

<sup>434</sup> “Xingyun xishuo bainian foyuan yibai wanzi zongxie lishi zizhuan xixie xinlu lichen shushuo minzu cangsang” 星雲細說百年佛緣 150 萬字縱寫歷史自傳細寫心路歷程述說民族滄桑, *United Daily News*, section A16 話題, April 3, 2013.

<sup>435</sup> “Ma dadun bei zhuobao kuku sao: zaodian shui” 馬打盹被抓包酷酷嫂：早點睡, *Taiwan Apple Daily*, section A13 政治, May 23, 2013.

<sup>436</sup> “Wang Jinping huanjia Ma Jiang shi wo pusa” 王金平緩頰「馬江是我菩薩」, *Taiwan Apple Daily*, section A2 關說風暴, September 15, 2013; Ma wang zhengzheng Xingyun: ying woshou yanhe” 馬王政爭 星雲：應握手言和, *The Liberty Times*, section A20K 高雄都會焦點,

Comments from Hsingyun on other issues could also be found across different news reports as well. On foreign affairs Hsingyun suggested Mainland China and Taiwan to increase interaction between the strait like a peaceful family;<sup>437</sup> in a cultural event held in September 2013 Hsingyun talked about the “dreams of a religious person” (宗教家的夢想) and expressed that his dream only consisted of sixteen Chinese words: “the union of China, the spread of Buddhism, social harmony, and the happiness of the people” (中國團結, 萬家生佛, 社會和諧, 人民安樂);<sup>438</sup> on Taiwan and U.S. relationship he expressed his wish for a long-lasting bond between Taiwan and the U.S. during Ed Royce visit.<sup>439</sup> On religion Hsingyun commented that Buddhism is not only a religion but also a form of philosophy and education, and that the building of the BMC was not for preaching but for education and to inspire the wisdom of the people;<sup>440</sup> in the International Fruit Festival held in the BMC at the beginning of the summer of 2013 in which many different local temples participated, including the Tianhou temple and the Mazu temple, Hsingyun expressed that the BMC is owned by every religious community of Taiwan and hope every temple will see the center as their own place, and hope to establish a “United Nation of Religions” (宗教聯合國) at the BMC and hold a “Deity & Buddha Meeting” (神佛大會) on every April 8<sup>th</sup> of the Chinese calendar.<sup>441</sup>

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September 15, 2013; “Xingyun quanhe Wang: yingyou ma zhudao heiyun tian zonghui guoqu!” 星雲勸和 王：應由馬主導「黑雲天總會過去！」, *China Times*, section A1 要聞, September 15, 2013; “Yi guojia weilai qiancheng wei kaoliang Xingyun fashi quan ma wang fangqi zhizhuo woshou yanhe” 以國家未來前程為考量星雲法師勸馬王方棄執著握手言和, *United Daily News*, section A3 立院, September 15, 2013; among others.

<sup>437</sup> “Liangan xiaozhang fangfo guan Xingyun: heping yijia” 兩岸校長訪佛館星雲：和平一家, *United Daily News*, section B2K 大高雄綜合新聞, July 25, 2013.

<sup>438</sup> “Xingyun renwen shijie luntan Mo Yan: zuigao jiangshang laizi duzhe” 星雲人文世界論壇莫言：最高獎賞來自讀者, *United Daily News*, section A12 文化, September 16, 2013.

<sup>439</sup> See note 422.

<sup>440</sup> See note 434.

<sup>441</sup> “Dashu shuiguo jie erbai zun shenming wei guonong qifu” 大樹水果節 200 尊神明為果農祈福, *The Liberty Times*, section A20K 高雄都會焦點, May 18, 2013.

#### 5.4.4 Other Presences of FGS in the Secular Newspapers

The above three clusters of newspaper clippings roughly made up most of the news reports related to FGS within the popular press in Taiwan. But there were also other news reports spreading across the year that were related to FGS that could not be well categorized in any single themes. This included reports of famous people attending FGS activities or their comments made towards FGS. In September, Chinese Noble Prize winner of literature Mo Yan was invited to Fo Guang University to receive his honorary doctorate degree award by the host university for his outstanding accomplishment in literature;<sup>442</sup> Hong Kong borned celebrity Daniel Chan, who's mother is one of the president of the BLIA Hong Kong branch, was reported in May 2013 in attending a Buddha's Birth and Mother's Day activity performing alongside the BLIA Young Adult in Taiwan.<sup>443</sup> Another famous celebrity, Chinese singer and songwriter Liu Chichang, also held three concerts at the BMC at the end of 2013, an event to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the BMC and as a mean to form connection with the people (*jieryuan*) through music. Liu revealed that despite being a Christian he is an open-minded one, seeing every religion to be the same in leading people towards kindness.<sup>444</sup>

The reports on the “BLIA Cup University Women's Basketball Tournament” (佛光盃大學女子籃球邀請賽) also received wide coverage throughout August 2013. The first BLIA cup was held in Fo Guang University in September 2010 as

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<sup>442</sup> “Nuobeier jiang Mo Yan foda jiang ban rongyu boshi” 諾貝爾獎莫言佛大將頒榮譽博士, *The Liberty Times*, section A14P 宜花焦點, September 15, 2013.

<sup>443</sup> “Cai Yilin Chen Xiaodong xiaoshun pei ma qiancheng yufo” 蔡依林陳曉東孝順陪媽虔誠浴佛, *China Times*, section D1 影視娛樂, May 13, 2013.

<sup>444</sup> “Younin zhenhao chan hunbian gongyi xuanchuan zouwei” 「有您真好」摻婚變 公益宣傳走味, *China Times*, section C2 娛樂新聞, December 26, 2013.

a celebration of the establishment of the University and a commemoration for the millions of donors who funded the construction, as well as a mean to promote health and sports in the Yilan region. The first BLIA cup had eight teams in competition and included oversea teams from Japan, Canada, Malaysia, etc.; since then it has grown in popularity and attracted teams from oversea countries to participate in the tournament. The tournament in 2013 was in its third year and the first to be held in the Kaohsiung Arena (K-Arena) – a demonstration of its popularity in attracting spectators – and had been widely reported among all four newspapers during the week of the tournament (from the 21st to the 27th of August 2013).<sup>445</sup>

Other reports related to FGS that occupied significant press coverage included the report of Hsingyun receiving the awarding of an honorary doctorate degree from the National Chung Cheng University in late October 2013;<sup>446</sup> reports on the recruitment of the “Miss Fo Guang” (佛光小姐) as customer service officers inside the BMC; and many others that involved the comments made by teaching staffs from Fo Guang University and Nanhua University on topics related to their specific field of research. While some of these reports have no direct connection to FGS as a religious organization it nevertheless gave it a degree of exposure within the major Taiwanese newspapers.

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<sup>445</sup> “Foguang bei nulan sai kaida kanqiu haineng mocai”佛光盃女籃賽開打看球還能摸彩, *The Liberty Times*, section AA2K 高雄都會生活, August 21, 2013; “Wushi fenzhong ezhan fोगuang qizou dama” 50 分鐘惡戰佛光氣走大馬, *China Times*, section B4 運動天地, August 24, 2013; “Wu Dunyi hui Xingyun didiao kan lanqiu sai”吳敦義會星雲低調看籃球賽, *United Daily News*, August 26, 2013; among many.

<sup>446</sup> “Yisheng mei nague wenping Xingyun dashi huoban zhongzheng daxue rongyu boshi”一生沒拿過文憑星雲大師獲頒中正大學榮譽博士, *China Times*, section A16 社會綜合, October 31, 2013.

## 5.5 Discussion

### 5.5.1 Discourse of FGS from the Mini-booklet Series – Controlled

From the *Buddhist in Every Step* mini-booklet series we can distinguish three particular forms of discourses that FGS has been trying to address and construct in relationship to modern life: 1) issues and challenges that modern people are facing in the society, 2) an acceptance of the world and the embracement of different modern stances such as democracy and freedom, and 3) a critic of modern form of lifestyle. The first type of discourses is more obvious to recognize, as it is one of the topics that Hsingyun has been addressing directly in many different occasions and one that could well capture the concerns and needs of the modern Taiwanese citizens. These topics fall in the main categories of social issues (the economy, politics, etc.) and ethical issues (the family, environmentalism, etc.). The series also addressed other popular topics that were attractive to the public, such as specific political and international affairs. The series addressed these contemporary social issues by giving an explanation through the lenses of Humanistic Buddhist philosophy and provided solutions to engage and handle these social challenges. These commentaries were able to illustrate the core objectives of Hsingyun and FGS: to reestablish Chinese Buddhism as a religion that is relevant to the lives of modern people and to eliminate its previous other-worldly image by constructing a religiosity that embraces and orientates towards the society.

A fundamental and critical factor to this remodeling mission depends on the way Hsingyun defines and interpret modern life and the society we are living in – which is also essential to the philosophical core of the Humanistic Buddhism that

he is trying to reestablish. This remodeling was done by a reorientation towards the world, redefining it as something not only acceptable but worth every effort to strive for. We have seen in the previous section that this is something FGS have been trying to convey throughout the whole mini-booklet series. The core ideal of Humanistic Buddhist philosophy in turning the world into the *Pureland* also illustrated an acknowledgement of a positive view of the current world and the immense potential it contains.

Another matter addressed in the mini-series was to give explanations to some of the underlying principles of modernity that is fundamental to modern life, ideas such as freedom, rights, democracy, etc. Time and again the series have demonstrated FGS's acceptance and embracement of these modern ideas, including other associating concepts such as equality and liberty. The mini-series went further in arguing that these modern ideas were not something novel that emerged in our modern times, but Buddhism had long been an originator and practitioner of these ideas throughout history, which the booklets claimed to have been clearly written and explained in Buddhist scriptures.

However in other sections of the series there were clear depictions of critiques towards our modern society, which seems rather contradicting. As show from the extracts above, the critiques of modern life was a common narrative of Hsingyun throughout his public conversations, depicting this modern way of lifestyle as the major factor in leading to the various modern social problems that he has been addressing in the series. In particular the increasing individualism of our modern life had been pinpointed as the culprit for relational problems, sense of loneliness and isolation – the foundation elements that undermines the

individual and causes of different social problems. In combination, modern economics and consumer culture have also been isolated as detrimental to modern individuals in leading to greed and extravagance, and as the origin for poverty, inequality, and environmental problems.

In terms of a consistent perception of the world, this negative view of our modern society seems to be heading the opposite direction in contrast to the positivity that FGS had shown towards the world. But once we try to understand these two threads of views and to make sense in relation to the philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism, such contradiction could be well resolved. In fact Hsingyun's critique of our contemporary world was not targeted on the world and the environment or the living beings that dwell in it, nor is his critiques towards the modern form of lifestyle itself, but on the corruption of modern human beings that have misused the advantage of modern advancement that could have been beneficial in leading towards the holistically well being for the whole world. This underlying factor of human corruption beneath the ostensible culprit of modernity has been discerned in the mini booklets; in volume 100 Hsingyun explained that "all social problems are originated from a sickened heart (心), so what should be resolved is an issue of the heart."<sup>447</sup> Therefore the way to address the social problems that are occurring in our world is not to abandon the modern lifestyle but to go to the root of the problem – to alter the inner heart that have been corrupted by pleasure and laxity modern advancement had granted us.

The only way to resolve this is by purification; the purification of the self and of the mind/heart. Such inner purification could eventually lead to the purification

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<sup>447</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 100, 5.



of the external world in which all social pathologies would disappear. This has been identified clearly inside the mini booklets, stating the rampaging disease and epidemics of our modern era as the “collective karma” of human beings that could be eradicated by the “purification of ones body and heart;”<sup>448</sup> and that a “harmonious society has to be constructed from the heart, when there is compassion in the heart the inner world would be clarified; ones the heart is clarified the world will followed and be purified.”<sup>449</sup> Therefore it is not the intrinsic values of modernity that is the cause of the contemporary problems in modern society, but the self that needs to be purified in order to resolve these problems.

The concept of purification and its linkage between the inner-self and the external-world has been a core philosophy of Hsingyun’s Humanistic Buddhism; a concept that one could find throughout his wide spectrum of discourses. And it shows a very complex relationship between human beings and the world in which it is humans who devastated the world but it is also humans who have the power to make the world into a paradise. It also demonstrates the philosophical foundation of the acceptance of the world and its “innocence” with the occurrence of the social problems and sufferings that modern people are facing, and how the responsibility is placed on each individual to trigger their potential to transform the external world from their inside.

From here we can see a discourse that is consistently constructed throughout the series, a narrative that has been prevailing within FGS philosophy: the

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>449</sup> Hsingyun, *Buddhist in Every Step*, Vol. 25, 7.

contamination of the inner side of modern individuals that leads to the contamination of the world and the appearance of all kinds of social problems and sufferings, with Buddhism being a way to fundamentally tackle these problems with its ability to purify oneself and eventually the world. The prevailing appearance of this core narrative inside the mini-booklet series and other extended discourses of FGS is consistent with Casanova's analysis of the features of modern public religion on a civic level. Throughout the series FGS has been contesting the principles of different aspects of our modern life, including the dominating domain of modern politics and economics; it has also been trying to legitimize and redraw the boundaries of different categories such as the definition of a good life and the interpretation of worldly reorientation as a legitimized form of contemporary Buddhism. The examination of the discourses within the selected issues of the series were also compatible with the characteristics of a public religion at a civil level as depicted in *Public Religion*: 1) the series showed FGS's defense of the traditional lifeworld against forms of state and market penetration through the emphasis of the different malicious force of modern state and market mechanism, and the appeal to return to the wisdom of traditional Buddhist thoughts to purify oneself and fundamentally restore a more holistic and compassion view towards the world; 2) it questioned and contested the claims of the state and market system and how its functioning within its own norms without regard to extrinsic traditional moral norms had been one of the major contribution to various forms of social problems and individual sufferings; and 3) it challenged the growing individualism of our modern life and appealed to return to a principle of a "common good" – common in a way that extends beyond the goods of common humanities to the goods of every living beings and non-living beings existing in our world. From this selective study of the

mini-booklet series, which compiles many public speeches and publications of Hsingyun towards the public, it illustrated what kind of values and through which form of language FGS has been trying to disseminate their discourse into the society. In this aspect FGS fully qualifies as a public religion at a civic level in Casanova's framework, playing the role of critiquing particular forms of modernity from a religious point of view.

### **5.5.2 Discourse of FGS in Secular Newspapers – Uncontrolled**

As we looked into the discourse of FGS from the secular newspapers we found a very different picture. Almost none of the major themes that were found from the mini-book series could be found in the newspaper clippings: there were no critiques of modern life, or any narrative of the existence of different social problems and the solution of a purification of inner self. In fact whenever FGS appeared inside the pages of the secular newspapers, its status and identity as a religious organization and a Buddhist monastery were always neglected and unrecognizable. The religious dimension of FGS had been reduced and casted out to an extent that it is almost impossible to identify it as a religious organization from just reading between the lines of the news articles.

There was two major forms of image that FGS has being constructed and represented in the four major secular newspapers: a popular site of tourist attraction and a social welfare organization similar to a NGO. Among the newspaper clippings studied during the year 2013, almost half of them were articles that related FGS to tourism and as a popular visiting spot in Southern Taiwan. As illustrated in the above section the appearance of FGS increased

dramatically during festive and holiday seasons, frequently appearing as recommended sightseeing location for visitors. Noticeably the BMC's appearance fell almost completely in the newspaper sections that promotes Southern Taiwan traveling attractions, special hotel and travel deals, and dining and cultural activity recommendations. Equally FGS was also frequently associated as a social service provider within the secular press, with the BLIA as one primary representative of FGS in providing different social service to the people of Taiwan and beyond. Again these newspaper articles did not mention much about the Buddhist background of BLIA, and surely not of the religious ideal and objective behind these social service provisions. Yet what was being highlighted was information that attracted and interested the readers: the amount of money being involved, some moving and touching story behind the involving people, etc.; these are the forms of contents that were often being highlighted within reports of most popular newspapers. From this logic it suggested that the religious contents of FGS were not something particularly interesting to the readers comparing to its attraction as a tourist spot or as a social service provider.

Many of the relevant newspaper articles that were identified in the studied year were clippings associated with Hsingyun himself more than with FGS as an organization. Around a quarter of the newspaper clippings studied in total involved Hsingyun participating in different kinds of events across Taiwan. While these articles would describe the details of the occasion that Hsingyun was appearing, rarely would they mention and quote anything Hsingyun had said and commented during those moments. More than often it would be other individuals that were present at the same occasions that were the focus in the article, such as the clippings that reported on the visit of a group of U.S. officials at Foguangshan

where the comments made by Ed Royce and other members were quoted with no mentioning of what Hsingyun had said during that meeting. In instances where comments made by Hsingyun were well covered in the articles, they would be mainly comments that were related to hot and trending affairs in Taiwan and predominately political in nature, such as the comments Hsingyun made on the condition of former president Chen Shuibien, the Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant incident, and on China/Taiwan politics. This again indicated that the interest of the secular press in Taiwan, and in their perception the interest of the readers, on FGS lies on aspects that were outside the religious dimension of the Buddhist organization. In addition it is also difficult to find much evidence that the religious discourses FGS attempted to construct and disseminate through its own publication can find any outlet through the secular newspapers.

Juxtaposing the discourses found within the mini-booklet series and those that were found in the secular newspaper, it illustrated two different forms of discourses of FGS that is circulating in the public; a difference that could be distinguished as controlled and uncontrolled discourses of the Buddhist organizations. The first form found in the mini-booklet series were those that could be controlled by the religious organization, and through such a controlled system the organization could have the authority in managing the contents, the form of language used to convey such contents, and the methods to disseminate them. The mini-booklets studied above demonstrated a couple of main themes and a grand narrative within a wide range of topics that were addressed by FGS in the series. However the discourses of FGS inside the secular newspapers manifested forms of religious presence within the public sphere that is outside the control of the religious organization. The secular newspapers showed no concern

towards the interest of FGS, but only on the interest of the press and what they presumed to be the interest of the readers. During such process other kinds of discourses might be formed and disseminated into the public that were not only uncontrollable but sometimes even undesirable for the religious organization, such as the risk of being constructed with an image that pertains more as a secular organization than a religious community among the public consciousness. The consequence of this form of “uncontrolled” form of discourse of religious organization – uncontrolled in terms of uncontrollable by the relevant religious organization – would be further elaborated in the concluding chapter. But from here we can see that a study of the religious texts and discourses circulating in the public domain of the Taiwanese society can provide a different view on the religious publicness that have not been considered in Casanova’s framework of public religion, and a way to look at the public image of modern religious organizations from a receptive perspective.

## **Chapter 6: An Ethnographic Study of Foguangshan**

### **6.1 Chapter Overview**

The thrust of the current research is to understand modern religious development in a Chinese context from the examination theoretically through the concept of secularization and empirically from the case of FGS in Taiwan. By using Casanova's framework on public religion, this study has investigated the publicness of FGS in the Taiwanese society in each on the three-leveled of the state, political and civil level. On top of that we have continued to examine other public aspects of FGS that could be visible and noticeable in Taiwan, including its geographical, institutional, discursive publicness. Throughout this enunciation, and from the historical overview in chapter three, we have also witnessed how the particular historical development of Taiwan in the past century, together with the new world-orienting philosophy that Venerable Taixu initiated and past on to subsequent Chinese Buddhist masters including Hsingyun, had propelled FGS and other Taiwanese Buddhism to invest heavily in engaging into the public society.

In this chapter we commence a final inspection of the public engagement of FGS, one that takes on a more subjective approach in trying to feel and understand the publicness of the Buddhist community from an ethnographic study that the researcher had personally undertaken in Taiwan during the spring of 2013. The purpose of this ethnographic approach is to provide an alterative aspect to see how the publicness of FGS is actually being conveyed and experienced in actual situations; a contrast to the rather distant and top-down analytical approach that were taken up in previous chapters. This ethnographic study also considers the

receptive aspect of the public engagement of FGS. The previous chapters have provided a glimpse on how FGS have disseminated into the society with different strategies and methods, and the philosophical, structural and institutional adaptation that it undertook to facilitate its engagement into the public. How such engagement and its associating discourses are being felt, experienced, and received from the people at the receptive aspect would be something worth considering. The section of discourses on FGS from secular newspapers in the previous chapter has given a little insight on the reception aspect of FGS's publicness from the media industry, an aspect that we have identified as dimensions outside the control of FGS. The ethnographic study in the following would continue in this thread to try to investigate the publicness of FGS from a reception pointed of view, hoping to construct a more comprehensive view of the subject alongside those that have been discussed earlier.

As discussed in the introduction of this study there is a significant gap amidst the myriads of academic studies in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, with the rather lacking of theoretical endeavor from both a sociological and cultural aspect. Considering the latter there has never been a true ethnographic studies of FGS. Among existing studies of FGS both Stuart Chandler and Richard Madsen have shown to spend time inside the monastery to conduct research for their works, but it was not their intention to adopt an ethnography approach and submerge themselves into the environment to reveal the experiential aspect as a person within the community, or to conduct any forms of participant observation and qualitative interviews with the people inside.

The core of this ethnography study took place from the 4th to the 25th of



February 2013 in the main temple of Foguangshan, Kaohsiung. I submerged into the environment working as a volunteer with other *fashi* and lay followers.

During this period I lived in the dormitory of the Male Buddhist Seminary (佛學院男眾部) with other male volunteers, followed the rules and routine of living in the monastery: worked, dined, and spent every minute as a volunteer and engaged with the people within the monastery. I took notes for my observation during the day, conducted informal interviews with people I encountered in a random basis, and wrote daily journals to keep record of my observations.

The ethnography was chosen specifically in this period to match the New Year Festive of Light and Peace, one was one of the most important event in Foguangshan that attracts million of visitors and thousands of FGS members to work as volunteers in the temple every year. It was also approximately a year after the opening of the Buddhist Memorial Center (BMC) – a time when the Center had most of its facilities completed and usable to the public and had gain enough experience from a year of operation while still maintaining its freshness as a new attraction for visitors. The ethnography at Foguangshan ended at the end of the February as the Festival came to an end, but the fieldwork continued as I relocated to the FGS branch in the Dalin Township (大林鎮) and Nanhua University where I continued to participate in various local FGS activities, and conducted interviews and fieldtrips across Central and Southern Taiwan. The chapter will consolidate this ethnographic study into a discussion of three areas: the people, the temple and the community, and the Spring Festival. An analysis of the findings will follow in connecting the ethnography with our previous discussion about the publicness of FGS.

## 6.2 The People<sup>450</sup>

### 6.2.1 Pei

Venerable Pei was the one waiting for me at the airport, he was assigned to coordinate and arrange for my arrival. Pei is one of the “higher ranked” *fashi* among the group of all-male *fashi* within the Executive Council (都監院), which is the highest execution body of the whole FGS organization. The Council is responsible for the execution of all the major events that take place in Foguangshan, with the coming Spring Festival the biggest annual event to kick off the calendar. Pei told me this would be the busiest time of the year on the mountain, and there will be up to two thousand *fashi* coming to stay in the temple to volunteer and participant in the myriad of activities that will take part in the Chinese New Year Festival of Light and Peace.

The drive took around thirty minutes from the airport to the temple, and around a few miles away on the highway I can already see the immense golden Buddha statue from the BMC, and as we get closer the Guanyin statue also came into sight. After entering FGS through the main gate we drove up the little slope on the right hand side and arrived at the Male Buddhist Seminary, the place where I will be staying for the coming month. This was my third time coming to the Foguangshan; the monastery has the same peacefulness and serenity as always but with an obvious buzz of the additional *fashi* and volunteers arrived for the coming festival, as well as the tens of thousands of Chinese lanterns, banners and decorations that had already been installed across the mountain.

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<sup>450</sup> Due to the research ethic in protecting and respecting confidentiality, anonymous names were used in this study for those who were being interviewed and observed during the ethnography.

After placing my belongings in my room Pei took me around the temple to get familiar with the surroundings. I was given a sheet of paper which was an itinerary consisting a schedule and details of the things that were planned for me during my stay, with clear instructions and the responsible person of each tasks. I realized that this itinerary was circulated among people who were related to my visit, including the director of the Executive Council and Venerable Chueming who referred my case to FGS and helped to organized this fieldtrip. This gave me an impression of a kind of management and operational model no different than other secular organizations and the attentions they paid in dealing with someone as trivial as me.

Pei first took me to meet Luo, a junior tutor of the Male Buddhist Seminary who will be taking care of the basic needs of my stay in the seminary such as accommodation and catering matters. Then he took me to meet the other *fashi* in the Executive Council office and particularly Venerable Chuan, the director of the Council. Chuan is the head figure of the mountain, operational and managerial-wise he is at the top of the hierarchy and he is responsible in making every important decisions on matters related to the mountain; he is like the Chief Executive Officer of FGS. Our meeting was brief, but Chuan obviously knew about my arrival and his willingness to meet me within his hectic schedule and his welcoming demeanor made me felt warm and sincerely accepted. Pei told me that even some *fashi* had never had the chance to talk directly to Chuan so I was lucky he had the time and will to meet me; Chuan was someone reverted by other *fashi* and lay members.

Afterwards Pei drove me out to a nearby town to handle some chores. First we went to the telephone network company to open a local phone card. We had difficulty to open a phone card for me at first because I am not a Taiwanese citizen and do not possess any working or student visa nor any prove of local address. The staff originally advised us to get a temporary phone card at a nearby convenient store, but after some friendly discussions they were willing to give us an exception with Pei explaining my affiliation with Foguangshan. Knowing that I am a “religious person” closely related to the temple accompanied by a FGS *fashi* they issued me the phone card after taken record of my passport, visa, and Pei’s identification document. Pei told me that religious personnel are also given other forms of privileges in Taiwan, and foreign people can enter Taiwan as a “religious person” if they can provide a letter of approval from any recognized religious organization to the immigration office; foreign people can obtain a residence visa in Taiwan if being approved and nominated by religious organization.”<sup>451</sup> Then we went to a grocery store to stock up some daily goods and items that I might need for the stay. I was advised to buy only vegetarian food to comply with the rule of the temple, which I found abundant choices inside the grocery store. The store seem to have comparatively more stocks suitable for vegetarians due to the extra demands of nearby Buddhist customers especially those coming from FGS. People on the street were indifferent to see a monk driving by or walking besides them; many were friendly and approached Pei with a smile or a greeting. The staff at the telephone network company and the cashier at the grocery store both had a chat with him on some trivial matters

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<sup>451</sup> Religious personnel can obtained a resident visa in the Republic of China (Taiwan) by applying “Resident Visas for Religious Work” if they have a certificate of registration or an invitation letter from a religious organization legally registered in the ROC. For details please see the website of Bureau of Consulate Affair, Ministry of Foreign Affair, ROC; <http://www.boca.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=6143&ctNode=778&mp=2> (accessed April 3, 2014).

during our encounter, and everyone seems to be used to the existence of monks in their neighborhood and they did not seem to treat them in any different way.

Pei had a friendly and approachable nature with an open mind, so I was not afraid to ask him different questions and raise discussion concerning FGS and Buddhism, which he was always willing to convene in an open manner. Pei told me that he came from Malaysia and has been a monk of FGS there before arriving in Kaohsiung a few years ago. Besides performing his duty as a member of the Executive Council in carrying out different events for FGS, he also spends time in academic researches and was finishing his master dissertation by the time I was in Kaohsiung. Because of that he was interested about my study in Hong Kong and my dissertation, and was enthusiastic to share his own writings with me. He also shared with me that after serving a few more years in the Executive Council he would like to be given the chance to station in other FGS overseas branches such as in the Philippines or Thailand, before returning to his home Malaysia in his later days.

By the time the Spring Festival approached and the workloads to meet the deadline intensified, the time I had in seeing Pei diminished as he was so tied up with the event while I was occupied with Pu and Han in handling the festive decorations. From my observation of the festive days I had spent with Pei and the Executive Council *fashi*, I could not recall any moment where they were given time to conduct any forms of Buddhist trainings and cultivations most ordinary people conventionally would expect, such as meditation, reading scriptures and other forms of rituals and prayers. Everyone of them had given all their time from morning till night preparing and working for the event and once they finished

their task for the day late at night they were so exhausted that they needed to head straight into bed. With the hectic schedule they had throughout the year in which events were followed by another event – almost a major event every month – I wonder how much time they have in between for matters that were not related to organization activities for FGS. Pei admitted that his schedule is occupied all around the year and that he do not have much time to engage in practices such as meditation or prayers, nor is there any opportunity for him as well as other *fashi* to have much or any at all the chance to see their master (Hsingyun) to engage in any form of discussion or knowledge transmission. Pei explained to me that he does not see these “conventional” forms of training as the only or the utmost important method to reach their religious/Buddhist ideals. He explained to me about the view that cultivations can be done through work and diligence and it is the outcomes of these actions that could concretely and directly achieve the Bodhisattva ideal in bringing the *Pureland* to the world. This mentality was vividly preached by Hsingyun and wholeheartedly embraced by Pei and other FGS *fashi* who I have meet during this fieldtrip.

### **6.2.2 Pu & Ren**

At the dawn on my third day on the mountain I was asked to assemble with hundreds of *fashi* and volunteers outside the canteen (齋堂) after breakfast. It was the first official day of a week of “communal labor” (出坡/普坡), and the task was to organize everyone to finish all the necessary preparation for the launching of the Spring Festival that is due to arrive in a week’s time. Participants were pre-assigned under different working groups under a group leader, and were lined up according to their group behind a wooden sign that indicates their group

number, their task for the day, the name of the group leader, and the number of workers under this group. After a briefing from the Executive Council director Chuan, all group dismissed to their designated task.

The main task for this series of communal labor is to finish installing the festive lanterns all across FGS and the BMC, and to finish the construction of the Bodhi Avenue (菩提大道) and its surrounding area before the New Year Festive of Light and Peace. The Bodhi Avenue, an area that combines the FGS temple on the mountain with the BMC down the backside of the hill, was a barren land just three weeks ago. While the construction of the area is around 70 percent finished by that time, there were still many works to be done with roads to be paved, hundreds of lighting to be installed, hectares of land to be furnished with trees and vegetation, tens of booths to be installed for selling local foods and drinks, as well as an outdoor dining area to be furnished for visitors to relax and consume the food they purchased from those booths. In retrospective I was surprised that we were able to finish all these works in under a week, as well as the number of human labor that were able to mobilized by FGS. Every *fashi* and volunteer was under extreme workload for long hours during this period, with many skipping proper meal and having only a few hours of sleep, especially for those from the Executive Council and other *fashi* who were assigned heavier responsibilities. It was interesting to recall from Pei on the first day of my arrival when he told me to expect bad tempers and attitudes from some *fashi* during this busy period, and that they were not casted due to any negative intension as everyone was just stressed out during this period, something that I have surely experienced.

I was assigned to a group of Executive Council *fashi* with the task to install and look after the big lighting decorations along the Bodhi Avenue. It was during this period that I met Venerable Pu and Venerable Ren, both from the Executive Council. Within this frenzied period I literally spent every whole day with either one of them or with another volunteer, Han, from morning after breakfast till going back to my room to rest at night. We would be driving around in different vehicles to travel around the huge temple complex, from a mini van for pace and convenience up to a big loading truck to carry different decorations and tools around for placement. I doubted anyone of them had a proper license to operate these vehicles but as Pei had told me, normal driving regulations do not apply within the FGS areas and the people within the monastery are given the freedom to set their own driving regulations. During breaks between works we were often treated with different vegetarian snacks and drinks coming from the canteen or the snack booths. We would then sit around to relish a little treat or if we were near the Executive Office, sit around in a room at the back of the office where most of the *fashi* from the Executive Office gathers to relax and have a chat during their free time.

Admittedly the long working hours and the manual works were quite exhausting, but this had given me an opportunity to spend a long time with Pu and Ren, talking with them and observing their daily life and interactions with others. Pu is a Taiwanese in his early thirties with a very calm temperament and a very small tone. Ren is a Malaysian in his late twenties, very talkative and expressive to an extent that he could go on talking non-stop for a quarter of an hour. In general they were very welcoming and sincere to me and to other volunteers, and they were very devoted to the tasks assigned to them without any



slight sign of complaint. They were always very willing to offer their assistance to others in needs even if it meant extra work, sacrificing their own time in other matters and often end up in skipping their meal or delaying their own tasks.

As Pu and Ren started to get used to my presence and we got more familiar with each other, they shared a lot of stories as well as their feelings toward FGS and their master Hsingyun. They were curious of my presence, as it seemed that I was the only foreigner who came to FGS as a volunteer for this year's event. They were also very interested towards my research. Ren was particularly fervent to address my study on the social engagement of FGS by telling me in detail the relief works FGS had provided for the victims of the 8/8 flood disaster in Southern Taiwan in 2009, and how FGS had respond quickly to provide relief services and donations to those victims. They told me how proud they were to what FGS had accomplished in the event and how they were helping the victims – most of them aboriginals – in ways that were different to other organizations that were also providing relief works. They were proud that FGS helped to reconstruct the aboriginal community by listening and consulting the aboriginals on their demands and how they wanted their homes to be reconstructed, and encouraged them to participate to do the construction together with the help and support from FGS. Comparing to other organization who helped the reconstruction without the involvement of the aboriginals, Ren and Pu were convinced that FGS's approach towards the relief works were more appropriate and it is more meaningful for the aboriginals to be involved in reconstructing their own homes. They revealed that some other involving religious organization had provided their help in demanding the aboriginals to affiliate to their religion in return.

Apart from their pride towards their monastery I also noticed their true respect and affection towards their master Hsingyun. In many conversations I had from them, they showed how they sincerely respect the ideals of Hsingyun in attempting to change the world by offering unconditional service to the people. They were very touched by his effort and revealed that they were willing to do whatever they can to assist him in achieving his ideals, even if “I worked until I only had one eye and one hand left”, Ren told me. They also took up Hsingyun’s Humanistic Buddhism wholeheartedly, entrusting undoubtedly of the social engaging approach in bringing the *Pureland* into this world, and that they as a *fashi* should walk on the Bodhisattva Path in achieving such ideal through actual actions among the people and the society. Similar to Pei they saw these actions and devotion to work as a method for cultivation in place of those “traditional” Buddhist monastic practices such as reading scriptures, meditation, chanting, or consulting with their master.

Their passion towards Hsingyun were ubiquitous among many other *fashi* and volunteers I encountered in the temple, as I was able to witness at a night assembly held a few days before the commencing of the Spring Festival. The assembly featured the appearance of Hsingyun for an early celebration of the festival, giving his blessing and showing his gratitude to the *fashis* and volunteers who came to the temple for their efforts in preparing for the event. The assembly was held at an auditorium that could hold up to around five hundred people, but the assembly was so overcrowded that hundreds of extra seats were added. The presence of Hsingyun on the stage was met with such huge applause and cheers similar to the presence of a top politician or a pop star; his speech was received earnestly from the audience with concurring nods, determined eyes, and ardent

applauses. Alike many audience in the venue, my volunteer friend Han who was sitting next to me cheered for Hsingyun with strong affection and excitement, listening with intense attention and recognition, and at some point it seemed like tears were appearing in his eyes.

The supreme status of Hsingyun among the FGS community, and their immense respect and affection towards their beloved master is easily palpable through events like this. However such unconditional affection towards their charismatic leader can also lead to some unintended disfavoring results, such as inefficiency, disorganization, and poor execution, mostly due to their irrational sentiment and their unconditional trust towards those up of the religious hierarchy who they believed were intrinsically superior both spiritually and intellectually. This form of voluntary submission did not appear only towards Hsingyun but also towards other members who were perceived to be higher in the FGS hierarchy: volunteers towards the *fashi*, *fashi* to those “higher” *fashi*, and everyone towards Hsingyun. I was able to experience this feature towards the Executive Council *fashi* in an incidence during a night of our construction work on the Bodhi Avenue.

That night Pu, Ren, Han and I were installing twelve human-sized puppet monk lanterns on a part of the side-path of the Bodhi Avenue, with tens of other *fashi* working on other decorations and installments nearby. We planned to place the puppets in a way that they will be facing to a certain direction so that the visitors walking up the slope can see the front-side of these puppets. The installation was almost finished as we stabilized them with long steel nails and wires before the Head of the Executive Council Chuan came by for a night

inspection at around ten o'clock. He was not satisfied with the placement and gave his opinions and instructed on how to implement them that he thought to be better. His arrival attracting other *fashi* around to gather and listen to his comments, everyone accepted his suggestion without any question and instantly dismantled all twelfth puppets without any hesitation. At that time I already had doubt in my mind about Chuan's suggestions as I did not think there were any problem in the placement at the first place, and I am curious why everybody did not even hesitate and think through carefully. Eventually as the puppets were being installed following the Head's instruction we found out that it did not work properly and had to re-arrange them again according to the original method. This incidence resulted in around fifteen *fashi* and volunteers working for a couple of extra hours into midnight, and a few of us continuing for a few hours the next afternoon because of the delay caused on other tasks. However neither Pu, Ren, Han nor anyone else seemed to have questioned the Head's idea one bit and truly thought that the resulting placement was better than the first, and pay tributes to his wit and leadership.

The inefficiency and lack of organization among the *fashi* was frequently felt during my time volunteering with the Executive Office *fashi*. Despite having an overall picture of the scheduling of their tasks, the *fashi* did not map out any detail plan and did not seem to prioritize their works. Their plans were all decided spontaneously each day and on many occasions we will have to put down our work in hand to go assist in other matters, which might not have any urgent importance. On the other hand many of the tasks were not planned and organized properly beforehand, and communications between different teams were poor, which really affected the efficiency of the team in which we often have to go

back and forth on the same task for different reasons. Even Pu admitted to me that they are quite spontaneous with their work. This is not hard to understand because almost all the construction and decoration on the mountain were done by the *fashi*, who were not professionals in these areas. This disorganization and inefficiency may be due to that fact that with FGS being a religious community in such a large scale, sometimes certain aspect of the organization reaches a point that needs to be institutionalized in a way similar to a secular organizations, the hierarchy, authority and human management that entails might contradict to their religious nature and its philosophies.

### **6.2.3 The Volunteers Ai and Bin**

During the fieldwork I stayed at the Male Buddhist Seminary, a two-stories white building with the Great Wisdom Shrine (大智殿) placed in the middle. It is the dwelling and studying area for those males who had decided to take tonsure (出家) and join the FGS *sangha* or partaking in a temporary “experiential” renounce program (短期出家) to learn about Buddhism; therefore the area is restricted to outside visitors throughout most of the year. For such reasons the area has everything a Buddhist seminary needs: classrooms, library, teaching staff office, kitchen, storage rooms on the ground floor, with the first floor entirely used as dormitories for the students; there are toilets in both floors with washing and spinning machines placed in the hallway.

As it was the month of the Spring Festival, which is a very important festive period for Taiwanese people and therefore has a long public holiday stretching six days with another Lanterns Day a week later to end the festive period, most of

the students of the seminary had left Foguangshan and went home to spend the holidays. As a result the dormitories were now used as temporary accommodations for young male volunteers who will be arriving in the temple for the coming New Year Festive of Light and Peace. There are four long corridors with around eight rooms in each side, and inside every room there are three two-stories beds providing six sleeping area and a few storage places. When I first arrived there were only a few volunteers staying in the dormitories, as it was still around a week before the Chinese New Year and most Taiwanese were still in school or work. But as the festive approaches the volunteers start coming in and by the first week of the holidays almost every bed had been occupied.

I had a good chance to meet different young male volunteers in the dormitories. Most of them were high school or university students, or just came out to work for a few years. All of those I encountered were local Taiwanese from all over the island – except an African American currently in Taipei teaching English and came to Foguangshan in the festive season. I was not able to spend much time with many of them as I was busy in different tasks for long hours every day, but I did managed to commence some long conversations with two of the inmates who shared the same room with me – Ai, a travel agent in Taipei in his early twenties and Bin, a university student.

Bin shared the room with me for a few days early before the holidays while Ai arrived right before the holidays and spend almost the entire three weeks with me. Both had a lot in common regarding their relationship with FGS, participating in activities in their local branches and pays visit to Foguangshan during special occasion throughout the year. They also had similar views towards

FGS as a religious institution in Taiwanese, seeing both positive and negative images of the monastery among the members and common citizens. The positives were the different services that FGS is able to provide for the people in Taiwan, in particular through education and emergence relief works; the negative image of FGS was due to the overt political involvement of Hsingyun and the public recognition of his bias towards the blue camp (KMT); both Ai and Bin thought that a religious master should not have any preference towards politics, a view they thought to be commonly shared among other lay members of FGS.

They told me that FGS is the most socially engaged among the four Buddhist Mountains in Taiwan. Ciji, in their opinion, is becoming less involved in the society and therefore they see them in a diminishing trend in popularity in Taiwan. In terms of religion in Taiwan, they told me that they regard most people in Taiwan as religious, even among young populations. One of the indicators, as Bin told me, is that Taiwanese will go to different temples often for auspicious purposes and asks for blessing, which Bin and many of his friends do. As a young lay Buddhist he does not feel any contradictions in being a Buddhist and conducting these other religious activities, and claimed that for Taiwanese, “religion is a part of life”. Ai also concurred with such claim and being an even more committed lay Buddhist he also do not see any problem of paying visits to temples of other deities. Bin also said that Buddhism is the second largest religion in Taiwan, the biggest is Daoism, which includes the belief in Mazhu.

#### 6.2.4 Han

During the first week of my stay in Foguangshan working as a volunteer for the Executive Council, I have met another young Taiwanese volunteer Han. Han is a Malaysian young man in his mid twenties who had been living in Australia since his early teens. He was a youth member of the FGS branch in both Australia and New Zealand and was a frequent participant of Nan Tien Temple, the Australian branch of FGS. After graduating from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand with a degree in East Asian Studies, he came to Taiwan and enrolled into a master degree program in Buddhist Studies in Fo Guang University. By the time we met he was already in his second year of study with one final year left. He shared with me that he plans to continue in his pursue towards learning about Buddhism and decided to take tonsure and become a disciple of master Hsingyun after graduation. By the time I am writing this chapter in early 2014 he was already in his first year of study in the Buddhist Seminary and heading towards becoming a member of the FGS *sangha*.

Han and I were being asked to report to the office of the Executive Council every morning, before being delegated with different tasks from Pu. From then on we would go around the mountain together on different vehicles, mostly with Han driving the long truck, installing and repairing the festive decorations. During meal time we would be eating lunch-boxes together or if we have time, enjoy a simple vegetarian buffet at the Pilgrim's Lodge (朝山會館). If we have a little time to take a break between work we would go to the little storage room near the Executive Council office inside Jade Buddha Building (玉佛樓) to take a



nap, surf the Internet, or for my own purpose look through the publications and documents placed inside the storage room for my research.

Han has a very calm and composed personality, and his passion and commitment towards Buddhism and FGS can be easily spotted from his zealous and wholehearted attitude towards other *fashi* and his full dedication towards the tasks in hand. When we talked about Buddhism and FGS in particular his immense admiration towards Hsingyun and Buddhism can be seen from the expression of his eyes and sound. But apart from the time that I started to ask or talk about topics related to Buddhism or FGS, Han never really initiated any conversations of such nature; we mostly conversed in some random topics one often found between ordinary young men: sports, career, our different culture and background, relationships, etc. Han never tried to proselytize me or inculcate me with good words about FGS during those long days we spend with each other; one might expect at least a small degree of persuasion if you spend such long time with a passionate Christian in a Christian setting. In retrospective none of the volunteers I have met in FGS really tried to convert me to become a Buddhist, even those *fashi* seldom tried to “sell” me about the goodness of their organization or Hsingyun with any wisdoms from Buddha or the scriptures. All I heard from some of them were their wish for me to come back to FGS and Taiwan in the future.

With Han’s background – being an oversea Chinese, fluent in English, Mandarin and English, a university graduate from an oversea institute, young, energetic and passionate – it is not surprising that he is being held in high regard from FGS; carefully nurtured and given many opportunities within the

organization. Early in his study days in Fo Guang University he was already a tutor and teaching assistance with himself only being a second year master degree student. This is not a surprise given FGS's inclination to recruit young and educated people to join their monastery, either into the *sangha* or its lay associations. One motive of such recruitment maybe due to its aim in establishing themselves with a public image of being energetic, sophisticated, and well-educated. I had also been asked in different occasions by the *fashi* whether I would be interested to stay in Taiwan to work in different lay positions for FGS, telling me that my profile as an educated youth can lead me to many opportunities and with different platforms to “shine” within the organization. In a sense their approach in inviting people to join their community was a bit different from what I expected, or what people would expect from a religious organization; the invitation was not much done by conveying religious concepts or doctrines but by this form of talent recruitment and job placement similar to other workplace.

A couple of days before the arrival of the Spring Festival there was a large vegetarian hot-pot buffet banquet in the Cloud Dwelling Building (雲居樓), a gathering for the close members of the FGS temple and its followings in the neighborhood – the *fashi*, the lay employees on the mountain, lay volunteers, and their relatives. There were more than a hundred tables in the huge column-less hall with thousands of FGS family members enjoying the fest. The buffet was preceded by the appearance and a short speech given by Hsingyun, where I saw the same zeal and excitement among the attendees because of his sheer presence. At the buffet I was able to meet the relatives of some of the *fashi*, some who came a long way from different part of Taiwan. I sat in a table with Han, some of

his classmates from Buddhist Studies in Fo Guang University, Venerable Shen – another *fashi* I met who teaches in the University, and Shen’s mother, sister, brother-in-law, and their two children. Shen introduced his relative members to me during the buffet, and from our conversation it seemed that they were not committed followers of Buddhism but rather drawn into the community because of Shen. Han’s classmates were not as articulated as he was, and did not display the same degree of vibe and passion as Han towards FGS and Hsingyun. And during the whole night not a signal conversation was conducted in related to FGS, Hsingyun or Buddhism in general, making this huge hot-pot banquet felt more like a community gathering than a religious event.

The families and friends of the *fashi* and followers included people of young and old, and I was a little bit surprised to see so many young people joining the buffet, ranging from small children of a few years old up to high school and university students. It might be more common in this part of Taiwan, or in smaller cities, where young people are more willing to follow their families in attending different activities. Or it might be that this kind of event is such a big and attract event in this small township, where there is not much entertainment otherwise. In either case it suggested that for the local people of this area of Kaohsiung, events like this held by FGS might not only be solely of religious nature, but a form of entertainment, a part of their communal life, and a tradition especially during the festive period.

### 6.2.5 The Chen's Family

After around a week working with the Executive Council team I was transferred to work with the “lunchbox team” located at the basement of the Three Good Building (三好樓). The team was assembled to cook and pack thousands of lunchboxes to the *fashi* and volunteers who will be working in Foguangshan during the Spring Festival. The team consisted of both *fashi* and volunteers and was separated into two groups: one working inside a large kitchen cooking food for the lunchboxes and another responsible for packing the lunchboxes and delivering it to different locations across the mountain. In contrast to my previous team of *fashi* from the Executive Council, this “lunchbox team” comprised of only female *fashi*, and most of the volunteers were middle age to elderly women alongside a few children volunteers. I was allocated to work with the group packing the lunchboxes, responsible to take count of the packed lunchboxes in communication with a few supervising *fashi*, and helped delivering them with a team of male volunteers.

The activities of the Spring Festival on Foguangshan lasts for a month so the “lunchbox team” will be active during this period when there will be hundreds of volunteers working at different stations throughout the mountain. But it will be the first two weeks that overlapped with the Taiwanese public holidays that would have the largest amount of visitors to the temple and the BMC. So it was expected that the first two weeks will be extremely busy with up to two thousands of lunchboxes needed to be packed twice everyday, one to be delivered around noon and another around five o'clock. I was being asked by the team in-charge to arrive at the location around 7:30 a.m. every morning for breakfast, at a time

where the cooking team had already been preparing and cooking the food for the lunchboxes. Most of the other volunteers of the packing team arrives sometimes before nine, and after all the food had been cooked, the packing starts at around 9:30 a.m. after a set of morning chanting led by the *fashi*. The packing takes around two hours and by around 11:30 a.m. a few male members and I will start to load the lunchboxes to a truck and deliver them to two locations in the BMC. The first delivery finishes after around an hour, after lunch and a little time of rest, the whole process starts again at around two o'clock and the day finishes around six in the evening when the second delivery is done.

There were around forty volunteers working in the “lunchbox team” everyday, with around ten cooking in the kitchen and the remaining in the packing team. There were some volunteers who appears constantly by most of them comes and goes in a few days. I was able to get familiar with a few volunteers who came often in particularly those male volunteers who deliver the lunchboxes with me everyday; this included the father and sons of the Chen’s family. The Chen’s family has been volunteering for the “lunchbox team” for up to a decade and some of the other long-serving volunteers had seen their children grew up since they were little children. The father of the Chen’s, Dao, is a driver at around forty years old, the mother is a housewife; their eldest son, Yi, is a junior high school student, the second daughter is in eighth grade and the smallest son, Du, is in seventh grade. They live in Kaohsiung with Dao’s mother and the whole family drives to Foguangshan every morning during the period to volunteer for the “lunchbox team”. Mr. Dao is a very sociable and passionate person, and because I was the only volunteer from overseas during this period, as I have been told, the volunteers were interested about my presence and Dao had

approached me since the very first day and we befriended each other shortly. We literally spent each day of these two weeks together, and despite being extremely busy when packing the lunchboxes I was able to converse with them during meal time and the twenty minutes ride around the mountain from the packing station and BMC delivering the lunchboxes.

The Chen's family is an active member of FGS. Apart from committing to volunteer works during the Spring Festival, they also pays frequent visits to the temple for other events during the year, and are active participants of their local FGS branch in Kaohsiung city. Dao became a member of FGS because of his mother who has long been a follower of Buddhism, and all of their children is a member of the BLIA youth group (佛光青年團) and often participates in different youth activities held by the group. Being a FGS member is like a family tradition for the Chen's, but they are also committed to be a FGS member because they are impressed by its humanistic nature, not only for its provision of different social services in the society, but for it being able to address the everyday issues of ordinary people. They think that the Humanistic Buddhism that FGS propagates can make Buddhism relevant to their daily life as well as to the need and demand of the society; it is a form of modern transformation of Buddhism that gives meaning and support for the individuals within their modern life. They are also impressed by how Hsingyun was able to foresee such a plan to modernize Buddhism and his audacity to follow this vision in building his Buddhist empire in just a few decades.

Dao has taken up the lay precept for many years. But besides being a vegetarian for many years he seldom performs chanting or read different

Buddhist texts and related publications throughout his daily life. Apart from incorporating some Buddhist practices into his lifestyle, such as vegetarianism and the five lay precepts, Dao does not seem to have the urge in pursuing a more advance route towards personal cultivation or engaging in more contemplative form of activities such as meditation. In his own response the reason was that he sees the Humanistic Buddhism that Hsingyun is propagating as a form of belief and lifestyle that is being acted within daily life; cultivation is done within the things being acted in everyday life: the things you do, the words you say, and the motivations behind these acts. Dao admires this form of Humanistic Buddhism as promoted by Hsingyun, and he thinks that it is no longer the imperative to renounce into solitude or conduct meditation in a personal and secluded place. These are no longer viewed, as Dao explained, as the only form of cultivation in attaining certain religious or personal ideals; such ideals can be achieved by actions and demonstrates through the proper interactions with other people. In the words of Humanistic Buddhism, the ultimate ideal is to bring the *Pureland* into this world, making our world as peaceful and blissful as the paradise. The task for every renounced and lay Buddhists is to attain this ideal by conducting good actions to directly making the world (society) a better place (such as alleviating the sufferings of the poor by donations); or by such good actions and the performance of other good conducts in their daily life demonstrates the “goodness” of a FGS member, and by that enhances the reputation of FGS and attracts other non-believers to follow and become a member of the Buddhist group. Such indirect form of proselytization would not only increase the number of people conducting good actions to reach the ideal of this-worldly *Pureland*, but to those individuals who initiated such action they could gain much deed for their own religious (Buddhist) benefits. This social engagement as cultivation

philosophy as told by Dao was well in line with the same philosophy that the *fashi* from the Executive Office had explain to me, and by this it is quite obvious that FGS and Hsingyun has been consistent in conveying such vision throughout the whole community.

In the second and third week of my volunteer work in the “lunchbox team” I have become very close with the Chen’s family, with Dao’s sons Yi and Du both really relishing my company. I also got familiar with their aunt Gu, who is around 30 years old also living in Kaohsiung and came to assist in the “lunchbox team” for a few days. Besides spending time together and talk during volunteering, Yi, Du, Gu and I also spend our lunchtime and after work time entertaining ourselves in different activities and performances of the Spring Festival throughout Foguangshan, as well as treating ourselves in the street-food market that was opened just outside of the main entrance of FGS, who came to do business just during this period to catch the crowd. Despite being the children of such a devoted member of FGS, they were not forced to follow the lifestyle of their father nor does it seem that they were interested in such commitment, at least not at the moment. They do not practice vegetarianism, nor do they chant or perform any kind of rituals and activities in their daily life as do their father. They do follow their father around in different activities held by FGS and were themselves members of the “FGS Youth Group”, which is why they seem very accustom to the settings, but it does not seem that their life is in anyway influenced by it, nor do their lifestyle looks anyway different from a non-Buddhist teenager. From the view of an outside observer, their acquaintance with FGS seem not to be a result of their own choice or religious need, but more because the monastery was an organization and community introduced to them by their parents where they



spend their leisure time and holidays. This is also similar to Gu's participation in FGS as well as some other younger volunteers I met during the Spring Festival.

### **6.3 The Temple and the Dashu District**

During the past three weeks on Foguangshan I had witnessed a big change of scenery of the area transforming from a quiet monastery with only a few *fashi* and visitors wandering around the temple, into a crowded mountain full of excited families and friends spreading across every inches of land enjoying their festive holidays. All the hostels and accommodation area were filled with volunteers and visitors, and both the member's catering area in the Pilgrims Lodges and the restaurants across the temple and the BMC were also packed with customers. Long queues can be seen throughout the day outside of the bookstore in the Cultural Square (文教廣場) in the main square outside the Non Duality Gate (不二門) for the shuttle buses service that carries visitors between the temple and the BMC, with *fashi* driving golf carts to carry elderlies and families up and down the hill inside the temple. The local governing body gave special privileges to FGS in their own administration and autonomy within its own territories, with these shuttle buses and golf carts being allowed to operate by its own regulations. As said it is not necessary for the *fashi* and their authorized personal to have a proper driving license to be allowed to drive within the territories under FGS admission; the *fashi* from the Executive Council and Han were driving different models of trucks within the temple and between BMC without such license. It seems that FGS were given many privilege to manage their property within this large stretch of land in the countryside of Kaohsiung city.

The difference can also be seen outside the temple. The monastery is located in an area of the Dashu District consisting of a very small community, surrounded by mountains and woodlands and a small neighborhood outside its main entrance. In the front of the temple is the Xingtian Road that connects the temple to the BMC and to the main road and highways that leads to other part of the region. Along that road across the temple is a large parking area that could park over hundreds of vehicles. In the first few days of my presence the neighborhood seemed like a deserted area, with all the shops closed but one small grocery where I was able to find milk and some snacks. The large parking area was also vacant, with the small vegetarian restaurant and souvenir shop on the side closed for most of the day. This all changed as soon as the holidays approached, with the shops outside the main entrance all opened for business, with hawkers arriving selling all kind of snacks and treats. The streets outside of the main entrance and along the Xingtian road were now packed with cars searching and waiting for parking spots, with people taking advantage of this congestion by ushering drivers looking for parking spots to other open areas to park and make themselves some extra money. The vegetarian restaurant and the souvenir shop were now welcoming endless customers, and the large piece of vacant land right outside of the main entrance was now occupied with around twenty temporary booth selling all kinds of popular street foods.

The streets along the entrance area of the temple and the BMC were crowded with incoming vehicles and visitors. These visiting vehicles, together with all kinds of street vendors coming to do business, have made the traffic to be so crowded that traffic controls were needed to direct traffic and deal with the congestion. The parking area outside of the BMC was loaded with coaches

carrying tourists to visit this new attraction in Southern Taiwan. While most of these tourists were local Taiwanese coming from different cities of the island, I also recognized tours from overseas, with guides waving flags indicating travel companies from Mainland China, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The tour guide of the Hong Kong travel agency Hong Tai informed me that their visit to the BMC was not specially request from any bodies or anyone, nor was this tour especially identified as a religious/ Buddhist tour, but Foguangshan and the BMC have now become one of the site-seeing spot alongside other tourist attractions in most of the tours coming to Kaohsiung and Southern Taiwan – it has become a regular visiting spot in any trip coming to Kaohsiung. The temple and the BMC had now become not only a new popular attraction for tourists, but had developed into something that could represent Taiwan for both foreigners and the Taiwanese themselves, regardless whether any religious or Buddhists contents is involved. The opening of the BMC has made the site to become a common visiting site for many local and international tours when traveling into southern Taiwan, which significantly helped exposing FGS to the global audience.

From statistics issued from the Tourism Bureau Kaohsiung City Government, the BMC has become one of the most popular tourist spot in the larger Kaohsiung area. From January to April 2012 there were over 5.66 million visitors to the BMC, well ahead of second place Cijin Beach (1.68 million) and third place the Pier- 2 Art Center (1.2 million). In 2011 Foguangshan was only in second place of the most visited tourist location from January to April with one million, but with the completion of the BMC in December that year, the number

multiplied fivefold in becoming the top tourist attraction in Kaohsiung.<sup>452</sup> The Tourism Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communication also announced that Foguangshan sat on the top spot with 2.43 million of visitors as the most visited location during the Spring Festival in the whole Taiwan of 2013, and in the whole February of 2013 Foguangshan also top the list of the most Visitors to the Principal Scenic Spots in Taiwan with four million, with the second and third the Bei Gang Chao Tian Temple (北港朝天宮) and Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple (大甲鎮瀾宮) around two million, all of them religious sites.<sup>453</sup> From the statistic of the Most Visitors to the Principal Scenic Spots of Kaohsiung city of the year 2012 Foguangshan topped with nine million visitors in total, almost double of second place Cijin Beach, and comprised of one-third of the total 29.6 million visitors to Kaohsiung City in the whole year.<sup>454</sup> The Bureau also reported that the occupancy of all kinds of accommodation in Kaohsiung City reached its height during the Spring Festival of 2012, with the third and fourth day of the Chinese New Year reaching 100 percent occupancy, as well as an annual increase of 14.5 percent of accommodation users reaching 6.88 million in 2012. With the astonishing growth of the number of visitors to Kaohsiung allured by the new BMC, it would not be an exaggeration to identify its huge impact to the overall tourism and its related economy of the city of Kaohsiung and Taiwan at large.

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<sup>452</sup> Report from the Tourism Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government on 31/5/2012 from News Achieve of the Tourism Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government website; [http://tourism.kcg.gov.tw/tw/index.asp?au\\_id=151&sub\\_id=148&Page=1](http://tourism.kcg.gov.tw/tw/index.asp?au_id=151&sub_id=148&Page=1) (accessed April 3, 2014).

<sup>453</sup> Report on the “Visitors to the Principle Scenic Spot 2013”, from the website of the Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communication Republic of China at [http://admin.taiwan.net.tw/statistics/month2\\_en.aspx?no=22](http://admin.taiwan.net.tw/statistics/month2_en.aspx?no=22) (accessed April 3, 2014).

<sup>454</sup> “高雄市主要觀光遊憩區遊客人次表(101年1~12月)”, from the website of the Tourism Bureau Kaohsiung City Government; [http://tourism.kcg.gov.tw/tw/index.asp?au\\_id=151&sub\\_id=147&Page=2](http://tourism.kcg.gov.tw/tw/index.asp?au_id=151&sub_id=147&Page=2) (accessed April 4, 2014).

## 6.4 The Spring Festival

The figures from the Travel Bureau were no exaggeration of the crowd that was presented at Foguangshan. There are two main attractions in FGS during the festive season, one was the BMC and the one was the lantern exhibition decorated in the Bodhi Avenue connecting the main temple and the BMC. All these attractions were open to the public free of charge daily, and visitors could also obtain a certain amount of coupons in exchange for different food and drinks that were offered by the vegetarian food stalls located across the temple. The Spring Festival here in FGS will be held for a month from the first day of the Chinese calendar. The main crowd was expected to arrive starting from the Chinese New Year's Eve for two weeks up to the Lantern Festival (元宵) on the 15th, with the first six days particularly congested with the overlapping of the public holiday of Taiwan. Apart from the attractions of the hundreds of lantern decorations throughout the temple and the Fo Guang Avenue, which was part of the Kaohsiung City Spring Light Festival (高雄燈會) held by the Kaohsiung City Government, there were also many different activities being held during this period, including different collective rituals, chanting, scripture transcription, wishing ceremonies, dharma meetings, art exhibitions, and parades.

The parades were in particularly intriguing. There were two main parades held everyday for the first two weeks of the festival. One was the “Three Good Carnival Parade” (三好嘉年華會), held twice everyday at around 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. respectively. The parade comprised of many groups of performers from different FGS volunteer units, with the accompanying of parade vehicles garnished with different Buddhist theme decoration and lightings marching from the Fuhai Home for Spiritual Cultivation (福慧家園) on the left side of the

temple through the Fo Guang Avenue ending at the Bodhi Square at the BMC. These volunteer groups consisted of a marching band from the students of Pu-Men Secondary School, Chinese dancers from the female dancing group, dragon dance performers, and other volunteer groups from other volunteer units all dressed up and fully rehearsed. The parade drew many spectators to gather and watch along the marching path not only for entertaining purposes, but also for auspicious reasons by taking part in such auspicious activities (not just only by watching by also in interaction with the march such as receiving those little Buddhist gifts given out by the parade band).

The other parade was the “Bring Your Own Lamp Parade/ Light Offering Ceremony” (提燈大會). It is worth recording in more details not only because I was personally involved in it but also for its significance in illustrating the syncretic and inclusive nature of FGS and Chinese Buddhism in general. After working for the “mealbox team” for ten days Pei exempted me from the duty, knowing that I still have to spend time doing my research, searching through the library and archive as well as writing my preliminary fieldwork notes. Therefore instead of spending hours in volunteering for the “mealbox team”, he assigned me to assist in the “Bring Your Own Lamp Parade” and the “Light Holding Assembly”. This ceremony was one of the main events of the FGS Spring Festival and was held every night at seven o’clock from Jan 1st to the 15th of the Chinese lunar calendar. My duty was to take charge of the gong: an important item of the ceremony carrying certain important religious symbolization. Apart from carrying the gong on and off the stage during the starting ceremony for ritual performance, I also need to carry the gong in front of the marching parade, and striking it in intervals of every few seconds. The ceremony starts with an

opening ceremony at the Main Shrine, with the host introducing the ceremony and the ceremony guests, followed by the chanting of Buddhist scriptures from abbot Hsin Pei (心培和尚), an incense ceremony (香雲蓋/上香), and ended with the kick-start of the marching assembly by hitting the gong thrice (鳴鑼三響). Then the participants, who were holding lanterns of various kinds, starts to march following the lead of the gong from the Main Shrine pass the temple, the Fo Guang Avenue, the Welcoming Hall (禮敬大廳) at the BMC, the Path to Buddhahood (成佛大道), and gathered at the Photo Terrance (萬人照相台) in front of the Bodhi Square at the BMC.

During those few days when I was assisting the parade there was an average of a few hundred of crowd gathering at the Main Shrine to participate in the ceremony. Pei told me that the participants for the parade were a few times more in the first few days of the Spring Festival when the visitors were at its peak. The marching crowd follows the lead of the gong and a band of Chinese drums and cymbals, and in some days a famous Taiwanese acrobatic performer will also be performing acrobatics alongside the crowd, which was more of an entertainment for the crowd than for any ritualistic or religious significance. The march lasts for approximately 30 minutes from its starting point to the ending at the BMC, and many of those who were within the area visiting the temple and the lantern displays would join the marching crowd towards the destination at the BMC. When arriving at the front gate of the BMC the march hauls and a public broadcast will make an announcement to inform the crowd who are already in the BMC to join the parade and the ritual that will commence ahead in the Bodhi Square. At the main entrance the march would also be “welcomed” by four dancing Nezha mascot (電音三太子) dancing at the entrance, who then joins the

parade alongside a few parade vehicles decorated with different Buddhist deities and lightings (vehicles which were also used in the Three Good Carnival Parade). The crowd then, which had already grown up to thousands, would gather at the Photo Terrace facing the large Buddha statue where the Light Offering Ceremony (獻燈祈福) was held. The ceremony is hosted again by Abbot Hsin Pei, starting with the chanting of scriptures, followed by the broadcasting of a vow recorded by Hsingyun and then the practice of merit transference (回向), and ends in culmination with a large firework display.

The firework display that was exhibited every night of the Light Assembly for fifteen consecutive days was rather an extravagance where hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese dollars were being burnt every night. While different groups and individuals sponsored the expenses of the firework, the display nevertheless gives spectators a sense of extravagance and lavishness unassociated with the convention conception of Buddhism. On the other hand the firework display also seemed to contradict the environmentalism that FGS was promoting, and many criticized that the large sum of money used for the firework could be used on other channels that could be more direct in providing services to those in need such as through charity and donation. I talked to Pei regarding this issue and he responded in saying that although the firework seemed wasteful in many eyes, what is important is to provide happiness (歡喜心) to those who came to the ceremony, and it is such happiness they experienced that they could bring back home and could help to promote and spread the words of Buddhism (*jieyuen*). Such response was not a direct answer to the questioning of extravagance and related critics, but a kind of Buddhist logic and reasoning the *fashi* commonly uses to engage such questions.



Another interesting thing about this Light Assembly was the existence of the assembly itself and the way it was being executed. The Light Assembly (燈會) is a traditional Chinese custom that is associated with the celebration of the Chinese New Year and in particular the Lantern Festival (元宵節) on Jan 15th of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is not a Buddhist tradition per se but I believed that throughout the historical development of Buddhism in China it has somehow incorporated this custom into its tradition. It is not a rarity that many of the Buddhist assemblies (法會) were a hybrid with traditional Chinese customs and this Light Assembly was among one of them. On the other hand the way the assembly was designed and executed was also intriguing in a way that it had incorporated many non-Buddhist elements into its performances. The assembly was a combination of different Buddhist rituals and many other elements of different nature: the firework display was a religious unrelated spectacle; the addition of the marching vehicles decorated with Buddhist characters and light effects were a blend of modern technology; and the involvement of the Nezha mascot was an inclusion of Daoist deities and local religious elements. The Nezha mascot itself is an interesting religious phenomenon in contemporary Taiwan with a mixture of Taiwanese culture of traditional Daoist deity belief and modern dance/disco subculture. The integration of these non-Buddhist elements into its core ceremonies and the way these activities were being organized raised different questions regarding how FGS defines the boundary of Buddhism and to a wider topic of the development of the religious cultural phenomenon in modern Taiwan.

This kind of parade in the Light Assembly was very similar to the “deities parades” (眾神巡遊) that could be found across the streets of Taiwan; in a way

the parade in the Light Assembly *was* one of these deities parade. Recalling my previous conversation with volunteer Ai and Bin in hostel, they told me that the people in the central and southern part of Taiwan are more religious who engages in many religious related activities and are more credence to the reliability and credibility of the deities. Therefore it is possible to spot more temples and “deities parades” in the street of Southern Taiwan, in particular in Tainan. I did not visit Tainan during my research trip but I was able to witness a few of these “deities parades” in the city center of Kaohsiung and Chiayi. These parades all have similar features but are different in scale in according to the number and popularity of the deities involved. One of the parades I have spotted in Chiayi was a celebration of the “White River Deity” (白河聖帝會). The parade consisted of the following: around ten to twenty different marching deities dressed up by people in costume; people carrying a kind of an altar which should be a very sacred object presumably the abode of the deity; bands of large drums and gongs; up to maybe tens of vehicles lightly decorated with ribbons and banners; two jeeps playing loud disco music each having a dance pole installed on the top of the car and a sexily dressed lady dancing on it; and other marching people probably members of these religious communities. The marching line was very long and consisted of a few hundred marchers, and occasionally there will be small fireworks displayed along the march. The parade drew many pedestrians and passing-by vehicles to stop by and watch, and despite the long parade line marching on the busy and narrow streets of central Chiayi city, the pedestrians and drivers did not seem to be bothered by the congestion caused from the parade. Also there were not anyone from the authority to maintain traffic flow and safety, and it was someone from the parade who was in control of the parade and the traffic, blocking cars and giving orders to them to change their directions.

The thing that the drivers and pedestrians were very willing to comply showed their acceptance of these deity parades in their community, and their respects to those deities that are in their neighborhood.

These deities parade was a good demonstration of the distinctive local religious practice that has developed in modern Taiwan. The involvement of different deities, the integration of different modern elements such as the disco music and LED light decorations, and the existence of those sexy-dressed female pole dancer, were all an illustration of a religious activity that incorporates many religious and cultural elements together – an unique development of religious practices in contemporary Taiwan. The similarity of the parade of the Light Assembly in FGS to these “deities parades” across Taiwan shows that the former is well within the larger religious and cultural landscape of the society.

## **6.5 Discussion**

We have seen from above that FGS has great influence not only on the local Dashu District but also on the larger region of the Kaohsiung City. The establishing of the FGS temple itself was vital to the whole economy of its location in that area of Dashu, which was just a barren area before Hsingyun arrived to build the temple in 1967. It is still recognizable today on how the local community operates around FGS; not only most of the buildings and facilities in the area were built around the temple and the BMC, many transportation and networks with other regions were also constructed and catered to connect with the temple complex. On a usual day the streets outside of the temple are mostly deserted apart from a few temple visitors, and the only shops that are open for business on a daily basis is the Tusita convenient store (兜率天) right outside the

temple main gate. The impact of FGS on the township is displayed on occasions of special festive events such as the Spring Festival, where the area suddenly awakes from its dormancy into a place full of vibe and energy, buzzing with visiting tourists and street vendors. Such a distinctive difference of the area happens whenever there are any festive periods and religious events that draws huge crowd to the temple, such as the International Fruit Festival in the early summer in tandem with the maturing of the lychees planted on the mountain behind the temple. The township operates in reaction around the clock of the temple, switching on into life and switching off into hibernation according to its schedule.

The influence of FGS does not confine to the township of Dashu but to a much larger scale on the whole tourism industry of Kaohsiung City. The observation of the transformation of Foguangshan and its surrounding community, coupled with the tourism statistics gathered in the above and the newspaper clippings from the previous chapter had all demonstrated that the existing of Foguangshan is massive to the tourism of Kaohsiung City. Again using the period of the Spring Festival as a demonstration, Foguangshan topped as the most visited tourist spot in Taiwan during the period, drawing over two million visitors to the Park. The sudden rush of incoming tourists must surely triggered other reactionary affect on the tourism of Kaohsiung, especially on the business of the hotels, travel agencies, transportation providers, local restaurants and shops, and to a larger scale the employment, public infrastructure, and other aspects of the local economy.

Moreover, the impact of the BMC to the tourism of the whole island of

Taiwan could not be underestimated. FGS has already been a strong force in pulling Buddhists from all over the world, not least its millions of member, to come to Taiwan to visit the temple and participate in its myriads of events that are held across the year. With the opening of the BMC, FGS is attracting even a much wider scale of international visitors to the area, visitors by no mean limited to Buddhist enthusiast but also ordinary tourists. The large amount of international tourists from the Mainland and other nearby countries such as Malaysia and Japan, as witnessed during the Spring Festival, is a testimonial that the BMC had already become a well recognized tourist attraction, and a mainstay in the itinerary of many travel tours to Southern Taiwan in just a few years.

With the Foguangshan main temple and the BMC playing such a huge role to the economy and tourism of the Dashu District and the Kaohsiung City it is impossible to ignore them from the public radar. The local government of Kaohsiung City showed their acknowledgement of the importance of FGS to its vicinity by promoting FGS and BMC as their local attraction for potential visitors, such as incorporating the lighting exhibition in FGS as a part of the larger Spring Festival campaign of Kaohsiung City; this certainly gave FGS a significant visibility among the Taiwanese public and worldwide. However, collaborations of this kind could also affect the positioning of FGS as a religious institution. For those who are familiar with FGS as a religious organization in Taiwan – those volunteers and incoming visitors I have encountered, they have always recognized FGS as a modern Buddhists advocate and a community that tries to improve the wellbeing of the people through the engagement of the society with a Buddhist ideal. But in the eye of an ordinary citizen of Taiwan, or those from other parts of the world who are not familiar with this religious organization, the

public image of FGS would be more ambiguous. To these visitors the temple and the BMC are definitely popular tourist attraction sites to visit especially in the festive seasons, and FGS is continuously endeavor to further establish these sites to attract more visitors to come and visit.

A question this fieldwork has raised is how do these visitors feel about this new attraction in Southern Taiwan, and what kind of image do they have towards FGS, as the monastery became so much more publicly exposed in the past few years. A more fundamental question related to this study is whether FGS is perceived more as a religious/Buddhist organization or more as a kind of secular/cultural organization among the public. From my observation during this fieldwork FGS stands precariously in the middle: a blend of secular attractions with a Buddhist content nicely sugarcoated underneath. But to the millions of non-Buddhist visitors FGS might be situated in the bracket of a tourist site: an attraction for its large Buddhist status renowned to be one of the world's largest, its massive theme park, its large firework display and other festive attractions, and the auspicious appeal to join in the crowd and pay a visit to a religious site in one of the most important festive season of the Chinese people. The tourists I had informally interviewed during my fieldwork had testified to the above speculation. While a proper research with the general public is needed to generate a more precise judgment to the above speculations – that a secular image had superseded the religious image of FGS among the general public –the response obtained in this fieldwork given by interviewees on the field suggests that FGS does face a challenge of an inconsistent and precarious image among general public.

Such precarious locality between the religious and the secular existed not

only among the image and perception among the general public, but runs through the entire organization and demonstrated through its activities and its people. My experience in FGS and its people has given me an impression that they do not see this precarious stance between the secular and the religious as anything that needs to be addressed, but in contrast something that could be embraced and even encouraged. This can be elaborated in three aspects: 1) the secular elements of its activities, 2) the seemingly lack of religious character of their members, and 3) the proportion of the *fashi* in engaging in “non-religious” matters.

FGS has sometimes been criticized for being a religious organization that lacks religious characters. The ways they engaged in the society either through providing social services or as a popular site for tourists gives an impression that it has always tried to attenuate their religious nature and kept those religious contents at the minimal. A user of any FGS branch across Taiwan can pay frequent visits to the temple and participate in all kind of different activities and services – be it mid-autumn festival events held at the temple or the various kinds of recreational classes and workshops such as Japanese tutorials or Chinese painting classes – without being in contact with anything related to Buddhism. Even during events particularly religious in nature it seems to be imperative for religious non-related elements to be added to the activities to increase its attraction: this Spring, Peace and Light Festival was supplemented by “Disneysque” parades, a mini zoo displaying animals and birds, and a grand firework display every night – all being highlighted as the showcase attraction of the event. The hot-pot banquet held before the commencing of the Spring Festival described earlier also seemed more as a communal gathering for relatives and friends of the *fashi* and the volunteers. The Chan, Pureland, Tantric Ceremony (

禪淨密三修大會) I participated in Taichung was another telling example of a fusion of religious and non-religious activity. Thirty something lay members were gathered early in the morning to attend the dharma ceremony, but for most of the day we were visiting a flower market, a famous local market, and a glass-product exhibition before we make our way to the dharma meeting at the Taichung Fulfillment Amphitheatre (台中圓滿劇場) when it almost approaching sunset. Again it gave an impression that these activities were more like opportunities for communal gatherings and as forms of leisure and entertainment activity than sheer religious in nature.

During the time I had spent with the volunteers in FGS, not a short time considering that I almost spent every single day with them for very long hours, I never encountered a moment that I felt they were trying to convert me into a Buddhist. Whether it was the young enthusiastic Han, my young roommates Ai and Bin, or the friendly and passionate Chen's family, no one had once started a conversation on topics related to Buddhism: not of its history, its philosophy, its scriptures, its many stories, or the goods that could arrive for being a Buddhist. Such a conversation never happened between us or between the volunteers themselves as well. On the other hand I cannot sense any significant difference between the lay members I encounter and other non-Buddhist believers. One of the most committed member I have met, Dao, does not seem any different than any other middle-aged men apart from being a vegetarian for many years. And for his private life he also admitted to me that he seldom commences in Buddhist related activities such as chanting, meditating or reading scriptures; things that outsiders may expect a long-serving lay Buddhist might be interested to do in his daily life. This inactivity in performing Buddhist routines were a common feature



among the lay Buddhists I have met during the Spring Festival, with many of them being some of the most ardent members of FGS.

But to be fair the seemingly lack of religious practices of the FGS member in their everyday life does not necessarily imply that the members of FGS are not religious enough or that they are not pious and devoted enough as a Buddhist. Neither does the seemingly excessive religiously unrelated nature of FGS activities necessarily suggest the lack of the religious intentions behind those activities. Nevertheless all these apparent features of the behaviors of the members and the way their activities were being organized does follow the logic of the philosophy that FGS and Hsingyun has been promoting, a philosophy that I have repeatedly received from the volunteers and *fashi* of Foguangshan: that the cultivation of Buddhist can be done within the ordinary daily life and by doing so in a right and proper way, serve as witness to others on how the belief of Buddhism can be beneficial to an individual and the society. This philosophy has been thoroughly conveyed into the consciousness of the FGS member, and has been integral in the way the *fashi* commence their daily life and their perception of religious ideal. As mentioned earlier the Executive Office *fashi* admitted to me that it is difficult for them to allocate time to undertake those religious and cultivation practices – meditation, etc – as expected from a monk, but they do not see this as the only way for cultivation. To them, these form of cultivation are meaningless if the achievements attained through such mean cannot be applied into daily life and make benefit to the society. It is both the application of the things they learnt from the traditional ways of cultivation into their daily life as well as the things they learnt within the works in their daily life – such as diligence, services to others, patience, teamwork, etc – that could lead them to the

ideal of attaining enlightenment and liberation. It is also this belief that gives them the foundation and impetus to engage to the public and their religious pursuit to establish a *Pureland* in this world.

To this point it seems possible to draw up a common feature that could be derived from the public image and identity of FGS and its member: a precarious stance between the religious and the secular with a seemingly secular appearance presented to the outsiders vis-à-vis a religious core sensible to the insiders. The secular appearance includes those social services provided to the Taiwanese public and FGS activities, both having their religious contents being tuned down often resulting in a public image undistinguishable from a secular NGO or recreational center in the eyes of an ordinary people. The secular appearance also includes the seemingly absence of religious behaviors among the FGS lay members, which looked as if being a FGS Buddhist has not much influence to their everyday life apart from being a form of life philosophy or some general principle for a better life. This is the same for the *fashi* who might seem to dedicate their time and effort on secular matter more than their religious ones. Analytically these secular features of FGS corresponded to what David McMahan described as demythologization, a process that modernization affects Buddhism in ways which “elements that are incompatible with modernity are relegated to ‘myth.’”<sup>455</sup> Such a process is influential to both the doctrine and practice of modern forms of Buddhism, as demonstrated here by how FGS attempts to adapt towards modernization by demythologizing its doctrine in reorienting its focus from the other-world to the present world, and in practices that relegated the previous emphasis on life and death rituals to participation in the mundane

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<sup>455</sup> McMahan, *The Making of a Buddhist Modernism*, 46.

society. The secular feature of FGS also resonates to what Christopher Queen has described in his co-edited book with Sallie King, saying that one of the commonalities that Engaged Buddhist leaders in Asian countries shares is an emphasis on a rationalistic approach to religion, where “[m]ysticism, emotionalism, ceremonialism, and devotionism have all been devalued.”<sup>456</sup> While the emotions still features high among the ardent members of FGS, rationality and the relegation of the mystical aspect of its Humanistic Buddhism remains the characters constantly displayed by FGS and its members.

Such characteristics of demythologization and rationalization embraced by FGS inevitably led others to draw a connection to the process of secularization within the organization. However as suggested above this secular appearance of FGS has a strong religious rationale underneath that is sometimes difficult for outsiders to identify. As mentioned by the *fashi* their dedication in secular endeavors are totally motivated by their religious ideal of a Bodhisattva way to transform this world into a *Pureland*; the lay FGS members are focusing their cultivation on their normal everyday life to gain personal merits as well as acting as role models to enhance the image of a Buddhist; the incorporation of secular and modern elements into the activities held by FGS is a “expedient mean” to attract non-Buddhists and disseminate the philosophy of FGS into the public. This religious aspect of FGS, an aspect that might have been disguised by the humanistic (secular) nature of the monastery, has frequently been overlooked by those who proclaimed FGS as being a secularized form of Buddhism under the process of modernization. Hong Jinlian made the same comment on those who

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<sup>456</sup> Pitman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, 296; see also Queen & King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 1-44.

failed to recognize Taixu's ultimate religious concern of his "Buddhism for human life" ideal, and instead only focused on his secular response to modernity and accused his philosophy as a representation of a form of secularization of Buddhism.<sup>457</sup> This unfair treatment also extends to the critic of Hsingyun and his Humanistic Buddhism, where the religious intentions and motives of this philosophy are often being neglected for the more obvious and attractive aspects of its modernized and secular expressions.

Nevertheless the contradiction between the seemingly secular appearance and the disguised religious core nature of FGS might only be a matter of perspective; one can argue for the secularization of FGS if the focus is placed on the former and another can argue for the sacralization of the mundane if the weight is put on the latter. But it can also be said that it is the result of the decision of FGS in taking its humanistic route that placed itself in such a precarious situation that invites interpretation. The secular appearance of FGS might be an expedient mean to strategically appeal to the public and penetrate into the society; but while it seems that it has been quite successful so far, the overtly secular appearance of FGS might become a challenge for FGS to construct an image and identity they wish to foster among the public in the future. The strategy to conform to modernization by demythologization, rationalization, and other secular means may well be essential for religious groups such as FGS to successfully survive in the modern world, but it is still to be seen whether such adaptation would result in transforming these religious organizations into forms

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<sup>457</sup> Pitman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, 170; originally from Hong Jinlian 洪金蓮, *Taixu Dashi Fojiao Xiandaihua Zhi Yanjiu* 太虛大師佛教現代化之研究 (Taipei: Dong chu chu ban she, 1995), 153.

of quasi-religious/cultural community that departs further and further away from its religious boundaries.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion: Rethinking the Religious and the Secular from a Chinese Context**

The impulse behind this study was the realization of a certain academic gap among the sociological study of contemporary religious organizations in Taiwan, recognizing that from one side the ample theoretical concepts generated in the field has been overly relied on Western history and models, and have not made sufficient and rigorous modification according to different local contexts in overcoming the question regarding its applicability and validity in examining religious development in non-Western cultural settings. On the other side the existence of scholarships that showed substantial exposure, awareness, and knowledge on empirical and fieldwork materials on the religious culture of modern Chinese societies and particularly on contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, has been mainly historical and doctrinal in nature that often overlooked and lack the effort to recognize and apply the aforementioned theoretical aspects that could facilitate them to articulate their abundant knowledge of these local religious communities. The very few that were able to heed attention on both of these aspects – the theoretical and the empirical – have not focused too much on the case of FGS, therefore making a theoretical understanding of the monastery still an unknown and undiscovered territory; the fact that many studies on contemporary Chinese Buddhism are still mainly in Chinese only increases the difficulty to made their findings knowledgeable to non-Chinese speaking audiences. Thus, this study recognizes that a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between religion and society in modern Taiwan relies on a proper and detail investigation between the theoretical aspect of the academic field and the case study under investigation: a dialectical process that could reveal how

specific factors of the contexts can play crucial role in contributing to the similarities and differences between the studies subject and the applied theories, and facilitates a better understanding of the religious landscape of a particular social and cultural context. It would be too rash both to arbitrarily apply existing theory on different settings and making conclusion without the awareness of the hidden assumptions of these theories, or to hastily abolish and deny the applicability of these theoretical tools before such a thorough examination between the theory and the context had taken place.

### **7.1. FGS and the Concept of Secularization**

Much similar to the field of the sociology of religion and the social science in general, the paradigm of secularization has been the main theoretical and analytical framework through which this study has been conducted to examine the relationship between religion and modernization – and in this case between the social engaging Buddhist community of FGS and the contemporary society of modern Taiwan. From the historical review of the concept of secularization earlier we have seen how the understanding of secularization within the sociology of religion has changed from a thesis in predicting a linear and irreversible trend of religious decline under the impact of modernization, to a concept that recognizes the possibility of multiple patterns and forms of social process, religious development, and various ways religion and the society negotiates with modernization. Such a refined understanding of secularization allows the existence of different patterns and scope of social process that is associated with the decreasing significance of religion in the society, and also recognizes the possibility of a process that goes the opposite way with an increase of religious presence; any scenarios between these two processes would depend on the

different contingent factors of the society under consideration. Therefore in embracing the factors of historical contingency, contextualization, and the awareness of the possibility of diverse outcomes, the concept of secularization is still recognized as a powerful tool in learning about religious transformation and the changes in modern societies.

The literature review in chapter two has also illustrated the various ways secularization was being defined and conceptualized, with Jose Casanova's *Public religion* succinctly summarizing them in three interrelated propositions: secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, as differentiation of different secular spheres from religious authority and norms, and as marginalization of religion to the private domain.<sup>458</sup> This study follows Casanova in focusing on the component of the privatization thesis of secularization, corresponding to the public engagement mentality of FGS as it "deprivatizes" itself to penetrate into various sectors of the Taiwanese society. Our analysis of the public penetration and deprivatization of FGS has demonstrated that these three major components of secularization are different but not isolated from each other, showing a mutual relationship between religious decline, structural differentiation, and religious privatization in modern Taiwan. More importantly we have discovered that the patterns of secularization in modern Taiwan has taken its distinctive form as a consequence of its own historical and social shaping.

The decline of religious beliefs and practices has been the most questionable proposition both theoretically and empirically among the components of

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<sup>458</sup> Please refer to note 131.



secularization, with the works from scholars such as Stephen Warner and Rodney Starks providing the strongest challenge both theoretically and empirically. Yet a more fundamental problem regarding the concept of the decline or increase of religious beliefs and practice is the question whether it could ever be properly measure at all. Different scholars, such as Demerath III, have raised this question regarding the possibility of measuring the religiosity among individuals, whether it is possible to qualify or quantify belief and faith, and the appropriateness in using variables such as religious membership and church attendance as measurements of religious attitudes and practices. The inapplicability of these measurement methods in non-Christian societies with different religious systems such as those in China shows that it is impossible to have any universal measurement that could account for the numerous religious systems existing in different civilizations; this problem of the difficulty in measuring religiosity even points to a far boarder and greater question regarding the definition of religion. In societies such as China where there are multiple conception of God, where church attendance makes not much sense to religious participation, and where individuals can follow more than one religious or deity, all would lead to a conclusion that relates Chinese culture with low religiosity from the eye of a measurement based on Christian traditions. Any universal measurement of religious belief and practice, whichever ways it is being defined, could never capture the true essence of these differing religious systems, making the measurement of religious decline or increase irrelevant.

Nevertheless from a broad perspective our case of FGS does seem to suggest that the process of secularization as religious decline is not applicable in describing the religious situation of modern Taiwan. From the official

establishment of the monastery in Kaohsiung in 1967 onwards we have witnessed its continuous expansion both in terms of membership and as an institution while the society at large underwent modernization. The number of *fashi* has increased to over a couple of thousands spreading in different branches worldwide, with another million said to be members of its lay community. While this study did not go into details to investigate the religious belief and practice of these people – quantifying the kinds of Buddhist practices they participate and the way they perceive their Buddhist belief – the exponential increase of FGS membership and the large crowd of followers that could be spotted in FGS activities simply indicates a growing religiosity and public presence of this Buddhist community at a public level improbable during the era of the martial law just a few decades ago. The same growth of memberships among other contemporary Buddhist communities such as Ciji and Dharma Drum, as well as the flourishing of other religious communities such as Yiguando, suggests a phenomenon of religious resurgence within the Taiwanese society in terms of institutional and religious membership growth that defies the conventional understanding of secularization.

We have also made an interesting discovery from our case study of FGS regarding the process of differentiation in the Taiwanese society. Many scholars including Casanova have identified the process of differentiation as the remaining valid component of the concept of secularization.<sup>459</sup> As one of the primary distinguishing characteristics of modern social structures, modern societies – societies who embrace modern principles and democratic liberal forms of governance and rule of law – tends to structure along a differentiated social systems, comprising different and autonomous specialized autonomous spheres

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 212.

rather than having a single overwhelmingly dominating sphere whose dynamic and norm penetrates into other spheres of the society, as what the Christian Church was capable to perform in Medieval Europe. During the process of modernization in Europe, the disestablishment of the Church and the differentiation of the society were fostered by a form of secularism associated with a consciousness that denounces religion – an Enlightenment critique of religion (ECR). Casanova identified this ECR as a crucial ingredient in galvanizing the process of secularization from a consciousness level in criticizing religion and facilitating the social process of the disestablishment of the Church and differentiation. He reminded us that society without such form of secularism, or consisted of different forms of secularism at the consciousness and social level, would very likely result in diverging patterns of religious suppression and resistance under modernity and hence, different result of religious increase and decline. It remains to be seen whether similar form of ECR existed in modern China, but without a dominant religious institution at a state level, differentiation in Chinese society would not be associated with such a negative impact on the vitality of religion as it had in modern Europe; differentiation in such a case would not be associated with any direct result of religious decline and hence, not a component of secularization in a strict sense.

Apart from the factor of the existence of such secularist consciousness, it is expected that differentiation in a Chinese context would be a very different process comparing to the European model. The reason for such an assertion is that the conventional model of differentiation in the field of the sociology of religion hinges on a disestablishment process from a single dominating religious authority. Such a dominating sphere belongs to the Roman Catholic Church for

the European model, the model in which the theoretical core of differentiation was being conceptualized. But such a predominant religious institution never existed throughout the history of China. Therefore a process of structural differentiation that could happen in a Chinese context, if it ever happens at all, would be the emancipation of different spheres from any dominating authority other than an all-encompassing religious institution – resulting in a disassociation between modernization, differentiation, and religious decline. This is the main deviation of the pattern of differentiation and process of secularization of the Chinese case from the conventional understanding of differentiation as secularization constructed under the European model.

This conceptual disassociation of differentiation from secularization can be testified by our study of Taiwan, in which the differentiation process that occurred after the democratization resulted in the liberation of different spheres of the society from the predominate authority of the state – the control and censorship of the KMT during martial law – rather than a religious institution. Religious communities, which had previously been confined within its own religious sphere and regulated by the state, actually benefited from such differentiation process with the retreat of state control and found a democratized and pluralistic society to expand and flourish, making the process of deprivatization feasible. Similar forms of differentiation could also be seen in Mainland China, with different sectors of the society starting to have more control of its own dynamic and value in the past decades, albeit the CCP still possess the power to dictate the society if they ever want to exercise it. But if further freedom and democratization of the society is allowed in the future we might be able to see a similar increase in religious activities in Mainland China

similar to that in present day Taiwan. This description of the Chinese case is not to argue for a kind of theoretical narrative in linking differentiation with religious resurgence in opposite to differentiation as secularization, but a demonstration that the difference in historical and political context can be determining factors in appropriating modernization with the local settings.

This study made further progress in the understanding of the concept of secularization in contemporary Taiwan as we placed FGS into Casanova's model of public religion and examines its process of deprivatization in assuming different public roles in the society. From our analysis we have discovered that despite our findings from the case of FGS has been compatible with Casanova's conclusion in *Public Religion* – that modern public religions are found mostly in the civil level and not at a state and political level, our case study showed factors that are solely distinctive to a Chinese context. We have discussed that FGS cannot assume a public role at the state level due to the specific history and state/religious relationship through Chinese societies. The historical predominance of state authority over the society, the unique “state religion” form of Chinese religious landscape as described by various Sino-scholars, and the non-existence of any organized, integrative religious institution that are capable enough in dominating other sectors of the society and challenge the authority, have all contributed to a state/religious relationship where the religious communities have been historically succumbed under the state with the ruling authority having the power to dictate over religious affairs across the society.

The remnant of such a state/religious relationship could be found in Taiwan, where the state had been the predominant authority over religious affairs and

every facets of the society throughout most of the twentieth century. The democratization of the society in the last quarter of the century came along with the differentiation of the society from previous state control, with FGS and other religious communities benefiting from the emerging pluralistic society. Thus, it would be a strange decision if FGS would be interested in confronting this differentiation process by attempting to assume its influence at the state level, as it would be a challenge and violation towards the differentiated society in which the monastery has took full advantage of. Any attempt would also be detrimental to the differentiated structure and the modern principles embraced by a democratized Taiwan – whether FGS is capable to do so is even more doubtful. An interested analysis from Casanova in his case study in *Public Religion* in relation to this case of FGS is in arguing that modern religions tends to suffer decline (secularization as religious decline) the more they resist the process of modern differentiation (secularization as differentiation), and *vice versa*.<sup>460</sup> The growth of FGS seems to validate this proposition as their well adaptation towards the current differentiation social situation and their conformity with the status quo without any serious form of resistance does seems to place them in a favorable position in surviving in the modern differentiated society of Taiwan.

Similarly FGS does not seem to present as a public religion in a political level as they are not 1) movements in resisting disestablishment and the differentiation of the secular spheres; 2) mobilizing as religious groups and parties against other religious or secularist movements and parties, or 3) religious groups mobilized in defense of religious freedom, protection of human and civil

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 214.

rights and other interests.<sup>461</sup> As analyzed above regarding the specific history and state/religion relationship of Taiwan, it was unnecessary for FGS to involve in any kind of resistance against process of disestablishment and differentiation, with most of the religious communities, very much so for FGS and the other Buddhist communities, were the beneficiaries of this state disestablishment and differentiation and hence it would be the last thing they would do to resist such process. FGS also does not seem to qualify for the second criteria, as it has not shown much antagonism or enmity towards other religious and secular bodies. Some of the core values that were promoted by FGS and Hsingyun include concepts such as unequivocal compassion and harmony, values that the monastery embraced as important components of its Humanistic Buddhism and are often promoted to its members and the general public. As shown in our analysis in chapter five, both compassionate love and harmony appears frequently throughout their mini-booklet series, an illustration that these are concepts FGS inclined to advance to its audience. The fact that there are specific volumes on harmony (Vol. 25 *Buddhism and a Harmonious Society* and Vol. 9 *Buddhist's View on Interreligious Relationship*) shows that at least philosophically FGS would continue to further the value of harmony and inclusiveness between individuals and communities in the society. With such values being promoted as the core values of the monastery, it would be inconsistent for them to emphasize on mobilizing their resources against other religious or secularist movements and parties.

FGS shows sign of congruencies with the third criteria of a public religion in a political level in defense of religious freedom and the protection of human and

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 218-219.

civil rights. This tendency is displayed by the active role Hsingyun played within the discussion of religious policies in Taiwan, such as his critiques regarding the outdated and ineffective Act of Supervising Temple and his initiative in proposing drafts for a new religious ordinance; all with the intention in protecting the freedom and rights of the Buddhist and other religious communities in Taiwan. The mini-booklet series also shows that the ideas such as human rights, democracy, and freedom are core values that FGS cherishes and upholds for the common goods of the people. The difference in the way FGS defends and protects these interests from what Casanova described is that they were not pursued in forms of institutional movements or mobilizations at the political sphere. Despite Hsingyun's involvement in the discussion of religious policies and his urge for a new religious ordinance, his engagement in the matter never involves the mobilization of his followers and the organization. Neither has FGS, any of its branch bodies, or its members attempted to assume any role within politics as a party or a politician. Therefore in a strict sense FGS as an institution does not show signs of a public religion at a political level.

The finding of our case of FGS followed Casanova's claim in his conclusion of *Public Religion* that it is at the civic level where the contemporary monastery was able to flourish in compatible with the modern differenced structure of Taiwan and finds the channel to extent its influence and disseminates their discourses. Even on affairs related to their interest that involves politics, FGS engages them through the civic channels by discursive means in disseminating their views and stances towards the public, as enabled by the extensive media outlets that Hsingyun had identified as an importance element for the progression of the monastery. Our analysis of the contents of the mini-booklet series



demonstrates FGS's acknowledgement of the effectiveness of discursive means to disseminate their core values. Congruent with Casanova's description, the intention of FGS to participate at the civil level is to: defend the traditional lifeworld against the state and market penetration; question the functioning of these two systems by its own intrinsic norms without regard to extrinsic traditional moral norms; and maintain the principle of a "common good" against individualist modern liberal theories.<sup>462</sup> In various occasions throughout the mini-booklets we have seen the critiques that Hsingyun had made towards the political and economic systems, questioning the morality of war and violence within world politics, and the role of modern capitalism and consumerism in leading to different social problems such as famine, poverty and social inequality. Fundamentally all these problems were ramifications of a modern way of lifestyle that values individualism, materialism, and personal indulgence that results in a society composed by isolating individuals that have no concern towards communal relationship and other sentient beings in our world. It has been clearly displayed in our textual analysis that FGS sees the mutual compulsion of this detrimental form of modern life and the corrupted mind/heart of the individual within to be the fundamental cause of all the problem modern people faces; be it personal or interpersonal such as mental illnesses and relationship problems, or social and global problems such as equality, poverty, and environmental degradation. The mini-booklets proposed that one should look within traditional wisdoms, and especially Buddhism, to find the effective remedy to purify the corrupted mind/heart of the modern individuals, and with the purification of the individual it will eventually lead to the purification of the society and the world with the attainment of a this-worldly paradise; a soteriology that demeans

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 221.

individualism and promotes the traditional lifeworld of Buddhism.

Apart from exploring the public face of FGS within Casanova's tripartite model, this study has also illustrated other aspects that facilitated FGS to establish their position as a public religion at the civil level of the Taiwanese society. Its institutional establishment in the Taiwanese society has paved a solid foundation for their penetration and dissemination into the public. Conforming to their four core objectives in promoting the principle of Humanistic Buddhism through culture, education, charity and Buddhist practices, FGS has been actively engaging in the public domain of the Taiwanese society at a very early stage, being the pioneer as a Buddhist organization in providing different social services to the society. The emergence of FGS as an ardent and accomplished public institution has led the government bodies to acknowledge their public status by inviting them to provide different social services on the island.

Its status as a public religion at the civil level of Taiwan could also be readily palpable in many different forms. In terms of physical infrastructure it has hundreds of temples worldwide and other branch infrastructures including their university, schools and medical clinics; the opening of the massive Buddha Memorial Center and its world record breaking Buddha statue only further magnifies its image as a prestigious Buddhist organization locally and internationally. In terms of the physical presence of its members, apart from their huge number of memberships worldwide, one could easily spot the presence of FGS's members across the island especially during times of major religious activities such as their annual Chan, Pureland, Tantric Ceremony, or the BLIA annual General Conference Meeting held in different venue across the world, as

well as the presence of its members as volunteers in different social service provision which could often be spotted within the community and among reports of the media.

In terms of public presence visually and aurally, one could readily experience the presence of FGS throughout their everyday encounter on television with FGS's Beautiful Life Television and other secular channels, in written media with FGS's newspaper the *Merit Times* and other publications, or the presence of the main temple in FGS and the BMC as tourism attractions that one could find in different travel catalog and recommendations in image or written form at travel agencies or online traveling websites. All these social presence of FGS are enabled and facilitated by FGS's own immense media industry ranging from television broadcast, newspaper, magazine, online news agencies, radio broadcast, book publication, academic journals, etc., FGS could find all kinds of channels to make their voices and interests heard by its audiences. It is also apparent that FGS acknowledges the capability of media by putting many efforts and resources into its media industry with huge loads of information and contents being transmitted through these channels on a daily basis. It is through these media channels where discourses and narratives of FGS, core values such as compassion and this-worldly soteriology as profoundly articulated in the mini-booklet series, could be effectively disseminated to the people of the civil society.

## **7.2. The Religious and Secular Aspects of FGS**

Apart from examining the public engagement of FGS in the framework of public religion and how different local factors have diverge the case of Taiwan in different ways from Casanova's case studies, this study has also explored other

facets of the publicness of FGS within the society as they engage and penetrate into the society; facets that could compliment and supplement the current model of public religion. First is the facet of the role of the religious communities and their desire and motivation to engage in the society and assume different public roles. Casanova's model concentrated on a sociological analysis that investigated modern religions in different social localities of the society – a somewhat vertical model of analysis. Despite such a focus he has not overlooked the factor of the religious communities and the important part they played that initiated the whole deprivatization process. In his conclusion of *Public Religion*, Casanova identified three conditioning factors of the religious communities that may be conducive to their intervention of religion in the modern public sphere: 1) religion which either by doctrine or by cultural tradition have a public, communal identity will want to assume public roles and resist the pressure to become privatized; 2) ability to maintain a dynamic and vital profile as a private religion of salvation; and 3) an identity as universal transsocial religions under the contemporary global context of action.<sup>463</sup> Following these three factors, we can see that it is also the endeavor of the prominent leaders of Humanistic Buddhism to establish themselves as a communal community in capturing the identity and cultural need of the people; the early Chinese Buddhist reformers Taixu and Yinshun had dedicated their life to remodel and redefined a modern Chinese religion that orientates toward the world and emphasize on the need of the people and the society. With their effort, the prevalent image of pre-modern Chinese Buddhism as a religion that emphasis on the dead and the transmudane world with a community secluded and indifference from worldly affairs was replaced by one that orientates towards the present world with an incentive to engage into the society. Moreover, this modern

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<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 224-225.

Chinese Buddhism also reinterpreted its tradition and translated a new this-worldly religiosity that combines with a salvation doctrine that sees the action of social engagement as a viable way to attain personal enlightenment (*Bodhisattvhood*) and the transformation of the present world into a paradise (*Pureland*). With this doctrinal reinterpretation it enables the formation of a humanistic religiosity that links the private aspect of the individualistic ideal of personal cultivation and salvation with the public aspect of a communal ideal of achieving the common good of the people through social participation. This is actualized in the third character identified by Casanova, the drive for action. Similar to Den Renjie's description of Ciji's "somatic" mode of social participation, FGS recognizes the importance of actions both as an effective means in disseminating their values (as illustrated by their social engagement through institutional establishment), and as the essential mean for personal cultivation (through their promotion of "Chan in Life" (生活禪) that sees the everyday encounter in work, labor, and action as a platform for cultivation no inferior to "conventional" practices such as meditation and chanting). The drive for action also goes beyond the geographical boundary of Taiwan and expands to other parts of the world, with FGS striving to construct a transnational religious institution as it continues to increase its global influence as an international faith-based organization on charity and social service in East Asia, at the same time spreading its humanistic philosophy as an ecumenical doctrine as a means towards global salvation. Each of the characteristics described by Casanova that would motivate a religious community to engage in the society – a public and communal identity, maintain a doctrine of salvation, and a focus on action – were all explicitly featured within FGS. In combination they provided the foundation for FGS and its members to actively engage in worldly affairs and disseminate such

salvational discourses to the public.

Secondly we have also looked into the reception aspect towards the public engagement of FGS through our investigation of the circulation of its religious discourses within the public domain. The analysis of the mini-booklet series has showed the compatibility of FGS with the central claim of Casanova that it is at the civil level where the monastery disseminates its messages and values discursively through its myriads of social services, its diversified media industry, and its immensely popular religious activities. While FGS has control over the contents and the methods in transmitting these discourses, it is another matter how the society and ordinary people of the Taiwanese people response towards them; how do the common people respond to this load of religious contents that have penetrated into the society, not only discursively by these religious contents but also from the sheer presence of its people and institution?

The comparison of what in chapter five called the “controlled” type of religious discourse as represented by FGS’s mini-booklet series *Buddhist in Every Step*, and the “uncontrolled” type of religious discourse as represented by the newspaper reports of FGS, may shed some light on the discrepancy between the increase of the supply of religious presence and contents of the religious community and how they were received by the common people of Taiwan. By comparing these two sources of religious discourses we have detected diverging contents, image, and presentation of FGS. The contents in the mini-booklet series were consistent with the core values promoted by the monastery, such as the promotion of Humanistic Buddhist ideals of compassion, equality, critiques on modern individualistic and materialistic form of lifestyle, and the central message

that Buddhism is the true authentic way to bring universal wellbeing to every global citizen. As FGS's own publication, the monastery has full control in making sure that the contents and the languages are consistent with its core principle without distortion.

However the monastery loses their control with the discourses from sources outside their jurisdiction. We have found no trace of any of the values and contents so painstakingly promoted in the mini-series within the four secular newspapers. Within these newspapers, as illustrated by the news clippings, FGS is associated primarily with tourism and presented as a popular tourist attraction in southern Taiwan, and frequently portrayed as an institution in providing different social services and welfare to the community. Throughout these reports FGS was rarely being mentioned as a religious organization, and it is also difficult to spot any traces that can associate FGS as a Buddhist community by the way it is being represented in the newspaper. The ridding of FGS's religious identity and contents in these newspaper clippings suggests that the interests of these secular media, and their assumption of the interests of the readers, on FGS lies somewhere beyond their religious nature. This is the same for the newspaper reports that features Hsingyun, in which more than often it was not the religious conversations and contents from the Buddhist master that were found in the reports, but his dialogues and commentaries on other social topics that were considered to be more interesting to the readers, in particularly his comments on political issues that attracted wide coverage from the secular newspapers. From this "uncontrolled" source of public discourse, we found a large discrepancy between contents and images being created by FGS themselves and those being portrayed and presented by secular sources; two seemingly contrasting

construction that would eventually affects how it is being received by the receptive end.

The two contrasting sources of the mini-booklet series and the Taiwanese secular newspaper have revealed a discrepancy between how and what FGS would like *to present* themselves toward the public and the way FGS is *being presented* by other secular agencies. Even without the interference of other sources that generate contents and images uncontrollable by the monastery, how the recipients *receive and response* to the controlled discourses and values conveyed by the monastery is also beyond its reach. This disparity between the deliverance and reception is not only presented from the discrepancy apparent between the two contrasting discourses of FGS found between its publications and other secular media, but could be experienced from many other aspects palpable in ones everyday encounter with the Buddhist community. What FGS often presents to the public, and often being experienced by the public, is a disparate image between being religious and being secular.

On an individual level as presented by the people of the monastery, the *fashi* seems to see religious cultivations and practices as secondary to the everyday operation of the monastery, and the lay members shows a similar lack of dedication of time in conventional Buddhist practices with many of them admittedly conceded that their Buddhist faith has very little explicit impact on their everyday life. From the eye of an observer the *fashi* are more occupied with their secular assignments in running the temple and related activities than submerging themselves into religious practices and cultivations; being a member of FGS seems more like a communal and recreational affair for the lay members



with their commitment as a lay Buddhist only as a prerequisite in joining the community. On an institutional level the activities held by FGS and the services they provided across the society also seems to have the secular features being more salient than the religious ones. In terms of quantity, the efforts the monastery has dedicated to their secular enterprises – their extensive social service and charity works, the vast number of recreational and vocational workshops that are held in local branches, etc. – far exceeds those that were obvious religious ones – *dharma* meetings, ritual performances and ceremonies, etc. And even within religious events it often seems that the religious purposes are superseded by other secular functions for the participants, as experienced and depicted in the ethnographic study where the sight-seeing trip before attending the Chan, Pureland, Tantric Ceremony served more as a leisure recreational activity for its lay members, the generous hot-pot dinner before the Spring Festival seemed more as a communal gatherings for the families and the neighborhood; and the magnificent Buddha Memorial Center and the eye-catching lighting decorations spectacles of the fireworks display during the Spring festival served more as a new top-attractive tourist location and entertainment for the millions of visitors worldwide. The presentation of such ambiguous image between the religious and the secular by its people, its institution, and its activities, makes it difficult for the common people or even its own members not to spot the secular elements and overlook and forget the religious ones.

But on the other hand this seemingly secular nature of FGS and its people from such perspective is countered by a very strong religious mentality and intention from the perspectives of those inside the monastery. For them, the

reason for the attenuation of the religious elements in its activities was only a strategy from the monastery to facilitate the penetration and dissemination of their values into the society, appealing to the interests of the general public and satisfying their different demands. This is the initial step to lead people to pay attention to the monastery and attract them into the community, increasing their chance to access and expose to the religious contents underneath; in Buddhist terminology it is an “expedient mean” to bring the people closer to Buddhism who otherwise would not have paid attention to the religion. Similarly, the commitment of the *fashi* and lay members on the seemingly secular affairs should not be read only as negligence and indifference towards religious industries; from their perspective these affairs *are* religious enterprises full of every religious purposes. Driven by the Humanistic Buddhism that emphasizes on the daily aspect of a Buddhist, personal cultivation can be done through the work one labors and the things they learn through their daily encounters, and not only through “conventional” practices such as meditation and chanting – an actualization of Hsingyun’s “Chan in Life” as mentioned above. Under this view the form of everyday cultivation is sometimes more preferable than the traditional Buddhist forms of practice as it is more adaptable and suitable to the modern human life. Therefore for the *fashi* and the laymen of FGS it is the virtues such as patience, wisdom, and diligent that they learn through their everyday life in hard work and interaction with others, and the endeavors to engage into the society with a collective ideal to better the world towards achieving a *Pureland*, that is the modern humanistic way to cultivate and attain enlightenment. Therefore in contrast to the ostensible secular nature of the monastery from one perspective, it is a holistic manifestation of their Buddhist doctrine, practice, and ideal from another.

From such analysis it would be a misunderstanding to perceive FGS as a secularized religious community, as from those within the monastery will explain to you that everything they undertook is full of religious aspirations. However it is also undeniable that from what is represented and possibly received and imagined by the public, their focus on FGS seems to weight more on its secular than its religious contents, which might be the unintentional consequence of FGS's new orientation towards worldly affairs and their strategies to dilute their religious contents to attract the attention of the public. The struggle between these two perceptions toward the monastery demonstrates that the boundary between religious and secular could be a contentious, grey area opened for different interpretations. But as the monastery experiences wide success as it adapt the strategy to turn towards the world and social engagement – success in terms of membership and institutional expansion and public exposure, the result for FGS as an organization and a community is a challenge of identity.

Referring back to the delineation of the Engaged Buddhism phenomenon from Christopher Queen in the introductory chapter, he stated that these modern form of Buddhism faces a challenge of identity and continuity as they orientates their focus from the transmundane to the mundane world.<sup>464</sup> Although Queen did not include the contemporary Buddhist movements of Taiwan and China under his bracket of this form of modern Buddhism, FGS akin to his description of what he called the phenomenology of Engaged Buddhism, in which the leadership, doctrine, and organization, all aspires to introduce a modern Buddhist movements that responses to the spiritual and social need of the modern era under the

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<sup>464</sup> Queen & King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 31.

challenge of global cultural confrontation. Under a similar drive to reinterpret itself to meet the needs of the modern society, FGS also faces a challenge of identity: an ambiguous and somewhat contentious identity between what the monastery expected and how it is being perceived, and between being religious and being secular; both sides constituting the totality of the FGS experience for the masses. With a religious core wrapped around by a secular outer layer, it will depend on the approaching individuals to decide whether they will reach to the religious core within, or wander at the exterior. And FGS might just be doing too well to embellish its outer layer that it became all the attraction and attention and makes its religious core too distant and inaccessible.

It is difficult to fully capture such a development displayed by FGS. Term such as rationalization or demystification commonly expound by other scholars seem too specific and not able to capture the metamorphosis that features in every aspect and level of the monastery. It is not exactly right to describe this as a secularization of the Buddhist community either, as the increased usage of secular philosophy and elements in their organization and operations does not necessarily entail a diminish of their religiosity on an equal weight; from FGS's point of view they may not even recognize these elements as secular as every decision they make are based on religious groundings. A possible way to describe the public image of FGS is a state that is not totally religious but not discernible with the category of the secular – a state of “non-religious” in between being not fully religious but not exactly the opposite of religion as in being secular.

On a societal level, such ambiguity between the religious and secular can also be seen at the process of secularization from our elaboration of the case in

modern Taiwan, in which the island demonstrates a status where there seems to be a decreasing religious significance at one aspect but experiences a historical period of religious resurgence at the same time, as shown by our case of FGS. Referring back to our conception of secularization borrowed from Casanova, we have witnessed that under the process of modernization, Taiwan did not undergo a decline in religious membership and practice. We have elaborated that the society did go through a process of differentiation, but one that is different to the conventional European model with religion playing an opposite role during the process; and we have witnessed throughout the entire thesis how FGS epitomizes the overall Buddhist revival in actively participating in the public domain of modern Taiwan, deprivatizing and assuming different public roles. These evidence contradicts with the common understandings of secularization, not least in the fact that the presence and significant of religion in Taiwan has actually increased parallel to the democratization of the island – what some scholars would call a desecularization or a sacralization process.

What we have discovered regarding the religious development in modern Taiwan is a state between secularization and sacralization: a state where both of these processes act as crucial factors in affecting and constructing the modern religious landscape of Taiwan. On the surface, as just pointed out, there is an increase of religious membership and in the role performed by religious group at a society level; but within this apparent sacralization process there are signs of elements and features that seems to be symptoms of the influence of secularization, particularly at the internal aspect of the religious groups as illustrated by FGS: philosophically in forms of rationalization or demystification in their orientation towards the mundane world and a this-worldly soteriology;

their focus on institutional expansion across different sectors of the society and the establishment of a transnational agency of social action; and through its members and activities where the “non-religious” ethos had become the salient expression of their modern Buddhism. This “non-religious” identity of FGS between the religious and the secular points to the broader ambiguous status of the Taiwanese society where it is not heading to become more secularized but also not exactly transforming into a more sacralized society; from another angle we can also say that Taiwan is becoming more sacralized *and* secularized, how can these two contradicting processes existing at the same time?

From one perspective this is an issue of definition, intention and interpretation. If the examination of religious development at a social level is based on a study from the field of social science or the sociology of religion – in terms of religious decline, differentiation, and deprivatization – then the case of FGS has demonstrated that none of these element of secularization happened in the past couple of decade of Taiwan, at least not in its conventional understanding. If the focus of the investigation is in the intrinsic level of the religiosity of the religious community and its people, our elaboration on the mentality and ethos of the monastery did suggested certain degree of increase of “non-religious” elements within their belief, practices, and their images among the general public. But any allegation of an intrinsic secularization within the monastery would be inevitably meet with dissent and skepticism from the people inside arguing that the accusers have neglected and misunderstood the religious purpose and values of their seemingly secular affairs. By and large, it is an issue of perspective and interpretation: whether they are read as religious or secular would likely differ from individual to individual, between the people from within the monastery, and

from those outside of their community. This reliance on definition and interpretation demonstrates that not only the process of secularization, but also the boundary of the category of the religion and the secular itself is ambiguous, contentious, and malleable.

Another perspective, which pertains to our theoretical foundation, is that secularization and sacralization are not that much mutually exclusive after all. As explained in chapter two, this study adapts a refined approach towards the concept of secularization in which it is not used solely for quantifying religious increase or decrease in a society, but as an analytical tool to investigate and comprehend religious change in relation to social change. As demonstrated by Demerath III and other recent scholars on the subject, this usage of the concept of secularization focuses on religious change and how different factors contribute to different forms of religious development in relation to the local society and the global trend of modernization. Decreasing religious elements (secularization) and increasing religiosity (sacralization) can happen at the same time, as shown by FGS where rationalized form of religious operation is accompanied by a general increase in religious membership in modern Taiwan as a whole. Therefore we should not treat secularization and sacralization as clear-cut mutually exclusive category but one that could jointly constitute the religious landscape and social reality of a society. On another note, this is very similar to the understanding of the non-dualism philosophy of Buddhism, where Humanistic Buddhism can be seen philosophically as the secularization of the sacred or the sacralization of the secular at the same time.<sup>465</sup> Our study has shown that this non-dualistic

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<sup>465</sup> The treatment of the secular and the sacred as non-dualistic categories corresponds to a similar description made from Stuart Chandler with his observation of the unique religiosity of FGS, stating that “Master Xingyun has ... [broken] down the boundaries between monastery and

philosophy does not exist only philosophically but can also be witness institutionally and socially in the case of FGS and in the modern Taiwanese society.

Our extent investigation and analysis of the different public faces of FGS and the social process of secularization within the Taiwanese society has led us to discover a distinct feature of the monastery – a religiosity and public image that is ambiguous and appearing to be religious and secular at the same time. It is a byproduct, perhaps intentionally in terms of doctrine but unintentionally in terms of result, from its strategy and decision to turn their orientation towards the world philosophically, doctrinally, and institutionally, to adopt towards modernization and the differentiated structure of the society. It is still to be seen where such a public image and identity of FGS would head the monastery into in the future; it might be both a danger in making FGS to become a social institution with an identity and positioning not much different than another secular institution, and an opportunity to further enlarge its appeal and reach to the people in Taiwan and worldwide. On the other hand, the revelation of the blurring religious/secular boundary has also illustrated the success of this study so far in prevailing its main focus of investigation: an inquiry of the specific pattern and form of secularization and its impact on religious change in a Chinese context. The study has demonstrated that despite the critiques being casted on the concept of secularization from various avenues, the concept still remains as a useful analytical tool in understanding religious development and the interrelationship between religion and society under the shadow of modernization. The particular

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general society ... [and] could be read as expedient means for the sacralization of mundane spheres. The important point is that any attempt to employ the sacred/secular distinction in a dualistic fashion proves unsatisfactory.” See Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 5.



history, political circumstances, social development, and the religious landscape of modern Taiwan has all contributed to a distinct form of negotiation and adaptation from the religious groups and the society towards modernity and globalization, resulting in its particular form of differentiation and the formation of its democratic state, and the emergence of a pluralistic and free religious market that allowed religious communities such as FGS to roam across different domains of the society. The increasing presence and functionality of FGS within the Taiwanese society has shown that Casanova's tripartite framework of public religion could very well be effective in investigating the dynamics of public participation of modern religions in cross-cultural scenarios, as long as it is aware of the different contingent factors involved and the awareness of the possibility of multiple forms of public religions, multiple patterns of secularization, and multiple path towards modernity. And for our case of FGS in Taiwan, this study has demonstrated that it is a public religion that has an unprecedented stretch and penetration in the society at both national and transnational level propelled by its unwavering commitment towards worldly affairs, but at the same time faces a challenge of identity with its ambiguous religiosity radiating expressions of both religious and secular.

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