

# 美國佛教裡的境遇：

## *Recalling the Encountering the Other in American Buddhism:*

上人來美弘法早期的弟子中，絕多數是當時的戰後嬰兒潮美國青年；之後隨著美國亞洲移民的增加，越來越多亞洲弟子投入上人座下學習佛法。作者是80年代在美國出生的亞裔青年，從小跟隨父母搬到萬佛聖城內居住。他以在聖城成長的經驗背景，以及對其他佛教團體的觀察瞭解，撰文探討亞洲與西方的佛教徒如何帶動美國佛教的開始和成長，文中提出許多精闢的分析與建議。

紀念上人傳法西方五十年回顧歷史之餘，希望此文能拋磚引玉，對西方佛教的未來展望有所啟發、反省與學習。

*In his early years of bringing the Dharma to the US, Venerable Master Hua's disciples were mostly American baby boomers of the Second World War. With the immigration reforms in the second half of the twentieth century, the United States has since opened its doors to welcome a new wave of Asian immigrants. This led to an increase of Asian followers joining the Master in search of his teaching. The author, an Asian American born in the 80s, spent many years living in CTB with her parents since a young age and has dedicated an essay to integrating the views of Eastern and Western Buddhism as well as the religion's rise and development in the United States. Her extensive experience, background, and interactions with other Buddhist communities have enabled her to contribute many valuable analyses and suggestions in the following paper.*

*On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Venerable Master's bringing the Dharma to the West, we hope that the essay will bring people to generate crucial dialogue and serve as a source of inspiration, critical reflection, and learning on the future of Buddhism in the West.*

# 開啟亞洲與西方佛教徒之間的對話

## CREATING DIALOGUE BETWEEN ASIAN AND WESTERN BUDDHISTS

揚帆文·凌峰 中譯

Written by Yang Fan, Chinese translation by Ling Feng

A Catholic friend once said that one of the things she appreciated about Catholicism was that she could go to Mass just about anywhere in the world and have a fairly clear idea of what was happening. Buddhism, being an especially diffused and loosely organized religious tradition, makes it possible to have a much greater amount of variability in its practices and forms. Even within the United States, a self-identified Buddhist might go from one Buddhist center to another and find very little sense of connection or similarities in what they see. This is partially unique to the United States, because of the ways in which Buddhism entered the country.

Two groups with very different identities and memberships have led to Buddhism's introduction and growth in the United States: Asian immigrants whose native religion was Buddhism and Westerners who were drawn to Buddhism's philosophy and practice. Despite both groups' self-identification as Buddhist, they have formed their own distinct communities and subcultures. It may seem obvious, considering the gap between Asian and Western Buddhists in the United States, that there should be dialogue between the two groups, but that does not seem to be happening. The social and cultural differences, as well as the function of religion for these two groups, are factors that together may explain why meaningful communication between the groups appears difficult.

In this paper, I will further examine why there is little dialogue between the two groups. How is this cultural and social divide shaping the formation or inhibiting the integrated development of an American Buddhism? Does that pose a problem; if so, what are possible solutions? I am implicated in these questions through my background growing up in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, a monastic community in the Chinese Mahayana tradition in northern California that was founded in 1976 by Master Hsuan Hua, and as the child of Asian Buddhist parents who have dedicated over two decades to their spiritual practice and community. The perspective I bring to these issues is rooted in my experience with the unique cultural and social dynamics there and in other monasteries and

一個天主教的朋友曾經說過，她欣賞天主教的其中一點是她到世界各地參加彌撒，對所有過程都可以相當清楚。反觀佛教，一向是非常分散和缺乏組織，所以其修行和儀式可能存在巨大的差異性。即使在美國，一個自認為佛教徒的人，從一個佛教中心到另一個佛教中心，可能都無法把所見聞的事物當中找到任何有關聯或是相似處。這一點是美國獨有的，其原因在於佛教傳入這個國家的方式。

兩個具備不同身份和成員所組成的團體，帶動了美國佛教的引入和成長：一是信仰佛教的亞洲移民，一是被佛教哲學與修行所吸引的西方人。這兩個群體已形成各自的社區和附屬文化，因此兩者之間的對話是明顯必要的；然而對話似乎並沒有發生。我們來分析兩者之間的社會文化差異，以及宗教對個人所發揮的功能，也許能解釋推動兩個團體之間溝通困難的原因。

本文中，我會進一步研究為什麼兩個團體之間幾乎很少對話？而這個文化和社會的分歧，又是如何將美國佛教予以定型或者抑制它的全面發展？是否有可行的解決辦法？這些問題和我是息息相關。我從小生長在加州北部的萬佛聖城裡，一座由宣化老和尚1976年創建深具中國大乘佛教特色的寺院。我的父母是虔誠的亞洲佛教徒，20多年來奉獻於精神修行和協助道場事務。我對這些問題的觀察，源於萬佛城的獨特文化和社區互動，以及我曾接觸過的其他寺院和宗教社團所得的經驗。

在美國有一些組織致力推動佛教各類派以及

religious communities I have seen.

There are organizations in the United States devoted to dialogue between various schools of Buddhism and with other religions as well, particularly Christianity, but there seems to be little dialogue on bridging this – possibly more difficult – cultural and social divide between Western convert and Asian immigrant Buddhists. Along with widespread Euro-American interest in Buddhism taking off in the 1950s (although there has been a much smaller minority of Buddhist sympathizers and converts since around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), an influx of Asian immigrants to the United States since 1965 has led to an exponential increase in the American Buddhist population. However, this does not mean that there is an “American Buddhism.”

The two groups are separated by deep divisions that can include ethnicity, culture, language, socioeconomic class, and motivation. One might note that the first Asian Buddhist teachers in the United States attracted many Western followers, but that may be due in large part to their exceptional personal charisma. While many Westerners may be drawn to Buddhism because of psychology or meditation, many Asian immigrants “have used their religious congregations to provide social services for new arrivals, to maintain fellowship with co-ethnic members, and to pass on their cultural traditions to their children.”

In brief, Asian immigrants’ religious communities also often serve important social and cultural functions, in addition to reasons of personal and spiritual interest. Thus, many Asian immigrants’ needs in relationship to their religious communities can be more complex than that of most Western Buddhists’. These factors contribute to the difficulty of dialogue between the two groups, because it causes a lack of a common language (in at least several ways – linguistic, cultural, conceptual). The understandings of the function of a religious community differ between the two groups, and even the interest in religion may be motivated by different factors. In order for dialogue to happen, there has to be some kind of fundamental shared understanding or framework to serve as the grounding for discussing differences. One may think of dialogue as something one enters into in order to more fully understand the other, but one also needs to have a basic understanding of the other to begin a meaningful dialogue as well. There also has to be a recognition of and interest in the other party. In her article on the landscape of Buddhist America, Jan Nattier quotes *Tricycle* editor Helen Tworikov in a controversial 1991 piece that “the spokespeople for Buddhism in American have been, almost exclusively, educated members of the white middle class.” To the extent that this assessment is accurate, it further explains the lack of dialogue between the two groups. Asian immigrant Buddhist organizations do have their avenues of expression, such as print publications and Websites, but often they are not in English or not physically or culturally accessible to the wider American public. This is not to blame the white, middle-class, educated Buddhists for generating much of the discourse, because helping the public to better

與其他宗教（特別是基督教）之間的對話；但是似乎很少有針對前邊所敘述的亞洲移民和西方佛教徒的文化和社會分歧——可能這工作更不容易！50年代，歐美人士對佛教掀起高度的興趣（其實20世紀初就有少數的佛教認同者和皈依者），以及1965年之後湧入大量亞洲移民，使得美國佛教徒人數暴增。但是，這並不意味有所謂的「美國佛教」。

這兩個群體在種族、文化、社會經濟階層，以及學佛動機是有極大的差異而彼此分歧的。可能有人會說，最初來到美國的亞洲法師吸引了許多西方的追隨者。但這大多數是因為他特殊的個人魅力居多。許多西方人因為心理學或打坐而被佛教吸引，同時許多亞洲移民卻是透過宗教聚會，為新移民提供社群服務，以維護同種族的團體，並藉此將自己國家的傳統文化傳遞給下一代。

簡單地說，除了個人精神方面的興趣之外，亞裔的宗教團體往往還具有重要的社會文化功能，因此亞裔移民對宗教團體的需求，比起多數的西方佛教徒，來得更為複雜。這些因素造成兩個團體之間的對話難度，因為二者缺乏一個共同的立場，至少在語言、文化、觀念上。兩者對宗教團體功能的認識不同，甚至對宗教的興趣也是受到不同因素的驅使。因此為了有溝通的機會，所以必須具備一些基本的共同認知或框架，作為化解這種分歧的基礎。有人可能會認為，溝通不就是為了更充分了解對方嗎？但這也需要具備對另一方的基本認知，才能開始一個有意義的對話，而且還要令對方認同和感興趣。

Jan Nattier 曾引用《三輪車》雜誌編輯 Helen Tworikov 在1991年發表的一篇爭議性文章：「佛教在美國的發言人，幾乎一直都是受高等教育白人中產階級的專利。」某種程度上，這個批判是正確的，也更說明了兩個團體之間缺乏對話。亞裔佛教徒有他們的表達途徑，如出版物和設網站，但往往不是英語，因此在訊息的流通或是文化的表達往往無法普遍於美國社會。這不是批評前述所提的高等教育白人中產階級獨占優勢，能讓大眾認識佛教的價值與重要；也不是說他們應該為亞洲佛教徒缺乏有效傳播的情形負責。引述的原因，只是要更瞭解

understand Buddhism has its value and importance, nor to say that they are responsible for the lack of Asian Buddhist representation, but rather to better understand the reasons for Tworokov's assessment.

From personal observation, Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery in Redwood Valley, California, which is in the Thai Forest tradition, has drawn a blend of Thai and Western Buddhists, while most of the monastics are Westerners. A number of the monks there have spent time in Thai monasteries, and they are in the lineage of Ajahn Chah, who had many Thai and Western disciples. Their balance between tradition and adaptation seems to be accessible to people across the range of Asian and Western Buddhists.

In Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, which is connected to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, an ethnically mixed range of people attend the weekly events such as talks and meditations, many of whom are Western or Asian American college students and professionals. Many of the Asian immigrant Buddhists and their children come to the monastery on Saturdays, during which they have events more associated with Asian Buddhism such as bowing and recitation sessions, and they have a large community noon meal. In the evening, a Dharma talk is given by a Western monk. For first generation Asian Buddhists, there are often translations provided on the side into Chinese, Vietnamese, or another Asian language. Since some come as families, their children grow up with this as their religious and cultural community.

However, second-generation Asian Americans in general may have religious experiences and interests different from that of their parents. Many have grown up in culturally Buddhist households, but as they acculturate or assimilate in American culture their spiritual interests and needs may become more similar to that of Western Buddhists.

Pyong Gap Min, who studies the sociology of Asian American religions, notes the paucity of research done on the children of contemporary Asian immigrants, who will further transform the religions of their parents as they continue to adjust to a new culture and suit new needs. Rita Gross mentions a young Buddhist who had grown up for eight years in a Zen community in New Hampshire. She collected experiences and stories from other young Buddhists into two books, and concluded that the "immigrant-convert divide that had been so central to her parents' generation was no longer as significant. Asian and non-Asian Buddhist young people had similar experiences and questions, went to the same schools, and often made the same decisions."

As a second generation Asian American Buddhist, I can see the way in which the divide might be bridged through my background with both young Asian American Buddhists and non-Asian American Buddhists. In my peer group, I similarly see many blends of cultural and social backgrounds and many shared spiritual needs and interests.

Tworokov做這種批判的理由。

依個人的觀察，在位於加州紅木谷、傳承泰國森林佛教傳統的無畏寺裡，雖然大部分僧眾是西方人，但與泰國佛教的文化有良好的融合。那裡的僧侶繼承阿姜查之傳統，他是一位擁有許多泰國和西方弟子的高僧。有些僧侶也曾在泰國寺廟待過一段時間。在這個道場裡，傳統和適應之間的取舍標準，似乎能同時被亞洲和西方弟子所接受。

柏克萊寺，與萬佛聖城同隸屬於法總的分支道場，每週舉辦的座談和打坐都有許多不同種族的人參加，其中多數是西方或亞裔美籍的大學生和專業人士。每個星期六，亞洲移民來的佛教徒和他們的孩子會來參加深具亞洲傳統的佛事，例如誦經、禮拜，並且一起留下用餐；晚間則由一位西方的比丘為大家講法，現場經常有中文、越南文或其他亞洲語言翻譯給第一代的亞洲佛教徒聽。許多都是全家一起來的，所以他們的孩子就在這樣宗教和文化融合的大家庭裡成長。

然而一般而言，第二代亞裔美國人的宗教經驗和興趣可能和父母的相差很大。許多人雖然在佛教家庭長大，但由於受到美國文化的同化與融合，他們的宗教信仰與需求會變得較類似西方佛教徒。

研究亞裔美籍之宗教社會學的Pyong Gap Min指出，過去所做的研究很少針對當代亞洲移民的子女。這些孩子在適應新文化和滿足新需求的過程中，會轉變他們承襲於父母的宗教信仰。Rita Gross提到一位在新罕布爾州的禪修中心成長八年的佛教青年，她蒐集其他年輕佛教徒的經驗和故事，出版了兩本書並得出結論：「在她父母那一輩的外來移民和本土教徒之間主要的分歧，在下一代已不再顯著。亞裔和非亞裔的佛教青年有著類似的經驗和問題，他們上同一所學校，也經常做相同的決定。」

身為第二代的亞裔美籍，兼具亞裔與非亞裔佛教青年的文化背景，相信透過我這個世代，上一代東西方佛教徒的歧異能得到溝通與連結。在我的朋友之中，我看到許多這樣的文化交融，以及許多相同的精神需求和興趣。