

Buddhist Societies or NGOs? :
Focusing on ‘Engaged and NGO-type Movements’
of Modern East-Asian Buddhist Societies

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국문요약

국제적으로 활동영역을 넓힌 세 동아시아 불교결사: 대만의 자제회, 한국의 JTS, 일본의 사방승가회에서 나타나는 NGO유형 참여불교운동의 유사성을 확인해본다.

이들 세 불교NGO운동은 21세기 초 이래로 계속 활동 중이며, 해외로 지부활동을 확장하고, 불교 교의와 공익활동을 조화시키며, 공적인 자원봉사활동을 종교적 소명의식과 직접적으로 연결시킨다는 점에서 상호 유사성을 보여준다. 그들은 외부적으로는 국제구호활동과 자원봉사를 실천하는

NGO임을 표방하지만, 내부적으로는 불교조직으로서의 정체성을 강조하기도 한다.

대만의 자제회는 국제연합 공보부(UN DPI) NGO 이자, 국제연합 경제사회이사회(UN ECOSOC)의 특별협의지위(Special Consultative Status) NGO이기도 하다. 한국의 JTS 역시 2007년에 UN ECOSOC의 특별 지위를 획득했으며, 그들 스스로를 “기아, 질병, 문맹과 싸우는 NGO”로서 표방한다.

일본의 사방승가회(CS)는 종교성에 기반하고 있는 강한 이데올로기와 실천적인 면에서 드러나는 특정한 경향성으로 인해 진보적 정치결사 내지 개혁적인 NGO에 좀 더 가까운 것으로 보인다.

사방승가회는 UN의 공식 NGO로 등록하는 대신에 그들의 해외 활동영역 내 국가의 정부나 종교단체와 연합을 체결함으로써 공공성을 획득하는 전략을 취한다. 따라서 사방승가회는 UN 기구에 등록되어 있어서 JTS나 자제회의 경우처럼 민간모금활동에 의지하여 활동자금을 구하는 방식이 아니라, 자체적으로 다양한 수익활동을 통하여 재원을 마련하는 차이점을 보여준다.

주제어: 동아시아 불교결사, 참여불교, 비 정부기구(NGO), 지도자승려, 제이티에스(JTS), 사방승가회(CS), 자제회(Tzu Chi).

1. Introduction

Buddhist societies, as defined in this article, are religious organizations that are independent of temple-based institutions and are established by the laity and under the leadership of one or

two monks. In most cases they strive to adhere closely to the traditional teachings and, different from temples that are under the supervision of conservative Buddhist orders, display strong solidarity and active social engagement. The ideology that provides the basis for their social work is far more progressive than that of the sangha and is commonly based on the doctrinal interpretations of the individual leading monks of the society. Furthermore, regardless of the involvement of monks, these societies are primarily lay movements that started from the intent to address the internal problems of the sangha and societal issues. In many cases these movements have come to be formed into Buddhist societies.

Many modern Buddhist societies are critical of the conservatism and the system of hierarchical system of the Buddhist orders they are affiliated with, and have developed a different organizational system. A key aspect in this is their transnational perspective, which gives them more leeway to work for greater public good and world peace. They find it difficult to become socially engaged from within the traditional sangha structure on issues such as social justice, environmentalism, and protection of ethnic minorities. However, under a decentralized structure freer from a central administrative control, social engagement is taking place in various forms under the guidance of individual monks.

Buddhist NGOs that are loosely connected with the sangha headquarters are involved at a global level on issues of social justice regarding children, women, and people marginalized or victimized by war. Such Buddhist NGOs are usually led by either

monks or lay leaders who are highly motivated and in most cases cooperate with other non-religious NGOs. In the case of monk leaders, it is also common that other monks are mobilized for organizing groups that are indirectly affiliated with the main Buddhist order with regards to matters of social justice.¹⁾

This paper will discuss three representative Buddhist societies in three East Asian nations: Tzu Chi of Taiwan, the Join Together Society of Korea, and Catuddisa Sangha of Japan. These three religious societies mostly have worked toward social justice and project that benefit society, and are rooted in the Buddhist traditions of East Asia in general and the respective Buddhist traditions of Taiwan, Korea, and Japan specifically. Their commonalities are that they have started as self-sustaining Buddhist communities and have developed into organizations that are active at a global level.

In this paper, I will firstly discuss the background to the establishment and operation of the three Buddhist societies. In following, and will then move on to their main forms of practice and methods of operation, and finally will examine their visions. Furthermore, parallel strategies and their methods of resolving the possible tension between their religious character as Buddhist organizations and their public interests that they uphold as global NGOs will be discussed.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, various Buddhist organizations have become highly active in East Asia, a region

1) Jonathan S. Watts, ed. 2012, 154-155.

traditionally dominated by Mahayana Buddhism, various Buddhist organizations have become highly active. Among these the three that will be discussed in more detail are the closest to NGOs in terms of their social engagement. Aside from the NGO-types, there are other types that focus on personal cultivation through Ch'an meditation and other cultivation institutes that focus on meditation and even South Asian practice methods.

As if to reflect the diversity of modern societies, there are various organizations where the practitioners even practice their own personal forms of religiosity. Thus, it would be difficult to concisely describe these organizations in general terms. In this paper, individual NGO-type Buddhist societies will be chosen from the three countries, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. Their similarities and differences and the context that have brought about the founding of these organizations will be explored.

Judging from the research done so far, there are several studies on Tzu Chi, most likely because its history is relatively long and the size of the organization is quite large. On the other hand, studies on JTS or Catuddisa Sangha mostly concern the personal background and actions of the leading monks; otherwise little or no work has been done on the societies themselves and their social mission. Representative research the leading monk of the Jungto Society, the main headquarters of JTS, was undertaken by Pori Park, while Jonathan Watts has written about Catuddisa Sangha's leading monks by connecting it to engaged Buddhism in Japan. However, this paper is the first comparative study of Buddhist

NGOs from the three countries, and it will show the similarities and differences of those NGO- typed East Asian Buddhist Societies.

2. NGO or Religious Society?: Global Buddhist Societies

(1) *The Emergence of Buddhist Societies in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan and the Historical Context*

Undoubtedly, the social engagement of Tzu Chi, Catuddisa Sangha, and JTS can be categorized as forms of engaged Buddhism. The leading monks or lay Buddhist leaders manage these societies and together with their members practice as communities and carry out socially engaged work. The engaged Buddhism that this paper will consider is not concerned with individual religious salvation. Instead, we are referring to Buddhism that considers the individual as inseparable from the society, and is characterized by direct action that is geared towards the public interests. The ideals of this form of engaged Buddhism include global peace, environmental protection, and abolishment of racial, ethnic and gender discrimination. It also includes political activism and the ideals of various other forms of social movements.²⁾

When we consider the leaders of the Buddhist organizations who are highly engaged in social issues, we can see that some of these leaders in the past had been involved in social movements or

2) Jhon S. Strong 2008, 362.

student movements.³⁾ In the case of the leader of Catuddisa Sangha, Okochi Hidehito, he was deeply influenced by the struggles of the student movements in the 1960s Japan.⁴⁾ In the case of the Japanese Buddhist movement Nipponzan Myōhōji, records show that one of its leader monks Kato Hiromichi was an active participant in the student movement.⁵⁾

In the case of Korean JTS, its founder Beop ryun was deeply involved in the social movements during the time of military rule and his experiences of hardships during that time was one of the reasons for establishing the Korean Jungto Society, the parent organization for JTS. Beop ryun argues that it is the purpose of religion and its representatives to provide relief for people's suffering, the world's problems, and even for personal problems. In effect, the Jungto Society and its affiliated groups such as JTS and 'Good Friends' have for the past 20 years worked to bring relief to the people in foreign places such as India, the Philippines, and North Korea.⁶⁾ In particular, it is worth noting that the North Korea aid project of Good Friends was able carry out projects that even

3) Zengaku kyōtō kaigi was an umbrella organization of all the main student political factions located in Japanese universities. It was initially formed at Tokyo University as a student movement and was active between 1968 and 1969 during the student demonstration era of the 1960s. It is sometimes abbreviated as Zenkyōtō and towards the end of the 1960s, student movements were generally called the 'Zenkyōtō movement.' They were radical in that they considered the Japanese Communist party as a conservative party.

4) Watts 2012, 168-169.

5) Robert Kisala 1999, 48.

6) Accessed February, 3, 2013. <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/book/562109.html>.

governmental organizations could not achieve.

From the perspective of Okochi Hidehito of Catuddisa Sangha, we can also witness the message of social engagement. His father being a head monk of a temple, Okochi grew up in a monastery setting. For his education, instead of going to the university of the Jōdō Shinshū, he went to the prestigious Keiō University and majored in political science and law. Living through the tumultuous times of the student movements namely the early part of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s, Okochi was heavily influenced by the movement.⁷⁾

For example, following the shooting by the Chinese police into crowd demonstrating for the return of the Dalai Lama, Catuddisa Sangha sent a signed petition for the Japanese government to intervene in the matter. Such forms of direct action into political affairs are characteristics of Catuddisa Sangha.⁸⁾ Another example is the forming of solidarity with the Tibetan exiled monks or holding a memorial ceremony for the missing Tibetan monks. These actions show that Catuddisa Sangha is notably different from JTS or Tzu Chi.

In comparison to another Buddhist organization, Tzu Chi, there appears to be some differences in the contextual background to social operations. In Tzu, founded by Cheng Yen, participation of the laity, social welfare contribution, and humanitarianism of the

7) Watts 2012, 169.

8) Cattuddisa Sangha Facebook homepage. Accessed April. 7, 2013.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/c.sangha/?fref=ts>.

bodhisattva path as a mission are always emphasized. In the goals and practices that are expressed by Tzu Chi, there does not appear to be political motivations but instead a focus on social welfare and charity work.

As noted in the three Buddhist organizations, there are various methods of social engagement that are adopted. Catuddisa Sangha is an example of an organization that dreams of social justice, economic justice, and global transformations. There are also cases such as Tzu Chi where political issues are excluded while social welfare and aid are focused on. In the case of JTS of Korea, the project for giving aid to North Korea is mostly at the level of humanitarian aid, but given the North-South situation, aid can easily be related to political issues. This places JTS in the middle ground between focusing on political issues and focusing on social issues.

Jonathan Watts has argued that in the Buddhist organizations that are socially engaged, there is tension between the two foci, social welfare and social justice.⁹⁾ However, in the case of Catuddisa Sangha, which is strongly focused on social justice, it expresses strong political messages or is actively involved in current social issues while also carrying out funding and construction projects for the welfare of the poor. Given this fact, it is clear that a strict dichotomous structure of categorization cannot be applied to all cases of Buddhist societies. In a similar manner, in the case of

9) Watts 2012, 153.

JTS, though it provides daily necessities for North Korean nurseries and orphanages, its leader Beop ryun has been actively critical of the current North-South reunification issues and has even put forth his own thoughts on this issue. When considering this, it is not simply a social welfare affair but can be categorized as belonging in the political or social justice sphere.

Let us now take a closer look at the concrete background factors that lead to the formation of these three NGO-type Buddhist organizations. Firstly, among the three societies, Tzu Chi¹⁰⁾ is a currently active organization that originated from the Tzu Chi Compassion Society 慈濟精舍 in Hualien, Taiwan. Tzu Chi consists of its international relief organization called Buddhist Compassionate Relief and its foundation called Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. The organization size is large enough to be referred to as a Buddhist order.

Together with Fo Guang Shan of Hsing Yun and Dharma Drum Mountain of Sheng-yen, Tzu Chi is one of the three largest Buddhist organizations that have originated from mainland China or Taiwan. Because Tzu Chi was formed on the basis of Chinese and Buddhist ideals, its members while pursuing the Bodhisattva ideal of saving all sentient beings also pursue the ideal of 'benevolence.'

10) Tzu Chi is a global relief and aid NGO and its official name is 'Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation.' Its internal organization is tightly interconnected through active communication. Tzu Chi, in 2010 under the name of Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, has been registered as a UN DPI NGO and as a UN ECOSOC NGO with a 'Special Consultative Status.'

It is worth noting that Taiwan Buddhism from the 1980s transformed the philosophical influence of ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ of Yin Shun (1906-2005) into a Buddhism for ‘social welfare.’ Humanistic Buddhism is an extension of the twentieth century transformations of the Buddhist reformation movements in mainland China. It is also the product of the influence of the reformist monks who were exiled to Taiwan in 1949 with the transfer of power to the Communist party. Based on the teaching of ‘Buddhism for Human Living’ of Taixu (1890-1947), Yin Shun developed from within Buddhism the philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism that emphasized the role of humanitarianism.¹¹⁾ In the end, it was within this historical background of Humanistic Buddhism that Cheng Yen came to establish Tzu Chi. While emphasizing social work and charity to its members, she taught them to “go and see the poor” and “act now.”

Furthermore, the societies created by Taiwanese immigrants to other countries have become the main foundation that allowed for Taiwanese Buddhist temples or Taiwan-based schools to become active internationally. When one visits the Vancouver branch of Tzu Chi, there is a sense that it is a cultural center or a volunteer center rather than a temple. Aside from the small number of administrative personnel from the main branch in Taiwan, the majority of the members were immigrants to Canada and it is these overseas groups that became the main financial source and a pool

11) Gary Ho 2009, 33.

of volunteers of Tzu Chi.

As for the JTS's founder Beop ryun, he considers it a mission to live a "Bodhisattva life that helps neighbors and the world and a life of freedom without suffering." JTS has provided an alternative to a world faced with the loss of humanity, the disintegration of communities, and the destruction of the natural environment. It has done this by way of focusing on the Buddhist worldview, that of the Buddha's and bodhisattva's life of non-self, non-possession, and non-attachment to self. Beop ryun believes that the environmental issue is not a problem only of consumerism or that can be solved by conservationism. He claims that it is an issue of transforming the living that involves changes in our value system, leading to by a new worldview and a new form of civilization. Also, Beop ryun regards the Korean reunification not as a regionally limited issue but a core issue from which much can be gained. He considers it as a model that can provide a method of resolution of issues of regional conflicts, intervention of external powers, and ethnic conflicts that occur in other places of the world.¹²⁾

Such thoughts and practices adopted by Beop ryun were influenced to a great extent by 'Mingjung Buddhism' that started to emerge together with the start of the Korean democratization movements of the late 1970s. Minjung Buddhism (Buddhism of the masses) was a reformist movement and can be considered to be the foundation for modern 'engaged Buddhism' or 'practice Buddhism'

12) Jungto Society webpage. Accessed February, 5, 2013.

<http://www.jungto.org/buddhist/budd1.html>.

that is characterized by active social engagement. Within the Minjung Buddhism of the 1980s, some perceived the realization of genuine Bodhisattva vows to be the basis of anti-authoritarian and democratic struggle. Among the Minjung Buddhist groups, those with reformist tendencies claimed to advocate anti-authoritarian struggle and the emancipation of the people. This reflected their intent and efforts to forge solidarity with hardcore activist groups. However, starting from the Korean presidential elections of December 1987, the Minjung Buddhist movement became newly reformulated. Against this historical backdrop, in the following year, 1988, the parent organization of JTS was founded by Beop ryun with the name 'Pure Land Society' or 'Jungto Society.'

After the Minjung Buddhist movement quietened down, the activities of 'religious associations' which propagated ideas of pure Buddhist movements gained strength in the 1990s. However, after the 2000s, the groups emphasizing religious practice lost momentum. In contrast, in the concurrent lay Buddhist movement, the number of groups and their activities expanded during this time. These phenomena occurred appears to be related to the social stability of the time and the institutional expansion of South Korea's largest Buddhist order, the Jogye order. In other words, when the order and its temples expanded, the more religiously oriented lay organizations began to shrink and conversely, lay groups became more socially involved and less attached to the main institution.¹³⁾

13) Kim Eung Cheol 2009, 99.

It is within this historical background that Korean JTS became established and eventually came to start its operations overseas and establishing overseas branches.

In the case of the Japanese Catuddisa Sangha, its establishment was closely related to the global situation when international NGOs became active from the 1980s. At this time the number and the activities of international NGOs increased because of the start of relief operations for Indochina's refugees and for the famines in Africa. In the midst of this, many Buddhist organizations like the Catuddisa Sangha came to be formed.

Okochi Hidehito, the founder of Catuddisa Sangha, in his 20s had travelled with like-minded fellow monks to the various conflict areas, Southeast Asia. Their experiences of working with the people who suffered under societal oppression led them to form AYUS¹⁴⁾ which gave support to small aid NGOs active in the conflict areas. Okochi had realized that Japanese economic prosperity was sustained by the economic and environmental exploitation of South and Southeast Asia parallel to the United States' exploitation of Middle East. Catuddisa Sangha came to be formed as a result of the cooperation between Cambodian and Japanese monks and worked outside any schoolarian affiliations. Their aim was to help the villages in the Battambang province of Cambodia that had experienced famine and was excluded from economic development

14) AYUS is a name of international Buddhist cooperation network. accessed
<http://jneb.jp/english/japan/ayus>

plans.

The current Catuddisa Sangha is in the process of forming a network that considers its area of operations the greater pan-Asiatic region that is not defined by the limits of national boundaries. They envision a Buddhist organization that is not limited to national boundaries, an aim that is based on the ideals of the Buddhist Pure Land. They consider Asia as a region that can become a model of 'World of eternal peace,' a vision they refer to as 'world reformation.'

As can be seen in the background of the above Buddhist organizations, fundamental Buddhist teachings of compassion, Bodhisattva path, non-self and non-duality have provided the basis for the social justice movements or in efforts to protect minorities. There are innumerable opportunities for the socially engaged Buddhist societies to take part in disaster relief or social welfare. Moreover, the internet and developments in the transportation have increased the contact of these organizations with ideas and notions that transcend national boundaries. This has promoted the expansion of Buddhist organizations into the global arena. This paper will focus on NGO-type Buddhist societies that have been discussed so far. They are socially engaged and transcend national boundaries. They are operated by means of participation of a large army of volunteers and are led by a few leading monks.

(2) *Modern East Asian Buddhist Societies and its NGO*

Characteristics

1) An International Charity NGO of Taiwan: The Case of Tzu Chi.

Tzu Chi was established on April 14 by Bhikkhuni Cheng Yen 1966 and began to operate as a volunteer and funding organization where monks and laity worked together side-by-side. Initially, it was a support group for the aged (those above 85 years), poor, and sick. After being recognized for its continuous volunteer work and sponsorship, it became registered in 1980 as Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation and thereafter operated largely as a foundation.

According to an interview with a Tzu Chi staff member from the Vancouver branch, most recently Tzu Chi has internally proclaimed itself as one of the Buddhist orders with the name of Tzu Chi Order. However, the management and functioning of Tzu Chi is clearly quite different from that of the traditional Taiwanese Buddhist orders. The organization of Tzu Chi is such that strategic committees are setup to coordinate the four areas of operations: cultural, medical, educational, and volunteer activities, considered to be the underpinning of Tzu Chi.

Though the hundreds of volunteer members are the main source of energy and support for Tzu Chi, this group does not have an official categorization. Despite the fact that Tzu Chi was established by Bhikkhuni Cheng Yen, not all of its members are Buddhist. That is because in the volunteer work of disaster relief, not only the Buddhists but also members of other religions participate in

what is considered to be general social relief work.¹⁵⁾ Tzu Chi is distinct from other Buddhist organizations in that its operational methods have no reason to encourage the volunteer members to become a nun or a monk.

Furthermore, the teachings of its leader Cheng Yen is not a complicated Buddhist teaching but because it is simple and the ‘teachings are doable,’ it is easily understood and followed by anyone. Religious elements such as scriptural studies and Buddhist rituals are limited and its principles of practice are also simplified.¹⁶⁾ Due to this reason, despite clearly being a Buddhist organization, its characteristics are those of a public service foundation.

The success of Tzu Chi can be explained through several factors including Cheng Yen’s leadership skills, the sacrifices of ordinary Tzu Chi members, and the focused efforts of the organized volunteers. Also, an increase in the number of financial supporters and volunteers through international aid activities, and its transparent financial management has helped in its success. For example, the foundation that manages the overall financial matters of the Buddhist Compassionate Relief is a foundation called the Taiwan Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. Because foundations, as public corporate bodies, are under the national jurisdiction in Taiwan, Buddhist Compassionate Relief was in a situation where all of Tzu Chi’s financial matters were publically

15) In Seok Bak 2012, 264.

16) Wei-Yi Cheng 2007, 43.

and transparently managed. According to 2010 records, the world-wide membership number increased to ten million and those who were small amount donors totalled seven million. Small amount donation is 50 Taiwan dollars and it is unique to Tzu Chi that its members collect this amount by personally visiting the donor.¹⁷⁾

Other than the long term and consistent contribution that the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation receives every year, in times of international crisis, it forms fundraising operations. Its membership fundraising promotions is its mainstay and this activity includes mailing to possible donors, TV advertisements, home solicitations, regional specific events, and large company solicitations. Nevertheless, Tzu Chi encourages a regular donation of a small fixed amount and arranges for Tzu Chi members to visit monthly its donors as a method of collecting funds. The donations are used toward poverty relief, charity work similar to emergency aid, TV station operational costs, publication of various materials, and support programs for school fees. In this sense its method of fundraising is not largely different from any other NGO's method of securing financial resources.

Another source of Tzu Chi's finances is its hospitals. One of the uniquely different aspects of Tzu Chi is that rather than building temples, it builds hospitals and schools.¹⁸⁾ The medical treatment fees are not different from other general hospitals but a certain

17) Kim 2009, 247.

18) Julia C. Huang 2009, 192.

percentage of the patients' fees are allocated towards charity work. Also, its hospital staff contributes 10% of their salary as donation to Tzu Chi. Given this fact, the hospitals can be said to be an important source of income for Tzu Chi.

Initially, what started as an effort to raise funds for relief operations for the 1991 flood disaster in Bangladesh, has now spread to fundraising in over 60 countries worldwide. With over 10 million volunteer members and 50,000 permanent members spread over 29 countries, its international volunteer work has rapidly expanded. In the United States, it has developed into an NGO that has 62 branches with a total membership of 100,000. Currently, Tzu Chi is operating volunteer work in South America and the Caribbean.¹⁹⁾

In 2010, Tzu Chi was recognized as a UN DPI (Department of Public Information) non-governmental organization under the name of "Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation". In the same year, it also received the Special Consultative Status from the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). Tzu Chi is also currently a member of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD) and InterAction.²⁰⁾ As an international NGO, it can be noted from the homepage of its global headquarters,

19) Mark. O'Neil 2010, 67-8.

20) Tzu Chi is now a member of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD) and InterAction. In 2010, Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Tzu Chi US homepage. Accessed April. 21, 2013. <http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=>.

the Tzu Chi office of the United States, that it has downplayed its religious characteristics.²¹⁾ That is because starting from the 2000s, as it was registered with the international organizations such as the UN as an NGO for international relief and volunteer work, it could not explicitly express its religious characteristics or its proselytizing aims. In addition, the US Tzu Chi office, as the representative of its international activities, would have recognized the value of having Tzu Chi recognized not simply as a Buddhist organization to its potential western members. That is because there is a large representation of people of other religions or people with no religions in the West.

Cheng Yen, having recognized these points has clearly outlined the guidelines for Tzu Chi's international work. She has emphasized three principles of international relief and volunteer work. The first consists of the three 'Noes.' 'No politics,' 'no economics,' and 'no religious matters' are discussed during relief and volunteer work. It emphasizes the point that relief is provided without any condition. Religious background or political position does not matter, relief is carried out as a gift from one human to another human. Nothing is expected in return and there is no expectation from the recipients

21) The foundation focuses on four major missions: charity, medicine, education, and humanistic culture. The foundation also engages in international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental protection. 'Tzu Chi' means 'compassion and relief.' Tzu Chi US homepage. Accessed April. 21, 2013. http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96&Itemid=182&lang=en.

to convert to Buddhism.

On a final note, we need to return to some points regarding the hospitals of Tzu Chi. An important work in international relief operations is medical relief and here the needed skills and people are supplied from its medical and nursing schools. Furthermore, in social welfare problems, medical welfare takes up an important part. However, when forming general government social welfare policies, raising taxes on social welfare is a sensitive issue. In Taiwan in order to resolve the tension between votes and political legitimacy which are closely linked with social welfare taxes, Cheng Yen's and Tzu Chi's support and assistance have been solicited by the political parties.²²⁾ This is an indication of how successful Tzu Chi's medical operations have become. It is to the extent that Tzu Chi's help is solicited for Taiwan's social medical welfare issues which in effect has become too complicated to be resolved with the given national budget or political will.

What has started at the level of charity work in order to give support to the medical issues of the poor has turned out to become successful to the extent that it has come to play a certain role in the national social medical welfare. If we consider Tzu Chi's medical operations in this way, the high level of public recognition Tzu Chi has already gained as a welfare organization is clearly obvious.

22) Andre Laliberte 2004, 95.

2) Japanese Grassroots Buddhist Network: Catuddisa Sangha.

The founder of Catuddisa Sangha (四方僧伽:Sihō Sangha), Yimoto Katsuyuki, was the head monk of a Nichiren shu temple in Fukuoka prefecture. The term Catuddisa Sangha refers to the notion that all the people of the world make-up a sangha. In the broad sense, it includes the people who will become Buddhists in the future and in this sense is referring to the universal sangha. Moreover, it is based on the idea that there are always people reviving Buddha's teachings and that the sangha continuously exists no matter the place and time.²³⁾

Catuddisa Sangha's operations extend beyond national borders and Buddhist schoolarian lines and have been expanding mostly in Buddhist countries. At present it is situated in more than 20 countries including Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Uighur, Mongolia, Korea, Russian Federation, Australia, France, England, and the United States. The Catuddisa movement is not based on the model of the richer countries unidirectionally giving to the poor countries. Rather, an important aim is to have the people of the poor countries establish their own self-sufficient communities. In other words, Catuddisa Sangha has been propagating a movement that has been based on the three principles of 1) self-sufficiency, 2) Dharma practice, and 3) autonomy.

23) Honda Shizuyoshi 本多静芳, Buddha ginkō no jissen to BNN 仏陀銀行の実践とBNN (Bukkō NGO nettowāku 仏教NGOネットワーク, 2012), accessed April 15, 2013, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Catuddisa-sangha>.

When considering the operations at a global level as publicized through the internet media such as YouTube, their official homepage, and their Facebook account, it comes closer to being an NGO rather than a Buddhist organization. According to a report given by the deputy of Catuddisa Sangha, Kōjima Chiko, the organization is even involved in the repatriation of the bodies of the WWII Japanese soldiers from Myanmar.²⁴⁾ However, in this report, Catuddisa Sangha was introduced as an NGO that gave small loans to small-scale farmers.

Catuddisa Sangha's operations are focused on the issue of world peace and a world free from discrimination. On the occasion of the globally synchronized World Peace Dharma service held on October 19th 2011, its theme was simply set as world peace gathering for Tibet. Furthermore, in 2012 an emergency funding was given for the restoration of Indian Buddhist and Hindu temples that were destroyed from the attacks by the Indian Muslims. On the same note, in December 2011, Catuddisa participated in the World Human Rights Day Solidarity Parade as a supporting organization for the appeal of human-rights issues of the Middle East, Africa, South Mongolia, Uighur Autonomous Region, the persecution of Tibetans by the Chinese government, and the massacre of the minority groups in Myanmar.²⁵⁾ In the same year with the money

24) Accessed April. 6, 2013.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/photo.php?fbid=10151425553150320&set=o.135405679872961&type=1&theater>.

25) Accessed April. 11, 2013. <http://blog.livedoor.jp/csnews/archives/942502.html>.

funded by Catuddisa Sangha, the Myanmar refugees in the Kachin region built a refugee camp that was able to house many of their fellow refugees.

One among the main projects that Catuddisa Sangha is managing its Buddha Bank with three operations in Cambodia and one in Thailand. Its main target population is the low-income labourers. In this project, there are more than 3000 registered participants and up to now, there have been 45 cases of small scale financial loans given. Buddha Bank can be seen as a movement that has borrowed its system and idea from the concept of micro-credit that had been operated by Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.

The money (BD: BODHI) used by the Buddha Bank is not a national currency but a 'pseudo' currency used for personal transactions in services and which has also become a localized currency. By using the BD, the participant gains membership and when needed, BD can be exchanged into real currency in order to, for example, establish the funding for a business endeavor. Essentially, the reason why Catuddisa Sangha established Buddha Bank is to aim for a highly localized autonomous economy by converting the globalized modern economy through establishing independence local communities.

Furthermore, from Catuddisa Sangha we can witness their efforts to create business ideas in diverse ways to assist in the survival and independence of the people in various regions. The most representative examples are the concept of 'fair-trade' and

zudabukuro (頭陀袋 : monks' knapsacks) that are produced by Myanmar refugees. Fair-trade is a concept that supports life improvements of the producers based on fair prices for agricultural or manufactured products exported from developing countries. Catuddisa Sangha has introduced as fair-trade products *zudabukuro*, that are produced by Myanmar refugees in a village located in the border regions of Myanmar and Thailand's northwestern region. Catuddisa Sangha is active in ensuring fair prices and the consistent sale of *zudabukuro* in order to improve the life circumstances of the people who are exposed to deteriorating living and working conditions.

Also, in order to fund the Life Line Projects for constructing water reservoirs, roads, hydraulic turbine, water wells, and the no-interest NPO Project (Buddha Bank), Catuddisa Sangha sells calendars and incenses. Since 2006 when picture books of the various operations of Catuddisa Sangha in foreign regions were distributed for sale, these pictures were collected every year into a calendar and sold as 'Charity Calendars'. Pre-orders are taken for 2500 Yen for a calendar and the sales revenue is used in various emergency fundings.²⁶⁾

Within its underlying aim of world peace, eradication of discrimination, and support for the poor, there can be noted no traces of religious tendencies. In fact, in the introductory speech by Kamikawa Yasuinori at the 34th Symposium on Life Information

26) Accessed April. 8, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfhfpodEDzs>.

Science, no religious tendencies appeared. Rather, its NGO identity, based on its endeavors for global peace was strongly emphasized. Furthermore, even from its publically claimed principles of practice, its orientation is closer to being a progressive political organization or a reformist NGO rather than a religious Buddhist organization. Some main points that appear in its principles of practice should be discussed in more detail.

- ① *We reject political power and question its legitimacy.*
- ② *The absurdities within the power structure need to be exposed.*
- ③ *We aim for life ways that lead to the autonomy of the people that are brought about by the people.*
- ④ *We need to bring to light the solidarity that exists between regions and between nations.*
- ⑤ *We aim to achieve no less than the ultimate goal of humanity, world peace.*

According to the source materials, the overall focus of Catuddisa Sangha has been the people, autonomy, solidarity, and world peace. This is a reflection of the ideals and influences from the experiences of the leading monks who participated variously both directly and indirectly in the Japanese student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Though there are strong religious underpinnings at the fundamental level of ideas as noted in its introduction or its establishing ideals, in its principles of practice, its Buddhist

characteristics have been diluted and its anti-political establishment tendencies have been asserted. Further to this, for cooperation with Muslims and Christians in Catuddisa Sangha's main region of operations, Myanmar and Cambodia, such religious flexibility and progressiveness seem essential. That is because for a successful operation of Catuddisa Sangha in the foreign regions and for international cooperation, it is very obvious that any forms of religious conflict with non-Buddhists must be avoided.

3) An International Aid Organization of Jungto Society: JTS (Join Together Society).

JTS was established following Beop ryun's experiences of meeting the Dalits on his pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy sites in India in the 1990s. JTS was a chance for Beop ryun, who showed great ambition to be socially engaged, to extend his activities overseas. Furthermore, it was on the occasion of his visit to the historic sites of the famous Korean poet Yun Dongju and General Kim Jwajin during his visit to the famous Goguryeo fortresses that Beop ryun became interested in the North Korean refugees problem. His visit in 1996 coincided with the North Korean famine, and this naturally led to efforts to help the victims of the famine in North Korea. These experiences and the fundamental Buddhist idea of cultivation which Beop ryun held to be essential provided the basis for the establishment of Peace Foundation which is still in operations today.

What is important to current JTS are the volunteers who have

run and managed JTS together with Beop ryun. The original organization, the Jungto Society of Korea was unlike the mainstream Buddhist order where the organization consisted of two ordained monks, Beop ryun and Yusu, and a few ‘dharma teachers,’ and lay devotees. The ‘dharma teachers’ do not shave their hair nor dress in monk’s robe but are practitioners who live at the temple and have roles no different from monks. Essentially, the volunteers who are not associated with any Buddhist order or temple and who may include members of other religions are the actual movers and shakers of JTS and other affiliated groups of the Jungto Society. In this sense, JTS is much closer to being an NGO than a religious organization.

JTS was the first among the Korean Buddhist institutions to provide funding for aid projects in developing countries. They have been active in providing funding, sharing of experiences, and have worked together with similar organizations such as Good Hands, Helping Our Neighbors of the Buddhist Coalition for Economic Justice, Korean Buddhist for Famine Support, and ‘BWC’ of Lotus World. No different from other NGOs, JTS is heavily involved in forming solidarity with other NGOs.

Regarding international activities, JTS Philippines has cooperated with Korea International Cooperation Agency in a project to build a postnatal care center in the city of Damulog. The purpose was to provide support in building a postnatal center that would provide similar services as a maternity clinic or gynecology clinic to the people in poverty who cannot easily receive medical care. Also in

the same city of Damulog, JTS is involved in a project to build a water supply to a seedling plantation where the seedlings for reforesting the bare mountain in Damulog are grown.

Aside from this, a pilot project to build factories for sun-drying grains has been started. On the education front, JTS Philippines has been involved in constructing Makapili Secondary School and funding Buluan School. In another case, JTS Philippines has formed solidarity with JTS of other regions such as New York to carry out works to send text books to the schoolchildren of the Philippines. Recently JTS has attempted to transfer modern farming technics to the people of inland and for this purpose built a large scale farm. Not being able to secure suitable conditions for passing on the technology, the project has currently remained as mostly experimental farming techniques and growing subsidiary crops.²⁷⁾

In the Dongheswari region, JTS India having built the Sujata Academy in 1993, which mostly focused on local education, especially local children's education. Furthermore, JTS has, as an effort to improve the lives of the people, taught sewing skills, martial arts, English, and computer skills as part of the education. Sujata Academy has also carried out a campaign to prevent hunger for its students and their parents. Moreover, the elimination of tuberculosis project that JTS India has carried on for 11 years has been transferred to the national project referred to as the Revised

27) JTS Korea Facebook homepage. Accessed April. 16, 2013.

http://www.facebook.com/#!/jtskorea?hc_location=stream.

National Tuberculosis Control Program of the Indian government such that the funds to purchase medicine are received from the Indian government.

In Korea, JTS Korea has been providing support to 53 orphanages and nursery centers and to 12,000 children from special-needs schools starting from 1997, when a severe famine hit all of North Korea after a large crop failure. Such foreign aid projects in North Korea have been very difficult for any religious NGOs due to the North Korean government's reticence. However, the continued support provided by JTS is most likely due to the conditions of continued famine and the resulting human suffering starting from 1996 in North Korea where foreign aid was not rejected.

What is important is that though JTS is certainly an organization derived from Jungto Society led by Beop ryun, it sees itself as an "NGO whose goal is the eradication of famine-disease-illiteracy." Also, it is evident from the sources that in the works of JTS or in its slogans, more NGO characteristics are visible and its aim of working for global public interests can be verifiable. It would be fair to say that these NGO-like aims of JTS were an influencing factor in being granted the special status of NGO of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).²⁸⁾ With an official status as an international NGO, profit-making activities and operations for religious or factional groups are forbidden.

28) Accessed April. 21, 2013.

<http://csonet.org/content/documents/E2011INF4.pdf>.

Thus it would be impossible for an affiliate body to a religious organization to carry out proselytization.

That JTS exhibits strong NGO characteristics would also be tied to the fact that its leading monk Beop ryun is not officially registered as a monk with either the largest Korean Buddhist order, the Jogye order, nor with any other Buddhist order. That he was not registered into any order indicates that there was free from any bureaucratic or tradition-based interference. It is obvious that from the point of view of the Korean Buddhist institution, if Beop ryun had been an affiliated monk to an official order, his Jungto Society and its subsidiary organizations would not have achieved as much as it has up to now.

However, different from the fact that Beop ryun is not an officially registered monk, his Jungto Society is a registered with the Jogye Order. In spite of this, it is not under the governing powers of the order and in turn does not receive any support from the order. Instead the organization is run purely on people's donations and thus was easily accepted as a registered NGO of ECOSOC.

(3) *Central Characteristics of Religious Organizations*

In this chapter the fundamentally religious aspects of these organizations will be discussed. Though these organizations have portrayed themselves as NGOs, they are affiliated to a Buddhist order or have expanded to a size large enough to form a separate

order.

The combination of ethics with religion in her teachings is Cheng Yen's effort to amalgamate Confucianism and Buddhism or tradition with modernity. Cheng Yen was well versed in Confucius and Mencius and this is evident in the two important ways of action that reflects Confucius' two important notions. Firstly, the virtues of filial piety need to be improved, and secondly, personal education in morality must be outwardly expressed. It is Cheng Yen's belief that by emphasizing these two points, the family, society, and the country will become edified and enlightened.²⁹⁾

Tzu Chi, similar to early Buddhism, has inherent characteristics of lay participation. In this sense the two essential principles of practice namely devotion to Avalokitesvara and the accumulation of compassion, together with the doctrine of karma makeup the fundamental teachings. Cheng Yen's teachings of karma hardly fit Buddha's own teachings of karma but rather come closer to the Chinese ideas of causationism. These aspects are what characterizes Tzu Chi's emphasis on moral teachings and practices and what also leads the members of Tzu Chi to focus on improving the 'here and now.'³⁰⁾

Cheng Yen recommends people to pray twice a day but explains

29) Charles Brewer Jones 1999, 213.

30) Richard Gombrich 2012, review of *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism: Origins, Organization, Appeal and Social Impact*, by Yu-shunag Yao 2013, *Marburg Journal of Religion* 17 (Oxford).: accessed April. 22, 2013.

http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/ivk/mjr/pdfs/2013/reviews/rev_gombrich_2013.pdf.

that it is not for the purpose of gaining merits but merely for self-introspection. Tzu Chi's monks and their volunteers like all other Buddhists in Taiwan do what is referred to as 'morning activity,' or morning service. However the main event of the day is communal cultivation when Cheng Yen gives a teaching personally or through a pre-recorded video or written materials.

What distinguishes Tzu Chi from general NGOs is the consciousness of death or the method of dealing with death that exists uniquely within religious organizations or Buddhist institutions. Within Tzu Chi, this is called *zhunian* 助念, a ritual for the deceased and its main part consists of a group of people chanting the name of Amitabha. When a directly related family member or a relative of a member passes away, other members gather at the home of the deceased person and perform the *zhunian* ritual. Cheng Yen explains that this ritual has two purposes. The first is to direct the way for the dead soul to the Western Paradise (西方淨土). The second purpose is to create an atmosphere that is peaceful and quiet.

After the cremation of the body, Cheng Yen encourages family members and relatives to keep the remaining ashes in the Buddhist charnel house. For Tzu Chi members, funerals are considered the same as a start in the next life or a form of a farewell gathering for the deceased and this is why the relatives and also Tzu Chi members are invited. What is worth noting is that the funeral ceremony is provided by Tzu Chi without a cost but generally

family members or relatives of the deceased contribute to Tzu Chi funeral funds. Thus, providing funeral services is in the end Tzu Chi's important source of income.³¹⁾ Funerary rituals for its members, an important life ritual, were carried out in close connection to the association. As mentioned, Tzu Chi funerary rituals were free and since compensation was later received as a form of donation, it allowed Tzu Chi to present itself as a non-profit organization while also being able to secure the cost of operations. These funerary rituals and related activities are possible because Tzu Chi as a Buddhist institution maintains its fundamental religious aspects such as chanting, prayers, teachings about death, and so on.

Compared to Tzu Chi, Catuddisa Sangha maintains stronger ties to the Buddhist order. Firstly, Catuddisa Sangha belongs to a sub-school of Nichiren known as Honke School. Catuddisa Sangha was initially formed by a group of monks as a socially engaged Buddhist organization. This organization was affiliated to a Buddhist order and the leading monks are also all affiliated to an order and thus compared to Jungto Society and Tzu Chi, its Buddhist aspects are more prevalently visible. Catuddisa Sangha's religious characteristics, especially its ideas of realizing Pure Land

31) According to the interviews of Tzu Chi community members who made use of the funeral ceremony services of Tzu Chi, the entire ceremony is provided at no cost. However, after the funeral they have been paying 1,000 Taiwan dollars every month since the funeral. Exactly how much one pays monthly is up to the financial situation of the donor and donation itself is not even mandatory.

in this world is clearly visible in the five article charter as stipulated on their official homepage. Below, articles 1 and 5 are noted for illustration.

1. Catuddisa Sangha by way of a trans-national network based on alliance with other Buddhist organizations transcends national boundaries. Our aim is to build a system of autonomy globally and this system includes all regions of all nation-states. We call this Land of the Buddha.

In comparison to Tzu Chi and JTS, there are several reasons for Catuddisa Sangha to be more religiously oriented. One particular reason for this is due to its public status as an NGO. In the above it has been noted that Tzu Chi and JTS were registered respectively as DPI NGOs and ECONO NGOs. However for Catuddisa Sangha, in 2005 in cooperation with the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs it formed an institute which later became a foundation. Catuddisa Sangha also formed a partnership with Cambodian religious organizations. For example, in 2007 it formed a 'Catuddisa Sangha Alliance' with the two Theravada Buddhist schools. It also gave funding to the Raise and Support the Poor Organization run by Cambodian monks for a project to educate orphaned children. In 2009, the Buddha Bank of Catuddisa Sangha joined the NPO Bank Federation which indicates the level of international cooperation that Catuddisa has become involved in.

By joining and becoming registered in the United Nations, an organization can easily gain publicity and public trust. This would facilitate in moving one's operations into a foreign country. However, despite these conveniences, Catuddisa Sangha entered into agreements with governmental or other groups similar to NGOs usually in Southeast Asian countries. In its strategy of foreign policy we can assume that there were also issues of securing income. For the UN registered NGOs they are prohibited from earning income through profit making activities but must secure funding through donations only. Also, politically or religiously motivated activities are prohibited. Though Catuddisa Sangha receives donations, it is organized such that a portion of the profit from selling backpacks, clothes, incense, calendars and photo books are distributed and sold to fund their field operations.

Another point to note is that establishing new branches of Catuddisa Sangha in various foreign countries is an integral part of proselytization. In contrast to Tzu Chi or JTS where the lay volunteers or members carry out current aid projects, for Catuddisa Sangha the registered monks go out to the sites or are involved in forming alliances or participate directly in aid work. Though in the end, the projects may be no different from those of the NGO's, and Catuddisa Sangha does not separate proselytizing from their aid work and in this sense is clearly different from Tzu Chi and JTS.

JTS, on the other hand, is different from Tzu Chi and Catuddisa Sangha since it is to a great extent independent from its affiliated order and has also gained official status as an NGO. Due to these

factors its religious characteristics are relatively subdued. Furthermore, in recruiting members and volunteers, people from other religions or even atheists are accepted and for this reason it cannot express its religious identity. However, its fundamental roots are originally that of a Buddhist association. Moreover, to become an on-site worker one needs to take the Jungto Society's cultivation programs which are fundamentally Buddhist. Thus, it would be difficult to characterize JTS without mentioning its Buddhist roots.

JTS, as a subsidiary to a Buddhist community founded on the idea of 'cultivation, giving, and service,' expects from its members daily tasks as practitioners of Buddhism. This consists of meditation, praying once a day, donation of 1,000 won per day, and a helping and benevolent deed more than once a day. Furthermore, Jungto Society's practitioners or project workers must get up every day a 5am and within an hour must profess the reliance on the three jewels of Buddhism, chant prayers, do 108 prostrations, and meditate. Afterwards, he or she must recite scriptures, give a pledge as a Jungto practitioner, recite the aim of 1,000 days of practice, recite the *Bowangsammaeron* (10 Buddhist proverbs), recite the bodhisattva vow, and lastly, compose a daily record of one's cultivation. After every 100 days, a ceremony is held when one's cultivation records are submitted together with one's donation and a new 100-day cultivation plan is received.

What is important is that the workers of JTS will eventually become Jungto Society members, and through the Jungto Society programs training is received. Among some of the actual on-site

volunteer workers, their Buddhist identities were quite important to them not only as agents of an NGO but as Buddhist practitioners. It is obvious that because JTS is a UN registered ECOSOC NGO it would not be possible to hold dharma talks for the local residents of the host country nor would JTS be able to carry out proselytizing activities. Nevertheless, the method of proselytizing is by using aid activities as a pretext to create the means of broadly communicating Buddhist values to the people receiving aid.

(4) *The Formation and Future of Proselytizing and Religious schools*

In this chapter, the possibilities and effort put to religious proselytization by the three societies will be discussed even though the three societies have expressed themselves officially and in the international arena to be NGOs. This seems warranted given that the roots of the three societies are in Buddhism and continue to be so.

The reason why Cheng Yen established Tzu Chi was originally for the purpose of “helping the poor and edifying the rich.” Among the four main operations of Tzu Chi (charity, education, medical care, and humanity), charity includes such assistance as long term aid, disaster relief, medical support, and even support for funerals. Aside from these efforts, it seems the volunteers and the members who were involved in charity operations also acted as proselytizers. Considering the ideas and attitude that the recipients of charity would have towards Tzu Chi, the structure is such that charity operations are, at the same time, religious practices and proselytizing

work. Also, another operation, called edification, refers to organizing volunteer activities and publishing print materials related to Buddhist morality and Cheng Yen's dharma teachings. These edifying operations as activities for propagating the work of Tzu Chi and its vision towards those outside of the organization are in essence for conversion, which can simply be understood to be proselytization.³²⁾

Recently, the slogan 'dharma lineage of purification doctrine' and 'the sangha of compassion and salvation' have become popular within the Tzu Chi organization. The congratulatory slogan for the 2012 year end was, "The way of purifying ideals and dharma lineage," and "Compassion and salvation is the path for the people of the sangha."³³⁾ Publically and especially in the international arena, Tzu Chi has presented itself as an NGO, while also practically, its operations are very similar to other NGOs. Contrarily, these slogans betray its internal elements whereas a Buddhist institution, to establish a dharma lineage and solidify its status as Buddhist order are presented as important goals.

"Of course people ask me which school Tzu Chi belongs to. Are we a new school or do we belong to the Pure Land school? I say to them, 'the place of our practice is among the people and we focus on interaction.' This is the school

32) Andre Laliberte 2004, 87.

33) 2012 Nian suimo zhufu zhubiao 年歲末祝福主標: "Jingsifamai qinxingdao, Cijizhongmen renjianlu 靜思法脈勤行道慈濟宗門人間路," Tzu Chi webpage. Accessed April. 17, 2013. <http://www.tzuchi.org.tw/index.php?option=com>.

of Tzu Chi."³⁴⁾

In this cited source we can see that Cheng Yen has her own unique style of leading the organization and that Tzu Chi is not limited by the teachings or a tradition of a Buddhist school. We can gather from this strategy of Cheng Yen that by working ‘among’ the people doing charity work and social edification, people will naturally be drawn to Tzu Chi.

Furthermore, Tzu Chi’s expansion is globally closely connected to its international proselytizing efforts, a connection brought about due to the well established overseas Chinese communities and their unique form of solidarity. Its overseas centers were established starting from 1990, not by the dispatched Tzu Chi staff but by the overseas Chinese immigrants. It was those who have already become established in the foreign countries that have come to establish the centers for the Chinese immigrant communities. The reason for creating foreign centers follows Cheng Yen’s teachings that no matter when or where, being part of Tzu Chi means that one must always behave accordingly and not forget. There is an understanding that to bring a person into Buddhism, to proselytize, is a fundamental part of practice through which one can gain merit.³⁵⁾ Wherever there is a community of immigrant Chinese, a Tzu Chi foreign branch would be setup and those

34) Mark. O’Neil 2010, 38.

35) Yu-Shuang Yao 2012, 160-61.

foreign Chinese would be consistently made part of its volunteer or working staff. This can be considered to be Tzu Chi's own style of proselytizing.

This leads to the case of Catuddisa Sangha which raises the question of what concrete strategies are formed by the Japanese Buddhist schools. Its religious character is evident in a speech given by Kōjima titled "The present and the future of the Buddhist community that unites Japan and Asia," at a Catuddisa Sangha's internal seminar of the Honke Network conference in September 2012.³⁶⁾ Thus, publically, its NGO side is emphasized while its religious side is deemphasized. Oppositely, during internal gatherings, its global 'Buddhist community' activities are explicitly referred to.

Moreover, we can verify such religious aspects on its internet homepage where the purpose of 'Simultaneous World Peace Service' that was held simultaneously worldwide by all its branches was explained.³⁷⁾ It was posted that 'establishing a new Catuddisa Sangha = proselytizing work.' This is vividly different from Taiwan Tzu Chi and JTS of Korea that have in official settings watered down their Buddhist characteristics and emphasized their aims as NGOs.

Catuddisa Sangha's ideological foundation for its overseas aid

36) Accessed April. 9, 2013. <http://blog.livedoor.jp/csnews/archives/17604703.html>.

37) "Shorei tsuizen kuyō sekai heiwa kigan no soto, shinki sanga no kaitaku (fukyō) o jitsumujo no mokuteki tosuru 諸霊追善供養・世界平和祈願の外、新規サンガの開拓（布教）を実務上の目的とする," Catuddisa Sangha webpage. Accessed April. 22, 2013. <http://www.catuddisa-sangha.org/ikisatsu.html>.

operations, ‘world reformation’ is no different from a Buddhist vision of transforming the world into a pure land. The appearance of mixing of its Buddhist religiosity and its NGO characteristics can be verified in their proclamations that appear on its official internet homepage.

“Catuddisa’s goal is to construct a ‘globalized system’ that operates in the pan-Asia region which transcends modern national borders. We intent to form a grassroots movement of practice based on Buddhist ideals which aim for the caring of others, compassion, love, and a sense of justice. We hold the Buddha’s land as the ideal that can be attained in this world and we believe that Asia will be a model of the ‘manifestation of permanent world peace.’ In Catuddisa Sangha, we consider this vision as a common aim and we call this ‘world reformation.’ Among the Buddhists of Asia who share this vision, we aim to bring about a structure of network, without any national boundaries, for the reformation of the world.”

It is not clear if the ‘global system’ created through the expansion into the pan-Asian region and which transcends national boundaries is referring to the intent of Catuddisa Sangha’s proselytization plans. Nevertheless what is important is that the ‘world reformation’ movement of Catuddisa Sangha is a grassroots movement based on Buddhist ideas and that it intends to use the

Asian Buddhist as the basis from which a network will be formed for changing the world. We can verify from this proclamation that Catuddisa is much more explicitly religious than Tzu Chi and JTS. From its efforts in constructing a world network, we can grasp a system that has become established as its global proselytizing operations.

Furthermore, it may be that NGO characteristics are presented to the recipients of aid, different from its workers. To the members who join Catuddisa Sangha and become an active staff, it is evident that a certain level of acceptance and practice of Buddhist ideas is required as it would be from self-professed Buddhist members. Those who have entered the organization are considered to be Buddhist and thus adherence to the practices and tenets of Catuddisa Sangha are required. In this way the identity even of overseas branches are consistent. This implies that when a person is accepted into Catuddisa Sangha, he or she is brought in under the rubric of proselytization.

Such a proselytizing strategy can be similarly found in JTS. Though JTS of Korea is generally known as a place that is active in social engagement, it would be difficult for people who have no interest in practice to join its operations.³⁸⁾ At JTS, office work is the driving force of its practical operations and one method of training interns is their program called '100 days of practice.' Generally, JTS recruits workers for their NGO operations directly

38) Ryu Jeong Gil 2009, 53.

from this program. In this system, cultivation and training for aid work are clearly combined and show how JTS works in concert with its headquarters, Jungto Society, which manages the programs.

Moreover, the Jungto Society social services team called ‘Gilbut’, whose members are also media personalities, arrange meetings and act as a mediating organ that connects JTS with large corporations in Korea.³⁹⁾ In this way, popular media personalities are used by JTS as their public relations ambassadors to increase JTS’s public image and public trust, ultimately to increase the number of its members and workers. Of course in the case of Tzu Chi, they have their own TV broadcasting station Daai, and by way of broadcasting programs and dramas are also able to advertise. For Catuddisa Sangha, there does not appear to be such an attempt.

JTS also takes a subtly different approach in proselytization. At Sujata Academy that was built for the dalits in Dhungeshwari in the northern Bihar province in 1994, workers of JTS also known as dharma teachers have been responsible for its operations. Dharma teachers are lay practitioners who maintain a celibate life and live within the JTS community but do not shave their hair or adorn monk’s clothes. Dispatching these dharma teachers overseas can be seen as a proselytizing strategy and a way around the prohibition against religious activities for recognized NGOs such

39) JTS Korea webpage. Accessed April. 3, 2013.

http://www.jts.or.kr/story/story_domestic.html?sm=v&b_no=11005&page=1&p_no=15.

http://www.jts.or.kr/story/story_domestic.html?sm=v&b_no=11005&page=1&p_no=15

http://www.jts.or.kr/story/story_domestic.html?sm=v&b_no=11005&page=1&p_no=15

as JTS.

In essence, JTS of Korea does not consider proselytizing and global public interests as separate issues. Moreover, they consider individual cultivation as fundamental and identify themselves as a religious community or a community of practitioners. Though there are people of other religions among the volunteers, they tend to agree with the values of Mahayana Buddhism of not being fixated to outer religious differences. As far as known there have been no cases where the people of other religions have complained of personal conflict due to religious issues. Up to 70%-80% of the workers are of a different religion or atheists. They, however, have explained that after having gone through the training for volunteers they have come to adopt Buddhist values.

3. Conclusions

In this paper, the background to the emergence of modern East Asian Buddhists societies, namely Tzu Chi, JTS, and Catuddisa Sangha, which have strong NGO characteristics has been examined. Also, their ideas, differences in their operations and the underlying reasons were discussed. Along with this, the questions of whether the three organizations were socially engaged Buddhist societies or whether they were in the process of constructing a Buddhist order or if they were traditional Buddhist orders that have adopted new methods of proselytizing were addressed.

These three Buddhist organizations have been active since the

early part of the twenty first century, and have now opened branches overseas extending their operations globally. Externally, they have shown themselves to be NGOs operating large aid projects while internally they have emphasized their Buddhist identities. Nevertheless, the strong commonality among the three has been that they are all international organizations that carry out relief and volunteer work all throughout the world. With the increase in the activities of Engaged Buddhism in the twenty first century, Buddhist social movements that have carried out social work and aid have increased in number. Because the ideals of Mahayana Buddhism such as the Bodhisattva vow or ‘benefitting others and not only oneself’ have provided the doctrinal basis, there does not appear to be any conflict with the traditional Buddhist focus on internal cultivation.

Though Tzu Chi of Taiwan has been established through Cheng Yen’s visions, its members are not entirely professed Buddhists. This is probably due to Tzu Chi’s strong image as an NGO carrying out social services and relief aid. Of course, disaster relief and similar operations are considered to be general aid that is participated in by people from all religions and not only by the Buddhists. Since Tzu Chi being publically recognized as an NGO is obvious when in 2010, with the name of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, it was recognized as a UN DPI non-governmental organization. In the same year, it also received the Special Consultative Status NGO from the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It is most likely due to this status that Tzu

Chi is no longer able to openly display its religious roots nor reveal its proselytizing intent. It is also a strategic move that Tzu Chi intends not to be recognized as only a Buddhist organization among the people of different religions. Rather, it is the benefit of Tzu Chi that it is known as a general NGO that carries out social work and aid.

The activities of Catuddisa Sangha of Japan is in the process of expanding among the Asian Buddhist countries as a grassroots network based on the idea of surpassing national boundaries and religious schoolarianism. In the operations of overseas Catuddisa Sangha, there is a strong message of world peace, abolition of discrimination, and a strong will to support the poverty-stricken class, while at the same time an effort to not reveal any hint of religious color. While in its fundamental ideals a strong religious tendency is preserved, in its official principles of practice, a strong politically progressive character or a reformist NGO character is maintained. Such religious flexibility or progressive tendencies were seen to be needed for operations in the main area of Southeast Asia where cooperation with Muslims and Christians are necessary. For a successful operation and international cooperation, it is strategically obvious that any religious conflict with people of different religions must be avoided.

Though JTS is an organization that is derived from Jungto Society founded by a Buddhist monk, they identify themselves as an NGO that aims to eradicate illiteracy, disease, and global famine. Such tendency of JTS as an NGO is most likely related to

becoming designated in 2007 as a special NGO of UN ECOSOC. That is because similar to the case of Tzu Chi, activities such as profit making, religiously oriented actions, or political operations along with proselytization are forbidden to NGOs with international recognition and status.

Also, it is interesting to note that one of the reasons for the success of JTS as an NGO is because its leading monk Beop ryun is not officially registered with a Buddhist order in Korea. Not being registered means that it would be difficult to expect any support from the order but oppositely it means that JTS is free from any interference. It is also due to this lack of support from the order that it depends on the donations of individuals which were also a criteria and the reason from being granted the status of a UN ECOSOC recognized NGO.

For Catuddisa, it has not become a public NGO such as JTS and Tzu Chi but has gained its public status by entering cooperative efforts with the governments of foreign countries or with foreign religious institutions. Also, while Catuddisa Sangha accepts donations from individuals, it also sells various products and directs a percentage of that income towards its operations. Thus, it is for this reason that it is difficult to gain a status of a public NGO and has chosen to work in cooperation on a one-to-one relationship with various organs of the foreign host country. In this sense it is different from Tzu Chi that raises income by providing funeral services or accumulating the income from its hospitals as donation. This contrasts from JTS's forms of raising funds from individual's

donations or donations from business enterprises.

Furthermore, in Catuddisa Sangha, its operations of opening new centers overseas are not differentiated from proselytizing. Simply, in Catuddisa Sangha, a volunteer can be seen as also doing proselytization. The success of Tzu Chi was due to the overseas Chinese establishing branches in big cities. Different from Tzu Chi and Catuddisa Sangha, JTS is comparatively independent and because it has also accepted people from different religions and even with no religion, and therefore does not present a clear religious identity. However, it should be noted that its fundamental roots are from Buddhist, and to become a worker one needs to take the Jungto Society's cultivation programs. Also, social work is used as a mediating process where the Buddhist values that JTS aims to maintain come to be recognized also by the recipients of aid. This proves to be a proselytizing method of JTS.

In conclusion, modern East Asian Buddhist lay societies that are highly socially engaged and not so much focused on individual cultivation appear to be more dominantly visible. In the end, rather than proselytism, public interests are officially the focus and effort was put to harmonizing Buddhist teachings with general values. Furthermore, an interesting point was that carrying out social work was seen to be no different from one's own cultivation. Also, increasing the number of aid workers and branch centers was directly related to proselytizing. Within such a structure, we can discern the reason for expanding the Buddhist society's arena to the global arena.

Similar to Tzu Chi, there are cases where the movement developed into an independent religious order. In this sense, the organizations are constantly changing like an organism and developing into new forms. Thus, there will be many chances to continue to observe and examine new developments that I hope to discuss in another paper.

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Abstract

Buddhist Societies or NGOs?: Focusing on ‘Engaged and NGO-type Movements’ of Modern East-Asian Buddhist Societies

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There are three East Asian Buddhist organizations, which have expanded their spheres of activity worldwide: Tzu Chi of Taiwan, the Join Together Society (JTS) of Korea, and Catuddisa Sangha of Japan. In this research, their characteristics of engaged Buddhism and the appearance of NGO-ized movements are closely examined.

Currently, these three Buddhist movements have been active since the beginning of the twenty first century. They share some similarities such as they have expanded their branches worldwide allowing them to achieve an international arena; they reconciled the Buddhist doctrines and the value of the general public claiming that voluntary work is directly related to missionary work. Therefore externally, they advocate

NGO by giving international aids and conducting voluntary work, yet internally, they emphasize their identities as a Buddhist organization.

Tzu Chi has been recognized as a United Nation Department of Public Information NGO (UN DPI NGO), also it is the Special Consultative Status NGO of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). In 2007, JTS, which has achieved a special position in UN ECOSOC, identify themselves as an “NGO which fights hunger, disease, and illiteracy.”

Japan’s Catuddisa Sangha (CS) has a strong religious ideology, yet in practice, their characteristics tend to be more similar to a progressive political group or reformative NGO.

CS tries to achieve publicity through signing a partnership agreement with a nation or religious group which is within their activity arena. Also, they secure their activity fund not only by conducting fundraising, but also by earning income from other sources. In this aspect, CS’s way of securing their activity fund differs from that of Korea’s JTS, which solely runs by the donation made by enterprises.

Key Words: East Asian Buddhist Societies, Engaged Buddhism, NGO, Leading monk, JTS, CS, Tzu Chi.

2014년 11월 11일 투고
2014년 11월 30일 심사완료
2014년 12월 10일 게재확정