Introduction

Master Xingyun, the founder of the Foguang Buddhist order, frequently announces to his devotees: "I am a global person" (wǒ shì guójì rèn). This book explores the historical background, cultural context, and social implications of that deceptively simple comment. The master began to refer to himself in this manner around 1990, just as his organization undertook an ambitious campaign to expand beyond its base in Taiwan and establish branch temples around the world, an effort that by the close of the millennium had resulted in the opening of nearly one hundred centers on five continents. For the master and his followers, this has been the first step in the "globalization" (guójì huà) of "modernized" (xiàndài huà) Buddhism. From another perspective, it can be seen to be the culmination of a vigorous attempt by an affluent community to protect and promote what its members regard as the best of their traditional culture in response to the Westernization and homogenization that are perceived to have heretofore predominantly shaped the nascent "global village."

The strategy adopted by the master to ensure the continued vibrancy of Chinese Buddhism has been, not to resist modernity, but to embrace many of its pivotal concepts and institutional mechanisms, thereby bringing about a dynamic synthesis of the old and the new. Underlying this approach is the assumption that those elements of modernity conducive to well-being have in fact long been present, at least implicitly, in the Buddha dharma. Tradition can persist and flourish through modernity because the spirit of modernity was already operative in tradition. Or, to restate the issue, modernity neither replaces nor supersedes tradition; it creates a new rendition of it. Master Xingyun's method of selective appropriation has led him to speak of the Buddhist versions of democracy (minzhú zhuyì), capitalism (zhīběn zhuyì), equality (píngdēng), women's rights (nu quán), modernization, and, most recently, globalization.

Because the Foguang thrust to internationalize is in direct response to wider processes of globalization, to understand the Foguang phenomenon we must first place it in this context. The term "globalization" as it has entered late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century discourse refers to the modern trend toward both a greater interdependence of all societies and an accompanying heightened consciousness of the world as a single arena. Long-distance transcultural contact and interchange have taken place for centuries, mainly impelled by political ambition,
economic incentive, and missionary zeal. To appreciate this fact, one need only recall the empires built by Alexander the Great and Chinggis Khan, the explorations of Marco Polo and the Chinese admiral Zheng He, the remarkable trade of goods from Europe and Africa to China along the silk route, and the vast spread of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Globalization as we know it today, however, having matured over the past century, significantly differs from its earlier manifestations in magnitude. Never before have virtually all segments of all societies been so intertwined with one another or so conscious of transnational and cross-cultural connection. The scale of international tourism, commerce, and migration and the sophistication of global communication and transportation are unprecedented.

The current condensing of the world to one global village is also driven by a new strain of economic forces and motivations that was unknown in former days, namely, modern capitalism. The sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein has forcefully argued that what he called today’s “world-system” has evolved directly as a result of market forces that first developed in sixteenth-century Europe (Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1984). In Wallerstein’s neo-Marxian model, the various values that are associated with global capitalism (e.g., faith in progress, democracy, and human rights) have played no significant role in determining the evolution of the world system, having arisen merely as epiphenomena of market forces. From this, one can see that Wallerstein considers the cultural implications of globalization to be of secondary importance. In fact, in his only article specifically dealing with this issue, he states that the concept “culture” is of negligible heuristic use and, in its social function, serves primarily as an ideological mechanism to legitimate the inequities in distribution present in the world system.1

Others have found the cultural ramifications of humankind’s ever-increasing contact and interdependence to be of great and, in certain respects, troubling significance. Because the international spread of modern capitalism had its origins in Western Europe, a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals believed that, as other groups were subsumed into the growing market system, they would increasingly assume the cultural traits of the West as well. Economic globalization was, hence, regarded as triggering widespread Westernization. In more recent years, the language has shifted. The presupposition continues to be that the differences in worldviews and values that heretofore distinguished various civilizations will inevitably wane as the same economic forces impinge throughout the world. Instead of seeing the result as merely the monolithic diffusion of Western values, however, observers now describe the emerging “world culture” as a homogenized synthesis that draws its elements from diverse sources.
The sociologist Peter Berger has identified four processes of cultural globalization (Berger 1997). First, there is what he has dubbed "the Davos culture." This "yuppie internationale" of business elites shares particular patterns of dress, conduct, humor, and leisure activities. Another global network of elites is the "Faculty Club International," which represents the global dissemination of values and ideologies originally developed by Western intelligentsia. Notable expressions of this are the worldwide feminist and environmentalist movements. Globalization has occurred on popular levels as well. There is "the McWorld Culture," that bricolage of pop entertainment, fashion, and fast food that carries with it such ideals as self-expression, spontaneity, and defiance of authority. Alongside this has been the rapid spread of Evangelical Protestantism and the concomitant transformations in attitudes toward traditional hierarchies, relations between men and women, and upbringing of children.

Berger is not the only scholar with a budding interest in the relation between cultural factors and globalization. As the topic has gained currency, three issues have proved especially nettlesome. First, there are those who, remaining unconvinced by Wallerstein's dismissal of culture, counter that communal values, concepts, and worldviews jointly constitute an autonomous variable that significantly guides the trajectory of globalization. One of the most vocal advocates of this view is Roland Robertson, who has written extensively on the role of such symbolic constructs as "nation," "civilization," and "world system" in determining the direction of the globalizing process (see, e.g., Robertson 1978, 1992).

Irrespective of whether cultural factors help set the projection of globalization, the question arises as to the degree of convergence that will occur with increased contact and interaction. Will the coalescence of a world system result in the attenuation of cultural differences, a homogenization? Or can a variety of cultural models coexist with participation in the international economic system? In other words, will various societies mobilize indigenous resources so that "multiple modernities" develop? Robertson (1992, 69) foresees the continuation of several dominant and alternative constellations of presuppositions. The anthropologist Jonathan Friedman (1994) has laid out a detailed model indicating that, with the decentralization of capital accumulation inevitably occurring with the global expansion of capitalist enterprise, cultural balkanization also takes place. The homogenizing trends that have accompanied the modern West's economic predominance will, therefore, naturally recede as semiperipheral and peripheral regions disproportionately accumulate capital through their greater productivity. In fact, in Friedman's opinion, there are signs that such pluralization is already under way.

Beyond disagreements about the role of culture in globalization and about
the future status of cultural diversity, scholars vary in the place that they foresee religion holding in the emerging global village. Does the modernization process that attends globalization inevitably breed secularization, or can there be religious expressions of modernity? Some argue that the rise of fundamentalistic religious movements has amply demonstrated the resilience and vitality of religion (e.g., Hadden and Shupe 1989); others claim such extreme expressions to be the last paroxysms of an inevitable demise. In general, arguments for cultural homogenization see that process occurring along secular lines, while pluralists predict continued vibrancy among religions.

Scholarly discussion of the role of culture or religion in modern globalization to this point has tended toward the abstract and general. Research concerning the relation between particular religious traditions and globalization is especially scarce. The collection Religion and Global Order (Robertson and Garrette 1991) includes brief articles on Islam, Pentecostalism, and Soka Gakkai. Books on fundamentalism, such as Marty and Appleby (1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995), the series published through the University of Chicago's Fundamentalism Project, scrutinize the more virulent traditionalist forms of religious resistance to globalization, although they typically do so without directly addressing the process of globalization itself. Furthermore, these data deal only with what are essentially negative reactions against the world's growing interconnection. To employ Robertson's (1992, 68) terminology, they are “anti-systematic movements which attack the world-system within the constraints of traditional presuppositions.” The sociologist Peter Beyer (1994) has offered a balanced analysis of both traditionalist and modernist religious responses to modernization and globalization, although his monograph remains largely theoretical.

The winter 2000 issue of Daedalus has provided the most concrete treatment thus far of how diverse religious (and secular) traditions are imprinting their own, unique stamps on modern global culture. In an introductory essay in that issue, S. N. Eisenstadt argues that the case studies on the Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Confucian traditions that follow provide clear evidence that modernization has not resulted in hegemonic Westernization or homogenization. Rather, the encounter between Western modernity and the various cultural traditions has spawned what Eisenstadt calls “multiple modernities.” By this, he means that, as various groups encounter the economic, institutional, and cultural challenges of modern times, they inevitably reappropriate and redefine the discourse of modernity in their own, new terms. Hence, there is continual reinterpretation of the cultural program of modernity, a reinterpretation that is significantly shaped by each group's history and traditions yet much more than a mere continuation of them.
Furthermore, the major arenas of contestation in which new forms of modernity are taking shape are not just the nation-state but increasingly other social spaces in which alternative constellations of cultural forces are interacting (see Eisenstadt 2000, 24). The studies that follow give substance to Eisenstadt’s assertions. Because each deals with at least one entire tradition and is only article length, however, depth of evidence for the observations made is limited. To date, there has been no sustained inquiry into how one particular modernist religious group has understood and adapted to globalization.

This book takes a small step toward filling that gap by analyzing the Chinese Buddhist organization Foguangshan in the light of global studies. I show how Master Xingyun endeavors to make Pure Land and Chan practices relevant to contemporary life by structuring them according to a modernist educational and institutional framework and by creating a synthesis of them and a Buddhist reconstruction of the Enlightenment values of democracy, equality, liberty, justice, and fraternity. Through presenting this material, I argue that cultural factors—specifically, religious beliefs and practices—influence modern globalization either by inhibiting or, as in the case of Foguangshan, encouraging patterns of behavior conducive to capitalist enterprise. Because there are definite similarities in the types of behavior favorable to prosperity through participation in the marketplace, and because communication on the global scale requires a common vocabulary, modern globalization has led to significant cultural convergence. Yet, because the global lingua franca is evolving in dialectical interaction with a variety of cultural frameworks, in each case the significance of various ideals—such as those of “prosperity,” “progress,” “modernity,” “democracy,” and “equality”—is given unique coloration. Furthermore, the increase in contact with members of other cultural groups that occurs with globalization sparks questions about identity that act to reaffirm distinctions and boundaries. Hence, modern globalization sustains cultural difference and encourages divergence of interpretation of the modernist conceptual apparatus.

The Foguang material also gives some interesting insight into the question of secularization. It could be argued that Master Xingyun has in many respects secularized Buddhist practice by giving a more this-worldly interpretation of the dharma and by breaking down the boundaries between monastery and general society. Alternatively, these same conceptual and institutional moves 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. The sacred and the secular are polar opposites on a continuum of mutual interpenetration, one gradually transforming into the other. The
same relational logic that holds true for the pair tradition/modernity adheres for this dyad as well.

On the spatial plane, globality and locality similarly exist only through one another. Fo Guang Shan represents an instance of the globalization of a local version of Buddhism’s universalistic message. This very observation indicates the limitations of using the local/global vocabulary. As a group sharing important similarities with all Buddhists, especially other Chinese Buddhists, can Fo Guang Shan be said ever to have been representative of local tradition? Does the term “local” designate the level of village, region, or nation? Conversely, what does it mean to say that Fo Guang Shan has become global in scale? Geographically, it has spread considerably. Ethnically, its diffusion has remained fairly circumscribed. Such ambiguities in the syntax of locality and globality have become accentuated in a postmodern world in which regional, national, and other forms of imagined communities are finding their geographic anchors increasingly giving way. The language of homeland for a particular people is becoming more and more hazy as migration and international commerce have spawned multiple ties and allegiances. Martin Heidegger has observed: “Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world” ([1947] 1977, 219). As one who long ago voluntarily “left home” (chujia), Master Xingyun has employed his status of professional wanderer to show that this destiny is by no means lamentable, for, in the Buddhist view, it holds vital, positive import for spiritual cultivation.

My choice of Fo Guang Shan as a case study allows this book to make a contribution as much to Asian studies as to globalization theory. Research into contemporary Chinese religions had until recently seemed irrelevant, if not futile, to many, given the requiems sung on its behalf by Chinese intellectuals and political elites and by such Western scholars as Holmes Welch and Arthur Wright. Only over the past few years have books and dissertations on the current status of Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, and a variety of folk traditions enjoyed something of a revival. In the case of Buddhism, Jiang Canteng has been a leader in researching the tradition’s resurgence in Taiwan, although all his work is in Chinese (see, e.g., Jiang 1989, 1996, 1997, 2001a, 2001b). English-language studies include Charles Jones’s Buddhism in Taiwan (1999), Don Pittman’s Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism (2001), and a flurry of dissertations.3

The material of this book differs from what has been furnished by Jiang, Jones, Pittman, and others in that it focuses more on the interaction of Buddhist and modernist discourses. My goal has been not so much to lay out Fo Guang Shan’s organizational structure, or to describe Fo Guang as it has been developed by Master Xingyun, as to show how these two converge with certain dominant in-
stitutional and intellectual trends impinging on contemporary Chinese life as it is evolving in Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora. As I have worked toward that objective, I have also uncovered certain aspects of Chinese Buddhist practice that have shaped the tradition’s worldview, not only in modern times, but through the centuries yet have garnered insufficient attention from the academic community. My discussions of jieyuan in chapter 2 and “monastic filial piety” in chapter 8, for instance, are relevant to a much longer historical scope than just the modern context. By revealing the complex interrelation of continuity and innovation, I hope to give an indication of what it might be like to look at the world through the eyes of a Foguang Buddhist. To the extent that I have succeeded, I believe that this book will be of service to anyone with an interest in Buddhism or Chinese society.
FOGUANG HEADQUARTERS
When in 1967 Master Xingyun first viewed what was to become Foguangshan (lit., “Buddha’s Light Mountain”), the area was covered by impenetrable stands of bamboo and thick jumbles of vines and underbrush. The journey from Kaohsiung along small country lanes and narrow dirt tracks had taken several hours. The lay devotees who accompanied the master were not at all impressed by the site, even refusing to leave their small van to explore the area. Master Xingyun, however, saw great potential in the dense tangle and soon announced that he had found a new campus for his Buddhist college. Today, only a few pockets of bamboo remain, the rest having been replaced over the years by a succession of ever larger and more ornate buildings, gateways, and pavilions. What had once been bucolic lanes winding through a few isolated rice paddies have evolved into crowded thoroughfares; from atop Foguangshan one can even see a newly constructed major expressway jutting across the flat plain.

ENTRY SECTION
For the steady stream of motorists journeying between Kaohsiung and Pingdong Cities, Foguangshan’s most prominent structure is the eight-story-tall statue of Amitabha Buddha (Amituo Fo, the Buddha of Light who presides over the Western Pure Land of Bliss). The golden image gazes down on the plain, with both palms facing outward at waist level, the fingers of the right hand turned up to the sky, and those of the left pointing down to the earth, thereby making the mudra of light and wisdom. Although Amitabha usually stands with his back to the rest of Foguangshan, there are reports that, on several occasions, especially during land and sea dharma functions, he has twisted his torso to glance over the monastery itself.

Just below Amitabha, the seven halls of the Longevity Funerary Complex are set into the steep slope in such a fashion as to mimic the architectural design of a pagoda. The complex’s lowest level includes Completion Hall (Yuanman Ting) and Lotus Hall (Hualian Dian), where, under the guidance of clerics, bereaved recite sutras to transfer merit to the recently deceased. Next-door is Foguangshan’s medical clinic, including its fleet of vans that daily journey through southern Taiwan’s mountainous region to dispense care to the poor and housebound. The second level includes a temporary memorial hall for Ven. Xinping, Foguangshan’s
second abbot, who died in 1995. His remains will eventually be removed to Transmission Hall, the columbarium specifically for high-ranking Foguang venerables that is soon to be constructed atop the mountain. Also on the second level are four hospice accommodations (each with a bedroom, bathroom, and funerary parlor), where Foguang clerics and benefactors may pass their final hours surrounded by constant chanting and prayers. The entire third level has been set aside as a memorial hall for Chen Cheng, vice president of the Republic of China in the 1940s and 1950s and the father of Chen Li’an, also a prominent player in Taiwan politics. The fourth and fifth floors of the complex remain vacant, although they will eventually house memorial halls for other prominent devotees. Filling the top two stories of the “pagoda” is the Hall of Rebirth (Wangsheng Tang), another location for funerals. Services are conducted here every morning and afternoon on behalf of those whose remains have found their final resting place on Foguangshan. An image of the Reclining Buddha dominates the temple. Behind this statue and along the walls of the upper story are tablets for those deceased whose descendants for one reason or another cannot keep the tablet at home or wish to have a second tablet placed in this auspicious location under the care of monastics. To either side of the shrine are three doors that open to narrow hallways, each of which is lined with storage spaces for cinerary urns, fifty thousand in all, including two thousand that have been donated to the Kaohsiung government to be used for indigent citizens of the county.

All seven levels of buildings are surrounded by row on row of individual stupas that contain urns within which are the ashes of deceased devotees. Along the uppermost row are slightly more ornate stupas, reserved for those who during their life had accumulated an especially large amount of merit. Here are the remains, for instance, of the master’s mother, Liliu Yuying. Next to the stupa for Liliu Yuying is that for Sun Muzhang, who arranged for the release of Master Xingyun and three hundred other monks from jail after they had been detained for a month in 1949 by the Nationalist government as suspected Communist spies.

To the left of Longevity Funerary Complex is Kshitigarbha Hall (Dizang Dian). All day long, the deep, resonant ringing of the large bell that hangs just outside this shrine reverberates around the mountain. With each strike of the bell, the vow is made to ease the sufferings of those currently incarcerated in hell. Kshitigarbha Hall looks down over the main driveway to the mountain. A high wall running the length of the avenue blocks from view a cluster of typically drab Taiwan housing, in the midst of which is the very ornate Kunlun Hall, a Daoist temple that serves for many in the surrounding community as a kind of declaration of independence from their wealthy Buddhist neighbor. Just behind Kunlun
Hall are the dilapidated remains of a small amusement park, the failed venture of a local businessman who had hoped to capitalize on the constant stream of tourists to Foguangshan. These two structures, the thriving Daoist temple and the abandoned recreation area, poignantly signify the fragile, uneasy relation between one of Taiwan’s largest Buddhist pilgrimage sites and its immediate neighbors, all of whom recognize the monastery’s importance for the vicinity’s economy, but many of whom still regard the clerics as intruders.

Only under special circumstances are people permitted to drive into the compound. Usually, visitors must park at the base and walk up. Maitreya (Mile Fo) looks down beatifically over the front security gate from atop a twenty-foot-high pedestal. It is fitting that this rotund, jovial bodhisattva of prosperity and hope welcomes visitors to Foguangshan, for this is an order that rejoices in wealth and plenty. Originally, the patined reclining image was at ground level. The story is that, when the statue was first brought to the mountain, the plan had been to locate it opposite Great Heroes Hall (Daxiong Baodian), the main shrine situated near the mountain’s summit. On arriving at the entryway, however, Maitreya refused to move farther and could not be budged from his place, even by cranes. The general understanding is that he preferred to be in closer proximity to everyday people so as to more effectively beckon them to visit the monastery. He did allow himself to be moved in 1997, apparently knowing that the intent was merely to raise him onto a perch from which he could, henceforth, gaze serenely down on those entering the temple grounds.

Visitors soon pass through the monastery’s front gate. Straight ahead is Bodhisattva Way, which cuts straight up to the mountain’s top, where the most important religious structures and administrative offices are located, including Great Heroes Hall, the meditation hall, the recitation hall, and all monastic lodgings. The road trailing off to the left first passes the Visitors Welcoming Office (Xunshan Zhike). All guests must register here on entering the monastery. Just across the street from this office is the Guanyin Release Pond, filled with carp and turtles. In the middle of this man-made pond is a small island on which Guanyin in her white robe stands astride a dragon. She faces Nonduality Gate (Bu’er Men). In years past, most visitors to the mountain strolled under this large archway, then through a shaded courtyard surrounded by statues of the 108 arhats (luohan), finally mounting a broad staircase to Pilgrim’s Lodge (Chaoshan Huiguan). This changed in 1997 when the monastery was closed to all tourists. On 16 May of that year, Master Xingyun presided over a solemn ceremony in which the large doors of Nonduality Gate were shut and bolted closed. Since then, groups have been allowed to visit only by special application or to participate in the weekend cultivation
retreats (*jiari xiudao hui*). Nonduality Gate itself remains shut. Placed on the stair-
case before it are a large statue of Shakymuni Buddha (Shijiamouni Fo) as well as
flowers spelling out the year’s motto: “Freedom and Wholeness” (*Yuanman Zizai*)
in 1998.

On either side of Nonduality Gate are the entrance and the exit of Pure Land
Cave (Jingtu Tongku), a Buddhist equivalent of the Disneyland ride “It’s a Small,
Small World.” (In fact, Master Xingyun was inspired to have this constructed after
viewing the Disneyland attraction in 1976.) This sprawling horseshoe-shaped
“cave” provides a kitschy introduction to the beauties and wonders of Sukhavati
(Jile Jingtu), Amitabha Buddha’s Western Pure Land. Two large intimidating door
gods stand guard at the entrance. Within, there are images of buddhas, bodhi-
sattvas, and arhats, a description of the nine grades of people reborn in the Pure
Land, moving figures that play instruments or dance, and a “lotus pond” where one
walks on lotus petals to a small wishing pond. Just before exiting, one may turn a
large wheel on which is inscribed: “The brilliance of the Buddha daily increases;
the wheel of the dharma is forever turned” (*Fo ri zeng hui, falun chang zhuang*).
The Pure Land Cave is one of the few facilities on Foguangshan that over the years
has required an admissions fee, indicating that, despite its religious theme, it is re-
garded more as a recreational attraction than as a place of spiritual cultivation.
Since the closing of the mountain, it has essentially remained unused.

A more important recreational facility for the resident monastic community
is the Water Drop Teahouse (Dishui Fang), located on the far side of the Guan-
yin Release Pond. This teahouse opened six months after the cloistering of the
mountain and has become quite popular as one of the few places where clerics can
gather to chat informally. With the 16 May 1997 ceremony, not only were tourists
no longer welcome on the mountain, but Foguang venerables were also instructed
to stay within the temple compound as much as possible. Furthermore, around the
same time as Water Drop Teahouse opened, the monastery instituted the rule that
all monks and nuns were to take their main meals in the central refectory, where
eating is to be regarded as a form of meditation and silence is, therefore, strictly
enforced. With all the smaller, less formal dining halls closed down, the teahouse
became an important place for socializing.

**Social-Service Section**
The front gate, Longevity Funerary Complex, Visitors Welcoming Office, Pure
Land Cave, and Water Drop Teahouse constitute the entry area, or threshold, of
the monastery. Everything uphill of Nonduality Gate is part of the mountain’s reli-
gious section. Beyond Water Drop Teahouse is the monastery’s social-service sec-
tion. This section has a relatively secular tone in the sense that Buddhist teachings and practices are not directly promoted, serving instead as an underlying foundation for educational and charitable enterprises.4

The largest of the social-service institutions on Foguangshan’s premises is Universal Gate High School (Pumen Zhongxue), which enrolls some sixteen hundred teenagers in its junior and senior high schools and tourism department. Most of the students live in the pair of dormitories located on either side of the activity center and track, going home only two weekends per month. Buddhist influence is decidedly muted at the school. Only the headmaster, Ven. Yiquan, is a monastic. All the teachers are members of lay society and are not even necessarily Buddhists. The students too need not follow the Buddhist faith. The school’s objective is to provide a well-rounded education to develop moral, capable citizens. Some Buddhist teachings are present: sayings by Master Xingyun can be found posted around the campus, and, during the daily evening assembly, Ven. Yiquan often mentions Buddhist masters and beliefs. Such references, however, are provided chiefly with the view of instilling ethical values. Students are also exposed to meditation: between each class there is a five-minute session of quiet, and there is a Chan hall in the school’s class building. The degree to which students actually engage in meditation is difficult to determine. The between-class sessions seem mainly to be viewed as an opportunity for a quick nap. Similarly, the hall remains largely unused.

The Universal Gate school system also includes a preschool, in which local children attend classes Monday through Friday and two Saturday mornings per month. Buddhist themes are more evident here (and in Foguangshan’s three other kindergartens, located in Kaohsiung, Yilan, and Tainan) than in the high school. The fifty or so children say brief prayers before lunch and the twice-daily snacks. After lunch, they walk in two large circles for fifteen minutes while chanting “Reverence to Guanyin Bodhisattva” (Namo Guanshiyin Pusa) in accompaniment to a cassette tape. On the first and fifteenth days of the lunar calendar, the children also intone a longer prayer while Lin Meiyue, the lay monastic in charge of the school, makes an offering before the Guanyin statue that stands just uphill from the small campus.5 Vegetarian fare is provided for lunch on those days. Students are also requested to participate in the processions for large dharma functions, for example, strewing flowers before the small images of the Buddha on his birthday or donning costumes as Buddhist attendants to march in the Chinese New Year parade held annually on the mountain. The school curriculum itself, however, includes no Buddhist stories and utilizes standard textbooks and lesson plans.

Next to Universal Gate Preschool stands the five-story Great Mercy Children’s Home (Daci Yuyouyuan). Typically, sixty to seventy children, aged five to
eighteen, live here. Some are orphaned or abandoned, but most come from broken homes. These latter spend important holidays and summer vacations with their parents or grandparents and return to them permanently once the family situation has stabilized. The majority of Great Mercy’s wards are from around the island of Taiwan, although, since its founding in 1970, children have also come from Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The facilities are wonderful, and the staff, headed by several lay monastics, enthusiastically carries out its work. Buddhism is more present in the lives of the children who reside at Great Mercy Children’s Home than it is in those of their neighbors in the Universal Gate school system. Just inside the building’s main entrance is a large statue of Guanyin. Each day begins and ends with chanting in the recitation hall on the second floor, and every meal is preceded by prayer. Unlike the orphanages found in mainland China at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Great Mercy holds no expectation that its wards will join the Buddhist order. In fact, over the institution’s three-decade history, only 7 of the 483 children who have found shelter there have taken monastic vows. The goal is simply to provide a nurturing environment to help children from troubled backgrounds develop into upstanding members of society.

Across the street and uphill from Great Mercy Children’s Home are four large dormitories. The first of these, Miaohui Hall, houses laywomen who are working long-term on Foguangshan. The other three are jointly referred to as the Hermitage (Jingshe). They constitute Foguangshan’s senior citizen home for retired lay devotees and those monastics who renounced very late in life. Also residing here are two dozen or so lay monastics. By continuing farther up this slope, one soon passes a vegetable garden and then arrives at Samantabhadra Hall (Puxian Dian). This marks the edge of Foguangshan’s property. Beyond, groves of litchi trees cover the surrounding hills. Samantabhadra Hall affords a beautiful view across to Foguangshan’s main ridge. Dominating the view is the towering statue of Amitabha, although farther up along the crest one can also catch glimpses through the foliage of Great Heroes Hall and Tathagata Hall (Rulai Dian).

Religious Section

Even before Foguangshan was sealed off to outsiders, few tourists or devotees visited the social-service section of the mountain. After strolling through the Pure Land Cave at Nonduality Gate, either they would follow a small walkway leading to the Museum of Buddhism and then continue to climb the path to the Welcoming Buddha (as the eight-story Amitabha statue is also called), or they would ascend the broad staircase through Luohan Park up to Pilgrim’s Lodge. The exterior of the
Museum of Buddhism replicates Indian Buddhist architecture. Within are moldering displays of Buddhist art from around the world, including paintings, *thangkas* (meditative wall hangings), and a room of *sariras* (relics).

Until the closing of the mountain, Pilgrim’s Lodge served vegetarian meals to the general public and, for those staying overnight, could house (in dormitory and private rooms) up to 330 people. The bedrooms continue to be filled during the weekend cultivation retreats, but the dining facilities, no longer necessary after the opening of an even larger refectory in Cloud Residing Hall, have been gutted so that the stairway from Nonduality Gate can now pass under a great arch through the lodge and continue up to Great Heroes Hall. To the right of Pilgrim’s Lodge is Bamboo Thicket Garden (Mazhu Yuan), which offers dining space and rooms for another 880 people as well as conference rooms. Just to the left of Pilgrim’s Lodge is Devotees’ Hall (Tanxin Lou), with its several conference rooms, two small meditation chambers, dining room, and 1,080-seat auditorium. Behind Devotees’ Hall, a steep gully filled by a small pond acts as a natural barrier preventing visitors from intruding on the women’s college, Great Compassion Hall (Dabei Dian), and the four dormitories of the nunnery. The women’s campus of the Foguangshan Monastic Academy and Great Compassion Hall are the oldest buildings on the mountain. Within this compound, two hundred lay and monastic students spend two to four years receiving a free education in Buddhist doctrine and practice. Absolutely no visitors are allowed to enter this part of the mountain. At night, a pack of dogs roams the campus, trained to attack any stranger, especially males or anyone not wearing arhat slippers.

Great Compassion Hall shelters a tall, slender, plain white image of Guanyin. Lining the walls are more than six thousand niches, each with its own image of the bodhisattva. The shrine’s overall atmosphere is of peace and tranquility. Just up the hill, Great Heroes Hall has a much different feel. Here, Amitabha, Shakyamuni, and Bhaisajya-guru (Yaoshi Fo) also stare down serenely in meditative trance, but the massiveness of their gilded forms and the ornate woodwork of the ten thousand smaller Buddha images that fill the surrounding walls of the hall project an almost overpowering sense of grandeur. Before the three main statues are long marble altars, on each of which sit two huge candles and an incense urn. To avoid being swamped with offerings, some of which may not be appropriate (i.e., may include meat or tracts with teachings contrary to those of Foguangshan), the monastery does not allow people to bring offerings to this or any other of its shrines. In the back corners of the hall sit a gigantic bell and drum. It is in this hall and on the wide courtyard leading up to it that Foguangshan holds its large-scale
dharma functions, such as birthday celebrations for buddhas, land and sea dharma functions, and triple altar ordinations.

Behind Great Heroes Hall are the Exhibition Hall (Zhanlan Guan), Jade Buddha Hall (Yu Fo Lou), Gold Buddha Hall (Jin Fo Lou), and Tathagata Hall. The Chinese Buddhist calligraphy, painting, and sculpture displayed in the Exhibition Hall constitute only a small percentage of Foguangshan’s permanent art holdings. The entire collection is spread out among a total of nine galleries and includes works by such famous artists as Zhang Daqian, Li Zijian, and Shi Guoliang (now known by his dharma name, Ven. Huichan).7

Gold Buddha Hall and Jade Buddha Hall house the bhikshuni and bhikshu meditation facilities for the Foguangshan Meditation College. Tathagata Hall is the administrative nerve center for Foguangshan. Located within are the abbot’s chamber, information center, computer center, and a variety of departmental offices. On the building’s second floor may be found a small exhibition hall showing Foguangshan’s history. Among the displays on view are a variety of articles that have been used by Master Xingyun—a robe, a walking stick, a traveling bag, socks, arhat slippers, a slide projector, and a sewing machine (which he jerry-rigged as a desk). There are also a host of photographs of the master with such world leaders as the dalai lama, the pope, and U.S. vice president Al Gore. The museum further provides biographical sketches of Master Xingyun’s most important disciples, displays of Foguang literature, charts tracking the order’s charitable activities over the years, and maps of its worldwide network of temples and BLIA (Buddha’s Light International Association) chapters.

One floor above the exhibition hall is Foguangshan’s meditation facility for lay devotees and large-scale retreats. As one visiting monk quipped, this is truly a “five-star meditation hall.” Along the four outer walls are the office space for the meditation center staff, dormitories for men and women, and laundry and shower rooms. The meditation chamber itself is quite open and spacious, with very little in the way of furnishings. In the middle is a small kiosk in which an image of Shakymuni sitting in a meditative pose gazes out toward the front door. On either side of the Buddha are full sets of Foguangshan’s edition of the Chan canon. Behind Buddha, a picture of Linji, the founding teacher of the Linji Chan school, faces the back doors. Surrounding the booth is a large open area for walking meditation (paoxiang). Benches furnishing space for eighty-four people to engage in sitting meditation run along the north, west, and south walls. By placing an extra row of benches just in front of these, and by setting cushions on the floor, the facility can accommodate as many as three hundred people at a time. Along the east wall are
A Mountain Monastery in an Urban Society

the main entrance and two small booths used by the abbot and the Chan masters when they give guidance (kaishi).

Foguangshan is justifiably proud of its meditation hall. The air-conditioning, washing area, and lighting all make for a comfortable, pleasing setting so that those who come for retreats can concentrate on their practice. Some, however, have found it all too modern, preferring the simpler furnishings of more traditional temples, such as Zhongtaishan (a large monastery in northern Taiwan known for its Chan instruction). As one informant explained, although air-conditioning makes for comfort, this may not be desirable; for one’s qi (vital energy) to be harmonized it must be attuned, not only within, but also with the surrounding environment, especially the seasonal climate. By creating a hermetic setting, concluded this individual, Foguangshan has inadvertently adversely affected the very process that it is trying to nurture. Foguang monastics disagree with such an argument, countering that most retreat participants are only beginners at meditation and, as such, require optimum conditions so that they can focus purely on the workings of the mind. The two halls used by the Foguangshan Meditation College do not have air-conditioning.

The Venerable Huiri, the monk in charge of the Foguangshan Meditation College, observes that the location of the meditation hall concretely represents Foguangshan’s attitude toward Chan. Rather than being placed in a tranquil setting apart from the headquarters’ other facilities, the hall is located on the middle floor of the central administrative building. Meditation is not a passive enterprise separate from daily life, he asserts; to be truly effective it must be an integral part of everyday activity.

The two stories above the meditation chamber are occupied by the main floor and balcony of Foguangshan’s largest auditorium, which has a capacity of 1,809 people. It is here that Master Xingyun holds meetings with the full mountain community. These sessions are, for many clerics, among the few opportunities to interact with the master directly. The organization has simply become too big and spread out for Master Xingyun to even know the names of all his disciples, much less give them one-on-one guidance.

Foguangshan’s latest and largest structure is Cloud Residing Hall (Yunju Lou), a somewhat ponderous six-story high-rise completed in the spring of 1998. The four upper floors provide lodging for two thousand devotees. Most rooms are simple, but on the sixth story is a very spacious presidential suite. The ground floor is Foguangshan’s refectory. Master Xingyun proudly observes that, at 6,312 square feet, this is the world’s largest room with no pillars to support its vast ceiling. Forty-two hundred people can eat here at a time. On the second floor is an
equally large chamber, also without supporting pillars. This serves as the recitation hall for weekend cultivation retreats and is the inner altar (neitan) for land and sea dharma functions.

Most visitors fail to notice the small walled-in compound next to Cloud Residing Hall. It may be argued, however, that this is the most important corner of the mountain, for it is Master Xingyun’s office and residence. Very few have the opportunity to meet privately with the master in his office, and even fewer are granted the privilege of viewing the inner residential area. The master’s house was built for him by Ven. Xinping, who took over as abbot of Foguangshan in 1986. On the first floor is a simply but elegantly furnished living room. The master’s living quarters take up the second floor. The dwelling is surrounded by a beautiful yard with several fountains and gardens. In the back is a small basketball court. The Venerable Xinping had this installed so that the master could practice his favorite sport whenever he desired. Since breaking his leg in 1991 and having had heart bypass surgery in 1995, the master has had to give up this pastime. Just beyond the basketball court, a squirrel lives in a large cage. The cage has housed a number of injured small animals that Master Xingyun has rescued, nursed back to health, and then set free, but the current resident apparently refuses to leave the compound.

The back gate of Master Xingyun’s residential area leads to Lamp Transmission Hall (Chuandeng Lou), home to Foguangshan’s small contingent of bhikshus, including Ven. Xinding, the monastery’s current abbot. This abuts the men’s campus of the Foguangshan Monastic Academy. Approximately one hundred students study here. Within the campus is Manjushri Hall (Wenshu Dian), within which is a relatively small image of the bodhisattva Manjushri. Towering above the classrooms is the Welcoming Buddha, although he faces in the opposite direction.

Cloud Residing Hall, Master Xingyun’s residence, Lamp Transmission Hall, the men’s college, and the Welcoming Buddha run along the edge of the escarpment just above Longevity Funerary Complex and overlooking Dashu County. On the occasional clear day, Taiwan’s central mountain range is visible to the west. More typically, haze and smog completely obliterate the peaks from view. Below the escarpment can be seen the many restaurants and gift shops opened by local entrepreneurs to cater to the tourists and devotees of Foguangshan. Since the closing of the mountain, such shops have lost nearly all their business.

THE CLOISTERING OF FOGUANGSHAN

For the first thirty years of its existence, especially after the completion of the Welcoming Buddha statue in 1975, Foguangshan was regarded as one of the premier recreational sites of southern Taiwan. Several thousand tourists would come each
weekend to stroll around the mountain, enjoy the view from the base of the Wel-
coming Buddha, visit the Pure Land Cave and Museum of Buddhism, offer incense
at Great Heroes Hall, and have a vegetarian lunch at Pilgrim’s Lodge. During the
month following Chinese New Year, as many as one million visitors would make
the pilgrimage to view the lamps festooned around the mountain. The constant
stream of tourists was a significant source of revenue for both the mountain and
the local community.

All this changed in 1997. On 16 May, the first day of Foguangshan’s thirty-
first year, the gates to the mountain were bolted closed. Uninvited visitors were
no longer welcome. For six months, even Foguang lay devotees were barred from
coming to the monastery. Thereafter, they and other Buddhists could come only
after registering at a branch temple to join a group pilgrimage to the headquar-
ters. By February 1998, these organized trips had evolved into a weekly oppor-
tunity to select one of ten “weekend cultivation activities”: meditation; chanting;
repentance; scripture copying; walking meditation; pilgrimage (one prostration for
every three steps up the mountain); dharma talks; youth camp; parent-and-child
camp; and volunteer work. The mountain was, therefore, still open to Buddhist
devotees for organized religious functions, especially on weekends, but it was now
closed to those simply wanting to come for recreation. The general population was
permitted to wander about the mountain on only three occasions: the two weeks
of the Chinese New Year; Buddha’s Birthday (the eighth day of the fourth lunar
month); and Sangha Offering Merit Day (the twenty-second day of the seventh
lunar month).

The ceremony marking the mountain’s shift in policy was very solemn. A
procession of nearly one thousand clerics coursed their way slowly from the high
school to the wide staircase leading up to Nonduality Gate. Master Xingyun,
shielded from the bright sun under a large parasol, mounted the top step, then sat
before a large image of Shakyamuni Buddha that had been placed just the other
side of the gate. The monastics recited from a sutra, then assumed the lotus posi-
tion on meditation pads as the approximately ten thousand people in attendance
were seated. Ten lay members gave speeches about the significance and wisdom of
the mountain’s closing. About halfway through these presentations, two govern-
ment helicopters swooped just overhead, landing on the parade ground in front of
the high school’s activity center. Sung Chuyou, governor of the province of Tai-
wan, was guided to the podium by his team of bodyguards. He gave a brief speech
thanking Master Xingyun and Foguangshan for their great contributions to the
island, then immediately returned to his helicopter to fly to another engagement.
After Master Xingyun and Ven. Xinding made speeches, the clerics stood to recite
a sutra before slowly filing past the master and through Nonduality Gate. Last of all to pass beyond the gate was the master himself, who stood immediately before the image of Shakyamuni and continued to look out over the assembled crowd as the newly constructed doors slowly shut. Many of the lay devotees rushed forward in a symbolic last-ditch effort to keep the doors open.

The closing of the mountain altered Foguangshan’s relationship with the local populace, the general public of Taiwan, even its own lay devotees. Ever since the monastery had developed into an important recreational site, tourism had become an integral part of the local economy. Restaurants, gift shops, and inns sprouted up around the mountain’s entrance, many incorporating “Foguang” as part of their names even though most had no formal connection with the organization. On the weekends, and during the month following Chinese New Year, local farmers opened stalls vending vegetables or snacks.

The relationship between Foguangshan and its neighbors, however, has not always been harmonious. Locals have regarded the monk with an unusual accent and his contingent of monastics as outsiders. A variety of disagreements have heightened the tension. For example, on several of the occasions when Foguangshan has attempted to purchase surrounding land, the monastery and its neighbors were unable to agree on a price. In the 1980s, an argument arose over whose responsibility it was to maintain a small road skirting the temple and the degree to which locals could have access to that road. In the spring of 1996, an even greater controversy erupted when it became known that Foguangshan’s garbage was being dumped right next to the Gaoping River, which flows not far from the mountain. Master Xingyun explained that the monastery had contracted out the work of garbage collection and had had no idea where the company carting off the refuse had dumped it, but residents complained that this was just one more instance of the monastery’s lack of concern for others in the area.

Foguangshan has had its grievances too. The clerics have felt that the local people have not appreciated all that the monastery has contributed to improving their lives. Foguangshan played a key role in upgrading electrical and water service in the region. The mountain had also opened a post office, a preschool for local children, and a public library. Every Chinese New Year, the monastery would hold a party and raffle for its neighbors, giving away thousands of New Taiwan dollars worth of goods. The boost to the local economy from the steady stream of tourists could not be denied. Instead of being grateful, grumbled the Foguang venerables, the residents simply became greedy, trying to get as much from the mountain as possible without appreciating its positive role in their community. Certain town and county politicians antagonistic to the monastery had employed a variety of
A Mountain Monastery in an Urban Society

tactics to obstruct Foguangshan’s ability to receive necessary permits for its building projects. A few locals had apparently even gone so far as to sneak onto the temple grounds at night to steal fish from the Guanyin Release Pond.

When Master Xingyun closed Foguangshan’s gates to outsiders, many locals believed that he did so to force Dashu County to back down from its attempt to redefine portions of the mountain as a tourist rather than a religious site and, thereby, collect property taxes. The Foguang leadership denies this, saying that the monastery’s for-profit enterprises already paid taxes and that such a change would have had no significant effect. The Venerable Xinding nonetheless admits that poor relations with the local community may have played a role in the decision to curtail the tourist business. Since residents found that the added crowds and traffic caused problems, he told Jody Duffy of Prime Television, the monastery felt that it had the responsibility to help alleviate such inconveniences (see Duffy 1997). The best way to do so, of course, was no longer to allow tourists to visit the monastery grounds. He insisted, however, that this issue played only a very minor role in the change in policy.

The closing of Foguangshan had ramifications beyond the local community. As 1997 drew to an end, several of Taiwan’s television stations included this event as one of the island’s top ten news items for the year. According to Jiang Canteng, a specialist in Buddhism in Taiwan, Master Xingyun shut the monastery’s doors in order concretely to symbolize his retreat from worldly concerns (Jiang 1997, 12–16). In the years leading up to the mountain’s closure, states Jiang, the master had experienced several embarrassing political setbacks, and his organization had probably declined in financial power as well.

As far as Master Xingyun’s involvement in politics is concerned, many felt that he had entered too deeply into the electoral process when, in 1996, he publicly endorsed his devotee Chen Lü’an, who was running for the presidency. This adversely affected the master’s standing in four ways. First, a variety of Buddhist practitioners and political analysts considered it inappropriate for a religious leader to participate in campaign politics so directly. Second, the news media reported that, during the elections, Master Xingyun had put Chen in contact with the powerful underground figure Chen Yonghe (no relation) so that the latter could act as a mediator between Chen Lü’an and President Li Denghui. Such a disclosure led critics to wonder why the master would associate with such a well-known mobster and engage in political maneuverings with him (Hu Zengfeng 1996). Third, the master’s public support for Chen Lü’an certainly must have upset the Kuomintang, perhaps causing some difficulties in the short term in gaining necessary permits etc. Finally, the poor showing of Chen in the election (he garnered only 8 per-
The spate of criticisms that Master Xingyun was too much a “political monk” (zhengzhi heshang) came at a time when Foguangshan may very well have been experiencing a downturn in its finances. In the 1970s and 1980s, the expanding economy and growing interest in Buddhism resulted in a flood of donations for Foguangshan’s many large-scale projects. The number of prominent Buddhist organizations multiplied through the 1990s, however, while the economy stagnated, resulting in greater competition for resources. Since donors tend to be attracted to what they view as the most cutting-edge projects, Master Xingyun continually initiated ever more ambitious undertakings, most notably a satellite television station and a tuition-free liberal arts university. Foguangshan therefore needed, not just to maintain its donor base, but to increase it, an even more difficult task to accomplish as editorials and commentaries led many to consider the master and his organization as too secular, political, and commercial.

If Foguangshan was already feeling financial strain, it may seem strange that the master would close the headquarters to tourists, thereby cutting off an important source of revenue. In fact, tourist dollars may not have accounted for much income. Non-Buddhist visitors to the monastery tended merely to saunter about without making any donations or buying any souvenirs or lunch. Furthermore, in recent years, other monasteries have constructed similar ornate structures, and the number of recreational sites on the island has increased considerably. The flow of tourist dollars into Foguangshan had, therefore, most likely leveled out or even fallen off over time. Certainly, the month-long Chinese New Year activities no longer drew the crowds they once did. On the other hand, the perception of Foguangshan as a tourist site exacerbated criticisms that the mountain was too secular and commercial, thereby threatening its much more important root of support: Buddhist donors.

Cloistering the monastery so that only devotees could visit, and even they under close supervision, served to reassert the mountain as a sacred place. According to Jiang Canteng, with the clarification of membership through the formation of the BLIA, the distinction between member and nonmember has become much clearer than it had been formerly. Because of this, along with Foguangshan’s internationalization, “the pressure to sacralize [shenghua] Foguangshan, making it into a sacred place, has steadily increased with time.” Jiang emphasizes the economics underlying this trend: “It has been necessary to raise the level of faith by sacralizing the mountain; otherwise, the feeling of dissatisfaction would deepen among devotees, thereby increasing the attrition rate” (Jiang 1997, 15, 16).
Master Xingyun would agree with Jiang's assertion that resacralization is the reason for closing the mountain, but he would discount political or financial factors as the underlying motivation. From the fifth BLIA World Conference (held in Paris in August 1996), when the cloistering of Foguangshan was first announced, the master steadfastly asserted that the shift in policy was being made for purely religious reasons, that is, so that the mountain could regain a solemn and tranquil atmosphere, thereby providing Foguang clerics and lay devotees with the most suitable environment for spiritual cultivation. In the past, according to the master, Foguang headquarters was the principal place where venerables would meet with devotees and others to promote Humanistic Buddhism. Once the organization had successfully established branch temples worldwide as well as a satellite television station and a website, these could assume responsibility as contact points with the general public. The headquarters itself could, therefore, return to its original focus, namely, the cultivation of Buddhist leadership, both monastic and lay.

Regardless of the degree to which financial and political factors may have entered into the decision to close the mountain, religious considerations do seem to have played an important role. "Humanistic Buddhism" serves as the Foguang rallying cry to make Buddhist teachings relevant for modern-day problems and to bring Buddhist values into everyday life. Such a program accentuates a challenge felt by all religious groups: how to reinterpret one's inherited teachings and values so as to make them pertinent without diluting their content. For its first thirty years, Foguangshan offered its openness to all as a symbol of the accessibility of the dharma. The underlying theory was that many of those who initially came for entertainment would leave with a greater understanding of and interest in Buddhism. Recreation, in other words, was considered a legitimate expedient means (fangbian; upaya) to attract people to the dharma. In more recent years, Master Xingyun has determined that this particular expedient means is no longer efficacious, that, in fact, its disruptive effects on monastic life overshadow whatever usefulness it might have had.

The shift in policy can also be traced to Foguangshan's greater accessibility. Twenty years ago, when Taiwan's public transportation system was not well developed and few people owned cars, the journey to Foguangshan was, while not terribly arduous, a trek nonetheless. Furthermore, the mountain looked out on woods and small farms, and a sense of separation from urban society was inherent in its location. Today, it is surrounded by highways and condominiums, and there is little, if any, sense of physical isolation. Cloistering the mountain reestablished a boundary, thereby marking it off as sacred space.
This renewed sense of separateness was emphasized by certain physical changes made to the monastery itself. A guard booth was built and a metal gate installed at the very base of the entryway, just below the statue of Maitreya. Only those with special permission may take their cars beyond this point. All others (including teachers at the high school) must park below and, after showing their identification badge, walk up the side path. Also, the jovial image of Maitreya, which for so many years had from its ground-level position seemingly beckoned all those passing by to come join in the festivities, was, as we have seen, raised atop a twenty-foot-tall pedestal. From this new position, Maitreya seems more removed, and the distance between this world and his current abode in Tushita Heaven is brought more to mind. Finally, the wall along the other side of the main driveway was erected, thereby emphatically segregating the monastery from the ramshackle houses and Daoist temple just the other side.

The separation of secular and sacred also was more clearly delineated within the monastery compound. This delineation was accomplished by closing the gate on the path linking the preschool to the women’s campus of the Foguangshan Monastic Academy and instituting the rule that neither high school nor monastic students could venture through it to each other’s campus. In the past, some of the college students used to go sit on the swings in the preschool yard after dark, and a few used to play basketball on the outdoor courts of the activity center in the cool of evening. Even such indirect mingling with the secular world was, henceforth, to cease. Master Xingyun has indicated that he hopes eventually to make this separation of Foguangshan’s secular and religious endeavors even more pronounced by relocating the high school, preschool, children’s home, and senior citizens’ home elsewhere in Taiwan.

The closing of the mountain to the general public does not appear to have had any long-term effects. In the year following the cloistering, the local community certainly felt a financial pinch. Several restaurants closed, and others drastically cut down on staff. The monastic community also felt the loss of tourism dollars. The decision to return to a much simpler medicine meal in the evening, for instance, may have been motivated as much by financial reasons as by religious ones. The weekend cultivation retreats appear to have been instituted at least partially as a means to recoup revenue since those who participate generally give a donation of at least NT$1,000 (approximately U.S.$33). The mountain averages one thousand visitors per weekend, which translates into an annual income of NT$52 million (U.S.$1.73 million).

The master, ever the optimist, told the monastic community shortly after the mountain was cloistered that, even if the closing would mean greater financial
hardship, overall it would prove a boost for self-cultivation. Monks and nuns must
learn to be zizai, that is, easygoing regardless of circumstances; to become attached
to prosperity is very dangerous. Also, he continued, the closing of Foguangshan
would provide both the time and the serenity for the resident clerics to spend the
greater part of their day engaged in self-cultivation. It appears that this has been
the case; many monastics have taken advantage of the increased number of medita-
tion and recitation retreats that have been organized. A larger proportion of the
daily schedule also appears to be devoted to self-study. Foguangshan had long been
proud of its reputation as one of Taiwan’s top recreational sites. As this reputation
came more of a liability than an asset, the master decided to sacrifice the bene-
fits of such a reputation to preserve and strengthen the mountain’s standing as a
place of cultivation.

SECULARIZING THE SACRED, SACRALIZING THE SECULAR
Foguangshan’s location is symbolic of its philosophical stance toward the relation
between Buddhist cultivation and society. It is neither nestled away in remote
mountains, as are many of Taiwan’s temples, nor situated in the midst of a city.
Rather, it is located where mountain and city meet. The area that thirty years ago
was undeveloped is today filled with orchards and residential housing. The two-
lane road that passes by the base of Foguangshan makes it easily accessible to such
urban areas as Pingdiong (thirty minutes away by car), Fengshan (forty-five min-
utes), and Kaohsiung (slightly over one hour). As metropolitan sprawl has reached
the monastery, the monastery has retreated, closing itself off to outsiders. Yet, con-
current with its symbolic separation, the organization has also made itself more
widely accessible through technology, establishing a satellite television station and
launching a website.

What does the cloistering of Foguangshan teach us about the concepts of
sacrality and secularity? Scholars of religion have generally employed the term
“sacred” to describe those objects, times, and events that are experienced as mani-
festing an extraordinary, mysterious force.12 Such “hierophanies,” as Mircea Eliade
(1959, 11–13) designated instantiations of sacrality, are highly paradoxical in na-
ture: they attract yet repel, vivify yet endanger, heal yet defile, and hold a power
that is somehow utterly transcendent yet radically immanent. Opposed to the sa-
cred is the profane, all those relatively effete articles, periods, and activities of the
mundane world that people experience in their daily lives. The particular contours
of the existential boundaries distinguishing the sacred and the profane modes of
being and the means of mediating between them constitute each culture’s religious
life, although, in premodern societies, none of this was thought of as specifically
“religious” in content since the concept of religion as a distinct cognitive and institutional sphere had not yet evolved.

By “secular” scholars have meant those segments of modern society that are neither guided by religious beliefs nor under the control of religious institutions. The classification of the “secular” differs from that of the “profane” in that the latter is itself a religious category while the former is opposed to that entire construct. In other words, the concept “religion,” which has the dyad sacred/profane as one of its most fundamental structural features, is dialectically paired with the notion of secularity. Scholars have tended to confuse the issue by using the terms “secular” and “profane” interchangeably since both designate an absence of sacrality. The two differ significantly in tone and intensity, however, for secularity implies that a much greater cognitive leap—in fact, a radical transformation in the organization of consciousness—must occur for sacrality to be experienced.13

The nominalization “secularization” therefore refers to the process through which activities formerly with a transcendent, sacred referent no longer have any such association. Peter Berger defines “secularization” as

the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols. When we speak of society and institutions in modern Western history, of course, secularization manifests itself in the evacuation by the Christian churches of areas previously under their control or influence—as in the separation of church and state, or in the expropriation of church lands, or in the emancipation of education from ecclesiastical authority. When we speak of culture and symbols, however, we imply that secularization is more than a social-structural process. It affects the totality of cultural life and of ideation, and may be observed in the decline of religious contents in the arts, in philosophy, in literature and, most important of all, in the rise of science as an autonomous, thoroughly secular perspective on the world. Moreover, it is implied here that the process of secularization has a subjective side as well. As there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness. Put simply, this means that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations. (Berger 1969, 107–108)

Berger goes on to say that such secularization is not merely a Western phenomenon but may be viewed as a global trend affecting all modern societies. It is a pro-
cess of social-structural, cultural, and subjective significance with repercussions for people’s understandings of politics, education, entertainment, the arts, literature, philosophy, and cosmology.

As distinct boundaries of religious and secular provinces have been laid out, each has developed along particular trajectories with particular methods. The two have never been hermetically segregated, however. At times, religious and secular institutions have borrowed techniques from one another or have entered an arena generally recognized as within the other’s sphere. A simultaneous secularization and sacralization takes place every time that occurs. When a secular organization appropriates language or a modus operandi identified with a religious tradition, it has secularized that vocabulary or technique while it has itself undergone a degree of sacralization. Conversely, a religious organization that appropriates a method regarded as coming from secular society has sacralized that method and secularized itself.

In Master Xingyun’s view, such creative interchange between the secular and the religious worlds provides an extremely effective expedient means for bringing people to Buddhism. Once Foguangshan adopted techniques associated with the entertainment industry to become a tourist site (especially when the master borrowed from Disneyland, arguably the world’s most poignant symbol of secular entertainment), the headquarters was secularized, losing some of its sacred aura. At the same time, recreation and tourism were sacralized, given potent significance as Buddhist activities. The line differentiating these from pilgrimage and worship blurred; just who was a tourist and who a pilgrim, who a spectator and who a devotee, was difficult to assess. The same can be said, mutatis mutandis, about those instances in which the master has entered the worlds of politics and liberal arts education. The sacred and the secular have become much more difficult to demarcate.

Buddhists who disagree with Master Xingyun’s methods voice the fear that he and others like him who secularize their practice remain religious only in name, having taken the sacred out of religion. On the other hand, one could argue that, through resacralizing particular instances of activities within putatively secular sectors, Foguangshan acts to transform the general understanding of those entire sectors in all their instances: they are no longer apprehended as secular but rather as more or less profane. Distinctions remain, but the overall cognitive framework has shifted, transforming subtly in nature. The end of religion and the end of secularity as they have been conceptualized in modern times can occur only in tandem, a metamorphosis into postmodern versions that are, in fact, similar in structural character to the premodern distinctions between the sacred and the profane. In
other words, even though the language of “religion” and “secularity” will most likely remain for the foreseeable future, the concepts to which these terms point appear already to be undergoing a reversion to the former senses of “sacrality” and “profaneness.”

A perpetual attraction between the sacred and its opposite (whether that be the profane or the secular) seeks to fuse them. There also, however, invariably persists a tension between the polarities: each repels the other. As Fuguangshan appropriates secular methods and enters the secular arena, it ipso facto jeopardizes its status as protector and mediator of the sacred. For this reason, as Master Xingyun and his organization have in recent years delved more deeply into secular political and educational endeavors, the need to reconsecrate the headquarters with sacrality through a symbolic withdrawal asserted itself. Given this larger picture, the decision to cloister Fuguangshan makes perfect sense.