



## Opening the Door to Heaven: Localization and London's Fo Guang Shan Temple

Caroline Starkey

**To cite this article:** Caroline Starkey (2022) Opening the Door to Heaven: Localization and London's Fo Guang Shan Temple, *Architecture and Culture*, 10:4, 643-670, DOI: [10.1080/20507828.2023.2166747](https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2166747)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2166747>



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Published online: 21 Feb 2023.



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# ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE

Caroline Starkey  
University of Leeds,  
Leeds, UK  
[c.starkey@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.starkey@leeds.ac.uk)

**Keywords:** Buddhism,  
localization, built  
environment, young people,  
Britain, Chinese diaspora, Fo  
Guang Shan



Volume 10/Issue 4  
December 2022  
pp. 643–670  
DOI:10.1080/20507828.  
2023.2166747

No potential conflict of  
interest was reported by  
the author.

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## Opening the Door to Heaven: Localization and London's Fo Guang Shan Temple

Caroline Starkey 

**ABSTRACT** This article addresses a lacuna in research into the religio-spatial practices of Chinese Buddhist communities in Britain. Although the numbers of Chinese migrants to Britain is increasing and diversifying, scholarly attention to religious practices (especially in relation to Buddhism) has been lacking. In this article, I focus on Fo Guang Shan London - a transnational Taiwanese Buddhist organization, occupying a Grade II\* listed former Victorian Parish School and the first Buddhist temple to receive Heritage Lottery Funding for renovations. Drawing on interviews and observational data gathered at the temple, predominantly with university students and young professionals, I examine the varied attitudes to, and experiences of, the heritage building and explore how the built environment has contributed to Fo Guang Shan's aim of localization in Britain.

### Introduction

In England and Wales, despite increasing numbers of people declaring they have no religion, Buddhism is growing in popularity.<sup>1</sup> Although there are a few purpose-built temples in this context, the

majority of Buddhist places for spiritual practice in Britain can be found in repurposed buildings, many of them Victorian, including fire stations, former churches, and factories. In this article, I explore the experience of using a repurposed historic building for religious practice, through a focus on London's Fo Guang Shan (FGS) Buddhist temple. FGS is a global Mahayana Buddhist organization, originating in Taiwan in the middle of the twentieth century. The London temple has occupied a Grade II\* listed Victorian building on Margaret Street (near Chinatown) since 1992, and it currently accommodates a small group of peripatetic nuns from Taiwan. FGS London provides religious services, alongside cultural activities and welfare outreach for the local Chinese populations as well as wider non-Buddhist and non-Chinese communities. In 2016, it was the first Buddhist temple to receive competitive Heritage Lottery funding for building redevelopment which they have undertaken with professional architectural support and sensitivity to the original external and internal Victorian features (including stairs, masonry, roof, doors and hinges, exposed archways, windows, and fireplace). They also follow a Chinese Buddhist interior esthetic, incorporating shrine rooms with imported embossed wall Buddha figures, large Buddha and *bodhisattva*<sup>2</sup> statues and images raised on plinths, enough seating spaces for large group religious activities, alongside smaller shrine rooms dedicated to specific deities and ancestors with respective statues, text and images adorning the walls, all sourced in Taiwan).<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese diaspora in England and Wales is disproportionately young and transient, mostly because the number of Chinese students is growing. Throughout this article, drawing on interviews and observations I have made at the temple since 2014, I discuss the perspectives of community members (most of whom were between the ages of 18 and 30) on the building occupied by FGS London. I consider my interviewees attitudes to the historic building, and some of the challenges that they face in incorporating Taiwanese Buddhist practices and the varied Chinese diasporic community needs with the restrictions of a space not designed specifically for their purposes. Outside of the UK, FGS temples have often been purpose-built, typically incorporating a specific Chinese religious architectural style (including ornate roof structures, pagodas, entrance-ways and particular colors, such as red) with enough space to accommodate large numbers for religious practice and communal events. The adaptation of a Victorian parish school building for a FGS temple is therefore highly unusual, although they have increasingly experimented with nontraditional Chinese architectural spaces, for example in FGS Paris, or Manila.<sup>4</sup> However, at these sites, although the buildings adopt a more contemporary architectural style, they are still purpose built to a design supported by the community, unlike in London where the activities and approach are inevitably shaped by the available space and their responsibilities toward a historic building. There are legal requirements related to the use of a listed building which shapes what the occupants

can do with the space, in order to preserve important built heritage. This curtails certain activities for FGS London, including both ceremonially and in a practical day-to-day sense, as I discuss as the article progresses, but it also opens up new opportunities that have enabled this transnational religious organization to become further embedded in their new location.

As a large, global Buddhist movement, the ways in which FGS has adapted to new cultural environments has been a keen topic for academic analysis. Stuart Chandler states that for FGS, “localization” (or *bentuhua*) is a process used “to lessen tensions with the mainstream society” where “centuries old customs can be replaced by other customs more appropriate to the region in question.”<sup>5</sup> Understanding the negotiations that newly established religious groups have with their host country and the subsequent adaptation that they have made is also a keen interest of scholars of contemporary religions in various disciplinary contexts.<sup>6</sup> In Britain, much of the focus of scholarly work on minority religions post-Second World War was on how religious groups with origins outside of the UK adapted their practices and traditions (both to support existing populations, and to attract new converts) and the perceived impact of British locations.<sup>7</sup> Kim Knott<sup>8</sup> highlights that even though the scholarly focus on the local was replaced by an interest in global connectivities from the late 1990s, it remains impossible to understand religious groups, even those with strong transnational links, without appreciating how they emerge and change in response to particular places, times, and spaces and peoples. She states that through understanding how organizations and communities are responsive to their geographic and cultural location, we are enabled to see “... religion as a plural, dynamic and engaged part of a complex social environment or habitat that is globally interconnected and suffused with power.”<sup>9</sup>

Buddhism is often seen as a religion that has adapted to differing local conditions *par excellence*, starting with its early movement away from India along the Silk Route, into China and Japan and beyond, changing some practices and doctrines in response to local conditions and cultures whilst retaining others. Thomas Tweed<sup>10</sup> argues that all religious communities engage in this process of conscious and unconscious negotiation between “dwelling” or “homemaking” in a particular place, and appealing to transnational and transcultural “crossing” and “flows” of information, connection, and practices. These crossings and dwellings come together to produce particular localized versions of religious traditions that are at the same time products of, and connected to, global flows of people and things and are subject to ongoing change. Tweed is keen to emphasize the dynamism and potential for movement that shapes religious practices.

Drawing on this theoretical understanding of what religion is and does, particularly the way that religious people make a home in specific

locations but remain connected outside these, the research question that underpins this article is: how has FGS's use of the heritage building contributed to their organizational strategy of localization? To answer this question, I explore how FGS London has engaged with a process of "localization" through the use of the Victorian building in central London, as well as through targeted activities to support local Chinese younger people's academic and professional ambitions. I argue that using a heritage building enables FGS London to inhabit an important piece of London's religious history and to be seen as responsible for maintaining it. Furthermore, focusing on young people positions FGS as a leading Buddhist organization in London and as a welfare hub for Chinese diasporic communities (particularly middle-class and upwardly mobile students and professionals). However, there are competing demands on the temple space, and this can cause tension, not least because the "Chinese community" that the temple serves is itself highly diverse, and the needs of a transient student population differ from one that is more permanently settled.

In order to put FGS London in context, I will first discuss a brief history of Chinese migration to Britain and the establishment of Chinese diasporic communities, including in relation to religion. I will then explore the development of FGS and the specifics of their London branch temple, before engaging in detail with my participants' perspectives. Kim Knott views religious space as multifaceted and interconnected, where "a particular place... enfolds its social, physical and cultural history within it, the various phases in its development layering through it and sometimes engaging instrumentally with one another along the way."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, for Robert Bluck, material culture (including buildings, art and esthetic) is a key feature of the way Buddhist groups have adapted to reflect the British context and the places that they inhabit.<sup>12</sup> Appreciating the complex interactions that arise between a specific historical building and its subsequent generations of inhabitants is a key aim of this article, as well as giving much warranted consideration to Chinese diasporic religious practices in the British context. Although Buddhism in Britain has received academic attention, particularly within the field of religious studies, a disproportionate amount of work to date has focused on groups that cater mainly to white convert Buddhists, rather than those who have a personal or family history of migration to the UK. Attention to the experiences of minority ethnic Buddhists in Britain therefore forms an important line of interdisciplinary inquiry, particularly in relation to Chinese Buddhist communities who have not been considered sufficiently in scholarly work in this context. My approach is sociological, with the aim of furthering interdisciplinary conversations about the contextually-driven relationships between specific minority religious communities, the buildings that they inhabit, and the impact on religious practice.

## Chinese Communities in Britain

There is a long history of Chinese<sup>13</sup> migration to Britain, and although it has been argued that they form the “least known minority community”<sup>14</sup> and are “low profile”<sup>15</sup>, there have been several studies that address early migration and the subsequent development of communities. The first notable wave of Chinese migrants arrived in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Century as workers on trading ships connected with the British East India Company.<sup>16</sup> As both Parker and Shang highlight, in the 1851 census there were 78 people of Chinese birth living in England and Wales, mostly seamen, clustered around the dockland areas of London, Liverpool and Cardiff.<sup>17</sup> These transient communities eventually formed the basis of early Chinatown areas in these three cities, with most employment being on ships or in laundries<sup>18</sup>. Although the numbers of Chinese people in Britain increased up until the end of the First World War, bolstered by conscription, a series of political policies in the 1920s saw the forced removal of Chinese “aliens” and the decline of communities in the docklands areas, particularly Limehouse in London, which was cleared, ostensibly, to make way for better quality housing.<sup>19</sup>

The second wave of Chinese migration, post-WW2, came mostly from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, as colonial rights to settle in Britain were operationalized, and many worked in Chinese restaurants across the UK.<sup>20</sup> The third wave of Chinese immigration to Britain occurred post-1980s (although Vietnamese refugees arrived in the mid 1970s), and according to Wang, has brought greater diversity in terms of demographics, including more “highly educated professionals and skilled workers”<sup>21</sup>. This was also the time, following the repeal of Martial Law in 1987, where increasing numbers of Taiwanese migrants were able to move abroad. Whilst this was mostly to the United States, some moved to Britain and Europe, particularly as students.<sup>22</sup> According to the 2011 Census, there were 393,141 Chinese people in England and Wales, with the majority aged 20-24<sup>23</sup>. Wang refers to “a persistent and substantial increase” in the numbers of Chinese people recorded in England and Wales between the 2001 and 2011 census<sup>24</sup>. This is particularly notable in student populations, and according to HESA, there were over 200,000 Chinese students in the UK in 2021<sup>25</sup>. It is important to appreciate that Chinese diasporic communities are highly diverse, and include those who have migrated themselves, or who were born in Britain to relatives who migrated generations previously, and the student population is likely to be highly transient, rather than permanently settled. This community diversity is mapped along a number of indices, including language, culture, country of origin, class, education, employment, and family history<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, Wang notes that those who have migrated to Britain since the 1980s, “are not necessarily connected to other previous Chinese migrant groups,” and therefore there are less likely to have diasporic community supports in place<sup>27</sup>.

### **Chinese religion in Britain**

In the 2011 census, of the Chinese population in England and Wales (393,141), 76,952 listed themselves as Christian, 49,344 as Buddhist, and 218,751 as “no religion.”<sup>28</sup> The remainder listing a specific religious affiliation are Muslim (8027), Hindu (2886), Sikh (1019), and Jewish (326).<sup>29</sup> Especially in the scholarship on early Chinese migrants to Britain, there is a lack of detailed engagement with religion and religious practices.<sup>30</sup> In recent years, there has been a little more attention given to Christianity amongst Chinese communities in the UK, including for students and young people, however the body of work is far from exhaustive.<sup>31</sup> Barclay Price quotes an article written by J. Pratt in 1895 about the Limehouse Chinatown in which he describes the large number of family domestic shrines, or “joss houses” erected for ancestor worship, and there was apparently a Confucian temple, although it no longer exists.<sup>32</sup> In Shang’s book from the 1980s, there is a section on Chinese “culture” which mentions the significance of religion to some Chinese migrants (and specifically highlights the development of Chinese churches), although he states that there were neither ancestral halls nor Chinese temples operational in Britain at this time<sup>33</sup>. Importantly for this article, there has been relatively little written about Buddhism within a British Chinese context, despite it being the second largest religious affiliation for this group in England and Wales.

In 1993, Jeffrey Somers published a short article entitled “Chinese Buddhism in Great Britain” where he argues that “until relatively recent times, there seems to have been little interest in Buddhism amongst the Chinese communities.” He cites that there were no specific temples that were able to conduct funeral rites and instead Chinese communities relied on other Buddhist traditions to facilitate these.<sup>34</sup> His argument about the limited number of temples is certainly accurate, although a lack of formally consecrated temple space might not automatically mean religion was less important to individuals and communities, as evidenced by Shang and the fact that there had been requests for Buddhist funeral services. It takes cultural and economic capital to establish a temple in the UK, and the domestic religious sphere may well have been either the only, or the preferred, option, at least initially (and certainly for transient communities). Somers, however, does focus the latter part of his article on Fo Guang Shan, highlighting its early development and heralding its future importance. Since both Somers and Shang were writing, a small number of Chinese temples have now been firmly established in Britain. In research I conducted with Emma Tomalin for Historic England in 2016, we found 29 temples connected to “East Asian” Buddhist traditions in England.<sup>35</sup> This includes six Vietnamese Buddhist temples (although we noted there were possibly more), two Fo Guang Shan temples (London and Manchester), and George Chryssides writes about a small Chinese temple, Fa Yue, in the West Midlands.<sup>36</sup> There are also Ch’an meditation groups (such as the Western Chan Fellowship), and an esoteric Buddhist center in Essex (which is

non-denominational, but based on the Chinese Hanmi lineage of Master Yu). Xinan Li indicates, citing Weller, that new religious practices might be adopted by Chinese migrants, and suggests that Christianity is perhaps more of a draw than Buddhism for this group, as the census appears to indicate.<sup>37</sup> However, as Li also argues, “So far, I have not found any other Chinese migrant religious organisation that has received the same level of public attention and official endorsement as the Foguangshan Temple”<sup>38</sup>, and the following section will explore the specific trajectory of development that this Taiwanese Buddhist organization has taken in England.

## **Fo Guang Shan: From Taiwan to London’s Oxford Street**

### **Origins**

Fo Guang Shan (FGS) is a global Mahayana Buddhist movement that Juewei Shi calls “one of the largest Chinese Buddhist communities today.”<sup>39</sup> It was founded in Kaohsiung County, Taiwan, in 1967, by Venerable Master Hsing Yun.<sup>40</sup> Master Hsing Yun was born in China in 1927, migrated to Taiwan in 1949, and was, according to Jens Reinke, influenced by a trajectory of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese Buddhist monastic modernization which intended “to correct the overly commercialist ritual practice of the past.”<sup>41</sup> Hsing Yun’s modernist Buddhism, referred to as “Humanistic Buddhism” (or *renjian fojiao*) draws on Ch’an and Pureland Buddhist teaching, and seeks not to reject society, per se, but to engage with it, and to “make Buddhist teachings relevant for modern-day problems and to bring Buddhist values into everyday life.”<sup>42</sup>

Following local success in Taiwan, FGS began to expand globally in the 1990s, and it is now established in twenty-nine countries, with 200 associated temples.<sup>43</sup> FGS is composed of a monastic order, as well as a lay organization (the BLIA, or Buddha’s Light International Association). In addition to the global spread of branch temples and lay associations, FGS have instigated numerous other philanthropic and educational organizations (in Taiwan, and abroad) including Universities, social and health care facilities, drug rehabilitation programmes, schools and restaurants.<sup>44</sup> Reinke describes FGS as a “highly centralized Buddhist order” with a clear approach to ritual and social engagement.<sup>45</sup> However, the emphasis on “localization”<sup>46</sup> (temple development reflecting local need, to support strong establishment) is key to their success. For Reinke, “localization” is a part of the “cross-cultural proselytization” of FGS, and in accordance with the perspective of Master Hsing Yun, should center on “openness and cultural flexibility” including the use of local vernaculars and increasing services provided to reflect local community need<sup>47</sup>. The aim of this approach is to strongly embed FGS in local areas, and in particular with the hope of engaging local, non-Chinese communities in organizational structure as well as supporting Chinese diasporic communities.<sup>48</sup> The term “Chinese community” is complex in relation to Britain and FGS London, as there is no singular community to



speak of, despite tools such as the national census typically flattening heterogeneity. When I refer to the community in relation to FGS London, I mean those people who regularly use the temple space, some of whom are formal members through the BLIA or the monastic wing, and others who engage more sporadically, but this is not without acknowledgement of internal diversity. With this in mind, the focus of the next section is how the London temple uses the heritage building as one aspect of their localization strategy.

### ***Fo Guang Shan London***

In Britain, there are currently two Fo Guang Shan branch temples, in Manchester and London. FGS London is located on Margaret Street in the West End, near to Oxford Street and in close proximity to Chinatown. It occupies a Grade II\* listed Gothic Oxford Movement building, designed by William Butterfield and built by C.N.Foster between 1868 and 1870.<sup>49</sup> The design incorporates “polychromatic brickwork using red Fareham bricks, blue, black and white bricks ... heavy Bath stone dressings and blue Welsh slate roofs” and the building is divided into an East and a West section (see [Figure 1](#)).<sup>50</sup> Internally, the building includes “plain plaster and colourwashed brickwork” and there are several intact original features including the wooden staircase, basement fireplace, and doors and hinges.<sup>51</sup> The building was first listed in the late 1960s, and according to the statutory listing description which provides more interior and exterior architectural detail, the building is part of a “seminal group of buildings in Margaret Street” which includes All Saints Church, opposite.<sup>52</sup> The building was used originally as a church school (first a parish school until 1904, and then a choir school and to accommodate clergy from All Saints until 1968).<sup>53</sup> Following this, an Institute of Christian Studies took over the space, and it was used for religious training.<sup>54</sup> FGS bought the building in 1992, and adapted it to house a group of female monastics and the activities of the London branch of the BLIA.

The temple, which spans four levels, occupies the larger west side of the building (the east side is used for office space). On the basement level is a kitchen and dining room. At the ground floor level is the entrance, reception and small shop, as well as a library. On the upper floors are the main shrine room, as well as two smaller shrines (one dedicated to the *bodhisattva* Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, see [Figure 2](#), and another for Di Zang, the guardian of the dead).<sup>55</sup> On the top floor is a larger room which is used for meditation as well as educational and community activities (see [Figure 3](#)). The main shrine room is ornately decorated, with over 10,000 Buddha and bodhisattva bas-relief style images on the walls (see [Figure 4](#)), and a three Buddha *rupa* principal shrine, all sourced from Taiwan (see [Figure 5](#)).<sup>56</sup>

On FGS London's YouTube channel, there is a short introductory video tour of the temple.<sup>57</sup> The tour is in English (with Chinese subtitles) and features cartoon avatar characters connected to the building (Faran



**Figure 1**  
Front of London Fo Guang  
Shan Temple, Margaret  
Street (Photograph  
by Author).

the Brick, Wally the Wok and Steve the Stairs) showing viewers around the temple and giving a potted history of the space and its current usage. As the YouTube video tour promotes proudly, FGS London has the largest number of Buddha and *bodhisattva* images of all the temples in Europe. The manner in which the YouTube video is presented, as well as its content, is one aspect of the “localization” of FGS practice to the British cultural scene. The video tour incorporates a classical music score that might traditionally be associated with England, such as the hymn, *Thine be the Glory*, and *Rule Britannia*, as well as cartoon imagery of the London skyline behind the temple building. It is unclear exactly who this video tour is aimed at, but it is likely to be potential new devotees or the

wider public. Faran the Brick is keen to point out that “my friend” the carved stone cross remains on the outside of the temple building, a reminder of its Christian heritage, as Master Hsing Yun wanted to promote “inter-religious harmony and coexistence.”<sup>58</sup> The YouTube tour carefully highlights the sensitive architectural and esthetic adaptation that has been undertaken at the temple, retaining external and internal original features, despite the radically different religious use. In the South Africa FGS temple (Nan Hua), according to Reinke, when they decorated the shrine room, they blended the traditional Taiwanese temple design with an African architecture and imagery, in order to reflect the new location.<sup>59</sup> Maintaining the aspects of the Victorian building in Fo Guang Shan London uses a similar methodology: the blend of traditional Chinese Buddhist esthetic with local heritage, in this case, the Victorian parish



**Figure 2**  
 Kwan Yin Shrine Room  
 (Photograph by Author).





**Figure 3**  
Upper floor room  
(Photograph by Author).

school space. However, looking after this building is replete with challenges, including issues with the roof and ongoing maintenance that needs to be completed in line with the legal requirements for listed buildings. Following a competitive application, in 2016 FGS London were the first temple to be awarded Heritage Lottery Funding (Grants for Places of Worship Scheme) of £209,300 (allocated in two parts) to support the repairs, the first part of which had been completed when I conducted interviews, and the second part was in the planning stage.<sup>60</sup>

Architecture has historically been important to Master Hsing Yun, and he makes the case that a Buddhist temple should be a “gathering

place” where people can “lay down their burdens, soothe their minds, and achieve a sense of calm.”<sup>61</sup> He reflects that temple spaces should provide multiple “services” to devotees (and the wider community) as a “multi-functional monastery,” referring to it as a “filling station” that might support a range of community needs and aspirations.<sup>62</sup> These ideas have certainly shaped the approach of FGS London, and the community activities they offer both within, and outside, the temple space. Prior to the restrictions enforced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020/2021 UK lockdowns which saw the curtailment of in-person religious services, there were multiple daily activities for various groups of temple devotees (as well as for the general public). These included regular religious services, chanting and meditation sessions, celebrations for special events (such as Lunar New Year), *sutra* (religious text) study groups, *dharma* talks<sup>63</sup>, a weekend school for children (called Little Bodhi Garden), conferences, various activity groups, and art and cultural exhibitions. As I explore later, the Fo Guang Shan London community has diverse needs, and there are multiple, sometimes competing, demands made on the available space.

FGS London’s diverse activities stretch beyond the boundaries of the temple and they also host public ceremonies in Leicester Square, such as celebrating the Buddha’s Birthday with local public dignitaries. As part of environmental charitable work, London Fo Guang Shan arranged for 4,500 trees to be planted in Theydon Bois Forest (Essex), and they have also participated in official Heritage Open Days, where members of the public can attend the temple for meditation and vegetarian cooking demonstrations, as well as *sutra* writing.<sup>64</sup> This public-facing activity, using both the temple space and wider surroundings, is a further attempt



**Figure 4**  
 Buddha and Bodhisattva wall  
 bas-relief (Photograph by  
 Author).



**Figure 5**  
Fo Guang Shan London Main Shrine Room (Photograph by Author).

to firmly embed FGS in London, and to demonstrate their responsible custodianship of the heritage building and the environment, whilst also sharing aspects of their Buddhist practices with the British public. As De Vries highlights, this variety of activity “helps people reconnect with Buddhism, especially Asian immigrants, giving them a sense of home, belonging and purpose” but it also ensures that FGS position themselves politically as a lead player in the religious, educational and charitable milieu of London.<sup>65</sup> The ways that the specific space of the temple and its location shape the activities of FGS London is particularly notable when examining what is offered to support young people.

### **Young People and the Fo Guang Shan London Temple**

In the latter part of 2019, I spent time at London FGS, observing daily activity and interviewing people involved in the temple, particularly younger people (aged over eighteen and approximately younger than thirty). I first visited the temple in 2014, as part of a Historic England funded project to survey Buddhist buildings in England where we discussed the building adaptation,<sup>66</sup> and following this, I met FGS members and nuns on a roughly annual basis as they attended and hosted academic events, including the UK Association for Buddhist Studies Annual Conferences, a Scholar/Practitioner event on Mindfulness in the Contemporary World (2018) and the opening of a library in a Buddhist Centre in Manchester (2019). In August 2019, I conducted an interview focusing on the renovation of the temple with two volunteers and a nun, and in September 2019, I completed a further group interview with a small number of young people, three of whom were regular participants in the temple and two who were new to FGS London. The aim of the interviews was to deepen my understanding about attitudes to the building they occupied, to assess how important the temple space was to them. I asked a series of open questions about the process of how the temple was developed and the renovations, and then more detail about attitudes and experiences. These interviews all took place at the FGS London, and were conducted in English, and during these times I was also able to participate in communal meals and observe services, meditation and chanting, as well as general day-to-day life in the temple.

#### ***Attitudes to the temple space***

When I first posed the question to my interview participants about how they felt about the temple building, the response was universally positive. They used words such as “amazing,” “unique,” and “very special.” The building was seen to be a “home” and an oasis in a fast-paced and busy city. An interviewee stated:

... for me, this is my second home, I'm attached to this building. I've been here more than 8 years and since day one that I've been coming here, I always feel that like a spiritual support ... when you come here it's very peaceful.

Another concurred, stating that the temple provides a space where it is:

... easy for people to gather with the same faith and beliefs and to share ideas and it provides lots of services and support resources. It's actually very convenient and it's always open to the public, so they come here and feel very comfortable and always feel welcome.



Others agreed, in particular with the idea that the temple is a space of peace in central London (which was seen as much-needed), also mentioning that FGS offered them a welcoming environment through which they could get involved in activities, be supported by a community, and receive spiritual guidance. It was described by an interviewee as a place to “recharge” and as a “powerhouse” – somewhere where you could go regularly to build up enough strength to manage a stressful professional existence. All interviewees agreed that the internal decoration, particularly in the shrine rooms, was also familiar and comforting. The internal shrine decoration is, I was told, “standardized wherever you go” based on the home temple in Taiwan, and this is “important to the devotees, familiar, home.”

Beyond the initial positive assessment, it is possible to discern some differences of opinion between the interviewees about the process and consequences of adapting a listed building, especially its external esthetic. I was told that the listed building was initially a draw, both because it was a unique space that was a part of English history (which was thought might help the Buddhist group to assimilate), but also due to its proximity to central London and Chinatown. However, some people were more cautious than others, in part due to the Christian cross on the front of the building that could not be removed. From the outside, the building looks very different to other FGS temples, and certainly does not look traditionally Chinese Buddhist. Some of the young people I spoke to said they had struggled to find it initially, as it does not have the “temple look.” Another stated:

No one actually realises there is a temple in this central location and when you see from outside you never actually realise this is a temple.

Opinion was divided as to whether this was a good, or a bad, thing. One interviewee countered that it doesn’t matter what the space looks like, as “the temple is where your heart is,” some offered concerns that a nontraditional looking temple would put people off. There is a tension here, and a question as to the purpose of a temple serving diasporic groups in Britain. There is pressure to inhabit a space that looks like a “traditional” temple, both for group members and the wider public, in order to put down a physical marker of presence on the landscape.<sup>67</sup> Yet, for most of my younger participants, there was a strong sense that it didn’t matter what the temple looked like outside, simply what it offered in terms of support, although there was a general appreciation for the familiarity of the internal decor. I did not get much sense that one perspective was pushed over another by temple hierarchy, and I enjoyed listening to my interviewees debate in a congenial manner what was more important – the look of the space, or the feel of the space. They came to no conclusions in these discussions, but my interviewees



shared with me the contradictions they sometimes felt and how they had individually reconciled tensions in their attitude to the esthetic and what it represents. As one participant noted, whilst they were initially confused by the temple's outward look, when they first entered, it was like "opening the door to heaven." This interviewee explained that they had become rather emotional and had cried, seemingly with relief, at finding a place that felt culturally and spiritually familiar in an alien city. This sense of familiarity was seen as particularly important for transient groups (such as students), and for those with no preexisting community connections in Britain. Several of the participants noted that they experienced high levels of stress in relation to the process of migration, work and studying, created in part by the competitiveness of the London professional scene. Attending the temple activities (as well as volunteering) was vital in helping them to manage this productively. However, it is not easy to manage a temple space that both supports transient groups and a diverse established community, as I discuss later.

### ***Challenges of maintaining the historic building***

While occupying a historic building had some benefits, the renovation and adaptation of the FGS London temple has not been entirely straightforward. In the early days, although substantial adaptation to the design of the shrine rooms was needed, much of the internal fixtures and fittings were kept intact in the rest of the building. Although this is in-keeping with what is necessary in a listed building, this was not always easy for the community to manage. Some lay and monastic members were confused as to why certain things had to be retained due to the listed building status, the legalities of which they were not entirely familiar with, particularly when things were not fit for purpose. It was only when the roof started leaking that the community felt they needed a more regular building maintenance effort, with support from a professional organization.

It is clear that there is now a strong sense of responsibility toward the building, although it was a difficult task both to apply for the Heritage Lottery grant, and to implement it, with everything needing to be replaced on a like-for-like basis. The funding from the grant only provided a percentage of the total cost needed, and fundraising efforts were required to raise the additional monies. In order to prepare for the renovation, FGS London drew on the skills of architectural and surveying expertise within their own community, as well as using outside specialists, and the roof renovation took approximately five months to complete. Although drawing on community members is expedient, it also has the effect of strengthening their commitment to the building. FGS London also worked closely with Historic England to ensure legal compliance, although the renovations have not been without errors. When they made some adaptation to the windows, they received an anonymous public complaint and had to return them to a more original form. FGS

London occupies a historic building, and it is incumbent on them to respect this, therefore building long-term relationships with authorities and architectural professionals is vital in order to minimize costly errors and allow them to maintain the space with wider community support.

Despite a commitment to the building as a heritage space, there are a number of things that both BLIA members and the nuns would prefer to change, as they curtail religious activities. What is important within many Buddhist temples, not just FGS, is a large, open space with sufficient heating and ventilation, in order to enable community gatherings to meditate, chant, listen to teachings and to celebrate festivals and cultural events. When there are large-scale gatherings, such as at Lunar New Year, the principal shrine room gets very hot and busy due to its relatively small size, and due to concerns about making too much noise in the local area, they often decide to keep the windows shut during ceremonies. This is not, therefore, the most comfortable environment in which to offer large-scale services in. Furthermore, there are a number of older members of the community who like to visit the temple for services and celebration, and the original Victorian stairs to the shrine room are steep and winding. This causes difficulties for those not fully mobile and a future fund-raising effort is needed to increase accessibility to the upstairs. Overall, occupying a listed building is “not very functional” according to one of my interviewees and having a temple that was purpose built to requirements (including well insulated and ventilated large rooms for Buddhist ceremonies on ground floor level, as well as modern kitchens and large dining facilities) might better support the kinds of religious activities that they aim to provide at FGS London. It was these functional and pragmatic issues that most dominated my participants’ concerns, not necessarily either the look and symbolism of the building or its history as a support to Christian worship. FGS wants to grow their community, and having accessible and physically appropriate space where they can adapt it to their own wishes (rather than those mandated by listed building requirements) is at the forefront of this.

### ***Location, location, location***

Despite these ongoing balancing acts between the listed building and the needs of the community, all agreed that the chief benefit of the building was its location in central London. Although most of the regular attendees at FGS London do not live in the immediate vicinity, the majority travel in from within Greater London. The location of the temple near Chinatown makes a clear statement of presence for FGS, not least because there are currently no other Chinese temples in the area. This allows them to lead public events and to be officially recognized as a key religious organization for the Chinese diaspora. The location also enables those working in central London to access the temple at different times. This includes those who work in service-driven industries, such as restaurants or taxi driving, as well as lawyers, bankers or other white

collar workers. Furthermore, given that younger people (including a growing number of students) form a sizable proportion of the Chinese diaspora in England and Wales, FGS's location in central London, not too far from several major University sites, is expedient. Several of my interviewees mentioned that they felt it was vital for the temple to engage with student and younger populations. Concerns were raised that many of the current devotees were getting older and they needed to continue to develop their offer to attract a younger audience, to keep the temple viable and vibrant. The ways in which they do this as part of their "localizing" agenda is discussed next.

***Supporting educational and professional ambition and success:  
 localising at Fo Guang Shan London***

From my interviews and observations at FGS London, I noted that there are different cohorts of people engaging with the temple space in conflicting ways, and there is sometimes an uneasy relationship between different groups. Some of this difference is predicated on generational lines, as well as politics, language, class, gender, country of origin, or occupation, and whether one is a permanent or transient member of the community.<sup>68</sup> Whilst the majority of people regularly using FGS London are likely to fall under the broad descriptor of "Chinese," and there remain few white British regular members, "Chinese" is a heterogeneous grouping, and includes those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Mongolia, and mainland China, amongst other places (although the majority appear to be Han Chinese). As one interviewee stated:

... there are many people contributing to many different parts of the building... sometimes we are a group, sometimes we are (separate), do different things and there are different ways to practice the Buddhist spirit.

To a certain extent, then, religious connections unite disparate groups together in the temple space, although as my participants note, separate activities are common. This separation within the FGS London community was seen by most participants as partly generational, with an older generation more interested in participation in particular ceremonies and devotional practices, and a younger generation more involved in other activities in the center, such as volunteering or externally-facing work.<sup>69</sup> Of those younger people I spoke with, there was some articulation of what was deemed *suitable* involvement in a temple, however. Whilst they appreciated that people engaged with Buddhism in various ways, there was a sense that participating in ceremonies or special occasions alone wasn't a sufficient way to engage with Humanistic Buddhism. Here, this exposes an area of competing spatial need, as one participant noted:

So I think it's quite important for people to (get) involved and... not just to come here to participate in one ceremony and then go back and have nothing to learn.

There are clearly various community needs that need to be met within a singular temple space, and an attempt to provide for them all<sup>70</sup>. However, engaging with young people, particularly in support of their educational and professional ambitions, is a key motivator for FGS London. As well as regular ceremonies and religious practices, younger people are given the opportunity to join a "Buddhism Research Support Group." This is a self-selecting group, supported by the nuns, who aim to encourage students and young professionals to hone their research and presentation skills. This group had been involved in presenting at conferences about Humanistic Buddhism, as well as hosting public events, engaging with Parliament and promoting interfaith community work. Under the auspices of this group, newcomers to the temple are able to meet other students and young professionals, and develop workplace and networking skills (including high-level professional English language) in a safe environment. The group fosters individual scholarly and leadership ambitions, connecting individuals into the existing structures of wider UK society and developing new links for the temple. Some of these engagement activities are hosted by the temple (either in person, or online), bringing scholars and wider community members into the temple, and for others, members of the group travel to represent FGS London. There have been particularly strong links made with British academic institutions, both through the UK Association for Buddhist Studies, but also beyond as FGS London have donated a multi-volume set of Master Hsing Yun's Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts (including a volume on Architecture) to various UK Universities (including SOAS and Canterbury Christ Church).

According to Edward Irons, "Fo Guang Shan's temples can serve as 'homes' for lay members"<sup>71</sup> and whilst this narrative of "home" and "familiarity" was certainly discernable, the work to support younger people in their ambitions appears more akin to a programme of professional extra-curricular activity, designed to enhance employability and academic attainment. This is important in the British Chinese context because there are a growing number of university students (and educational achievement is presented as typically high),<sup>72</sup> and there has been "rapid socioeconomic advancement" for some.<sup>73</sup> Fo Guang Shan London have considered ways they can support students and young professionals to be engaged fully in the temple, whilst also encouraging educational and career success, helping them to build up a sense of cultural capital. This reflects Master Hsing Yun's desire not to reject society, but to work with it. Indeed, according to Chandler, FGS is keen to foster the next generation of "Buddhist leaders," whilst also "rejoicing in wealth and plenty" and promoting educational advancement.<sup>74</sup> He goes on to highlight that there is in Master Hsing Yun's teachings a

“glorification of diligent work,” where the development of Buddhist ethics has a symbiotic relationship with professional life.<sup>75</sup>

What is offered to younger people in the way of educational, professional and welfare support is a key aspect of the “localization” agenda operationalized in the space of the London FGS temple. For FGS, “localization” takes many forms, and some have been more successful than others. As I highlighted earlier, Stuart Chandler describes the localization agenda as “lessening tensions with the mainstream society,” and Jens Reinke emphasizes “the effort to spread the Dharma to the local populace beyond the Taiwanese diaspora community.”<sup>76</sup> For FGS, localization is a complex process that involves both moves to integrate activities and diasporic community members into the host country, as well as adapting religious practices and approaches to attract non-Taiwanese adherents. Naturally, the approach to localization differs in different global contexts. For example, Reinke demonstrates that in South Africa, for example, it can be seen through adaptations to temple esthetic and architecture, as well as in the range of social and educational services provided to local people, including targeted beyond the Chinese Buddhist devotee cohort. In Canada, Lina Verchery argues that FGS have been effective in marketing their brand of Buddhism to Canadian young people through a month-long monastic educational exchange programme in Taiwan, which she calls an “entirely new avenue through which to propagate the Dharma.”<sup>77</sup> FGS themselves articulate “localization” as “the process of taking Buddhist teachings and transplanting, having them take root, their growth, flowering and bearing fruit in a new cultural environment.”<sup>78</sup>

Although FGS London embody this by trying to involve the wider non-Buddhist populations in some of their activities (predominantly outward-facing one-off cultural events, such as cooking demonstrations, and in relation to historic tours of the building), they have not yet attracted large numbers of non-Chinese community members to attend religious services regularly. However, they have successfully engaged non-Taiwanese populations, and a proportion of the young people I interacted with at the temple originally came from Hong Kong. While there are some similarities in the localization approach described in both the South African and Canadian examples above, in London, FGS localization is enacted in a unique way through the adaptation and use of the historic building and the connections made by and for Chinese students and young professionals. Whilst FGS London offers activities and support for other demographics beyond students, it is their philosophical integration of educational, professional and spiritual success<sup>79</sup> that enables this kind of community activity to thrive, and it is their locally responsive way of rooting the temple and its people in place, constructing a web of multiple points of connection with key aspects of British society, and developing the next generation of successful FGS members, whether they remain in London permanently or not.

## Conclusion

FGS London is a dynamic space that is responsive to multiple (sometimes competing) cultural and generational needs. By giving deliberate attention to fostering younger people's education and career ambitions, they are effectively "localizing" the temple in the British cultural environment, particularly for middle-class and upwardly mobile students and professionals. Although support for young people and professionals is certainly not the only activity on offer at FGS London, it is a strategy that is effective in that it promotes the engagement of a growing (albeit often transient) aspect of the Chinese diaspora in Britain. As Davidson and Eng note, "migration is as much about mobility as it is home-making, as both a subjective sense of belonging as well as the ability and opportunity to secure a living."<sup>80</sup> FGS London aims to offer this security and support through the promotion of a particular type of Chinese Buddhist spiritual activity, alongside the creation of new avenues for social connection and advancement, especially for younger Chinese people, either those who were born in the UK, or who have migrated.

The building that they have adapted facilitates this, and it is both the space (and its location) and the specific support services provided which are attractive. The adapted temple allows them to be situated in the heart of London, which offers them a strong presence both for Chinese diasporic members, but also for wider British society who are more likely to perceive FGS as best-placed to represent this minority community. The historic building is a talking-point, and has attracted attention, including in relation to Heritage Lottery Funding. Whilst there are competing needs within the temple space which makes localization complex, and inherent difficulties in adapting and maintaining a listed building, if FGS had instead constructed a purpose-built space outside of London, they would not have had the same opportunities for connection that have been open to them on Margaret Street. Of course, as the community becomes increasingly established, it is always possible that they might wish to move to a purpose-built temple, although given the costs involved, this would likely be outside of London and away from their primary support base.

They could follow a pattern of spatial progression, first noted amongst certain minority faith communities in the UK by Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, where religious groups might start in rental properties, move then to adapted buildings, before settling in larger, purpose-built spaces that are designed to meet the needs and esthetic preferences of the community.<sup>81</sup> Although several of my participants noted that a building that looked more like a traditional Chinese Buddhist temple (and that had better access to larger and better ventilated shrine rooms) might have some advantages (including as a tourist attraction), what is offered by the current temple space is a clear statement of arrival and establishment, both socially and politically, and a means to put down roots and make long-term connections - a key aspect of FGS's localization policy. Whilst there may be competing spatial needs in FGS

London and a range of activities to support people across the lifecycle, younger people appear to be given some priority, and the outcome is the integration of social and spiritual success. This research focused on a small sample of participants, and more research is most certainly needed in particular to understand better the fragmentation within the Chinese diaspora connected to FGS London (particularly between those from Taiwan, Hong Kong and the PRC), in order to investigate in more detail the potential for contestation within the temple space. However, by looking at community practice through the lens of the religious built environment, we are offered the chance to see how particular spaces are inhabited by new communities, but also, in turn, how that community is shaped by the space that it inhabits.

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**Dr Caroline Starkey** is Associate Professor of Religion and Society in the School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science at the University of Leeds, UK. Caroline's research focuses primarily on the establishment, adaptation and development of Buddhism in Britain. She was involved in the first national survey of Buddhist buildings (funded by Historic England, with Professor Emma Tomalin) and she is particularly interested in gender, authoring *Women in British Buddhism: Commitment, Connection and Community* (published by Routledge) in 2020, and is coeditor of *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Gender and Society* (with Emma Tomalin), published in January 2022.

### ORCID

Caroline Starkey  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7807-6617>

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to FGS London and the Buddhism Research Support Group for taking time to speak with me. I would also like to wholeheartedly thank Paulina Kolata for the invaluable comments made on a draft of this article, particularly in relation to the professionalising nature of FGS's activities in London.

### Notes

1. Office for National Statistics. Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11>
2. A *bodhisattva* is a central figure in Mahayana Buddhism who has achieved enlightenment but who stays connected to the human realm, in order to help others achieve salvation. A famous example of this is Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.
3. <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/fo-guang-shan-temple-wins-national-lottery-support> (accessed September 23, 2021).
4. A list of Fo Guang Shan temples is available at, <https://www.fgs.org.tw/en/> (accessed September 23, 2021).

- Interestingly, the Manchester Fo Guang Shan temple also occupies a heritage building (a former library), and this has been discussed as part of the Religion and Minority Project at the University of Manchester: Available online: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/religion-and-minority/2019/04/01/kickoff-meeting-and-pilot-visits/>.
5. Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2004), 293.
  6. For example, see George Chrystides, "Britain's Changing Faiths: Adaptation in a New Environment," in *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain Since 1945*, ed. Gerald Parsons (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), 55–84. See also the chapters on Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, all of which chart a varied story of religious adaptation and development in Britain, in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*, eds. Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).
  7. Whilst some of the national work on religion in contemporary Britain is summarised in the chapters listed in the previous note, excellent examples of local work in relation to minority religious adaptation and change in Britain can be found connected to the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds. For example, Kim Knott, *Hinduism in Leeds: A Study of Religious Practice in the Indian Hindu Community and Hindu-Related Groups. Community Religions Project Monograph Series* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1986) and Helen Waterhouse, *Buddhism in Bath: Adaptation and Authority. Community Religions Project Monograph Series* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1997). See Kim Knott "From Locality to Location," 154–155.
  8. Kim Knott, "From Locality to Location and Back Again: A Spatial Journey in the Study of Religion," *Religion* 39, no. 2 (2009): 154–60.
  9. Knott, "From Locality to Location," 159.
  10. Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
  11. Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," *Temenos*, 41, no. 2 (2005): 161.
  12. Robert Bluck, *British Buddhism: Teachings, Practice and Development* (Routledge: London and New York, 2006), 184.
  13. In this article, when I use the term "Chinese" I am principally referring to those of Han Chinese descent. However, who is included as "Chinese" is complicated, and as Jens Reinke indicates it includes an affiliation along the lines of location, language, engagement in cultural events, and ideas of family responsibility. Jens Reinke, "Sacred Secularities: Ritual and Social Engagement in Global Buddhist China," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 338. Although tools such as the national census flatten the Chinese community, and assume a level of homogeneity, this isn't necessarily the case and, as I explain in relation to FGS London, there are divisions between temple users predicated on geographic, political, and demographic lines.
  14. Anthony Shang, *The Chinese in Britain* (Batsford Academic and Educational, London, 1984), 3.
  15. Ruby C. M. Chau and Sam W. K. Yu, "Social Exclusion of Chinese People in Britain," *Critical Social Policy* 21, no. 1 (2001): 116.
  16. For a more detailed examination of the waves of Chinese migration, see David Parker, "Chinese People in Britain: Histories, Futures and Identities," in *The Chinese in Europe*, ed. G. Benton and F. N. Pieke (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1998), 67–95. Anthony Shang, *The Chinese in Britain* (Batsford Academic and Educational, London, 1984) and Gregor Benton, "Chinese Transnationalism in Britain: A Longer History," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 10, no. 3 (2003): 347–375. Parker and Shang, as well as Barclay Price, *The Chinese in Britain: A History of Visitors and Settlers* (Amberley, Stroud, 2019), indicate that the seafaring communities were not the very first migrants to Britain as both students and other official visitors were recorded as arriving



- on British shores as early as the 17th century, however the numbers were low.
17. There are, unsurprisingly, difficulties in analysing this census data (see the discussion offered by John Seed, "Limehouse Blues: Looking for Chinatown in the London Docks 1900-40," *History Workshop Journal*, 62 (2006): 58–85.
  18. Parker, "Chinese People in Britain," 69.
  19. Parker, "Chinese People in Britain," 71, 73. See also, Shang, *Chinese in Britain*, 10.
  20. Parker, "Chinese People in Britain," 75.
  21. Wang, Danlu, *Imagining China and the Chinese: Cultural Identities of British Chinese Young People in and around London* (PhD thesis, University College London, 2016), 16. See also, Fleming Christiansen, *Chinatown: Europe: An Exploration of Overseas Chinese Identity in the 1990s* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon), 3, 45.
  22. Jack F. Williams, "Who Are the Taiwanese? Taiwan in the Chinese Diaspora," in *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility and Identity*, ed. L. J. C. Ma and C. Carter (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 174–175.
  23. Office for National Statistics. Available online: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/summaries/chinese-ethnic-group>. See also Wang, *Imagining China*, 33.
  24. Wang, *Imagining China*, 27–28.
  25. <https://collegenews.org/216000-chinese-students-choose-uk-for-higher-education-due-to-visa-restrictions-in-us/>. See also, Caroline Knowles, *Young Chinese Migrants in London* (London: Goldsmiths University and Runnymede Trust, 2015), 13.
  26. Shang, *Chinese in Britain*, 8; Chau and Yu, "Social Exclusion," 108; Christiansen, *Chinatown*, 4, 12; Wang, *Imagining China*, 35.
  27. Wang, *Imagining China*, 34.
  28. [http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC2201EW/view/2092957703?rows=c\\_ethpuk11&cols=c\\_relpuk11](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC2201EW/view/2092957703?rows=c_ethpuk11&cols=c_relpuk11) (accessed September 2, 2021).
  29. There were also people who listed "other religion" (1555) as well as those who opted not to list a religion (34,281).
  30. Xinan Li, *Believing Through Belonging: A Sociological Study of Christian Conversion of Chinese Migrants in Britain* (PhD thesis, Loughborough, 2018), 22.
  31. See, for example, Yinxuan Huang, Kristin Aune and Matthew Guest, "Covid-19 and the Chinese Christian Community in Britain: Changing Patterns of Belonging and Division," *Studies in World Christianity* 27, no. 1 (2021): 7–25, and Xinan Li *Believing through Belonging: A Sociological Study of Christian Conversion of Chinese Migrants in Britain* (PhD thesis, Loughborough, 2018).
  32. Price, "The Chinese in Britain," 50.
  33. Shang, "The Chinese in Britain," 42–48.
  34. Jeffrey Somers, "Chinese Buddhism in Great Britain," *Religion Today* 8, no. 2 (1993): 14.
  35. Emma Tomalin and Caroline Starkey, *A Survey of Buddhist Buildings in England, Historic England* (2016), Available online: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/survey-of-buddhist-buildings-in-england/buddhist-buildings/>. See also, Caroline Starkey and Emma Tomalin, "Building Buddhism in England: The Flourishing of a Minority Faith Heritage," *Contemporary Buddhism* 17, no. 2 (2016).
  36. George D. Chryssides, "Takyu: A Young Buddhist Nun at a Ch'an Temple in the West Midlands," in *Buddhists: Understanding Buddhism Through the Lives of Practitioners*, ed. Todd Lewis (Chichester: John Wiley, 2014), 80–86.
  37. Xinan Li, "Believing Through Belonging," 22.
  38. *Ibid.*, 74.
  39. Juewei Shi, "Buddhist Merit in the West: A Case Study from Australia's Nan Tien Temple," *Studies in Chinese Religions* 5, no. 2 (2019): 165.
  40. A useful history of Fo Guang Shan is provided by Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), as well as a date-by-date timeline on their own website: Available online: <https://www.fgs.org.tw/en/history/Index/>. This is complemented by a more recent monograph by Jens Reinke, *Mapping Modern Mahayana: Chinese Buddhism and Migration in the Age of Global Modernity* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

41. Reinke "Sacred Secularities," 338.
42. Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land*, 46. See also, Reinke, "Sacred Secularities," 338 and James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair, "Imperfect Accomplishment: The Fo Guang Shan Short Term Monastic Retreat and Ethical Pedagogy in Humanistic Buddhism," *Cultural Anthropology*, 34, no. 3 (2014): 330.
43. See a global interactive map of FGS temples. Available online: <https://www.ishb-uwest.org/mapping-fgs>, and <https://londonfgs.org.uk/fo-guang-shan>.
44. Shi, "Buddhist Merit," 168.
45. Jens Reinke, "The Buddha in Bronkhorstspruit: The Transnational Spread of the Taiwanese Buddhist Order Fo Guang Shan to South Africa," *Contemporary Buddhism*, 21, no. 1–2 (2020): 15–32.
46. Reinke, "The Buddha," 5 and Reinke, "Mapping Modern Mahayana," 42. See also, Chandler, 'Establishing a Pure Land', 293.
47. Reinke, "Mapping Modern Mahayana," 42.
48. Ibid.
49. Fo Guang Shan, London Fo Guang Shan Temple, (Leaflet, no date). See also, the official Historic England listing. Available online: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1273611>
50. Ibid.
51. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1273611> (accessed September 8, 2021).
52. <https://asms.uk/> (accessed September 8, 2021).
53. Fo Guang Shan, London Fo Guang Shan Temple, (Leaflet, no date).
54. Fo Guang Shan, London Fo Guang Shan Temple, (Leaflet, no date). See also, the brief history provided in an online article by Patrick De Vries, "Documenting an Urban Temple: Fo Guang Shan London". *Buddhist Door Global* (2019). Available online: <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/documenting-an-urban-temple-fo-guang-shan-london> (accessed November 20, 2022).
55. <https://londonfgs.org.uk/about-us> (accessed September 8, 2021).
56. A *rupa* (Pali/Sanskrit) is a statue of a Buddha. It can refer to the historical Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama), or Buddhas such as Bhaisajyaguru (the Medicine Buddha) or Amitabha Buddha (the Buddha of the Pure Land).
57. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0cH9eviXew>. Last Accessed, 8th September 2021.
58. Ibid
59. Reinke, "The Buddha in Bronkhorstspruit," 5.
60. <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/fo-guang-shan-temple-wins-national-lottery-support> (accessed September 8, 2021).
61. Hsing Yun, *Building Connections: Buddhism and Architecture* (Oxford: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, 2006). 8: 1–12.
62. Hsing Yun, 'Building Connections', 16.
63. "Dharma Talks" mean speeches and discussions of a Buddhist nature, which could be drawing on scriptural or practice teachings and interpretations about the Buddhas or other teachers and Masters.
64. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/theydon-bois/> (accessed September 9, 2021), see also De Vries, "Documenting an Urban Temple," online, and Jonathan Mair, "Fo Guang Shan Buddhism and Ethical Conversations Across Borders: 'Sowing Seeds of Affinity,'" *COLLeGIUM* 15 (2014): 80.
65. De Vries, "Documenting an Urban Temple," online. See also Reinke, 'The Buddha', 15.
66. To find out more about the Historic England project, see the project report online: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/survey-of-buddhist-buildings-in-england/buddhist-buildings/> (accessed September 10, 2021). A blog post we wrote on Fo Guang Shan as part of this project can be found here: <https://buildingbuddhism.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/a-taiwanese-temple-on-oxford-street-fo-guang-shan-london/> (accessed September 15, 2021).
67. This esthetic pressure has also been noted by a Thai community in England, who initially occupied a repurposed space, but then felt they needed to construct a more traditional looking

- temple (see, Starkey and Tomalin, 'Building Buddhism in England').
68. See also, Mair, "Ethical Conversations," 80.
  69. Ibid.
  70. Ibid.
  71. Edward Irons, "Under the Gaze of the Buddha Mega-Statue: Commodification and Humanistic Buddhism in Fo Guang Shan," *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* 18 (2020): 113.
  72. Becky Francis, Ada Mau, and Louise Archer, "The construction of British Chinese Educational Success: Exploring the Shifting Discourses in Educational Debate, and Their Effects," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43, no. 14 (2017): 2331–2345.
  73. Mary Pang and Agnes Lau, "The Chinese in Britain: Working Towards Success?" *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 9, no. 5 (1998): 862.
  74. Chandler, "Establishing a Pure Land," 71, 10, 118.
  75. Chandler, "Establishing a Pure Land," 98. See also Mair "Ethical Conversations," 75–77.
  76. Reinke, "The Buddha of Bronkhorstspuit," 5.
  77. Lina Verchery, "The Woodenfish Programme: Fo Guang Shan, Canadian Youth, and a New Generation of Buddhist Missionaries," in *Wild Geese: Buddhism in Canada*, eds. John Harding, Victor Sogen Hori, and Alexander Soucy (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 214.
  78. <http://foguanguddhism.blogspot.com/2015/09/localization-of-humanistic-buddhism-at.html> (accessed September 15, 2021).
  79. Reinke, "Sacred Secularities," 343.
  80. Andrew P. Davidson and Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng, "Introduction: Diasporic Memories and Identities". In *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora: Memories, Identities and Belongings*, eds. Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng and Andrew P. Davidson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 9.
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