Fo Guang Shan (FGS), a transnational Buddhist movement in the Chinese Mahāyāna tradition, has grown rapidly in the last fifty years to become a global network of close to 180 branch temples. For almost thirty years, FGS Oceania has invested heavily in the Buddha’s Birthday Festival annually in the form of weekend-long festivals in public spaces across Australia and New Zealand, involving months of planning and thousands of volunteers to welcome tens of thousands of visitors. FGS Oceania served as an incubator, exporter, and importer of innovations to make the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha accessible to the public through these festivals. Here, we map the flows of such innovations among the headquarters in Taiwan, the Oceanic branches, and other regional headquarters to examine the dynamics of organisational learning that drive these innovations. Using a system of systems model, we conclude that such flows were enabled by FGS’ culture of innovation and the independent yet collaborative nature of its transregional network.

Keywords: innovation, Buddha’s birthday, Humanistic Buddhism, Fo Guang Shan, Oceania, system of systems

This is the second of a series of five seminars in the ‘Buddhism in the Sea of Islands’ webinar series that examine transnational flows and counterflows of Buddhism in Pacific contexts. To stay updated with information on the webinar series and related events please visit: https://www.nantien.edu.au/buddhism-in-the-sea-of-islands-webinar-series/

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