

Inclusive Spirituality: The Bodhisattva Kuan-yin as Moral Exemplar and Self-Cultivation in a Malaysian Dharma House

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Abstrak

Based on an ethnographic study of a lay Buddhist organization in contemporary Malaysia called the Kuan-yin Contemplative Order (KYCO), this paper looks into the inclusive spiritualism KYCO engenders by situating the organization and the religious universalism from which it emerges in the cultural and historical context of “redemptive societies”—a religious tradition that was established during the late imperial era of China and exploded during the early twentieth century into the cities and spread to Southeast Asia. While the ongoing racial politics and simmering religious tensions in Malaysia limit what followers of KYCO can realistically hope to achieve in terms of realizing a more peaceful and equitable existence, these perennial issues and challenges do not stop them from pursuing the ideals of the Bodhisattva—one who out of compassion delays her/his own salvation until all others have been saved from suffering.