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## Teaching Dharma, Grooming Sangha: The Buddhist College of Singapore

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Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia, Volume 24, Number 1,  
April 2009, pp. 122-138 (Article)

Published by ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute



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## *Research Notes and Comments*

### **Teaching Dharma, Grooming Sangha: The Buddhist College of Singapore**

Jack Meng Tat CHIA

This article is a preliminary observation of the recently established Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS). It seeks to propose, building on Kuah Khun Eng's notion of "Reformist Buddhism", that the college can be seen as a product of the Reformist Buddhist movement in Singapore. By positioning the BCS within this larger context of Reformist Buddhist movement, this article argues that Reformist Buddhism has legitimized the process of rationalization and bureaucratization of the Buddhist institutions in the country. This has, to a large extent, contributed to the organizational and educational structure of the BCS.

**Keywords:** Buddhist College of Singapore, Reformist Buddhism, religious education, seminary, Singapore.

#### Introduction

13 September 2006 marks the official opening of the Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS, 新加坡佛学院). Over one thousand Sangha members and laity from Singapore and overseas attended this significant event. The opening ceremony held at the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS, 光明山普觉禅寺) was graced by the presence of Khaw Boon Wan (许文远), the Minister for Health of Singapore; Zhang Yun (张云), the Chinese Ambassador to Singapore; and Ven. Sheng Hui (圣辉), the Vice-Chairman of the China Buddhist Association (中国佛教协会). In his opening address, Ven. Kwang Sheng (广声),<sup>1</sup> the Rector of the BCS, pointed out the

importance of “grooming members of the Sangha community.” He emphasized the “strategic geographical location of Singapore” and hoped that it “can serve as an advantage for the BCS to develop high quality bilingual Buddhist talents for the benefit of Chinese Buddhism in Southeast Asia” (KMSPKS 2007, p. 31). Established by the Singapore Buddhist Federation (SBF) and administrated by the KMSPKS, the BCS is Singapore’s first Chinese Mahayana Buddhist college.

This article is a preliminary observation of the recently established BCS. It seeks to propose, building on Kuan Khun Eng’s notion of “Reformist Buddhism”, that the college can be seen as a product of the Reformist Buddhist movement in Singapore. By positioning the BCS within this larger context of Reformist Buddhist movement, this article argues that Reformist Buddhism has legitimized the process of rationalization and bureaucratization of Buddhist institutions in the country. This has, to a large extent, contributed to the organizational and educational structure of the BCS. First, I will discuss the concept of “Reformist Buddhism” and its relevance as a framework for this study. I then present a concise historical background of Buddhism in Singapore and the recent transition towards Reformist Buddhism to provide the context for this study. Finally, I discuss the origins, structure, challenges and future plans of the BCS, and conclude that the college is an excellent case study to demonstrate the rise of Reformist Buddhism in Singapore.

The data is drawn from several sources. One is the in-depth semi-structured interview conducted with Ven. Chuan Cheng (传诚), the Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies and College Advisor to the Management Board of the BCS. Ven. Chuan Cheng was born in Sichuan, China, and was ordained in 1991. He received his early Buddhist education at the Minnan Buddhist College (闽南佛学院) in Xiamen, China. Between 2000 and 2005, Ven. Chuan Cheng completed his M.A. in Indian Religions and Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He became a resident monk at KMSPKS in 2005 and was appointed the Dean of Academic Affairs of BCS from 2005 to

2008. Besides the interview, Ven. Chuan Cheng showed me around the college and allowed me to interact with some of his students. Another source of data is the BCS official website and its online forum. The website contains basic information of the college and its faculty members, course syllabus, library resources, photographs, and speeches. A third data source is the Buddhist periodicals, which provide regular advertisements, news coverage, photographs and reports on the BCS.

### Theoretical Considerations: Reformist Buddhism

Scholars and Buddhologists have started to coin the term “Reformist Buddhism” (or “Reform Buddhism”; “Protestant Buddhism”) in their research as early as the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, this concept has become popularized in the study of the development of Buddhism in various countries. Several scholars have employed this concept to examine the history and development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Gombrich 1990, Bond 1992, Seneviratne 1999, Keown 2003). Damien Keown (2003, p. 223), for instance, suggests that the rise of “Protestant Buddhism” in Sri Lanka has “its roots in the latter half of the 19th century and [was] caused by two sets of historical conditions: the activities of the Protestant missionaries and the close contact with modern knowledge and technologies of the West.” This concept of “Reformist Buddhism” has also been widely used by scholars looking at Buddhism in Western countries (Yoo 1996, Baumann 2001).

The concept of “Reformist Buddhism” was first applied to the study of Buddhism in the Singapore context by Kuah Khun Eng in her Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Protestant Buddhism in Singapore: Religious Modernization from a Longer Perspective” (1988). It was subsequently published as *State, Society and Religious Engineering: Towards a Reformist Buddhism* in Singapore (2003). Kuah (2003, p. 1) examines the “process of ‘Buddhification’ of the Chinese religious syncretism and a movement towards Reformist Buddhism within the Chinese community where 65 per cent of the Buddhists

now regard themselves as Reformist Buddhists.” She contends that “the agents responsible for transforming the religious landscape of the Singapore Chinese include the Singapore state, the Buddhist Sangha and the Reformist Buddhist within the community” (ibid.). In the process of religious modernization, the state, the Sangha members and the laity have engaged in various strategies to hasten the process of change. While each group modernizes Buddhism according to its own agenda, they have all worked towards a common goal of promoting Reformist Buddhism as a modern religion in Singapore (Kuah 2003, p. 217).

Kuah’s notion of “Reformist Buddhism” is especially relevant for this study. Extending her concept to the study of the BCS deepens my analytic focus in three ways. First, it highlights how the case of BCS fits into the broader context of the Reformist Buddhist movement that is gathering momentum in Singapore. Second, as Reformist Buddhism has legitimized the process of rationalization and bureaucratization at the religious level, this process is very much in parallel with both the organizational structure and educational focus of the college (Kuah 2003, p. 243). The BCS is therefore an attempt by the Singapore Buddhist community to equip young Sangha members with modern rational Buddhist education to meet the needs of the present-day Reformist Buddhist movement. Finally, the BCS has contributed to an increase in Buddhist networking among the Buddhist groups at local, national, regional and even international levels, and has become a part of the growing trend towards Buddhist ecumenism (Kuah 2003, pp. 289–92).

### Setting the Context: Buddhism in Singapore

Following the establishment of Singapore as a British colony in 1819, multitudes of Chinese migrants flooded the island in search of employment and business opportunities. These Chinese migrants brought along with them their religious beliefs and practices to Singapore. Most of the early Chinese migrants practiced Chinese syncretic religions consisting of Buddhist, Confucianist, and Taoist

elements (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一; Shi 1997, pp. 30–56). To cater to the spiritual needs of the migrants, Chinese Buddhist monks migrated to Singapore and resided in Chinese syncretic temples such as Thian Hock Keng (天福宮) and Hong San See (鳳山寺). These monks were mainly concerned with chanting and performing rituals (*jingchan fashi* 经忏法事) and were not interested in propagating the Dharma.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, several prominent Buddhist monks from China came to Singapore for various reasons. While some were on transit in their pilgrimages to India and Sri Lanka, others on their visits to other parts of Southeast Asia made a stopover in Singapore. Some Chinese monks were also invited to Singapore to give Dharma talks to the migrant community and they stayed on to become spiritual advisors of the local temples (Ong 2005, p. 36). To meet the needs of the growing number of Buddhists in Singapore, monasteries were established as places of worship and residence for the migrant monks. Nevertheless, there were no formal monastic schools in Singapore to train Sangha members. For this reason, an aspiring monk or nun would have to travel to Taiwan, Thailand or Sri Lanka to receive Buddhist education and monastic training (Kuah 2003, p. 131).

In her 1976 study, Vivienne Wee (1997, p. 130) points out that despite about 50 per cent of the Singaporean population declaring themselves as “Buddhists” and using a single religious label, they do not share a unitary religion. She argues that “‘Buddhist’ systems as practiced in Singapore must be considered in the larger context of Chinese religious behaviour” (Wee 1997, p. 131). Therefore, for a significant number of Singaporean “Buddhists”, “Buddhism” actually refers to Chinese syncretic religions consisting of Buddhist, Confucianist, and Taoist elements (Wee 1997, p. 131). However, “Buddhism” as a religious phenomenon cannot be simply regarded as Chinese syncretic religions. Instead, Wee (1997, p. 132) maintains that “Singapore ‘Buddhism’ can only be understood in a dialectic framework: it is on the one hand ‘Buddhism’ as Canonical Buddhism

and on the other hand ‘Buddhism’ as Chinese Religion.” From as early as the Chinese migration to Singapore in the nineteenth and early twentieth century right up to Wee’s research published in the 1970s, “Buddhism” in Singapore had very much been an all-inclusive religion, embracing both Canonical Buddhist teachings and Chinese syncretic religious practices (Chia and Chee 2008, pp. 2–3).

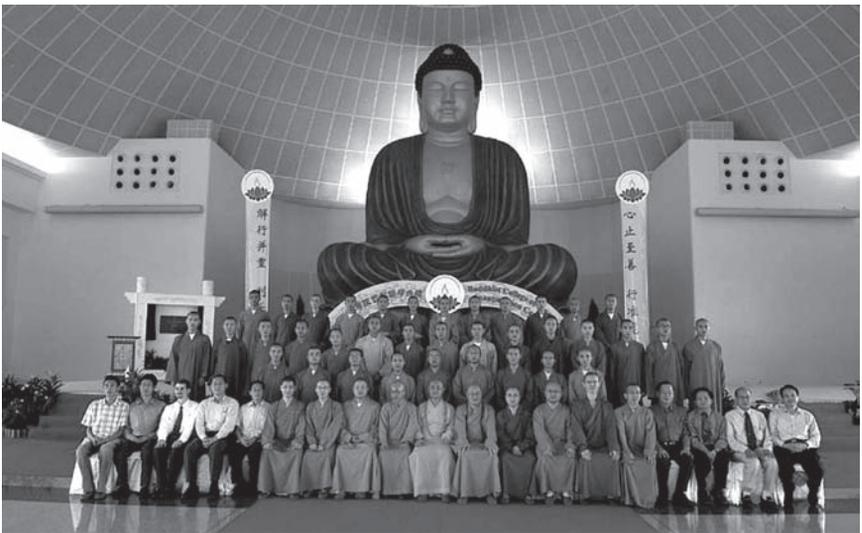
In recent years, a changing socio-political and socio-economic environment in Singapore has forced Buddhism to change and cater to the modern needs of the believers, the society and the state. While the Singapore state, the Sangha community and the Reformist Buddhists within the Chinese community are the major agents responsible for the rise of Reformist Buddhism, Christian evangelists, with their “aggressive proselytisation and rapid conversion rate, serve as a catalyst to hasten religious change within the Chinese community” (Kuah 2003, p. 1). Buddhism in Singapore has in recent times shifted from its earlier all-inclusive syncretic nature to a modern rational belief that answers “contemporary needs” and contributes to the “socio-cultural and welfare aspects of the society” (Kuah 2003, p. 217).

Kuah (2003, p. 233) suggests that the activities of the Reformist Buddhists can be categorized into the religious and the main secular spheres. Within the religious domain, there are six main types of activities, namely: “propagating Buddhist scriptural knowledge to the public; encouraging general participation; nurturing a group of committed Reformist Buddhists; performing missionary work and engaging in subtle proselytisation; putting faith into real life practice and action; and legitimizing Vesak day as a public holiday.” Within the secular domain, “Reformist Buddhists support numerous socio-cultural and welfare activities” (Kuah 2003, p. 233). A group of highly educated and fully trained Sangha is therefore needed to cater to the needs of the Reformist Buddhists in Singapore. It is in this context that the BCS is founded to train young members of the Sangha and groom them into future leaders of the Buddhist community.

## The Buddhist College of Singapore

The first Buddhist college in Singapore is probably the Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore (BPCS) established by the Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple in 1994. The BPCS provides “tertiary education in Buddhist Studies leading to the award of Diploma, BA, MA and PhD degrees of the Buddhist & Pali University of Sri Lanka” (Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple 2007). However, unlike the BPCS, which is a Buddhist college that specializes in Theravada Buddhism and allows any Buddhist — be it Sangha members or laity — to be enrolled in the college, the BCS is founded as the first college in Singapore that specializes in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and only accepts Sangha members as its students. According to Ven. Chuan Cheng (Shi 2007), the BCS is established to: fulfill the wishes of the late Venerables Hong Choon (宏船), Siong Khye (常凯), Kong Hiap (广洽), and Yen Pei (演培); enhance the qualities and cultivations of Sangha and laity; and develop bilingual Sangha members skilled in the areas of

**Figure 1**  
Faculty Members and Students from the BCS



*Source:* Photo courtesy of BCS.

Dharma propagation, management and research. The BCS has four primary objectives: first, to develop talents in monastery and temple management; second, to train teachers for Buddhist colleges; third, to foster researchers in Buddhist Studies; and fourth, to nurture Dharma propagators.

#### i) Origins

The origins of the BCS can be traced back to 2004, when Ven. Kwang Sheng, the Abbot of KMSPKS, saw the need to establish a Buddhist studies and monastic training college for the Sangha. He proposed his idea to Ven. Wai Yim (惟严), the then President of the SBF. Ven. Kwang Sheng's idea was welcomed and accepted by other Buddhist leaders in the SBF. In early 2005, he started to gather a few disciples to make preparations to set up the college. Subsequently, the BCS received approval from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to be established as a religious college in Singapore.<sup>3</sup> Ven. Chuan Xiang (传祥), who completed his Ph.D. at the University of the West, returned to Singapore for about half a year to assist Ven. Kwang Sheng in preparing for the opening of the BCS. He started to advertise the establishment of the college in hope of recruiting students. The recruitment advertisement first appeared in the August 2005 issue of *Nanyang Buddhist*, the SBF's monthly periodical. Around that time, Ven. Chuan Cheng completed his Ph.D. in London and came over to Singapore to help with the setting up of the college. Subsequently, he succeeded Ven. Chuan Xiang's position when the latter left the college and returned to the United States for his postdoctoral research.

At that time, there were only two staff in the BCS, Ven. Chuan Cheng and his senior, Ven. Chuan Xian (传显). Due to the shortage of teaching staff, Ven. Chuan Cheng had to postpone the commencement of the course. He started to work out plans for the college and advertised the college in major Buddhist periodicals and websites so as to recruit faculty members and students. His effort paid off when the college hired three permanent teaching staff in 2006. Subsequently, the first batch of students was officially enrolled and

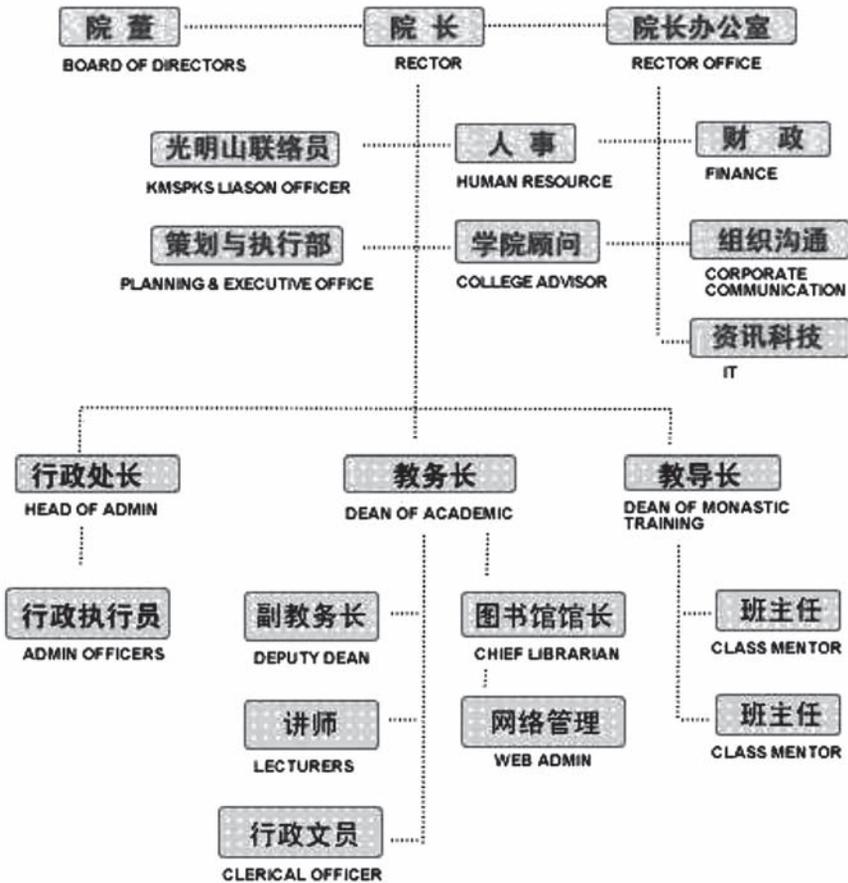
commenced their studies in August 2006. The lessons are held at the Dharma Hall of KMSPKS. The college shares the library facilities of KMSPKS that is located on the second floor of the Dharma Hall. The administrative office, staff rooms, and computer laboratory are situated at the Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall.

As the concept of “Reformist Buddhism” is a term that is more commonly used by academics rather than the Singaporean Buddhist community in general, Ven. Chuan Cheng points out that it is likely that Ven. Kwang Sheng was neither aware of the concept nor regard the BCS as part of the Reformist Buddhist movement when he first started out with the idea of having a Buddhist college in Singapore (Shi 2007). Nevertheless, it is not difficult to notice that the BCS is very much ideologically, structurally, and educationally in line with the characteristics of Reformist Buddhism.

#### ii) Organizational and Academic Structure

The BCS adopts a highly systematic organizational structure (see Figure 2). At the apex is Ven. Kwang Sheng, the Rector of the college. However, because the Venerable concurrently holds two other senior appointments — President of the SBF and Abbot of KMSPKS — he only oversees the administration of the college and is hardly involved in the day-to-day operations. Directly under the Rector is Ven. Chuan Guan (传观), the Chief Operations Officer (COO). The COO heads the operations of the BCS and leads the three departments in the college. The three departments in BCS are the Administrative Department, Academic Department, and Monastic Training Department (BCS 2008*a*). The Administrative Department is in charge of the administration, facilities management, finance matter, human resource, and public affairs. The Academic Department is responsible for issues concerning curriculum planning, research, academic board, cultural affairs, and the library. The teaching staff at the college falls under this department. The Monastic Training Department is responsible for the discipline, welfare, and extra-curricular programmes, and offers counseling for the students. As such, it is headed by a senior monk (Shi 2007).

Figure 2  
Organizational Structure of the BCS.



Source: BCS, 2008a (reproduced with permission)

Kuah (2003, p. 95) suggests that the old temple structure that served the early Chinese community is no longer regarded an appropriate institution in contemporary Singapore society. In a modern society, all institutional activities are therefore “rationalized and made accountable under an auditing system put in place by the government.” Buddhist monasteries and temples are also subjected

to this bureaucratizing process and have developed into bureaucratic organizations with a high degree of differentiation in administrative practice (Kuah 2003, p. 96). This bureaucratization of the monasteries and temples has in turn resulted in a higher degree of “formalization” (Kuah 2003, p. 101). State policy does have an effect on the organizational structure of the Buddhist monasteries and temples in general and the BCS in particular. Therefore, like any other Buddhist organization that has to undergo the process of bureaucratization, the BCS as an approved religious educational institution is subjected to the rules and regulations laid down by the MOE.

The academic programme structure of the BCS is laid out by the Academic Department. There are currently two education tracks: the Dharma propagation and management track, and the academic research track. In addition, students enrolled into the BCS can choose to pursue their five-year undergraduate studies either in the English or Chinese language stream (BCS 2008*b*).<sup>4</sup> The undergraduate programme is basically divided into six broad categories: moral and disciplinary codes, Buddhist history, Buddhist systems of thought, canonical studies, cultural studies, and academic and life skills. Therefore, students are given a comprehensive education in Buddhist Studies covering areas including Buddhist doctrines, art, history, literature, and philosophy. They are also given training in English and classical Chinese language, basic computer knowledge, administrative and managerial skills, and even debate and public speaking (Shi 2007).

The course structure of the BCS demonstrates a highly complex and systematic curriculum for teaching young members of the Sangha, thus inculcating them with modern and rational Buddhist education. If Reformist Buddhism legitimizes the process of rationalization at the religious level, then Sangha members would certainly need to acquire such complex and rationalized education to meet the challenges of the religious changes, and cater to the contemporary needs of the believers (Kuah 2003, p. 243).

There are currently fourteen academic staff in the BCS consisting of both Sangha members and laity from Singapore and abroad. Most

of them have Ph.D.s from reputable universities around the world (BCS 2008*e*). While the Sangha teachers are in charge of teaching areas concerning the doctrinal and scriptural aspects of Buddhism, the lay teachers are responsible for teaching the history, literature, and language courses. As Ven. Chuan Cheng (Shi 2007) pointed out, the BCS constantly emphasizes the need to recruit high quality teaching staff so as to provide the best education for its students. A team of highly trained faculty members is therefore essential, and plays a crucial role in training the students in the rational and academic understanding of Buddhism, to meet the needs of the Reformist Buddhist movement today.

Students are selected and enrolled at the BCS after passing a stringent examination and an interview conducted by the teaching staff. According to the latest recruitment advertisement, eligible applicants must be: first, an ordained monk between the age of eighteen to thirty-five; second, ordained for at least a year; third, have attended high school education or its equivalent; fourth, of good health and with no disabilities; and finally, no criminal record. The BCS provides a full tuition waiver and a monthly stipend, and pays for the air ticket, food, accommodation, and course materials required by the students (BCS 2008*f*). Ven. Chuan Cheng (Shi 2007) mentioned that “the well-furnished facilities such as the computer rooms and living quarters, monthly allowance, excellent teaching faculty and comprehensive library resources are the main factors that attracted the students to study in the BCS.”

By recruiting teaching staff and students both locally and overseas, the BCS has contributed to an increase in religious networking among the Buddhist groups at the local, national, regional, and even international levels (Kuah 2003, p. 291). This allows Buddhist scholars and students to exchange ideas and participate in Buddhist academic activities. In addition, it certainly helps to build a “sense of *communitas*” between Buddhists in Singapore and other parts of the world. Thus, this can be regarded as a part of the “growing trend towards Buddhist ecumenism” (Kuah 2003, p. 291).

### iii) Challenges and Future Plans

One of the key challenges faced by the college is the regulations set by the MOE. As an approved religious college, the BCS is subjected to the standardized instructions and procedures laid down by the authorities. Ven. Chuan Cheng, for instance, pointed out that when the BCS decided to change its course structure from the original four years to five years, they had to write in to the MOE and a lot of paperwork was generated to justify the amendment. However, given the bureaucratization and increasing “formalization” of Buddhist monasteries and temples (Kuah 2003, p. 101), such bureaucratic practices and procedures are unavoidable.

Other challenges faced by the BCS are the recruitment of students in competition with better-known international Buddhist colleges and universities, and the institution of exclusive library facilities. At the same time, the BCS is planning for a new 35 million college campus in KMSPKS, which would feature state-of-the-art facilities (Huo 2006, p. 4). Finally, the BCS plans to start a graduate programme that would offer a research Masters programme in areas such as the history of Buddhism, scriptural studies, Buddhist ethics, Buddhist arts, Dun Huang studies, and engaged Buddhism (Shi 2007).

### Concluding Remarks

This article has suggested that the BCS is a product of Reformist Buddhism in Singapore. The Reformist Buddhist movement has legitimized the process of bureaucratization and rationalization of the Buddhist institutions in the country, and this process can very much be illustrated in the case study of the BCS. Organizationally, the BCS, approved by the MOE, adopts a highly bureaucratic structure styled after modern colleges and universities. Educationally, the college has taken on a highly complex, rational and systematic academic structure, and has a team of highly trained teaching staff with Ph.D. and M.A. degrees. By extending its recruitment of teaching staff and students both locally and overseas, the BCS has very much contributed to the increase in transnational Buddhist

Figure 3  
BCS Recruitment Poster



## 新加坡佛学院招生简章 BCS Admission Exercise

(英文部 | 中文部 English and Chinese Course)

- 1 本院宗旨：培养一批精通中、英双语，有能力从事弘法管理和学术研究的僧伽人才，为传统佛教的可持续性或提供人力资源。  
Objective: To nurture members of the Sangha to be proficient in the English and Chinese Languages as well as to have the ability to promulgate Buddhism, conduct academic research and manage monastic matters, so as to ensure the continual development of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism.
- 2 学制及学习内容 Course Structure and Curriculum:
  - 2.1 英文部：五年全日制学习——两年预科主攻英语，三年本科全英文攻读以南传佛教为主的学士学位课程，修满规定学分后，学生将获颁新加坡三巴旺拉惹大学学士学位文凭。  
English Course: Full time 5-year course, with 2 foundational years focusing on developing core English Language skills, followed by a 3-year undergraduate programme specializing in Theravada Buddhism conducted in English. Upon earning the required credits, students will be awarded a Bachelor of Arts' degree by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
  - 2.2 中文部：五年全日制学习——一年预科，四年本科全中文佛教学课程，修满规定学分后，学生将获颁泰国拉拢功道佛大学学士学位文凭。  
Chinese Course: Full time 5-year course, with 1 foundational year, followed by a 4-year undergraduate programme in Buddhism conducted in Chinese. Upon earning the required credits, students will be awarded a Bachelor of Arts' degree by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
- 3 师资力量：本院拥有一支强大和资深的教学队伍，其中教授佛学科目的教师，都是获得硕士/博士学位，精通佛法的比丘和居士。  
Teaching Staff: BCS has a well-established and experienced teaching team, especially our Buddhist lecturers, which consist of both Sangha members and lay-people with either Masters' Degree or PhD qualifications.
- 4 生活待遇：学院将提供免费食宿、学习及生活的基本用品，并在学习期间每月发一笔生活费。  
Benefits: All meals, accommodation and daily necessities will be provided by the college. Students will also receive a monthly allowance during their period of study at BCS.
- 5 毕业去向：原则上，毕业生回原寺院。有志于从事佛学研究的毕业生，可以向本校提出申请，受助国外深造。  
Post Graduation Outlook: Students shall return to their monasteries upon graduation. However, graduates who are interested to engage in further academic research may apply to the college for assistance to further their studies overseas.
- 6 报考资格 Application Pre-requirements:
  - 6.1 不限国籍，年龄为18至35岁的佛教徒。  
Unlimited nationality, age 18 - 35 of all nationalities.
  - 6.2 信仰虔诚，出家一年以上，Devout and had been ordained for at least 1 year.
  - 6.3 具有高中或同等学历（如高级文凭、中文初中毕业或三年制学院）。  
Possess at least high school or equivalent qualifications (e.g. A-levels, vocational college or junior high graduate plus 3 years' education at a Buddhist College).
  - 6.4 身体健康，五官端正，无残（疾）疾和传染病。  
Healthy, no deformities, and no visible or hidden disabilities and infectious diseases.
  - 6.5 无犯罪记录，No criminal record.
- 7 报考程序 Registration Procedures:
  - 7.1 即日起接受报名，截止日期为2009年2月10日，以邮戳为准。  
The closing date for all applications is 10 February 2009.
  - 7.2 在线索取或从网上www.bcs.edu.sg下载《报名表》，如实填写，字迹工整。请务必提供有效电话号码和电子邮件地址，以便及时联络。  
Interested parties may wish to request for the application form or download it from our website www.bcs.edu.sg. Application forms should be completed accordingly and legibly. Please provide a valid contact number and/or email address.
  - 7.3 把填好的《报名表》连同下列材料一同寄至本院注册部  
Please submit the completed application form together with the following materials to the Registrar's Office:
    - a. 两封推荐信，可由报考者的师父、常住寺院的住持/师长、曾就读佛学院的师兄/师姐提供。  
Two different referral letters from either the applicant's Master, the Abbot / senior monks at the applicant's current Monastery or former Venerables / Lecturers who had previously taught the applicant.
    - b. 已获得的最高学历证书和成绩单的复印件。  
Photocopy of the latest academic transcript and certificate attained by the applicant.

↑ 造就高素质  
佛教接班人的摇篮

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面向佛教界，  
服务全人类！



- c. 身份证和/或护照的复印件。  
Photocopy of Personal Identification card and/or passport.
- d. 标准(4寸)半身免冠照片4张，颜色不限。  
Four recent passport-sized photographs (2" x 2 inches) of the front profile with no headwear.
- e. 最近以上医院体检表(包括血检、肝化、胸片)。  
Medical check-up form (inclusive of blood test, liver test, chest X-ray) from a Government-registered medical institution.

8 录取程序和名额 Admission Procedures and Intake:

- 8.1 中、英文班各招收200名学员。  
Only 200 students will be selected for each course.
- 8.2 统一考试，择优录取。  
Applicants will be selected based on the results of the entrance examination.
- 8.3 考试科目：英文部考中高级英语；中文部考佛学、语文和初级英语，并统一面试。  
Scope of Examination: Interviews and examinations for both courses will be conducted at the same time. English course applicants will sit for an Intermediate English Language examination while Chinese course applicants will sit for 3 examinations: Buddhism, Chinese Linguistic Skills (both conducted in Chinese) and Elementary English Language Examination.
- 8.4 就录取的学员，签订就读协议。  
The college will apply for student visas and permits on behalf of all selected applicants.
- 8.5 录取结果将通过电话、电子邮件和本院网站同时通知，敬请留意。  
Selection results will be announced via telephone, email and the college website.
- 8.6 根据本国移民厅政策，外籍学员需交担保金，本院为学员承担一半，另一半由学员自行承担，金额与支付办法，请查阅本院网站——  
<http://www.bcs.edu.sg/forum/index.php/topic,104.0.html>  
According to the policy stipulated by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore (ICA), all foreign students are required to pay a security deposit. The student shall bear half of the amount, while the remainder will be subsidised by the college. Please visit the college website (<http://www.bcs.edu.sg/forum/index.php/topic,104.0.html>) for more details on the deposit amount and payment method.

9 录取被录取，必须在2009年8月17日报到。  
Successful applicants are required to report to the college by 17 August 2009.

10 开课日期 Start of Semester: 2009年8月31日

11 预知详情，请访问本院网站的“招生”栏目，或来电话咨询。  
For more information, you may visit the "Student Recruitment" section at the college website or contact us in writing / via telephone.

注意：本院只负责为学生来新入学和毕业离校的单程机票。  
Note: BCS shall provide one-way air tickets only for freshmen and graduates.

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networks among Buddhists at the local, national, regional and international levels, and has become a part of the growing trend towards Buddhist ecumenism.

Over the next few years, we will see more student monks graduating from the BCS to either become leaders in their religious community or continue with their postgraduate studies. Just as Kuah (2003, p. 242) suggests that the full effects of Reformist Buddhism within Singapore society in general and the Chinese community in particular can only be realized with the passage of time, the significance and impact of the BCS on the Reformist Buddhist movement can perhaps only be measured in time to come.

## NOTES

Chinese names and terms are transliterated by the pinyin system. However, commonly used names and terms are romanized according to the original spelling that appeared in the texts. Chinese Buddhist monks have the word *Fashi* (Venerable) following their name. To this standard usage, I add “Ven.” (Venerable) preceding the name of a monk to distinguish him from a layperson. An earlier version of this article was presented at “The Sacred in a Global City: Symposium on Religion in Singapore”, 10 March 2007. I am grateful to Ven. Chuan Cheng, Thomas DuBois, Guo Jing Yu, Hui Yew-Foong, Pattana Kitiarsa, Kuah Khun Eng, Ven. Kwang Sheng, Gina Phang, Melissa Sim, Soh Gek Han, Jackie Yoong, and an anonymous reviewer for their assistance and many helpful suggestions. All errors and inaccuracies are mine.

1. Ven. Kwang Sheng is also the President of the Singapore Buddhist Federation and Abbot of the KMSPKS.
2. See, for instance, Smith (1968); Tambiah (1973); and Malalgoda (1977).
3. According to Ven. Chuan Cheng, while the BCS has received an “approval” from the MOE, he was told that the college does not need to be “officially registered”. Therefore, the college is regarded by the ministry as an “approved religious college”. Nevertheless, as an approved college, the BCS has to abide by the rules and regulations set by the MOE.
4. For detailed curriculum of the programme, see BCS (2008c; 2008d).

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