

# Introducing the Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism

To have value, religion must respond to the needs of the world. Buddhism, which spans over two thousand six hundred years and has spread worldwide, has become a major global religion. The doctrines of Buddhism foreground the concepts of dependent origination, the interconnection of all things, the fundamental equality of all sentient beings, and the imperative to practice loving-kindness toward all creatures.

The teachings of the Buddha have been recorded, interpreted, and translated by many generations of Buddhist disciples and teachers. These teachings cannot be limited to their literal, word-for-word expression in the scriptures; rather, they must be understood within the larger context of the history of Buddhism itself. This entails distilling the core teachings and considering their significance and influence within historical and cultural frameworks. The study of Buddhist history and the study of contemporary Buddhism, in other words, must proceed in parallel.

The academic community has long focused on the historical aspects of Buddhism, including Buddhist history, philosophy, philology, literature, ritual, monastic codes, and art, resulting in a rich body of research. Building on this foundation, the modern field of Buddhist studies must expand its understanding of Buddhism in contemporary society. As a living tradition, Buddhism exists not only in the past but also in the present. Buddhism's historical and contemporary forms, thus, are not separate but continuous, like a flowing river. To understand the adaptations of contemporary Buddhism, one must

understand Buddhist history; to comprehend Buddhist history, one must pay attention to its contemporary forms. Scholarship contributes to a better understanding of this ancient world civilization known as Buddhism, and helps us move toward a compassionate future.

With this in mind, we initiated the Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series on Contemporary Buddhism. With the sponsorship of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, we invited distinguished scholars such as Professors Stephen Teiser and Jonathan Gold from Princeton University, Professor Eugene Wang from Harvard University, Professor Bernard Faure from Columbia University, Professor Song Wang from Peking University, Professors Imre Galambos and Noga Ganany from the University of Cambridge, and Professors Ulrike Roesler and Matthew Orsborn from the University of Oxford to join us in launching the lecture series. Named in honour of Venerable Cheng Yen and her mentor, Venerable Yinshun—both of whom made outstanding contributions to contemporary Buddhism—the lecture series aims to focus on the study of contemporary Buddhism, including its philosophies and practices, with the goal of linking ancient and contemporary issues.

The Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series on Buddhism officially commenced on September 1, 2021. To date, fourteen lectures have been held. We express our gratitude to our partner institutions: the University of Cambridge, Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Oxford, Princeton University, Peking University, the University of British Columbia, and, as of 2022, the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Inalco) in France. In 2022, we entered the second phase of the project, expanding to become the Yin-Cheng Network for Buddhist Studies. Our activities include an annual lecture and triannual symposium organized by each participating university, the publication of the *Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism* in both Chinese and English, as well as a dedicated website and book series.

It is our hope that by supporting the efforts of scholars in the field, we can advance the study of contemporary Buddhism and explore the long evolution of Buddhist philosophy and practice from ancient to modern times. The academic community is a repository for the wealth and wisdom of human civilization and thought, and has the potential to play a pivotal role in transforming humanity for the better. With reverence, we gaze at the peaks of scholarship with the conviction that each step in the ascent brings us closer to the summit. Just as the teachings and spiritual practices of Venerable Yinshun and

Venerable Cheng Yen inspire us as practitioners to rise toward greater heights, scholars are continually climbing toward the peaks of academic knowledge. Standing on these summits allows us to behold other peaks, and only then can we begin to appreciate the myriad facets of Buddhism as they unfold across time and place. We need not always follow in the footsteps of those who came before; when necessary, we sometimes forge our own path, blazing new trails in the unceasing effort to go beyond.

We look forward to the development of the Yin-Cheng Network for Buddhist Studies, which will help us discover many new summits of scholarly knowledge and contribute to the flourishing of contemporary Buddhism in the world.

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