

Combining Old With New Towards Awakening Society¹

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The consolidation of a modern network society creates a new set of opportunities and challenges in the path to awakening society. Modern society, as a live and active entity, becomes a new subject matter for Buddhism. This results in a vision of society and its dynamics as well as a Dharma practice which contemplates society as a whole and its awakening. A Buddhism for society transcends the individual towards the collective.

In this paper we present results of an ample sociological in-depth study of the organizational forms and practices designed and used by a Tibetan monastic community (Sakya Tashi Ling, STL) in Barcelona (Spain) in order to create and experiment with fresh avenues towards the Awakening of modern society.

We study how this Buddhist organization (STL) experiments with the encounter between old wisdom and modern society, combining ritual with modernity and the past with the present to create a novel approach towards a future social awakening. STL introduces innovative ways to bring spirituality and the dharma to society by using society's communication vehicles and values. To introduce Buddhist values in society, it uses market and consumer products which reach a wide social audience.

STL adopts the form of *Open to Society* as a way to become part of its structure, dynamics and values using modern organizational forms and practices in order to bring spirituality and the Dharma to society at large and its main components: networks and organizations. We will analyze the relational systems making up the ordained community and the dynamic lay sangha as well as those embedding them into society.

This paper also analyzes the effects of this way of interacting and practicing with and within society using the results of a survey of the lay community, along with a survey of visitors to the STL Monastery and a survey of university students as indicators of how society is perceiving and reacting to the new paths.

FROM THE MONASTERY TO SOCIETY:

Mantras and Chill Out. At the end of 2005, the Sakya Tashi Ling Buddhist Monk Community (whose main Monastery is located in the Garraf Natural Park on the outskirts of Barcelona, Spain) released the "Buddhist Monks" CD whose songs are Buddhist mantras wrapped in Chill Out, or as it was defined by the press at the time, "mantras to a pop rhythm." In a few weeks it became a musical hit that flooded the radio waves, music scenes, and dance clubs (in Spain as well as in the rest of the world), and it made the Sakya Tashi Ling Buddhists Monks (STL) very popular. It turned into a media phenomenon, and from then on they have been present in the media (written press, radio,

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TV, Internet). What initially began as a media explosion wound up turning into a social and cultural phenomenon of great magnitude. Buddhism emerges and is made visible to the wider public, and the STL Buddhist Monks become, in Spain at least, the image of modern Buddhism.

The *Buddhist Monks* CD is a novel product and differs from the CDs of mantras sung by monks in the traditional way or New Age music CDs which incorporate complete or partial mantras. *Buddhist Monks* is a product which takes the mantras from the Monastery and brings them to a new public with no prior interest in religion, Buddhism, or spirituality. It is a product especially addressed to youth but also appropriate for a wider public. In addition to making Buddhism very visible in the West, it offers a new vision of Buddhism, the role of monks and of the very concept of the monastery (Baumann, 1994, 1997^a, 1997b; Lenoir, 1999; Prebish and Keown, 2006; Heine y Prebish, 2003).

Chill out adapts to the mantras, and as it wraps them up, it becomes their transmitter. With this transmitter, Buddhism gains access to spaces, times, and population groups to which it had or never would have reached. The format as well as the transmission method exemplarizes a new model of Buddhism that differs from the traditional Buddhism in its methods of transmission and dissemination as well as in its organizational methods and even in its prioritizing of its content, presentation, and role in society. By using the market and consumer products to introduce their values in society, they also westernize their message, in other words, the product (Batchelor, 1994; Coleman, 2001, Prebish and Baumann (eds), 2002). The westernization of the product allows them to reach a wider range of Buddhist followers and essentially non-Buddhists (Tweed, 1998). They are messages for the general population, for society as a whole.

The essence of Buddhism is maintained, accenting the values of happiness, environment, peace and personal development. The message fits perfectly with the post-materialistic values dominant in Western societies (Inglehart, 1997 and 2004). The Western post-materialistic Buddhist model proposed by STL also differs from other Buddhist models (in the West and in the East) in its organizational structures and pragmatism, in the configuration of a wide spiritual community of the faithful, in its link with and insertion in society and in its social role. The STL experience, with this socially open Buddhism, also represents a new manner of Buddhism's entrance and expansion in Spain and in the West.

STL is a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery/Community belonging to the Sakya lineage and the Ngagpa tradition. They practice one of the three main types of Buddhism: the Vajrayana (also known as the Diamond Vehicle or Tantric Buddhism). They see themselves as social monks¹:

- in society, embedded in it...
- for society, working for its benefit...
- and with society, creating a large spiritual community.

Sakya Tashi Ling has two working monasteries in Spain, the main monastery in the Garraf (an open monastery) and a smaller one in Castellón (for retreats and teachings), and one more is being finished in Peru. The community also has two Dharma houses in Spain in Manresa and Cáceres and one in Bolivia, and runs one orphanage in Nepal. The STL main Monastery was created in 1996 transforming an old mansion and estate at top of the Garraf Natural Park near Barcelona and is the headquarters of and from where they direct their Open Buddhism for Society Project. Aimed at spreading happiness, their Open Project rests on four main pillars:

- Meditation and Buddhist Philosophy Teachings (Tantrayana Buddhism)...

- Religious Rituals...
- Social Buddhism: teachings and practice in society as part of a program for happy organizations (health and social care centers, educational institutions and universities, corporations, etc.)...
- and Buddhism for and in everyday life: two music CDs (Buddhist Monks and Live Mantra), a cook book with a Buddhist approach (Cocina para la Felicidad: Cooking for Happiness), a novel (El Camino del Héroe: Hero's Path), a motorcycle helmet with Buddhist instructions, etc.

The main fact that led us to study the STL Buddhist monks was their religious, social, and cultural success in a society not open to religious phenomena, which had traditionally been Catholic, whose public practices were lay and where religion had been relegated to the private sphere. That led us to study the organizational structure used in the Open Buddhism for Society Project and specifically from the point of view of social networks.²

The model put forth by STL is inherently a complex social system in itself. The STL model of how to practice Buddhism and how to be, act and live Buddhism implies an organization open to society which allows for the creation of a large community (Sangha) and the transmission of its westernized and post-materialistic version of Buddhist values to the society at large. Their project of Western Buddhism requires specific organizational structures which guarantee the transmission of Dharma as well as its insertion in society.

In general, the entire project is built, in a greater or lesser degree, through social networks (Barabasi, 2003; Watts, 2003; Buchanan, 2003). Therefore, to adequately understand the organizational structures and the role of this Buddhist organization in society, to understand its success, one has to understand its social networks. The relations—and the networks rising from them—yield a new organizational form which transcend the closed master/disciple relation and allows for the creation of a wide spiritual community and facilitates the insertion into society in addition to generating trust and social legitimacy (Powell and Dimaggio, 1991). The analysis of social networks offers us a novel and appropriate vision to understand these new organizational structures³ (Laumann, E. and F. Pappi, 1976; Scott, 1991; Wasserman, S. and K. Faust, 1994; Wellman, B., 1999; Newman, 2010).

The social system analyzed⁴ is the complete extended community (the Sangha). Within the same Community, two large groups can be identified: the ordained Sangha⁵, consisting of Lamas, monks, nuns, novices, postulants; and the lay Sangha. The unordained part of the Community in the case of STL includes all the faithful of the Community, those following the project and involved in various Dharma study programs and periodically participating in rituals and initiations. Together with the master-disciple learning relationships, it is precisely these practice areas (courses, rituals, initiations)

² All members of the ordained Sangha are Western natives coming from urban areas that surround the Monasteries.

³ The analysis of social networks centers on the relations between the actors, and from these relations social structures are derived where social dynamics, marginalization, power, etc. are analyzed. The Social Networks Analysis is useful for studying the processes of cohesion, creation of groups, identity and articulation of collective action.

⁴ A classic reference study is that carried out by Sampson about the internal networks of a Catholic Monastery (Sampson, 1968).

⁵ To analyze the social system, we use relational information that we obtained through questionnaires administered between January 2008 and December 2009 to the members of the Sangha: 35 members in the ordained Sangha and 200 members of the spiritual community of followers. They were asked about their relations of collaboration, communication and trust among themselves (ordained and non-ordained Sangha) and with people and institutions outside the Community. The statistical analysis and the representation of the information has been carried out with Ucinet and Netdraw, programs specializing in social networks.

where relations and ties between members of the project that make up the intended community are created.

A NETWORK COMMUNITY

As a network, the Sangha is the product of the interaction between ordained and non-ordained members of the community. It is a complex relational system that has the ordained Sangha (Lamas, monks, nuns, novices, postulants)⁶ as the main center surrounded by the lay community members. The strongest and most cohesive relational structure is that formed by the ordained members who are at the same time the center of reference for many of the relations of the lay community. The most distinctive element is that, as can be seen in **Graph 1**⁷, it is a non-pyramidal or hierarchical organizational structure typical of the traditional organizational models. We can interpret the large enveloping aspect exerted by the relationships of the faithful (indicated in the graph with fuchsia circles) as a system of protection (of the ordained community) as well as a mechanism of extending the monastic organization to society.

Graph 1. Network of the Entire Sangha

⁶ The ordained Sangha is comprised of all those who have begun the monastic path (35 members). From this point on, we will refer to the members of the ordained Sangha in the generic form as monks.

⁷ GRAPH LEGEND:

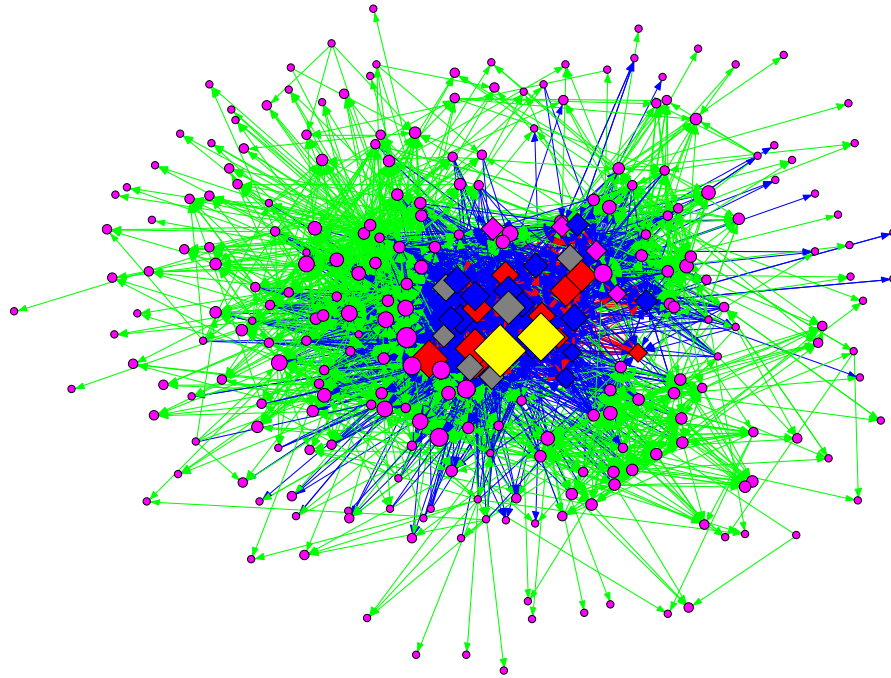
People and institutions are represented by nodes, and relations by lines connecting the nodes. Shapes, sizes and colors indicate different characteristics.

The **shape of the nodes** differentiates types of actors: Diamonds represent the monastic community, Circles represent the followers part of the sangha, and the Squares represent social actors and institutions from the outside world.

The **colors of the nodes** differentiate actors: Yellow represents the Lamas, Red indicates monks and nuns; Blue indicates novices; Grey indicates postulants; Fuchsia identifies the non-ordained members of the community (the faithful); and Green colors the nodes of Institutions and Social actors with whom the community is linked.

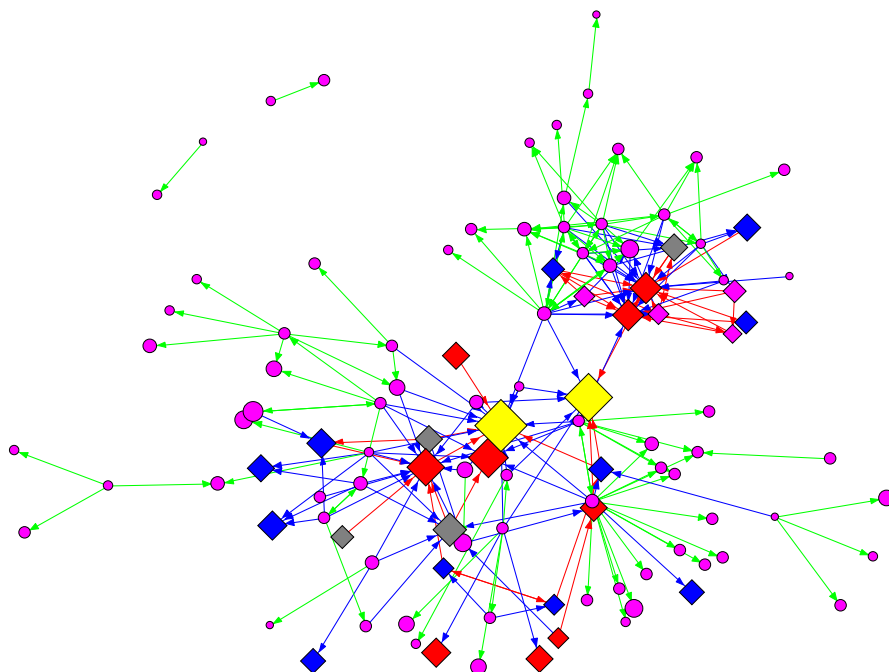
The **color of the lines** indicates types of connecting relations: In Graphs 1 through 7: Green lines connect followers; Red lines connect members of the ordained sangha (“monks”); and Blue lines designate the relations between “monks” and followers. In Graph 8: Blue represent the relations between followers with the social, economic and political environment, and Red the relation of “monks” with the environment.

The **size of the nodes** indicated centrality and prominence. In Graphs 1 through 7 the size of a node indicates how many actors refer to it. In Graph, 8 the sizes of Squares indicate how many direct relations they receive, and the sizes of the Diamonds indicate with how many actors in the environment the members of the sangha establish direct relations.



We identify the nucleus of the Sakya Tashi Ling relational system as the structure made up of high intensity relationships (**Graph 2**). It is the neurological center of the network and to a large extent imitates, albeit in a simplified manner, the network in its entirety. The role of the monks in this network stands out as fundamental and dominant. The center of the network is comprised of two large substructures which correspond to the two main centers of the Community: the Garraf Monastery and the Castellón Monastery linked together.

Graph 2. Core of Sangha
(strong relations GT10)

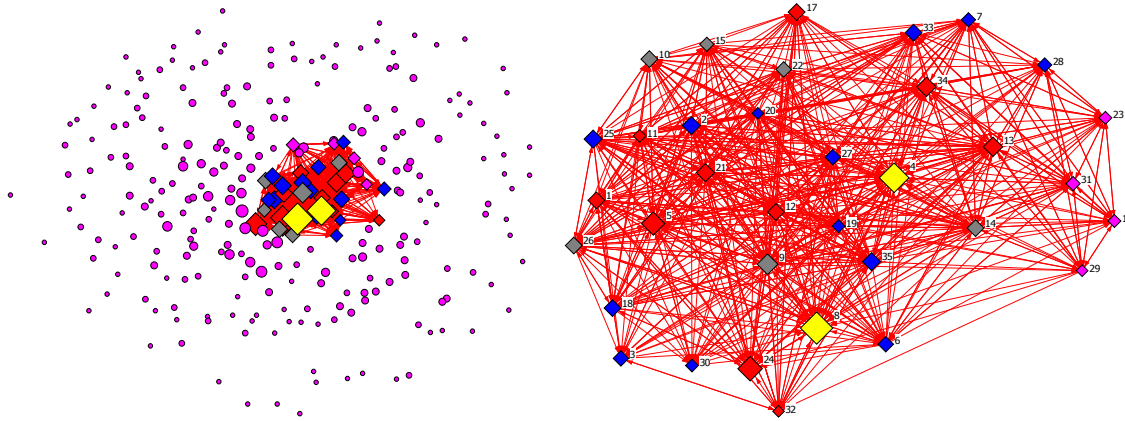


In this complex network, a double system of centrality exists: global and local. The global centrality of the network is occupied by the two Lamas (yellow diamond) who form the nucleus of the functional and religious authority structure of the Community. At the local level, some nuns and monks (red diamond) join the Lamas in the functional authority structure of the Monasteries.

The relations among monks and nuns produce the very dense and compact **monastic network** shown in **Graph 3**. The slightly less dense structure on the right corresponds to Castellón while Garraf is on the right. At the individual level it is important to point out the importance of the centralizing⁸ role of the two Lamas in the whole monastic network. Together with them there are four monks and nuns who have a key central role at the local level. The non-resident monks and nuns are on the outside edge of the monastic relational system indicating a lesser centrality in the monastic community life.

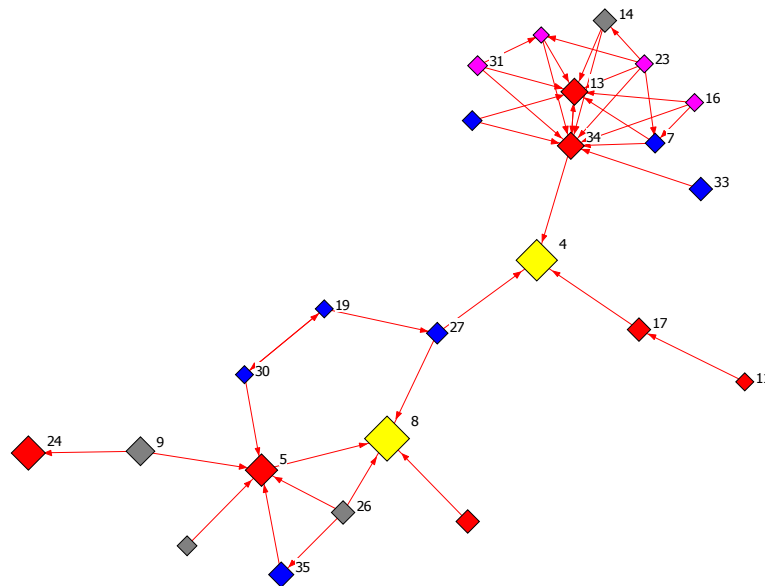
Graph 3. Monastic Network

⁸ Their size indicates the amount of relations they receive.



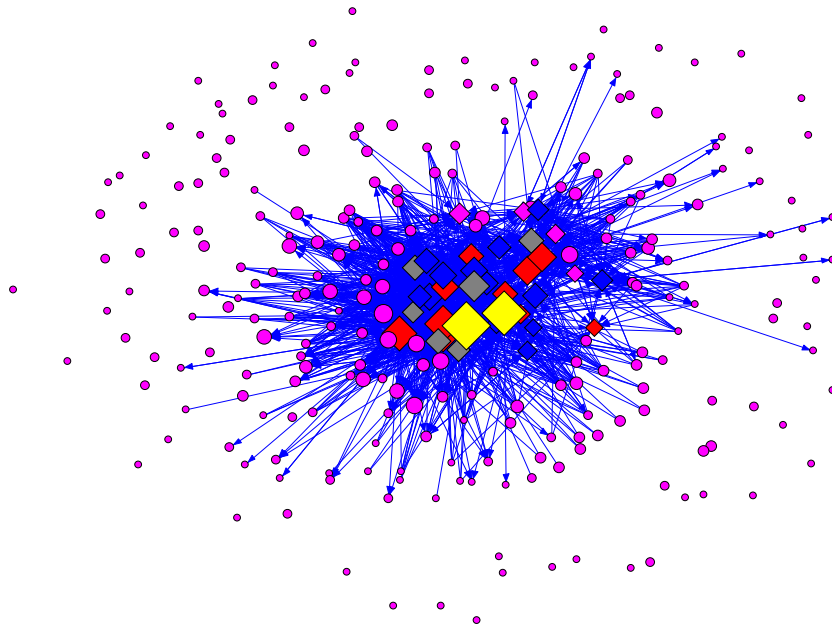
In the neuralgic center of the network (**Graph 4**), where the weight of monastic social life falls, is the structure made up of the most intense relation, the network breaks down into two subnetworks (corresponding to the two monasteries, Garraf and Castellón) internally cohesive and fundamentally linked by the centralizing and bridging role of the Abbot of the Community. He keeps the system united.

Graph 4. Core of Monastic Network (strong relations GT10)



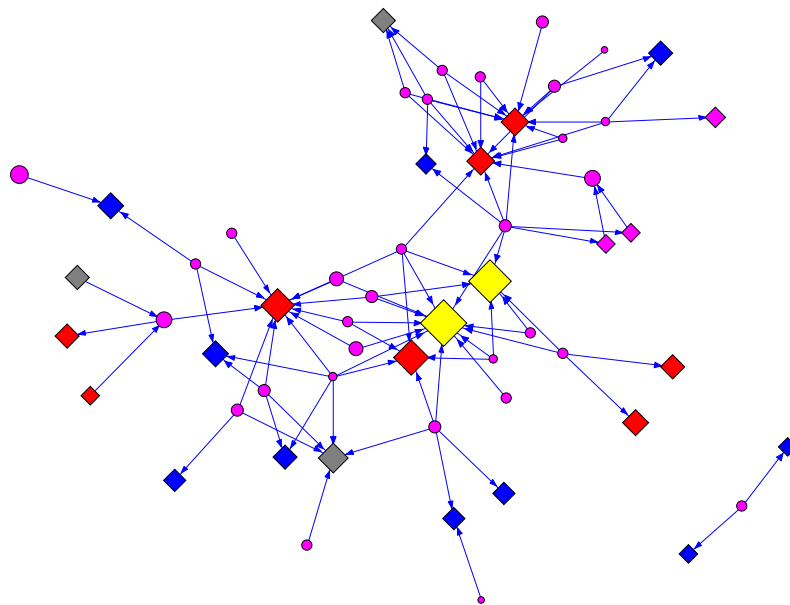
The extended Sangha is a product of the **relations between monks and nuns and the lay followers** (the faithful). The graphic representation of those relations (**Graph 5**) allows us to visualize the centrality and prominent role of few monks and nuns in the establishment of a very dense structure of links with the followers.

Graph 5. Relations between Monks and Followers



As is shown in **Graph 6**, at the core of this system of relations, that is to say, in the structure of very strong relations, the number of participants is very reduced, and two small substructures are maintained (corresponding once again to the two monasteries) united by the Abbot who plays the key role of bridge. The Prior and two nuns assume the role of centralizers of the relations with the lay community, and they are the key monks in the creation of the lay community.

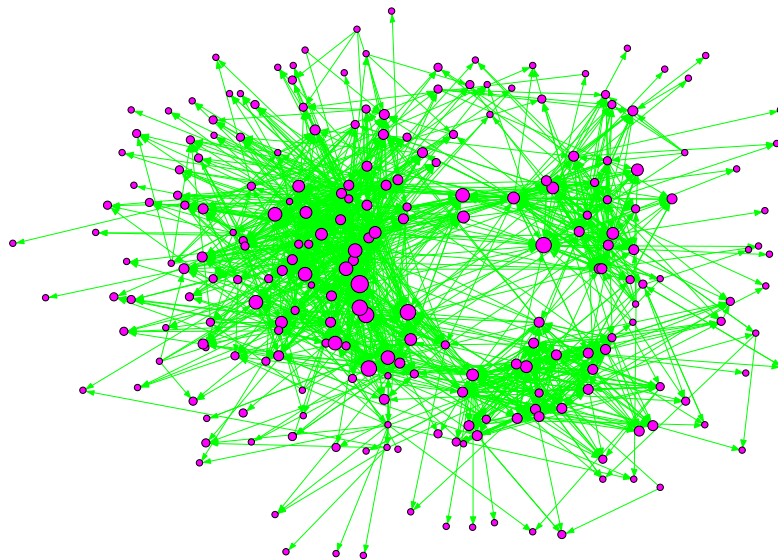
Graph 6. Core of Relations between Monks and Followers (strong relations GT10)



One of the distinctive elements with respect to other types of centers and Buddhist monasteries, in Spain as well as in other countries, is the existence of a wide and active lay spiritual community. This community is formed by members committed to the STL project and have become a fundamental part of its Sangha. **Graph 7** shows the large and complex **social structure of the lay spiritual community**. The religious practices and

the collaboration in Sakya Tashi Ling are decisive in its creation. Initiations, meditations, and retreats and other practices are the meeting point among the followers (and with the monks), favoring relations and ties, creating identity in the lay community and generating commitment with Buddhism and the STL project. The existence of this lay community (this social network) is the product of a monastery open to society and is what becomes a differentiating element with respect to other monasteries.

Graph 7. Social structure of the Lay Community (Followers)



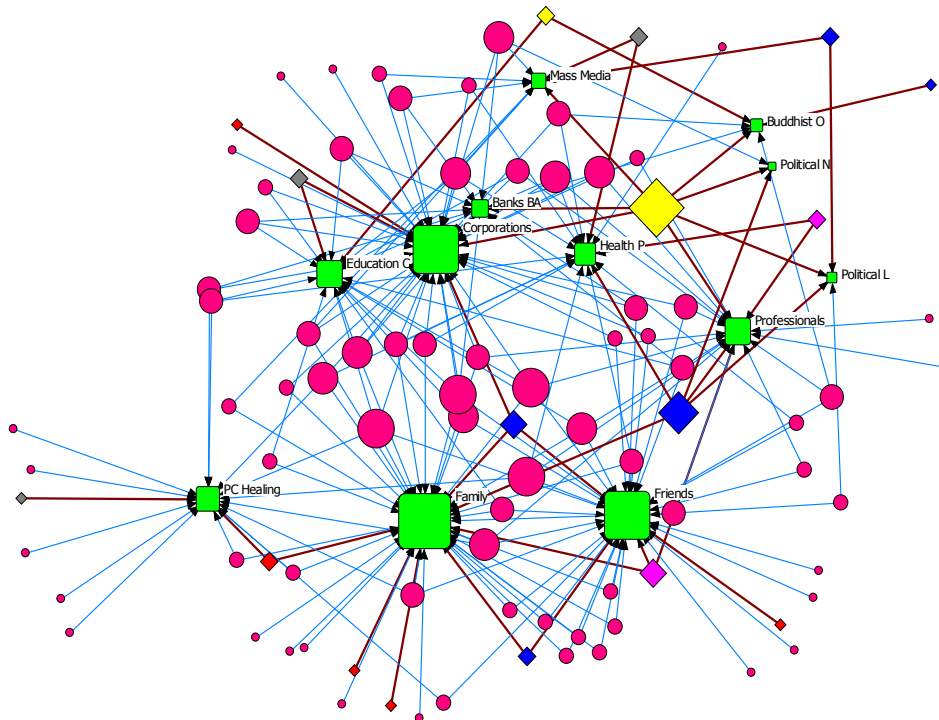
The lay community is made up of three main substructures linked together forming an oval shaped space. The collective practices of all the Community (normally in the main monastery) facilitate the relations among all the followers which translates into ties among the subgroups. These subgroups corresponds to the spaces where periodic religious practices take place: the Dharma house of Manresa and the Garraf and Castellón Monasteries. Globally, the lay community directly linked to the Garraf monastery (on the left of the graph), besides being larger and more cohesive, plays a central reference role in all the Community. Following in importance is the community linked to the Castellón Monastery (top right) and the older Dharma house in Manresa (bottom right).

Upon introducing the lay element into the STL Buddhist project, the entire social system increases its size and strength. The lay element also gives it a totally different character from other Buddhist Sanghas. This converts STL into a more complex model that combines the practice and the project of the monks with those of the lay community. Additionally, the lay community plays a key role in interfacing and linking with the social environment, whether collaborating in the monastery activities open to society or spreading the Dharma (disseminating the STL project and Buddhism) to society. Its most important function without a doubt is to embed Sakya Tashi Ling in the social, cultural, political and economic fabric. It acts as a perfect bridge between the religious community and society at large.

Graph 8 shows the existing **relations** of the ordained and lay members of the Community **with the social, cultural, political and economic environment**. The dense mesh of relations clearly shows the importance given by STL to its insertion into its environment as a mechanism of legitimacy and survival and as a mechanism of extending and expanding the Buddhist ideals to society. The central goal of the project of open

organization is to bring Dharma and Buddhist ideals to society, and the most appropriate mechanism to do this is through relations with the organizations and institutions of the environment.

Graph 8. Social Relations with the Environment



Such links create a relational system where two differentiated spaces can be seen: that which we can call institutional relations (found at the top of the graph) and that which we can consider non-institutional spaces, that is, more social (found at the bottom part of the graph).

The space of institutional relations is formed by the relations with businesses, banks, political organizations and institutions, the media, Buddhist organizations and education and health institutions. It is a dense space (of many relations) where the Corporations along with Professionals and Educational centers stand out as central (as sectors that receive a large part of the relations). In this institutional space the Abbot's role as social leader is highlighted, followed by the key importance of the followers creating and maintaining the relational structure.

The institutional space can be seen, following the neo-institutionalist (Meyer and Bowan, 1997; Powell and Dimaggio, 1991) contributions, as a provider of legitimacy as well as religious and nonreligious resources. In terms of legitimacy they establish relations with key social agents that grant and guarantee social approval and sociopolitical acceptance of the project: businesses, political institutions, professionals, and the media. We can speak of a double system of relations and of legitimacy: with the Western setting (the media, business, banks, political system) and with the religious lineage (Buddhist centers). The former allow for the integration and reduction of potential conflicts with the economic, social, cultural and political setting. The latter (with Buddhist centers) insures its connection with the ancestral Oriental religious tradition as well as with the networks of Oriental and Western Buddhist organizations. In brief, this

double system of relations supplies the resources for the survival and continuity of the institution, be they economic or political resources or those of a religious type.

This institutional space besides offering legitimacy and resources also incorporates two spaces for social practice where STL is implementing projects that spread its message and offer help: health and educational spaces. In its entirety it is an institution network as a collective entity.

In the non-institutional space the most noteworthy relations are the classic strong individual relations with family and friends. Also important in this space are relations with people and sectors with closely related visions, approaches, and practices (professionals and alternative therapy centers). The link of STL to this sector of values and services is also a source of social legitimacy.

The totality of the relations with the environment places STL in the political and social dynamics in such a way that it acquires social and institutional legitimacy and at the same time receives strong support for its projects.

ON THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

A first approach to the effects of this novel way to connect Buddhism with society is with the study of those who have initiated the Buddhist path towards happiness: the faithful who make up the lay sangha. They are characterized by their great commitment and activity in the Sakya Tashi Ling STL project and they see Buddhism as the path towards individual as well as collective happiness.

We now present and analyze results⁹ of a sociological study of this western Buddhist lay community. The research is an x-ray of the system of values and attitudes of its members, of their Buddhist trajectories and practices and of their consequences/outcomes/results.

The fact that happiness is a central element in their practice makes their perception and expectations of it a bit different from the general population. When comparing their level of happiness with the general Spanish population, according to the 2005's World Values Survey¹⁰, we observe that the proportion of people "quite" or "very happy" is higher among the general population (93%) than among the members of the lay sangha (75%). This difference might be the result of their focus on attaining a higher level of happiness. They believe they can be happier, aspire to be, and work towards it.

A first outcome in this road is the evidence that their Buddhist practices make them happy. There is a substantial positive and significant correlation between the level of Happiness and the level of Buddhist Practice (0.215), the level of Knowledge of Buddhism (0.303), and the number of Initiations received in STL (0.226). Furthermore, the Monastery also makes them happy; being physically present in the Monastery increases their levels of happiness.¹¹ It increments by 13% the proportion of followers who are "quite" or "very happy". The feeling and the practice of community have a positive impact on Happiness.

Orientation towards others, characteristic of a Buddhist practice, transforms their relations with their closer surroundings (the social networks of the non institutional space analyzed earlier and made up by family, friends, acquaintances and work mates) into another source of happiness. As their positive influence over their environment increases,

⁹ Results from the survey to the STL's followers "Buddhism, values, religiosity and spirituality" (*Budismo, valores, religiosidad y espiritualidad*) carried out at the end of 2008. Universe: 150 people of the Buddhist Philosophy Study Program. Number of responses: 93 (62% of the universe)

¹⁰ <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

¹¹ Comparing their self report general levels of happiness with those at the monastery, at the moment of answering the questionnaire.

thanks to their Buddhist knowledge and practice, so does their level of Happiness (in a positive correlation of 0.359 and significant at the 0.001 level).

The social world created by strong relations of trust (with family, friends, acquaintances) was the main source of information and discovery of both Buddhism (for 53% of them) and the Sakya Tashi Ling community (for 67%). Institutional avenues of information transmission and dissemination had a less important role. In the case of access to information regarding Buddhism, institutional dissemination (through the Monastery, other Buddhist centers, or alternative healing and wellbeing centers) is also very relevant (43%). And in the case of information regarding STL, 9% of the followers discovered the Buddhist monk's community through the mass media, 8% thanks to the monks' CDs, and 5% through Internet.

The majority of the followers define Buddhism as a "non-religion", which, however, they "religiously" practice. Most of them (80%) define it as a philosophy and only 18% label Buddhism as a religion.¹² More than one third also define it as a "value system" (36%) and one-fourth as a "behavior system". Curiously, in spite of not labeling Buddhism as a religion, two thirds (65%) of them practice "Buddhist rituals" daily, and the number reaches 80% when the frequency of the ritual practices lowers to several times at week.

Meditation along with retreats and pilgrimages are the main avenues of religious practices of the lay community. The two main reasons to engage in them are for personal growth and to advance and deepen in their practice of Buddhism. They illustrate the essence of Buddhism for westerners: the discovery and empowerment of oneself and Happiness.

Almost all the followers perceive clear positive effects from such practices. For most of them (90%) such practices help to find inner peace and happiness, and they also help to provide a level of comfort when confronting suffering. Meditation and recitation of mantras are the main avenues of personal benefit for the followers (98% and 84%).

In addition to the individual effects, religious practice has clear social dimensions: the followers believe they would be useful for others and for society in general, and also almost two thirds of them found similar people thanks to those practices. Religious practices, in this case Buddhist practices, becomes a vehicle for the creation of trust and community.

Buddhism is not only key and central to their individual lives but also to their social and collective ones. More than half of the faithful (52%) know Buddhist practitioners outside the STL space. The entrance road into Buddhism is associated with the discovery and construction of a large Buddhist social world, both in and outside STL (friends, acquaintances, mates).

The Monastery is also an important reference point in the social lives of the faithful: their relation with the Monastery is, in spite of the distance, very intense. In addition to the sessions of the Buddhist Philosophy Study Program, more than two thirds of them visit the Monastery frequently: 9% daily, 28% weekly, and one third at least once at month. The main reasons to go to the Monastery are for Buddhist Initiation rituals (53% of the faithful), for advice and spiritual guidance from the Lamas (40%), and to do voluntary work (44%) within the Monastery, in line with their role to help others.

Buddhism becomes an important social reference. It becomes a "small world" (Watts, 2003); it becomes the main social world of relational reference for the lay members of the sangha.

¹² It should be noted that the labelling of Buddhism as religion lineally increases with the advancement in their Buddhist practice.

In addition to the positive effects on their individual lives, the followers¹³ believe the activities of the monks have had a large positive impact over society, culture and religiosity in their surroundings. In fact, they have such positive assessment regarding the potential of Buddhism and of STL that the followers see STL as an important political, social and economic actor and consider that Buddhism must play an active role transforming society. They advocate for a role of religion, of Buddhism and of STL, as revitalizers (**Table 1**).

Table 1

| SOCIAL IMPACT | FOLLOWERS (2008 wave) | | | VISITORS |
|----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| | Effects of STL Buddhist Monks on... | Wanted effects of STL Buddhist Monks on... | Think that Buddhism will have some effect on... | Believe that Buddhism will have some future effects on... |
| Political Dimension | 30.3% | 93.3% | 68.4% | 44.2% |
| Economical Dimension | 25 | 88.9 | 59.2 | 47.1 |
| Social Dimension | 88.2 | 100% | 97.7 | 85.5 |
| Cultural Dimension | 89.2 | 100% | 98.8 | 65.9 |
| Religious Dimension | 83.6 | 97 | 92.8 | - |
| Other dimension | 75 | 88.2 | 95.2 | 67.4 |
| N | 83 | 93 | 21 | 138 |

In conclusion, STL, by means of its teaching programs, retreats, initiations, and pilgrimage trips, has very positive effects on its followers, in dimensions of personal benefit as well as of collective benefit. The most prominent are its contributions to personal growth and empowering; to inner peace and serenity; to more compassion, tolerance and generosity towards others; and to the discovery of new ways to face suffering.

SOCIETY ENTERING THE MONASTERY

One of the distinctive characteristics of Sakya Tashi Ling Monastery and Community is its openness to society, that is to say, it is an open doors monastery, it is a monastery inviting society to enter in. There is no exact data on the annual number of visitors, although some estimations point to 30,000 to 40,000 people yearly. Exact numbers, even though they only look at one part of the total number of visitors, are the number of paid visits to the Museum, which in 2009 was 22,000 people. That year, the monastery's refractory served 20,000 meals to visitors. And since not all visitors enter the museum or stay for lunch or dinner, these numbers show the tip of the iceberg of a much larger figure of annual visits.

In order to be able to understand this phenomenon of "religious tourism" to a monastery that opens its doors so society can enter in it, and to learn the reasons as well as the impact of the visits, we carried out a survey of 447 visitors¹⁴ in two waves in April, 2008 and April, 2009.

¹³ Two thirds are women (67%), and 33% men; their mean age is 43.3 years; and most have at least secondary education (50% have university degrees). They practice a variety of occupations and professions. Half work in qualified professional occupations while one fourth are manual workers. Almost all see themselves as middle class: 47% as middle-middle class and 44% as middle-lower class. 9% positioned themselves in the middle-upper and upper class. Their mean ideological position is center left: 4.5 in a scale where 1 is extreme left and 10 is extreme right.

¹⁴ More than half the visitors interviewed were women (60%) and 40% men; their mean age is 46.2 years; and most of them have higher education (50% have university degrees). They practice a variety of occupations and professions.

Almost 60% of the visitors had learned about the STL Monastery through informal relations, what we call networks of acquaintances and friends (almost identical figure to the followers' case). 10% learned about it from TV and mass media, and 16% of the visitors encounter the monastery while visiting the natural park where it is located. Half of the visitors went to the monastery for curiosity and to learn a little bit more about Buddhism and Buddhist monks, clearly religious tourism. One third went to the monastery looking for something more, they had questions about Buddhism and its path, they went to workshops or lectures, or they attended some religious ceremony or celebration.

By the end of the visit, the large majority (90%) believes that it is beneficial to have public spaces as this one, open religious space, non-catholic religious spaces. This is a very interesting result in a Western country attempting to limit religious practice to the space of individual private life.

They rate the visit as very positive, to the extent that the majority (80%) would repeat the visit at another time and 95% would recommend the visit to friends and family. It is a very positive impact, not only because they want to tell others about it but also because many (43%) would like to delve deeper into Buddhism after the visit. A similar amount, 45%, would like to learn more about and practice meditation. After the visit to the monastery, close to half of the visitors would like to learn more about Buddhism and learn how to practice it. They went looking for something, and they found something.

Visitors especially liked the space, the natural surrounding where the monastery is located on top of the natural park, as well as its openness. They liked the idea of open doors, of being able to enter into the monastic life. The stupa, and the possibility to practice circumambulating it, were especially appealing due to its novelty to Western and Catholic culture.

Half of the visitors associate Buddhism to philosophy; a quarter to religion, and 15% sees it as a value system. Oddly enough, given its strong association to non-religion, many believe its practice could personally help them: 91% believe meditation could be beneficial, and 78% consider yoga as being also beneficial.

They believe that some practices, not associated to religion, are beneficial. Almost all the visitors stated that the contribution of Buddhism to society, its structure and dynamics, would be very positive. They have a quite social vision of Buddhism. It is part of their social networks. In addition to the fact that 60% learned about STL thanks to the information provided by their social networks, 40% of the visitors know some Buddhist practitioners, in most cases they are friends with whom they have a close relationship. All these are indicators of the spreading through western society of Buddhism (as ideas and philosophy as well as practitioners) as something positive with positive effects (**Table 1**).

Most of the visitors (80%) said they were quite or very happy people in their lives. When asked about their level of happiness at that very moment in the monastery, the number of them being quite or very happy increased to 85%. This increment (5%) in the number of those quite or very happy point towards the positive effects the visit to the Monastery has on the visitors.

They were looking and in the end many of the visitors discovered Buddhism and the idea of meditation and religious practices as individually and socially beneficial.

A POSITIVE AND HOPEFUL CURIOSITY

In order to get an approximate idea of the extent of the penetration of Buddhist ideas and concepts in a western society, and also to assess the knowledge about the STL

More than half work in qualified professional occupations while one fifth (19%) are manual workers. 47% define themselves as Catholic and 26% said that they did not have any religion.

Buddhist community as well as its social impact, we carried out a sociological survey of 543 university students¹⁵ from two Spanish universities (Universidad de Barcelona and Universidad Polit cnica de Catalunya) in two waves in April, 2008 and April, 2009.

We could describe the general attitude of the university students regarding Buddhism as one of positive and hopeful curiosity. In spite of the fact that the majority of the university youth (70%) has very little knowledge about Buddhism (they live in a religious and culturally Catholic society) more than one fourth (27%) is very interested and would like to learn more about it, and more than half of them (60%) has a very positive general attitude towards Buddhism. They have received information on Buddhism from formal avenues, such as mass media (31%) and the educational system (31%), as well as from social relations with family, mates and friends (22%).

The majority of students (70%) associate Buddhism with a combination of religion and philosophy. And, in fact, 75% of them believe that Buddhism as a philosophy and values system would have positive effects on their western society. Such curious, positive and hopeful image of Buddhism leads them to believe that elements associated to Buddhism could be of help in their individual personal lives. For example, 73% of the university students believe meditation, and to a lesser extent yoga, could be very beneficial for them.

The vision of Buddhism held by the university students is a counterpoint to the material society in which they live. More than half of them associate Buddhism to spirituality and also to a tranquility, calm and serenity quite different from the speed and material consumerism of Western society. And it is precisely on such serenity and spirituality, along with the positive role of meditation and yoga, where it lays the potential contribution of Buddhism to society.

An indicator of the extent of the spreading of Buddhist ideas and practices in this society is the fact that more than one fourth of the students have Buddhist practitioners in their close relational circles/systems.

Less than half of the university students (40%) know about the STL Monastery and Community. Many (43%) have learned about them through their social relations (family, university mates, and friends' networks), others (38%) through the mass media, and 5% discovered them through the "Buddhist Monks" CD. Only a fifth of them had visited the Monastery but almost two thirds (64%) indicate that they would like to visit it and learn more about the community and its services.

The "Buddhist Monks" CD had a great impact among the youth. In fact, 40% of the students directly knew the record and most of them quite liked it (an average of 6.1 in a 1 to 10 scale, 1 being "nothing" and 10 "a lot"). Fifteen percent in the 2008 survey wave said they had felt some positive effects when listening to the record. In the 2009 wave, many students said that they felt sensations of peace and happiness in both CDs (average of 5.8 in a 1 to 10 scale, 1 being "nothing" and 10 "a lot", with "Buddhist Monks"; and an average of 5.9 with the "Live Mantra" CD). Both music CDs, as instruments of communication of sensations, of the idea of happiness and even of Buddhism itself, have had a positive influence on/among youth.

Overall, and somehow reflecting their positive view of Buddhism and of the STL Monastery, thanks to the music CDs or the mass media, many of them (half of the respondents) believe that the existence of the STL Buddhist Monastery is in itself positive, and also many (45%) believe the activities of the STL community have had a positive effect in their western society.

¹⁵ A little over half of the students interviewed were male (55%), and 45% female; their mean age is 23.4 years, and most of them (63%) place their parents in the middle and upper class. Only 28% define themselves as Catholic while the majority (62%) say that they do not have any religion.

All of this evidence, that along icons [*idols - or a statue*] (a third of the students have Buddhist icons at home even though they are not practitioners) and songs, a curious, positive and hopeful vision of Buddhism as a path of individual and social improvement is spreading among the youth (and therefore the entire society). Students see the presence and activities of STL as contribution to this path (**Table 2**).

Table 2

| SOCIAL IMPACT | UNIVERSITY STUDENTS | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| | Effect of existence and activities of STL Buddhist Monks | Think that Buddhism will have some effect on our society |
| Very Positive | 3.3% | 10.9% |
| Positive | 41.4 | 73.6 |
| Indifference | 1.3 | 8.9 |
| Negative | 0.5 | 3.7 |
| Very negative | 0.8 | 2.2 |
| None | 13.4 | - |
| Don't Know | 25.3 | 0.7 |
| Total | 100% | 100% |
| N | 367 | 405 |

CONCLUSIONS: OPEN BUDDHISM FOR A MODERN NETWORK SOCIETY

The analysis of an organization such as Sakya Tashi Ling makes it clear that the model that they put forth (their way of understanding and practicing Buddhism) requires an organization open to society which allows them to create an extensive community (Sangha) and transmit their westernized adaptation of Vajrayana, Sakya and Ngagpa Buddhist values to society at large. This implies a radical change in the organizational form and the product: from a closed monastery to an open monastery, from inward practice to outward practice.

The success of the STL model lies in the fact that it is Western oriented and involves the incorporation of dimensions such as the pragmatism, the combination of the individual dimension with the collective. In addition, it is Modern, with happiness and networks being its two key ingredients; and it is Open to and towards society.

We can understand the westernization of Buddhism in two ways: as a westernization of the product and as a westernization of the means of transmission. Their vision of Buddhism becomes part of nonreligious products (music CDs, cookbooks, motorcycle helmets, etc.) which are distributed through nonreligious channels. They take advantage of the market potential in order to transmit Buddhist values to society. The social impact goes beyond the consumer that acquires their products. They are discussed in the press and seen on TV, their CDs are heard on the radio and in discothèques, and the helmet is seen on the highways. The fact that their message is oriented to society in general seems to imply the creation of their own social system and as well as taking advantage of already existing networks for its transmission.

The four pillars of their Open Project are intimately related with organizational structures which are also open and in network form. The Teachings and collective religious practices are the social spaces where the necessary trust emerges in order to create identity as an extended community and to set their action in motion by bringing their Buddhist views and practice to society. As part of this process, one of the distinctive elements of STL is the creation of an active lay community which gives a special character to the Sangha and which is fundamental in integrating the organization in

society. In brief, the open Buddhist project necessarily requires an organizational project which is open and integrated in society.

In brief, the use of the networks is essential for the success of the organization and its project. The networks are a flexible organizing mechanism which adapts well to different functions. In this case, we have confirmed how different structures have been formed according to their role and objective and how they combine closing with opening. Religious type relations as well as those for the transmission of philosophical knowledge are more centralized and create cohesive social systems. The ordained community networks are communion networks with high identification control and authority. In contrast, action, transmission of values, and insertion into society is based on less compact and more open networks. The relations with the environment, the relations for creating the lay spiritual community, and those relations for introducing and practicing Buddhism in society, are more open, looser, and less centralized. The centralized networks make up compact structures of religious communion. The loosest and least centralized networks facilitate the creation of the lay spiritual community and its penetration into the society that envelops it.

STL is also an interesting case of relation between meaning and form. We have confirmed how the meaning, the project, generates an organizational form. That is, the opening to society requires an organizational form that is also open. The networks guarantee the closure necessary for certain organizational functions at the same time as the essential opening for an open Buddhism project.

Being open to society also creates a two-way street. In one way, the STL Monastery brings Buddhism to society and in the other way Society enters the Monastery and Buddhism.

Society enters the Monastery by the hand of the lay sangha, visitors, and the social actors and institutions with whom STL interacts. Society brings forward a social vision of a post-materialistic Buddhism centered on the quest for happiness, which minimizes the religious dimension while emphasizing its value and philosophical components and stressing its social scope.

The interaction with society shows the languages and mechanisms which facilitate communication and guides the continuous adjustments among them. Openness and embeddedness in society has resulted in the use of fresh values and practices: Western values such as happiness and social engagement; and Western practices such as the market, mass media and networks.

Furthermore, the study shows the relevance of Buddhism (as conceptual elements or practices) in Western societies. It penetrates the relational systems which energize society as well as it morphs its values systems introducing its own.

By opening the doors, Buddhism opens to society. By opening the doors, Society enters into Buddhism and becomes an object and subject to be awakened. Society (collectivities, institutions and networks) is seen as an alive-entity and becomes the object of Buddhism and of the quest for happiness and awakening.

The three populations studied coincide in their positive and hopeful vision of Buddhism and STL for making present and future positive contributions to the individual and collective wellbeing. They share a vision where Buddhism emerges as a counterbalance of materialism and consumerism.

In brief, it is a fresh approach to Buddhism for a network society. In order to preserve the essence of Buddhism, that is to say the application of Dharma teachings in the search for enlightenment, and to bring this awakening to society, the ways to see and interact with society have to be continuously assessed.

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