

The Interactive Logic of Globalization and Local Culture: A Multidisciplinary Theoretical Perspective and Its Application in The Dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism

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Abstract. The accelerating global interconnectedness has sparked debates over whether globalization is the harbinger of cultural homogenization or cultural diversification. This paper explores the complex interplay between global and local cultures through multidisciplinary perspectives including anthropology, communication and media studies, economic ecology, and methodological approaches, with a case study of Tibetan Buddhism culture. Anthropological insights reveal the fluidity of cultural landscapes and local cultures' adaptation to globalization at a macro-level, while communication and media studies propose the context-specific negotiated interpretations of global messages at a micro-level. An economic-ecological perspective further concludes that global capitalism depends exactly on local materials and cultural distinctiveness, and a comparison of big data analysis and digital ethnography clearly demonstrates the subtle interaction between cultural flows. Taking the transnational dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism as an example, this article redefines globalization as the process that thrives on hybridity and friction while acknowledging risks of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. This paper challenges deterministic models and highlights the mutual constitution of global and local dynamics, providing theoretical and practical significance for deconstructing the "global-local" binary opposition narrative.

Keywords: Globalization; local culture; Tibetan Buddhism.

1. Introduction

Globalization, as a corollary of technological breakthroughs, economic resurgence, media proliferation, and transnational migration, has long been a grand cliché in social theory and repeatedly examined in terms of its derivation, progression, and implications [1]. As the interdisciplinary field of global studies evolved, a central controversy emerged within this discourse: whether globalization primarily leads to cultural homogenization, where dominant forms eradicate local distinctiveness, or cultural hybridization, where global flows stimulate new cultural syntheses. Accordingly, a cultural dichotomy between the local and the global appears to arise from the increasing global interconnectedness. While the local culture refers to the way of being determined by geographic location and historical heritage, its counterpart, the global culture, is a set of shared values, experiences, and practices that transcend physical and historical boundaries. In the modern context, the global culture is often framed as a standardized Western pattern of living, featured by communications in English, consumption of information through CNN or TikTok, and an adherence to pragmatism and democracy values [1]. However, the perceived homogenizing tendencies attributed to such a global culture have sparked heated debate from different fields of studies. Research on cultural flows emphasizes the inseparability of broader issues: global inequalities, as cultural production can be unevenly distributed; social injustices, as marginalized voices can be excluded from global platforms; and cultural appropriation, where symbols can be commodified outside their original contexts. Furthermore, issues of environmental sustainability and religious resurgence are increasingly intertwined with cultural globalization [2,3]. These complex challenges demand insights from research that is both transnational and interdisciplinary, two key characteristics of global studies as mentioned by researchers [4].

This paper therefore juxtaposes perspectives from three distinct fields, including anthropology, communication, and economic ecology, with multicultural evidence to examine the interplay between

global culture and local culture under globalization. Mainstream methodologies are also examined. To further corroborate the theoretical frameworks, the paper introduces the case of Tibetan Buddhism, whose global spread demonstrates both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of local cultures. With its long history of transnational appeal through charismatic figures like the Dalai Lama and its integration into global mindfulness practices, Tibetan Buddhism presents a particularly vivid case for studying cultural transformation under globalization. Through this case analysis, globalization is viewed as a stimulus for cultural diversity rather than a catalyst for homogenization, with the hybrid forms it produces enriching both local and global identities.

2. Anthropological Perspective: Asymmetry and Reconstruction

Anthropology's standpoint stresses that local cultures are not static entities under siege by global culture but fluid processes constantly in motion. Clifford Geertz's interpretation of culture as a web of significance frequently remade through encounters lays the foundation for arguing against the inevitability of homogenization [5]. Appadurai's introduction to five "scapes" in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, namely the ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, ideoscapescapes, technoscapescapes, and finanscapescapes, further reveals the contemporary world as flowing and amorphous [6]. Each scape is fluid internally and interconnected externally. For example, ethnoscapescapes, referring to the flows of populations, are constantly shifting with refugees, tourists, and labor migrants moving in unpredictable ways; mediascapescapes change daily with new platforms, viral trends, and competing narratives, subsequently altering values and ideas within the ideoscapescapes; technoscapescapes and finanscapescapes are also erratic due to the continually updating technology and the fluctuating markets. Their internal composition is always in flux, and never reducible to a single order. Meanwhile, the boundaries between them are porous, allowing their flows to constantly intersect and reshape one another. The nonlinear flows of population, information, and money render individuals' identity and imagination diverse and even chaotic, threatening the previously stable and certain nationhood and personhood. Taken together, these scapes describe a world in which culture is not merely disseminated from the "center" to the "periphery" but continually fragmented and hybridized in local contexts.

The disjuncture and plurality of culture are implied again in Appadurai's later essay *The Production of Locality*, which asserts that the production of locality is increasingly destabilized by transnational flow and media. Migration, refugee flows, and tourism weaken the geographic boundary formerly associated with "locality" or "neighborhood". Television, film, and the internet have eliminated the need for face-to-face interaction or shared space in traditional neighborhoods, thereby eroding spatial-virtual links. A typical illustration of this process is the global evolution of yoga. Although originating in South Asian religious traditions, yoga has traveled across ethnoscapescapes of teachers, students, and migrants, been reshaped by mediascapescapes of global advertising and social media influencers, and integrated into technoscapescapes of fitness apps and streaming platforms. In New York or Berlin, it takes the form of a secularized wellness practice focused on physical fitness, whereas in India it remains entangled with spiritual philosophies.

Admittedly, empirical evidence of the loss of indigenous languages and the pervasiveness of global brands like McDonald's may prompt people to equate globalization with cultural imperialism or homogenization. Yet Appadurai warns that when cultural products, practices, or ideas travel from powerful metropolises into other societies such as Hollywood movies, Western brands and English language education. Instead, local communities adapt, reinterpret, and transform these elements into local ways. Appadurai's concept of indigenization clarifies the process of integrating imports into local cultural logics, values, and practices.

Ultimately, by elucidating the indigenization of global forms and the constant production of locality, anthropologists point out that cultural flows generate diversity as much as uniformity. Local cultures do not exist as isolated relics at risk of absorption but as living processes situated within broader global currents. While Geertz and Appadurai offer valuable frameworks for analyzing global

culture flow at a macro-level, micro-level lived experiences can provide vital evidence for corroborating local cultures' various adaptations to the global culture.

3. Communication and Media Studies: Encoding and Decoding

Based on Stuart Hall's explanation, communication is a structured program consisting of encoding and decoding, or the production and the interpretation of the messages [7]. In fact, encoding and decoding themselves provide evidence against the assumed passive homogenization. These two mechanisms illustrate the process by which audiences exercise subjectivity and autonomy, adapting global content to local moral codes and political ideologies. Additionally, three modes of decoding have been identified: the dominant-hegemonic position, in which audiences accept the intended meaning; the negotiated position, where audiences interpret the message selectively based on their own frameworks; and the oppositional position, in which audiences reject the intended meaning altogether [7]. These modes illustrate the agency of local audiences, particularly in non-dominant cultural contexts.

In Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas*, audience negotiation and oppositional decoding are reflected in Dutch audience comments on the soap opera, showing how viewers interpret media through their own cultural and social lenses rather than being cultural dupes [8]. Ang demonstrates that Dutch viewers engaged with *Dallas* both playfully and critically. While some appreciated the glamorous lifestyle and dramatic plot, others mocked its excesses and questioned its moral values. This example underscores the interpretive creativity of audiences engaging in global media.

In media discourse, meanings are shaped by processes of translation, social power, and historical context rather than being fixed or universally shared. Encoding and decoding take place within socio-culturally embedded frameworks wherein meanings are made and contested. Crucially, these frameworks are not symmetrical. There are misunderstandings generated among distinct social relations and technical infrastructures between the production and reception of a message. A historical illustration where visual information is misconstrued would be Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii*, a painting that was initially intended to glorify Roman patriotism, yet later reinterpreted by the audience as a visual advocacy for liberty and revolt. Such unintended decoding of the message arose as the painting was exhibited during a period of political upheaval in France when viewers are discontent with the monarchy. Contemporary parallels can be observed in global media phenomena. While the South Korean drama *Squid Game* was encoded with critiques of socioeconomic inequalities by the locals, Indian and Brazilian viewers may reflect on alternative themes including familial loyalty. The disparity in comprehension between groups from different milieus effectively demonstrates the uncertainties and diversity of messages that a cultural product can convey.

Consequently, from the perspective of communication and media studies, local audiences' selective engagement, negotiation, and appropriation underscore how the spread of global culture fosters dynamic cultural interplay rather than uniformity. The multitude of hybrid cultural practices produced by media flows similarly resists the anxieties engendered by homogenization.

4. Economic-Ecological Perspective: Interdependence and Symbiosis

From an economic-ecological standpoint, the interdependence between economy and ecology epitomizes the relationship between globalization and local cultures. In fact, the diverse reinterpretations and reactions experienced by local cultures are exactly what constitute the globalization process. Globalization does not proceed smoothly and eliminate differences; instead, it thrives on friction, irregularity, and cultural specificity.

Anna Tsing's ethnographic fieldwork on the mushrooms offers a telling example of the economic-ecological entanglement [9]. According to Tsing, matsutake are highly valued commodities in the Japanese market, yet their existence and economic worth are inseparable from the forest ecosystems in which they grow and the labor of local foragers harvesting under informal, precarious working

conditions [9]. The entire supply chain of the mushroom is predicated on the health and specificity of Oregon forests' ecosystems, while the ecological ecosystem gains new forms of attention and management through its integration into global economic circuits. Such mutualism is analogous to the interaction between globalization and local culture, where global culture stays dynamic as opposed to a linear, top-down process.

A supplementary dimension added to the economic-ecological perspective is how standardization and totalization are no longer the prerequisite of contemporary capitalism; instead, global capitalism relies on non-capitalists' forms like the freedom-assemblage foragers. This relationship, in which global economic structures depend on diverse non-capitalist practices, can similarly be read as a model for understanding global and local culture. Tsing postulated a definitive account of such phenomena at a relatively early stage in her book *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections* [10]. The term friction was employed to refer to the resistance, drag, and irregularity experienced by distinct groups due to disparate contexts and encounters, refuting the assertion that globalization is an inevitable process that merely homogenizes cultures and economies. Correspondingly, she claims that unintended environmental destruction and social activism are in fact constitutive elements of globalization's operation.

Seen through the lens of economic ecology, globalization largely hinges on the distinctiveness and resistance of local economy, ecology, and culture. Analogous to the interdependence between economic and ecology, the interplay between the global culture and the local culture is not antagonistic but symbiotic: local practices both sustain and reshape global processes, while global structures, in turn, generate new conditions of possibility for local life.

5. Methodology Perspective: Macro and Micro Approach

Distinct methodological approaches also provide theoretical and practical significance for exploring the interactions between global and local cultures. Methodologically, the study of global and local cultural dynamics has increasingly relied on innovative approaches that reflect the digitalized world. As the internet penetrates through individuals' lives, traditional ethnographic or statistical tools alone are insufficient to capture the complexity of cultural flows under globalization. With technological advancement, big data analysis and digital ethnography have emerged as especially productive, providing both the macro-structural and micro-interpretive insights required to understand how global culture interacts with local groups.

Big data is defined more by its ability to analyze, aggregate, and link extensive datasets than its absolute quantity. Its potential to identify patterns that are otherwise invisible at the scale of individual experience distinguishes it from the traditional approaches. Big data is powerful in unveiling macroscopic dynamics, such as the diffusion of global media across platforms or the adoption of linguistic trends in transnational contexts. For instance, large-scale analyses of Twitter or TikTok can trace how global hashtags are adopted and localized in different regions. Yet, Biggs caution against assumptions that scale guarantees objectivity [11]. Subjective observations and choices during data scraping and cleaning serve as sources of bias, rendering quantitative results not as dispassionate facts but individual's decision. Thus, while big data enables researchers to visualize cultural flows on a global scale, it risks obscuring the situated meanings and lived realities embedded in those flows.

Digital ethnography, by contrast, emphasizes immersion in local practices and the subjective interpretations of the targeted culture. Lane and Lingel highlight that digital ethnography allows researchers to investigate how people build communities, express identities, and engage in activism within digital environments [12]. Unlike big data, digital ethnography prioritizes the micro-level processes of meaning-making, which is how individuals' appropriate global culture, attach local significance to it, and build community online. For example, a prolonged observation of K-pop fan online forums can reveal the processes of negotiation and adaptation that individuals employed when exposed to Korean cultural products. This methodology thus highlights depth and multiplicity, countering the specious homogenizing trends uncovered by large-scale data models.

The complementarity of these two approaches lies in their different scales of analysis. Big data illuminates structural patterns of cultural circulation across national and linguistic boundaries, while digital ethnography reveals how those flows are integrated or challenged in everyday practice. Methodological comparison offers a new perspective for global cultural studies, which abandons the binary opposition between globalization and localization and instead examines dynamic and negotiated relationships.

6. The Case of Tibetan Buddhism: From Local Culture to Globalization

Religion is always global as it moves with people and spreads with ideas. Tibetan Buddhism, with its intensity and visibility in global expansion over the past half century, provides a vivid case for exploring the effect of globalization on local cultures. Once geographically concentrated in the Tibetan plateau, Tibetan Buddhism has been resettled in diasporic communities since the 1950s Tibetan exile and propelled into global consciousness through the international activities of religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama [13]. The religion's local cosmology has been increasingly incorporated into global discourse about ethics and environmental sustainability while encountering misconceptions during cultural transfers. This dual dynamic of being shaped by globalization while also shaping global imaginaries makes Tibetan Buddhism uniquely suited to illustrate how global flows generate cultural hybridity rather than uniformity.

Building on Appadurai's framework of ethnoscapas, ideoscapas, and mediascapas, it's apparent how Tibetan Buddhism is reconfigured beyond its Himalayan locus by diasporic Tibetan communities, Western converts, and international practitioners. In addition to the circulation of Buddhist texts and teachings, the financial infrastructures supporting monasteries and NGOs such as the Tibetan Nuns Project and the Tsadra Foundation collectively highlight the role financescapas has played in the religion's global presence. Major shifts in the technoscape, specifically the prevalence of the internet, have further amplified the fluidity and hybridity of Tibetan Buddhism. As Yonnetti notes, digital tools facilitate deterritorialization and recontextualization of spiritual practices once tied to specific geography, thereby creating new global publics of practitioners [14]. These developments demonstrate that globalization does not simply diffuse Tibetan Buddhism outward in a static, original form, but actively alters its practices and orientations.

Communication and media studies underscore how Tibetan Buddhism's transnational spread is mediated through processes of encoding and decoding. Originating communities encode the tradition with cosmological depth, ritual authority, and a soteriological goal for nirvana. Yet, these messages undergo reinterpretation when transmitted to non-Tibetan audiences through cultural exhibitions or digital platforms. In fact, Tibetan rituals, meditation practices, and monastic institutions are adapted within diverse settings including European retreat centers and North American mindfulness programs [13]. Some Western countries often decode Tibetan Buddhism through a lens of romantic orientalism, associating it with mysticism and timeless wisdom [13]. Their encoding of new information also utilizes Tibetan Buddhism as a vital keynote and substantiates the process of negotiated readings. Meditation practices are selectively appropriated as tools for mental health or stress reduction, though ritual complexity might be neglected. Therefore, global communication does not dissolve local religious meanings but multiplies them in unpredictable and local-specific ways.

Finally, the notion of "friction" highlighted in an economic-ecological perspective perfectly captures how Tibetan Buddhism's global spread depends precisely on its distinctiveness. Tibetan Buddhism meets the modern desire for spiritual fulfillment and identity exploration in ways that resist the homogenizing force of capitalism with a singular logic. The local cultural and ecological particularities both sustain and shape the global circulation of Tibetan Buddhism, presenting a viable alternative to cultural homogenization.

Indeed, encounters between local economies and global flows of visitors can potentially generate tensions over commercialization and authenticity [15]. The ecological ethos, such as the emphasis on compassion for all sentient beings, has been appropriated in global environmental discourses, but

only through selective translation of local cosmologies. Yet despite being occasionally stripped of its deeper spiritual contexts, Tibetan Buddhism still possesses unique symbolic capital because of its cultural specificity. In conclusion, the religion's global presence reflects a symbiotic relationship where globalization relies on local uniqueness for its vitality while offering renewed visibility to Tibetan Buddhism through global circulation.

7. Conclusion

Drawing on perspectives from anthropology, communication and media studies, economic ecology, and methodology approach, this paper claims that globalization is not a flattening force but a process that thrives on hybridity. A case analysis of the Tibetan Buddhism culture further challenges local cultures as static relics in danger of extinction, underscoring their dynamic coexistence with the evolving global flows. Anthropologists elucidate the fluidity and amorphousness of the cultural landscape, highlighting the new syntheses through processes of indigenization. Communication and media studies reveal that global messages are never simply received as intended but are decoded in diverse and context-specific ways. Economic ecology proves that the globalization process and global capitalism do not erase local distinctiveness but relies on it. A comparison between the big data analysis and digital ethnography provides valuable insights into approaching global culture studies, while a closer examination of the spread of Tibetan Buddhism perfectly corroborates those theoretical frameworks. However, acknowledging hybridity is by no means denying the risks of cultural appropriation and cultural misinterpretation. As seen in the global diffusion of yoga or the selective translation of Tibetan Buddhist cosmologies into environmentalist discourse, non-local audiences can detach practices from their original meaning and strip them of their embedded significance. These tendencies highlight the ambivalence of globalization where cultural visibility and vulnerabilities to misrepresentation are both amplified. To refute homogenization, then, is not to romanticize globalization but to recognize its double-edged nature.

This article conducts a cross-comparative analysis of the relationship between globalization and local cultures from the perspectives of anthropology, communication and media studies, economic ecology, and methodology, providing theoretical and practical significance for deconstructing the "global-local" binary opposition narrative. Ultimately, globalization neither heralds the homogenization of culture nor implies the hegemony of global culture. Reframing it as an ecology of cultural interplay rather than a binary opposition between the global and the local can contribute to a growing body of scholarship that challenges deterministic models of cultural imperialism. For policymakers, educators, and practitioners, this perspective can also foster local regions to negotiate and reinterpret global flows on their own terms, engendering greater respect for the multiplicity of cultural voices. Future research could further focus on how digital platform algorithms influence the flow and reconstruction of cultural elements in the process of globalization. Furthermore, the in-depth integration of empirical research and interdisciplinary methods could provide a more refined framework for understanding the dynamics of globalized culture.

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