When a New Generation Comes up:  
*Buddhist Leadership*  
in *Contemporary China*  

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Contents

List of Contributors 6

Editorial  Carsten Krause 8

Transfers of Power and Influence:
The Road to the Rise of Leadership in Chinese Buddhism in the Post-Zhao Puchu Era
Xuan Fang and Carsten Krause 12

An Abbot’s Vision of an Authentic and Global Saṃgha:
On the Efforts of Master Dayuan to Revive Buddhism in China
Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber 52

Nurturing Buddhism with Traditional Chinese Culture:
On the Characteristics of the Dharma Promotion by Ven. Guangquan and his Saṃgha in Hangzhou
Zhang Jiacheng 101

Building the Largest Female Buddhist Monastery in Contemporary China:
Master Rurui between Continuity and Change
Amandine Péronnet 128

Leadership Transition within the Living Chan Movement:
From Venerable Jinghui to his Dharma Heirs
Wu Yuanying 158
In Quest of the Legacy of Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China: Identification Processes of the New Buddhist Leadership, between Historical Relevance and the Challenges of Modernisation

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When a New Generation Comes up: Buddhist Leadership in Contemporary China

Every kind of leadership in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has been confronted with severe challenges since the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In the religious field, leaders of Buddhist monasteries underwent complex processes of revitalising or reinventing Buddhist traditions. At the same time, they continuously had to adapt to changing political rules and commercial environments, as well as to the social and religious expectations of new generations of lay people.

While many Buddhist abbots and abbesses of the first “post-Mao” generation who became ordained before the Cultural Revolution have grown older, a younger generation has come to power almost all over the country within the last four decades. At the end of 2020, Buddhists in the PRC look back at the 40th anniversary of the first nationwide official ordination ceremony for monks after the enormous repressions of religious life during the Cultural Revolution. This new generation began in the late 1980s, early 1990s to take over more and more leading positions in Buddhist institutions. The first representative of this generation, Ven. Xuecheng 学诚 (1966–), who was inaugurated as a monastery’s abbot in 1989 at the age of 23, was the same person who also became the first President of the Buddhist Association of China 中国佛教协会

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(Zhongguo fojiao xiehui BAC) in 2015, representing then the new generation on a nationwide scale, at the age of 49. While he and other leading monks and nuns did not necessarily maintain a hold on power, most current leading figures in Chinese Buddhism look back at one or more decades of leadership experience and can be expected to take over future’s primary responsibilities for Buddhist development in China.

The representatives of this “new” generation have much in common: They were mainly born in the 1960/70s, ordained and trained by more or less famous masters during the 1980/90s, and selected for Buddhist leadership according to the same political rules. While they had a similar biographical background and to some degree were part of a common elite network, they nevertheless faced very different challenges. Meanwhile, many of them are on the way to establish their specific brands.

Since the early 1980s, a central requirement for taking over institutional responsibility in the Buddhist world was training the monastics, as summarised with the famous phrase by Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000), the long term President of the BAC:

“The most important work of the Buddhist community at present and in the future is, first, to cultivate talent; second, to cultivate talent; and third, still is to cultivate talent.”

当前和今后相当时期内佛教工作最重要、最紧迫的事情第一是培养人才, 第二是培养人才, 第三还是培养人才。

Such a credo was echoed by Ven. Shenghui 圣辉 (1951–), who belonged to the most promising monks who attended the newly opened Buddhist Academy of China and gave the assurance in 1982:

“We will definitely not disappoint the expectations of the Party and the people, of the older generations of the Buddhist community, and of the masses of Buddhist followers. We must learn all subjects with perseverance, bravely and diligently, adhere to the equal emphasis

on morality, intelligence and physical [training]. On this basis, we will build ourselves into a generation of qualified Buddhist successors who love the country and the [Buddhist] teaching.”

However, it should be kept in mind that leadership is far from being based only on education, and it involves different nuances, ranging from the possession of institutional to spiritual power, all of them sometimes even in conflict with each other.4

This “Special Supplement” of the Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies offers different perspectives on Buddhist leadership in contemporary China. Xuan/Krause start with an overview of how Buddhist leadership at the highest institutional level of the People’s Republic of China has been transformed over the last four decades within the BAC. In the second part, three biographical case studies give insights into different Buddhist careers. The portrayal of Ven. Dayuan 大愿 (1971–), presented by Hu-von Hinüber, begins with a general discussion of the question of leadership in Buddha’s teaching and focuses on “grassroots religious leaders” in contemporary China, in contrast to “official-like religious leaders”. The latter type can be perceived in the case study by Zhang, who analyses the popularity of Ven. Guangquan 光泉 (1961–). Among the female leaders in Buddhist China, Ven. Rurui 如瑞 (1957–) is characterised by Péronnet as a charismatic person who derives legitimation from famous nuns of the 20th century, but also from her loyalty to government institutions. In the last part, two case studies investigate the relation of the new generation to former generations of Buddhist masters. Wu analyses the top-down network of abbots and monasteries that evolved from the influence of Ven. Jinghui 净慧

3 Quoted from Fayin 法音 [Voice of Dharma] 1983: 35, as a response to the “Welcome Speeches” for the new students at the Buddhist Academy of China.

4 Compare the remark by Holmes Welch. 1967. The Practice of Chinese Buddhism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 151–152, 173, who reported about the first half of the 20th cent. that to become abbot required at least “five qualifications”, and who followed later: “The reason that abbots had to serve in several places concurrently or long beyond their time for retirement was not only the shortage of good men, but also because – let it be emphasised again – the best men did not want to be abbots at all.”
EDITORIAL

(1933–2013) on the basis of his brand called “Living Chan” (shenghuo chan 生活禅). In the sense of a bottom-up relation, Krause compares how current abbots represent themselves with regard to the legacy of Buddhist patriarchs of the distant past.

This collection of articles is aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the diverse expressions of Buddhist leadership in contemporary China and aspires to promote a long term investigation into the current as well as the following generations of Buddhist leaders. It would not have been possible without the workshop at the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies at Hamburg University in February 2020 (“When a New Generation Comes up: Buddhist Leadership and Lay People in Contemporary China”). I would like to thank all the scholars for their participation and valuable comments, i.e. Cao Yan 曹彦, Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber 胡海燕, Ji Zhe 汲喆, Kai Shmushko, Wu Yuanying 吴园英, Xuan Fang 宣方, and Zhang Jiacheng 张家成. My sincere gratitude also goes to the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies and the Glorisun Charity Foundation (Glorisun Buddhist Network) for supporting the workshop and part of the excellent translation and proofreading work by Dr. Michael Cavayero. Finally, I am greatly indebted to the Editorial Board of the Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies for their generous and professional contribution to make this publication possible.
Abstract

Beginning with the establishment of the Buddhist Association of China (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会, hereafter BAC) in the 1950s, Zhao Puchu served as its primary, long term leader until he passed away in 2000. After the Cultural Revolution, starting with the Fourth Council of the BAC in 1980, Zhao led the gradual revival of Chinese Buddhism. In 1987, during the Fifth Council of the BAC, he arranged plans for the succeeding lineup (i.e., the Third Echelon) of Buddhist leaders in China. Beginning with the Sixth Council of the BAC in 1993, figures of the post-Cultural Revolution generation gradually emerged. In 2002, the BAC’s Seventh Council marked the overall rise of this generation. In 2010, the Eighth Council showcased a significant power shift, with Buddhist leaders of the post-Cultural Revolution generation serving as the mainstream of the BAC’s leadership. This article selects several key figures who have emerged as leaders of the BAC since the 1980s. It examines the rise and fall of their trajectories and reveals the main factors in a long term transfer of power and influence.
Introduction

In 2015, when Xuecheng 学诚 (1966–), who was under the age of 50, became elected as President of the Ninth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会, hereafter BAC) at its General Assembly, many overseas observers of China’s religious community were astonished. They were surprised not only that Xuecheng was 34 years younger than his predecessor Chuanyin 传印 (1927–), who had served as BAC President since the Eighth Council, but also because the BAC had historically never appointed a president under the age of seventy-three (appendix 1). Considering Chinese Buddhism’s special attention to seniority, and therefore the usual priority given to senior monastics’ ranking, it seemed incredibly out of the ordinary to see Xuecheng take office as BAC President. This event made clear that a significant generational break and transfer of power was occurring at the leadership level of BAC, in that a monk born in the 1960s could overtake three generations of monks (born in the 1930s and 1950s) and take on the title of President from a predecessor born in the 1920s.

However, in mainland China, Xuecheng’s inauguration was already anticipated by those at the Buddhist community’s higher levels. Even to many ordinary Chinese Buddhists unfamiliar with the BAC’s selection process and, therefore, somewhat surprised, Xuecheng’s appointment still seemed reasonable. After all, he had been a constant figure in the Chinese Buddhist community’s higher echelons for over 22 years. In this respect, although this

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1 This article is based on a presentation given by Professor Xuan Fang at the workshop “When a New Generation Comes up: Buddhist Leadership and Lay People in Contemporary China” at the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies of the University of Hamburg (10/11 February 2020). It has gone through a process of co-authorship with Dr. Carsten Krause in Chinese as well as in the final English version. The article was translated into English by Dr. Michael Cavayero at Peking University.

2 Since there are a lot of monastics mentioned in this article, it was inconvenient to set “Ven.” (= “Venerable”, according to the Chinese convention of fashi 法师 = “Dharma master”) in front of each monk’s or nun’s Dharma name. Further, the Chinese monastics’ common “surname” Shi 释 (according to the historical Buddha’s original clan name Sākya, Chin. Shijia 释迦) would have been redundant and unusual in English (as well as many Chinese) publications. Nevertheless, the authors’ high esteem of each monastic should be kept in mind in reading this article. For the unfamiliar readers, it should be noticed that all the three-syllable names belong to secular persons, and among the two-syllable names only Youxiang 游骧 stands for a secular person.

3 Due to the Cultural Revolution, almost no Chinese Buddhist monks of the 1940s generation could be seen in the BAC leadership during this time.
shift of leadership seemed sudden to the outside world, to insiders it represented more of a bold turning point in the long-term transfer of power to the post-Cultural Revolution generation.

This paper aims to outline this transfer of power and thereby reveal some key links within it, especially some of the more sensational personal affairs and appointments of individuals that have occurred. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the internal logic of the BAC’s transfer of power and influence.

In light of the particular circumstances of Tibetan Buddhism and Southern Theravāda Buddhism in China, as well as the relatively sensitive nature of these subjects, limiting our access to certain materials for research, this article will focus on the role of Han-Chinese representatives within the leadership of the Chinese Buddhist community, and only extend the topic of discussion outside this area when necessary.

Moreover, concerning China’s contemporary era since the 1980s, sinologists have coined many familiar titles, such as the “Post-Cultural Revolution Era” (hou wenge shidai 后文革时代) and “Reform and Open-Door Period” (gaige kaifang shiqi 改革开放时期). In light of this, this paper adopts the term “Post-Cultural Revolution Era”, starting from the 1980s, to refer to two related yet distinct ideas: One, the period in which the leadership level of Chinese Buddhism shifted in power. Two, the period in which the particular group of Buddhist leaders that this paper examines matured and rose to power. Additionally, this paper also uses the term “Post-Zhao Puchu Era” (hou Zhao Puchu shidai 后赵朴初时代) to refer to Chinese Buddhism’s new era of development post-2000 and to address the critical role and unique significance of the long-term President Zhao Puchu (1907–2000) in this transfer of power and influence in Chinese Buddhist leadership.

In discussing Chinese Buddhist leaders in the Buddhist world, this article focuses specifically on the BAC organisation. It will not deal with leaders’ participation in other central or localised entities, including the People’s Congress, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) or other politically based or Buddhist based platforms, including provincial level Buddhist associations. The choice in content is not only to focus the discussion but also because the process of accessing internal promotion records of the People’s Congress and CPPCC remains far more complicated than that of the BAC. This issue is especially true for understanding the internal decision making process of such organisations, which presents many difficulties.

1.1 The Fourth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (1980): The Restoration of the Buddhist Association of China

In 1976 after the end of the Cultural Revolution, especially in 1977, when Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904–1997) returned to the political stage, and in 1978, following the 3rd Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, various areas of Chinese society, including the religious sphere, entered into a period of “reconfiguration”, characterised by the program of boluan fanzheng 拨乱反正, literally meaning “Eliminating Chaos and Returning to Normal”. In Sept. 1979, the National United Front Work Conference explicitly proposed

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3 In July 1978, the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee held a symposium for the heads of its departments in individual provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government. The meeting proposed initiatives to resolve pressing concerns, including religious freedom and open access to monasteries forming the “Report Requesting Instructions on Two Policy-related Matters in need of Urgent Resolve Concerning Current Religious Affairs” (Guanyu dangqian zongjiao gongzuozhong jixu jiejue de liangge zhengcexing wenti de qingshi baogao 关于当前宗教工作中急需解决的两个政策性问题的请示报告). In October of the same year, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China forwarded the request report in full entitled, “Central Party Issue (1978) No. 65” (Zhongfa [1978] 65 hao wenjian 中发〔1978〕65号文件), which became the starting point for reconfiguring religious affairs. In December 1978, the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee held the first National Religious Work Conference (Quanguo zongjiao gongzuo huiyi 全国宗教工作会议), since the Cultural Revolution ended: the Eighth National Religious Work Conference. This meeting proposed to restore the organisation and establishment of the State Council’s Bureau of Religious Affairs (since 1998 renamed as State Administration for Religious Affairs [SARA]) and those of all provinces and autonomous regions. Following this, various religious groups also began restoring normal operations. Finally, in January 1980, the Central Committee approved the Central United Front Work Department’s report on convening a national meeting for various religious groups. In the same year, various religions held national congresses, revised their constitution, and elected new leaders. Afterwards various religious groups successively established 164 provincial-level religious organisations and more than 2,000 county-level religious organisations.

that “There must be conditions created for religious groups and patriotic organisations to resume activity.” Following this, the BAC immediately revived its daily operations, and in Dec. 1980, after a gap of 18 years, convened the first General Assembly after Mao as a re-election conference for the BAC’s Fourth Council. At this meeting, Zhao Puchu, who had held concurrent posts as both Vice President and Secretary General of the BAC since before the Cultural Revolution and served as the operator de facto of the BAC, now became promoted to President of the BAC.

Two issues concerning the organisation and power distribution of the leadership of this Council of the BAC are worthy of attention:

One is that as both the new President and ongoing Secretary General of BAC, Zhao Puchu’s position represented an extremely unusual combination of power. Likewise, Zhao’s standing during this time also revealed that he maintained total authority over the leadership of BAC and enjoyed the full trust of the Party.

As for the BAC’s power structure, before the Cultural Revolution, the President’s role was often given to a highly esteemed monastic within the Buddhist community. In many ways, this title was more of a symbolic honour, while actual authority was in the Secretary General’s hands entrusted by the Party. The Fourth Council of the BAC continued in this kind of power

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7 See Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi zonghe yanjiuzu 1995.
8 The Third Council elected by the General Assembly of the BAC was constituted in June 1962. According to the regulations of “The Constitution of the BAC” at that time, the General Assembly should be held every three years. However, as the political situation became increasingly severe, continuing with that rule became more and more difficult and after 1962 finally impossible. For information on BAC before 1980, see Xue 2015: 435–463, Welch 1972: 17–25, also Zhao 1983: 13–21; Jinghui 1983: 34–51. For different aspects of the restoration process of the BAC in the post-Cultural Revolution era, see Chapter 8 “Zhongguo fojiao xiehui” [Buddhist Association of China], in Xue 2015: 463–481, and Krause 2019, Laliberté 2019.
9 Until the 1980s, the BAC’s Council was first elected by elite members within the clergy via internal consultations. After being approved by the United Front Work Department, candidates were finally formally elected by the General Assembly. Regarding the organisational structure of the BAC and the power distribution and evolution of the Council, Standing Council, President, Vice President, Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General positions, see the successive constitutions of the BAC. For the previous two “Constitution[s] of the BAC” see Xiandai foxue 1953: 16; Xiandai foxue 1957: 26. For the “Constitution[s] of the BAC” after the Third Council, see Fayin 1981: 12; Fayin 1987: 26–27; Fayin 1993: 26–27; Fayin 2002: 25–28; Fayin 2010: 24–26; Fayin 2015: 23–26, respectively.
10 See, in a similar way, the analysis by Welch 1972: 19, 23: “The staff was headed by [Zhao Puchu], who was secretary general during the whole life of the organisation. He was assisted by
distribution. However, since Zhao, despite being a lay Buddhist, now continued to hold the Secretary General post, and also occupied the Presidential post—a post which had until then been represented by eminent monastics, which demonstrated that his accumulated seniority and reputation within the Buddhist community had reached a height. This type of leader who combines prestige within a religious circle and actual power is not only unprecedented, but also remains unrepeated in recent years.11

Second, concerning the other Chinese Buddhist leaders constituting the leadership level, except for those who passed away, the leadership of the BAC’s Fourth Council remained almost entirely unchanged from the previous one (see Chart 2). These factors perfectly epitomised the fundamental characteristics of this Council—“Eliminating Chaos and Returning to Normal”—and restored the original power structure, namely what Deng Xiaoping referred to as “Restoring Old Policy” (huifu lao de zhengce 恢复老的政策).12 Nevertheless it is obvious that at this time the concern for preparing future Chinese Buddhist leaders, although already in sight, was not yet part of the official agenda.13

Two deputies, [Juzan] and [Guo Peng]. One gets the impression that these three men actually ran the [BAC] and that the president, vice presidents, standing committees, and council […] merely assented to what they did. If so, the preponderance of monks on the council did not assure (as in the case of the old CBA) that the association was dominated by the sangha. What dominated it was the Party […]. At least one trusted Party member was in the inner circle of this leadership […]. This was [Guo Peng] […].” As Welch later goes on (408): “[…] monks and nuns outnumbered the laity three or four times over in the [BAC] council, presumably as a token of the sangha’s leadership of Buddhism. Yet in the secretariat (where real power lay) laymen outnumbered monks two or three times over until 1962. By then enough trustworthy monks and nuns had been trained so that they could be allowed a majority in the secretariat too.”

11 For Zhao Puchu, see, among others, Ji 2017, Shen 2008, Xiao 2005, Zhu 2004. It is worth mentioning here that although most individuals in the BAC leadership, such as the Panchen Lama (1938–1989) and Juzan 巨赞 (1908–1984) were persecuted to varying degrees during the Cultural Revolution (some including President Sherab Gyatso [1884–1968] even being persecuted to death), Zhao Puchu remained one of the few figures in the leadership who was not persecuted. This is mainly due to Mao Zedong’s appreciation for Zhao Puchu’s poems and their use in China’s and the Soviet Union’s political struggle. In 1965, a year before the start of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong personally titled three Sanqu’s written by Zhao Puchu, “Mou gong sanku” 某公三哭 [The Three Cries of a Man], and delivered them to Renmin Ribao 人民日报 [People’s Daily] for publication. They were broadcast on the Central People’s Broadcasting Station for several days, causing a sensation. See Zhu 2004: 146–148.


13 During this meeting of the BAC, Deputy-General of the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee, Zhang Zhiyi 张执一 (1911–1983) gave an extensive discussion on
1.2 The Fifth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (1987): The Making of Successors in the Buddhist Community

At the General Assembly of the BAC held in 1987, the above situation began to change. The Fifth Council’s re-election of this year confirmed Zhao Puchu as President without any uncertainty. It also confirmed, without surprise, the monastics Zhengguo (1913–1987), Mingzhen (1902–1989), and the lay Buddhist Li Rongxi (1916–1997) as Vice Presidents (the Council promoted Li to Vice President in 1982).\textsuperscript{14} However, the list of Vice Presidents also included new faces such as the monastics Yuanzhuo (1909–1997), Longlian (1909–2006), and the lay Buddhist Zhou Shaoliang (1917–2005).

The emergence of these new faces in the leadership might be described as following popular expectations: Yuanzhuo represented a senior monastic of the Fujian Buddhist network and a key figure of Buddhism’s restoration in the Fujian region.\textsuperscript{15} Due to his role at that time in establishing the largest Buddhist scripture printing and circulation centres in the country (Guanghuasi fojing liutongchu 广化寺佛经流通处 [Buddhist Scripture Circulation Centre of Guanghua Monastery]), as well as the earliest local Buddhist Academy (Fujian foxueyuan 福建佛学院 [Fujian Buddhist Academy]) – among other achievements, several years before in 1983, the Council had already elected Yuanzhuo as a Standing Council Member. Longlian, at that time already known as “China’s No. One Bhikṣuṇī”, had been elected as the Deputy Secretary General of the BAC since 1962.\textsuperscript{16} Zhou Shaoliang was a well-known, erudite scholar, and came from a prominent family. His father, Zhou Shujia, had served as one of the founding members of the BAC. At the same time, Zhou Shaoliang, himself had been active since the BAC’s restoration as Director of the BAC’s Library of Buddhist Texts and Images (Fojiao tuwen guan 佛教图文馆).

the nurturing of successors in the Buddhist world. However, his address mainly focused on the question of the recruitment and training of talented young monks in general. Likewise, his words verified that the training of potential successors for leadership at the BAC’s highest level was not yet part of the Council’s formal agenda. See Zhang 2006: 359–379, especially 373–376.

\textsuperscript{14} Another important Vice President of the Han-Chinese Buddhist tradition, Juzan, had already passed away in 1984.

\textsuperscript{15} Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, Fujian has been a province with one of the largest number of monks and monasteries in China. This can be seen in a similar light as already discussed by Welch (1972: 18–20, 408), who brought up questions of influence and representativeness within the BAC’s Council of the 1950s and 1960s, mentioning, “other places with disproportionately high representation [like Shanxi, Sha’anxi, Henan, and Hebei], probably because they had historically important temples that were often shown to foreign visitors”.

\textsuperscript{16} On Longlian 隆莲, see Bianchi 2017, Qiu 2006, Qiu 1997, and Péronnet’s article in this issue.
During this time, the Vice Presidency of the BAC, much like before the Cultural Revolution, was more an honorary title given on the basis of seniority within the religious circle, and was not necessarily a position with direct implementing authority. As a lay Buddhist, Zhou Shaoliang ranked last among the three newly promoted Chinese Buddhist Vice Presidents, yet he possessed the most power. This situation was because current standing President Zhao, already in his eighties, would no longer hold the Secretary General’s concurrent post in this term. Thus Zhou, ten years his junior, took over the position.

In terms of his age difference, the more remarkable newcomer was 52-year-old Dao Shuren 刀述仁 (1935–), a lay Buddhist from the Theravada tradition, who, at this Assembly, became elected as both Vice President and Deputy Secretary General. This double position indicated that the post of Vice President was not merely a nominal title, but rather a sharing of actual power under the leadership of Zhao Puchu and Zhou Shaoliang. Early in 1980, Dao, who was only 45 years of age at the time, representing the Theravada Buddhist tradition, started to serve as a Council Member for BAC, and in 1983 he became re-elected as a Standing Council Member. At the top leadership level of the BAC, the age difference between Dao on the one side and the quite homogeneous group of senior peers on the other side represented a rather unusual arrangement.

It might be reasonable to say that the election of Zhou Shaoliang as Vice President and Secretary General was to lessen the burden of the then 80-year-old Zhao Puchu, but how do we explain the sudden promotion of Dao? To understand this question, we must find our answers via the Chinese Communist Party’s organisational policies of the time. After the palace coup ended the Cultural Revolution, senior leaders returned to their former positions, but many were too old to take-on heavy workloads. Even worse, looking at their potential successors, many were individuals who had gained profit from the Cultural Revolution and could not be entrusted with responsibility, or even needed to be examined and cleared out. Therefore, quickly identifying and promoting a reserve of younger talent as the “Third Echelon” (disan tidui 第三梯队) now

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17 For more on the Presidential ranking of this particular BAC Council, see: Fayin 1987: 35.
18 As Vice President, his title was often introduced as a “Full-time Vice President” (zhuanzhi fuhuizhang 专职副会长), thus distinguishing him from the other senior monks, who were given honorary Vice Presidential titles.
19 The Third Echelon refers to reserve cadres. The Central Political Bureau Standing Committee members such as Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun were regarded as the First Echelon. The frontline cadres of the central and local governments in charge of daily work such as Hu Yaobang
became an essential cadre policy. In July 1979, Deng Xiaoping emphatically noted:

“The big problem is that of successors. This problem exists in every department. Now we must make a conscious effort to select people who are relatively young. This task is the party’s fundamental and strategic duty. Our task within the next three years is to select one, two, three task-masters. Choose someone who is 40 or 50 years old, is in good health, and can work hard for eight hours. Now our veteran comrades must pay attention to appointing individuals based on their character, choosing outstanding individuals, not based on seniority.”

At that time, Chen Yun (1905–1995), another senior member of the Politburo, likewise, repeatedly appealed and personally wrote articles, emphasising that “Promoting and training young and middle-aged cadres is a top priority.” Under their strong impetus, the Third Echelon selection was fully launched after 1982 and reached its climax in 1985 and 1986. Dao’s sudden promotion to the leadership level represents the active implementation of this policy in the BAC. His emergence in the top leadership indicated that the BAC had finally placed on its agenda the cultivation of a new generation of leaders and transferred power between generations. Director of the Bureau of National Religious Affairs, Ren Wuzhi (1929–), who attended the meeting to issue instructions, pointed this out in his speech, stating:

“Colleagues of the older generations in the Buddhist community have worked closely with the Party for a long time. They firmly

and others were called the Second Echelon, and the reserve cadres who were to succeed in the future were called the Third Echelon. At the time, leaders of the CCP preferred using military terms to denote political ranking. Regarding the Third Echelon, see Lee 1989: 61–86. For recent Chinese publications, see also Chen 2013: 108–114; Gao 2014: 45–53, 124. On the whole topic of the concept of generations and transfer models in China, see an overview by Bo 2013, and the comprehensive bibliography by Schucher 2002.

Deng Xiaoping nianpu 2004: 537.
believe in the leadership of the Party and keep close contact with religious followers. They have attained a high level of prestige. Now, although many of them are old, they still play an essential role. In the future, while continuing to give agency to the role of the older generation of Buddhists, we should pay attention to cultivating and educating the younger generation, and promote mutual respect and strengthen unity in the Buddhist world. Only in this way can we enhance all aspects of Buddhism under the leadership of the Party.”

Limited by the amount of public information accessible, there remains no way for us to accurately assert whether choosing Zhou Shaoliang and Dao Shuren to share Zhao Puchu’s responsibilities and powers served as an interim solution or a carefully orchestrated arrangement. However, we know that unlike Zhao Puchu, Zhou and Dao did not possess rich experience or extensive influence in the Buddhist community, nor did they possess qualifications beyond their peers. Most importantly, they did not have the Party’s absolute trust, which Zhao had long cultivated. In particular, early in 1983, Zhao was promoted to Vice President of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, thus joining the ranks of the Party’s and country’s leaders. Therefore, whether or not this power distribution indicated the formation of a sequence of successors remains to be verified.

However, another post’s existence gave light to an even more apparent strategy for balancing power: Youxiang (1931–), who ranked last among the Deputy Secretary Generals of this Council, was a cadre party member. The intensification of party members’ direct engagement in the BAC leadership signified a shift in the Party’s control over religious affairs. This occurrence has become common in subsequent Councils. Nevertheless, due to restrictions in status, cadres like Youxiang that serve as party members in the BAC, and therefore have only political credentials and no religious pedigree, cannot serve at the highest level of the BAC.

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1.3 The Sixth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (1993): The Formation of a Succession Echelon and the Emergence of the Post-Cultural Revolution Generation

The Sixth Council elected by the BAC’s General Assembly in October 1993 provides a significant window in observing the transition of leadership.\textsuperscript{22} The re-election of Zhao Puchu as President at 86 years old, once again proved his unparalleled influence. Dao also was promoted in rank and power. He took over the post of Secretary General from the then 76-year-old Zhou Shaoliang. He now held the central position of power and was endowed with even more resources and influence.

Other significant changes to point out include a rise in the number of Chinese Buddhist leaders stepping into vice presidential posts. In addition to the re-election of Yuan Zhuo, Long Lian, Dao Shuren, Zhou Shaoliang, the lineup also included the monastics Mingyang 明旸 (1916–2002), Zhenchan 真禅 (1916–1995), Mingshan 茗山 (1914–2006), as well as the much younger Jinghui 净慧 (1933–2013), Yicheng 一诚 (1926–2017), and Shenghui 圣辉 (1951–). Despite their age differences, with the exception of Shenghui, these individuals still belonged to a generation ordained before the Cultural Revolution. Additionally, each of these new faces represented members of the monastic community rather than the Buddhist laity. Mingyang, Zhenchan, and Mingshan all came from famous urban monasteries. Their promotion reflected the beginning of the revival of urban Buddhism in the 1980s. Likewise, all of them were contemporaries of Zhou Shaoliang and yet with higher qualifications, which further diluted the possibility and legitimacy of Zhou’s promotion, despite his having seemingly been a frontrunner for President for a long time.

\textsuperscript{22} According to the regulations in the Constitution of the BAC at the time, this conference should have been held in 1991. However, Chinese society was still facing aftershocks from the June 4th, 1989 incident; this reason, along with the drastic changes occurring in the international situation between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in which religion played a significant role, caused the Party much fear and hesitation concerning religious affairs. Thus convening a General Assembly for re-elections seemed untimely. Even after Deng Xiaoping’s famous series of speeches in 1992 given on the Southern Tour to restart reforms, the Party’s political direction was still unclear. It was not until the Fourteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 1992 (Zhonggong shishi da 中共十四大), and the First Conference of the Eighth National People’s Congress (Dì ba jié guǎngguó rènmín dàibào dàhui di yī ci huìyì 第八届全国人民代表大会第一次会议) in March 1993, that the “Theory of Creating a Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” (Jianshe you zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi lìlùn 建设有中国特色社会主义理论), as a guiding ideology for national development, became clearly defined. These events thus provided a proper political atmosphere for the BAC’s General Assembly to take place.
However, two other younger, newly appointed Vice Presidents deserve more attention: Jinghui and Yicheng both represent disciples of Xuyun (*1840-1959), the first Honorary President of the BAC, who is also considered one of the Four Great Monks of modern China.23 Jinghui was known for his talent and thinking. Despite being criticised by many people in the Buddhist community for writing large-character posters criticising Xuyun in the 1950s24 and being doubted by the Party for leading students of the Buddhist Academy of China to support the Student Movement in 1989, he still became elected as Vice President. Jinghui’s rise demonstrated Zhao Puchu’s strong support for him, and that the followers of Xuyun had forgiven him for previous missteps and supported his promotion. These factors eventually elevated Jinghui to become the favorite candidate amongst his peers.25 Yicheng represented a monk with low education who was quite simple and not very eloquent. His election was more of a reward for his honest practice and his achievements as a temple administrator.26 Whereas at the time of the General Assembly in 1980, Yicheng was not even an ordinary representative, in 1987, at the time of the General Assembly’s election for the BAC’s Fifth Council, he had only become a general Council Member. Therefore, at least at the time, no one would have considered him a viable candidate to compete as a successor.

Apart from the individuals mentioned above, two other younger monks who, up to this date, were the only ones ordained after the Cultural Revolution in the early 1980s and among the newly elected Vice Presidents, require special attention: 41-year-old Vice President Shenghui and 27-year-old Deputy Secretary General Xuecheng. These two figures broke the age record by being elected so young and benefited from the Party’s more diverse selection policy. Although Shenghui ranked last in seniority among the other Vice Presidents,

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23 For English secondary literature about Xuyun and his legacy to the Buddhist revival in Post-Mao China, see, among others, Campo 2019, 2017.

24 These circumstances may explain why he was just an ordinary representative at the General Assembly of the Buddhist Association in 1980 and not even a Council Member. However, by 1987 he had already risen to Standing Council Member (changwu lishi 常务理事) in light of his outstanding talent.

25 For Jinghui, see Wang 2019 (revised version, Wang 2020 (forthcoming)), Li 2015. For English secondary literature on Jinghui, see Yang/Wei 2005, and also the article in the current publication by Wu Yuanying.

26 At the time, Zhenru Monastery, where Yicheng served as head abbot, was rated as one of the Top Three Model Monasteries in China (quanguo san da mofan conglin 全国三大模范丛林).
his age gave him the advantage to challenge his competitors.27 Xuecheng had become elected as the Abbot of the famous Guanghua Monastery in Putian five years earlier, in 1989. At the time, he had been only 23 years old, thus making him the youngest abbot in China and an instant celebrity in the Buddhist world. To date, no other monk has been able to surpass this record.28 By 1993, although Xuecheng could not directly enter the innermost circle of decision makers, his experience of being trained by and already taking part in top leadership put him at an advantage for future positions.

More importantly, the emergence of these two individuals serving in leadership roles made evident that the generation of monks ordained and cultivated after the Cultural Revolution had officially stepped onto the Chinese Buddhist leadership stage. Compared to the older generation of monastics that returned to posts after the Cultural Revolution, like Longlian (born in the 1900s–1910s), or middle-aged monks that were ordained before the Cultural Revolution but only became well-known after it, like Jinghui, this generation of monks represented a younger and more powerful faction that had emerged entirely after the Cultural Revolution ended.

Until now we have reviewed several individuals who represented potential successors: Zhou Shaoliang, who was once considered a frontrunner, Dao Shuren, who held most actual power at that time, Jinghui, who was still rising despite resistance, and the ambitious star of tomorrow, Shenghui.

However, it became apparent that as long as Zhao Puchu’s health was good he would continue his role as President, and the Party would support him. Therefore, this marathon of a fight for power had not yet reached its final run.

27 For diverse portraits of Shenghui, see, among others, the reports by Tang 2003; Yi 2003; Nanputuo zaixian 2007.


On May 21, 2000, Zhao Puchu, who served as one of the top leaders of the Chinese Buddhist world for half a century and became known to many as Elder Pu (朴老 “Pu Lao”), passed away, marking the end of an era.29

Zhao’s death intensified the competition for the presidency of the BAC. Dao Shuren, who was once considered the front-runner, now in comparison, became a relatively weakened competitor.30 For the first time, the two most viable competitors were members of the clergy: Jinghui and Shenghui. Both were determined to win and capitalise on their respective social networks and resources to forge a sprint for victory. In some cases, they even instigated (or condoned) attacks on each other’s credibility.

In the end, this struggle for power, which had already lasted nearly ten years, culminated in the convening of the Seventh Council of BAC’s General Assembly in 2002:31 Perhaps it was exhaustion from the mutual fighting between the

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29 That night, many Buddhist scholars based in Beijing, including one of the authors of this article, met up in a Beijing hotel to welcome scholars from Taiwan. While together, one of the more well-connected scholars went to answer a call. After returning, with a solemn expression on his face, he told the others: Elder Pu had passed away. The joyous laughter of the night suddenly fell silent. Everyone realised that an era was over. The festivities, which initially had been planned to last until midnight, ended early. Twenty years later, this scene still remains impressed in one’s mind.

30 This is mainly because he comes from Yunnan, whose economy is backward and whose local government did not have enough strength and foresight to support him in competing for the highest leadership position in the Buddhist world. His role as a lay Buddhist of the Theravada tradition in a Buddhist world, where the revival of Han-Chinese Buddhism and the rise of monk-based thinking are priorities, also presented undeniable constraints.

31 Much like the last re-election Assembly, this re-election Assembly was also long overdue. According to the Constitution of the BAC, the General Assembly should have been held in 1997. However, out of respect for Zhao Puchu, who was aging, it was postponed until after his death. The ensuing intense competition for the presidency, and the government’s indecisiveness in picking candidates for potential succession all significantly delayed the meeting. The choice to hold the General Assembly in September 2002 was to finalise the re-election before the next re-election of the National People’s Congress and the National Committee of the CPPCC. This decision ensured that the newly elected BAC delegates could receive appropriate governmental placement at these
two sides that led to the United Front Work Department of the CCPCC finally selecting the honest Yicheng as President. On the surface, this represented a third-party benefit. Nevertheless, this Council’s first resolution explicitly stated, “Vice President Shenghui is to assist in all daily Presidential affairs.” In this sense, Shenghui resumed more actual power. However, this arrangement also included a particular compromise that protected Jinghui’s reputation and pedigree. At least it was his fellow senior classmate rather than a competitor who was taking on the role of President.

Concerning the attention grabbing fight for the presidency, in the long run another change proved more noteworthy. Among the nine newly elected Vice Presidents of BAC who represented the Chinese Buddhist tradition, six were what we have referred to as the “post-Cultural Revolution” generation. Additionally, among the freshly appointed Deputy Secretary Generals, three were also of this generation. Up to this point, among the thirteen Vice Presidents in the BAC’s new lineup (apart from the odd inclusion of a lay Buddhist calligrapher), only four were pre-Cultural Revolution generation figures (Yicheng, Jinghui, Mingxue, Gentong). In comparison, the post-Cultural Revolution generation now provided eight of the Vice Presidents.

As for the roles of Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General, except for Party members and cadres, all were post-Cultural Revolution generation monks, thus marking the full rise of the post-Cultural Revolution generation to holding undeniable power in the BAC leadership. At the same time, we also see that the future star of the last ten years, Xuecheng, continued to rise steadily. During this period, he already held concurrent posts as Vice President of two other major meetings. The scheduling also took into account that the provincial-level People’s Congresses and the CPPCC General Meetings would be held at the end of 2002 and early 2003, so that September 2002 was already an intense time.

32 In the Vice Presidential lineup, he was, unusually, ranked first among the Han-Chinese monastics, ahead of Dao Shuren and Jinghui, both of whom had been elected earlier.

33 Except for one lay Buddhist, the other eight individuals came from the Four Famous Mountains (si da mingshan 四大名山) or some of China’s other most famous monasteries. Among them, Xuecheng (1966–), Jieren 戒忍 (1959–), Yongshou 永寿 (1963–), Yongxin (1965–), Mingsheng 明生 (1960–), and Juexing 觉醒 (1970–) represented monastics of the post-Cultural Revolution generation.

34 Huaishan 怀善 (1947–, ordained in 1985), Rurui 如瑞 (1957–), Zhaocheng 照诚 (1967–).

35 Liu Bingsen 刘炳森 (1937–2005), a calligrapher who had previously never even been a general member of the BAC, suddenly appeared on the lineup of BAC Vice Presidents. This incident caused much criticism and private discussion in the Buddhist community.
and Secretary General. As pointed out earlier, the Secretary General holds a crucial role in the actual implementation of power. Xuecheng’s occupation of this position made him the frontrunner amongst his generation of monks born in the 1960s for the future highest leadership position in the Buddhist world.

This lineup of the BAC also began a subsequent shift in the proportion of figures from the Chinese Buddhist tradition in leadership roles, surpassing that of Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist representatives. This discrepancy has continued to widen in subsequent sessions.

2.2 The Eighth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (2010): A Lasting President and the Transition of the Post-Cultural Revolution Generation into the Mainstream

Although never stated publicly, it was well known that the poorly educated, poorly spoken, and ailing Yicheng would only serve as a transitional figure and that the next Council would produce a real successor. Shenghui seemed to be the best candidate; this was probably the general perception in the Buddhist world.36 Thus wherever Shenghui went, he was treated much like a BAC President, with many monks approaching him to become his disciples and appointed abbots inviting him to attend their inaugurations as “send-off” (songzuo 送坐) instructor.37 Shenghui possessed the ambition and courage to take on the role, actively leading the BAC’s daily operations,38 and expanding his influence in various places by promulgating the Dharma.

36 For Shenghui’s promising career, see Pacey 2016: 427, who quotes Ashiwa 2009 and Wank 2009, as follows: “Shenghui was a graduate of the Chinese Buddhist Academy, which according to Yoshiko Ashiwa (2009: 66) ‘is subject to strong political guidance by the Party and collaborates closely with it.’ It furthers the Party’s desire to cultivate Buddhists who ‘in terms of politics, ardently love the motherland, [and] support the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist system.’ […] According to Ashiwa (2009: 66), Shenghui ‘represents a generation, in their twenties to forties, that was mostly educated in the aforementioned China Buddhist Academy and understands completely the position of ‘normal’ religion in the state system and ideology.’ As Wang (2009: 126) explains, ‘normal’ religions accept Party leadership, work toward state goals, and are therefore ‘patriotic’. ‘Shenghui ‘projected the imperious air of a cadre, and was, therefore, both respected and feared’ (Wank 2009: 143).” On Shenghui’s work as Abbot of Nanputuo Monastery and rector of the Buddhist College of Minnan (Minnan foxueyuan 闽南佛学院), see also Ashiwa/Wank 2019: 6–8.

37 Sending off a newly appointed monk to his “seat” as abbot is an important segment in an abbot’s inauguration ceremony. During the ceremony, a venerated senior monastic symbolically serves as a witness and offers verification concerning the newly appointed monk’s promotion to abbot.

38 For example, he approved BAC documents that publicly criticised a famous monastery. This monastery’s abbot was Yicheng’s senior fellow monk and a venerated senior monk in the Buddhist community.
However, changes occurred suddenly. In the second half of 2006, Shenghui abruptly left Beijing, and his formidable steps towards the Presidency seemed to come to an abrupt end. In light of this, the BAC’s General Assembly, which planned to resume in 2007, was postponed indefinitely.\(^{39}\)

Shenghui’s sudden marginalisation from the center of power brought huge shock waves to the Buddhist world,\(^{40}\) causing the lineup of successors that had become more apparent in recent years to once again become chaotic and ambiguous. Both the Buddhist community and the government authorities needed time to clear the chaos caused by this. Thus the BAC’s General Assembly for electing its Eighth Council convened slowly, finally being held in February 2010.

At the Eighth Council of that year’s General Assembly, the 83-year-old Chuanyin unexpectedly replaced Yicheng as the new President. Before this, Chuanyin had not even been Vice President of the BAC – though he served as President of the Buddhist Association of Beijing for 11 years and Vice President of the Buddhist Academy of China since the mid-1980s. Together with his fellow senior classmate Yicheng, Chuanyin was also a disciple of Xuyun, making him the nominal ninth-generation successor of the Weiyang 楂仰 lineage of the Chan school, in addition to being an actual practitioner of the Pure Land school. In the 1990s, with the passing of more and more Republic of China era figures such as, Juzan, Zhengguo, Mingzhen, and others (all of whom had affiliated with Taixu’s 太虚 (1890–1947) reform-oriented thinking),\(^{41}\) the voice of the reformist that largely dominated the orientation and development of Chinese Buddhism during the 1980s, gradually declined. This decline allowed the traditional factionists to gain authority steadily.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{39}\) Concerning the cause of this incident, there is still no public information disclosed. However, it can be inferred that even the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) leaders only noticed the development of the situation in its final stage. Likewise, not long before, the SARA was actively preparing for the re-election Assembly of the BAC.

\(^{40}\) The negative impact this incident had on the middle and higher levels of the Buddhist community was comparable to, or even worse than, those impacts that had affected senior CCP officials that same year, specifically, the impacts caused by Chen Liangyu 陈良宇 (1946–), who was a member of the core circle of power in China, including the Politburo and the Party Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. A Provincial-level Buddhist Association Vice President even compared this incident to the psychological shock caused by the Lin Biao incident.

\(^{41}\) For Taixu, see, among others, Pittman 2001. On his reform-oriented legacy, including the so-called “Humanistic Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教) which has played a central role in Zhao Puchu’s concept of a Buddhist revival, see Ji 2017, Krause 2019.

\(^{42}\) Compare with the reports of Welch 1972: 409 about former times when, at the councils of 1957 and 1962, “the [BAC] was intended by the regime […] perhaps to reflect the opinions of the conservative majority of the nation’s Buddhists. Few members can be identified as clerical
Shenghui maintained his seat at the BAC top leadership; however, this time, he ranked behind Dao Shuren, closely followed by Jinghui and Xuechong—a sequence established entirely upon age seniority and honour.

Xuechong’s power and status continued to rise. On the announced list of Vice Presidents, his name included an obvious addition: “(He) is to reside at the Association and assist the President in his affairs.” Although Xuechong’s new role was not as high-profile as Shenghui’s, which, in 2002, had been announced explicitly on behalf of an “Assembly Resolution” (huiyi jueyi 会议决议), its significance was apparent to all leaders within the Buddhist community.

At the same Council, unsurprisingly, more members of the post-Cultural Revolution generation emerged on the stage. In addition to the previous Council, that included Yongshou, Yongxin, Mingsheng, and Juexing, an additional nine individuals representing Chinese Buddhist monks ordained as the post-Cultural Revolution generation joined the ranks of Vice President.43 With the addition of another seven newly appointed as Deputy Secretary Generals,44 the Post-Cultural Revolution generation gradually took over as the backbone of the BAC leadership.45

However, a significant change included, for the first time, that the Secretary General’s post was also to be assumed by a high-level official of the SARA, symbolising a new stage in the government’s control of the daily operations of the BAC.

reformers or radicals and their number did not increase. […] Throughout the history of the [BAC] a good proportion of the council consisted of persons who had been well known as traditional Buddhists before 1949.”

43 They include: Rurui 如瑞 (1957–), who at the last Council, served as Deputy Secretary General, and now became promoted to Vice President, Zhanru 湛如 (1968–), Miaojiang 妙江 (1952–), Xincheng 心澄 (1963–), Daoci 道慈 (1953–), Chunyi 纯一 (1964–), Zhengci 正慈 (1971–), Yinshun 印顺 (1970–), Zengqin 增勤 (1962–). Among these, Miaojiang was ordained during the Cultural Revolution, but completed his training in the precepts in 1981.


45 Those suddenly disappearing from this Council’s leadership lineup included Vice President Jieren and Deputy Secretary General Zhaocheng. Both of their withdrawals were for different reasons. However, both were related to similar tensions in their relations with the local government.
2.3 The Ninth Council of the Buddhist Association of China (2015): Completing the Generational Transition and Unifying the Post-Cultural Revolution Generation

In 2015, the General Assembly for the BAC’s Ninth Council convened as scheduled, marking the first time it had done so since the BAC’s reinstatement in 1980, and before its establishment in 1953. This point alone signified that this election would present no surprises and that the central governmental departments in charge had already decided on a candidate.

At the Assembly, 49-year-old Xuecheng was elected as the youngest President in the history of the BAC and the first monk born of the post-Cultural Revolution era to serve as President. In reality, this event, which surprised many followers overseas, was no surprise to insiders in China, familiar with official circles’ operations.

From his election as the Deputy Secretary General in 1993 to that of Vice President and Secretary General in 2002, and then to Vice President and assistant to the President in 2010, and finally to President in 2015, Xuecheng’s entire career trajectory perfectly accorded to the system of promotion established by the ruling Party to train candidates. In the Party’s terms, this was a “one step at a time” (yībù yīgè jiàoyīn 一步一个脚印) process. Except for the Party’s initial, more unconventional decision to promote Xuecheng, his promotion here was now seen as nothing but expected. Likewise, Xuecheng was already widely recognised within the Buddhist world: the three monasteries where he served as abbot (Guanghua Monastery in Putian, Famen Monastery in Baoji, Longquan Monastery in Beijing), and the three Buddhist Academies where he served as headmaster (Fujian Buddhist Academy, Buddhist Academy of Famen Monastery, Buddhist Academy of China) all received praise for their methods of teaching and learning. In particular, the Buddhist community credited Xuecheng for his role in leading the Longquan Monastery in Beijing to make efforts for the modernisation of Buddhism, which gained tremendous attention and praise at home and abroad, both inside and outside the Buddhist community.47

46 The constitutions of the First and Second General Assemblies of the BAC both stipulated that a National General Assembly was to be held every three years. Concerning the rules of the first two Councils, see Xiandai foxue 1953: 16; Xiandai foxue 1957: 26. Beginning with the Third Council, the rules stipulated that re-elections should take place every four years, see Fayin 1981: 12; Fayin 1987: 26–27; Fayin 1993: 26–27. Starting with the Seventh Council, the rules stipulated that re-election Assemblies would be held every five years, see Fayin 2002: 25–28; Fayin 2010: 24–26; Fayin 2015: 23–26.

47 On Xuecheng, see Chen 2015: 67–72. For an article published on social media about the
At the same time, a decisive change had emerged in the BAC’s leadership level: the number of individuals of the Chinese Buddhist tradition serving as Vice Presidents now reached a record number of twenty, all figures of the post-Cultural Revolution generation. Likewise, amidst the line-up of Vice Presidents, the ratio of Chinese Buddhist representatives to non-Chinese Buddhists was now twenty: twelve. At the beginning of the BAC’s reinstatement in 1980, the ratio was three: five (appendix 2). This shift indicated that beginning in the 1980s (when non-Chinese Buddhist figures occupied the majority of leadership roles) until the 1990s, the ratio was roughly equal. However, following this, in 2000, the number of Chinese Buddhists completely surpassed the other groups, thus widening the gap. These factors reflected the rise of a strong revival of Chinese Buddhism and its authority, and local governments offering increased support to local representatives’ presence in BAC’s leadership.

At this point, the long process of the transfer of power that began in the 1980s slowly reached a culmination. After the fall of many candidates, Xuecheng, who was hand-picked and carefully reared by the ruling Party, gloriously emerged on the stage amidst the cheers of the Buddhist world and general public, and with the support of the international public. From the second decade of the 21st century, the post-Cultural Revolution generation occupied the historical stage. Minus some competitors who were either defeated or marginalised during the competition, almost all were happy with the outcome.

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story of Xuecheng and Longquan Monastery, which has become widely circulated and has accumulated over one million views, see Shiyi 2016. The post has since been deleted. However, it continues to circulate on the internet through a large number of re-posts, such as http://t.cn/A6ypPqWH. About the far reaching impact of Xuecheng’s modernisation activities which started from, but also went far beyond the circle of Longquan Monastery, Fan 2015: 12–13, resumes: “[...] as Ji (2012) argues, Longquan Monastery’s service to political interests may subvert its traditional legacy and exacerbate the delicate process of Buddhist secularisation, ‘resulting in a desacralisation of religion, and loss of control by Buddhism of its own resources’ (p. 15). It is still debatable, however, whether secularisation and the use of technology remain a blessing or a curse, or whether they signal a revival or disconnection from ancient Buddhist roots. [...] Overall, through the discursive sequence and prioritised technological access, the Longquan’s website promotes the advantages of modern Buddhism, and strategically and rhetorically positions the very monastery and its leadership in the process.” See also McCarthy 2019: 88-92.

48 Compare also with the analysis of Welch 1972: 18–19, 408, concerning the 1962’s council membership: “Some 40-50 per cent of the council members came from minority nationalities, though these amounted to but 6 per cent of China’s population [...] The purpose was, of course, to counteract separatism in outlying areas.”
However, in August 2018, Xuecheng resigned unexpectedly due to a sex scandal. This incident served almost like an imminent ‘blow to the head’ for the momentum and development of Chinese Buddhism, functioning as a profound wake-up call. The event also deeply reflected the inherent shortcomings present in the election process of Buddhist leadership. The consequences of this event are also reflected in the current situation, which shows the BAC’s daily business being led, temporarily, by Vice President Yanjue (1955–) and Zongxing (1973–), both of whom belong to the post-Mao generation and who were ordained in 1982 and 1990, respectively. While they only function as provisional “deputies” for a President, who is still to be determined, on the eve of the BAC’s General Assembly to take place in late 2020, both of them appear to be viable candidates for the position.

Although the official documents are usually rather uninteresting, and present only the outcome, patient interpretation can reveal the logic behind them.

3. Examining the Factors Affecting the Rise and Fall of Power

Reviewing the power transfer process (appendix 3), it is not difficult to see that various factors affect or even determine the rise and fall of a specific individual’s power. These factors mainly include the recommendation by authoritative figures, the overall influence exerted by each individual’s unique personality, the broader network he represents, the strong endorsements by local governments, and the Party’s degree of participation in balancing affairs in the religious sphere.

3.1 Recommendations from Authoritative Figures

The restoration of the BAC in the post-Cultural Revolution era represented a natural part of the policy “Eliminating Chaos and Returning to Normal”, which entailed that senior members return to their original posts of power. Zhao Puchu’s qualifications in the religious world, and his cooperation with the Communist Party as early as the Anti-Japanese War, made his combination of religious and political authority far exceed that of his peers in the Buddhist community. Further, his influence on policy within the Party far transcended his titular role as BAC President or even the roles of cadre members in the State Administration of Religious Affairs. In this regard, Zhao Puchu’s influence over the BAC’s state

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49 For some commentary on this incident, see Xuan 2019.
of affairs and power structure during the 1980s and 1990s can be considered as unmatched. The entrance of Zhou Shaoliang and Dao Shuren into the circle of power, along with their unconventional promotion of Xuecheng (approving him as Abbot at the age of 23 and Deputy Secretary General at the age of 27) can all be attributed to the weight of Zhao’s influence.

In the Post-Zhao Puchu Era, there is no longer a figure with such amassed power who plays a similarly decisive role in the overall power structure of the BAC. However, in certain areas, this situation has not entirely disappeared. For example, Dao Shuren still holds a similar influence on the selection of leaders of Theravada Buddhism. During the General Assembly of the BAC for the election of its Ninth Council in 2015, Zhao Dengdai 诏等傣 (1974–), who had only served as a Buddhist Association President at the city-county-level, became Vice President of the BAC overnight. Before this, he had not even served as an ordinary Council Member of the BAC. This promotion out of the blue caused considerable controversy, even within the Theravāda Buddhist community itself. Nevertheless, under Dao Shuren’s strong endorsement, this young Theravāda monk was elected without interference.

As powerful figures age, especially in light of the ruling Party paying more attention to the institutionalisation and standardisation of the BAC’s leadership, and showing efforts to prevent a mere minority of influential figures within the inner Buddhist circle making arbitrary changes based on personal benefit, the possibility of the above situation has become less and less likely to reoccur, at least within the coming decade.

3.2 The Combined Power of the Individual and the Related Monastic Network

In the Post-Zhao Puchu Era, with the absence of influential patriarchal figures in place, competition for leadership positions among Buddhist elites now more than ever relies on the combined strength of the individual and the related network. This strength is reflected, first, in the influence and resources of the monasteries, line of transmission(s), or sect(s) the individual is affiliated with,

50 Concerning Zhao Dengtai’s credentials, see Sun 2016.
51 Another kind of recommendation/endorsement that does not have as much strength, but occurs more commonly and will be taken seriously by the Party, is when a senior monastic who has served as the Vice President for several consecutive terms suggests who should succeed in the leadership. Although it is common to hear rumors of such instances during interviews, there is currently not enough conclusive evidence for further discussion on this particular topic.
while less attention is paid to the individual’s cultivation, administrative ability, and cultural and political literacy. In this sense, a so-called candidate’s capital and strength are measured as the combined total of the individual’s religious, cultural, economic and political capital.

An example of this includes the newly appointed Vice President and Deputy Secretary General monks of the Seventh Council of the BAC. Each of these figures came from famous monasteries with long legacies.\(^{52}\) Similarly, at the Eighth Council of the BAC, after former Vice Presidents (Gentong 根通 (1928–2015), Jieren 戒忍 (1959–)) retired, Miaojiang 妙江 (1952–) and Daoci 道慈 (1953–), who were representing the same two famous sites as the leaving Vice Presidents, namely Mount Wutai and Mount Putuo, logically took their places. Another example that illustrates the importance of one’s line of transmission is that of Jinghui. Although Jinghui lost the competition for the Presidency to Shenghui, the two consecutive Presidents of the BAC’s Seventh and Eighth Councils were fellow disciples of Jinghui. Despite these two Presidents being relatively weak and indifferent figures, their identity, as direct disciples of Xuyun, aided by the importance of Xuyun’s legacy in the revival of contemporary Chinese Buddhism, worked in combination with their religious integrity, giving them enough legitimacy to become elected. These examples prove the importance of the monasteries, line of transmission, or sect represented by candidates vying for leadership positions.

\(^{52}\) Mingxue 明学 (1923–2016) comes from the most famous site of the Pure Land school lineage in modern times, Lingyan Mountain Monastery 灵岩山寺. Gentong, Jieren, and Yongshou come from China’s four most famous Mountain temples, Mount Wutai, Mount Putuo, and Mount E’mei, respectively. Yongxin comes from Shaolin Monastery 少林寺, and Mingsheng 明生 comes from Guangxiao Monastery 光孝寺, the Chan school’s lineage site. Juexing and Zhaocheng both come from famous monasteries in Shanghai. Rurui’s situation is a little more special. Although the Pushou Monastery where she comes from is also part of Mount Wutai, her election was based on her distinguished record and because she was the most famous of the bhikṣunīs within her age group.

\(^{53}\) Although urban Buddhism was restored first after the Cultural Revolution and has always maintained strong momentum, it was the mountain-based Buddhist network established by Xuyun that, interestingly, was more responsible for cultivating groups of talented traditional Buddhist figures. Likewise, in the early stages, Xuyun’s Buddhist network played a more significant role in the revival of Chinese Buddhism, see also Campo 2019, 2017. The reason for this can be summed up by the famous contemporary lay Buddhist Nan Huaijin 南怀瑾 (1918–2012), who said, Xuyun, preserved a leg for the Chinese Buddhist community. In other words, this network’s familiarity concerning Chan’s tradition made its affiliates very sought after among the various sangha groups in China.
However, with the advancement of China’s reform and open door policy, and the building of its market economy, the importance of an individual’s overall strength has continued to become more critical amongst elite Buddhist circles. Some figures who entered the leadership of the Eighth Council of BAC help shed light on this point. Zhanru 湛如 (1968–), who, for example, was elected here as the Vice President, and became the Standing Vice President of the Buddhist Academy of China, did not have the endorsement of any famous teacher or monastery but instead was a professor at Peking University. This affiliation allowed him to obtain enough political, financial, and cultural traction to enter the core circle of leadership.

Another relatively minor figure, Xiao Zhanjun 肖占军 (1965–), Vice President of the Buddhist Association of Hebei, who is among the leadership level but not in its core circle, also helps us understand this system of promotion better. Xiao, who did not serve as a member in the previous Council of the BAC, still managed to become elected as Deputy Secretary General during this Assembly. The financial resources and social network he obtained through his charitable work helped Xiao Zhanjun land his promotion. However, soon afterwards he fell drastically, due to his involvement in a corruption scandal. Such examples of individuals with low qualifications and no reputation, who appear in the leadership of the BAC and then disappear in a flash, give us a glimpse of both the effects and limitations of individuals with sufficient overall capital.

3.3 Strong Support from Local Governments: Central-Local Relations and Divisions of Power

Compared with the overall strength of the individual and the affiliated monastery/network, the will of the local government emerges as an even more powerful factor, especially in the more traditionally Buddhist provinces such as Fujian, Zhejiang, and Guangdong, known for their many famous, historical monasteries. These provinces’ Buddhist communities are also full of talented elites, many of whom have the strength and qualifications to enter the arena of power competition. Such circumstances easily lead to occasions when the local government’s recommendation and support can become a deciding factor in one’s success.

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54 Concerning the rise and fall of Xiao Zhanjun, see Guo 2017.
A typical case is that of Xuecheng, who, under the strong support of the Fujian’s Provincial Party and government departments, served as President of the Buddhist Association of Fujian from 1998 until his fall from grace in 2018, a total of 20 years. The local government gave Xuecheng strong support in his campaign for the BAC Presidency.

Another typical case is the firm support of the Party and government departments of Hunan Province given to Shenghui. Even after Shenghui returned to Hunan from Beijing in 2006, this support remained.

The most typical example is that of Zhaocheng (1967–), who was elected as the Shanghai delegate to serve as the Deputy Secretary General of the Seventh Council of the BAC. During his appointment in the Eighth Council, he lost this seat by committing misconduct towards the local government (even falling from second place among the Shanghai representatives in the BAC’s Seventh Standing Council, to last place in the Eighth Council). However, he regained his seat in the Ninth Council as a delegate of Liaoning. From this example, we can see the role local governments play in determining the leadership of the BAC and the competitive relationship between local governments for the leadership of the BAC.55

In the era of the market economy, local governments are increasingly aware that they can transform Buddhism’s historical and cultural resources into economic resources such as promoting tourism and local popularity. For this purpose, to support the promotion of local Buddhist talents in the leadership of the BAC can likewise contribute to the local economy’s boosting development. Thus local governments recognise this system as a mutually beneficial relationship.

3.4 The Central Government’s Selection Criteria: A Macro Perspective and the Shift of the Party’s Strategic Goals in the Religious Field

However, the influence of local governments on candidates for BAC leadership remains limited to the Vice President and Deputy Secretary General. As for selecting candidates of the most critical President and Secretary General positions, the Central Government, specifically the United Front Work Department of the CCPCC, holds the most decision-making power, though the final decision-making powers operate at an even higher level.

55 Regarding the competitive relations amongst local governments and their significant impact on local development, see Zhou/Tan 2014; Zhou 2007: 36–50.
Since the official archives have never been made public to retrace the selection of Buddhist leaders, we have no way of knowing the United Front Work Department’s actual selection process, which operates as the Party’s highest authority concerning the field of religious affairs. However, according to public documents, leaders’ selection is based on their “Political reliability, religious accomplishments, moral attitude towards service for the people, and effectiveness during critical times (zhengzhi shang kaodezhu, zongjiao shang you zaozhi, pinde shang neng fucong, guanjianshi qi zuoyong 政治上靠得住、宗教上有造诣、品德上能服众、关键时起作用).” Although these criteria are relatively general, it is clear that individuals, who comply with the Party during times of political change and likewise maintain strong reputations in the religious world, are considered the ideal candidates for leadership. Much like Zhao Puchu, who managed to stay in office for a long time. Such factors further explain why in Zhao Puchu’s lifetime, the Party considered no other candidates to take his place as BAC President.

In the Post-Zhao Puchu Era, Buddhism’s underlying political functions remain unchanged, and it is still an integral part of the ruling Party’s united front, serving its political goals. However, changes in the times have caused the Party’s expectations of Buddhism’s social function to shift. “Buddhism is no longer dominated by the traditional ideology of being a marginalised component of the united front; rather, it is becoming a more pragmatic instrument for maintaining social stability, operating through a combination of pragmatism and ideology.”

56 See a similar question of transparency with regard to the much lower level of the BAC’s Council members’ selection in the 1950s, described by Welch 1972: 19: “We may infer, therefore, that delegates to national [assemblies] were selected, not elected from each locality. Who selected them was never revealed. In all likelihood, it was the Party’s religious affairs apparatus, working in consultation with Buddhist leaders.”

57 The earliest official document to include these standards was Hu Jintao’s speech at the National United Front Work Conference on July 10, 2006; see Hu 2006: 71. At that time, the expression was, “Politically reliable, religiously accomplished, and morally convincing.” In 2008, following the turmoil caused by ethnic and religious relations in Xinjiang, Hu Jintao later added the clause, “effective in critical times”. This set of criteria differs from the one which has been promoted in Buddhist circles right from the beginning of the religious revival, i.e., given in Zhao Puchu’s speech on the thirtieth occasion anniversary of the Buddhist Academy of China in 1986. In this context, he compared the Four Vows (si hong shiyuan 四宏誓愿) in Buddhism with the government’s Four Havings (si you 四有). However, his remarks were encouraging the audience to become good “Buddhist Citizens”, not specifically referring to the training of Buddhist leaders, see Zhao 1986.

58 See Xuan 2007.
Buddhism’s effectiveness is precisely why the United Front Work Department now considers more trade offs when choosing Buddhist leaders. Factors like who can serve the overall economic and social development, and guide religious leaders and followers to actively promote economic and social development, become essential considerations for candidacy. Likewise, in light of Buddhism’s increased influence in social development, its rise in autonomy, and also the growing self-consciousness of its community of monastics, the Party tends to avoid candidates prone to provoking controversy. All of these factors have become undeniable considerations in the selection of Buddhist leaders of the Post-Zhao Puchu Era.

Further, because lay Buddhists cannot exercise authority according to the Buddhist community’s internal ethical system, lay Buddhists are no longer seen as suitable candidates for the BAC Presidency. Similarly, monks who possess over bearing personalities, such as Shenghui, even if their leadership and administration skills are adequate, are also seen as unsuitable for the Presidency because their behaviour is likely to cause a backlash. Thus, as the Post-Zhao Puchu Era’s experience demonstrates, those who have become presidents were considered relatively unthreatening before being elected.
Conclusion

Starting with its establishment in the 1950s, Zhao Puchu served as the BAC’s primary long-term leader until he passed away in 2000. After the Cultural Revolution, beginning with the BAC’s Fourth Council in 1980, Zhao led the gradual revival of Chinese Buddhism. In 1987, at the General Assembly to elect the Fifth Council, he personally arranged plans for the future lineup of the BAC’s leadership. Starting with the Sixth Council, elected in 1993, the post-Cultural Revolution generation of Buddhist leaders gradually emerged. However, it was not until the Seventh Council elected by the General Assembly in 2002, following the death of Zhao Puchu, that the historic opportunity to select Buddhist leaders representing the post-Cultural Revolution generation appeared. At the BAC’s re-election Assembly for the Eighth Council in 2010, the post-Cultural Revolution generation finally took over the BAC’s mainstream leadership. Finally, in 2015, during the Ninth Council re-elections, the post-Cultural Revolution generation occupied the entire lineup.

The rise of the post-Cultural Revolution generation of Chinese Buddhism has played an integral part in the revival of contemporary Chinese Buddhism. Thus, this generation’s rise offers a crucial perspective for understanding Chinese Buddhism’s revival process. Like the entire Buddhist revival movement, the rise of elite Buddhists of the post-Cultural Revolution generation, regardless of means, process, or their ultimate degree of success, has always remained subject to contemporary China’s political, economic, and cultural conditions. These factors have, likewise, always depended on the strong leadership of the government. While the central and local governments continuously control the selection and promotion of Buddhist leaders, authoritative figures trusted by the government can also play an essential role in the power structure. Under such conditions, the overall strength of individuals and their affiliated monasteries and networks has become an increasingly important competitive factor. However, all of this is subject to the Party’s overall goals concerning religious endeavours in the context of its newly invented “Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (Xi Jinping xin shidai zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi sixiang). This new policy also leads to questions regarding what the current generation of Buddhist leaders have learned from their paths to power, how they will use it, and how power structures will endure for the next generation, which is already on the way.


## Appendix 1: The Age and Power Control of Successive BAC Presidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Age at his year of election</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1953.5</td>
<td>Yuanying 圆暎 (1878–1953)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Yuanying passes away in Sept. of that same year. Zhao Puchu presides over the actual duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1957.3</td>
<td>Shes-rab rGya-mtsho 喜饶嘉措 (1884–1968)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu presides over the actual duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1962.2</td>
<td>Shes-rab rGya-mtsho 喜饶嘉措 (1884–1968)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu presides over the actual duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>1980.12</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>1987.3</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>1993.10</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>2002.9</td>
<td>Yicheng 一诚 (1926–2017)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>From 2002 to 2006, Vice President Shenghui assists the President in the operation of daily affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>2010.2</td>
<td>Chuanyin 传印 (1927–)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Chuanyin remains mostly in seclusion during this time; actual affairs are taken over by Secretary General Wang Jian 王健 and Vice President Xuecheng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>2020.?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>The upcoming General Assembly of the BAC is expected to be held in 2020.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2: Comparison of the Organisational Structures of the BAC’s Third and Fourth Councils

(Chinese Buddhist leaders marked in bold; names of non-ethnic Chinese leaders with * according to Pinyin transcription)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honorary President</td>
<td>Blo-bzang ’Phrin-las Lhun-grub Chos-kyi Rgyal-mtshan</td>
<td>Blo-bzang ’Phrin-las Lhun-grub Chos-kyi Rgyal-mtshan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>班禅额尔德尼·却吉坚赞</td>
<td>班禅额尔德尼·却吉坚赞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yingci 应慈</td>
<td>应慈</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Shes-rab rGya-mtsho</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>喜饶嘉措</td>
<td>赵朴初</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Ngag-dbang rGya-mtsho</td>
<td>’Phags-pa-lha dGe-legs rNam-rgyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>阿旺嘉措</td>
<td>帕巴拉·格列朗杰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thub-bstan Kun-dga'</td>
<td>’Jam-dpal Phrin-las</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>噶丹赤巴·土登贡嘎</td>
<td>坚白赤列</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初</td>
<td>’Jam-dbyangs Blo-bzang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1907–2000)</td>
<td>’Jigs-med Thub-bstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nenghai 能海</td>
<td>Chos-kyi Nyi-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1886–1967)</td>
<td>嘉木样·洛桑久美·图丹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Songliu·Agamouni</td>
<td>却吉尼玛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>松留·阿嘎牟尼</td>
<td>1948–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1898–1974)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Gelazang 噶喇藏</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1911–1965)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Wugula 伍古腊 (1900–1972)</td>
<td>Zhengguo 正果 (1913–1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>嘉木样·洛桑久美·图丹却吉尼玛 (1948–)</td>
<td>*Gongming·Jiangba qurimu 宫明·姜巴曲日木 (1932–1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000)</td>
<td>Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Deputy Secretary General | Juzan 巨赞 (1908–1984)  
Zhou Shujia 周叔迦 (1899–1970)  
Shi Mingke 石鸣珂 (1901–1971)  
(Also known as monk Zhifeng 芝峰, one of the “Four Diamond Disciples” (sida jin'gang 四大金刚) under Master Taixu, who later left the order and returned to secular life.)  
Mingzhen 明真 (1902–1989)  
Zhengguo 正果 (1913–1987)  
Shibo 逝波 (1911–1985)  
Zhengguo 正果 (1913–1987)  
Mingzhen 明真 (1902–1989)  
Longlian 隆莲 (1909–2006)  
Shibo 逝波 (1911–1985)  
Li Rongxi 李荣熙 (1916–1997)  
(1982 Promoted to Vice President) |
## Appendix 3: Rise and Fall of Power of Key Figures in BAC’s Central Leadership in Post-Cultural Revolution Era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Shaoliang 周绍良 (1917–2005)</td>
<td>Council Member 理事</td>
<td>Concurrent posts of Vice President, Secretary General 副会长兼秘书长</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>Vice Chairman of the Advisory Board 咨议会副主席</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinghui 净慧 (1933–2013)</td>
<td>Representative (no Council Member) 代表 (非理事)</td>
<td>Standing Council Member 常务理事</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dao Shuren 刀述仁 (1935–)</td>
<td>Representative; Council Member; Standing Council Member (since 1983) 代表 理事 常务理事 (1983)</td>
<td>Concurrent posts of Vice President, Vice Secretary General 副会长兼秘书长</td>
<td>Concurrent posts of Vice President (Standing Vice President), Secretary General 副会长 (事实驻会) 兼秘书长</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>Vice Chairman of the Advisory Board 咨议会副主席</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yicheng 一诚 (1926–2017)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Council Member 理事</td>
<td>Vice President 副会长</td>
<td>President 会长</td>
<td>Honorary President 名誉会长</td>
<td>Honorary President 名誉会长</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuanyin 传印 (1927–)</td>
<td>Representative (no Council Member); Council Member (since 1983) 代表 (非理事) 理事(1983)</td>
<td>Standing Council Member 常务理事</td>
<td>Standing Council Member 常务理事</td>
<td>Standing Council Member 常务理事</td>
<td>President 会长</td>
<td>Honorary President 名誉会长</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TRANSCENDERS OF POWER AND INFLUENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shenghui (1952–)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Council Member</td>
<td>Vice President (presides over operations)</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuecheng (1966–)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Concurrent posts of Vice President, Secretary General</td>
<td>Vice President in Residence assisting the President</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanjue (1955–)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Standing Council Member</td>
<td>Standing Council Member</td>
<td>Standing Council Member</td>
<td>Vice President in Residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zongxing (1973–)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Council Member</td>
<td>Standing Council Member</td>
<td>Vice President in Residence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References:


Shiyi 拾遗. 2016: “Ta yong duanduan shiniand, jiang yizuo feqi gusi dazao cheng zhongguo zui niu siyuan” 他用短短十年,将一座废弃古寺打造成中国最牛寺院 [In a short period of ten years, he restores an ancient discarded temple into China’s greatest monastery]. Published August 2016 on the WeChat public account Shiyi 拾遗. The post has been deleted. Re-posts, e.g. at http://t.cn/A6ypPqWH.


An Abbot’s Vision of an Authentic and Global Saṃgha:  
On the Efforts of Master Dayuan to Revive Buddhism in China  

Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber

Abstract

Among those Buddhist monks ordained in China after the Cultural Revolution, Ven. Dayuan 大愿 (1971–) was one of the youngest when he became appointed as Abbot for Renrui Monastery 仁瑞寺 at the age of 24. Motivated by a generation gap within the Saṃgha’s leadership and the urgent need to uphold the Dharma, Dayuan has made great efforts to learn from many older masters including Tibetan Buddhism. In 2004, he then became appointed as first Abbot of the new Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺. The post-Mao period of China’s reform era was accompanied by significant social changes and desperation. The social circumstances have led religious leaders such as Dayuan to become adored as “Spiritual Leaders” by many Buddhist followers. Thus, the influence of Buddhist abbots extends far beyond that of local monasteries and has taken on a fundamental role within Chinese society.

In order to explore the challenges and opportunities for the on-going movement of “Reviving Buddhism” in China, this survey will focus on the religious background of various joint projects between the Liuzu Monastery and several research institutions in China and around the world. To a certain extent, this study is also a documentation of how Buddhism in China was painstakingly brought back to life and developed new perspectives in the course of a new generation of Buddhist leadership, after having suffered devastating oppression and destruction in the years from 1949 to 1976. In this respect, the study aims to look at examples of common patterns or different directions of Buddhist strategies in the present and with regard to the future.
1. Introduction

Among those Buddhist monks ordained in China after the Cultural Revolution, Venerable Dayuan 大愿 (1971–) was one of the youngest when he became appointed as Abbot for Renrui Monastery 仁瑞寺 at the age of 24 (§3.5). Similar to many others of his generation, Dayuan’s religious career is the result of a confluence of inspiration from different Buddhist traditions combined with the modern education he received from the Buddhist Academy (§6.1). However, in contrast to his predecessors and coevals, Dayuan is one of the first Buddhist leaders to have been trained in business management before becoming a monk.

Motivated by a generation gap within the Samgha’s leadership and the urgent need to uphold the Dharma, Ven. Dayuan has made great efforts to learn from many older masters who survived the Cultural Revolution (§3.2–§3.3). Another aspect of Dayuan’s study has included his interest in Tibetan Buddhism. Starting in the mid-1980s and up through the 1990s, when Dayuan was a young monk in training, Buddhism underwent several crucial periods. During this time, Tibetan monastic scholars made considerable contributions to the revival of Chinese Buddhism (§3.4). Additionally, Ven. Dayuan has also shown great interest in Theravada Buddhism and has held active exchanges with countries that boast strong Theravada traditions (§4.1 and §5.3).

During all of his years of study, Ven. Dayuan has continuously applied academic knowledge to his meditation practices. Meditation is an aspect of cultivation that he appears to emphasise more than his peers, and one which he, from early on in his education, would practise silently in solitude (§4.2). By doing so, he deepened his understanding of Buddhism in various respects, including the practice-oriented Chan tradition, Tibetan Lamaism, and esoteric Tantrism.

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1 I sincerely thank Abbot Dayuan and Abbot Dengjue 登觉 for the many conversations and exchanges we have shared, together with my colleagues from Europe and Japan, in Göttingen and Sihui between 2017 and 2020. A special thanks to Ven. Dengjue, who was gracious in answering all of the questions that arose during my in-depth fieldwork concerning Liuzu Monastery. The present article is based on the presentation I gave at the workshop, “When a New Generation Comes up: Buddhist Leadership and Lay People in Contemporary China”, at the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, 10/11 February 2020. I sincerely thank Dr. Carsten Krause 康易清 for inviting me to the workshop and his valuable suggestions to improve this paper. I also thank Dr. Michael Cavayero 柯伟业 very much for proofreading my final draft. To a certain extent, this paper is related to an earlier colloquium lecture “Chinesische buddhistische Klöster in Deutschland. Zu Entwicklungen im 21. Jahrhundert” [The Chinese Buddhist Monasteries in Germany. On the Current Development in the 21st Century], which was given in connection with a research project at the Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies in July 2018; see Hu-von Hinüber 2019a and 2019b, however with a different focus.
Consequently, Ven. Dayuan received high recognition and encouragement from various Ācāryas and Rinpoches, who have viewed him as a capable figure to carry on the Buddhist teachings and help others to end suffering. These conditions have helped Dayuan to create a solid basis for his extensive missionary work, which he has carried out since 1995 to the present day (§5).

In 1997, Master Dayuan was appointed to supervise the construction and reopening of Liuzu chan si 六祖禅寺, the “Chan Monastery of the Sixth Patriarch”, also known as Liuzu Monastery. In 2004, he then became appointed as the monastery’s first abbot (§3.6). Using this platform, Ven. Dayuan began developing a nationwide network of more than 40 affiliated monasteries (appendix 2), many of which had been, for the most part, damaged or abandoned during the Cultural Revolution.

The present study begins by discussing some general questions concerning Buddhist leadership in the past and present (§2). The post-Mao period of China’s reform era was accompanied by significant social changes and desperation; countless Chinese individuals once again found spiritual salvation in Buddhism. Such social circumstances have led religious leaders such as Dayuan to become adored as “Spiritual Leaders” (jingshen lingxiu 精神领袖) by many Buddhist followers. Thus, such figures’ influence extends far beyond that of local monasteries and has taken on a fundamental role within Chinese society (§2.4).

Beginning with Dayuan’s family background (§3.1) and the early stage of his religious career (§3.2), this study traces the different stages and places of the national and international network established under his direction. Additionally, in order to explore the challenges and opportunities for the on-going movement of “Reviving Buddhism” in China, this survey will focus on the religious background of various joint projects between the Liuzu Monastery and several research institutions in China and around the world.

To a certain extent, this study is also a documentation of how Buddhism in China was painstakingly brought back to life and developed new perspectives in the course of a new generation of Buddhist leadership, after having suffered devastating oppression and destruction in the years from 1949 to 1976. In this respect, this study aims to look at examples of common patterns or different directions of Buddhist leadership strategies in the present and with regard to the future (§6.2).

Often abbreviated as Liuzusi (六祖寺, in the following Liuzu Monastery), this monastery, like most other Buddhist monasteries in China today, is composed of two parts: a public “temple” part, with several Buddha Halls for visitors, and an internal “monastery” part, with living quarters and dining facilities for the clergy only, which remains mostly inaccessible to the public.
2. Does Buddhism need “Leadership”?  

The ongoing efforts of Chinese Buddhists to restore the traditional structure of the Samgha have made it very clear that there is a current increasing interest in understanding Buddhism’s “origin” and its early stages in India, especially among monastic scholars. Therefore, in this discussion on “leadership” within the Samgha, it may be relevant to examine the oldest canonical text that records the historical Buddha discussing this topic.

2.1. Buddha’s Last Wish Concerning the Leadership of the Samgha

According to the “Sutra of the Great Decease” (Mahāparinibbānasuttanta), Śākyamuni said the following (buddhavacana) on his deathbed, addressing his main disciple, Ānanda:

“It may be, Ānanda, that some of you now have the following thoughts: “The word of the master has now ended; we have no teacher from now on!” But Ānanda, you should not think in that way. The teaching of salvation (dharma) and discipline (vinaya), which I have explained and defined for you, should become your teacher when I have left.”

In this account, the “wise man” (Muni) from the Śākya clan has strongly advised against an individualised leadership in the Buddhist community. Early Buddhist art also speaks for this narrative; almost 400 years after his Nirvāṇa, Śākyamuni Buddha had never been represented in human form, but only aniconically by his footprints, the wheel of the teachings (dharmacakra) or the Bodhi tree of his enlightenment, etc.

According to the codes and discipline for monastic life (Vinaya), any five monks may form their own order. In doing so, the eldest in the group, according to the dates of their individual ordinations (i.e. not biological ages) is said to be the Samgha’s “leader” (sthavira, thera). Therefore, the saying “Vinaya as Teacher” (yi jie wei shi 以戒为师) is still very popular in Chinese Buddhist orders.

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3 Cf. Mak 2012.

4 See The Dīgha Nikāya 17 (6.1–6.2), PTS Edition 1908, II: 154; the English translation is quoted from Rhys Davids 1910: 171. Additionally, the fraternal relationship in the monastic order was also regulated by Buddha himself: “Ānanda! When I am gone address not one another in the way in which the brethren have heretofore addressed each other – with the epithet that is, of ‘Āvuso’ (Friend). A younger brother may be addressed by an elder with his name, or his family name, or the title ‘Friend’. But an elder should be addressed by a younger brother as ‘Sir’ or as ‘Venerable Sir’.”
2.2. The Reconstruction of Genealogy as Incarnate Leadership in Chinese Buddhism

Because Buddhism in China traditionally did not have a multi-level organisational body like that of the Christian church, deciding who should lead the Saṃgha has always presented a challenging question. What differentiates the development of so-called sinicised Buddhism from the original conception of Śākyamuni is not only the view of how the Buddhist community should be led after the Buddha’s death but also the emergence of several different schools, most of them grouped around individual charismatic personalities.

This phenomenon of individualisation and personification of school heads is particularly pronounced in medieval China. This is primarily due to the need of many Chinese followers of this foreign religion to trace the masters of their faith and religious practice back to its Indian origin. Such a desire was additionally reinforced by the deeply rooted emphasis on genealogy in the Chinese tradition.

Appendix 1 of the present paper “An Overview of the Eight Main Schools in Chinese Buddhism (4th–8th Century)” shows the position of the influential Chan school (Chan zong 禪宗) in the Buddhist landscape which gradually formed in medieval China. The boundaries between historical and lineal developments of the different schools have become more blurred over time, e.g. the differences between the prevailing Chan school and the Pure Land school (Jingtu zong 净土宗). Nevertheless, the terms zong 宗 or zongpai 宗派, which imply the traditional consciousness of belonging to a certain “school” were reinforced in the 19th and 20th centuries by the influence of Japanese scholars and, in many cases, even today remain fixed notions with diverse connotations and historical understandings.

However, during Buddhism’s revival and self-assertion process in China in the post-Mao era, young Buddhist leaders’ vision to form a comprehensive and global Buddhism instead of restricting themselves to the historical school affiliations of their monasteries has become more evident. The aspect of “networking beyond the borders of one’s school” has also played a key role

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5 There have been a lot of discussions and diverse interpretations regarding what constitutes the so-called “sinicisation” of Buddhism in Medieval China. For some of these questions, see Zürcher 1984, and Friedrich 2001.


in Master Dayuan’s ideology, which aligns itself with both Chinese Chan and Tantric practices. While Dayuan officially represents a successor of the Chan school, via the platform of Liuzu Monastery, he also supports other monasteries which historically belong to alternative traditions. Examples are the Chongren Monastery 崇仁寺, which highlights the teachings of the Avatāmśaka school (Huayan zong 华严宗) and the Huizhao Monastery 慧照寺, which once specialised in teachings of the Vijñānavāda school (Weishi zong 唯识宗). Ven Dayuan renovated both of these monasteries at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s (§4.2).

In this sense, the initiatives of Ven. Dayuan no longer imply a strict genealogy but rather engage with a wide variety of Buddhist communities that have become part of an extensive network built by Liuzu Monastery. Some of these monasteries also serve as one of the eleven Meditation Centers (Liuzusi chanxiu zhongxin 六祖寺禅修中心) under this network, which is set up in different provinces (see appendix 2).

2.3. The Relevance of Administrative Structures and Buddhist Education

In order to understand the background of Master Dayuan’s access to Buddhist leadership, it is necessary to review the consequences of the easing measures after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when the responsible authorities in China began gradually allowing more “Religious freedom” (zongjiao xinyang ziyou 宗教信仰自由), though not without monitoring by the government. The following diagram shows the basic structure of how religious life in Chinese Buddhist communities has remained regulated at various administrative levels. This system has had a crucial impact on how the young and well-educated generation gain leading positions in the religious context. The “political” position of Abbot Dayuan, for example, is located at the provincial level of Guangdong, i.e., not in Peking’s power centre (§2.4).

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8 In general, the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (十一届三中全会) in 1978 is seen as a turning point for China’s reform. However, in the Buddhist context, the new easing measures only began a few years later, gradually in the early 1980s. For some concrete examples see §3. An important collection of laws and regulations that were passed from 1979 to 1994 (immediately after the Cultural Revolution), so far, has not been widely researched, see: Xinshiqi Zongjiao Gongzuo Wenxian Xuanbian 新时期宗教工作文献选编 [Laws and Regulations for Religious Affairs in the New Era 1979–1994].

9 Cf. Laliberté 2011. Concerning revitalizing Buddhist tradition in general cf. the contributions in Chau 2011, Goossaert 2016 (e.g. Xue Yu 学愚, “Buddhism and the State in Modern and Contemporary China”), and Ji 2019a.
The Ministry for Working on the United Front, subordinate directly under the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (中共中央统一战线工作部, established in 1938 during the Anti-Japanese war). The Second Department of this ministry is responsible for minorities and religious affairs.

The State Office for Religious Affairs (国家宗教事务局) reports to the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. Its First Department is responsible for Daoism and Buddhism. This office is also the overall authority for “The Buddhist Association of China” (BAC 中国佛教协会, established in 1953).

“The State Office for Religious Affairs” as well as “The Buddhist Association of China” have offices in each of the twenty-three provinces, five autonomous areas and four municipalities. All matters relating to Buddhist institutions such as construction of a new temple e.g. must be applied for starting at the lower levels and finally approved by the central authority in Beijing.

Early on, during the time of China’s Reform and Opening-up in the late 1970s, Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000), one of the founders and then president of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), frequently emphasised that the most critical task for the revival of Buddhism should be the education of monastics as well as Buddhist scholars. This task was to remedy the vast

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11 Concerning the BAC, see the introduction to this special issue by Xuan/Krause. The purpose of this association which now has its headquarters in the Guangji Monastery 广济寺 in Beijing, is to unite the three main traditions of Buddhism that have long coexisted in China: (a) the East Asian “Mahāyāna” Buddhist tradition, which follows Buddhism according to Chinese translations (hanchuan fojiao 汉传佛教), (b) Lamaism, which uses the canon in Tibetan translations (zangchuan fojiao 藏传佛教), and which was also adopted by the Mongols (as rulers of China: 1271–1368) and the Manchus (as rulers of China: 1636–1912), (c) the South East Asian “Theravāda” Buddhist tradition (shangzuo fojiao 上座佛教), which is practised by some minorities in southern China on the border to Myanmar and Laos. For information on how the BAC came into being, cf. Li Gang 2005, Wen 2006, and Ji 2016.

12 See the well-known statement by Zhao Puchu: “First is education, Second is also education, and Third is still education” (diyi shi rencai peiyang, di’er shi rencai peiyang, disan haiishi rencai peiyang 第一是人才培养, 第二是人才培养, 第三还是人才培养). An overview of Buddhist education after the founding of the BAC in 1953 can be found in Xuecheng 2016; cf. also Ji 2019b.
amount of knowledge about Buddhism that had become lost after the prolonged interruption of almost 30 years (since 1949 and in wartime before). Such knowledge included an understanding of the Buddhist teachings, ritual practices, and administrative experience for managing monasteries.

Since the late 1970s, a number of measures have been taken in order to increase the religious education of the monastic community. One of the important ventures has been the establishment or expansion of Buddhist academies (foxueyuan 佛学院), which currently number fifty in total in mainland China. Like Abbot Dayuan (§3.3), many of today’s young Buddhist leaders have studied in and graduated from such institutions.

2.4. Two Types of New Leaders in Contemporary Chinese Buddhism

Because of the dynamic development of Buddhism in the post-Mao era, the need to lead the rapidly growing Samgha has become all the more pressing. According to statistics published on the website of the Buddhist Association of China,14 "There are – as of 2012 – more than 33,000 Buddhist event venues [monasteries] used by 240,000 monks and nuns in total who belong to the three major languages [Chinese, Tibetan and Thai]. With regard to the Chinese tradition, there are about 28,000 monasteries and roughly 100,000 monks and nuns. Some 130,000 monks and nuns are housed in 3,000 Tibetan monasteries. Around 1600 Theravāda monasteries give shelter to nearly 10,000 monks (2,000 nuns among them). There are currently 38 Buddhist academies and colleges of various levels and more than 100 Buddhist periodicals. Buddhist websites with a certain influence number about 200. Almost all Buddhist communities in various circles carry on charity organisations and Buddhist cultural institutions. According to incomplete statistics, the current number of Buddhists in China is above 100 million."

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13 Regarding the quality of education and curriculum at Buddhist academies in China, see a series of articles collected in vol. 12 of the Journal Wuyue fojiao 吴越佛教 2017 [Buddhism in Province Zhejiang and Jiangsu]. In this volume, two reports based on field research are also particularly important, Xuan 2017, and Song/Huang 2017.

14 Cf. Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 2020. Presumably due to the unexpected changes of the BAC’s leadership in summer 2018, these quoted statistics from 2012 have not yet been updated on the official website of the BAC. However, one can assume that the number of Buddhist followers in China may have significantly increased in recent years, to an estimated 200 million.
截止至2012年，三大语系佛教活动场所有3.3万余座，僧尼约24万人，其中汉传佛教寺院2.8万余座，僧尼10万余人；藏传佛教寺院3000余座，僧尼13万余人；南传上座部佛教寺院1600余座，僧人近万人（其中比丘2千多人）。现有各种不同层次的佛学院38座，佛教期刊100余种，较有影响的佛教网站近200家。各地佛教界均设有公益慈善组织和佛教文化机构。据不完全统计，目前中国的佛教徒人数有1亿多人。

The BAC was designed as a modern institution for the guidance of Chinese Buddhists on a national level. However, its design has not focused on placing leadership in the hands of a sole Buddhist representative. Instead, “leadership” in China’s Buddhist communities has almost always been characterised by strong regionalism, a condition due to the different schools’ historical developments and trajectories, and the wide distribution of the religion still present in the current landscape.

From the political perspective, in modern China, the term “leader” (lingxiu 领袖), which also includes the connotation “spiritual leader”, has been reserved for five figures: K. Marx, F. Engels, W. Lenin, J. Stalin and Z. Mao, as was once portrayed at Tian’anmen (Gate of Heavenly Peace 天安门) from 1949 to 1989. It is highly important to observe that as the reform process continues, people in China increasingly search for “spiritual guidance” concerning their religious beliefs. This trend is slowly replacing the statues of political leaders. In the religious sphere, one may differentiate between two types of leaders in contemporary Buddhism in China:

- “Official-like Religious Leaders” (guanyuanshide zongjiao lingxiu 官员式的宗教领袖); this type refers mainly to the monastic officials commissioned in various areas concerning Buddhist affairs, who have been promoted by state authorities in the long term towards a special career. They are mostly acting in different central institutions of the Buddhist Association of China or as representatives of China’s Political Consultative Conference (Zhengxie 政协) etc. (§2.3)
• “Grassroots Religious Leaders” (caogenshide zongjiao lingxiu 草根式的宗教领袖); this type refers mainly to the monastic leaders who are – in the first place – deeply rooted in their local monasteries, which they have solidly built up as the basis for further activities. Such leaders’ great success and the overwhelming approval of lay supporters lead to their eventual recognition by the authorities, e.g., as a representative of a provincial Buddhist association.

Master Dayuan belongs to the “Grassroots Leaders” category, because he attaches great importance to working at the grassroots level in order to show as many people as possible the Buddhist way to salvation (§3 and §4). He does not seem to be interested in residing at the centre of political power; on the contrary, he seems to avoid the political stage deliberately. During the transformation of China’s planned economy to a market economy that began in the post-Mao era, and which became marked by severe social problems, countless Chinese, once again, turned spiritually towards Buddhism. Religious leaders such as Abbot Dayuan have, therefore, become adored by their followers as “spiritual leader(s)” (§1).

The approximately two dozen public posts that Ven. Dayuan now holds, such as Vice President of the Buddhist Association of Guangdong Province (§6.1), were, in fact, only assigned to him after his strategy “From the ground up” brought great success and an increase in his following. Such specific factors have shaped the public image of Master Dayuan as a Buddhist leader in contemporary China. Thus, they deserve analysis in the present case study in order to determine their level of effectiveness.
3. Abbot Dayuan as the New Generation’s Pioneer for Buddhist Revival in China

3.1. Ven. Dayuan’s Family Origin

Venerable Dayuan 大愿 was born as the eldest of three siblings in September 1971 in the urban area Yiyang of Hunan Province. His birth name (suning 俗名) was Chen Yihua 陈一华. His father was a high school teacher and his mother a pious Buddhist who often took him to visit Buddhist sites. Both of Dayuan’s parents followed him years later and eventually found their way into the Sangha as well.

Master Dayuan, Copyright and provided by Liuzu Monastery

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15 The curriculum vitae of Ven. Dayuan is based on the website of the Liuzu Monastery (https://lzs.hrzh.org: Dayuan fashi jianjie 大愿法师简介 [About Dharma Master Dayuan]) and a short report that Mr. Zhang Zhenyu 张振宇 on behalf of the Liuzu Monastery sent to me in the Summer of 2018. More information about Ven. Dayuan can also be found at each website of Liuzu Monastery’s related monasteries (see appendix 2), e.g. of the Xiaoling-shan Monastery in Hong Kong 小灵山灵显法院: siulingshan.org.hk. However, the current data in all these sources is rather limited, and is now being supplemented and corrected by more extensive research and by several WeChat interviews with Abbot Dengjue, especially with regard to Dayuan’s study of Tibetan Buddhism (§3.4) and via the historical background of some Chinese monasteries where Ven. Dayuan studied and taught for years.

16 Both the Buddhist monks and the nuns in China are registered under their secular name, which also appears on their identity cards and passports. The “dharma name” (faming 法名) is used only in the Sangha.
In 1988, Dayuan (then Chen Yihua) started to study at the Hunan University of Applied Sciences for Finance and Economics (Hunan caijing xueyuan 湖南财经学院). At the University, he also came to know more about traditional Buddhist culture and literature. Like many others of his generation, he too developed an intense religious interest in Buddhism. During a visit to Lushan Temple (built in 268), located near his University in the capital city of Hunan Province, Changsha, the young Dayuan prayed in front of the statue of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva Guanyin of a Thousand Arms and Eyes (qianshou guanyin 千手观音). At that moment, he recalls having felt a deep connection, which he understood as the indication of a turning point in his life.

3.2. From the University to the Buddhist Saṃgha

After this experience, Dayuan, after only three terms, left his university education in Spring 1990. His first Buddhist teacher, Ven. Tianzhu 天柱 (1921–2011) accepted him as a novice, allowing him to receive the primary monastic consecration (tidu 剃度, Sansk. pravrajyā) at the Renrui Monastery (built in 1649) in July 1990. Dayuan’s monastic name, meaning “Big Vow”, was given by his master Tianzhu, who, since 1949, had worked tirelessly to preserve the old monastery Renrui (see §3.5 and §4.3). In 2016, Ven. Dayuan described his first encounter with Master Tianzhu as follows:

“At that time, public transport was not well developed. It was getting dark when I arrived in Jilong Village. Driven by my inner longing for the Dharma, I tried to walk towards the Renrui Monastery in the moonlight. Since I didn’t know the way yet, I felt pretty insecure. At that moment two young men appeared, asking me where I wanted to go. They said that they lived near the monastery. Then I followed them both. Shortly before the monastery, they said to me: ‘We have arrived’, then bowed, and were off. When I turned around, the boys had disappeared without a trace and I was very amazed. At eleven o’clock p.m. I finally came to the entrance of the monastery where an old monk was sitting in the moonlight and said: ‘Arrived have you?’ I asked him, ‘Who are you?’ He stood up smiling and answered: ‘I have been waiting for you’. Out of sheer surprise, I followed him to the monastery. This is how I entered the Buddhist order at the age of 19, for unimaginable karmic reasons.”

17 Translated from Tianzhu laoheshang shengxi wuzhounian jinian huace 天柱老和尚生西五周年纪念画册 [Memorial Album of the 5th Anniversary of Tianzhu Abbot’s Parinirvana]. 2016: 82.
At Nantai Monastery 南台寺 (built in 742) in Hunan Province, Dayuan received the higher monastic consecration (juzujie 具足戒, Sansk. upasampadā) from Master Baotan 宝昙 (1925–2008). He also received lessons on Buddhist teachings from Master Shengyi 聖一 (1922–2010) at the Baolin (Po Lam) Monastery 寶林禪寺 in Hong Kong.

Looking at Dayuan’s path from university to the Saṃgha, via the monasteries Renrui and Nantai in his home province and Baolin in Hong Kong, it becomes obvious that conditions for initiation to become a monastic novice and receive appropriate training were quite limited during the politically troubled period from 1989 to 1990. As mentioned earlier, since much knowledge about religious rules and liturgy was lost from 1949 to 1978, in the 1980s monastic life was only gradually reviving. In some publications, even the word “secularisation” has been used to describe the situation at that time. In the following 30 years, Buddhist leaders of younger generations, such as Ven. Dayuan, made great efforts to restore the Saṃgha’s discipline (Vinaya), using the canonical scriptures on monasticism (appendix 3). In order to overcome this “secularisation”, Dayuan’s search for Buddhist teachings and practice was, from the very beginning, inspired by reading all kinds of sūtras that were accessible, and by learning from eminent Buddhist masters who were reachable, sometimes even seeking out those who were abroad.

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18 In 1984, the Nantai Monastery was officially returned by the government to the monks, who were once allowed to manage their own residence. In 1987, the famous monastery welcomed Master Baotan as its new Abbot to revive the Dharma. Ven. Baotan became a monk in 1933 and received the proper consecration upasampadā in 1938. In 1957, due to critical opinions he announced at a meeting, he was mistakenly classified as a rightist partisan (youpai 右派), and mistreated for more than 20 years. After Ven. Baotan took on responsibility for the Nantai Monastery, the great monk succeeded in converting numerous people to Buddhism. With the help of the generous donations of lay believers, the ancient monastery was fully restored. A year after his death, in 2009, a stūpa was built for the extremely meritorious abbot. In a sense, the fate of Ven. Baotan’s trajectory is quite typical to that of many Chinese monks and nuns in the 20th and 21st centuries. The biographical data of Dayuan’s Chinese and Tibetan teachers mentioned in §3.2–§3.4, who are all considered famous Buddhist masters in China, are largely based on the Chinese Internet Encyclopedia “Baike.Baidu”: https://baike.baidu.com.
3.3. Study and Teaching Activities at Buddhist Academies and with Different Masters

In May 1991, Ven. Dayuan started to study at the Buddhist Academy of Fujian (Fujian foxueyuan 福建佛学院), which was established in 1983. As mentioned above (§2.3), for young monks and nuns, three or four years of study at one of the approximately 40 Buddhist academies in China is meant to be a crucial time to broaden one’s horizons. Although a degree from one of these academies is of great importance in terms of promotion to the rank of abbot, it is nevertheless not a prerequisite for chairing a monastery, which has its own separate criteria for evaluation.

However, at that time, the range of courses offered by the Academy setting was not particularly satisfactory for Dayuan. That is why he decided to discontinue his study at the Buddhist Academy of Fujian and take on a more challenging role as the chancellor (jiaowuzhang 教务长) of the Samgha’s education in both Yumen 云门寺 and Nanhua 南华寺, two important Chan monasteries in Shaoguan of Guangdong Province. This task was offered to him by the longtime Abbot Foyuan 佛源 (1923–2009) of Yunmen Monastery, who also served concurrently as Abbot of Nanhua Monastery, starting in 1992. Master Foyuan greatly appreciated Dayuan’s knowledge and competence. From 1991 to 1995, Dayuan helped Foyuan to organise the advanced training courses for the monastic order (sengjia peixunban 僧伽培训班) in both monasteries. Ven. Dayuan’s contribution should not be underestimated with regard to the preparatory work he undertook, which later led to the establishment of the Caoxi and the Yunmen Buddhist Academies (Caoxi foxueyuan 曹溪佛学院, Yunmen foxueyuan 云门寺佛学院).

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19 The monks of this academy are studying at the Guanghua Monastery in Putian 广化寺 (built in 558) and the nuns at the Chongfu Monastery 崇福寺 (built in 977) in provincial capital Fuzhou. Regarding the rapid development of Buddhism after the Cultural Revolution in Fujian Province where the religion has a particularly long tradition, cf. Ashiwa 2000.

20 The Yunmen Monastery, located in Shaoguan and built in 923, is the place of origin for one of the five branches of the Chan School: the Yunmen 云门 branch. The monastery was severely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Starting in 1984, its Buddhist legacy began being restored under the direction of Abbot Foyuan.

21 The Nanhua Monastery 南华寺 (built in 502), is regarded as one “Ancestral Court of the Sixth Patriarch” (liuzu zuting 六祖庭) because the Sixth Patriarch of Chan school Huineng taught at this place for 37 years and his mummy is still kept in this monastery. After the death of Abbot Weiyin 惟因 (1914–1990), the abbot’s post of the Nanhua Monastery was represented from 1992 to 1998 by Abbot Foyuan of the nearby Yunmen Monastery.
3.4. Studying Tibetan Buddhism and Other Buddhist Traditions

Tibetan monastic scholars have made considerable contributions to the revival of Chinese Buddhism. Likewise, the inclination towards Tibetan Buddhism has a long and multifaceted history in China. While Dayuan was actively promoting the revival of Chan Buddhist practice at famous historical sites and serving under senior Chinese monks, he also developed a strong interest in Tibetan Buddhism, Tang-period Tantrism (tangmi 唐密), Korean Chan, and Theravāda practices. He saw all of these as a means to broaden his spiritual understanding and compensate for the lack of meditation practice within the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

In the 1980s, Buddhist teachings expounded by learned Tibetan masters began becoming increasingly attractive to Chinese monks; this was also because much knowledge had become lost in Chinese-speaking areas between the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus in the early 1990s, in addition to lectures given by masters in Tibetan-speaking areas, diverse and lively exchanges between Chinese and Tibetan monks were also taking place, mostly in Chengdu and at Mount Wutai, where, even today, many Tibetan scholars regularly gather and give lectures by invitation.

During this time, Ven. Dayuan established contact with Abbot Qingding 清定 (1903–1999) of the Zhaojue Monastery in Chengdu. Ven. Qingding was considered one of China’s most learned monks, combining Buddhist knowledge and practice from both Chinese and Tibetan traditions. It was master Qingding who recommended Dayuan to listen to the lectures given by the great scholar, Dr. (གྱིིལ་མཚན། གྱིིལ་མཚན་ཤྗ་ཀྱ་) rGyal-mtshan Sha-kya 坚赞释迦 (1915–1999) at the

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22 On the role of Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary China, esp. in Sichuan and Qinghai provinces, see Smyer Yü 2012.
23 After having obtained a degree in philosophy and a second degree in military science, he first worked for many years in a high teaching position in the army. Disappointed by the government’s policies at the time, he finally joined the Buddhist order in 1941. Unfortunately, Ven. Qingding was sentenced to imprisonment in 1955 and released 20 years later, only thanks to a personal instruction given by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai 周恩来. In 1985, the Saṃgha of the Zhaojue Monastery 昭觉寺 (built in 877) in Chengdu welcomed the master as their abbot.
24 Main biographical data about rGyal-mtshan Sha-kya’s life starts with the age of seven, the Tibetan boy entered the big Gelug monastery Ganden Songtsenling (གདའ་ལྡན་སུམ་རྩེན་གླིང), today located in the Tibetan autonomous district bDe-chen of Yunnan Province. At the age of 18, the novice went to Lhasa and studied at the Sera Monastery where he obtained the higher ordination (upasampadā) at 21 years old. After the unrest in Tibet in 1959, there was no monk in the Sera Monastery who was able to hold the half-monthly confessional ceremony (gSo-sbyoṅ, Poṣadha)
Sera Monastery (སེ་ར་དགོན) near Lhasa in the time that followed.

Using vacation times between the training courses he organised at the Yunmen and Nanhua Monasteries in 1991–1995, Ven. Dayuan traveled several times to the Sera Monastery in Tibet, located north of Lhasa and belonging to the Gelug tradition. It was here that Master rGyal-mtshan Sha-kya taught as Khenpo (堪布) from 1982 continuously until 1998. The lectures given by the Khenpo had been translated into Chinese by the well-educated Lotsawas (interpreters) who were among his bilingual students.

At the Kumbum Champa Ling in Qinghai Province, where Tsongkhapa once taught, Ven. Dayuan also searched for Buddhist knowledge and practised meditation in seclusion. With Master Jigme Phüntshog 晋美彭措法王 (1933–2004) and Long Duo Rinpoche 龙多活佛 (1955–), he studied the Nyingma teachings such as the “Great Perfection” Dzogchen (Atiyoga, Chin. da yuanmanfa 大圆满法) at the Larung Buddhist Academy. 25 In order to practise this teaching, in 2002, after having become an established teacher himself, Ven. Dayuan encouraged more than a hundred of his disciples to travel with him from the Pearl River Delta to gSer-rta in Sichuan to bring Master Jigme Phüntshog their great veneration personally.

Furthermore, Ven. Dayuan attended many courses of Tibetan scholars hosted by the Gelug Monastery Yuanzhao 圆照寺 on Mount Wutai and by the Zhaojue Monastery in Chengdu. In addition, he followed the guidance given by the Byams-pa-blo-gros Rinpoche 强巴洛珠仁波切 (1917–2002) of the Yokhang in Lhasa, by the Gelug Rinpoche Guṅ-thaṅ-tsaṅ 贡唐仓活佛 (1926–

by reciting the Sūtra containing the confessional forms (So-sor thar pa´i Dor, Prātimokṣasūtra). Therefore, the monks asked rGyal-mtshan Sha-kya as a specialist in monastic discipline (´Dul-ba ’dsin-pa, Vinayadhara) to carry out this important ceremony. For this reason, he was sentenced to ten years in prison. When he was released in 1970, roughly another ten years of the Cultural Revolution followed in which he had to hide his religious life. From 1982 to 1998 he taught for 17 years as a main teacher (Khenpo) in the Sera monastery, although this chair would normally be available for only six years.

25 Located in the county gSer-rta (གསེར་རྟ་རྫོང) of the Tibetan autonomous district dKar-mdzes of Sichuan Province, the Larung Buddhist College of the Five Classical Sciences (གསེར་རྟ་བླ་རུང་ལྔ་རིག་ནང་བསྟན་སློབ་གླིང་) was established by the Nyingma Master Jigme Phüntshog (འཇིགས་མེད་ ཐུན་ཚོགས་ འབྱུང་གནས་ 1933–2004) in 1980, greatly supported by the Tenth Panchen Lama (1938–1989) and the president of the Buddhist Association of China, Zhao Puchu who calligraphically wrote the Chinese name of the college in 1993: Seda larong wuming foxueyuan 色达喇荣五明佛学院.

2000), by the Nyingma Master Penor Rinpoche 贝诺法王 (1932–2009), and by the Khejok Rinpoche Lobsang Dhundop 祈竹仁波切 (1936-2013) of the Dhetse-Tsang Monastery in Sichuan.

By getting to know the Dorje Sempa method (རྡོ་རྗེ་སེམས་དཔའ, Vajrasatva, Chin. jin’gang saduo fa 金刚萨埵法) which is commonly practised by all Buddhists in Tibet, Ven. Dayuan has gained an insight into four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism, from Gelug and Nyingma to Kagyü and Sakya.

Even if Dayuan’s search for various traditions of Buddhist teachings did not always necessarily lead to an equal level of spiritual understanding, the experience of learning with different masters was a decisive part of this stage of his career. For instance, in the mid 1990s, when the Korean Seon master Seungsahn 崇山禅师 (1927–2004) of the Jogye order, founder of the international Kwan Um School of Zen, came to visit the Nanhua Monastery and guide a seven-day meditation practice, he was very impressed by how the young monk Dayuan was able to give him perfect answers to a series of questions. As recognition, the Korean teacher gave Dayuan – in a symbolic gesture – a scripture about Chan in the hopes that he would pass on the Seon teaching.

In 2005, the 52nd successor of the Chinese Vajrayana tradition, Ācārya Wu Xinru 吴信如 (1926–2009) handed a holy scripture concerning the Chinese Vajrayāna (tangmi 唐密) over to Ven. Dayuan in order to transmit this lineage. Master Dayuan also greatly appreciated the widespread Vipassanā meditation method (neiguanchan 内观禅) practised by the popular Burmese-Indian teacher Satya Narayan Goenka (in Chinese known as 葛印卡，1924–2013). So Dayuan incorporated this practice into his own meditation courses and recommended his followers to use the video recording by master Goenka as a guide.27

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27 From 2011 to 2019, Ven. Dayuan made a series of exchanges and encounters possible between the Liuzu Monastery and leading Buddhists in Myanmar. In recent years, young monks and nuns from Liuzu Monastery have been regularly sent to the major meditation centers in Myanmar to be trained by Burmese masters. For more details, see reports on monastery’s website.
3.5. Becoming Abbot of Renrui Monastery at Age 24

In light of his loyalty, successful management, spiritual development and self-discipline, in 1995 Ven. Dayuan was promoted to be Abbot of the Renrui Monastery on Mount Qi, based on the recommendations of Master Tianzhu of the Renrui Monastery and Abbot Foyuan of the Yunmen and Nanhua Monasteries. Thus, at the age of 24, Dayuan became one of the youngest Buddhist leaders in China. According to Dayuan’s account concerning his “Ascension to the [Samgha’s] Head Seat” (shengzuo 升座), taking over the leadership of a monastery at such an early stage was not something he necessarily wanted, as the responsibility would hinder his studies and limit time for meditation. However, he felt he had no choice but to meet the expectations of his revered teachers.28

The Renrui Monastery played an essential role in the process of reviving Buddhism that started in the 19th century. Several leading figures have led or visited the monastery; some even lived and practised meditation there for several years. In 1889, Master Xuyun 虚云 (1840–1959) paid a visit to Ven. Hengzhi 恒志 (1811–1875), who started to rebuild the monastery in 1866, and brought about a new period of success in monastic life. Under the guidance of Master Hengzhi, the famous Buddhist monk-poet known as the “Eight Fingered Dhūta” (Bazhi toutuo shi jing'an 八指头陀释敬安, 1851–1912)29 stayed in this monastery for five years, focusing on strict spiritual practice until he attained enlightenment.

When Master Taixu 太虚 (1889–1947), the initiator of “Humanistic Buddhism” or “Engaged Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教), officially took over the leadership of the Renrui Monastery as Abbot on January 1st 1943, Dayuan’s teacher, Ven. Tianzhu, was a novice twelve years old. In this sense, Ven. Dayuan’s role as leader of Renrui Monastery (1995–), can be traced back to the legacy of Taixu, who was one of the most eminent and progressively oriented monks of the 20th century.

Furthermore, Master Dao’an 道安 (1907–1977), who in many ways made great contributions to the reforms of Buddhist education in Taiwan from the 1950s to the 1970s, spent his monastic life in the Renrui Monastery from 1927 to 1930. There, in 1929, he was assigned to look after and assist guest monks (ketang zhike 客堂知客). His student, Ven. Huimin Bhikṣu 惠敏 (1954–), who now heads the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts in Taiwan, made two pilgrimages to the Renrui Monastery.

28 See Tianzhu laoheshang shengxi wuzhounian jinian huace 2016: 82.
29 This monk is said to have once burned two fingers in front of Buddha’s statue to demonstrate his pious belief, thus leaving him with only eight fingers remaining.
It is also important to note that, from the very beginning, Ven. Dayuan was appointed as fangzhang (方丈), the highest rank among abbots in contemporary China. This post includes the possibility of eventual promotion to zhuchi (住持), usually translated as “abbot”, a post that allows one to lead multiple monasteries simultaneously (appendix 2).30

3.6. The New Monastery of the Sixth Patriarch and its First Abbot Dayuan

Around the time that Ven. Dayuan took over the post as Abbot of Renrui Monastery in Hunan, another important event occurred amidst the Chinese Buddhist community. In 1995, two years before Hong Kong was returned to China, a massive fundraising campaign was carried out by followers of the Chan school in Hong Kong to rebuild the Liuzu Monastery in the small town Sihui (四会), which is administratively subordinate to the city of Zhaoqing (肇庆) of Guangdong Province. The monastery is named “Liuzu” after the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713), who is said to have meditated in seclusion for 15 years in the forests of Sihui before he became officially accepted as the successor of the Fifth Patriarch Hongren. Hong Kong and the adjacent Guangdong Province have always remained connected in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural terms. The original Liuzu Monastery, established during the Tang dynasty (618–907) and restored in 1809, has always been an important pilgrimage site for Chan Buddhism followers in the Pearl River Delta region, including Hong Kong.

After the new monastery’s construction began in 1997, a selection process for its managing abbot (zhuchi) took place all over China. The chosen abbot would also supervise the construction work as its jianxiu (监修), an official title often given to a monk for several years when a large monastery is being

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30 In today’s China, the office “zhuchi” (住持) may be designated by the leadership of one’s own monastery, small or large; i.e. this position must not be approved by a higher authority. The procedure of promoting a monk to “fangzhang” (方丈), however, is much more demanding. In the first step, “recommendations” (tuiju chengxu 推举程序) from several highly respected senior monastics (gaoseng dade 高僧大德) are required. Next, the local authority for religious affairs must be informed about the person’s choice in order to officially permit it. At any rate, the monastery should have a certain size. Therefore, the solemn and honorable ceremony “Ascending to (the Samgha’s Head) Seat” (shengzuo 升座) will be only performed for a fangzhang.

31 Meanwhile, Zhaoqing city where Liuzu Monastery is located belongs to the nine priority cities of the “Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area”, which started in 2017. Because of his great merits for the area Zhaoqing and Sihui, Ven. Dayuan has been elected as Representative of the People’s Congress of Zhaoping City and received the title “Honorary Citizen of Sihui City”.
built. In 1999, Ven. Dayuan, who was then the Abbot of Renrui Monastery in the neighboring Hunan Province, was selected. Finally, five years later, in 2004, when the new monastery (located in a complex consisting of 120,000 sq. meters) was complete with 20,000 sq. meters of usable space, Ven. Dayuan was promoted to first Great Abbot (fangzhang), the position he still holds today.32

Despite this new endeavour, Ven. Dayuan has also remained Abbot of the Renrui Monastery. However, the new Liuzu Monastery, which differs significantly from Renrui Monastery, offers new possibilities for Dayuan’s creative development. Liuzu Monastery has thus become the headquarters for Ven. Dayuan’s vision of constructing an authentic, globally-oriented Saṃgha. Likewise, the spiritual legacy of the famous medieval Sixth Chan Patriarch of China, Huineng, has given Dayuan a deeper historical basis. In particular, Huineng’s legendary fifteen years of meditative seclusion, which took place on the Monastery’s site, has given Dayuan further inspiration to focus on diverse aspects of Buddhist meditation practice.

From the relatively remote and secluded location of Liuzu Monastery, situated far away from any major cities, in the last 25 years, Ven. Dayuan has succeeded in focusing all of his energy and power to revive Buddhist tradition and culture in China and abroad. By synergising monastic and lay supporters’ combined efforts, around 40 monasteries have been renovated and restored to full use for religious life (appendix 2). These monasteries work in tandem with Liuzu’s headquarters and represent a national network under Dayuan’s leadership. Its large community and countless supporters have made it possible to establish the “Tianzhu Foundation” (§4.3) and sponsor many other projects around the world. (§5)

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32 See Baidu Encyclopedia under item Dayuan fashi 大愿法师 [Master Dayuan]: https://baike.baidu.com: On April 25th acc. to the lunar calendar in 2004, about 30,000 people from 20 different provinces of China including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as from other countries such as India, attended Dayuan’s ceremony “Ascension to the Abbot’s Seat” (shengzuo yishi 升座仪式). Eminent monks from various monasteries, great patrons of Buddhism, monks, nuns and lay followers of numerous Saṃghas as well as representatives of government authorities gathered in the newly initiated Liuzu Monastery in Sihui. Mr. Ye Xuanping 叶选平 (1924–2019), Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and Master Yicheng 一诚 (1926–2017), President of the Buddhist Association of China, sent their congratulations with Chinese calligraphy to the new abbot. Both, Ven. Mingsheng 明生 (1960–), Vice President of the Buddhist Association of China and Ven. Xincheng 新成 (1919–), President of the Buddhist Association of Guangdong Province personally accompanied Dayuan to his abbot’s seat (songzuo 送座).
4. Ven. Dayuan’s Concept for Reviving Buddhism and his Key Achievements

As Ven. Dayuan has become more influential as the Buddhist leader of a broader, global network, he has continued to more accurately shape his agenda, systematically honing in on a diverse set of working models. After 25 years, his efforts have led to great success in devising the following four systems:33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systematic Designation and Structure of Working Areas</th>
<th>Correspondence to the Respective Buddhist Deities and their Ideals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting up centres for practising meditation (修证体系)</td>
<td>Following the great vows practised by Bodhisattva Samantabhadra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering social services and charities (社会化服务体系)</td>
<td>Following the great compassion of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the subject “Chan Studies” at universities (佛教学科体系)</td>
<td>Following the great wisdom of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Buddhology and its inherent missions around the world (国际弘法体系)</td>
<td>Following the great vow of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the limited scope of the present article, Ven. Dayuan’s diverse achievements can only be mentioned here in key words; further research will be needed to investigate these different branches in detail. Excluding Dayuan’s overall ideology for reviving Buddhism, insofar as it can be seen in the agenda above and related activities, I will briefly examine a few fundamental issues which may explain Dayuan’s enormous success in addressing such a broad audience. These issues include (a) *dusheng* 渡生 (helping human beings to achieve salvation through Buddhism: §4.1), (b) *xiumiao* 修庙 (constructing monasteries for the Samgha: §4.2), and (c) *cishan* 慈善 (engaging in charitable work for the socially disadvantaged: §4.3). However, the focus of this case study is on the issue of “national and international cooperation projects with universities” (*hongfa* 弘法: §5.1-§5.3).

33 For more details and current projects, I refer to the monastery’s website: [https://lzs.hrzh.org](https://lzs.hrzh.org).
4.1. Re-forming the Saṃgha through Pravrajyā (剃度) and Bodhisattvaśīla (菩萨戒)

From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, most Buddhist communities in China faced two challenges: first, the monasteries were largely damaged or abandoned; second, there were very few trained monks or nuns who were able to give sound explanations of the sūtras and to carry out Buddhist rituals. In other words, the Saṃgha barely existed in many places. At the same time, the number of people interested in entering the Saṃgha, especially young people, was increasing rapidly.

Thus offering access to the Saṃgha became a priority. Beginning in 1995, utilizing his multilocal leadership, Ven. Dayuan paved the way for more than a thousand male and female novices to enter the Saṃgha, by granting them primary monastic consecration (pravrajyā, Chin. tidu chujia 剃度出家). The higher ordination (upasampadā, Chin. juzujie 具足戒) takes place when a novice has passed the trial period of two years. Today, Dayuan’s disciples take on active roles in any one of the roughly 40 monasteries that remain connected via the Liuzu headquarters in Sihui. Meanwhile, some of these disciples are also leading monasteries, such as Abbot Dengjue 登觉 (1976–) who, succeeding his teacher Dayuan, has run the Linghui Monastery 灵惠寺 as fangzhang since 2014 (appendix 2, no.4), as well as Abbot Dengning 登宁 (1977–) who has run the Daxing Chan Monastery 大兴禅寺 in Huaihua since 2018 (appendix 2, no.13).

34 In the first decades after the foundation of the People’s Republic, traditional Chinese culture, including all religion, was practically forbidden for ideological reasons. Especially from 1957 (Anti-Rightist Campaign, fanyou 反右) to the end of the “Great Cultural Revolution” in 1977 (wenge 文革), followers of Buddhism also endured severe suffering such as persecution, discrimination and forced secularisation; monasteries with cult pictures and cultural objects were destroyed, set on fire, closed or used for other purposes. This brutal oppression of Buddhists (fa’nan 法难), which was due to the radical anti-traditionalist policies of both the Republican (1912–) and Communist regimes (1949–), is comparable to the so-called “Four Annihilations of Buddhism” (miefo 灭佛) in ancient Chinese history (446–452, 574–578, 842–846, 955–959), and will likewise “go down in history” with related stigma.

35 I am indebted to C. Krause for the following note concerning the self-value orientation of China’s young generation: “The 1996 national survey of youth by China Youth and the Children Research Center reveals that 77.5% of the youth consider the realisation of self-value as their life goal; meanwhile, 50.3% of the surveyed confess that the primary reason for their hard work is to realise their own value. Therefore, “self-realisation” is the salient characteristic of the value orientation of contemporary youth”, quoted from Xi/Xia 2006: 84.

36 As successor to his teacher Dayuan, zhuchi Chanding 禅定 (1988–) has run the Lingquan Monastery in Wuhan since 2016 (appendix 2, no.22). The young abbot managed to get the monastery through the corona crisis when Wuhan was shut down for 76 days in spring 2020. Also
Currently, around 200 monks reside in the headquarters monastery alone. Ven. Dayuan has also taken over the leadership of various nunneries where more than 200 nuns are housed, mainly in the Huizhao Monastery 慧照寺 in Weinan and the Daqing Monastery 大庆寺 in Wenzhou. Dayuan’s significant following of female students also reflects a recent phenomenon: that an increasing number of women across China want to enter the Bhikṣunīsaṃgha (Chin. biqunensiengjie 比丘尼僧伽). In light of this growing number, the nunneries’ administration commissioned several experienced psychologists to look after the unique needs of nuns residing in monasteries under Abbot Dayuan. In addition to the gender factor, there is also an age-related factor that plays a role in today’s Saṃgha. With very few exceptions, a person over 50 may no longer be accepted into the monastic order. This policy is partly because the Buddhist community in China often faces severe challenges in caring for older members in their respective institutions (anyangyuan 安养院). Due to these subjects’ complexity, the details regarding gender and age cannot be dealt with in this article, and will need separate examination.37

In theory, the complete Saṃgha consists of four parts (catuspariṣad, Chin. sibuzhong 四部众 or daosuzhong 道俗四众): monks, nuns, male and female lay followers. Among lay practitioners, Ven. Dayuan has managed to attract even more followers. Historically, monks and nuns have always depended on the alms given by the laity.38 However, beginning in the 7th century, adherents of the Chan school, following the instruction on the “equal importance of farming and meditation” (nongchan bingzhong 农禅并重) taught by Huineng,39 began to pursue agro-economics alongside their daily meditation. In the past 25 years of his career, to realise a Saṃgha with all its traditional components, Ven. Dayuan has authenticated the Bodhisattva vow (bodhisattvaśīla 菩萨戒) taken by more than 7,000 lay followers in numerous special ceremonies, over which he has presided in some of the main monasteries of the Liuizu Group.

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37 As introduced in the book Chinese Religious Life by D. Palmer et al. 2016, “Religion provides a lens through which to observe a range of complex social issues related to the economy, gender and sexuality, health and the environment, human rights, ethnicity, and globalisation”; in this regard cf. also Ji 2011.

38 With regard to the dependent relationship of the Buddhist orders to their lay supporters cf. Hu-von Hinüber 2018.

In this way, Ven. Dayuan brought these lay Buddhists from the lowest level of religious commitment to the highest level that a layperson can reach, namely as Upāsaka (male lay disciple, Chin. youpose 优婆塞) or Upāsikā (female lay disciple, Chin. youpoyi 优婆夷). He extended their moral obligations from merely taking the three refuges (triśaraṇa, Chin. sanguiyi 三皈依) to that of the eight additional precepts to be kept permanently and periodically observed by monks or nuns, namely twice a month on the full and new-moon days (upoṣadha, Chin. busari 布萨日). In issuing the Bodhisattvaśīla vow, Ven. Dayuan uses the canonical scripture Upāsakaśīla (Youposejiejing 优婆塞戒经) translated by Dharmakṣema 昙无谶 (385–433, see appendix 3, no. 10). Finally, be it active support for the renovation of old monasteries or the fundraising campaigns for charities and research projects, Ven. Dayuan understands how to engage his lay disciples and encourage them to give their total support to all of his projects as volunteers or as sponsors.

The popularity of Ven. Dayuan is also in part attributable to his excellent sermons, which are an aspect of his charisma. The profound knowledge he has acquired from various masters (§3.2–§3.4), combined with unique rhetoric, enables him to teach believers in clear and persuasive ways. While he refers to old sūtras preserved in the Buddhist canon, he also analyzes the cause of many pertinent problems in contemporary social, family, and business contexts with the basic Buddhist notions of triviṣa (greed, aversion, and ignorance).

At the same time, Liuzu Monastery’s publications office has printed or digitised over 200 books by Abbot Dayuan, mostly based on his sermons and lectures (see appendix 3, which cites the first 20 books from a long publication list, supplemented by English translations and explanations). This rich history of teaching activities allows more in depth insight into Dayuan’s method of using traditional materials to revive Buddhism in contemporary China. It deserves more intensive research on another occasion.
4.2. Restoring Old Monasteries to Create a National Network Transcending Schools

As shown above (§2.2), the so-called denominations developed during the 4th to 8th centuries in different Buddhist schools have not always been strictly kept apart. Over time, particularly the Pure Land school (Jingtu zong 净土宗) and Tiantai school (Tiantai zong 天台宗) gradually merged with the Chan school. Also, in monasteries focused on doctrinally heavy philosophies such as the Consciousness-only school (Weishi zong 唯识宗), meditation exercises have also been practised and considered as the basis for the “middle way” in Buddhist teaching. Thus, traditional divisions between “schools”, based on older understandings, have become less and less relevant in China’s contemporary Buddhist landscape.

Ven. Dayuan, having become a Buddhist leader so young, was often invited to take over leadership positions of smaller monasteries in his home province Hunan and elsewhere. Invitations particularly came from those sites that had to be rebuilt entirely but lacked any funding or experienced local monks to take on the task. Refusing to confine himself to any particular school per se, and following the examples given by his teachers (§3.2–§3.3), Abbot Dayuan has initiated projects to renovate or rebuild more than 30 monasteries in the past two decades. This kind of non-discriminating “cross-school aid” of Vihāras was urgently needed at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century. Many monasteries had already been run down and destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.40 Thus monasteries in such a state were incapable of preserving any peculiar tradition.

While being responsible for several monasteries all over the country, Ven. Dayuan continuously looked for a balance between his own specialisation and the local needs of each monastery. Under his direction, these monasteries are now thriving with religious activity once again. For instance, the Huizhao Monastery of the Consciousness-only school, once abandoned, is now administered by thirty nuns41 and used as a meditation center. As mentioned

41 See appendix 2, no.28. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Abbot Chanxi 禅玺) of the Dazhuangyan [Great Alamkāra] Monastery 大庄严寺, Ven. Fagong 法肱 and Ven. Fadi 法地 of the Huizhao Nunnery 慧照寺, who kindly supported me during my fieldwork in both monasteries in Weinan in the Summer 2018. I was greatly impressed by the unwavering commitment of the two nuns Fagong and Fadi, who – on behalf of Abbot Dayuan and with the help of a group of female lay supporters from South China - monitored the reconstruction work to transform the dilapidated old monastery into a modern nunnery.
earlier (§4), establishing centres for meditation practice (xiuzheng tixi jianshe 修证体系建设) belongs to one of the four main working models that Ven. Dayuan has systematically devised. In 2018, the Liuzu Monastery confirmed eleven monasteries as affiliated “Centers of Meditation” (禅修中心, see appendix 2), where meditation courses following instruction by Ven. Dayuan can be arranged for the general public periodically.

A unique feature of Dayuan’s teaching techniques includes meeting many contemporary practitioners’ needs by offering introductions to diverse Buddhist meditation methods. One of the most popular meditation retreats provided at these centres is the traditional Vipassanā meditation method (§3.4). Dayuan’s intensive workshops teaching Tantric practices, which require a high degree of collaboration with one’s master, are also immensely popular amongst his lay followers. To make it more convenient for ordinary people to practise meditation and optimise their experience, the Liuzu Monastery has also tried introducing services such as “Acupuncture before Chan Meditating” (zhenjiu qianxingchan 针灸前行禅) as a technical supplement to established meditation methods.

4.3. Establishing the “Tianzhu Foundation”

Against the backdrop of Ven. Dayuan’s growing popularity and ongoing financial support from different sides, early in 2013, around one year after the death of master Tianzhu 天柱 (1921-2011), a foundation named after that eminent monk was established by a group of young entrepreneurs who are also lay followers of Ven. Dayuan and work closely with Liuzu Monastery. The full name of the foundation is “Tianzhu Association for the Promotion of Culture and Charity of Guangdong Province” (Guangdongsheng tianzhu wenhua cishan cujinhui 广东省天柱文化慈善促进会), Ven. Dayuan is Executive Director of the Foundation.
It was Ven. Tianzhu who previously led Dayuan into the Saṃgha in Renrui Monastery in 1990 (§3.2) and, in his old age, spent a few years in Liuzu Monastery at the invitation of his former pupil.\(^{42}\) In a sense, the foundation’s name is a reminder of the terrible time from 1949 to 1977, when Buddhism was suppressed in China. When the People’s Republic was founded in 1949, there were still about 100 monks living in Renrui Monastery. The government tried to persuade the monks to disrobe. However, Ven. Tianzhu and 17 other monks who did not want, under any circumstances, to give up their belief and monastic life, adhered to Huineng’s ideal that “physical work has the same value as meditation practice”. In order to maintain their monastery, they worked under challenging conditions as forest labourers.\(^{43}\) Finally, the Renrui Monastery was preserved. Immediately after the Cultural Revolution, Ven. Tianzhu returned to the monastery and continuously worked for over 30

\(^{42}\) The photo of teacher Tianzhu together with his pupil Dayuan was taken in Liuzu Monastery on the occasion of Ven. Tianzhu’s 87th birthday on September 16, 2007.

\(^{43}\) Cf. Tianzhu laoheshang shengxi wuzhounian jinian huace 2016: 26ff.
years to promote Buddhism gradually. The foundation also pays homage to the extraordinary character of this highly revered monk, who never strove for a leading position, but left the office of abbot to the younger generation several times, while he – as the oldest monk of Renrui Monastery (shouzuo 首座: Saṃghasthavira, Thera) – always served in the background in a very modest and reserved manner.

According to the legacy of the humble master, the main goal of the Tianzhu Foundation is, on the one hand, to support the clergy’s Chan spirituality by actively “Practising Meditation in Solitude” (biguan shixiu 闭关实修) and, on the other hand, to “Widely Spread Buddhist Charity” (guangzuo cishan 广做慈善). The Foundation, which was officially approved by the authority of Guangdong Province (registry no. 1548), has its headquarters and a public bank account in the provincial capital of Guangzhou. Endeavouring to “give back to society something that comes from society” (yuanyu shehui er huikui shehui 源于社会而回馈社会), the Foundation, as a nonprofit organisation, aims at mobilizing voluntary members whose collective goal is to carry out charitable activities that relate to society based on Buddhist wisdom. Although officially established outside the Liuzu Monastery, the Tianzhu Foundation also supports Ven. Dayuan’s international collaborative projects in China and around the world (see §5.1–§5.3).

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44 With this legacy of the old master in mind, a “Meditation Centre” (biguan zhongxin 闭关中心) was built in June 2011 to enable the monastic staff members to have a space to meditate in peace and reflect on the teachings they have learned. The center, which is located in a mountain-forest above the precincts of the Liuzu Monastery is not accessible to visitors. During the time of the “rains retreat” (varṣā, Chin. xiaanju 夏安居), which according to the Vinaya tradition, requires monks and nuns to remain in residence in one place for three months, the monks and nuns of the Liuzu Monastery retreat to this Meditation Centre as their “rains retreat” (varṣāvāsa, Chin. anjuchu 安居处) without any visitors for the whole month of August. This can be seen as an example of how the traditional rules for monastic life have been restored. At the same time, it would be worth investigating certain adaptations which have been made based on contemporary conditions in China, including the local climate etc.

45 See the website of the foundation: www.tzwhcs.org. Examples of abundant activities organised by the association, such as some 40 offices set up in many locations, volunteer recruitment and training etc., can be seen in its annual report 2018 published on the website of Liuzu Monastery.
4.4. Reviving the Traditional Structure *Saṃghakarma*

Apart from the Tianzhu Foundation’s fundraising activities, the Liuzu Monastery also receives donations from temple visitors. According to the Buddhist tradition, the monastery has established an internal administrative body to make collective decisions regarding the Saṃgha’s property and development. This highest decision-making body is called the “Saṃgha Committee” (**sengjia wei**[**yuanhui**]僧伽委[员工会]**). This committee, consisting of a few representatives of the leading monks and nuns, decides on operations and major expenses for various internal and external purposes.

In historical terms, this committee corresponds to the traditional “working meetings of the Saṃgha” (**saṃghakarma**, Chin. **sengjia jiemo**僧伽羯磨), even if not **every** member of the Saṃgha has a voice (**śalāk**, Chin. **chou**筹) today. This modern structure is shaped by the contemporary Chinese mode of decision-making democracy, which uses a process of both “selection and election”. Nevertheless, the “Saṃgha Committee” is an attempt to revive the traditional managing structure *Saṃghakarma*.

5. The National and International Network of Academic Projects

In the traditional view of the Buddhist “Saṃgha of the Four Directions” (**cāturdiśa-saṃgha**, Chin. **sifang sengjia**四方僧伽), the Saṃgha should be both multilingual and multicultural. Likewise, followers of the Buddha from all over the world belong to the same Saṃgha as one religious congregation. Considering this, the interactions between Buddhists and their monasteries in various Asian countries have played a vital role in history. Such interactions helped China begin a new reform policy in the 1980s and aided the revival of Buddhism in Mainland China and its “diplomacy via religion” initiative.

Probably inspired by the activist policy of “going out [into the world]” (**zouchuqu** 走出去), which initially encouraged many Chinese companies in the 21st century to invest abroad, some Buddhist monasteries also began exploring how to expand their sites in other countries. Thus diverse Buddhist projects, mostly associated with missionary activities, have noticeably increased in recent years. While the Buddhist Association of China officially approved individual monasteries’ global engagement on its homepage in 2018, emphasizing the “learning” of the local language and culture, etc., Ven. Dayuan has played a pioneering role among Chinese Buddhist leaders in this regard. His unique concept was right from the start different in the way that it was not focused exclusively on religious activities, but also considered how to spread Chan culture in combination with innovative academic research projects.
To support research on the history and current development of Chan Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism in general, between 2012 and 2019, the Liuzu Monastery organised a series of collaborative projects with domestic and foreign universities. In 2017, several strong collaborative partners joined the more extensive “Tianzhu Buddhist Network.” The following parts will introduce these university collaborations in chronological order, starting with the universities in China (§5.1), and then examine some of the projects abroad (§5.2 and §5.3).

5.1. Collaborative Projects with Universities in China

In 2013, as a first step in bridging initiatives between Dayuan’s network and universities in China, on July 1st, a collaborative agreement between Wuhan University (Wuhan daxue 武汉大学) and Lingquan Monastery (灵泉寺) was signed to establish a “Research Centre for Chan Health” (jiankangchan yanjiu zhongxin 健康禅研究中心). The whole concept of “Health Chan” was conceived by Ven. Dayuan based on his teachings of the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, who represents the central sacred figure in Lingquan Monastery. This religious site in Wuhan was first built in 749 during the Tang dynasty and rebuilt by Ven. Dayuan, who became its new abbot in 2000. At the new site, which was expanded to 9.3 hectares in 2001, Abbot Dayuan has taught the Bhaiṣajya guruvaiḍūryaprabhāsapūrvapraṇidhānaviśeṣavistara as a basic sūtra. Given the numerous health problems and increasing psychosomatic illnesses present in China, Ven. Dayuan has promoted the innovative teaching of “Health Chan”. Its methodology re-interprets the traditional term “Chan” and can be seen as a new terminology related to other popular terms developed in Chinese Buddhist

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46 I sincerely thank Mr. Deng Jinhua 邓金华 who worked as head of the “Department for Cooperation with Universities” of the Liuzu Monastery (liuzusi gaoxiao hezuo jiaoliuchu 六祖寺高校合作交流处) from the end of 2014 to the beginning of 2020 and personally supervised most of the projects mentioned in §5, for having made a four-page written report available to me in 2018. My latest information about Liuzusi’s collaborative projects in the higher education sector can be traced back to a speech given by Abbot Dengjue at the Hong Kong Chinese University in September 2019.

47 As reported in the Newspaper Changjiang ribao 长江日报 [Yangtse River Daily] on July 1st 2013.

48 Chinese version Yaoshi liuliguang rulai benyuan gongdejing 药师琉璃光如来本愿功德经 (Taisho Edition T. 450, 451 and 499); cf. Dayuan’s book listed in appendix 3 under no. 16: Yaoshi famen jinsheng chengjiu fa 药师法门今生成就法 [Medicine Buddha Dharma Door for Attaining Enlightenment in This Life].
history. The main goal of this collaboration with Wuhan University has been to bring scholars and Buddhist practitioners together to find solutions for various health problems in contemporary Chinese society. Ven. Dayuan’s concept consists of three components: “physical health without illness, psychological health without trouble, and mental health with direction to enlightenment” (shenti jiankang wu bingku, xinli jiankang wu fannao, lingxing jiankang de jietuo 身体健康无病苦、心理健康无烦恼、灵性健康得解脱). In 2012, 2015 and 2016 respectively, the Lingquan Monastery organised three sessions of the “Hubei Symposium of Health Chan” (Hubei jiankangchan luntan 湖北健康禅论坛). This symposium brought together medical professionals, psychologists, politicians, and monastery staff. Although the proposed Research Centre has not yet come to fruition, since its conception Dayuan’s idea has been taken up by several research institutions for psychology, including the China University of Geosciences (Zhongguo dizhi daxue 中国地质大学) and Minzu University of China (Zhongyang minzu daxue 中央民族大学).

In 2014, the next collaborative project followed when the Liuzu Monastery started awarding scholarships to foreign monks and students who took part in the Master’s program, “Chinese History and Buddhism” (Zhongguoshi zhuanye hanchuan fojiao fangxiang haiwai yanjiusheng ban 中国史专业汉传佛教方向海外研究生班), established in conjunction with the South China Normal University (Huanan shifan daxue 华南师范大学) in Guangzhou. Prof. He Fangyao 何方耀, who is responsible for administering the program, summarised its structure as consisting of courses such as “A History of Chinese Culture”, “Buddhist Cultural Exchanges between China and Other Countries”, “Buddhism Transmissions in China”. In the years 2015 to 2017, a total of nine students from abroad (Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Turkey) received scholarships in the amount of 60,000 RMB annually, covering tuition, housing

49 Such as “Agriculture Chan” (nongchan 农禅), “Martial Art Chan” (gongfuchan 功夫禅), “Medicine Chan” (yaoshichan 药禅), or the modern term “Living Chan” (shenghuo chan 生活禅) etc.

50 This university and the Liuzu Monastery signed a contract in January 2015 to jointly establish a research centre “Research Centre for Chan for Psychological and Psychosomatic Treatment” (Chan yu xinli zhiliao yanjiu zhongxin 禅与心理治疗研究中心). A conference on the theme “Chan and Psychological Trauma Therapy” took place in Wuhan in December of the same year.

51 In May 2017, Prof. He organised a personal meeting with Abbot Dayuan in Sihui and invited me to give a guest lecture for the current students of the Master’s program. Thank you to Prof. He for providing me with the statistics regarding the number of foreign students and the total amount of the Liuzusi scholarships related.
and living expenses. Thus the sum financed by the Liuzu Monastery for this program has amounted to a total of 1.44 million RMB (approx. 210,000 USD). Five of the former scholarship holders are now pursuing Ph.D. degrees at renowned universities such as Beijing Normal University and Southwest University in Chongqing.

In 2015, an even more significant step was made when the Liuzu Monastery reached an agreement with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Xianggang zhongwen daxue 香港中文大學) to establish a “Centre for the Study of Chan Buddhism and Human Civilization” (Chan yu renlei wenming yanjiu zhongxin 禪與人類文明研究中心) under the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies. This project allowed Liuzu Monastery’s initiatives to achieve semi-international status and gain an even more academic focus.52 In this case, the Centre’s mission was to create a platform to foster more excellent academic research on Chan Buddhism. From 2015 to 2019, the joint Centre, having developed unique specialisations, found great success under the direction of Prof. Xue Yu 學愚 and, during this time, even expanded to include five areas: (1) Promoting academic studies of Buddhism, (2) Training Buddhist scholars, (3) Enhancing academic exchange among scholars, (4) Promoting Buddhist culture, and (5) Publication. Nevertheless, early in 2020 Liuzu Monastery ceased funding the Centre.

In 2016, Liuzu Monastery initiated another collaborative agreement with the Centre of Buddhist Studies at Sun Yat-sen University (Zhongshan daxue foxue yanjiu zhongxin 中山大学佛学研究中心), a renowned university in Guangzhou. One of the research areas at this Centre, which was set up in 2009 and since headed by Prof. Gong Jun 龔隽, relates to Buddhism’s development in China’s 20th and 21st centuries. With generous funding from the Liuzu Monastery, the Center was able to successfully organise two international conferences: “Buddhism in East Asia and Its Modernisation Process” (dongya

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52 For more detailed information see the website of the centre: www.crs.cuhk.edu.hk/cbhc/en/.

53 The author would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Xue Yu, who kindly invited me to two conferences organised by his centre: The International Conference on “Theory and Practice of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism in a Global Context” (26–28 June 2017 in Göttingen, Germany), and The International Forum on Buddhism and the Silk Route (13–16 September 2019 in Hong Kong).
In 2017, the Liuzu Monastery made a further step, far exceeding any of its related branch monasteries, and established an agreement with the Research Centre of Buddhism at Peking University. One of the research areas at this centre, headed by Prof. Wang Song 王颂 since 2016, concerns the critical figure of modern Buddhism in China, Master Taixu, who headed Renrui Monastery in 1943 (§3.5). The funds offered by Liuzu Monastery have been allocated for two projects at this Centre. One is a subsidy for the printing costs of publications (e.g., the critical edition of the *Gaoseng zhuan* 《高僧传》 [Biographies of Eminent Monks] by Tang Yongtong 汤用彤 in the traditional thread-bound book form, and the other supports the Centre’s lecture series (*Beijing daxue fojiao xilie jiangzuo* 北京大学佛教系列讲座), which invites renowned scholars from all over the world. International workshops, such as “Buddhism during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589)” and “Avatāra Studies” held in 2017, have been supported by such funding as well.

While all of these collaborative projects have taken place in an academic context, their common aim is to intensify the exchange between Buddhist practitioners (jiaojie 教界) and scholars (xuejie 学界) which can be seen in many other Buddhist countries. Early on, in Wuhan, the focus was on the topic “Health Chan”, which represents one aspect of Ven. Dayuan’s teachings. However, one can see that eventually, partner universities and the content of their projects were chosen more independently to fit Liuzu Monastery’s wider initiatives.

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54 The author took part in the first joint conference and participated in the organisation of the second conference, which aims to draw attention to the importance of comparative religious studies, and, in particular, to the great potential of historical sources kept in the Buddhist canons concerning the early relationship between the Jainas and Buddhists. So far, this topic has not yet been given sufficient attention in the rapidly developing area of Buddhist Studies in China, and the conference’s design can be seen as an example of its high academic ambitions. For more details cf. Hu-von Hinüber 2020.
The idea of academic collaboration may take some inspiration from pre-existing Taiwan-based Buddhist education projects. At the moment, however, for many reasons, the Liuzu Monastery’s fields of collaboration have not yet led to full study programs or even to the establishment of a fully accredited university. Hence, its endeavours are mainly concentrated on conferences, scholarships and publication support.

5.2. Collaborative Projects in Northern America and Europe

In 2017, after several years of preparation, Liuzu Monastery began its most significant international initiative to date. It launched the “Tianzhu Global Network for the Study of Buddhist Cultures” (Tianzhu guoji fojiao wenhua yanjiu wangluo 天柱国际佛教文化研究网络) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada on June 18th. As the leading partner of Liuzu Monastery, UBC is in charge of the whole network that includes six universities in North America and Europe. Since the partnership began, the Director of UBC’s “From the Ground Up” platform, Prof. Chen Jinhua 陈金华, has since taken on the role as chief coordinator and liaison between Liuzu Monastery and the five other international academic partners: UC Berkeley, Harvard University, Ghent University, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, and McMaster University.

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55 In response to Max Weber’s question “What should cause a Buddhist monk, who is looking for his own salvation and entirely dependent on himself alone, to take care of the salvation of others and to undertake the mission? Where were the real practical drives?” (M. Weber, Religion und Gesellschaft, 2010: 768), the author analysed the possible motivations for Liuzu Monastery’s missionary activities in social, religious and economic terms, cf. Hu-von Hinüber 2019a: 13-17. In this context, several aspects should be considered. (1) The success of Buddhist monasteries in China also poses a danger; the historical fear of a new smashing of Buddhism (see note 34) is still present. (2) The globalisation process offers new development opportunities, also for Buddhist communities; the “going-out strategy” was officially approved by the BAC. (3) The role models from Taiwan (Fo Guang Shan) and Japan (Numata Centres) that have found relative success in some Asian and Western countries. (4) Finally, many Buddhist organisations consider it their duty to respond to the westernisation of Chinese society because young people are increasingly drawn to Christianity.

56 With regard to the eminent monk Tianzhu and the naming of the Tianzhu Foundation see §3.2, §3.5 and §4.3. For more information about the concept and activities of the network, see http://tianzhubuddhistnetwork.org/.

57 The cooperation between the UBC and Liuzu Monastery had already started before signing this contract. From August 26th to 29th, 2016 both sides held a joint symposium at the Research Center for East Asia of University Madrid on the topic “When the Himalaya meets the Alps: International Forum on Buddhist Art and Buddhism’s Transmission to Europe” (当喜马拉雅山与阿尔卑斯山相遇:佛教艺术暨佛教在欧洲的传播国际高峰论坛).
For the first five-year collaboration (2017–2022), UBC received 4.9 million CAD from the Tianzhu Foundation for Chan Buddhist studies. Likewise, each of the partner universities mentioned above receives annually 105,250 CAD from donation funds to support studies on Buddhism and East Asian culture and host annual conferences on Buddhist culture. The network is managed by a special Tianzhu Steering Committee that includes a representative from the donor sector and each member institution.

As its long-term goal, this network of partners promotes innovative and interdisciplinary study of Buddhism and East Asian culture that crosses the boundaries between countries, cultures and religions. In this respect, the network’s partnerships are kept free from doctrinal expectations and follow Ven. Dayuan’s aim to support the worldwide exchange of scholars and Buddhist practitioners. Currently, funding has served to increase academic engagement opportunities in many ways. For example, eminent professors can be sent as visiting professors to partner universities, where they deliver lectures on their particular area of research; postdoctoral fellows can be employed to increase the number of courses related to Buddhist studies; graduate students benefit from scholarships that allow them to enhance the quality of their dissertations. The range of the funds donated by the Tianzhu Foundation also extends to other members of the academic community via the hosting of international conferences, and to the broader public via Buddhist cultural festivals organised by the partner institutions.

In addition to the four universities in North America and two in Europe mentioned above, the “Tianzhu Buddhist Network” also includes – in the sense of partnership, but not in financial terms – three universities in China, which in earlier years had already received funding from Liuuzu Monastery for several projects and thus established partnerships via bilateral collaborations: Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sun Yat-sen University, and Peking University (see §5.1).

In 2017, just a week after Liuuzu Monastery signed the contract with UBC in Vancouver, the Monastery also signed a declaration of intent with the University of Göttingen on June 26th to establish a Buddhist studies centre.

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58 Acc. to the above mentioned website of the network, the six supported partner universities have e.g. organised roughly 70 guest lectures, nine conferences, and eleven events including schoolings from 2017 to 2020. In addition, 27 visiting professors and seven visiting students could be invited by each host university.
Simultaneously, the German branch of “Liuzu-Monastery” (Deguo liuzusi 德国六祖寺), complete with a meditation centre, opened in Katlenburg-Lindau near Göttingen. However, in 2018, only one year after opening, the centre faced several setbacks regarding administration issues in the local setting, and the University of Göttingen eventually terminated its project.

Additionally, on May 25th 2017, the Liuzu Monastery funded three faculty members at the University of Akron in Ohio to establish a “Centre for Health, Happiness, and Chan” as a non-profit and non-religious organisation. The centre works with local libraries to offer free meditation classes to the public on techniques including breathing meditation, mindfulness meditation, and others.

In 2018, after a period of preparatory work beginning in 2017, the Hungarian branch of “Chongren Monastery” was established (Xiongyali chongrensi 匈牙利崇仁寺: 1161 Budapest, XVI.ker. Pál utca 74). The original Chongren Monastery (in current-day Zhejiang Province, see appendix 2) was first built in 907 and was strongly influenced by the Avataṃsaka school teachings. Unfortunately, much of the temple was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In 2009, Ven. Dayuan became Abbot of the monastery and has since made great efforts for its restoration. Also, based on the historical school affiliation of this monastery, its Hungarian branch has chosen Prof. Imre Hamar (郝清新), who is an internationally known specialist in Avataṃsaka-related studies and Vice President of Eötvös Loránd University, to collaborate on the project.

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60 See www.healthhappinesschan.com; on this website, the instruction given by Ven. Dayuan is quoted as follows: “Only those who are the master of their mind can have true compassion and love because their mind are purified. They will fill their surroundings with the vibration of loving kindness and the powerful energy of love.”
5.3. Some other International Projects and Collaborations

While Ven. Dayuan’s global engagement has emphasised the support of academic research and exchange, over the years he has also initiated many other large projects with a much more religious focus. For example, in the early 2010s, one of his strategic projects was directed at several Southern Asian countries with a mainly Theravada Buddhist tradition. Such projects initiated large “Festivals of Buddhist Culture” (fojiao wenhuajie 佛教文化节), such as “The First Asian Buddhist Culture Festival” (with the “Angkor Wat Declaration”), held in 2011 in Cambodia; The Asian Chan Seminar, held in 2013 in Hong Kong; “The Second Asian Buddhist Culture Festival” held in 2013 in Sri Lanka; and “The Third Asian Buddhist Culture Festival and the First International Festival for Monks’ Robes” held in 2016 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

In stages, the Liuzu Monastery established four “International Huineng Colleges for Chan Studies” (Liuzu huineng guoji chanxueyuan 六祖慧能国际禅学院) in Korea, Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. To spread Chinese Chan Buddhism globally, Ven. Dayuan organised a large project translating the “Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch” (Liuzu tanjing 六祖坛经) into eleven languages. Likewise, the establishment of the “Liuzu Monastery International Academy for the Translation of Buddhist Sūtras” (Liuzu si guoji yijingyuan 六祖寺国际译经院) is also underway.

Since the mid-2010s, Ven. Dayuan has led delegations to Europe and North America, searching for possibilities to establish meditation centres in other western countries. As a result, several branches of Liuzu Monastery have been established in different countries, often at the request and with the support of the local laity, such as in Germany, Hungary (§5.2), the USA, Canada, and Japan. In all of these cases, Dayuan’s religious activities abroad have primarily focused on Chan Buddhism. He has tried to connect this focus with academic projects via the organisation of cultural events and other endeavours.

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61 Concerning the interrelations between these Asian countries cf. Sen 2014.
62 The “Liuzu Monastery”, US Branch (Meiguolizu 六祖寺) was set up in San Francisco (2450 San Bruno Ave. CA 94130) in 2018. A “Liuzu Center for Chan Culture” (Meiguo boshidun liuzu wenhuazhongxin 美国波士顿六祖禅文化中心) has been established in 2019 and is located not far from Harvard University (11 Tirrell crescent, Chestnut hill. MA 02467).
63 The “Liuzu Monastery”, Canada Branch (Jianadalizu 六祖寺) is located in Toronto (40 Shields Crt. Markham, Ontario L3R 9T5).
64 In 2019, the „Centre of Liuzu Culture in Japan“ (Ribenuzwenhuazhongxin 日本六祖文化中心) was set up in city Ōme of Tokyo.
6. Concluding Remarks

As shown above (§3–§5), for the last 30 years, Ven. Dayuan has both experienced and played an active role in Buddhism’s development in China. To a certain extent, Dayuan can be regarded as a bridge connecting the older and younger generations of Chinese Buddhists. On the one hand, he studied with various old masters, who had entered the Samgha prior to the P.R. China’s founding in 1949 and fortunately survived the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, Dayuan represents one of many young Buddhists who converted to Buddhist practice in the post-Mao era. His unique training became bolstered by his profound emphasis on meditation practices and teachings that he sought from an array of older Chinese and Tibetan masters. At the same time, Dayuan was profoundly inspired by his own teachers’ tireless commitment to restoring Buddhism in China.


The present case study has shown how Ven. Dayuan has gradually developed into one of the most influential Buddhist leaders among China’s younger generation. Starting at Renrui Monastery, where he was initially accepted as a novice by Master Tianzhu at the age of 19, Ven. Dayuan has built up a national and global network of monasteries and Buddhist cultural and education projects for almost 30 years.

In summary, Ven. Dayuan’s success as a Buddhist leader can probably be associated with some very extraordinary qualities of his personality in combination with a deliberate strategic alignment:

- Broad knowledge of traditional Chinese, Tibetan and Theravada Buddhism and rich spiritual experience in meditative methods
- A long-term vision of a well-equipped Samgha for the future
- A cross-school mindset to create a nationwide network of affiliated monasteries
- The ability to plan and manage skillfully from an economic point of view
- Creation of new concepts that reach people with unique but understandable terminology
- Contemporary interpretations of Buddhist teachings with convincing and inspiring rhetoric
• Personal charisma due to his kindness and open-mindedness
• Willingness to enrich the Samgha by way of collaboration with Buddhist scholars
• Building an extensive global network following the traditional ideal of a united Samgha
• Keeping a certain distance from the power center of politics to focus on basic work

Throughout the years, Ven. Dayuan has been elected as the Vice President of the Buddhist Association of Guangdong Province (Guangdongsheng fojiao xiehui fuhuizhang 广东省佛教协会副会长) and the Representative of the People’s Congress of Guangdong Province (Guangdongsheng renda daibiao 广东省人大代表). However, even more importantly, his religious career has prioritised reviving dozens of monasteries all over China, attracting Chinese followers interested in diverse spiritual meditation methods, and inventing strategic leadership methods as Director of both the Chan Culture Research Center and the Tianzhu Foundation. Thus, Ven. Dayuan represents the quintessential example of a “Grassroots Buddhist Leader” (§2.4), whose basis for all of his activities has been a growing network of local Samghas and lay followers.

Dayuan’s communities and organisations, most of which remain linked to his headquarters in Sihui and some of which he leads personally (appendix 2), may make up in total about 0.15% of the 33,000 monasteries in China. All in all, such an influential network can be viewed as a small window into the entire process of Buddhist revival in China, because many Buddhist communities underwent similar development in post-Mao China. Likewise, since the passing of some of the last few old masters, in many ways, the future of Buddhism in China lies in the hands of a relatively small number of Buddhist leaders with ambitious visions and rich networks.

6.2. A Retrospective Analysis of some Roadblocks in Development

As Ven. Dayuan repeatedly emphasises to his disciples, the intended purpose behind all the activities in setting up a global network should originate from the sincere desire to share Buddhist knowledge and learn from local cultures and scholars’ research at collaborating universities. Thus over the years, Ven. Dayuan succeeded in meeting and fostering exchanges with almost a thousand learned monks and scholars from more than 70 countries.
Looking back at the past ten to fifteen years of extremely rapid development under Dayuan as Abbot of Liuzu Monastery since 2004 (§3.6), it becomes clear that some unavoidable omissions and missteps have also occurred. This fact is also noticeable when comparing Liuzu Monastery to some of the successful institutions set up by Buddhist organisations based in Japan and Taiwan, all of which have been built on solid foundations, and after extensive preparation have attained more longevity and insurability.

In China’s contemporary context, in many cases, insufficient preparation and pressured timelines caused by national slogans such as “Going out” have led to overly rushed programs without robust support systems for wide consultation. Also, the training of a qualified community of monks and laity lags far behind the current speed of development. Thus, these deficiencies have caused many roadblocks while driving projects forward. Finally, in the case of Liuzu Monastery, perhaps the launching of so many new initiatives within such a short period (2014–2019) can be seen as having led to overstretching capacities and resources. Ultimately, essential projects could not be adequately sustained when unexpected difficulties occurred, such as the onset of the structural break caused by the global COVID-19 Pandemic, which broke out in early 2020.

The leadership of Liuzu Monastery itself has since recognised these and other shortcomings. Nevertheless, the respective departments are now in the process of compensating and learning from the past. Thus, who is to say that such daring experiments are not acceptable means of schooling-via-practice? Seen in this light, one may expect a healthy future for Ven. Dayuan and his merits in creating an incredibly large groundwork and extensive global platform.

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65 Regarding the impact from Taiwan cf. Johnson 2017.
**Appendix 1: An Overview of the Eight Main Schools in Chinese Buddhism (4th–8th Century)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the School</th>
<th>Founder in China</th>
<th>Indian Master</th>
<th>Time of arising</th>
<th>Centre in China</th>
<th>Canonical Script</th>
<th>Cult Image</th>
<th>Influence abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two dogmatic schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三论宗 (also known as 菩提行)</td>
<td>Xuanzang (玄奘, 602–664)</td>
<td>Asaṅga &amp; Vasubandhu</td>
<td>4th cent. in India; 7th cent. in China</td>
<td>Ci’en-Monastery 慈恩寺 (Xi’an)</td>
<td>Ci’en-Script 真言等</td>
<td>Hossō-shū in Japan, 7th cent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唯识宗 (also known as 瑜伽行)</td>
<td>Xuanzang (玄奘, 602–664)</td>
<td>Asaṅga &amp; Vasubandhu</td>
<td>4th cent. in India; 7th cent. in China</td>
<td>Ci’en-Monastery 慈恩寺 (Xi’an)</td>
<td>Ci’en-Script 真言等</td>
<td>Hossō-shū in Japan, 7th cent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two Law Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>律宗 Lü zong (Vinaya School)</td>
<td>Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667)</td>
<td>Buddhayaśas from Kashmir (translator)</td>
<td>5th cent. (Chinese translation)</td>
<td>Zhongnan Mountain 终南山</td>
<td>Dharmaguptaka Vinaya 四分律</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三阶教 Sanjie jiao (Asetic School)</td>
<td>Xinxing 信行 (549–594)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6th cent., forbidden in 600</td>
<td>Fazang Monastery 法藏寺 (Anyang)</td>
<td>Lotus Sūtra 法华经</td>
<td>Kṣitigarbha 地藏菩萨 Dziang puja</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emphasis of the school affiliation is mostly based on a particular aspect of Buddhist teaching including epistemological philosophy (Madhyamaka and Yogācāra), the meaning of the monastic discipline (Vinaya), the importance of various meditation exercises (Dhyāna) or the belief in Buddha Amitābha’s ruling in the joyful paradise Sukhāvatī for the next rebirth etc. Accordingly, one or a few sūtras from the large variety of Buddhist scriptures will be basically used for the respective teaching concept. Sometimes, a school is just named according to the location of its spiritual centre e.g. the Tiantai school. Neither both dogmatic nor both law schools were able to assert themselves in China in the long run. The four schools of belief, on the other hand, succeeded in adopting to local circumstances over time and influenced each other as well. The meditation Chan school has become particularly popular in southern China.
AN ABBOT’S VISION OF AN AUTHENTIC AND GLOBAL SAMGHĀ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the School</th>
<th>Founder in China</th>
<th>Indian Master</th>
<th>Time of arising</th>
<th>Centre in China</th>
<th>Canonical Script</th>
<th>Cult Image</th>
<th>Influence abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>净土宗 Jingtu zong</td>
<td>Huiyuan 慧远</td>
<td>(334–416)</td>
<td>1st–2nd cent. in India; 5th cent. in China</td>
<td>Donglin Monastery (Lu Mountain)</td>
<td>Sukhāvatīvyūha 无量寿经</td>
<td>Amituofo</td>
<td>Japan: 13th cent., Jōdo-shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiantai zong (after 13th cent. gradually united with the Chan-School)</td>
<td>Zhiyi 智顗</td>
<td>(538–597)</td>
<td>2nd cent. in India, 6th cent. in China</td>
<td>Guoqing Monastery (Tiantai Mountain)</td>
<td>Lotus Sūtra 法华经</td>
<td>Avalokiteśvara 观音</td>
<td>Japan: 8th cent. Korea: 10th cent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Some Key Monasteries related to the Liuzu Monastery (see §4.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Monastery</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>School Affiliation</th>
<th>Incumbent Abbot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Province Guangdong 广东省</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Liuzu Monastery / Monastery of the Sixth Patriarch (Headquarters) 六祖禅寺 (总部)</td>
<td>Sihui 四会</td>
<td>built in 1999–2004</td>
<td>Chan school Meditation Centre</td>
<td>Dayuan appointed as administrator in 1998 and as fangzhang in 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cha’an Monastery 茶庵古寺</td>
<td>Jiangmen 江门</td>
<td>built in 14th–17th cent. and restored in 1999</td>
<td>Meditation Centre</td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Guanshan Monastery 观山寺</td>
<td>Gaozhou 高州</td>
<td>built in 14th–17th cent. and restored in 2002</td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 2002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Monastery</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>School Affiliation</td>
<td>Incumbent Abbot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Linghui Monastery</td>
<td>Maoming 茂名</td>
<td>built in 8th cent. and restored in 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan appointed as zhuchi in 2005 and elected as President of the Buddh. Assoc. of City Maoming; Dayuan’s pupil Dengjue 登觉 as fangzhang since 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Renhua Monastery</td>
<td>built in 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Xiaoling Mountain</td>
<td>built in 1952</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Lingyun Monastery</td>
<td>Heshan 合山</td>
<td>built in 2014</td>
<td>Meditation Centre</td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Renrui Monastery</td>
<td>Qishan 岐山</td>
<td>built in 1649</td>
<td>Meditation Centre</td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Xianglin Nunnery</td>
<td>Hengyang 衡阳</td>
<td>restored in 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan elected as Vice President of the Buddh. Assoc. of City Hengyang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Qifeng Monastery</td>
<td>Hengyang 衡阳</td>
<td>restored in 1998</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Fangguang Monastery</td>
<td>Nanyue 南岳</td>
<td>built in 593 and restored in 1998</td>
<td>Meditation Centre</td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Xiangshan Monastery</td>
<td>Changning 常宁</td>
<td>built in 906 and restored in 1998</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Daxing Chan Monastery</td>
<td>Huaihua 怀化</td>
<td>built in 11th cent. and restored in 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 1999 elected as President of the Buddh. Assoc. of City Huaihua; Dayuan’s pupil Dengning 登宁 as fangzhang since 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Ganquan Monastery</td>
<td>Qiyang 郏阳</td>
<td>built in 1470 and restored in 2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Puti Monastery</td>
<td>Huaihua 怀化</td>
<td>restored in 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Guanyin Monastery</td>
<td>Jingzhou 靖州</td>
<td>restored in 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Feishan Monastery</td>
<td>Jingzhou 靖州</td>
<td>restored in 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi since 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Wufeng Monastery</td>
<td>Jingzhou 靖州</td>
<td>built in 1526</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan as zhuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Wenchangge Monastery</td>
<td>Yongzhou 永州</td>
<td>built during the Song dynasty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Jingxing Monastery</td>
<td>Yuanjiang 溆江</td>
<td>built during 785 and 805</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dayuan’s pupil Dengxian 登贤 as zhuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Yaowang Monastery</td>
<td>Hongjiang 洪江</td>
<td>built in 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## AN ABBOT'S VISION OF AN AUTHENTIC AND GLOBAL SAMGHA

### Name of Monastery | Location | History | School Affiliation | Incumbent Abbot
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**In Province Hubei 湖北省**
22. Lingquan Monastery 灵泉寺 | Wuhan 武汉 | built in 749 and restored in 2001 | Meditation Centre | Dayuan as zhuchi since 2000, Dayuan’s pupil Chanding 禅定 as zhuchi since 2016
23. Ganlu Monastery 甘露寺 | Xiantao 仙桃 | built during 1736–1796 | | Dayuan as zhuchi since 2012

**In Province Zhejiang 浙江省**
24. Chongren Monastery 崇仁寺 | Longquan 龙泉 | built in 907 and restored in 2009 | Avatamsaka school | Dayuan as zhuchi since 2009 and elected as President of the Buddh. Assoc. of City Lishui
25. Daqing Nunnery 大庆寺 | Wenzhou 温州 | built in 942 | | Dayuan as zhuchi
26. Huiming Monastery 惠明寺 | Jingning 景宁 | built in 861 | | Dayuan as zhuchi

**In Province Anhui 安徽省**
27. Sanhua Monastery 三华寺 | Wuhu 芜湖 | built in 10th cent. | Meditation Centre | 

**In Province Shaanxi 陕西省**

**In Province Hebei 河北省**
29. Lapsum Shedrup Ling Monastery 护国崇德寺 | Shangyi 尚义 | 1636 | Meditation Centre | 

### Appendix 3: Selected Publications by Ven. Dayuan

As mentioned in §4.1, only the first 20 books from a long list consisting of more than 210 publications by Ven. Dayuan are cited here as specimens, supplemented with English translation and explanation. For other books see Dayuan Shuku (大愿书库 Library of Dayuan’s Books) at Liuze Monastery’s website [https://lzs.hrzh.org](https://lzs.hrzh.org). I sincerely thank Ven. Wuru 悟如 and Ven. Zhipu 智普 for their kind cooperation to clarify the origin of some books.

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<tr>
<th>Chinese Title</th>
<th>English Translation and Explanation by Luo Yingyu 罗英玉 and Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber 胡海燕</th>
</tr>
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</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Linquan Monastery 灵泉寺 in November 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Chongren Monastery 崇仁寺 in August 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 《信心铭》学记 (六祖寺电子版, 9 集)</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the Verses on the Faith Mind [composed by Sengcan 僧璨 (495–606), the Third Patriarch of the Meditation School (Chan zong)].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digital version, 9 parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in April 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 《八识规矩颂》学记 (六祖寺电子版, 14 集)</td>
<td>“Study Notes on [Xuanzang’s 玄奘 (602–664) Verses on the Guideline of the Eight Consciousnesses [aṣṭavijñānāni].]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in September 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 《大学直指》学记</td>
<td>“A Brief Introduction to the Bodhisattva Precepts of Lay Buddhists (with Study Notes on the Upasākaśīla [T. 1488, transl. by Dharmakṣema]).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in September 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 《金刚般若波罗蜜经》学记</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra [Diamond Sūtra].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Linghui Monastery 灵惠寺 in December 2009.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.《六祖法宝坛经》略讲</td>
<td>“A Brief Introduction to the Bodhisattva Precepts of Lay Buddhists (with Study Notes on the Upasākaśīla [T. 1488, transl. by Dharmakṣema]).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in September 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.《地藏菩萨本愿经》学记</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions [T. 839, transl. by Bodhidīpa 菩提灯].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Guanyin Monastery 观音寺 in September 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.《药师法门今生成就法》</td>
<td>“Medicine Buddha Dharma Door for Attaining Enlightenment in This Life. [based on the Bhaisajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabhāsapūrvapraṇidhiṇavacīṣṭavatara, Chin. Xuoshilianguang rulai benyuan gongde jing 药师琉璃光如来本愿功德经, T. 450, 451 and 499].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lecture given at Bailu Monastery 白鹿寺 in June 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.《大念处经》学记</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the Interpretation of Great Learning [by Zhi Xu 智旭 (1599–1655)].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in July 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.《占察善恶业报经》学记</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the interpretation of Great Learning [by Zhi Xu 智旭 (1599–1655)].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in July 2013.</td>
</tr>
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<td>15.《地藏菩萨本愿经》学记</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Guanyin Monastery 观音寺 in September 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.《大学直指》学记</td>
<td>“A Brief Introduction to the Bodhisattva Precepts of Lay Buddhists (with Study Notes on the Upasākaśīla [T. 1488, transl. by Dharmakṣema]).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in September 2006.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.《大学直指》学记</td>
<td>“A Brief Introduction to the Bodhisattva Precepts of Lay Buddhists (with Study Notes on the Upasākaśīla [T. 1488, transl. by Dharmakṣema]).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in September 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Lingyuan Monastery 灵岩寺 in October 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.《般若波罗蜜多心经》学记</td>
<td>“Study Notes on the Mahāsattvatathāgata Sūtra [Smatypaśasthāna Sūtra, T. 26, Chin. Zhongzhang jing 《中阿含经》98: Niunchu jing 念处经].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Liuzu Monastery 六祖寺 in October 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.《般若波罗蜜多心经》学记</td>
<td>“The Provisions for Pure Land”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on a lecture given at Pudu Monastery 普度寺 on August 3rd 2012.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


Xue, Yu 学愚. 2016b. “Buddhist Efforts for the Reconciliation of Buddhism and Marxism in the Early Years of the People’s Republic of China”. In: Kiely, Jan, and J. Brooks. Recovering Buddhism in Modern China. Colombia University Press (online), Part II/5.


Nurturing Buddhism with Traditional Chinese Culture: 
On the Characteristics of the Dharma Promotion by
Ven. Guangquan and his Saṅgha in Hangzhou

Zhang Jiacheng

Abstract
Since Ven. Guangquan 光泉 (1961–) founded the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy (Hangzhou foxueyuan 杭州佛学院) and served as the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery 灵隐寺, he has made dedicated efforts in Buddhist education and academic research, fine arts, charitable activities, and international exchanges. He has achieved remarkable results, leading the Buddhist community in Hangzhou to the forefront of promoting contemporary Chinese Buddhism. In light of his career, this article examines the characteristics of Ven. Guangquan and his Saṅgha’s Dharma promotion initiatives, referred to as the “Dharma Promotion Model Featuring Traditional Culture and Art” (hereafter “Guangquan Model”). Since the mid-1990s, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy’s founding and running have laid the foundation of this model. After Guangquan became the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery in 2011, based on this famous site’s religious capital, he further exerted his influence in the Jiangnan region and developed a broader international network. On the one hand, Guangquan has become active in the new age of modernisation of the monastic management system. On the other hand, by using the post-Mao revitalisation of Chinese traditional culture and art, Ven. Guangquan found a way to promote the Buddhist Dharma beyond the monastery’s borders, thus offering his understanding of a model in line with the officially promoted construction of a “Humanistic Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教).
1. Introduction

Lingyin Monastery and the West Lake are the favourite destinations of visitors to Hangzhou. Lingyin Monastery is always crowded with visitors and enthusiasts. The stories of Master Jigong (1130–1209), Master Hongyi (1880–1942), and other eminent monks related to Lingyin Monastery are also profoundly fixed in the minds of travellers and Buddhist followers. To many people who live in Hangzhou, the image of Lingyin Monastery is accurately illustrated by the four characters on the wall opposite the front gate: 咫尺西天 (Zhi Chi Xitian), which means “The Western Paradise is within Reach”. It is a secluded famous Chan Buddhist monastery at Hangzhou’s West Lake periphery and a place inextricably linked with the residents and even with overseas Chinese.

Especially in recent years, every activity of Lingyin Monastery arouses strong interest and concern among the locals and affects many ordinary citizens’ lives. On new year’s day 2020, more than 400,000 copies of new year’s calendars bearing the abbot’s calligraphy were given to the locals. A much more far-reaching activity was initiated when China started suffering from the COVID-19 outbreak at the beginning of 2020. On January 28, to help fight against the pandemic, a Dharma assembly was held by Lingyin Monastery to pray for all sentient beings and eliminate disasters. This event led to donations of 10 million RMB (approx. 1.5 mill. USD) for pandemic relief aid.

Apart from the religious capital, which stems from the monastery’s historical legacy, it is evident that Lingyin Monastery’s reputation and influence on the public are related to the unique character and leadership of the current abbot, Ven. Guangquan (1961–). In recent years, under his leadership, the monks of Lingyin Monastery have engaged in a wide range of innovative social programs.
featuring Buddhist discipline enhancement and Sangha education, and Buddhist faith-strengthening programs integrating Dharma promotion, charitable events, and international cultural exchange. Based on his success in benefiting both the Sangha and the greater community, Ven. Guangquan has become an influential figure among the new generation of Buddhist leaders in China.

According to the publications and speeches of Ven. Guangquan provided by Lingyin Monastery, as well as related reports and articles on the websites of Hangzhou Buddhist Academy (Hangzhou foxueyuan 杭州佛学院), Lingyin Monastery and other media, this article aims to conduct a preliminary review of the Dharma promotion of Ven. Guangquan and his Sangha. This study will explore the main characteristics of his model to promote the Buddhist Dharma, and analyse the factors which have contributed to forming his promotion model.

2. The Buddhist Life of Ven. Guangquan and his General Alignment

Ven. Guangquan is a native of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. After studying several years, he became a monk at the relatively late age of 28 in December 1989 at Faguang Monastery 法光寺 in Haimen, Jiangsu Province. Later in April 1990, Guangquan received full ordination at Longhua Monastery 龙华寺 in Shanghai. In an exclusive interview with a reporter from the journal Zhongguo zongjiao 中国宗教 (China Religion), Ven. Guangquan once talked about what prompted his belief in Buddhism and his initial reasons for becoming a monk. His first encounter with Buddhism was in the 1980s when his father died, and his family invited a local Buddhist monk to perform funerary ceremonies. Later, at Faxi Monastery 法喜寺, which is close to Lingyin Monastery, he took part in a ceremony related to the Bodhisattva Guanyin and took refuge with Master Xinrong 新融 (1928–2010). He then read the Biography of Master Hongyi, the famous artist-intellectual who became a monk in Hangzhou in 1918 and lived there for many years. This example of Hongyi, who decided to become a monk at the late age of 38, may have convinced Guangquan that it was still possible to follow the Buddhist monastic path.

2 For the following biographical data, see Lingyinsi 2020.

After receiving full ordination, Ven. Guangquan entered the Shanghai Buddhist Academy (*Shanghai foxueyuan* 上海佛学院). To him, the Shanghai Buddhist Academy was very removed from the secular world, not easily accessible by public transportation, but an ideal place for young Buddhist students to concentrate on Buddhist studies and practice. Between 1992 and 1997, Guangquan’s Buddhist studies and practice at the Shanghai Buddhist Academy and his first steps as a supervisor in Shanghai and at Guangfu Monastery 广福寺 on Chongming Island laid a solid foundation for his Buddhist education and experience of Buddhist leadership.

In 1997, at the invitation of the Buddhist community in Hangzhou, Ven. Guangquan returned to his hometown Hangzhou, where he served as the monastery supervisor (*jianyuan* 监院) of Fajing Monastery 法净寺. It was then that he started to build up the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy (*Hangzhou foxueyuan* 杭州佛学院) and became the President (of its precursor institution) in 1999. With the official approval and establishment of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy and the launch of a series of Dharma activities based on Fajing Monastery and the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, Ven. Guangquan’s reputation rose rapidly both inside and outside the Buddhist community. From then on, he was elected or recommended to several positions in the Buddhist Association of Hangzhou, the Buddhist Association of Zhejiang (*Zhejiang fojiao xiehui* 浙江佛教协会), and the Buddhist Association of China (*Zhongguo fojiao xiehui* 中国佛教协会, hereafter BAC).4

In February 2007, Ven. Guangquan moved to Lingyin Monastery, where he first served as the monastery supervisor and was finally inaugurated as its abbot on October 8, 2011. Over the years, Ven. Guangquan has also become a member of the CPPCC of Zhejiang Province and a member of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC of Hangzhou.

Since becoming a monk several decades ago, Ven. Guangquan has dedicated himself to Buddhist studies and practice. Right from the beginning, when he held the position of monastery supervisor at Fajing Monastery, he has devoted much energy to Buddhist education. Later, in the 2000s, while building up the

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4 In December 2002, he served as the Executive Director and Deputy Secretary General of the Buddhist Association of Zhejiang, and in October 2004 as the Secretary General of the Buddhist Association of Hangzhou. Since September 2005, he has been the President of the Buddhist Association of Hangzhou, and since December 2010 the Vice President of the Buddhist Association of Zhejiang. He has also been the Executive Director and the Deputy Secretary General of BAC since 2015.
Hangzhou Buddhist Academy for the next generation, Guangquan attended Zhejiang University, where he earned a degree in 2007 and deepened his philosophical training.

Ven. Guangquan’s Buddhist career of more than 30 years can be roughly divided into two stages: pre and post moving to his current station at Lingyin Monastery in 2007. Since 2007, a distinctive feature in his religious career has been promoting the Buddhist Dharma by way of fostering Buddhist education and academic research, but also more than before by his engagement in various cultural fields. The consistent and unchanging theme of his work is promoting Buddhist culture and art as an undeniable part of traditional Chinese culture.

Although over the years he has held several positions within the Monastery, the Academy and Buddhist associations, Guangquan has continuously engaged in the promotion of Buddhist culture. He has toured to other monasteries and carried out various Buddhist activities across the Taiwan Strait and in several dozen countries worldwide.

One may regard the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy and Lingyin Monastery as the bases for Guangquan’s efforts of combining Buddhist education with Buddhist culture to serve the promotion of the Dharma.

Unlike many other Buddhist abbots, who are focused on studying Buddhist scriptures and rituals, Ven. Guangquan, together with his Sangha, acts as a reform-oriented practitioner of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva path. Guangquan seeks to manifest the ideal of “Humanistic Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教), an idea initially introduced by master Taixu 太虚 (1890–1947) and taken up in the 1980s by Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000) as an official guideline for the development of Buddhism in the People’s Republic of China.5

Additionally, much of Ven. Guangquan’s nearly 30-year Buddhist career can be seen as part of the period of revitalisation of Chinese traditional culture and the transformation of religious policy that began in the 1980s during China’s reform and opening up. This has much to do with China’s current Buddhist revival, which builds on its historical foundations. When Buddhism was introduced into China, it gradually harmonised with the local Confucian and Daoist ideas and developed into a Buddhism with distinct

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5 For the concept of “Humanistic Buddhism” in the PR China and its historical background, see Ji 2017, Krause 2019. On its roots in the thinking of Taixu, see for example Pittman 2001, Yao/Gombrich 2017.
Chinese characteristics mainly based on Mahāyāna principles. During the Han and Tang dynasties, Buddhism finally became an integral part of Chinese traditional culture. Since the 1980s, many guiding principles have been discussed concerning contemporary Chinese religious culture. Examples include “The essence of religion is culture” (zongjiao de benzhi shi wenhua 宗教的本质是文化), “Actively guide the harmonisation of religion with a socialist society” (jiji yindao zongjiao yu shehuizhuyi shehui xiang shiyìng 积极引导宗教与社会主义社会相适应), and “Inherit and promote the excellence of traditional Chinese culture” (chuancheng hongyang Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua 传承弘扬中华优秀传统文化). In the years since 1980, this discursive background has provided a unique opportunity for Ven. Guangquan and his Saṃgha to carry out their distinctive way of promoting the Dharma in China.

Ven. Guangquan’s deep interest in Chinese culture and art, which is evident in most of his publications and speeches, focuses on “Buddhism and Traditional Chinese Culture”. Since Guangquan served as the Dean of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy and the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery, he has consciously been “Nurturing Buddhism with Traditional Culture” (yi chuantong wenhua jinrun fojiao 以传统文化浸润佛教), i.e. taking culture and art as Buddhist affairs. Undoubtedly, this constitutes the most crucial feature of the Dharma promotion activities of Ven. Guangquan and his Saṃgha.

For this reason, Ven. Guangquan and his Saṃgha’s way of promoting the Dharma can be summarised as the “Dharma Promotion Model Featuring Traditional Culture and Art”, and this article argues that according to Ven. Guangquan’s specific design it can also be called a “Guangquan Model”.

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6 Although Lingyin Monastery was historically a Chan Buddhist monastery, it has also always been a site of the integration of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. When Master Huili established the monastery, Ge Hong 葛洪 (*280–*340), a Daoist theorist, inscribed a plaque with the four characters 绝胜觉场 (juesheng juechang, in the sense of “Best Place for Awakening”) at the original monastery gate. In the Qing dynasty, Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), the (Confucian minded) governor of Zhejiang Province, established the “Lingyin Book Collection” (Lingyin shuzang 灵隐书藏) in Lingyin Monastery, the earliest public library in China. See Zhang 2013.


8 See Zhongguo xinwenwang 2020.
3. The Founding of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy as a Base for the “Guangquan Model”

In his Buddhist career, Ven. Guangquan’s founding of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy can be regarded as a milestone and the core of his early work promoting the Buddhist Dharma.

In 1998, in order to meet the needs of the development of Buddhism, Ven. Guangquan, who at that time was the monastery supervisor of Fajing Monastery, set up the “Hangzhou Buddhist Samgha Training Course” with the support of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association. In the beginning, about 20 to 30 Buddhist students were admitted into the program to undergo a systematic study of the Chinese Buddhist teachings for three years. In 2001, the program was renamed as the “Hangzhou Buddhist Academy”, and a postgraduate course was added based on the undergraduate curriculum. However, it was not until 2006 that the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) officially approved the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy.9

Since the establishment of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy Ven. Guangquan has served as its President, a post that enabled the realisation of his high ambitions for engaged Buddhism. Over the last several decades, Guangquan has played an active role in the planning, development and significant activities of the Academy, despite being occupied with a full plate of other monastery affairs. During his time at Fajing Monastery, Guangquan only had a small space to organise simple facilities. However, despite such limitations, he tried his best to bring together excellent teachers and plan and construct a new campus. Over the years, in addition to eminent monks from both inside and outside Zhejiang Province, experts and scholars from Chinese universities and scientific research institutions have also been employed as teachers for various courses, including experts and professors from Zhejiang University, the China Academy of Art (Zhongguo meishu xueyuan 中国美术学院) and other famous institutions.

In the last several years, many different research institutes have been established to improve the quality of Buddhist research and create an excellent academic setting for the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy. Examples include the “Buddhism Research Institute” (Fojiao yanjiusuo 佛教研究所), the “Japanese Buddhist Research Office” (Riben fojiao yanjiu shi 日本佛教研究室), the “Yogacara

9 It was clearly stated that Hangzhou Buddhist Academy is a Buddhist Academy for advanced studies of Chinese Buddhism organised by Zhejiang Buddhist Association and undertaken by Hangzhou Buddhist Association. On the development of local Buddhist Academies in post-Mao China, see Ji 2019.
Research Office” (*Weishi xue yanjiu shi* 唯识学研究室), the “Eastern Yogacara Research Association” (*Dongfang weishixue yanjiuhui* 东方唯识学研究会), the “Sino-Indic Cultural Exchange Center” (*Zhongyin wenhua jiaoliu zhongxin* 中印文化交流中心), and the “Chinese Association of Logic Hetuvidyā Committee” (*Zhongguo luoji xuehui yinmingxue weiyuanhui* 中国逻辑学会因明学委员会). Further, the Academy has regularly held special academic conferences on different aspects of Buddhism. In this context, it is worth mentioning that since 2003 the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has consecutively hosted seventeen academic conferences on Buddhism in the area of Hangzhou as the capital of the historical Wuyue kingdom. By hosting these conferences, outstanding academic achievements have been made in the in depth exploration and collation of Buddhism’s historical and cultural resources in the local region of Hangzhou. The Academy has successfully compiled and published many works dealing with Buddhist scholarship, which have been met with a very positive response within the broader academic community at home and abroad.

Also, to learn about new ideas and methods in Buddhist research from overseas institutions, and cultivate talents of Chinese Buddhism with international perspectives, Ven. Guangquan has been active in schemes to globalise Buddhist education and send monks abroad for further studies. He has successively sent more than twenty students to Hanazono University in Japan, the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist College of Singapore, and the University of the West in the United States.\(^\text{10}\)

In September 2010, the new campus of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, located in Lingyin Monastery’s Scenic Area in Hangzhou, was put into use officially, marking a new step in developing the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy. In light of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy’s success and good reputation both inside and outside the Buddhist community, in 2011 the BAC decided to establish the first “Chinese Buddhist Doctrinal Lecture Center” (*Hanchuan fojiao jiangjing jiaoliu jidi* 汉传佛教讲经交流基地) there. This would make use of its lively Buddhist atmosphere and rich cultural resources and reach a broader audience outside the Academy.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) See Ven. Guangquan 2018. As far as the author is informed, among the more than 20 students, 5 have been at Hanazono University in Japan, 10 at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka, 3 at the Buddhist College of Singapore, 1 at Monastery University and 1 at the University of the West in the United States. Some of them have completed their studies and returned to China, while some are still studying abroad.

\(^{11}\) See Chen 2017.
With more than 20 years of rich experience, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has gradually formed a Buddhist education model using Buddhist doctrinal teaching as its core and the teaching of Buddhist art and foreign languages as specialised training supplements. Especially in the field of Buddhist art, which has become a central part of Ven. Guangquan’s culture-centered model of promoting the Dharma, courses such as Buddhist painting, Buddhist calligraphy, and Buddhist sculpture have all been set up as the Academy’s specialty. As a result, Hangzhou’s Buddhist Academy is the only Buddhist academy with courses on Buddhist art approved by the SARA.

Collaborating with faculty from the China Academy of Art, Xiling Seal Society (Xiling yinshe 西泠印社), and other colleges and universities, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has built a successful platform for Buddhist art education. In doing so, it has combined the unique advantages of Lingyin Monastery and the Hangzhou Buddhist community. It can be said that the successful model of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy in both teaching and research, and the creation of Buddhist art-related pedagogy has set a forward-looking and exemplary standard in the field of Chinese Buddhist education.

Concerning a balance between Buddhist research and Buddhist practice, compared with traditional monastery-based education models, students trained at current Buddhist Academies are generally more knowledgeable about Buddhist theory. That is why the relationship between study and practice has become a challenging problem in contemporary Buddhist education. In this respect, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has created an innovative education model that inherits tradition and simultaneously adapts to change. In this sense, Ven. Guangquan has re-established a connection to the legacy of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy’s indirect precursor, the Wulin Buddhist Academy (Wulin foxueyuan 武林佛学院), which was founded by the masters Taixu and Juzan 巨赞 (1908–1984) at Lingfeng Monastery 灵峰寺 in December 1946. Ven. Guangquan has repeatedly spoken about the vital significance of the former academy’s motto of “Upholding the Saṃgha, Studying Diligently, Thinking Positively and Practising Persistently” (jin sengge, qin xuewen, zheng siwei, du xingchi 谨僧格，勤学问，正思维，笃行持) proposed by Master Huijue 会觉 (1892–1971), the first president of Wulin Buddhist Academy. In modern terms, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy explicitly adheres to the idea of “integrating

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12 See Liu 2013.
13 See for a discussion of this question, Ji 2019.
study and practice, giving a monastic spirit to student-monastic life” (xuexiu yiti hua, xueseng shenghuo conglin hua 学修一体化，学僧生活丛林化), as has been promoted by the BAC in recent years. In the sense of a local adaptation, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has finally sharpened its own slogan “Study and Practice as the Foundation, Academic Research as the Core, and Artistic Education as the Feature” (xuexiu wei genben, xueshu wei hexin, yishu wei tese 学修为根本，学术为核心，艺术为特色).

Based on this concept, students of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy adhere to daily sūtra chanting and evening meditation. They also participate in bi-weekly precept recitation summits. Such practices, usual in monastic life, guide young Buddhist students to understand Buddhist practice’s purity and solemnity better while they also gain theoretical knowledge daily. At the same time, Ven. Guangquan has also stressed the importance of academic research. He pointed out that “academic research is the core of the Buddhist Academy’s management policy. Based on the principle of ‘Study, and Practice as the Foundation’, the Academy connects ‘study’ (xue 学) and ‘practice’ (xiu 修) through academic research.”

It is evident that during the whole of his career, Guangquan has kept in mind the famous saying of Zhao Puchu (the late President of BAC), who stated that “the most important work of the Buddhist community at present and in the future is, first, to cultivate talent; second, to cultivate talent; and third, still is to cultivate talent.” Training talented individuals for the revival of Buddhism in contemporary China has been an undeniable need since the 1980s and 1990s, and continues to be an ongoing effort.

Therefore, since its establishment the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has always regarded the cultivation of qualified monks as its fundamental task. It has continued to realise this goal, cultivating young, talented monks for the Buddhist community in China. According to official statistics, more than 350 Buddhist students, including more than 30 postgraduates, have graduated from the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy so far. Some are trained in Buddhist research, Dharma talks, and monastery management, while others, the so-called “monk artists” (yiseng 艺僧), are trained in Buddhist arts, such as calligraphy, painting, sculpture, and Buddhist music.

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14 See Guangquan 2019.
15 See Guangquan 2018.
After graduation, these Buddhist students have settled down in all parts of the country and even overseas. Many of them have held important positions in the Buddhist community and grown into a new force in promoting Buddhism and benefiting society in contemporary China. Some of the outstanding graduate students from the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy have stayed in the Academy as teachers or joined the local Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou. All of these factors have dramatically increased the influence of the Buddhist community in Hangzhou and much change is directly related to the leadership of Ven. Guangquan. In recent years, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy has cultivated a considerable number of talented individuals who have engaged in the Buddhist community and contributed to Hangzhou’s Buddhist traditions’ rigorous period of rebirth and new prosperity. In this regard, the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy’s establishment has laid the foundation for the success of the “Guangquan Model”, characterised by a unique mixture of religious and academic content, and the successful integration of Ven. Guangquan’s growing network utilizing substantial local, regional, and international resources.

4. Shaping the Characteristics of a “Guangquan Model” after Becoming Abbot of Lingyin Monastery

Based on his initial success as founder and President of Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, in September 2005, at the age of 44, Ven. Guangquan became elected as President of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association. This role positioned him as a representative member of the new generation of monks ordained after the Cultural Revolution, who were now emerging centerstage. In July of the following year, Ven. Muyu 木鱼 (1913–2006), the then Abbot of Lingyin Monastery and

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17 Examples of outstanding graduate students from Hangzhou Buddhist Academy who have stayed at the academy as teachers or at local Monasteries are as follows:

Ven. Huiren 慧仁 (1973–), who graduated from the research class of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, currently serves as the Vice President of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy and is proficient in Yogacara Buddhism; Ven. Jiefa 戒法 (1986–), who graduated from the PhD program of Hanazono University in Japan, currently serves as the Director of Academic Affairs of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy and is proficient in Chan Buddhism; Ven. Xinwu 心悟 (1986–), who graduated from the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy with a focus on research and intellectual history and is currently a teacher at the Academy and proficient in the Tiantai school teachings; Master Weichen 惟尘 (1983–), the Abbot of Fajing Monastery at Zhong Tianzhu, and Master Yantong 演通 (1971–), the Abbot of Yuquan Monastery in Jiande, both of whom graduated from the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, to list just a few.
honorary President of the Buddhist Associations of both Zhejiang Province and Hangzhou, passed away. Following this, in February 2007, Ven. Guangquan transferred to Lingyin Monastery, and in October 2011, at the age of 50, he was inaugurated as the famous monastery’s new abbot. In effect, this promotion elevated Guangquan as the new leader of the Buddhist community in Hangzhou. Further, in becoming the President of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association (2005) and the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery (2011), Guangquan’s focus shifted from dealing with the localised affairs of Fajing Monastery and the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy to the overall improvement and future development of Buddhism in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, and the greater region as a whole.

With its long history of more than 1,700 years and reputation known throughout the Buddhist community in China and Asia, Lingyin Monastery has provided the platform for Ven. Guangquan’s growing influence. As a famous historical site of Chan Buddhism, Lingyin Monastery represents a symbol of Hangzhou’s cultural and historical heritage. Even during the Cultural Revolution, its site remained protected. To this day, it remains an emblematic monastery of Chinese Buddhism playing an essential role in upholding the Chinese Buddhist community’s cultural legacy.

Lingyin Monastery was founded in the early years of the Xianhe era of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (326). The founder of Lingyin Monastery was an Indian monk, Master Huili. With a history of more than 1700 years, it is also the first monastery that has been established in Hangzhou after Buddhism came to China. During the Song Dynasties, Hangzhou Buddhism flourished unprecedentedly, and that was also the peak period in the history of Lingyin Monastery. In the Jiading era (1207–1224) of the Southern Song Dynasty, Lingyin Monastery was ranked second on the list of Five Sacred Buddhist Mountains when the top 10 Chan Buddhist monasteries and top 5 sacred Buddhist mountains were evaluated. During the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, although Lingyin Monastery had ups and downs from time to time, it was still one of the most influential Buddhist Monasteries south of the Yangtze River. In modern history, Lingyin Monastery suffered many disasters, but it still preserves the basic architectural framework of the late Qing Dynasty.

During the “Cultural Revolution” in August 1966, some “Red Guards” wanted to demolish the Mahāvīra Hall of Lingyin Monastery, while some local factory workers and students spontaneously came to protect the monastery. When the two sides were at loggerheads, Zhou Enlai, the then Premier, ordered that the Mahāvīra Hall be “temporarily closed”. At present, most of the monasteries in China are rebuilt after the reform and opening up, but the Mahāvīra Hall of Lingyin Monastery retains the architectural pattern of the late Qing Dynasty. See Teng/Yang 1992: 8–9; Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 1998: 1133. After the reform and opening up and the implementation of religious policies, Lingyin Monastery has developed rapidly. At present, the central axis of the monastery has developed from two directions to five directions (Hall of Heavenly Kings, Mahāvīra Hall, Hall of Medicine Buddha, Sūtra Library and Huayan Hall). Other major halls of the monastery include Hall of Five Hundred Arhats, Huayan Pavilion, Liandeng Pavilion, Hall of Master Jigong etc.
In 1998, Ven. Muyu made substantial progress when he became the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery and attached great importance to improving the “hardware” and “software” of the monastery. Be it the (re)construction of buildings, the (re)enforcement of monastic rules, or fostering cultural exchanges with the Buddhist communities in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea; all of these measures contributed tremendously to the revitalisation of the Lingyin legacy. When Guangquan became the Abbot of Lingyin Monastery, he began building on this framework, drawing lessons from his successful experience developing the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy. In this sense, he took various measures to promote Buddhist culture, and in many respects this even transformed Lingyin Monastery into a recognizable brand.

A brochure which represents Ven. Guangquan’s view of Lingyin Monastery’s role for the local and global community begins with the following phrase:

May Culture Unfold the Holy Path
To Serve Society
To Build up Humanistic Buddhism

Culture is the root and the soul of a nation. Chinese Buddhism, as a fundamental part of Chinese traditional culture, has a history of nearly two thousand years. Since the founding by Huili in 326 AD, Lingyin Monastery has been the most important cultural source of the Southeastern Buddhist Kingdom (Dongnan foguo 东南佛国). For many years, Lingyin Monastery’s goal has been to “carry forward the rich traditions of Buddhism and actively build a real life Pure Land in the Southeastern region”. Its efforts in continuing to cultivate self-discipline, lead and transform the secular world, actively inherit and promulgate Chinese culture, serve the greater society, and promote peace and harmony, has been recognised by fellow practitioners and many believers, and has also been widely praised by all sectors of society.21

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20 Since the Wuyue Kingdom Period (907–978), due to the prosperity of Buddhism, the area with Hangzhou as the capital has been known as the Southeast Buddhist Kingdom. See Zhang 2014.

21 Lingyin Monastery Promotion Brochure (2014).
The following analysis will attempt to examine the ways in which Ven. Guangquan has made use of his leadership of Lingyin Monastery, and honed the characteristics of the so-called “Guangquan Model”.

4.1 Monastic Rules and the Modernisation of Monastic Management

When Guangquan took over as Abbot of Lingyin Monastery, many aspects of Buddhist activity were still undergoing revitalisation. One of the main tasks included helping Buddhist monasteries regain their original pedigree as religious sites for Buddhist practice. From the beginning, Ven. Guangquan attached great importance to the modernisation of management and the initiation of cultural projects to “scientifically improve the quality of management of the monastery” (tisheng siyuan kexuehua guanli shuiping 提升寺院科学化管理水平).

While Guangquan highly valued the inheritance and promotion of the long tradition of Chinese Buddhism via monastic discipline, to meet the time’s needs, he also actively introduced a standardised modern management system. In 2015, Lingyin Monastery began making innovations in management systems, integrating enterprise management models with the traditional monastery management system. These efforts allowed it to pioneer, promote and implement “Monastery Management System Standards” (siyuan guanli biaozhun tixi 寺院管理标准体系) in China’s Buddhist and religious circles.

After three years of research and planning, Buddhist monastery management methods became finalised, meeting a monastery’s management needs in the contemporary age. This achievement also fulfilled the ISO9001 quality system standards and enabled Lingyin Monastery to finally gain certification from the China Quality Certification Center (CQC, Zhongguo zhiliang renzheng zhongxin 中国质
In doing so, Lingyin Monastery became the first and only Buddhist monastery certified by the ISO standardised management system in China. After introducing the ISO9001 quality management standard into Lingyin Monastery, it was inevitable that the event would stir up discussion in various circles of Chinese society. However, since Buddhist monasteries have always been forced to confront enormous changes brought on by rapid economic and social developments, Ven. Guangquan has argued that traditional monastic regulations are not always suitable to meet the needs of contemporary Buddhism and the goal of promoting the Dharma. With his brave engagement, Guangquan has taken a step beyond the modernisation standards that have been common in Buddhist monasteries in post-Mao China since the end of the 20th century. In doing so, Guangquan stands at the forefront of management innovation for Chinese Buddhist Monasteries in the current age.

22 The ISO9001 had become even more popular in China than in Japan and the US, as was reported in Qualityinspection.org 2013.
23 See Pusa zaixian 2019.
4.2 Transforming the Monastery into a Cultural Centre for Promoting the Dharma

Ven. Guangquan has made use of Lingyin Monastery as one of the most famous Buddhist sites in Hangzhou, utilising its religious capital to attract both Buddhists and non-Buddhist institutions alike. A large part of Guangquan’s initiatives has been connected to the locality of Hangzhou and Zhejiang itself. Collaborations have led to the establishment of the Zhejiang Yunlin Academy (Zhejiang Yunlin shuyuan 浙江云林书院), the Lingyin Culture Forum (Lingyin wenhua luntan 灵隐文化论坛), and Yunlin Workshops on the Studies of Ancient Chinese Civilisation (Yunlin guoxue ban 云林国学班). Additional collaborations with institutions in Hangzhou have also enabled Guangquan to organise projects like the Chinese Buddhist Chanting Music Ensemble (Fanbai yishutuan 梵呗艺术团) in collaboration with the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy. This project provided popular performances to multiple audiences and has held training sessions on Buddhist chanting for lay Buddhist practitioners. Also, Guangquan founded the Hangzhou Yunlin Charitable Foundation (Hangzhou Yunlin gongyi jijinhui 杭州云林公益基金会). This foundation has carried out a series of charitable activities such as disaster relief drives, alms to the poor, assistance to the elderly and the young, and financial aid projects for students from underfinanced families.\(^\text{24}\)

Among all his activities to promote Buddhism in the name of Lingyin Monastery, there are some with distinctive features worth a more detailed discussion:

1. Yunlin Tea Ceremony (Yunlin chahui 云林茶会):
   One example of how Ven. Guangquan has combined Buddhism with the local culture, includes his choice to promote Hangzhou as the “Capital of Tea” (chadu 茶都), a title which stands in close connection to its ancient city’s reputation as the Chinese “Capital of Chan Buddhism” (chandu 禅都). As early as the Song dynasty, the “Jingshan [Monastery] Tea Banquet” (jingshan chayan 径山茶宴) in Hangzhou was well known throughout the world. It eventually spread to Japan and evolved into the Japanese tea ceremony.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\) See Sangjizhaxi 2012.

\(^{25}\) See Zhang 1996.
For this reason, Ven. Guangquan has made efforts to promote Hangzhou’s ancient “Chan tea culture” (chancha wenhua 禅茶文化) and to re-establish Hangzhou as the geographic origin of this now world famous cultural activity. In his early years, while managing Fajing Monastery, Ven. Guangquan built the “Fajing Chan Tea” (fajing chancha 法净禅茶) brand. In 2009, after becoming active at Lingyin Monastery, he began establishing the “Yunlin Tea Ceremony” and actively promoting it throughout China. In recent years, the “Yunlin Tea Ceremony” of Lingyin Monastery has expanded its influence and even has been held internationally in New York, Vancouver, Paris, and other parts of the world. This format has also become an appreciated means of promoting the Dharma at home and abroad.

2. Laba Porridge Distribution (Laba shizhou 腊八施粥):
Following his move to Lingyin Monastery in 2007, Ven. Guangquan started to introduce the annual tradition of “Laba Porridge Distribution” (laba shizhou 腊八施粥).\(^{26}\) The number of porridges distributed has increased from 80,000 (in the first year) to 100,000 and then to 300,000 and 400,000 in 2018 and 2019. In the implementation of charity and social benefit programs, Lingyin Monastery ranks first in China. It is also worthy of note that since Ven. Guangquan’s move to Lingyin Monastery and his promotion of the “Laba Porridge Practice” of giving, this custom has become increasingly popular all over Hangzhou. Based on such popularity, in 2016 the “Lingyin Laba Festival” (Lingyin laba jiexisu 灵隐腊八节习俗) succeeded in becoming recognised as an item of World Heritage. It was listed in the fifth batch of the “intangible cultural heritage” of Zhejiang Province\(^{27}\). In this way, Ven. Guangquan has combined a Buddhist tradition with practical social outreach and has confirmed the monastery as a center for local and universal social programs.

\(^{26}\) The custom of Laba porridge distribution has become increasingly popular in recent years. For discussion on another example of this custom that was promoted by Ven. Xuecheng 学诚 (1966—) on behalf of the Longquan Monastery 龙泉寺 near Beijing, see McCarthy 2019.

\(^{27}\) See the news report of Xinhua wang 2017.
3. Chinese Filial Piety Culture Festival (Zhonghua cixiao wenhuajie 中华慈孝文化节):

An entirely new series of cultural initiatives started on the eve of the traditional Buddhist “Ullambana Festival” in 2013. During this event, Lingyin Monastery invited family members of the Saṃgha community to the monastery to celebrate the festival and practice filial piety. Since 2015, Lingyin Monastery and the China News Agency have collaborated to launch the annual “Chinese Filial Piety Culture Festival” (Zhonghua cixiao wenhuajie 中华慈孝文化节). In light of this, a series of creative activities have been held utilising this festival as a platform to promote filial piety.

Examples include the selection of “Zhejiang Filial Piety Models” (Zhejiang xiaoqin renwu 浙江孝亲人物), the organising of a “Chinese Filial Piety Culture Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition” (Zhonghua cixiao wenhua shuhuazhan 中华慈孝文化书画展), a “Zhejiang-Taiwan Filial Piety Award Ceremony” (Zhetai xiaoqin renwu banjiang dianli 浙台孝亲人物颁奖典礼), and a selection of “20 Filial Piety Figures” (20 ming huaren cixiao renwu 20名华人慈孝人物). Other items include, the selection of a “2018 Chinese Filial Piety Cultural Ambassador” (2018 Zhonghua cixiao wenhua dashi 2018中华慈孝文化大使), awards given to “2018 Filial Piety Figures” (2018 Zhonghua cixiao renwu 2018 中华慈孝人物), and the organisation of a “China Filial Piety Culture Forum”.

During the “Ullambana Festival” Lingyin Monastery centers all these activities around this festival, which in Chinese Buddhism usually falls on the 15th day of the lunar calendar’s 7th month. This day is also the date of the “Zhongyuan Festival” (Zhongyuan jie 中元节), when people perform ancestral worship ceremonies based on Daoist and Confucian traditions. In this way, the “Chinese Filial Piety Culture Festival” has integrated traditional virtues and practices of filial piety from Confucian and Daoist traditions with Buddhism’s compassion. The festival’s visual elements have also provided a platform for the aesthetics of calligraphy, painting, and music to be put on full display.
4.3 Making Use of the Monastery’s International Prestige for Going Abroad

In light of Lingyin Monastery’s international reputation, it has become a common task for Ven. Guangquan to welcome guests from all over the world.\(^{28}\) The connections which Lingyin Monastery provides have also made it possible for Ven. Guangquan to travel abroad and carry out foreign cultural exchanges. The term and concept of “going out [into the world]” (zouchuq\(^{u}\))，although was used initially as a strategy for Chinese companies with the support of the Chinese government in the 2000s, Ven. Guangquan has advocated for applying this idea to bolster the direction and influence of Lingyin Monastery.\(^{29}\) Compared to the leaders of other Buddhist Monasteries, Guangquan’s cultural approach has helped him find innovative ways of combining international cultural exchange with “Dharma promotion” and spread Hangzhou’s Buddhist culture to other parts of the world. The results of Ven. Guangquan and his Samgha’s Dharma promotion projects can be seen in Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, India, Sri Lanka, and other Asian countries that have been deeply influenced by Buddhist culture. Additionally, in more than twenty other countries and regions globally, such as Greece, France, Italy, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, and Mexico the influence of Guangquan’s various projects is also evident.

In February 2015, during the “2014 Public Recommendation of the Most Influential Chinese Monasteries Ceremony” (2014 zui ju yingxiangli zhonghua siyuan gongjian shengdian 2014 最具影响力中华寺院公荐盛典) held by Ta Kung Pao, the Journal of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and other relevant institutions in Hong Kong, more than 1,000 monasteries in

\(^{28}\) Since ancient times, Lingyin Monastery has been an important window for exchanges of Buddhism in Hangzhou. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, many dignitaries from Asia, Europe and North America have paid visits to Lingyin Monastery, including the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of Myanmar U Nu, the Prince of Cambodia Norodom Sihanouk, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Sirimavo Bandaranaike, as well as the First Lady of the United States Mrs. Nixon, the President of France Georges Pompidou, the King of Spain Juan Carlos, the Queen of Denmark Margaret II, etc. In particular, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, would come to Hangzhou every time he visited China, and pay a visit to Lingyin Monastery. In 1971 Prince Sihanouk, accompanied by Premier Zhou Enlai, visited Hangzhou and proposed to offer incense at Lingyin Monastery, which was still in “temporary closure” at that time. It was Prince Sihanouk’s request that led to the reopening of Lingyin Monastery. See the news report of “Legendary King Sihanouk Dies in Beijing, because of whom Lingyin Monastery in Hangzhou Reopens” on October 16, 2012 by Meiri shangbao 2012.

\(^{29}\) See Guangquan 2014.
China and abroad participated in the evaluation. Based on its success in recent years, Hangzhou’s Lingyin Monastery was rated as “The Most Influential Chinese Monastery in the World” (Zui ju guoji yingxiangli zhonghua siyuan 最具国际影响力中华寺院).  

5. Conclusions

Propagating Buddhism in combination with traditional Chinese culture does not lack examples in contemporary Chinese Buddhist circles. For example, in recent years many places in China have successively carried out Buddhist cultural festivals, such as the Avalokitesvara Cultural Festival (Guanyin wenhuajie 观音文化节) (Mount Putuo), Ksitigarbha Cultural Festival (Dizang wenhuajie 地藏文化节) (Mount Jiuhua), Maitreya Cultural Festival (Mile wenhuajie 弥勒文化节) (Mount Xuedou), Huangmei Buddhist Cultural Festival (Huangmei fojiao wenhuajie 黄梅佛教文化节) (Huangmei, Hubei Province).

In Taiwan, Fo Guang Shan 佛光山, led by the eminent Ven. Hsing Yun 星云 (1927–) and his Saṃgha has also become a thriving platform for “Promoting Buddhism through cultural education” (yi wenhua jiaoyu hongyang fofa 以文化教育弘扬佛法).

However, unlike the above cases, the “Guangquan Model” is formed upon the unique position of Lingyin Monastery in the Buddhist circles of Hangzhou and Zhejiang and its strong support from the Hangzhou Buddhist Association and the leadership of Ven. Guangquan. Its model’s brand has been built upon and established on the motto, “Nurturing Buddhism with Traditional Culture”. Simultaneously, Guangquan’s model bears distinctive modernised characteristics and does not neglect the challenge of transcending locality to promote the Buddhist Dharma to a global audience.

A scholar once commented on the overall impression of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association and Lingyin Monastery’s role in developing Buddhism in the current global climate:

“Relying on the platform of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association, Lingyin Monastery takes the lead, and each monastery is positioned independently and performs its own duties. Lingyin Monastery, as the most influential Buddhist monastery in Hangzhou, is the main window to the outside world. It holds various large-scale Buddhist activities

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30 See Zong 2019.
It not only integrates with the lifestyle of modern society but also with the daily life of the public. It has become the brand of Hangzhou Buddhism. At the same time, due to a large number of tourists and Buddhist followers who come to Lingyin Monastery for sightseeing, the monastery not only undertakes its own self-supporting and maintenance functions but also undertakes a large part of the maintenance and construction costs of other monasteries in Hangzhou through the platform of the Hangzhou Buddhist Association. At the same time, the Hangzhou Buddhist Association has a unified layout for the ‘different positioning’ of other monasteries and also has the right to investigate and identify the candidates for the abbotship of the monasteries, and these Monasteries can focus on cultural construction and pure cultivation. In this way, Buddhist monasteries in Hangzhou are integrated into ‘one big monastery’.

In summary, the efforts of Ven. Guangquan characterised as the “Guangquan Model” can be defined as follows:

1. Conforming to the trend of the times
   Ven. Guangquan’s thirty-year Buddhist career in post-Mao China must be examined in the light of Buddhist revival and the ongoing and widespread revitalisation of traditional Chinese culture in China. The notion of the “Guangquan Model” not only symbolises the fundamental spirit of Chinese Buddhism but also embodies the deeply rooted pursuit of Ven. Guangquan’s generation and their efforts to adapt traditional Chinese culture according to the time’s social needs. Such an idea has even become mainstream in recent politics with the demand for an ongoing “sinicisation” of religions, and even the term “to meet the opportunity” (jiyu 机遇), which has become a recent political buzz word.

2. Acting according to local circumstances.
   Based on the in-depth exploration and utilisation of the rich resources of “Hangzhou Buddhist culture”, Ven. Guangquan and his Samgha have evolved feasible strategies and measures to

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31 See Li 2015. Compare also with the development of the branding of a “Putuoshan Buddhism” (Putuoshan fojiao 普陀山佛教), see Vidal 2019.
develop a cultural branding, which benefits from Hangzhou’s special local features. Although a big part of Ven. Guangquan’s Buddhist education has taken place in Shanghai, his identification with Hangzhou’s religious sites – being a native of that city himself – has become an essential factor of his success. Further, with his promotion of the local culture, he has been smart in addressing the local community while also keeping Lingyin Monastery attractive for the tourist masses coming from abroad.

3. Innovative thinking.

One essential element of the “Guangquan Model” is being innovative, and not just rigidly adhering to traditions based on ceremony. Many of the cultural activities that have been introduced by Ven. Guangquan are incredibly innovative. They range from the adaptation of the “Yunlin Tea Ceremony” for a mass audience to the “Lingyin Laba Festival’s” submission to become an Intangible Cultural Heritage item. Examples also include the “Chinese Filial Piety Culture Festival’s” fusion with non-Buddhist elements of traditional Chinese culture. Another groundbreaking innovation has been Lingyin Monastery’s launch of the “Monastery Management System Standards (ISO9000)”, which came to represent the first modern management system in the Buddhist community and even in China’s entire religious sphere. This system has provided valuable experience for the innovation and practice of contemporary Buddhist monastery management in China.

4. Precise positioning.

The formation of the “Guangquan Model” is finally a comprehensive showcase for Ven Guangquan’s charm as Hangzhou’s Buddhist community’s leader. As a native of Hangzhou born under the Mao era and inspired by the “culture fever” (wenhuare 文化热) of the 1980s, Guangquan fell in love with traditional Chinese culture early on. This background also explains why Guangquan has remained deeply engaged in promoting Buddhism as an inseparable part of Chinese culture. Guangquan has stated that he sees Buddhism as a religion and also a culture. The centuries-old
monasteries are religious sites and also places for the inheritance and promotion of Chinese culture. Guangquan believes that we should transform a Buddhist monastery into a comprehensive cultural forum and a base for promoting tradition.32

In addition to his values regarding Chinese traditional culture, Ven. Guangquan’s leadership role is also strongly connected to his great attention to Buddhist academic research and Buddhist practice within the Saṃgha. Also significant is his continued emphasis on the concept of “Dharma Promotion as a Monk’s daily task” (yi hongfa wei jiawu 以弘法为家务). In this sense, Guangquan is good at learning from others and has firm beliefs and a strong vision. Thus the author believes that he represents a new type of intelligence in the Buddhist community.

In short, the “Guangquan Model” is forged around Lingyin Monastery as a local Buddhist centre with a global reach. As a Buddhist leader, Ven. Guangquan also represents a figure from the new generation of Buddhist leaders who emphasise the appeal of Buddhist arts and their fusion with Chinese cultural values.

However, the perfect harmony between form and content is complicated to attain. It has been mentioned that the most distinctive forms of the “Guangquan Model” include the representations of Buddhist art, such as “Chan Tea” and “Buddhist Chanting Music”, which on the surface can easily achieve sensational effects. Nevertheless, it is not easy to reveal ultimately authentic concepts of Chan Buddhism in the form of Buddhist music performances to an unknowledgeable public. Such a task requires the performer to have a deep understanding of Buddhist art to grasp and interpret it well. However, judging from the Hangzhou Buddhist Chanting Music Ensemble performances, most Buddhist monks are very young, and their cultivation and artistic skills still need improvement. In this sense, the “Guangquan Model” still faces many limitations before realising its goals.

Therefore, there is still much work to be done to make Buddhism acceptable and understandable in the context of Chinese culture among the new generation of Buddhist monastics and contemporary Chinese society. This must meet the demands of the current world, which faces various challenges from the growing importance of science, technology, and globalisation. These factors are also the realities faced by Ven. Guangquan and his Saṃgha in seeking a sustainable balance of Buddhist values within the contemporary Chinese cultural context and also one which takes into account the global perspective for the future.

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References


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Abstract

Born in 1957, Rurui 如瑞, the abbess of Pushou Monastery 普寿寺 on Mount Wutai, in Shanxi province, belongs to the generation of Buddhists that became monastics after the opening up of China in the 1980s and came to leadership afterwards. She has been building Pushou Monastery, and the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns (Zhongguo Wutaishan nizhong foxueyuan 中国五台山尼众佛学院) that it hosts, since 1991, as part of the institutionalised system, and negotiating with both the political authorities and the laity. As the leader of the largest institutions for Buddhist nuns in the contemporary People’s Republic of China (PRC), Rurui also has a responsibility specifically to nuns, within the Buddhist community at large. Drawing from ethnographic data, this paper will look into the model that she built, and from that model and her individual trajectory, inquir into how she legitimised her leadership and authority. More generally, this will be an opportunity to ask ourselves about how one asserts oneself as a female Buddhist leader in contemporary PRC.
Introduction: Charisma in Context

What probably struck me most when I first met Rurui 如瑞 (1957–), the abbess of Pushou Monastery 普寿寺 on Mount Wutai 五台山, on 3rd July 2015, was her poised attitude, and the influence she seemed to have on lay Buddhists who came to visit her that day. Her aura at the time was what I would have characterised as charismatic. Other accounts of a first encounter describe her as “earnest and dignified” (wenzhong er duanzhuang 稳重而端庄), or as an ordinary person who still “resembled a reserved and earnest scholar” (xiang yi wei shenchen wenzhong de xuezhe 像一位深沉稳重的学者). A later interview with a Pushou nun revealed that,

“[…] [visitors] always praise the abbot in practice, in preaching Dharma, in being very humble and discrete. People coming here, really, a lot of people coming here, they want to, they’re eager to visit our dean, the dean […] in this academy. Because they have a lot of questions in their lives, in their study, […] so they want to get good answer […] to their problem. So, […] after they listen to the preaching, as well as some special instruction from the dean, they, their life view and world view, it’s a degree of purified and upgraded.”

Lay Buddhists and nuns alike indeed see her as someone particularly clear-sighted, as what she predicts usually comes true, and they also believe her to possess healing abilities resulting from her great compassion. In this way, Rurui can be said to have a charismatic nature, in the Weberian sense, meaning that she, as an individual, is being seen as having access to exceptional qualities that are out of reach for ordinary people. She can also, as she is affiliated to eminent nuns like Tongyuan 通愿 (1913–1991) and Longlian 隆莲 (1909–2006), inherit

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1 This paper is partly based on fieldwork data, and their collection has been made possible by financial support from the Università degli Studi di Perugia and from the INALCO since 2015. For their funding, I would also like to thank the EFEO (field scholarship in 2017), and the Confucius Institute (Joint Research PhD Fellowship in 2018). Furthermore, I wish to extend my gratitude to the reviewers of this essay for their insightful comments, and Callisto Searle for her careful proofreading and notes. Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who made this essay possible, in the field and in my professional and personal environments.


3 From an interview with one of the abbess’ assistants, conducted in English on July 7, 2015, in Pushou Monastery. For a better readability, the hesitations (“uh”) and agreement (“yeah”) marks have been taken out of the transcription, whereas the English has not been polished.
charisma that is associated with their prestigious lineages. Rurui’s leadership and authority stems from these factors, authority that, according to Welch, does not need to be absolute for Buddhist leaders, but rather based on respect and support from peers and lay people.

Looking further into the idea of charisma applied to contemporary religious specialists, there could be a discussion on whether or not she actually possesses this quality. Goossaert made a point of differentiating “charismatic authority” from the more common “charismatic potential” or “awe” among these specialists, in modern and contemporary Chinese society. In the case of Rurui, the idioms of self-cultivation and scholarship (based on individual qualities) seem to be reunited with the idiom of leadership, that would place her at the head of a community and/or a large group rather than only a monastic organisation. Based on these idioms, she has built a contractual relationship with her followers, and the Pushou community composed of both monastics and lay Buddhists grew up around her after her establishment of Pushou Monastery. As such, Rurui goes beyond simple awe, and fulfils the necessary conditions to create charismatic authority, as enumerated by Goossaert. Part of her legitimacy as a contemporary Buddhist leader is thus derived from her charisma, although it will be later noted that this is not the only factor behind it.

Rurui belongs to a generation of Buddhist leaders born before the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and ordained only after the opening of China and Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms which began in 1978. Like her peers, she had to adapt to and deal with changes in religious policies after Mao’s era, and participated in establishing the new relationship between state and religion. She not only had to become a legitimate Buddhist leader within the institutional structure, but also earned legitimacy for her organisation, based on her capacity to negotiate with the political authorities and not on her charisma alone. This legitimacy has also been achieved with reference to tradition, implementing strict monastic discipline, and promoting higher education.

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4 On charisma and charismatic authority, see Weber 1971. Moreover, he used the notion of inherited charisma in the context of the early Indian caste system, where individual charisma was being transferred to a lineage, and charisma attached to a lineage was being transferred to its heir in a mutually legitimating process. See Weber 2003: 135–136.

5 Welch 1967: 150.

Regarding issues of legitimacy, how did the process of becoming a female Buddhist leader influence her choices and the model she established? Although primarily a Buddhist, she also is one of the most visible nuns of her time, and as such needs to find ways in which not only Buddhism, but also more specifically Buddhist nuns can exist in post-Mao China.

Little biographical information or detail about her religious career can be found. She was born in 1957 in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. After the Cultural Revolution, she received a university degree in literature from the Taiyuan Normal University (Taiyuan shifan xueyuan 太原师范学院), and went on to study Chinese language and literature at Beijing Normal University (Beijing shifan daxue 北京师范大学). She was then employed as a secondary school teacher, and grew more interested in Buddhist education. The two eminent nuns mentioned earlier had a particularly great influence regarding her religious career. It was indeed her meeting with Tongyuan that encouraged her to receive tonsure in 1981, thus entering the Fahai Monastery (法海寺), Shanxi, as a novice. In the early 1980s, she also became Longlian’s assistant, and followed her to the Aidaotang Nunnery (爱道堂) in Chengdu, Sichuan. She finally received full ordination (juzu jie 具足戒) in 1984 at Datong’s Shanghuayan Monastery (上华严寺). A decade later, in 1991, at the age of 34, she accomplished what she came to be known for, the establishment of Mount Wutai’s Pushou Monastery, and the founding one year later of the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns (Zhongguo Wutaishan nizhong foxueyuan 中国五台山尼众佛学院). Although she has received a number of distinctions over the years, the most recent and significant ones have been her nomination as "Chinese Cultural Personality" (Zhonghua wenhua renwu 中华文化人物) for the year 2016, and her honorary PhD degree in Buddhist Studies from the Thai Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU), which she obtained in November 2017.

Under her leadership, Pushou Monastery was designed to be a Vinaya centre, or a “Vinaya-centric institution”, which meant that from then on it specialised in the study, interpretation and strict implementation of the monastic discipline, and that it was recognised as such by others. It currently hosts the largest community of nuns in the People’s Republic of China (hereafter PRC). The number of permanent residents amounts to approximately 600 people, but expands during the busiest season, the summer retreat (anju 安居), to reach about 800–799 precisely in 2019.

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7 Some of this information is mentioned in Mao 2015: 2–3. Other items can be found on Pushou Monastery’s website (www.pushousi.net), brochures and informative documents.
This last number accounts for nuns residing permanently in the monastery, as well as those who only join in yearly classes and activities, and is regularly changing. As for the Buddhist Institute, it is unsurprisingly the largest Institute for Buddhist Studies (foxueyuan 佛学院) providing a modern education for nuns in the PRC. It aims at training the next generation of Buddhist leaders within the institutional framework and in accordance with Vinaya regulations. Rurui is, to this day, the abbess of Pushou Monastery and the president of the Institute. She also occupies a high position within the institutional system, as vice-president of the Buddhist Association of Shanxi (Shanxi sheng fojiao xiehui 山西省佛教协会) since 1997, and as one of the Buddhist Association of China’s (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会, hereafter BAC) Vice Presidents since 2010.

The first section of this paper will reflect on the processes of Rurui’s affiliation to monastics’ networks, and on the continuity it provides for a contemporary Buddhist leader, with its identity being built on the influence of eminent masters of the past century. The second section will then tie this legacy to Pushou Monastery’s history, emphasising its distinctive characteristics and Rurui’s own contribution based on her teachers’ legacy. Her efforts to adapt the model she designed for nuns to the institutional context will also be examined, as well as her positions and responsibilities within the official institutions as a Buddhist leader, and as a nun. In summary, the paper will provide insight into a female Buddhist leader’s individual trajectory, and the concrete model she established to give nuns the opportunity to become legitimate Buddhist leaders themselves in the future; this is further discussed in the last two sections of this article.

This paper is based on data collected during several periods of fieldwork in mainland China, in Pushou Monastery and its branch monastery (fenyuan 分院) Dacheng Monastery 大乘寺 in Taiyuan’s suburban area, between 2015 and 2019. Using the ethnographic method, data were collected in the field through semi-structured open question interviews, participant observation, and by reviewing various print and digital fieldwork materials. During this period of time, individual meetings with Rurui herself were rare and only occurred in July 2015 and May 2017. Religious rituals and ceremonies, official meetings and Q&A situations were a more common setting for our encounters. The paper is also based on three formal interviews with Pushou nuns, two of them with the same informant in July 2015 and August 2019, and one with another in August 2019. A rich set of data was further collected over the years from onsite and online resources, and from observations of the monastic and lay communities surrounding Rurui.
1. Building Personal Ties: Continuity and Legitimacy through Networks of Nuns

Nuns, as well as monks, can become affiliated with networks that can influence their individual trajectories, and legitimise their role as Buddhist leaders. Even without looking into lineages in the strict Buddhist sense of the term (the “tonsure families” described by Welch, or “Dharma lineages”), an abbot’s or an abbess’ position can often be traced back to their relationship with various masters, teachers, or colleagues. These networks of monks and nuns are built around eminent and influential figures, who bring legitimacy to them based on historical continuity and prestige or charismatic authority. In his last chapter to The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, Welch mentions that affiliation is achieved not only through religious kinship, but also through loyalty to a charismatic figure, or even through regional ties between monks.10 In modern and contemporary China, other criteria can be added as members of the Saṃgha can become affiliated with classmates or teachers within Buddhist institutes, or with work colleagues within Buddhist organisations or associations, and thus build transregional and transnational networks.11

It is virtually impossible to look into Rurui’s accomplishments without mentioning her affiliation with the overlapping networks of two eminent nuns, Tongyuan and Longlian. Tongyuan is considered by the Pushou nuns as a founding figure of the community, a figure whose vision led Rurui to establish Pushou Monastery, and who was later described by one of my informants as a “flag”. Born Zhao Yaochen, Tongyuan was from an educated family of Buddhist practitioners from Heilongjiang and received a modern education early on.12 In 1930, she moved to Beijing as a college student, and between 1934 and 1937 studied economics at the Beiping University (Beiping daxue). At the same time, she also deepened her knowledge of Buddhism by studying monastic discipline under the Vinaya master Cizhou in Jinglian Monastery.13 It is worth noting that this particular monk was

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12 As she requested, there are very few texts, academic or otherwise, that provide biographical details on Tongyuan’s life. Most of the information used here is from Pushou Monastery’s website, and from an article published after Tongyuan’s passing in 1991, see Wen 1991.
13 As there are no Western academic publications on Cizhou yet, see his works in Chinese, Cizhou 2004.
influential in the Vinaya revival of the first half of the twentieth century, which consisted of modernising Buddhist monasticism by encouraging strict observance of discipline.\textsuperscript{14} Tongyuan received tonsure from Cizhou in 1940 and in the same year was conferred the full ordination in Guangji Monastery 广济寺. Between 1941 and 1955, she acted as teacher at the Tongjiao Monastery 通教寺 in Beijing, a monastery that was restored by three nuns to become a Vinaya monastery, under the influence of Cizhou.\textsuperscript{15} As she was the abbess of Tongjiao Monastery, Longlian came to stay there in 1955 while in Beijing for official duties, and this encounter is known as the beginning of a thirty-six years long friendship.

The same year, Tongyuan moved to mount Wutai, living at first a simple and withdrawn life in hermitages, and then residing in monasteries, before she had to leave the mountain in 1969 in the worst period of the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{16} Only afterwards, in the second half of the 1970s, did she move back, but she kept travelling within China to perform her teaching duties, and promote Buddhist education for nuns and laywomen. She indeed thought that education was essential for them to gain recognition as active and legitimate participants in Chinese society,

“\textquote{At the moment, the most important thing is not to build monasteries, but to train people; […] if possible, a spiritual development school for women should be created on a national scale. Women are numerous today, but their spiritual life is insufficient, the quality of their faith is poor. If we create a school like this one to study and improve knowledge of the Buddhist teachings, they will be able, at the end of their studies, to help other people train to reach perfection in their practice.}”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Vinaya is a group of canonical texts dedicated to monastic discipline, regulating the life of monks and nuns. Several Vinayas have been followed in Buddhism throughout history, but today only three are still active; they are the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Theravāda, and Dharmaguptaka traditions. The last is the one used as a reference in China and called the “discipline in four parts” or sifen lü (四分律). On the rules for nuns contained in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, see Heirman 2002. There have been several movements launched to revive Vinaya practices and procedures over the centuries, one of them initiated in the 1930s by eminent masters and continued by their heirs in the contemporary era. It advocates the rejuvenation of monastic discipline and the reform of the Buddhist Samgha, by returning to standards that have been set aside or never implemented in China. See Campo 2017.

\textsuperscript{15} DeVido 2015: 80–81.

\textsuperscript{16} Qiu 2006: 22–23.

\textsuperscript{17} Personal translation from the original French in Cochini 2015: 293.
She finally managed to set up such a structure at the end of her life, in Shaanxi province, a place called the Jixiang Residence 吉祥精舍. There she taught both lay people and monastics between 1988 and 1990, and organised research classes on monastic discipline. After meeting her friend and colleague Longlian at Mount Emei 峨眉山, Sichuan, in 1990, she went back to Shanxi and passed away in March 1991. Although she focused on education throughout her life, it was not her only concern, and she was also involved in spreading what she believed to be the correct observance of the Vinaya, based on what she learned from Cizhou. Both she and Longlian shared the same interest in setting up modern educational structures and establishing orthodox procedures and practices for nuns according to the Chinese Vinaya.

Tongyuan applied throughout her life an ideology that was known as the “three no’s” (sanbu 三不): she decided not to take disciples, not to have her biography written, and not to write texts promoting her own interpretation of Buddhist doctrine. Although Rurui was not Tongyuan’s official Dharma disciple, she was her student, and their meeting in the 1980s had a decisive impact on Rurui’s individual trajectory. It was surely this encounter that made up her mind to receive the tonsure in 1981, and then the full ordination in 1984 in Datong, Shanxi, with Tongyuan acting as ordination master. When Rurui later established Pushou Monastery and the Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns, she was carrying out Tongyuan’s wishes, and Tongyuan is still revered by the Pushou nuns as the master whose legacy they keep alive. Her relics are kept in a specific hall of the monastery, the Hall for Remembering Kindness (Yi’en tang 忆恩堂), and her passing is commemorated annually on the twentieth day of the first lunar month. Even more significant is the threefold system implemented by Rurui at Pushou Monastery: “[…] Avataṃsaka as lineage, Vinaya as practice, Pure Land as destination […]” (Huayan wei zong, jielü wei xing, jingtu wei gui 华严为宗, 戒律为行, 净土为归), which was passed down from Cizhou to Tongyuan, and from Tongyuan to Rurui, providing the monastery with a sense of continuity as part of the Huayan school of Buddhism.

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18 Li 1992: 258
19 A slogan that can be found in several texts about Pushou Monastery, for instance in Zhou 2012: 55, and on Pushou Monastery’s website.
Longlian, whose lay name was You Yongkang 游永康, was called the “first nun of the contemporary era” (dangdai diyi biqiuni 当代第一比丘尼) by Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000), former president of the BAC.21 She was also from a learned family from Sichuan, who practised Buddhism. Like Tongyuan, she received a good education in a number of subjects. In the 1930s and the 1940s, she perfected her Buddhist education with several masters, Nenghai 能海 (1886–1967) being one of them. He was a master of Sino-Tibetan Buddhism, and participated in spreading Tibetan Buddhism in China during the twentieth century. He was also a specialist in monastic discipline and was recognised as such by his peers, being very insistent on the strict observance of the Vinaya in the monasteries he established.22 He was instrumental in shaping Longlian’s individual trajectory, just as Cizhou was for Tongyuan. In 1941, she received the tonsure from another monk, Changyuan 昌圆 (1879–1944), and took the full ordination the next year in Chengdu’s Wenshu Monastery 文殊院. At the same time, she officially became Nenghai’s disciple, and started to teach at the Lianzong Women’s Institute (Lianzong nüzhong yuan 莲宗女众院) that Changyuan had set up at the public monastery for nuns, Aidaotang Nunnery, where she would later become headteacher. At the end of the 1940s, she took on the position of abbess at both the Aidaotang Nunnery and the Tiexiang Monastery 铁像寺, which then became the first monastery for nuns to follow the Tibetan tradition in China.23 She later went to Mount Wutai twice, in 1957 and 1959, to follow Nenghai’s teachings as he had set up his residence there, which also gave her the opportunity to visit Tongyuan.24 After the Cultural Revolution, during which she stayed at Aidaotang Nunnery, Longlian managed to set up what she saw as her two greatest accomplishments: in 1984 she opened the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns (Sichuan nizhong foxueyuan 四川尼众佛学院) in Tiexiang Monastery, of which she became the Dean; and she also restored the dual ordination procedure for nuns (erbuseng jie 二部僧戒),25 as Nenghai

21 Bianchi 2017: 272. She is one of the most famous nuns of her time; several biographical texts have already been published on her in English and Chinese. The information used in this paper mostly comes from the aforementioned paper by Bianchi. In addition, see, among others, her biography by Qiu 1997.
23 DeVido 2015: 82. Specifically on Tiexiang Monastery, see Bianchi 2001.
25 The dual ordination is the process through which a candidate becomes a nun, as prescribed in the Vinaya. To be considered a fully ordained nun, she should present herself in front of the
entrusted her to do. Indeed, by the end of 1981 and the beginning of 1982, she held the first full ordination ceremony for nuns since the end of the 1950s according to this specific procedure, and asked Tongyuan to act as head nun for the group of ten nun masters conferring ordination. Finally, during the last two decades of her life, she devoted herself to her official, teaching and management positions, and passed away in November 2006 at Aidaotang Nunnery.

Rurui entered Longlian’s Sichuan network by becoming her assistant at the Aidaotang Nunnery after she received tonsure in the early 1980s, and thus participated in the establishment of the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns before its official opening in 1984. Although Longlian, unlike Tongyuan, did not play a crucial part in the founding of Pushou Monastery, she still influenced Rurui, especially with regards to her work on ordination procedures and modern education for nuns. Pushou Monastery’s nuns still commemorate her passing with rituals, performed on the nineteenth day of the ninth lunar month.

The far-reaching influence of Tongyuan and Longlian on Rurui has one more aspect: In addition to being active in the field of Buddhist education and trying to set up a model of monastic discipline for nuns based on the Chinese Vinaya, both of these nuns occupied high positions in official institutions. Longlian worked from the 1950s with the Communist government, and in 1955 was appointed to sit on the council of the newly founded BAC. Among other positions, she also became president of the Sichuan Buddhist Association in 1981 and vice-president of the BAC in 1987. It was her involvement with the BAC, and the contacts she had within it, that underlaid her efforts to restore the Tiexiang Monastery and establish the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns as early as 1983.26 Although to a lesser extent, Tongyuan also took on some official duties. In 1980, she served as a representative during the Fourth General Assembly of the BAC, then after 1981, she was successively appointed permanent member of the council of the Shanxi Buddhist Association, vice-president of the Mount Wutai Buddhist Association and of the Shanxi Buddhist Association, and permanent member of the BAC’s Council.27 These functions allowed these two leaders to represent Chinese nuns, and promote their interests based on what they deemed to be essential in order to build a strong and relevant community.

Samgha, and ask an assembly of ten nuns and an assembly of ten monks in succession if they would bestow the ordination upon her. This process is explained in detail in Heirman 2002: 75–79.

Although these two eminent nuns of the twentieth century and their networks have been significant in shaping Rurui’s career, it should be noted that her affiliation to them is not based on kinship in the strict sense. While no mention is made to Rurui’s tonsure master or to any member of her “tonsure family” either on Pushou Monastery’s website or in the documents produced by the monastery, Tongyuan’s and Longlian’s legacy is made abundantly clear. Rather than kinship, affiliation with Tongyuan was achieved through a teacher-student relationship, and in the case of Longlian through loyalty to this particularly celebrated nun. Thus, Rurui’s particular affiliation processes to both of these eminent nuns were able to provide her with the legitimacy she needed as a Buddhist leader, thanks to the continuity and charisma inherent in their individual networks. To sum up, Rurui’s establishment of Pushou Monastery and the Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns has been based to a large extent on Tongyuan and Longlian’s teachings, especially in terms of monastic education and discipline, as well as on their influential networks.

2. Establishing Religious Sites: Legacy and Innovation at Pushou Monastery and the Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns

While continuity can be found within networks of nuns, the Pushou Monastery in itself, as a physical building, currently seems to have no specific tradition attached to it. Supposedly built between 1086 and 1090, it had been a monks’ monastery up until the Cultural Revolution; it was successively called Great Huayan Monastery 大华严寺 and Great Xiantong Monastery 大显通寺, and even identified as a monastery belonging to the Tibetan tradition. During the Cultural Revolution, the monastery was partially destroyed, and requisitioned as a health centre, which marked a rupture of approximately twenty years with the previously existing religious tradition. In a document written by one of the nuns, describing the monastery’s history, the restoration of the monastery’s premises in 1991 is characterised as a process of “starting from scratch” (baishouqijia 白手起家). Similarly, Rurui herself told a lay visitor: “[...] when we had only just arrived [in June 1991] there was nothing, we drank unboiled water and slept on brick beds, there even wasn’t any bedding.” Only then, in 1991, when Rurui started restoring it, was the monastery called Pushou Monastery, and turned into a Chinese monastery for nuns of the ten directions (shifang conglin 十方

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29 “[...] women gang lai shi shenme dou meiyou, he lianshui shui zhuankang, lian chuang beiru ye meiyou.” 我们来时什么都没有, 喝凉水睡砖炕,连床被褥也没有. Quoted from Tan 2000: 42.
丛林) or according to Welch a “public monastery” – a category of monasteries usually big in size and belonging to the broader monastic community. This blank slate provided Rurui with an opportunity to start her own model, based on what she inherited from her teachers rather than any specific tradition attached to the monastery. Incidentally, no mention is made to the larger history of Pushou Monastery on its website, and the nuns themselves, when asked about it, are not familiar with it. This situation is not unlike the one experienced by the community of Taiwanese nuns studied by Yü. At their arrival on the site of what then became the Incense Light Monastery 香光寺 in 1974, the latter indeed benefited from the lack of preexisting tradition – several earthquakes prompted the monastery to be restored a number of times – and so they were able to create their own brand.

Thus, the cleanly severed ties to the building’s history allowed Rurui to renew tradition, based on her teachers’ legacy and on her own interpretation of that legacy. The year 1991, which was both the year when Tongyuan passed away and the one when Rurui started restoring Pushou Monastery’s premises, is clearly transitional, and marks the beginning of the abbess’ individual career. Her first known and celebrated accomplishment is indeed tied to the monastery: it was her and her Dharma sister Miaoyin 妙音 (1957–) who led the restoration project of the monastery in 1991, financed only by the small amount of money they could put together, amounting to 105 yuan (approximately £12 in today’s money). They also received help in this enterprise from a group of Rurui’s disciples and lay students, about thirty people strong, and together spent the first year restoring the premises, erecting new buildings – on the whole rendering it liveable. However, these pieces of information might be disputed, as an article on Mount Wutai’s nunneries states that not only was the monastery allocated a restoration fund by the government, but also that more than fifty people participated in this enterprise. Even if this is the case, the story surrounding the restoration project, as it is being told by the Pushou Monastery and its followers, highlights Rurui’s capacity to overcome obstacles in order to achieve her goals and certainly feeds into her reputation and charisma.

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30 See Welch 1967: 137. The ten directions are the four cardinal directions, the intercardinal ones, along with the zenith and the nadir. A monastery of the ten directions is then one that would follow a specific system to choose the abbot, not from within the lineage or tonsure family but from the outside, and thus from any direction. See also Buswell/Lopez: 804.
32 This anecdote features on Pushou Monastery’s website as part of the monastery’s history. See also Mao 2015: 3.
33 Bei 1994: 30.
1991 was also the year when Rurui started developing the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns, and although the brand was only registered in 2011, it had begun hosting students as early as 1992. Providing a modern higher education for nuns, it is a direct result of the influence of Tongyuan, who in 1985 already endeavoured to establish a structure to serve that particular purpose. At the time, she was teaching at Dayuan Monastery 大愿寺 in Shaanxi, but because the monastery was hereditary, it could not host a seminary.³⁴ Tongyuan thought that only a public Buddhist monastery could foster capable and learned monastics, and would allow her to pass on her knowledge of Vinaya to her students. As she used to say to them: “[…] if you want to revitalise the Dharma, you need to call upon the entire community of nuns to establish a monastery of the ten directions. What the Dharma will lack most after that is talented monastics.”³⁵ Although Tongyuan was not able to achieve her ultimate goal, she still moved out of Dayuan Monastery, bought five village houses and established a place for religious practice (daochang 道场), the aforementioned Jixiang Residence. With its research classes on the Chinese Vinaya, and its teachers coming from Institutes for Buddhist Studies in Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, this was the precursor to the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns.³⁶

However, the Institute could only be established officially when Tongyuan’s students, Rurui and Miaoyin, were finally able to set up a public Buddhist monastery for nuns that was also a Vinaya centre, in order to host the Institute. Today, the Pushou Monastery and the Institute work together to provide nuns with both traditional monastic training and modern education. Although some Buddhist institutes received criticism for favouring “study” (xue 学) over “practice” (xiu 修),³⁷ Pushou Monastery and the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns have been successful in combining both elements since the 1990s. According to the monastery, they aim at “integrating study and practice, giving a monastic spirit to student-monastic life” (xuexiu yiti hua, xueseng shenghuo conglin hua 学修一体化, 学僧生活丛林化).³⁸

³⁴ Welch 1967: 137
³⁵ Quoted on Pushou Monastery’s website (Chin.: 如果想要佛法振兴, 就要号召全体尼众起来建十方道场。佛法以后最缺的是僧才), in the section regarding Tongyuan, from one of her talks to disciples in 1981.
³⁷ Ji 2015: 736.
³⁸ This slogan can be found on Pushou Monastery’s website, in the section regarding the “Three-Plus-One Project”. It was actually coined by Zhao Puchu and the BAC in 1992, and has been largely used by Buddhist Institutes ever since, even though what it refers to remains somewhat
Before joining the Institute, applicants must first receive full ordination, and then apply for a three month training program that takes place during the summer retreat. If selected, they enter the Institute and make their way through the three levels: the “general” (putong ban 普通班), the “intermediate” (zhongji ban 中级班) and the “advanced” (gaoji ban 高级班) classes, each level taking two years. During those six years, the curriculum is focused on one main mandatory subject, which is Vinaya, but also includes other Buddhist and secular subjects. The most persevering nuns can then join one of the three research departments called the Avataṃsaka (Huayan bu 华严部), Vinaya (Lüyan bu 律研部) and Pure Land (Jingtu bu 净土部) departments, which refer to the threefold system Pushou Monastery inherited from Cizhou. Part of the curriculum for the graduate and research programs is provided by Yang 2011: 41–43.

The teaching methods at the Institute are standardised and adapted from the Chinese secular education system (conferences, debates, oral presentations and so on), and the students also enjoy modern equipment and resources (mostly multimedia equipment and computer rooms). Finally, the Institute’s teachers can be either monastics or Buddhist laypeople, the former being chosen from inside the monastery, the latter coming from outside the monastery and staying only for the duration of their classes. In the course of almost three decades, the Institute has grown to become a leading institution for modern Buddhist nun education, aiming at training the next generation of Buddhist leaders in compliance not only with Vinaya regulations, but also with official expectations. Being dependent on government funding, it is indeed influenced by its institutional environment, reproducing the structure and rules of that environment, and staying in line with official directives and policies.

While still influenced by her teachers’ legacy, Rurui went even beyond their wishes and ideals by founding the “Three-Plus-One Project” (Sanjiayi jiaoyu gongcheng 三加一教育工程), which was launched in 2006. The project has three institutions working together: Pushou Monastery, that acts as the administrative centre and supervising institution; the Dacheng Monastery; and the Bodhi Love Association (Puti aixin xiehui 菩提爱心协会, hereafter BLA), both located in Jinzhong. Together, these institutions have been said to gather up
to 1,200 nuns and novices. Shanxi. Dacheng Monastery was rebuilt by Pushou nuns from the ground up in 2005, after approval from the district authorities, as a branch monastery funded and supervised by Pushou Monastery. It currently accommodates between 200 and 300 nuns and novices. The philanthropic association, while administratively managed by Pushou Monastery, works solely on donations. It first operated from Dacheng Monastery and then moved to newly built premises just outside the monastery in 2018. Moreover, the “Plus-One” in the title of the project is a reference to the home for the elderly (Qingtai anyang yuan 清泰安养园), that was later built as part of the BLA. To each one of these three main institutions has been attributed a specific expertise: “cultivation” for Pushou Monastery, “education” for Dacheng Monastery – which also hosts part of the Buddhist Institute for Nuns, and is sometimes referred to as the “department of vast learning” (Guangxue bu 广学部) – and “philanthropy” for the BLA. Obviously, this only provides a theoretical framework, as in practice their roles often overlap, but these boundaries testify to what Rurui considered to be the three challenges of modern times: 1. finding orthodoxy in monastic practice, 2. promoting education for nuns, and 3. providing social relief through charity. Indeed, according to the project’s slogan, as displayed for instance on Pushou Monastery’s website, she intends to use “[...] Buddhist cultivation as a foundation, education as a guarantee, and philanthropy as a skillful means” (yi xiudao wei genben, jiaoyu wei baozheng, cishan wei fangbian 以修道为根本、教育为保证、慈善为方便). More generally, the project is according to Rurui the most effective way to meet two specific requirements of the time, introduced as “society’s need for the wisdom contained in the Dharma”, and “the need of Buddhism for outstanding elite monastics capable of administering a monastery according to the correct Dharma.”

To summarise, from the establishment of Pushou Monastery and the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns, to the “Three-Plus-One Project”, the influence of Rurui’s teachers comes through fairly clearly: the key features of these institutions are built around strict monastic discipline and higher education for nuns, which were the main focus of Tongyuan’s and Longlian’s work. In this sense, what Chiu and Heirman called the “leader’s educational

41 This quote (Chin.: 社会需要佛法的智慧, 佛教需要优秀的僧才来住持正法) comes from a written document received in September 2019, aiming at answering questions that I transmitted to the abbess in August 2019 – a face to face meeting was not possible at the time.
influence”\textsuperscript{42} has deeply impacted Rurui’s individual trajectory. The similarity of her accomplishments to those of other contemporary Buddhist leaders\textsuperscript{43} attests to the role of these networks, built around eminent monastics, in shaping these individual trajectories, and in providing contemporary Buddhism with historical context and legitimacy through continuity. However, building on this legacy, Rurui has also been able to develop her very own brand, as is made clear by the “Three-Plus-One Project”.

3. Setting up a Comprehensive Model for Nuns

In the context of the PRC, the main challenge for all Buddhist communities seems to lie in obtaining some form of legitimacy, but even more so in the case of female communities. Rurui’s efforts with regards to nuns’ education and discipline, after Tongyuan’s and Longlian’s, make clear that there is still need in contemporary times to prove nuns worthy of being a trusted interlocutor with the laity and the institutions. Nuns have indeed been discredited in the past, as Yü’s introduction to her book on the Incense Light community points out. According to her, they do not receive the same respect that monks do, mostly because their lifestyle and beliefs buck the traditional feminine ideal of the Confucian woman, and as such are subject to suspicion and mixed feelings, even in contemporary Taiwanese and Chinese societies.\textsuperscript{44} During the first half of the twentieth century, that rather poor image was entertained by religious discourses on how the nuns’ lack of knowledge was discrediting the whole Saṃgha. Some high profile monastics like Taixu 太虚 (1890–1947) even thought that “[...]

\textsuperscript{42} Chiu/Heirman 2014: 260.

\textsuperscript{43} Others have been influenced by Tongyuan and Longlian, as both their networks ran wide. Let us take two examples. Rufa 如法 (1956–) was also a student of both Tongyuan and Longlian, and restored the Taiping Monastery 太平寺 of Wenzhou together with Rurui. She has been leading the Taiping Institute for Buddhist Studies (Taiping foxueyuan 太平佛学苑) ever since, and founded the Taiping Charities (Taiping gongdehui 太平功德会) in 2008. Ruyi 如意 (1963–), Longlian’s student, is president of the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns now located in Qifu Monastery 祈福寺 in Chengdu’s suburban area, a monastery that also has its own charity (Qifusi cishan hongfa gongdehui 祈福寺慈善弘法功德会) since 2009. Ruyi holds official positions as well, as she is vice-president of the Buddhist Association of Sichuan and permanent member of the BAC’s Council. See DeVido 2015: 85-86. See also the WeChat account of the Taiping Institute for Buddhist Studies at https://wemp.app/accounts/fc52196-414c-4f18-83d4-3e0435d1aac9, and the website of the Sichuan Institute for Nuns at www.nzfxy.org/.

\textsuperscript{44} Yü 2013: 1–29.
and thus corrupted the Saṃgha”, and others, including nuns themselves, could be found saying that they were partly responsible for the moral decline of Buddhism, their ignorance leading them to commit faults and act against the precepts. Paradoxically, nuns like Tongyuan and Longlian benefitted from these discourses, as it justified the effort to provide nuns with better education and teachings on discipline, thus giving them the opportunity to change that image. Taixu was one of the great promoters of women’s and nuns’ education, and established in 1924 the first modern Buddhist Institute for Female Buddhists in Wuhan (Wuchang foxueyuan nüzhong yuan 武昌佛学院女众院), as part of the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies (Wuchang foxueyuan 武昌佛学院) which was set up in 1922. It is in this context that Tongyuan and Longlian, also using this rhetoric of women’s “insufficient” and “poor” faith as mentioned above, devoted themselves to establishing a strong base for nuns to build on, rooted in education and monastic discipline. Developing these two aspects, as Rurui did at Pushou Monastery, is then also a way to promote a better image and provide nuns with tools to legitimise their place as Buddhist leaders.

With the founding of Pushou Monastery, its subsidiaries and the Institute, Rurui’s contribution to these goals became a concrete successful model, based on her teachers’ work. Three aspects appear as the main fields in which Rurui’s expertise could benefit the position of Buddhist nuns and participate in setting new standards, namely monastic discipline, education and philanthropy.

First of all, in terms of implementation of the Chinese Vinaya, Rurui is one of the Buddhist leaders promoting dual ordination as the orthodox full ordination procedure for nuns, following its restoration by Longlian in 1982. This procedure has since then been included into a larger system, the “Triple-Platform Ordination” (santan dajie 三坛大戒), according to which the novice, full, and bodhisattva ordinations are bestowed on a candidate in one single place and during a short period of time. This system, first mentioned in the 1993...
“Administrative Measures for Ordination in Chinese Buddhist Monasteries” (Quanguo hanchuan fojiao siyuan chuanshou santan dajie guanli banfa 全国汉传佛教寺院传授三坛大戒管理办法), has been formally unified and defined as the normative framework for ordinations in the revised Administrative Measures of 2000, integrating the dual ordination as the standard procedure for nuns. 49 Thus, promoting dual ordination is now in line with both the Vinaya and the official regulations.

However, and in seeming contradiction with the standardised triple platform system, Rurui also advocates having separate ordination procedures for novices, and implementing an additional probationary period, an extra step in the female monastic career that has no equivalent for monks. After being tonsured, a female novice or śrāmaṇerikā (shamini 沙弥尼) in Pushou Monastery doesn’t receive the ten precepts for a year, which is why she is first called xingtong shamini 形同沙弥尼 or “novice in appearance”. After having received the precepts, she becomes a fatong shamini 法同沙弥尼 or “novice according to the Dharma”. 50

Only then can she be bestowed the probationer or śikṣamāṇā (shichani 式叉尼) ordination. This probationary period is supposed to last for two years, during which the śikṣamāṇā must follow a set of six precepts (liufa 六法) if she is to claim full ordination. 51 At first glance, the necessary intervals between these stages, as prescribed in the Vinaya, would seem to jeopardise the standardised triple platform ordinations. Yet the case of Pushou Monastery proves that coexistence is possible: based on a customised system designed by Longlian,
and as two Pushou nuns have confirmed to me, the novice and śikṣamāṇā ordinations are taken beforehand, and once the probationary period is complete, the candidate simply receives the novice precepts once more during the triple platform ordination ceremonies. This does not contradict the official system, but merely complements it, as a doctrinally orthodox adaptation to the contemporary institutional environment in which Buddhism finds itself in the PRC. Thus, even though Longlian, who lived long enough to witness the standardisation of ordination procedures, had already devised ways in which to achieve this adaptation, it was Rurui, among others, who provided contemporary nuns with a concrete working model. As a new generation leader, she was faced with different circumstances from her teachers, and actualised their contributions to the present situation.

Secondly, in terms of monastic education and as mentioned above, the Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns was founded by Rurui in 1992 as a means to provide nuns with modern higher education. At that point, though, a lot had already been done in that respect. The Institute, like many others in the contemporary PRC, is indeed an heir to Taixu’s Institutes for Buddhist Studies that sprang up in the 1920s. Similarly to them, the Mount Wutai Institute does tend to reproduce the secular education system and includes elements that go beyond the monastic sphere, for instance teachings on Chinese culture, English, computer skills, and training at the home for the elderly for fourth year students. Like the institutes of the modern era, it has been dealing with the involvement of the political to religious education, which provides institutional legitimacy, but also implies a certain standardisation and integration of patriotism within monastic education.52

However, one peculiar aspect of the educational system devised by Rurui is the Institute’s successful adaptation to contemporary institutional requirements. As Rurui occupies positions in high places, and the Institute is funded by the government, this gives nuns the opportunity to receive a “proper” education according to these requirements, and to be trained as legitimate Buddhist leaders in the eyes of the State. According to a 2010 article on the new leadership elected at the BAC’s Eighth General Assembly, Rurui’s reputation is tied to her designing of the Institute in conformity with the expectations of the “new era” (xin shidai 新时代) regarding Samgha education, and the Institute is introduced as “publicly praised” (koubei 口碑) and “approved” (rentong 认同) by both the

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Buddhist world and society. In 2010, Rurui was the only nun vice-president of the BAC, and as her accomplishments are in the aforementioned article entitled “Nuns Enter the Leaders Group” (biqiuni jinru lingdao banzi 丘尼进入领导班子), the issue of nuns reaching high positions in the decision-making system could be raised. In that sense, the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns has also been designed as a platform to produce nun leaders who can later take their place on the official stage and promote the interests of the community at large. According to the Institute’s teaching guidelines, and with a clear focus on nuns, “the Institute not only imparts knowledge of Buddhist culture, it also emphasises the studies and training of nuns within the Samgha group, by paying equal attention to studies and practice as an educational method, cultivating both students who possess essential ritual knowledge and monastic behaviour, as well as elite monastics capable of preserving the correct Dharma”.

The third field in which Rurui has set new standards for nuns is the one of institutionalised philanthropy. Its development by individual monks’ or nuns’ Buddhist monasteries seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon in modern and contemporary Buddhism — although Buddhist philanthropy itself dates back to historical Buddhism. The late establishment of charities by Rurui’s and other nuns’ monasteries might partly be explained by the changing framework in

53 Li 2010: 18.
54 As of today, Rurui doubles as one of the only nine female permanent members of the Ninth Council of the BAC (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui dijiu jie lishihui changwu lishi 中国佛教协会第九届理事会常务理事), out of 145 permanent members. She also is one of thirty-two women acting as committee members (zhuanmen weiyuanhui 专门委员会) of the Ninth Council, out of 273 members. These figures are displayed on the BAC’s website, respectively available at www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/js/hb/2016-11-11/12109.html, accessed May 20, 2020, and at www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/cs1/2015-05-04/8823.html, accessed May 26, 2020.
55 This sentence (Chin.: 佛学院不仅传授佛学文化知识, 更注重尼众在僧团中的学习和锻炼, 通过学修并重的教育模式, 培养具有基本出家僧仪及僧格的学僧和住持正法的僧才) is part of a detailed Word document that was given to me by a nun from Dacheng Monastery in 2017, in order to better introduce the “Three-Plus-One Project”.
56 Laliberté 2009: 120.
57 In addition to the BLA launched by Pushou Monastery in 2006, Rufa also opened the Taiping Charities in Wenzhou in 2008, as mentioned earlier, and a charity was established in 2009 in Ruyi’s Qifu Monastery in suburban Chengdu. They are not the only ones to follow this model of first setting up Buddhist institutes within monasteries, then charities; others have done so too, such as the nun Yinkong 印空 (1921–), abbess of the Dajinshan Monastery 大金山寺 in Jiangxi province. There she also founded a Buddhist Institute for Nuns in 1994, and later a charity, as well as a retirement home. On Yinkong and her accomplishments, see Campo 2020: 264–280.
which religious philanthropy finds itself in the PRC. It is indeed only in the 2005 amendment to the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” (Zongjiao shiwu tiaoli 宗教事务条例) that religious organisations were explicitly allowed to provide social welfare.\(^58\) But specifically in the case of Buddhist nuns, this recent development towards philanthropy might also be a testament to the ongoing stability and growing legitimacy of the community. Up until the turn of the century, and in continuity with what masters from the Republican era set out to do, the main issue was to build a strong base for nuns to gain legitimacy from. For Pushou Monastery, this base was, and still is, constituted by a strict implementation of Vinaya practices and nuns’ ordination procedures, and by an emphasis on education, bequeathed to them by Tongyuan and Longlian. However, with the BLA, Pushou Monastery expands its activities, indicating, as others did, that the community is stable, legitimate and confident enough to turn its attentions outwards.

Then what differentiates Rurui’s model from other contemporary ones based on the three fields of Buddhist monastic discipline, education or philanthropy, is the combination of all these aspects within a specifically designed threefold structure, the “Three-Plus-One Project”, all under the supervision of the largest Buddhist monastery for nuns in the PRC, and in line with the political environment of the time.

4. Bringing Nuns’ Voices to the Institutional Stage

For a Buddhist leader in the contemporary PRC, government support is conditional on obtaining legitimacy, and high profile monastics often occupy positions within the administrative structure. Longlian’s and Tongyuan’s involvement in that structure made it easier for them to advance their goals, and the same goes for Rurui. Her most featured positions are the vice-presidency of the Shanxi Buddhist association since 1997, and the vice-presidency of the BAC since 2010, positions previously occupied respectively by Tongyuan and Longlian. However, according to one of her bibliographical records on the BAC’s website, she has also been named a Member of Council of the Buddhist Association of Shanxi in 1997, as well as Deputy Chief Administrator (fu mishu zhang 副秘书长) of the BAC in 2002.\(^59\) She is also a member of the Chinese People’s Political

\(^{58}\) Laliberté 2009: 123.  
Consultative Conference (Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi 中国人民政治协商会议). More recently, in August 2019 in Mount Wutai, she presided over the Third Meeting of the Chinese Buddhism Educational Committee as part of the Ninth Council of the BAC (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui di jiu jie lishihui hanchuan fojiao jiaowu jiaofeng weiyuanhui di sanci huiyi 中国佛教协会第九届理事会汉传佛教教务教风委员会第三次会议), acting as Deputy Director (fu zhuren 副主任). This list is not exhaustive but serves as an example of her official positions and duties over the years.

As is also the case with Rurui, within the frame of institutional Buddhism, political ideologies and norms often resurface in the discourses and practices of Buddhist leaders. The well-known patriotic slogan “loving the nation, loving religion” (aiguo aijiao 爱国爱教) has become an integral part of their speeches. Rurui uses it in both administrative and religious contexts, when speaking to her fellow Buddhist leaders or to her followers, and is even said to have written it on a blackboard on her arrival in 1991 when she became aware of the desolate state of Pushou Monastery. Recent developments also include holding flag ceremonies, an activity that is usually carried out by students of the Institute, and was displayed for the first time on the WeChat page of the “Three-Plus-One Project” in 2018. Another instance of Rurui’s discourses being influenced by institutionalisation processes can be found in her speech at the Eighth General Assembly of the BAC’s representatives (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui di baci quanguo daibiao huiyi 中国佛教协会第八次全国代表会议) in 2010, in which she uses the same wording as that of the Regulations on Religious Affairs:

“We firmly believe that: we have the solicitude and support of the Party and of the government; that the new leading group of the BAC will guide all of us as disciples, and will continue to write new and brilliant pages regarding the protection of national unity and unification, social stability and world peace.”

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60 Mao 2015: 2.
61 Li 2019: 25.
62 This is the slogan of a patriotic education campaign started in the 1990s which aims at developing patriotic behaviour in religious organisations and actors. Even to this day, religious institutions are supposed to comply with the requirements of this campaign in order to keep their regular religious practices going. See Cooke 2009: 141.
63 Mao 2015: 3.
64 Her speech was published in the official journal of the BAC, Fayin 法音 [Voice of Dharma], see Rurui 2010: 48.
We firmly believe: under the care and support of the government and the party, the new leadership of the Buddhist Association will lead us, the seven ordination groups, to maintain national unity, ethnic unity, social stability, and world peace, and to write a new chapter of glory!

This goes to show the influence of politics on Buddhist leadership in the contemporary PRC, and the concrete manifestations of patriotism within religious spaces. Religious organisations and individuals, but especially Buddhist leaders, are indeed required by constitutional provisions and more generally by legal policies to promote patriotism, socialism and socialist values, national unity and unification, respect for the law, and so on.65

Like a number of her peers, Rurui understands the strategic advantages of staying in line with these requirements, in order to secure her position and her organisation’s existence in post-Mao China, while enjoying a certain degree of autonomy. Being a Vinaya centre, Pushou Monastery carefully maintains an image of strictness, which answers to the laity’s and the institutions’ need for a Saṃgha beyond reproach. In the same way, the Institute produces BAC-approved monastics and potential leaders, and even the charity’s work is carried out strictly in compliance with state expectations, is tolerated as long as it is localised, has no political claims, and does not substitute itself for social services.66

However, adopting the “renewal paradigm” as described by Goossaert,67 situations also arise in which Buddhist leaders, Rurui included, make creative use of their institutional environment to benefit their organisations or advance larger goals. Responses from Buddhist actors to this environment, far from being seen as a state of surrender, may rather be based on cooperation and negotiation. In the case of Longlian for instance, securing high positions within the decision making institutions was decisive in making progress for her own community and the entire community of nuns. In her aforementioned speech at the 2010 meeting of the BAC’s representatives, Rurui included a part on nuns’ role in contemporary Buddhism:

67 Goossaert 2005: 19. He identified five paradigms in scholarly works on religion in China – namely the secularisation paradigm, the continuity paradigm, the repression and resistance paradigm, the dichotomy paradigm, the renewal paradigm – each one of them adopting a different approach to the relationship between state and religion in China.
“Nuns account for a good proportion of the contemporary Buddhist community; they are a vital force that cannot be ignored. We hope that in future work we can integrate every kind of advantageous resource in order to build more platforms for nuns; that when we participate in various activities we can benefit from the care of Buddhist associations at all levels, in order for nuns to strengthen themselves, and establish a good image that would facilitate requirements; and that nuns can display even greater positive action, in order to make a unique contribution to the great revival of the Chinese people!”

在当今的中国佛教界，尼众占有相当的比例，是一支不可忽视的有生力量。我们希望在以后的工作中，能整合各种优势资源，为尼众搭建更多平台，并在参与各种活动时，能得到各级佛协给予的特别关照，为尼众加强自身建设、树立良好形象创造便利条件，使尼众能更好地发挥积极作用，为中华民族的伟大复兴作出独特贡献！

This section of Rurui’s speech makes clear use of official discourses regarding a Saṅgha beyond reproach and politically compliant, introducing nuns as both “adequate spiritual guides” and “authoritative interlocutors.” It also emphasises nuns’ beneficial and constructive role in contemporary Chinese Buddhism and society as a whole. Just as the argument of moral decline was utilised in the first half of the twentieth century to legitimise nuns’ access to modern monastic education, Rurui makes use of the perceived need for a better image of the Saṅgha, and of nuns within the Saṅgha, to ask for recognition and resources. Being aware of her exclusive position as one of the few nuns to occupy high office in the institutional structure, she thus takes on the responsibility of being a spokesperson for contemporary Chinese Buddhist nuns, advancing a model that she deems appropriate for their development. However, it should be noted that the standards Rurui is setting in terms of monastic discipline, education, and Buddhist philanthropy, as well as her official position, are the result of her individual trajectory. Her perspective is not necessarily representative of that of the whole community of Buddhist nuns in the PRC, and is not to be understood as a nationwide model.

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69 Bianchi 2019: 159–160.
Concluding Remarks

Rurui is currently one of the most prominent nuns in contemporary PRC, because she leads the largest monastery and Institute for Buddhist Studies for nuns, and also because of her position as a valid interlocutor with state institutions. Like other Buddhist leaders of her generation, she has been trying since the 1990s to adapt Buddhism to its new institutional environment, making changes according to religious policies and increased expectations from both the state and lay Buddhists. Therefore she first has had to stabilise her community by securing a strong base in continuity with what was accomplished by her predecessors, namely emphasising Buddhist monastic discipline and establishing higher monastic education. Actively drawing from her teachers’ legacy, she was then able to create her own model, building Pushou Monastery and the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute for Nuns from the ground up, and finally setting up the threefold “Three-Plus-One Project” in 2006. Thus she came up with a distinct “brand” for Pushou Monastery, while at the same time making sure that every aspect of this “brand”, including the upcoming field of philanthropic activities, complied with state expectations for Buddhist institutions. Although she has not been engaging in discourses about gender equality, she has continuously promoted nuns’ interests, arguing for better resources, combining doctrinally orthodox ordination procedures with the standardised system of the PRC, and training nun scholars, skilful religious specialists and reliable leaders who will be legitimate in the eyes of the state and of the laity alike.

Legitimacy for Rurui as a Buddhist leader rests not only on her personal charisma, but also on the continuity provided by affiliation to eminent masters’ networks, and on the careful designing of Pushou Monastery and its subsidiaries as highly successful sites of Buddhist teaching and practice, setting up standards since 1991. By achieving legitimacy, she has been able to better serve her community, and to provide not only a theoretical model, but also a concrete structure through which nuns can be equipped to reach higher positions and have more influence in the future as Buddhist leaders of the PRC.
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155


Leadership Transition within the Living Chan Movement: 
*From Venerable Jinghui to his Dharma Heirs*

*Wu Yuanying*

**Abstract**

At the end of the 1980s, Venerable Jinghui 净慧 (1933–2013) began restoring monasteries and, in the early 1990s, invented an influential brand of Dharma teaching that he named Living Chan (shenghuo chan 生活禅). As a result of his engagement with Chinese Buddhism, he became a prominent example of transmitting the Dharma lineages of different traditions. Between 1999 and 2014, Jinghui transmitted Dharma lineages from five schools (Linji, Caodong, Yunmen, Weiyang, and Fayan) to 167 monks and nuns, partly as a proxy in 2014 by Chuanyin and in 2013 by Minghai. Today, Jinghui’s Dharma successors have formed a new sangha leadership with a distinct approach to promoting Living Chan within the network of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. Their cooperation as a group exemplifies a new mechanism of Buddhist leadership: to build up a tight-knit network of branch monasteries that is headed by Jinghui’s tonsure disciples, ordination disciples, Dharma heirs, and adherents of Living Chan. This paper examines the transition of leadership within the Living Chan movement from Jinghui to his successors. Further, it explores the challenges and opportunities the new generation of leaders have to face when promoting Living Chan in the future.

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Introduction

While studying the significance of the Living Chan (shenghuo chan 生活禅) Summer Camp² on monastics, I noticed that the overwhelming majority of venerable³ (fashi 法师) speakers who had given lectures at the camps were born in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴ Many of them are holding significant positions in contemporary Chinese Buddhism. Some are concurrently abbots of famous public monasteries and (Vice) Presidents of Buddhist associations at national and provincial levels, e.g., Ven. Jingbo 静波 (1963–), the Abbot of Jile Monastery 极乐寺 and the President of the Heilongjiang Buddhist Association. Some are both scholar-monks and executive members of the Buddhist Association of China (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会, BAC), e.g., Ven. Dr. Zhanru 澹如 (1965–) and Ven. Dr. Shengkai 圣凯 (1972–), and some concurrently hold high-ranking positions at the BAC and the Buddhist Academy of China (Zhongguo foxueyuan 中国佛学院), e.g., Ven. Zongxing 宗性 (1973–), the executive Vice President of the BAC, and the Dean of the Buddhist Academy of China.⁵ Another striking feature of these monks is that many of them have obtained advanced Buddhist education and/or secular tertiary education, e.g., Ven. Dr. Jingyin 净因, Dr. Zhanru, Dr. Shengkai, and Ven. Dr. Daofa 道法 (1968–).⁶

By examining the basic information about the President and thirty-two Vice Presidents of the BAC who were elected at the Ninth Council of the General Assembly of the BAC in May 2015, one can see that twenty out of the thirty-

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⁴ I refer here to those who had given lectures several times (at least twice) during the camps. Younger fashi from the 1980s and 1990s have been invited to give lectures at the camps since 2013.

⁵ On the BAC’s leadership see the article by Xuan/Krause in this issue.

⁶ Ji Zhe also identified that “the younger generation of abbots of major temples have often been trained in Buddhist academies.” For details, see Ji 2019.
three most influential Chinese Buddhist high-ranking leaders were born in the 1960/70s.\textsuperscript{7} Moreover, many of them who obtained advanced Buddhist education and/or tertiary education took over the monasteries from the previous abbots (often, but not exclusively, their tonsure, ordination, and/or Dharma master) in the last two decades. This phenomenon echoes what Daniela Campo has identified, namely that responding to the calls of local governments, many former representatives of the sangha reemerged to lead Buddhist reconstruction after the end of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, now it is “largely their disciples who are carrying out the tasks of revival and renewal” for “its long-standing authoritative stance has contributed to ensuring a connection between religious legitimacy and political power”.\textsuperscript{8} Notably, as Ji Zhe points out, “obtaining a degree from a Buddhist academy, especially one of the most renowned ones, provides the degree holder with a significant amount of symbolic capital”.\textsuperscript{9}

Based on a case study of “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, this article sketches the Dharma lineages from Jinghui’s master Xuyun to his heirs in order to provide a perspective for understanding the leadership transition in terms of religious sources, credentials, authorities and notions of authenticity within the Living Chan movement. This article shows how Jinghui transferred leadership to his dharma heirs within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. It attempts to answer the following questions: What are the main challenges? What are the typical patterns of Buddhist leadership strategies in the present and the probable future?

This article first briefly introduces Ven. Jinghui 净慧 (1933–2013) and his Living Chan in order to lay the foundation for understanding the Living Chan movement. The second section provides insight into Jinghui’s five Dharma lineages, beginning with Xuyun, that legitimised the authenticity of his religious identity as an heir of Chan Buddhism. The third section focuses more specifically on the Dharma transmission from Jinghui to his Dharma heirs between 1999 and 2014. By providing a full list of Dharma heirs of Jinghui and the number of “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, the third section tries to exemplify

\textsuperscript{7} Notably, three from the 1940s have non-Han nationalities (two Tibetan and one Mongolian), nine in the 1950s consisting of four Tibetans and five Han monastics — Shenghui 圣辉 (1951–), Daoci 道慈 (1953–), Rurui 如瑞 (1957–), Miaojiang 妙江 (1952–), and Yanjue 演觉 (1955–), and Qoigyi Gyaibo (班禅额尔德尼·确吉杰布) is the only one born in 1990.

\textsuperscript{8} Campo 2019: 123–124.

\textsuperscript{9} Ji 2019: 192.
common patterns in what ties the heads of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” to Jinghui, as well as the continuities and changes in Living Chan brought about by the leadership transmission within the Living Chan movement. This article is based on both textual study and fieldwork.

1.1 On the Background of Jinghui and his Dharma Teachings

Ven. Jinghui was born into a peasant family in Huanggang county (in present-day Wuhan city), Hubei province, in 1933.10 Because of the poverty of his family, Jinghui was sold to a monastery when he was only seventeen months old. Soon he was sent to a nunnery called Xian’gu Nunnery 仙姑庙, where he was raised by two nuns till 1947, when he was tonsured under Zongqiao 宗樵 (?–?) at Zhuodaoquan Monastery 卓刀泉寺 in Wuhan. In 1951 he was fully ordained under the revered Chan Master Xuyun 虚云 (1840–1959)11 at Yunmen Monastery 云门寺, and one year later he inherited five Dharma lineages of Chan Buddhism from Xuyun. From 1956 to 1963, Jinghui studied at the Buddhist Academy of China. During the Cultural Revolution, Jinghui was laicised and sent to the countryside, where he devoted long hours to physical labour and strenuous tasks.12 In early 1979, Jinghui resided at the Guangji Monastery 广济寺 in Beijing, where the BAC and the editorial offices of the Fayin (法音 [Voice of Dharma]) magazine13 were located. There Jinghui helped with the work of the BAC. In 1981, Jinghui worked as the executive editor of Fayin and became the chief editor in 1984. Invited by government officials in Hebei and supported by Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000), Jinghui began reviving Buddhism in Hebei by establishing the Hebei Buddhist Association and restoring the Bailin

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11 Xuyun, a well-known Chan Master in the republic period who “accomplished the greatest number of Dharma transmissions in the first half of the twentieth century.” See Campo 2019. For the biography of Xuyun, see Cen 1995.


13 Fayin 法音 [Voice of Dharma], a national monthly journal of the Buddhist Association of China, which was launched in 1981. Its predecessor was Xiandai foxue 现代佛学 [Modern Buddhism], 1950–1964, 144 issues. With the aim of “carrying forward the fine tradition of Buddhism, advocating Humanistic Buddhism, inspiring the public, and purifying life,” Fayin targeted the majority of Buddhist believers, Buddhist scholars and researchers, and Buddhist lovers.
Chan Monastery in 1988; this marked the beginning of his religious success and occupied him until he passed away in 2013.\footnote{A special issue (internal circulation) under the title Tianxin Yueyuan, Zhenzhao Wubian — Jinghui zhanglao zhuisi tekan 天心月圆 真照无边 净慧长老追思特刊, edited in 2013, has details of Jinghui’s passing away and his funeral (including letters of condolence from various government offices, religious departments, and important individuals), as well as information on his Dharma lineages, monasteries in which he resided, which he restored and/or rebuilt, on Living Chan, and on Living Chan summer camps.}

Roughly, Jinghui’s life can be divided into three separate phases: the preparatory period from 1933 to 1962, in which he grew up in a nunnery and studied at the Buddhist Academy of China; the turbulent period from 1963 to 1978, in which he was laicised and forced to work on farms from Beijing to Guangdong, and later to Hubei; and the resurgent period from 1979 to 2013, in which he worked in the BAC and revived Buddhism, mainly in Hebei and Hubei provinces.

A poem entitled “Self-Praise of Jinghui (Jinghui zizan 净慧自赞),” which summarises Jinghui’s life and main achievements in eighty Chinese characters, can be considered a mini-version of his autobiography (Special Issue on Memories of Jinghui, 2013). The poem highlights Jinghui’s religious career. For instance, he had been engaged with Buddhism at a young age and inherited five Dharma lineages from Master Xuyun in 1952, and in 1988 he first went to the Bailin Chan Monastery. There he officially became the abbot after inauguration in 1998. He initiated his new approach to the Dharma – Living Chan (shenghuo chan 生活禅) – in the early 1990s. At the age of seventy-one, in 2003 he became the abbot of Sizu Monastery 四祖寺, where the Fourth Patriarch Daoxin 道信 (580–651)\footnote{Daoxin is a Chan monk and reputed as the fourth patriarch of the Chan tradition. Chuanfabao ji 传法宝纪 states that Daoxin attracted more than five hundred students during his residence at the Mountain Shuangfeng (where the Sizu Monastery is located).} had resided, and at the age of eighty he became the abbot of Wuzu Monastery 五祖寺 in 2013, where the Fifth Patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (601–674)\footnote{Hongren is a well-known Chan master and the reputed fifth patriarch of the Chan Buddhism. Hongren’s teachings came to be known as the “East Mountain teachings” after he moved to East Mountain and attracted many disciples.} had lived. Between 2003 and 2008 he also restored Yuquan Monastery 玉泉寺 and Dumen Monastery 度门寺, both located in Dangyang city of Hubei province.

This poem also provides Jinghui’s credentials for being a pivotal Buddhist leader in Mainland China. Firstly, he became involved with Buddhism at a very young age (tongzhen rudao 童真入道), which is valued by the Buddhist
community because it is perceived as a sign that one has fewer connections with the secular world. Having received five Dharma lineages from Xuyun, one of the most famous Chan masters during the Qing-Republican period, serves as vital proof of Jinghui’s religious authenticity and authority in the lineage of Chan masters.\textsuperscript{17} Thirdly, he accumulated first-hand experience of gathering resources for monastery reconstruction and management by heading famous monasteries from 1988 to 2013.

Further, it is important to mention Jinghui’s work experience at the BAC and as the chief editor of \textit{Fayin} during his stay at the Guangji Monastery.\textsuperscript{18} Some of Jinghui’s early adherents first became acquainted with him during his stay at the Guangji Monastery. For example, Ven. Minghai 明海 (1968–), the current successor of Jinghui as the Abbot of the Bailin Chan Monastery, first got to know him at the Guangji Monastery in 1990, when he was studying at Peking University, and he was tonsured under Jinghui at the Bailin Chan Monastery in 1992.\textsuperscript{19} Ven. Mingying 明影 (1967–), the current Abbot of Yaoshan Monastery 药山寺 in Hunan province, also met Jinghui first at the Guangji Monastery in 1994 and was tonsured under him at the Bailin Chan Monastery in 2001.\textsuperscript{20} Xia Zehong 夏泽红, a Dharma benefactor of Bailin Chan Monastery for decades, first visited Jinghui at the Guangji Monastery and formally took refuge in the Three Jewels with him in 1993.\textsuperscript{21} Ven. Chongdi 崇谛 (1983–), the current Abbot of An’guo Chan Monastery 安国禅林 in Hubei province, first got in contact with Jinghui when the latter was the chief editor of the journal \textit{Fayin} in 2002, and was tonsured under Jinghui in 2006.\textsuperscript{22}

Today Minghai, Mingying, and Chongdi are all head monks of monasteries affiliated to the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, and Xia Zehong became a lay disciple of Jinghui and a “great Dharma protector (\textit{da hufa} 大护法)” of Bailin Chan Monastery. To recap, Jinghui’s working experience in the BAC served as religious capital that attracted potential tonsure and lay disciples who followed and revered him and later formed a new generation of leadership within the Living Chan movement.

Working in the BAC and for \textit{Fayin} enabled Jinghui not only to have a better

\textsuperscript{17} Campo 2019: 141.
\textsuperscript{18} For details, see Fisher 2014.
\textsuperscript{19} See the official website of Bailinsi 2020a.
\textsuperscript{20} See Mingying 2018.
\textsuperscript{21} See Zhengjue 正觉 2018.
\textsuperscript{22} See Yaocha 2013.
understanding of religious work within the Chinese political framework but also to form an extensive network of Buddhist patronage and support, domestically as well as internationally. Jinghui’s charisma was such that it attracted many monastery visitors to become his Dharma disciples and patrons, which laid a foundation for his monastic career, monastically and financially. As a vice-chairman of the BAC, on behalf of the BAC, Jinghui visited Japan, France and Switzerland and received international delegations and Buddhist pilgrims, thereby expanding his network internationally. When he headed Bailin Chan Monastery, he was also invited to instruct meditation retreats in Germany and Singapore. On the walls of the monastery, one finds him pictured with officials, delegations, and pilgrims in attendance. Given his numerous ties to temple goers, patrons, and officials at the BAC, it is not surprising that Jinghui was able to acquire the resources and capital required for his outstanding religious career as the initiator of the Living Chan movement.

In the last twenty-five years of his life, in addition to his efforts in (re)constructing monasteries, Jinghui devoted considerable energy to promoting and practising Living Chan. In 1993, his new approach to Buddhism, which had been widely promoted for modern (young) people under the label of shenghuo chan (生活禅 [Living Chan]), was accepted as one of the mainstream expressions of Buddhism in contemporary China. While on the one hand it was based on the Chinese tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, including a revival movement of Chan, it was also inspired by Zhao Puchu’s 赵朴初 (1907–2000) reinterpretation of Ven. Taixu’s 太虚 (1890–1947) “Humanistic Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教) in the 1980s and other contemporary modernisation trends. How far Jinghui’s teachings differ from other revivals of Buddhist traditions or innovative developments will not be discussed in this article. However, it is a fact that he has succeeded in producing a brand associated

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23 See Yang/Wei 2005.
24 See Jinghui huazhuan 2014.
25 This is first and foremost shown in the congratulation letter written by Zhao Puchu that read out by Wu Limin 吴立民 (1927–2009), on behalf of Zhao and the BAC, on the opening ceremony of the first Living Chan Summer Camp in 1993. See Zhao 1993. Speeches given by officials on the opening and closing ceremony of the summer camp also show the endorsement of authorities. For the speeches and lectures given at the summer camps, see Bailinsi 2020b.
26 On the historical background of “Humanistic Buddhism” promoted by Taixu, see for example Pittman 2001, Yao/Gombrich 2017, on the post-Mao movement initiated by Zhao Puchu, see Ji 2017, Krause 2019.
with his personal Living-Chan-label, related slogans, and public activities like the popular summer camps for lay people which were the first of its kind in mainland China in the beginning of the 1990s.

According to his own words, what is meant by *shenghuo chan*? I will follow Ji Zhe’s translation of “*shenghuo chan*” as “Living Chan”.27 Other translations such as “Life Chan”, “Chan in Daily Life”, and “Zen of Life” can also be found in English. A definition of Living Chan by Jinghui that scholars often quote goes as follows: “Living Chan means the integration of the spirit and wisdom of Chan into one’s life, the fulfilment of the transcendence of Chan in one’s life, and the embodiment of the artistic conception, spirit, and wonder of Chan in one’s life”.28

The following “Exposition of Living Chan”, written by Jinghui, reveals the background, purpose, scriptural foundation, requirements, and rules of Living Chan:

“Background:

Living Chan aims at selecting a practice from various Dharma teachings that enable one to achieve the ultimate goal of not only receiving one’s nature and liberation from birth and death but also adapting to the living environment of modern people. In order to theoretically and practically make the study, practice, and implementation of Living Chan follow orthodox Buddhism (zhengfa 正法) and adapt to society, we [the sangha of the Bailin Chan Monastery] draw up this preliminary outline of the practice structure of Living Chan and hope that it will be enriched and improved in practice.

1: Purpose

Inheriting tradition, adapting to the ages, staying rooted in orthodox Buddhism, promoting Chan studies, developing wisdom, improving morality, awakening life, and harmonising society.

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27 See Ji 2011.
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

2: Scriptural foundation


3: Requirements

3.1: Having the right faith — take the Three Gems as its core, take karma as its criterion, take wisdom as its essence, take deliverance as its final result.

3.2: Upholding right practices — 1. take the Three Trainings (morality, meditation, wisdom) as the general principle, 2. take the Four Means of Salvation as the expedient means of benefiting others, 3. take the Six Perfections as the Right Action of learning and practising, being an honest man as the beginning of the practice, 4. take prasrabdhi and enlightenment as the confirmation of learning and practising Buddhism.

3.3: Keep samādhi — walking is Chan, sitting is also Chan, silence, or movement is all Chan.

4: Rules for daily practice

Seek satisfaction in dedication, seek conscience in obligation; pursue happiness in devotion, pursue progress in non-self (anātman); understand Chan in life, and liberate in life.”²⁹

²⁹ Quoted from Jinghui 1993: 5–6. All translations from Chinese are my own, unless otherwise noted.
Chan, in Jinghui’s reinterpretation, covers everything from natural phenomena to social life to aesthetics.\textsuperscript{30} Notably, “Chan” in “Living Chan” refers not only to \textit{dhyāna} in the sense of a meditative absorption but also to all other Buddhist practice.\textsuperscript{31} The inclusiveness of Living Chan leads to the view “all practices are Chan and Living Chan”;\textsuperscript{32} it deliberately reinterpreted Chan to make Living Chan compatible with modern people’s needs, particularly those of young college students and intellectuals. Living Chan is thus presented as a new Dharma teaching that adapts traditional values of Chan to daily life, as expressed in the famous slogan “a life of awakening, a life of dedication” (\textit{juewu rensheng, fengxian rensheng} 觉悟人生, 奉献人生), initiated by Jinghui in 1991. Living Chan was officially proposed and promoted in 1993 during the first Living Chan Summer Camp. One core aspect of Living Chan lies in “putting faith into life, practising at this moment; integrating Dharma into the human world, and integrating individuals into the masses”, as well as believing in “faith, karma, conscience, and morality” and “thanksgiving, tolerance, sharing, and affinity”.\textsuperscript{33} The ethical aspect makes Living Chan a conducive teaching for modern society that is marked by historical legitimacy, rationality and pragmatism, thereby complying with Jinghui’s intention in inventing Living Chan — a Dharma teaching designed to re-orientate the locus of Buddhism away from otherworldly to present-day daily life.

Embracing the tenets of Living Chan, the new generation of Living Chan leadership engages in contemporary society to provide Buddhist knowledge and practices for the increasingly learned Buddhist laity. Furthermore, the Living Chan Summer Camp in Bailin Chan Monastery became a pioneer in temporary and short term Buddhist and Living Chan monasticism.\textsuperscript{34} The successful establishment of Living Chan as a label associated with Jinghui marked the most crucial chapter his monastic career. Moreover, the dynamic cultural practices of Living Chan within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” over the years have also made Living Chan an influential brand of Dharma teaching in China.\textsuperscript{35} In the various practices of Living Chan, one can also see how the Living Chan community blends secular values with Buddhist knowledge and teachings.

\textsuperscript{30} Jinghui 1993: 2.\textsuperscript{31} Jinghui 2013: 9.\textsuperscript{32} Jinghui 2010.\textsuperscript{33} Ven. Chongrou, a tonsure and Dharma disciple of Jinghui, who is currently studying in Singapore, compiled Jinghui’s thought and practice of Living Chan. See Chongrou 2015.\textsuperscript{34} Ji 2011.\textsuperscript{35} For the detailed description of the dynamic practices of Living Chan, see Wu 2020.
1.2 Jinghui’s Dharma Lineages and Stanzas

Jinghui received the five Dharma lineages in 1952 from Xuyun,\(^{36}\) who “accomplished the greatest number of Dharma transmissions in the first half of the twentieth century” and whose “Dharma lineages and their far-reaching scope are not haphazard, but appear to be the result of a systematic and programmatic approach on his part”.\(^{37}\) On the eighth day of the second month of the lunar calendar in the year 1952, the birthday of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713),\(^{38}\) Master Xuyun transmitted the Yunmen lineage to nine people, including Ven. Foyuan 佛源 (1923–2009), Ven. Fayun 法云 (d. 2003), and Jinghui, who became the thirteenth generation of the Yunmen lineage, at the Yunmen Monastery in Ruyuan county, Guangdong province. In the same year, Jinghui additionally received the Weiyang, Linji, Caodong, and Fayan lineages from Xuyun. Jinghui, therefore, took over all five lineages of Chan Buddhism and became the forty-fourth generation Dharma heir of the Linji lineage, the forty-eighth generation Dharma heir of the Caodong lineage, the ninth generation Dharma heir of the Weiyang lineage, the thirteenth generation Dharma heir of the Yunmen lineage, and the ninth generation Dharma heir of the Fayan lineage.\(^{39}\) Notably, Jinghui became the only Dharma successor of Master Xuyun, who carried all five lineages of Chan Buddhism after 1978 (two of the other three five-lineage holders returned to secular life, and one passed away); and the uniqueness and sacredness of being a five-lineage holder made Jinghui stand out from his contemporaries.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{36}\) Minghai 2016: 34. The five Dharma lineages refer to Linji 临济, Caodong 曹洞, Weiyang 沩仰, Fayan 法眼, and Yunmen 云门. The Chinese Buddhist saying “one flower with five petals (yihua kai wuye 一花开五叶)” from the Platform Sūtra (Liuzu tanjing 六祖坛经) refers to the five lineages (five petal) evolved from Chan school (one flower). However, Weiyang, Fayan, and Yunmen disappeared in between until Xuyun reinstate the interrupted three lineages in the mid-1930s. See Campo 2019: 126-128.

\(^{37}\) Campo 2019: 126.

\(^{38}\) Huineng, a well-known Chan master and the Sixth Patriarch of the Chan Buddhism, who is claimed to have been the founder of the so-called “Southern School” (nan zong 南宗), and instructed his followers the “sudden teachings” (dun jiao 顿教).

\(^{39}\) Minghai 2016: 34.

\(^{40}\) Wang 2019: 53.
Campo discusses how Xuyun reinstated the three interrupted lineages (Weiyang, Yunmen, and Fayan) and how the other two, uninterrupted lineages, (Linji and Caodong) he had received at the Yongquan Monastery 涌泉寺 in 1892 underlined the legitimacy of his reviving the three interrupted lineages. Campo notes that

“He [Xuyun] composed three new stanzas of fifty-six characters each, in which the first character was drawn from the name of the last (known) patriarch of each branch and the second character was drawn from one of his own monastic names, therefore appointing himself as the only, deferred receiver of the three interrupted transmissions. Xuyun would then symbolically associate to each Chan branch one of the monasteries that he was restoring, and in that monastery he would carry out most of the Dharma transmissions of that specific branch. To every disciple in each specific branch he would confer a Dharma name containing the third character of the relative stanza.”

“A Brief Summary of the Chan Genealogy of Bailin Chan Monastery” shows Jinghui’s Dharma filiation as it dates back to the first generation of the five lineages as follows:

Linji school: 1st generation Linji Yixuan 临济义玄 …… 42nd generation Miaolian Juehua 妙莲觉华 — 43rd generation Xuyun Xingche 虚云性彻 — 44th generation Jinghui Benzong 净慧本宗

Caodong school: 1st generation Dongshan Liangjia 洞山良价 …… 46th Dingfeng Yaocheng 鼎峰耀成 — 47th Xuyun Guyan 虚云古岩 — 48th Jinghui Fuxing 净慧复性

Weiyang school: 1st Weishan Lingyou 楂山灵祐 …… 7th Xingyang Ciduo 兴阳词铎 — 8th Xuyun Deqing 虚云德清 — 9th Jinghui Xuandao 净慧宣道

Yunmen school: 1st Yunmen Wenyan 云门文偃 …… 11th Ji’an Shenjing 己庵深净 — 12th Xuyun Yanche 虚云演彻 — 13th Jinghui Miaozong 净慧妙宗

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LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

Fayan school: 1st Fayan Wenyi 法眼文益 …… 7th Xiangfu 楚怀 
Liangqing 祥符良庆 — 8th Deqing Xuyun 德清虚云 — 9th Jinghui Benxing 净慧本性.42

This “Brief Summary” of Bailin Chan Monastery reproduces the lineage origin and religious legitimacy that Jinghui received from his master and later transferred to his disciples. For his heirs, Jinghui stressed that Bailin Chan Monastery belongs to the Yunmen school, and inherits the Dharma lineage of Linji school,43 as well as the Dharma teaching of Master Zhaozhou Congshen 赵州从前 (778–897) and the Sixth Patriarch Huineng. He further emphasised in the summary that the first character of the Dharma name (faming 法名) of his monastic and lay disciples follows “Xuyun’s Yunmen Dharma lineages and stanzas” (i.e., Ming 明 X). The internal name (neihao 内号)45 of his tonsure disciples follows the “Stanzas of the Tonsure Filiation of Bailin Chan Monastery” (i.e., Chong 崇 X), and the name of Dharma heirs follows the “Linji Longchi Lineage and Stanzas,” (i.e., Chang 常 X).

2. Dharma Transmission from Jinghui to his Dharma Heirs between 1999 and 2014

Dharma transmission (chuanfa 传法) in a broader sense means spreading the Buddha’s teaching; narrowly speaking, it refers to a Dharma heir in the sense of inheriting a Dharma lineage (sifa dizi 嗣法弟子) or the ceremony of transmitting Dharma in Chan Buddhism.46 According to Holmes Welch, Dharma transmission involved the master transmitting the Dharma scroll, robe, and bowl to his Dharma successors, and this serves as evidence of being qualified for abbotship in Buddhist monasteries.47 Campo notes that Dharma transmission

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42 See Bailinsi 2002.
43 Campo points out that Xuyun symbolically associate each Dharma transmission to the monastery he restored by carrying out Dharma transmission there. See Campo 2019: 127.
44 Zhaozhou Congshen, a well-known Chan master, whose teachings became to have known as Zhaozhou Chan 赵州禅. A pagoda enshrines the relics of Zhaozhou is located in the Bailin Chan Monastery.
45 Ven. Mingjie 明杰 shares that only one’s master and Dharma brothers know the neihao. Personal WeChat communication with the author, April 2020.
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

is “a religious entrustment by which a master formally recognises the spiritual accomplishments of a disciple, names him as his heir, and confers on him the authority to teach others.”

Whom did Jinghui pick as his heirs by conferring the authority to teach others? The “List of Dharma Heirs of Ven. Jinghui”, compiled by Minghai, Ven. Minghan 明憨 and Ven. Mingji 明基, and published in the Chan magazine in 2016, shows that Jinghui transmitted the Dharma lineages from all five schools to 167 monks and nuns between 1999 and 2014, partly in 2014 by Chuanyin 传印 (1927–) and in 2013 by Minghai as a proxy (daifu 代付), see appendix 1.

According to this list, and supplemented by personal information, the work of Jinghui’s Dharma transmission can be summarised as follows: (1) One hundred and sixty monks and seven nuns received Dharma lineages from Jinghui. (2) Five monks (Minghai, Minghan, Mingqing 明清, Chongdi, and Suwen 素闻) received all five lineages. (3) Two monks (Mingjie 明杰 [without Linji] and Mingji [without Caodong]) received four lineages. (4) Nine monks (Juecheng 觉乘, Xuexian 学贤, Mingyang 明仰, Zhonghui 中慧, Mingxu 明虚, Mingyin 明因, Mingyong 明勇, Mingying 明影, and Zonghui 宗慧) received both Linji and Caodong lineages. (5) Roughly forty-six Dharma heirs are Jinghui’s tonsure disciples. (6) Four Dharma successors, affiliated to the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, are currently preaching Buddhism abroad. They are Suwen in Malaysia, Chishun 持顺 and Minglai 明来 in Hungary, and Mingsi 明思 in Myanmar. (7) Three Dharma successors (Mingzhuang 明奘, Jieyu 戒毓, Mingqing) have left the monastic community and returned to secular lives. (8) Jinghui transmitted Linji lineage to Willigis Jäger at Bailin Chan Monastery on October 23, 2009, and it was considered “the first step of spreading Buddhism abroad.”

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49 Minghai 2016: 34–60. Campo has discussed the ambiguities of proxy Dharma transmission, see Campo 2019: 141–144. For details, see Welch 1963: 127.
50 Tonsure disciples (tidu dizi 剃度弟子) refer to those who shaved their hairs under Jinghui to “leave the household” (chujia 出家)” and enter the monastic community. For a description of the tonsure ritual, with photographs of a ceremony in Taiwan, see Welch 1967: 269–275. The number sixty-four is based on my fieldwork and text evidence. Based on my observation, tonsure disciples appear to be core members among other religious kinship with Jinghui among his Dharma adherents.
51 Personal observation and private conversation with lay Buddhists of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”.
52 This news was re-edited when I retrieved the homepage of the Bailin Monastery recently. The quotation and the group picture of Jinghui and Willigis Jäger were deleted.

171
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

heirs (Xinliang 心亮, Yanti 衍悌, Wanru 万如, Changhong 常宏, Changkai 常开, Hongcheng 宏诚, and Hongyong 宏用) received Caodong lineage from Jinghui. Among them, Changhong, Changkai, and Hongyong are abbesses of Xuyun Chan Nunnery, Longquan Nunnery (in Luquan City, Hebei Province), and Luhua Nunnery respectively, which are all affiliated to the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. (10) Jinghui personally transmitted Linji and Caodong lineages 154 times to 142 people from 1999 to 2010. (11) The Dharma heirs of the Linji lineage (123 successors) remained dominant among all five lineages, followed by Caodong (55 successors), Weiyang (7 successors), Yunmen (7 successors), and Fayan (8 successors). (12) Most Dharma transmissions have been undertaken at the Bailin Monastery (six times the Linji Dharma transmission and one each of Weiyang, Yunmen, and Fayan), followed by Yuquan Monastery in Xingtai (once of Linji and four times of Caodong), Sizu Monastery (once Linji and Caodong individually), and each one in Laozu Monastery (Linji), Dumen Monastery (Linji), Tiantai Monastery (Linji), and Baoji Nunnery (Caodong). (13) Jinghui’s Dharma heirs in the 45th generation of Linji all bear a name containing the character Chang 常, in the 49th generation of Caodong all bear a name that contains the character Teng 腾, and in the tenth generation of Weiyang, 14th generation of Yunmen, and the tenth generation of Fayan all bear a name that contains the character Yan 衍, Ming 明, and Ji 寂 respectively. Taking Minghai as an example, his Dharma names imply the lineage as shown below: Linji: Changru Minghai 常如明海, Caodong: Tengjie Minghai 腾戒明海, Weiyang: Yanxu Minghai 衍虚明海, Yunmen: Minghai Changru 明海常如, Fayan: JiZhi Minghai 寂智明海.

3.1 New Generation of Living Chan Leadership

The heirs of the traditional Chan lineages transmitted by Jinghui mentioned above, in combination with his teaching and practice of Living Chan, appear as promising candidates for taking over diverse positions of Buddhist leadership in contemporary China. The new leadership of the Living Chan Sangha that is discussed in the following will focus on those representatives who are currently in charge of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”.

On April 20, 2014, the first anniversary in commemoration of Jinghui, Ven. Zongshun 宗舜 (1967–), a teacher of the Buddhist Academy of China and a Dharma heir of Jinghui, proposed the idea of “Living Chan Lineage Monasteries” (shenghuo chan xi siyuan 生活禅系寺院) to refer to monasteries connected to Jinghui; the head monks of these monasteries are aiming at promoting
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

Living Chan. Minghai, who appears to play a leading role among the Living Chan community, prefers using “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” (shenghuo chan chengchuan siyuan 生活禅承传寺院) because the former name implies a strong sectarian meaning (paixi secai 派系色彩), which would cause misunderstanding.\(^{53}\) From “shenghuo chan xi” to “shenghuo chan chengchuan”, the change in language reflects the Living Chan community’s thoughtfulness and caution in order to avoid sectarianism, and it reveals the distinguishing characteristics of this group in that they tend to be rather informally constituted and only loosely organised. He Jianming 何建明 said that “unlike the Fo Guang Shan, the ‘Living Chan Monasteries’ are a relatively loose alliance.”\(^{54}\) One likely reason for being informally constituted and loosely organised is that the Living Chan leaders do not want to attract unnecessary attention from the authorities or make the authorities feel any potential threat. However, the lack of a unified organisational structure made these monasteries quite vulnerable regarding common standards that would fit all practices of each monastery. What can be observed is that head monks seem to feel it increasingly necessary to foster closer ties with Jinghui and his teaching of Living Chan, and the expression of “Living Chan lineage or school (shenghuo chan xi)” is common among many of Jinghui’s disciples and adherents.

It is that direction in which Ven. Mingjie goes when he summarises that “Living Chan lineage,” later called “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, can be defined as those religious sites that have been (re)constructed under the leadership of Jinghui and/or where he resided as their head. In addition to that, some monasteries that were (re)built by Jinghui’s close tonsure disciples and Dharma heirs under Jinghui’s direct supervision (dixi dizi 嫡系弟子), with the aim of promoting Living Chan, also belong to the “Living Chan lineage”. However, monasteries managed by Jinghui’s Dharma heirs should not be regarded as belonging to the “Living Chan lineage” if they do not commit to the teaching of Living Chan.\(^{55}\)

In the following, I will not decide on the orthodoxy of these monasteries’ teaching, but keep talking of that group of adherents in the broadest sense, and stay close to Minghai’s less sectarian terminology, as Buddhist leaders affiliated with Jinghui’s teaching who are leading “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”.

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\(^{53}\) Personal email files with a devout lay adherent of Jinghui in 2017.

\(^{54}\) Chai 2016: 188.

\(^{55}\) I warmly thank Ven. Mingjie for pointing this out. Personal communication over WeChat on June 1, 2020.
3.2 Religious Sites of the New Living Chan Leadership

Before going further into the details of the leadership of those monasteries which are indebted to Jinghui’s Living Chan, it is necessary to underline Jinghui’s efforts in (re)constructing monasteries. Based on my fieldwork and textual evidence, there were twenty-one monasteries (re)built and revived under the supervision of Jinghui (see appendix 2) between 1988 and 2013, of which thirteen (bold in appendix 2) belong to the present “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” and are headed by Jinghui’s heirs. Dangyang Yuquan Monastery and Dumen Monastery were also headed by Jinghui’s Dharma heirs but are too far away to be counted as Living Chan monasteries.56

Undoubtedly, a salient component of Jinghui’s contribution to Chinese Buddhism is his physical restoration of dilapidated great monasteries during his monastic career between 1988 and 2013, recalling the (re)construction and revival movement initiated by Xuyun several decades before.57 The (re)construction of monasteries represented a considerable capital investment, and it involved the cooperation of several networks from the political endorsement of local authorities, official permission of religious affairs bureaus, financial donations of patrons, and continuous support by Buddhist devotees and practitioners. In the Chinese context, registered monasteries are legitimate religious sites for Dharma preaching. In this respect, the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” (appendix 3) thus laid a foundation for the promotion of Living Chan in the future, and the smooth leadership transmission and abbotship handover within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” are essential for further development of Living Chan.

Appendix 3 shows a more comprehensive list of monasteries, which should be included in the analysis of “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” according to my research. It is not only based on a selection of monasteries in appendix 2 but also includes other monasteries that have become affiliated with Living Chan. This identification goes beyond the list given in the Special Issue in Memory of Ven. Jinghui58 and is based on the following criteria: (1) There is a close relationship between the monastery and Jinghui, e.g., being (re)built, revived, headed by Jinghui, as shown in appendix 2. (2) The monasteries’ head

56 I warmly thank a close lay disciple of Jinghui for pointing this out.
57 For Xuyun and the reconstruction of great public monasteries, see Campo 2019.
58 The Tianxin yueyuan, zhenzhao wubian 2013: 73 lists fourteen monasteries (re)built and revived by Jinghui.
monks have been connected to Jinghui by formal religious acts, for example by being his tonsure disciples and/or ordination disciples, or Dharma heirs. (3) The monasteries’ heads have been residential monks in an administrative position at the Bailin Monastery in the past, or have been monk-students of the Hebei Provincial Buddhist Academy that is located there, and most importantly, support and promote Living Chan. (4) The promotion and practice of Living Chan is part of the distinguishing characteristics and moral virtues of the monastery (宗风), as represented by the head monks’ public talks and lectures, as well as the websites of these monasteries. (5) The monasteries’ head monks reveal close ties and intensive interactions with the backbone of highly committed Living Chan monks, e.g., abbots of Bailin Monastery, Sizu Monastery and Xingtai Dakaiyuan Monastery.

Following the above criteria and my fieldwork between 2014 and 2019, there are altogether thirty-four monasteries affiliated to “Living Chan Transmission”. Among them, sixteen monasteries are located in Hebei province, which accounts for almost half of the whole number, seven monasteries are in Hubei province, and one each in Hunan, Henan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, and Beijing. There are four monasteries outside China — Puji Monastery and Xuyun Monastery in Hungary, Miaoyuan Lianshe in Malaysia, and Guanyin Monastery in Myanmar.59

All these monasteries have far more in common than having been (re)built or revived by Jinghui, as listed in appendix 2. More essential than that is their leadership’s aiming at promoting and practising Living Chan. Heads of these monasteries include Jinghui’s tonsure disciples, ordination disciples, Dharma heirs, monk graduates of the Hebei Buddhist Academy, former residential monks that held executive positions at Bailin Chan Monastery, Sizu Monastery, or Dakaiyuan Monastery, and/or Jinghui’s grand-Dharma-heirs (the third generation of Jinghui’s Dharma lineage). Although there is no specific “corporate identity” comparable to Fo Guang-members (佛光人, a term of the Fo Guang-community for its adherents who agree with the aim and tenets of Fo Guang Shan) among the representatives of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, Jinghui’s most valuable legacy, Living Chan, has been developed into a common starting point of these new monastic leaders.

59 This is based on my observation during fieldwork between 2014 and 2018. I warmly thank Mingyao for his information.
Especially those monasteries that are managed by the closest and highly committed disciples of Jinghui have in common the same regular monastic practices. As Minghai has stressed, the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” are well developed residential monastic communities that refer to a conventional cultivation system of precepts, regular chanting, summer retreats, and winter meditation, based on Jinghui’s teaching of “Living Chan,” and sharing a similar mission for Dharma dissemination. This common ground especially seems to be possible because the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” are under a strong monastic leadership, and instead of being dependent on a government bureau (such as the local bureaus of tourism or cultural heritage), enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

3.3 Background and Implications of the New Living Chan Leadership’s Commonalities

In order to better understand the background and implications of the second generation of the Living Chan Sangha leadership, the following aspects are of fundamental relevance: (1) Most of the heads are born in the post-1960s. (2) Twenty-three out of thirty heads are tonsure disciples of Jinghui, which means their religious career started directly with Jinghui as their personal mentor. (3) More than that, i.e., twenty-six disciples, have received Jinghui’s Dharma transmission, and the most influential disciples among them reveal an even closer relationship in the sense that their whole religious life, from conversion, tonsure, ordination to Dharma transmission, has developed under Jinghui’s mentorship. The only four non-Dharma heirs are Mingding, Xinci, Mingyuan, and Xueshan. However, their relationship with Jinghui has been shaped by other important factors. Mingding and Mingyuan have been tonsure disciples of Jinghui, and Xinci has been a monk graduate of the Hebei Buddhist Academy and held a position at Bailin Chan Monastery before he finally received his full ordination shortly after Jinghui’s death at Bailin Chan Monastery in 2014. Xueshan took over the Qingfu Monastery in 2007 and re-established it as a

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60 See Minghai 2013.
61 See Nichols 2019.
62 In fact, with the exception of a very small number of abbots, such as Minghai and Mingji, I have not yet to find personal information on the heads, such as the date of birth, in a public channel like the website, Sina blog or WeChat account. My results are based on my personal observation and conversations during my fieldwork. Further investigation needs to be done in the future.
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

nunnery with the help of Jinghui as well as the local government’s support. In 2012, Xueshan received the 50th Caodong lineage from Changhong.\(^{63}\) As an exception, being a first-line-follower of Jinghui’s Dharma heirs, Xueshan may here be regarded as one of the first leaders within the Living Chan movement in the third generation. (4) Many of the heads received a secular tertiary education and/or advanced Buddhist education. To a greater or lesser extent, these leaders readily incorporated modern tools such as new social media like Blog and WeChat into their work of promoting and practising Living Chan. That has led to a development where many of them not only promote their own Dharma talks but also pay homage to Jinghui and underline their affiliation with his teaching of Living Chan. (5) These new leaders are forming a tight-knit network in promoting Living Chan by supporting each other’s large-scale Buddhist events within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. For instance, senior monks are invited to expound Buddhist classics within the Living Chan lineage (e.g., Minghai gave lectures on sutras at Gufo Chanlin, a sub-monastery of Bailin Chan Monastery). Some are also invited to give meditation instructions and lectures (e.g., Mingying is often invited to give meditation instructions and lectures at Bailin Chan Monastery during the summer camps). More importantly, by inventing a new tradition of an annual Dharma assembly to commemorate Jinghui within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, the new generation of the Living Chan sangha unified and strengthened their connections and cooperation among the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” by crediting their religious ties to Jinghui.

3.4 The New Living Chan Leadership’s Way to Power

Beyond their religious kinship with Jinghui, what other factors have contributed to the handover of the abbotship to so many of his disciples? In other words, how did the new Sangha generation of Living Chan actually come to power? Firstly, the lack of monastics after the Cultural Revolution made it possible for charismatic leaders\(^{64}\) like Jinghui to take over the abbotship of more than one monastery at a time. At the same time, the increasing numbers of Buddhist

\(^{63}\) See Takungpao 2012.

\(^{64}\) Taking Li Yuansong 李元松 (1957–2003), a lay Buddhist charismatic leader of the Modern Chan Society (Xiandai Chan 现代禅), as an example, Ji Zhe discusses the three axes—expectation, affection and responsibility—in charismatic building and grouping. See Ji 2008. For further details on charisma, see Weber 1948.
academies and monk graduates since the 1980s/1990s became attractive for a new generation and produced a monastic elite that could assist the older generation to take over the leadership.

Secondly, the revised version of the “Measures for the Appointment of Abbots of Chinese Buddhist Monasteries (Hanchuan fojiao siyuan zhuchi renzhi banfa 汉传佛教寺院住持任职办法)” requires that “in principle, the abbot of a monastery shall not concurrently serve as the abbot of another monastery.” In contrast to the 1980s and early 1990s version, religious regulations hence limit the possibility of an abbot being the head of many monasteries at the same time. However, in reality some abbots (including some of those belonging to the Living Chan network) are still in charge of several monasteries concurrently. The government’s regulation has enabled and demanded a growing number of monastics to take over leadership. That is what the impressive number of Dharma disciples has been prepared for by Jinghui.

Thirdly, religious affiliations turn into a kind of primitive religious capital in the process of leadership transition. Holmes Welch has identified three critical networks of Buddhist affiliation in Mainland China in the 1960s: (1) religious kinship (including the relationship between a master and his tonsure disciple, ordination disciple or Dharma heir), (2) loyalty to charismatic monks, and (3) regionalism. The tripartite Buddhist affiliation not only explains how the sangha members of the second generation of Living Chan came to power individually or how their vertical and horizontal relationships were especially fruitful within the broader network of “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. In this context, the “Measures for the Appointment of Abbots of Chinese Buddhist Monasteries” even strengthen the mechanism that abbot successors should be approved by relevant governmental offices on the basis of recommendation by former abbots.

Finally, as Wang Xiaochao points out, religious organisations usually revere their founders or leaders, with the consequence that their words, deeds, and

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65 Fayin 2019: 15. However, in the same measures, it also states that in special cases an abbot may concurrently hold the abbotship of another monastery/monasteries.


67 Fayin 2019: 15. For instance, the measures stipulate that “before the abbot candidates of national key monasteries take up their positions, the Buddhist association of the provincial, autonomous region or municipality levels where the candidates are located shall provide their verification opinion (on the candidates) and submit it to the Buddhist Association of China for approval.”
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

writings often become the basis for their institutional norms and systems. In the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, this dictum helps to understand how Jinghui influenced the strong Buddhist belief and practice of the members of the Living Chan sangha and motivated them to take over responsibility for the monasteries he had revived. Thus, the young generation’s Dharma affiliation with Jinghui exerts considerable influence on the religious identity of the Living Chan sangha. Meanwhile, the Living Chan networks have also reinforced the cohesion and spiritual power of Jinghui, which can be seen through Jinghui’s relics, ashes, and images which are enshrined in many of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”.

3.5 Leadership Transition: Continuities and Changes

The inauguration ceremony of Minghai as official abbot was convened at Bailin Chan Monastery on September 23, 2003. It marked the smooth and peaceful transition of power from Jinghui to his heir in the most important religious site that Jinghui has revived. Being such a symbolic place, it also offers an excellent occasion to reflect upon the leadership transition of Living Chan in a more general sense.

Being the abbot of a monastery in contemporary Mainland China not only requires the fulfilment of the regulations of the BAC but also expects the new leader to pay respect to the former abbot and the monastic community. In this context, the legacy of the former abbot should not be underestimated: at an inauguration ceremony it produces religious legitimacy and authority, and strengthens religious credentials and reputation. Following Bourdieu, this could also be described as the accumulation of religious capital.

Taking Bailin Chan Monastery as an example, the proposed continuity of the practice and promotion of Living Chan has been obviously required by the “Ten Main Points of Religious Virtues” (Zongfeng shiyao 宗风十要), a set of regulations of Bailin Chan Monastery written by Jinghui and passed on

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68 Wang 2007: 175.
69 See Bailinsi 2020c.
72 The “Ten Main Points of Religious Virtues” (Zongfeng shiyao 宗风十要) is posted on the wall of the connecting corridors between the halls. Picture taken by the author in July 2014.
to Minghai on the day of his inauguration ceremony. This handover of a set of regulations can be seen as a highly symbolic act to consolidate Jinghui’s teaching of Living Chan for the next generation.

However, the new Living Chan leadership is not supposed only to maintain the status quo. The type of changes under a new leadership depends on many subjective and objective factors, such as the individual attributes of the new head monks, the relationship between local authorities and monasteries, and other political, economic, and social realities. One noticeable “change” has occurred since April 2013, after Jinghui passed away. It did not lead away from Jinghui, but on the contrary was aimed at enhancing the longevity of his teachings. An annual commemorative anniversary of Jinghui was initiated within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, including the offering of flowers and food, chanting sutras, and transferring merit (huixiang 回向), as well as presenting an art exhibition and publishing books about Jinghui. This commemorative anniversary has also been the starting point for a regular meeting of Dharma heirs of Jinghui to discuss the future development of Living Chan.

In a next step, in commemoration of Jinghui, the second generation of Living Chan leadership has developed a similar style of initiating further “changes” in many of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” that have led to a more intensive cult of Jinghui’s personality than before. Belongings left behind by Jinghui (e.g., books, bowls, clothes, and notebooks) were exhibited, and Jinghui’s relics were worshipped in several of these monasteries. Indeed, stupas to commemorate Jinghui are in preparation at some of these monasteries. By 2019, the foundation stone laying ceremony of stupas for Ven. Jinghui (Jinghui zhanglao shelita dianji yishi 净慧长老舍利塔奠基仪式) has been held in Bailin Chan Monastery.

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73 According to the “Ten Main Points of Religious Virtues,” the monastic community should not only proceed with the long-standing monastic collective cultivation, such as daily devotional practices (morning and evening chanting) and periodical cultivation (half-monthly precept-chanting, summer sutra-studying retreats, and winter meditation retreats), but also go on with Living Chan summer camps and the promotion of Living Chan in general. Such an explicit mission has not necessarily been the case in the other “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, but as the Bailin Monastery takes on a special role among them, it is what many others are referring to (in)directly.

74 See the official websites and WeChat accounts of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”. See also, for example, Kaiyuansi 2018.
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

(October 1, 2013), Xingtai Yuquan Monastery (January 26, 2014), Fushou Monastery 福寿寺 in Ningjin county, Shijiazhuang city (June 12, 2014), Sizu Monastery (May 25, 2015), and Xuyun Monastery in Budapest (August 22, 2015).75

Another example of a “change” which can be seen as a homage to Jinghui is the later integration of his famous four-phrase slogan of Living Chan into daily Buddhist life, by chanting it after breakfast and lunch during the summer camps at the Sizu Monastery.76 Continuing and changing the Buddhist practice of Jinghui have become two sides of the same coin.

Further changes in the basis of Living Chan are on the way. For instance, new Living Chan leaders have developed new forms by analogy with the annual Living Chan Summer Camp, which had been addressed to students in the Bailin Chan Monastery since 1993, and the annual Chan Culture Summer Camp of the Sizu Monastery since 2004. The Living Chan Guoxue Camp, initiated in 2015, is aiming at teenagers at Xingtai Dakaiyuan Monastery, and the Drama Summer Camp at the Beijing Chaoyang Monastery has been addressed to even smaller children since 2011. What can be seen here is the rejuvenation of inherited activities and their related target groups, which may be inspired by the younger leadership’s refreshing capabilities, aspirations, and strategies.

In pursuing the maintenance of continuity on one side, and innovative adaptation to ongoing social changes on the other, the relationship among the Living Chan sangha leadership is shaped by both cooperation and competition. The cooperation can be characterised by the bond with Jinghui and his Dharma legacy (e.g., promoting Living Chan), as well as by common motivation and a certain pragmatism (e.g., compared with their contemporaries, they are more competitive and powerful as a group).

75 Ven. Changhong initiated the building of a stupa for Jinghui at the Fushou Monastery. See Hebeisheng minzongting 2014. News of other stupas can be found on the website of Sizu Monastery, Bailin Monastery, and Xingtai Yuquan Monastery, as well as Takungpao 大公报 (http://bodhi.takungpao.com/special/mhxyl/).

76 The four-phrase slogan of Living Chan goes as follows: “Implementing the faith in life, implementing practices at the moment, combining Dharma with the secular life, blending individuals into the public” (Jiang xinyang luoshiyu shenghuo, jiang xiuixing luoshiyu dangxia, jiang fofa ronghuayu shijian, jiang geren ronghuayu dazhong 将信仰落实于生活,将修行落实于当下, 将佛法融化于世间,将个人融化于大众). It was initiated by Jinghui in the early 1990s and is used in many of his teachings, posters, and talks, but not during his lifetime in a ritual way as described above. Fieldnotes at Sizu Monastery in August 2016.
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

In times of extreme mobility, they profit from mutual support during major Buddhist events or when the head monk of one monastery gives lectures on sutras, leads meditation retreats, or conducts Buddhist services at another monastery. Competition, however, exists over the utilisation of resources. While the Buddhist tradition offers a rich variety of texts and rituals, that can be interpreted in many different ways, deviating understandings of the particular teaching of Jinghui’s Living Chan would have a much more substantial impact on questions of the authenticity and authority of the new leadership.

Because the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” are a loose alliance, the second generation Living Chan leadership is confronted with the challenge of preserving Jinghui’s teaching and finding a balance among their members between consistent maintenance and innovative development. As the Abbot of Bailin Chan Monastery, which can be regarded as the birthplace of Living Chan, and as one of the most eminent, well-educated disciples of Jinghui (with tertiary education at Peking University), Minghai has successfully shaped the image of a new and widely accepted leader. However, there is no indication that he will be the leader of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” in the same sense as Jinghui had been for them. Though Minghai may have the potential as well as the ambition to become a central leader in the world of Living Chan, it will be a much more complicated enterprise and only can result in a different position from that of Jinghui.
Concluding Remarks

Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the process of leadership transition within the Living Chan movement so that one may deduce the opportunities and challenges of the new leadership in promoting Living Chan in the future. It is noteworthy that one striking feature of the transition of the Living Chan leadership from Jinghui to his successors is that Jinghui successfully and smoothly transmitted the leadership and power to his successors within the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” when he was still alive. Jinghui personally installed Minghai as the Abbot of Bailin Chan Monastery in 2003. Although Mingji and Minghan became the official abbots of Sizu Monastery (2014) and Dakaiyuan Monastery (2013) after Jinghui passed away, in reality they had already been in charge of these monasteries under the mentorship of Jinghui since the early 2000s. Similarly, the abbotship or leading management of many other “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” had already been firmly in the hands of Living Chan disciples when Jinghui was alive.

According to the criteria above, “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” appear as a relatively spontaneous network of Buddhist leaders based on a similar background. While developing independently from each other in many ways, they are forming a loose group, without a top-down mechanism and avoiding the impression of sectarianism (shantou zhuyi 山头主义). Nevertheless, the second generation of the Living Chan sangha leadership is fully aware of its similar fate, and is thus encouraged proudly to carry forward Living Chan as a shared legacy of Jinghui. Although the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” lack a “corporate management” system and organisational efficiency, the leaders’ wise use of the religious capital inherited by Jinghui and his Living Chan enables them to stand out from their contemporaries in Mainland China to prove authenticity and gain authority. It exemplifies a new mechanism by which the current Buddhist leadership build up a tight-knit network of branch monasteries in Mainland China.

While the second generation of the Living Chan sangha leadership has shown some capacity to cope with the rapid pace of socio-economic change in the past, much needs to be done for the preservation and further development of Living Chan. The current model of loose cooperation without an institutional guarantee may be inadequate for the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” to cope with the new economic and social realities of China. Each monastery and abbot of the “Monasteries of Living
Chan Transmission” has particular characteristics, which open up spheres for the widespread practice of Living Chan, but inevitably will also lead to the development of local and personal differences and the emergence of smaller groups.

As successors, practitioners, and promoters of Living Chan, how far should they distinguish themselves from their Dharma brothers and sisters within the group of “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, and how should they stand out from other charismatic Chinese Buddhist leaders? In the long term, Bailin Chan Monastery may still play a leading role among the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, but it is not the headquarters. Although Minghai has significant influence on them, each head of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” has his or her own strong merits, and each monk or nun of the second generation of the Living Chan sangha leadership has his or her personal interpretation of Jinghui’s Living Chan. In this regard, the death of Jinghui has posed a far-reaching challenge to the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”, since the new Living Chan sangha leadership lacks a unifying charismatic leader who attracts and unifies all of them (of course, particular diversity could also be a chance). Even more challenging is the fact that nearly all of Jinghui’s Dharma heirs have already begun to welcome novices in order to train the third generation and to go on with transmitting Dharma lineages.

The second generation of Living Chan sangha leadership discussed in this study is by no means representative of all the monastic leaders in Mainland China. These Living Chan inheritors profit and suffer at the same time from the charismatic leader who has trained them in post-Mao China and who has transmitted to them more than just an old Buddhist tradition. Relying on his legacy of Living Chan, they have come to power. Since he has passed away, they have searched for a collective identity and mutual support, but also their specific local and individual profiling. In the long term, the alliance of the “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission” may be fragile in many respects and deserves further research in the future. Comparisons with other monastic alliances within the People’s Republic of China may be useful, as well as with those in Taiwan. How the leadership transition within the Living Chan movement and its impact are being perceived by Jinghui’s adherents might be another question that awaits further ethnographic research.
# Appendix 1: Dharma Heirs of Ven. Jinghui

## Lists of Dharma Heirs of Ven. Jinghui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Heirs</th>
<th>Dharma Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Linji</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>1999.12.04</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chang</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>2001.05.05</td>
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<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>2003.01.27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>2004.02.17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>2004.11.21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Yuquan Monastery</td>
<td>2007.07.16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tiantai Monastery</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dumen Monastery</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>2009.10.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>to Willgis Jäger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yuquan Monastery</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sizu Monastery</td>
<td>2013.06.17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Minghai daifu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caodong</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yuquan Monastery</td>
<td>2005.06.21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teng</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yuquan Monastery</td>
<td>2006.03.14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Baoji Nunnery</td>
<td>2007.11.15</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>to nuns</td>
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<td>2009.06.02</td>
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<td><strong>Weiyang</strong></td>
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<td>Ji</td>
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</table>

**Total:** 200
# Appendix 2: Monasteries (Re)built and Revived under the Supervision of Jinghui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Monastery</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>In connection with Jinghui</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bailin Monastery</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>rebuilt, revived, abbot</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Xuyun Nunnery</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Xuyun Chan Monastery</td>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>appoint his disciple in charge of the monastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Fangshan Yunju Monastery</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>abbot</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Gufo Monastery</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>(re)built</td>
<td>sub-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Yuquan Monastery (XT)</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>rebuilt, revived, abbot</td>
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<td>7.</td>
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<td>Hebei</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Hubei</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<td>Hubei</td>
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<td>Hebei</td>
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<td>sub-</td>
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<td>rebuilt</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>abbot</td>
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</table>

**Notes:** XT: Xingtai city. DY: Dangyang city.
Sub- refers to the sub-monastery/nunnery of the Bailin Monastery and Sizu Monastery.
### Appendix 3: “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Monastery</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>In connection with Jinghui/BCM</th>
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<td>Bailin Chan Monastery</td>
<td>Minghai</td>
<td>Tonsure disciple/Dharma heir</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(BCM)柏林禅寺</td>
<td>明海</td>
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<td>明憨</td>
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<td>明舟</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Tiefo Monastery</td>
<td>Mingqi</td>
<td>Tonsure disciple/Dharma heir</td>
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<td>东光铁佛寺</td>
<td>明启</td>
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<td>16.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>龙泉古寺</td>
<td>(f)常开</td>
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**Note:** XT: The monastery is also named Xuyun Chan Monastery 虚云禅寺. I thank Ven. Mingjie for providing this information.
### “Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>Monastery</th>
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<td>nun Changhong’s Dharma heir, Jinghui’s Dharma-granddaughter</td>
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LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:

“Monasteries of Living Chan Transmission”

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<td>Guanyin Monastery观音寺</td>
<td>Mingsi明思</td>
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</table>

References


LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:


LEADERSHIP TRANSITION WITHIN THE LIVING CHAN MOVEMENT:


Leidership Transition within the Living Chan Movement:


In Quest of the Legacy of Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China: Identification Processes of the New Buddhist Leadership, between Historical Relevance and the Challenges of Modernisation

Carsten Krause

Abstract

Buddhist monasteries have been reopened and restored under disparate circumstances at different times over the past 40 years. For monastics born in the 1960s/70s and ordained after the Cultural Revolution, taking over the leadership of these monasteries has involved various challenges depending on their religious status and the sociopolitical environment.

One common feature has been the question of how to align one’s biographical background and religious career with the monastery’s legacy in order to bolster its popularity and broader legitimacy. This study focuses on a selection of monasteries which share a comparable historical background, having been regarded as so-called zuting 祖庭 (“Patriarchs’ Domains”). It discusses the similarities and differences in the challenges faced by the new leadership in reconnecting with each monastery’s legacy of the distant past and bridging the “floating gap(s)” in between. Further, it investigates and compares the diverse strategies of young abbots regarding how to represent themselves and their Buddhist teachings within such a context.
The paper argues that, on the one hand, compared to the case in preceding decades, a stronger sense of revival and a search for unique characteristics to be revitalised has emerged. On the other hand, inspired by an ongoing modernisation process and challenged by heterogeneous sociopolitical developments, the new generation of abbots appears to be maintaining a deliberate distance from the past and striving to invent and re-traditionalise new brands.

1. Introduction

Buddhist monasteries have been reopened and restored under disparate circumstances at different times over the past 40 years. For monastics born in the 1960s/70s and ordained after the Cultural Revolution, taking over the leadership of these monasteries has involved various challenges depending on their religious status and the sociopolitical environment.

One common feature has been the question of how to align one’s biographical background and religious career with the monastery’s legacy in order to bolster its popularity and broader legitimacy. This study focuses on a selection of monasteries which share a comparable historical background, having been regarded as so-called zuting 祖庭 (“Patriarchs’ Domains”). It discusses the similarities and differences in the challenges faced by the new leadership in reconnecting with each monastery’s legacy of the distant past and bridging the “floating gap(s)” in between. Further, it investigates and compares the diverse strategies of young abbots regarding how to represent themselves and their Buddhist teachings within such a context.

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1 The present article is based on preliminary presentations, given at the “International Seminar on the Chinese Buddhist Culture of Ancestral Monasteries” (Hanchuan fojiao zuting wenhua guoji xueshu yantaohui wenji 汉传佛教祖庭文化国际学术研讨会) organised by the Buddhist Association of China et al. (see Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 2016), at the conference on “Identity and Networks in Buddhism and East Asian Religions” at Wutai Mountain, July 2018, and at the workshop, “When a New Generation Comes up: Buddhist Leadership and Lay People in Contemporary China”, at the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, February 10–11, 2020. I sincerely thank all the participants of these events, my special gratitude goes to Ji Zhe, Xuan Fang, Hu-von Hinüber, and Wu Yuanying, for their valuable suggestions in 2020. I also thank the Glorisun Charity Foundation for supporting the proofreading of my final draft.

2 On the concept of a “floating gap”, see Assmann 1992.
With the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), which had led to the closure of most Buddhist monasteries in the PR China, a gradual reopening was driven by the Buddhist Association of China (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会, BAC) on the basis of the Communist Party’s new religious policy. At the beginning of the 1980s, the BAC emphasised the revival of a selection of 142 so-called “Main National Buddhist Monasteries [and Daoist Temples]” (quanguo zhongdian si[guan] 全国重点寺[观]). This selection consisted primarily of monasteries which were accepted as major cultural sites protected at the national or provincial level (quanguo zhongdian wenwu baohu danwei 国家或省级重点文物保护单位).³

With regard to the religious heritage represented by some of those and other monasteries, a special term which stresses their former function as a “Patriarch’s Domain” (zuting 祖庭) and thus indicates a growing emphasis on the monasteries’ religious legacy has become popular in recent decades. This term is related to former Confucian concepts of ancestor worship and has come into fashion at the end of medieval China in the context of lineage thinking among local Buddhist schools, especially Chan, Tiantai, and Pure Land school. As Cao/Fang have systematically analysed, the connotations of zuting changed over the centuries, in some contexts standing more abstractly for the school as a whole (like in the work Zuting shiyuan 祖庭事苑 [Chrestomathy from the Patriarchs’ Halls], 11th cent.). But more often it is referring to a specific religious site’s uniqueness and its legacy according to the school’s patriarch(s) or other outstanding monks of the past who have resided there.⁴ With regard to such monasteries’ relevance to build a bridge between past and present in a broader sense, over the last 15 to 20 years a more comprehensive policy of so-called “Patriarchs’ Domain Culture” (zuting wenhua 祖庭文化) has evolved.⁵


⁴ The practice of granting a monastery the status of a zuting as well as adding or even replacing its original name with the succession number of the patriarch appears to have followed different criteria at different stages of Chinese history. Modern definitions are, for example, suggested by Li Li’an and Bai Bing, see Bai 2017: I-X and 127, Li 2015. The newest and most systematic analysis of the historical evolution of diverse connotations of this term has been presented by Cao/Fang 2020.

⁵ The growing attention in China to those monasteries under the heading of a so-called zuting
To create a manageable sample for comparison, the selection of monasteries in this study is limited (in the more detailed second section) to those “Patriarchs’ Domains”, in an extremely narrow sense, which (a) have been regarded as belonging to the lineage of the so-called “Six Patriarchs” (liuzu 六祖) of the formative phase of Chan Buddhism and which (b), over the past centuries, have been assigned the singular status of a “Patriarch’s Domain” and are also the only ones to bear the patriarch’s succession number in their name.6

The analysis of this sample of monasteries is subsequently complemented (in the less detailed third section) by an additional analysis of so-called “Patriarchs’ Domains” in a broader sense which are also regarded as religious sites where the Six Patriarchs of Chan Buddhism left – even more (or fewer) – historical traces.

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the six monasteries selected for section §2 of this study. Appendix 2 includes an overview of the other monasteries discussed in section §3.

wenhua (祖庭文化 = “Patriarchs’ Domain Culture”) concerns not only historical perspectives, but also the search for their contemporary cultural, touristic and even diplomatic relevance. Such tendencies can be seen in several initiatives of the Sha’anxi Province government since 2005, with the aim of having more and more “Patriarchs’ Domains” included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Examples of zuting wenhua in that area are also discussed in Xue 2017, Fang 2015, Wu 2013, see also the website presenting a “Treasure of Sources about the “Patriarchs’ Domain Culture” of Buddhism in Sha’anxi Province” (Sha’anxi fojiao zuting wenhua ziyuan baoku 陕西佛教祖庭文化资源宝库): www.sxlib.org.cn/dfzy/sxfjwhzybk/. Another ambitious project has been the International Seminar on the Chinese Buddhist Culture of Ancestral Monasteries organised by the Chinese Buddhist Association et al., see Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 2016, and the book series Zhongguo hanchuan fojiao ba da zongpai jiqi zuting congshu 中国汉传佛教八大宗派及其祖庭丛书 (Series on the Eight Great Schools and their Patriarchs’ Domains in Chinese Buddhism). As another example see the initiative in Jiangxi Province where a “Summit on the ‘Patriarchs’ Domain Culture’ of Chan School” (Chanzong zuting wenhua gaofeng luntan 禅宗祖庭文化高峰论坛) was held in September 2019, Huang/Zhang 2019.

6 As part of the publication series mentioned in the footnote before, Bai Bing specifically dedicated one volume to the “Patriarchs’ Domains” of famous Chan masters, see Bai 2017. This includes more than the Six Patriarchs’ domains and focuses on the description of each monastery’s historical development and current situation as well as each patriarch’s personal background. Of course, there can (and should) be more “Patriarchs’ Domains” set in relation to each other, since it is the case that one master left his mark at several monasteries, or that several patriarchs stayed at or visited one and the same place. Moreover, Chan Buddhist traditions look back at many more so-called patriarchs than only the first six. However, limiting this study to the (six) monasteries with the Six Patriarchs as their eponyms (via their succession number) should be understood as a starting point based on quite obvious criteria.
It is obvious that the “Six Patriarchs” and the six monasteries numbered according to their order within the traditional lineage, as well as the other monasteries which served as domains of those patriarchs, are partially constructs of later times and cannot fully represent the world of Chan Buddhism, either of former times or of contemporary China.\(^7\)

However, it is their legacy – being more closely related to the roots of Chan Buddhism than any other monasteries are – that can be seen as a common point of comparison with a similar historical depth.

Regarding these monasteries’ revival process, the current leaders have in common a special uncertainty about how to reflect their contemporary relation to the patriarchs (and possible questions of genealogy) or other influential monks in their past, how to deal with interruptions in the monasteries’ more or less institutionalised traditions, and how to take an innovative approach to these historical topics in order to keep up with ongoing modernisation processes.

While the monasteries are complex institutions with heterogeneous target groups, their leadership faces the shared challenge of finding a style of representation that integrates the above reflections and defines the monasteries’ role as central Buddhist institutions in the midst of dynamic social surroundings. The extent to which these leaders’ self-representation follows similar patterns and is based on active strategies is the central focus of this article.\(^8\)

Due to the limited scope of this study, it focuses on online material collected and analysed in the years 2014–2020. Since the establishment of the Internet, a monastery’s homepage has become the standard “business card” and (together with growing online platforms like WeChat) one of the best and most popular tools for reaching a broad community, even outside the monastery itself. Instead of analysing the entirety of these mostly complex and quite dynamic websites, WeChat accounts, etc., section §2 focuses mainly on each monastery’s homepage, and especially its self-representation (寺院简介) and its current abbot (方丈简介 or 住持简介) (2.1.) (2.2.). Since these are very common and static rubrics, one can assume that they have definitely been approved by the current Buddhist abbot and do not change.

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\(^7\) As an example of the controversies about Chan historiography and traditional(ised) “lineage” thinking, see the chapter “Rethinking Chan Historiography”, in: Faure 1993; the chapter “Looking at Lineage: A Fresh Perspective on Chan Buddhism”, in: McRae 2003: 1–21, and Döll 2018.

\(^8\) The current study is part of a larger research project which aims to integrate a larger number of monasteries and relevant primary sources into its comparative design.
2. Questions of Identification in Buddhist Monasteries Named after the Six Patriarchs

Each monastery commonly provides a brief general overview of the monastery (hereafter referred to as the \textit{M-introduction}) on its homepage under the rubric “About the Monastery” (\textit{siyuan jianjie} 寺院简介) or under similar rubrics such as “Chronology” (\textit{chunqiu} 春秋), “Sights” (\textit{shengjing} 胜境) or “Culture” (\textit{wenhua} 文化). Its leadership is represented by the introduction or portrait (\textit{jianjie} 简介) of the “abbot” (\textit{fangzhang} 方丈 or \textit{zhuchi} 住持) (which seems to depend on who is the dominant figure). In two cases the rubric is titled “Giants of Dharma Gates” (\textit{famen longxiang} 法门龙象) or “Strings of Dharma” (\textit{famai} 法脉) and is combined with a list of former masters (hereafter referred to as the \textit{L-introduction}). In the following, I analyse similarities and differences in how these rubrics are represented under the supervision of the current leading abbot or abbot in charge.

\footnote{The Internet has become a very popular research subject with regard to the religious field; see for example Campbell 2013. Many studies on the development of personal or institutional identities pay attention primarily to interactive self-representation in social media, and some also discuss the interrelationship between online and offline identities; see for example Lövheim/Lindermann 2005, Eakin 2015; with regard to Buddhism and the cyberspace see an overview in Campbell/Connelly 2012, “Cyber Behaviour”: 434–446, 440; for a study of the cyber activities of Chinese Buddhists, see Tarocco 2017, Travagnin 2019. The present article concentrates on online materials accessible worldwide, independently from social media apps like WeChat, though the latter’s \textit{gongzhong hao} (公众号) has become increasingly popular among the Chinese and is partially taking over a substituting function for the “classical” homepage.}

\footnote{Throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism there have been various definitions of the two terms. For a discussion of their differences (and his way of translating these terms) in Republican China, see Welch 1967: 484, fn. 1: “There were various names for the head of a Buddhist monastic institution. The title with the widest scope was [zhuchi] [transl. by Welch as ‘head monk’]. The abbot ([\textit{fangzhang}]) of a large public monastery was often referred to as the [\textit{zhuchi}]. This title was also applied to the monk of a hereditary temple, […]. In other words, a [\textit{fangzhang}] was always a [\textit{zhuchi}], but a [\textit{zhuchi}] was not necessarily a [\textit{fangzhang}].” In contemporary China, the BAC has recently emphasised an equal meaning with regard to relevant aspects, see Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 2020. However, for a more precise characterisation, see the article in this issue by Hu-von Hinüber. In the centre of my article stands the leading figure of each monastery on site. If it is presented as \textit{zhuchi}, it is either in the sense of chief abbot (\textit{fangzhang}) or of possessing the leading function of an abbot in charge, if the chief abbot is not at present, because the latter is in charge of several monasteries and continuously stays at another headquarters.}
2.1. Monasteries’ Self-Representation

The six monasteries which are the subject of the investigation in this section (§2.1.) have, on the one hand, a long history in common. However, their religious lives came to a stop and were then recovered at very different stages of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

2.1.1. Continuity and Interruptions

Given that nearly all monasteries in the PR China were challenged most recently by the Cultural Revolution to undertake a renewal of their enterprise, one central question about their self-representation is the extent to which they are shaping a sense of continuity in the face of interruptions within their long history.

As can be seen in their self-representations, all of the six monasteries considered in this section have undergone several interruptions, including political persecution under the reign of diverse emperors, destruction by the Taiping rebels, fire, decline of the monastic community, etc. Finally, all of them suffered from repression after the founding of the PR China – and their leaders have not excluded this aspect from their self-representation.11

But despite its significance in terms of recent history, the growing repression exercised by the government of the PR China after 1949, which climaxed in the closure or destruction of monasteries during the Cultural Revolution, has mostly been treated as only one of several temporary interruptions during the past centuries.12

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11 It may be an interesting task for a later stage to develop a typology in the field of Buddhist life after the Cultural Revolution. How far should there be a distinction between the usage of “re” in words like reopening, rebuilding, restoration, reconstruction, reemergence, regeneration, revival, revitalisation, reestablishment, rejuvenation, resurgence, reconnection, redefining, reshaping, reconfiguration, (re)production, regrowth, renewal, renovation, reform, and reinvention etc. (and the question what “re” is related to historically) on the one hand, and the phenomenon of a construction of completely new monastic sites etc. on the other hand.

12 See, for example, the narrative of Eruzu Monastery: “At the end of the Ming Dynasty and during the Taiping reign, it once again suffered several military destructions. Until the late stage of the “Cultural Revolution”, there only remained almost 60 Buddha statues, and one Precious Hall of the Great Hero at the Sikong Mountain also had been destroyed.” (明末和太平天国时期, 又几遭兵燹。到了“文革”后期, 司空山仅存的近六十尊佛像和一座大雄宝殿也被破坏); Sanzu Monastery (long version): “Throughout the history of Sanzu Monastery, within more than one thousand years from Song times up to the “Cultural Revolution”, it suffered several war and flooding disasters which led to severe destruction. Although the lighting of incense was going on, time was not enough, so that destruction predominated over revival and there was more declining than flourishing.” (纵观三祖寺的历史, 从宋代到「文革」前的千余年中, 多次遭受战争祸水洗
In most cases other factors have been given more attention as being responsible for a gradual decline during the nineteenth/twentieth centuries. One should be aware that this is probably due to the fact that all the six monasteries in this section declined in prominence (or were even closed) in the Republican era or during the early period after the founding of the PR China, so that during the Cultural Revolution they mainly suffered material damage; their immaterial loss had already occurred. The standstill during the Cultural Revolution, which ultimately led to a total restart afterwards, therefore does not appear as an outstanding interruption and, if mentioned, is only linked to the material damage of Buddhist buildings and statues rather than reflections about immaterial loss or preservation. All in all, details seem to be avoided, and there are no judgements to be found about any heroes or guilty parties that may be worth mentioning as having been responsible for either the continuity or interruption. In this context it is notable that some of the sources explicitly ascribe a positive role to the

劫, 破坏极为严重, 其中虽有香火盛代, 但时间不长, 破坏大于恢复, 兴少衰多). In contrast, the Liuzu Monastery does not mention interruptions at all in its M-introduction: “The original monastery was built during the Tang [Dynasty], so it is one of those ancient temples with [a history of] a thousand years. In November 2000 it announced the start of restoration.” (原寺始建于唐代, 属千年古刹。2000年11月重修告竣).

The following M-introductions stress the decline before 1949. “Chuzu Monastery”: “During the Republican era (1911–1949) the Shaolin Monastery suffered from a severe man-made catastrophe. In 1928, the chaos of warlord battles led to the damaging of Shaolin Monastery with regard to important buildings, such as the Precious Hall of the Great Hero, the Scripture Hall, and scriptures which were burnt and suffered heavy losses.” (民国期间 (1911–1949年), 少林寺遭受了一场人为的重大火灾。一九二八年, 军阀混战, 殃及少林寺, 大雄宝殿、藏经阁楼等重要建筑及典藏, 皆被烧毁, 损失惨重); Erzu Monastery: see footnote 12; Sizu Monastery: “For manifold reasons, the seven-day Chan retreat came to a standstill here for 70, 80 years.” (由于种种原因, 打禅七在这里停止了七八十年); Wuzu Monastery: “After winning the anti-[Japanese] war, some halls were restored, but in 1947 the local forces of the Guomindang demolished the Bell and Drum Tower and used the material for a gun tower. On the eve of liberation, there were only a dozen temple halls and some ancient relics.” (抗战胜利后, 又修复了一些殿堂, 1947年国民党地方武装强行拆掉钟鼓楼, 将材料修炮楼, 至解放前夕, 仅存十几栋殿堂和部分名胜古迹).

One exception – probably due to the fact that it remained the only monastery in action at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution – may be when the M-introduction of the Sanzu Monastery (short version) describes how “during the ‘Cultural Revolution’ the Buddha statues and scriptures of the monastery were completely burned down” (“文化大革命”中, 寺内佛像、经籍尽被付之一炬) and judges (long version) a group of revolutionaries as “ignorant ones” (无知者) who destroyed a silk manuscript that is assumed to have been the Xinxinming 信心铭 (“Inscription on Faith in Mind”) text personally produced by Sengcan 僧璨 (?–606). But as summarised above, this mention also concentrates only on the material loss, not the immaterial damage that occurred during the Cultural Revolution.
government of the PR China since 1949 in general – emphasising its support for revival since the 1980s.\textsuperscript{15}

This gives the impression that the monasteries’ self-representations aim to minimise the relevance of historical interruptions and underscore the continuity of religious tradition, and to emphasise their good relations with the current government, which they are dependent on, ascribing to the latter a positive role comparable to that of former emperors as patrons of Buddhism.

2.1.2. References to External Authorities

In terms of the legitimation for their continuity – or revival – under the reformed political leadership after the end of the Cultural Revolution, most of the monasteries analysed in this study have in common a twofold emphasis in their self-representation.

As a crucial event, many of them stress the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC (1978) or related political implications in the following years.\textsuperscript{16} But as a similarly important factor for their legitimation, many of them also emphasise the positive role of Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907–2000) as the religious authority who provided support through his function at that time as President of the Buddhist Association of China (\textit{Zhongguo fojiao xiehui huizhang} 佛教协会会长) and as an important link to the government, in his simultaneous function as Vice Chairman of the Political Consultative

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\textsuperscript{15} See the “Chuzu Monastery’s” \textit{M-introduction}: “After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, especially since the religious policy, as newly announced by the government in the 1980s of the twentieth century, along with the state’s opening policy and the global rise of an era of cultural diversity, the Shaolin Monastery continued and developed its own unique and marvelous tradition [...].” (中华人民共和国建立以后, 特别是二十世纪八十年代政府颁布新的宗教政策以来, 随着国家的开放政策和全球多元文化时代的到来, 少林寺继承和发扬自己独特的优良传统 […]); see also the \textit{M-introduction} from Wuzu Monastery in conclusion of the narrative in the quotation from footnote 13: “After the [PR China’s] founding, the state properly protected the Wuzu Monastery’s halls, steles and ancient relics. Especially after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC, the Wuzu Monastery received the State Council’s admission as part of the first nationwide group of reopened monasteries, and the government of Huangmei County conscientiously implemented the Party’s religious policy, allocated funds and organised its restoration.” (建国后, 国家对五祖寺的殿堂、碑刻、古迹等加以妥善保护, 特别是党的十一届三中全会以后, 五祖寺经国务院批准被列为全国第一批重点开放寺庙, 黄梅县政府认真贯彻落实党的宗教政策, 拨付专款, 组织修复).

\textsuperscript{16} This is the case for the “Chuzu Monastery”, the Wuzu Monastery, see footnote 15, and the Sanzu Monastery.
IN QUEST OF THE LEGACY OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Conference (*Quanguo zhengxie fuzhuxi* 全国政协副主席). For instance, it is Zhao Puchu who is reported to have authorised the Abbot of the Sanzu Monastery Hongxing 宏行 in 1990 with the words: “It should be put into your hands to revitalise the ‘Annals of Sanzu Monastery’” (在你手上要把《三祖寺志》修起来). And it is Zhao Puchu who is presented as the most “prominent person” (“名家”) in the Wuzu Monastery’s *M-introduction*, where he is quoted with the following statement about the monastery’s importance: “Concerning the Chinese Chan School, there is nothing that does not derive from Huangmei.” (中国的禅宗无不出自黄梅). There he is also quoted as saying: “The Wuzu Monastery is the point of origin of the Sinicisation of Indian Buddhism.” (五祖寺是印度佛教中国化的发源地). This indicates how these monasteries not only rely on sociopolitical reasoning to strengthen their revival, but also present the search for the roots of their religious tradition as a central motive for their enterprise. A similar statement can also be found on the homepage of the Sizu Monastery about the encouragement given by Zhao Puchu to Ven. Benhuan 本焕 (1907–2012) to rebuild the monastery after 1994. This statement goes even further and leads us to another aspect common to the monasteries’ self-understanding, *zuting*, which is discussed in the next section.

2.1.3. The Zuting Aspect – In Search of Uniqueness

As can be deduced from the various homepages’ *M-introductions*, it is important to indicate one or more aspects that highlight the respective monastery’s uniqueness. One sort of uniqueness which the monasteries in this study have in common is that they are not only regarded as famous Chan monasteries, but they have also been and are still viewed as one of the Six Patriarchs’ most prominent domains. This aspect of being a former “Patriarch’s Domain” was made explicit by Zhao Puchu in a noticeably strategic manner. He is quoted on the homepage of the Sizu Monastery with the statement, from the mid-1990s, that “One should immediately restore the Sizu Monastery in order to link the Six Patriarchs’ domains of Chan Buddhism into a single stretch, so that they illuminate each other and form a network of Buddhist holy sites.” (要尽快把四祖寺修复好, 使佛教禅宗六个祖庭连成一片, 相互辉映, 形成一个佛教圣地网络). Such an awareness of belonging to a very unique group of monasteries in China was stressed afterwards by the Sizu Monastery, which in 2000 organised the “First Networking Symposium about the Chinese Chan

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17 On Zhao Puchu, see Ji 2017; also, in this issue, Xuan/Krause.
Patriarchs’ Domain Culture” (Shoujie zhongguo chanzong zuting wenhua wangluo yantaohui 首届中国禅宗祖庭文化网络研讨会). As the monastery’s M-introduction goes on quite self-confidently, this “First Symposium” focused exclusively on the Sizu Monastery’s individual development (Sizu dashi yu chanzong 四祖大师与禅宗). But it appears that it was never followed by a further “Networking Symposium” in the spirit of Zhao Puchu.\(^{18}\)

Although there is no sense of corporate identity to be found in the M-introductions of the Six Patriarchs’ monasteries, in the sense of their forming an exclusive group representing the first six (or more) patriarchs of Chan Buddhism, it is the zuting aspect in general which has been emphasised by each monastery in one way or another, mostly through descriptive attributes that represent its individual uniqueness. Appendix 3 illustrates a similar way in which this aspect is presented within the M-introduction: through quotes from authorities or sayings from former times.

Whereas the zuting identity constitutes a commonality in the monasteries’ self-representations, there is a tendency towards the use of quotations and other sources which underline each monastery’s uniqueness vis-à-vis the others. It may be worth taking a closer look at the role of this zuting aspect in a broader context, as this provides much more material for a deeper analysis.

**2.2. A New Generation of Abbots and Their Self-Understanding**

Having analysed how the monasteries are presented under their current leadership, this section compares the diverse strategies used by the present generation of abbots to represent themselves and their Buddhist teachings within such a context.

\(^{18}\) As mentioned above (see footnote 5), the biggest conference on the label of a so-called zuting wenhua (“Patriarchs’ Domain Culture”) was the “International Seminar on Chinese Buddhist Culture of Ancestral Monasteries” in 2016. The initiative of the Sha’anxi government has led to quite a concrete corporate consciousness of “Patriarchs’ Domains” on the part of different schools within that province, and a similar group consciousness is suggested by the editors of the book series Zhongguo hanchuan fojiao ba da zongpai jiqi zuting congshu (Series on the Eight Great Schools and their Patriarchs’ Domains in Chinese Buddhism). However, this tendency towards interconnected publicity has no equivalent in the self-representations of the Six Patriarchs’ domains according to the limited source material of this study. A further look at the so-called “friendship links” (youhao lianjie 友好链接) underlines the preliminary impression that a diffuse interconnection with different institutions seems to be of more interest than a strategic partnership with the other Chan patriarchs’ domains.
Since the leadership of Buddhist monasteries in Mainland China had to be renewed after the Cultural Revolution under quite complicated political and religious circumstances, these leaders have had in common the rise of a new generation that usually had not experienced Buddhism outside Communist rule and whose religious practice had been suppressed dramatically during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas some of the monasteries in this study were launched right from the beginning of the revival by quite young leaders, at least since the late 1990s/early twenty-first century nearly all of them have been managed by young monks who were born in the 1970s. With the exception of the Erzu Monastery, all the monasteries examined here are now led by young monks (see also appendix 1).

With regard to the monasteries’ pride in their long history and in belonging to the most prominent Chan Buddhist “Patriarchs’ Domains”, the following section asks how much the current leaders stress this aspect in their self-representations. As in the previous section (§2.1.), the following analysis is (mainly) based on each abbot’s personal introduction (jianjie 简介, hereafter L[eadership’ s]-introduction) on the monastery’s homepage.

2.2.1. Biographical Structure and Layout

The structure and layout of the biographical accounts, which form the centre of the L-introductions in this study’s comparative design, are mostly short and follow quite a conventional pattern. They focus on technical information such as the general data about education and administrative functions. To tell the reader more about the leadership’s personality, there are sometimes additional lists of sayings (“Chuzu Monastery”: “Important Dharma Sayings” [zhongyao fayu 重要法语], Sizu Monastery: “Golden Phrases” [jinju 金句]); lists of publications (“Chuzu Monastery”: “Abbot’s Works” [fangzhang zhuzuo 方丈著作], Liuzu Monastery: “Teaching the Sūtras and Praying the Dharma, Writings and Sayings” [jiangjing shuofa, zhushu lishuo 讲经说法、著书立说]); and lists of activities (“Chuzu Monastery”: “Main Traces of Events” [zhuyao shiji 主要事迹], Sizu Monastery: “Past Events” [wangshi 往事]); see appendix 4.19

19 In recent years, almost every leading Buddhist representative has initiated blogs and other interactive online tools, which could become part of an analysis of their self-representation in a broader sense. Though they are not the focus of this study, the analysis of such material will take place in a later work.
2.2.2. Questions of Genealogy

The *L-introductions* all have in common that they clearly mention the names of relevant teachers of the current abbots, as appendix 2 shows.

The way this educational background is presented does not necessarily reveal whether a specific role is ascribed to the abbots’ personal master(s). However, there are three cases where this is done: Old Master Shaoyun, Abbot of the Erzu Monastery, is connected with a special lineage by having studied with Master Xuyun and become the “ninth generation’s transmitter of the Weiyi-lineage of Chan School” (禅宗沩仰宗第九代传人). Ven. Mingji, Abbot of the Sizu Monastery, is reported to have “deeply experienced awakening through the method of ‘Living Chan’ through his close relationship to the old master Jinghui for many years” (亲近静慧长老多年, 于生活禅法深有所悟). Another emphasis on the abbot’s genealogical background is stressed in the biography of Ven. Dayuan, Abbot of the Liuizu Monastery: in contrast to the other biographies, it mentions a relatively large number of teachers and demonstrates their importance with the help of extensive photo material (though the photos have recently been deleted). Instead of relying on one central master, it stresses the transmission through (nearly) each of these masters, making it obvious that the broad variety of masters played a special role in the abbot’s educational career.

With this in mind, the question arises as to how each abbot’s specific relationship to the patriarch of the monastery he is leading today has developed during his religious career. It is striking that not one of these biographical accounts establishes any explicit relationship to the patriarch’s legacy; nor is there mention of a special relationship to the relevant patriarch’s monastery, except in the case of Ven. Mingji, who is described in the *L-introduction* explicitly as someone who:

“[…] transmits the essentials of the Recollection-of-the-Buddha Chan invented by the grandmaster Sizu [Fourth Patriarch] […] He fits deeply with the domestic style of the Patriarch […] As he has accepted the invitation to take over the abbot’s seat of the Fourth Patriarch, he is maintaining on a high level the legacy of the Patriarch and proceeding with the continuity of his profound

20 For instance, one may distinguish between a master for taking refuge, for different stages of ordination, or for the transmission of a particular lineage (*guiyishi*皈依师, *tidushi*剃度师, *shoujieshi*受戒师, *chuanfashi*传法师).
style. This can be termed: ‘When a leader is needed for a famous mountain, he is the man to keep it up.’"\(^{21}\)

他传精于四祖大师所倡导之念佛禅 […] 他深挈祖师家风 […] 此次受请主四祖丈席, 高提祖印, 振续玄风, 可谓名山得主, 住持有人。  

Since the pride of these monasteries rests on being part of the history of Chan Buddhism, it is remarkable that – with the exception of Old Master Shaoyun of the Erzu Monastery and Ven. Mingji of the Sizu Monastery (and to a certain degree Ven. Dayuan of the Liuzu Monastery) – there is no mention of a Chan Buddhist specialisation in these biographies.

With regard to all the other former abbots active in these monasteries between the times of the patriarchs and the abbots of the present day, it is obvious that they play a certain role in the self-representation of the monasteries, though mainly in the form of chronological lists and not their personal biographies. It is also remarkable that even the more detailed biographical material about former abbots of the very recent past (twentieth century) is offered only in a very limited manner and at quite a distance, in terms of placement, from the present abbots’ \textit{L-introductions}.

There may be various explanations for the lack of identification with the patriarch’s legacy and with the monastery’s history. At first glance, there appears to be little biographical linkage to the monastery’s/patriarch’s history because many of the current abbots did not begin their religious career in the monastery in question.\(^{23}\) On an abstract level, one may rethink the concept of a “floating gap” here, since we can see the phenomenon of two “floating gaps”: on the one hand, there is a “floating gap” consisting of the more or less diffuse

\(^{21}\) The last sentence can be dated back to his taking over of the abbotship in March 2014. Shortly afterwards, in December 2014, Ven. Zhengci became Abbot of the Wuzu Monastery and was also congratulated with a similar phrase (可谓名山得主, 传法有人; www.hg.gov.cn/art/2014/12/8/art_30_45477.html, accessed October 17, 2020).

\(^{22}\) The presentation of biographical outlines of the abbots of very recent times in close spatial relation to the current abbot’s \textit{L-introduction} appears to be a sensitive field: Firstly, such a placement makes it quite obvious whether there was an immediate predecessor; secondly, it may provoke the question of how far his/their achievements have had a better or worse reputation, both of which could be disadvantageous, etc. This deserves a more detailed analysis in a later stage of this research project.

\(^{23}\) The only exception to this phenomenon is Abbot Yongxin, who started his career as a monk in the Shaolin Monastery in 1981.
succession of abbots between the “Patriarch’s Domain” of the distant past and the present abbot. On the other hand, another “floating gap” can be seen in the representatives of the patriarch’s “lineage”, who appear to be even more difficult to place in relation to the current abbot.

But why, on a deeper level, do the biographies not construct any indirect link to the monastery? One possible reason may be that many abbots are responsible for more than one monastery, making it difficult for believers to follow their abbot if he only represents one monastery’s tradition/lineage. In a similar way, it may be inopportune to become identified with a single monastery given the possibility that the abbot will later have to change to another monastery.

Finally, the biography may not be regarded as a suitable place to define one’s own position at all. This leads to the next point, which is how much the legacy of each patriarch’s monastery is reflected as part of the abbot’s personal agenda.

2.2.3. On the Legacy and the Agenda

As can be seen from the biographies of the abbots under study, they generally do not explicitly reveal a personal agenda. The less they do so, the less one finds an explicit relation to the legacy of the relevant monastery as a “Patriarch’s Domain”. The same impression can be derived from the analysis of the above-mentioned M-introductions, although these introductions document a certain pride in the uniqueness belonging to a “Patriarch’s Domain”.

However, there are some more or less explicit elaborations on that legacy which may be worth looking at with respect to self-representation:

The Sanzu Monastery, for example, emphasises a close relationship with its patriarch Sengcan 僧璨 (?–606) in several places – for example, when it mentions the new building for Dharma teaching named after a famous text by its patriarch in the M-introduction, as well as when it lists this work (Xinxinming 信心铭 [“Inscription on Faith in Mind”]) among the teachings of its abbot in the L-introduction. This reminiscence on the patriarch’s legacy coincides with the abbot’s comments in an interview elsewhere:

“The Chan Buddhist Erzu Monastery and Sanzu Monastery are both located within the region of Anqing, which has meant that Anqing has attained the reputation as the ‘World of Chan Buddhism’

24 This is the case, for instance, with Ven. Dayuan, who is in charge of several dozen monasteries across the country, and also for Ven. Mingji, who maintains a strong relationship with the Bailin Monastery and related branch temples.
[Chanzong zhi di 禅宗之地]. [...] Managing and reviving a Chan Buddhist monument like the Sanzu Monastery with a history of more than 1,500 years entails great responsibility. In designing a master plan for its restoration, we regard the commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of the founding of Sanzu Monastery as a great opportunity to promulgate the history and culture of the Sanzu Monastery; to collect, revise and propagate the historical achievements of Master Sengcan, focusing on the ‘Inscription on Faith in Mind’ [Xinxinming 信心铭] as the most representative thinking of [Master] Sanzu’s Chan teaching; [...] to present the Sanzu Monastery and spread Chan Buddhist culture via different kinds of propaganda; to adapt and develop China’s excellent traditional culture; and to expand the reputation of Sanzu Monastery and contribute to the economic development of civilised tourism. [...] We even went to Singapore and Malaysia for the special purpose of teaching on the ‘Inscription on Faith in Mind’. This was the very first time that monks from the Chinese Mainland have gone abroad to teach on [Master] Sanzu’s ‘Inscription on Faith in Mind’.

宽容法师: 禅宗二祖寺, 三祖寺都坐落于安庆境内, 安庆有“禅宗之地”之称。我们积极整合佛教资源。举办一系列活动, 把佛教资源和力量引进来, 促进社会和谐。管理、中兴一座具有1500多年历史的禅宗古刹三祖寺责任很重。制订出重建的规划方案, 举办纪念三祖寺建寺1500周年之机遇, 大力弘扬三祖寺的历史文化, 授集、整理、宣传三祖僧璨大师的历史功绩和以《信心铭》为代表的三祖禅学思想。调整充实三祖寺的机构, 增设了工程建设办公室、网络室、历史文化整理小组、禅宗文化研究会、书画院、慈善功德会等。以不同形式宣传介绍三祖寺, 弘扬禅宗文化。很好地继承和发扬了中国的优秀传统文化, 提高了三祖寺的知名度, 促进了人文旅游经济的发展。

[...] 目前, 我们三祖禅寺搜集、整理了三祖僧璨的《信心铭》, 它是目前国内拥有《信心铭》资料最多的地方。我们还到新加坡、马来西亚专门讲《信心铭》, 这也是大陆的法师第一次到海外弘扬三祖的《信心铭》思想。
This excerpt from an interview shows a deliberate focus on the third patriarch’s most influential work, which even serves as a brand with which to expand Buddhist teaching abroad.

A much more elaborate way of adapting and promoting the patriarch’s legacy can be seen in M-introduction of the Sizu Monastery, which includes a special introductory column about “Relighting the Candle of the Patriarch” (zudeng zaiyao 祖灯再耀). Under this heading, the entire revival process since the mid-1990s is documented as being inspired and pushed by the proclamation of the need to take up the teachings of the Fourth Patriarch Daoxin 道信 (580–651). This strategy is repeatedly used to rank the Sizu Monastery among the Six Patriarchs’ domains. As mentioned above, it emphasises the presence of representatives of all the Six Patriarchs’ domains at the opening ceremony and presents itself as the organiser of the “First Networking Symposium of Chinese Chan Buddhist Patriarchs’ Domains” (Shoujie zhongguo chanzong zuting wenhua wangluo yantaohui 首届中国禅宗祖庭文化网络研讨会), which, however, never seems to have seen a follow-up event.

A remarkable example of how the Sizu Monastery’s agenda stresses the legacy of the Fourth Patriarch Daoxin can be seen in its documentation of the revival of rituals and charity activities based on the former tradition of Daoxin’s birthday celebration as well as on his emphasis on intensive Chan sessions. The relevance of Chan meditation as part of the Fourth Patriarch’s legacy was especially strengthened by Jinghui 净慧 (1933–2013), when he succeeded Benhuan 本焕 (1907–2012) as Abbot in 2003. He is cited from a “Seven Day Chan Retreat” (chanqi fahui 禅七法会) at the end of the same year as proclaiming:

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26 The M-introduction reports: “Today everyone in the country not only knows that the monastery of the Chan School’s Fourth Patriarch is situated in Huangmei. It is also well known that every year on the third day of the third month, one can try out the mustard according to the old recipe to heal wounds, as invented for the people by the Grandmaster [called] Fourth Patriarch.” (如今，全国各地不仅知道禅宗四祖的道场在黄梅，而且知道每年三月三在四祖寺还可以品尝四祖大师创造的为民众医治疮疾的千古良方芥菜粑）.

27 The M-introduction refers to the Fourth Patriarch’s emphasis on “intensive Chan sessions for three to five years” (勤坐三五载), as well as to reports according to the “Inscription of the Fourth Patriarch’s Chan Hall” (Sizu chantang beiji 《四祖禅堂碑记》) about the tradition of regular Chan sessions in the monastery by the following masters. Finally, it refers to the recent masters of the mid-twentieth century (“according to the memory of the countryside’s people” (据乡民回忆)) and in the years after 1991, when meditation sessions were finally “developed systematically after the opening of 2000” (2000年开光后, 渐成制度).
“From the beginning to the end, Abbot Jinghui practised together and gave them instructions. Every night he spent 50 minutes on a lecture about the ‘Expedient Dharma Gate of Entering the Way and Calming the Mind’ [Rudao anxin fangbian famen 入道安心要方便法门] from the Great Master Sizu. He said: ‘The Sizu Monastery was the first monastery in the world founded by a patriarch of Chan Buddhism, meaning that Grandmaster Sizu [the Fourth Patriarch] has left us a historical wealth which cannot be replaced by any other monastery. Taking this Chan as a starting point, for the future of the Sizu Monastery one should transform the Chan teaching of [Master] Sizu into the monastery’s methods of practice and direction of Dharma teaching, and regard them as the very specialty and advantage of the Sizu Monastery.’”

净慧方丈自始至终同修指导，每晚用50分钟宣讲四祖大师的《入道安心要方便法门》。他说: “四祖道场是天下禅宗祖师创建的第一座道场，是四祖大师留给我们的一笔其他寺院无法取代的历史财富。以这次禅为起点，要把四祖禅法作为四祖寺今后的修行法门和弘法方向，作为四祖道场独具的特色与优势。

This is very reminiscent of the approach used by Jinghui to revive the Bailin Monastery in Hebei Province in the 1990s. In that case, and in a similar manner, he had looked for points of reference in the history of the monastery, while at the same time combining it with his own vision of present day Buddhism. In line with this, the Sizu Monastery notes a slogan that is said to become more and more popular: “In the North you have Zhaozhou, in the South you have Huangmei” (Bei you Zhaozhou, Nan you Huangmei 北有赵州，南有黄梅). Since Jinghui installed one of his closest and most experienced disciples, Mingji, to become his successor in the Sizu Monastery, we can observe that the Sizu Monastery has continued its revival according to its individual local legacy on the one hand, but has also become part of a larger system inspired by the Bailin Monastery’s modernisation process on the other.29

There is an apparent similarity between the Sizu Monastery and the Liuzu Monastery, which has presented a great deal of additional material (mainly primary sources and texts from Wu Limin 吴立民 (1927–2009) and Master Yinshun 印顺 (1906–2005)) on its homepage about the historical background of Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713) in order to demonstrate its extraordinary connection with Chan Buddhism.30 This kind of reminiscence and the architectural design of Ven. Dayuan’s Liuzu Culture Park appear to have inspired a description on the Chinese Buddha Light Culture Network website (Zhonghua fouguang wenhua 中华佛光文化网, www.zhfgwh.com), which even goes as far as equating the holy spirit of Liuzu Monastery with that of Bodhgaya in India:

“The newly restored Octagonal Liuzu Pagoda is a cultural calling card with magical power to disseminate [Master] Liuzu’s [teaching] of Chan Buddhism. It stands for Sihui – the holy site of [Master] Liuzu of Chinese Chan Buddhism – and just like the Indian Bodhgaya it reveals the wisdom of ‘clearing the mind and witnessing the nature’ [mingxin jianxing 明心见性] to the people who come there on pilgrimages.”

However, if one looks at the self-representation of Ven. Dayuan’s Liuzu Monastery, it indicates an agenda that is partly inspired by Huineng, but far removed from a local perspective. The M-introduction emphasises global thinking, stating:

“For today, the Liuzu Chan Monastery is a ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ of the Chan School, but it is also a marvellous site for the practice, doctrine, dissemination and cultivation of all the world’s Buddhist schools and traditions. […] In the history of the Chan School and even in the history of human civilisation, the tremendous relevance of the Grandmaster Huineng’s – the Sixth Patriarch’s – approach to

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30 Before 2018, this was the case under the heading “Liuzu Culture [Park]” (Liuzu wenhua [yuan] 六祖文化[园]) at www.hrzh.org, which was subsequently integrated into a new web design under the rubric Liuzu famai 六祖法脉 (Strings of the Dharma of the Sixth Patriarch) at www.china-liuzusi.cn.
the world and of his Platform Sūtra exceeds the patriarchs of Chan Buddhism of all generations.”

如今，六祖禅寺既是禅宗祖庭，也是世界佛教各宗各派修行、讲学、弘法和安养的殊胜道场。[...] 在禅宗史、乃至整个人类文明史中，六祖惠能大师的应世及坛经的重要意义超越了历代禅门祖师。

More than any abbot of the other Six Patriarchs’ domains, Ven. Dayuan develops an elaborate system of global thinking for his Liuzu Monastery, as well as for the several dozen other monasteries that are under his guidance, which is summarised in some instances as the “Four Great Categories” (si da tixi 四大体系).31

31 This system from Ven. Dayuan has been promoted mainly for the purpose of internationalising Buddhism, as explained in 2015 in the “Introduction of the Information Centre for the Rising of the Sun of Wisdom” (慧日增辉信息中心简介, at http://www.hrzhu.info/portal.php?mod=view&aid=116 (retrieved 2015-06-09)) which is no longer existent in that form but still appears to be part of at least internal presentations, such as that at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_628c31150102woux.html (retrieved 2018-12-22):

1) dazhi 大智 (great wisdom):
   当代佛教文化及学科体系建设 (‘Building up a System of Contemporary Buddhist Culture and Science’: Developing a worldwide network of Buddhist studies together with renowned universities in China and abroad).

2) daxing 大行 (great practice):
   当代佛教教育与修证体系建设 (‘Building up a System of Contemporary Buddhist Education and Experience’: Cultivating different Buddhist methods according to each monastery’s individual context).

3) dayuan 大愿 (great vow):
   当代佛教国际弘法体系建设 (‘Building up a System of the International Spreading of Contemporary Buddhism’: Developing the aim of spreading Buddhist teachings over the whole world in all relevant foreign languages).

4) Dabei 大悲 (great compassion):
   当代佛教社会化服务体系建设 (‘Building up a System of Contemporary Buddhist Social[ised] Service’: Fulfilling charity and healthy activities to transform Buddhist spirituality into concrete measures for the rescue of mankind).

This system is also identical with the “Systematic Designation and Structure of Working Areas” presented in the table by Prof. Hu-von Hinüber, according to which it is still available to the public at https://lzs.hrzhu.org ((1) = table row 3, 2) = table row 1, 3) = table row 4, 4) = table row 2)). For Ven. Dayuan, see in much more detail the article in this issue by Hu-von Hinüber.
3. A Look at the Leadership of the Six Patriarchs’ Domains in the Wider Sense

While the monasteries examined above have in common that they have been named after the succession numbers of the Six Patriarchs – which implies a special expectation to deal with the patriarchs’ legacy – there are many more monasteries in China that can be historically regarded as domains where these patriarchs have been active in a more or less intensive way. This is particularly the case for the two most famous patriarchs, Bodhidharma (the first) and Huineng (the sixth), whose traces in China have led to a broader culture of reminiscence and worship in the past and today.

In the following, a short survey summarises these monasteries’ recent developments and the direction in which their leaders are shaping the patriarchs’ legacy. The analysis of these cases is linked to the context established in the second section, and leads up to the article’s conclusion.

3.1. Bodhidharma

The First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, has the greatest number of monasteries identified with his historical traces. In addition to the Shaolin Monastery and its so-called “First Patriarch’s Temple” (Chuzu’an 初祖庵), the following monasteries demonstrate extreme pride in having been domains of Bodhidharma during his stay in China:

In the province of Guangdong, Hualin Monastery 华林寺 has traditionally been regarded and is still described as “the first place where [Bodhidharma] arrived from the West” (xilai chudi 西来初地). From the beginning of the twentieth century it suffered from secularisation, and it experienced severe destruction during the Cultural Revolution, which meant that its reopening in 1989 has led to a new identification process. The current Abbot Guangming 光明 (1958–), who was ordained in 1981 and inaugurated as Abbot in 1989, can draw on a “[Bodhi]Dharma Hall” (Damo tang 达摩堂), re-established in 1996, with the inscription “The transmission of the Dharma in the East, started with the Western Treasures opening up Hualin” (东土禅宗传妙法, 西域宝甸辟华林). But he describes another place of worship which he initiated himself in 2005 more proudly, citing the “First Patriarch’s Sanctuary” (Zushi dian 祖师殿) as “the only sanctuary [diantang 殿堂] worldwide that is exclusively devoted to the First Patriarch [Bodhi]Dharma” (全世界唯一一个专供达摩祖师的殿堂).
Obviously aware of the fact that the Shaolin Monastery is more famous for Bodhidharma’s bequests, and in a manner similar to the examples given above, Ven. Guangming emphasises that “In the South there is Hualin, in the North there is Shaolin” (Nan you Hualin, bei you Shaolin 南有华林、北有少林) as a unique selling point. Instead of personally revealing a specific relation to Bodhidharma or Chan Buddhism, he goes so far as claiming that the Hualin Monastery is where the whole of Buddhism entered into a new life after Bodhidharma had left India because of its decay. Further, in a self-conscious manner, he regards the relics of Buddha, which have been preserved in the Hualin Monastery, as a supplementary element that makes the monastery the cradle of Buddhism in China, as well as the ideal starting point for spreading (Chinese) Buddhism across the (Western) world on the basis of the government’s Belt and Road Initiative.32

There are three more monasteries with historical connections to Bodhidharma’s long path to the area of the Shaolin Monastery. Among them is the Gaozuo Monastery 高座寺 near Nanjing, which has experienced a revitalisation of religious life since 2011 (effectively since 2015) after an extremely long interruption, but does not seem to be actively associated with Bodhidharma by its Abbot Lingshan 灵山 (?–).33

Although the Changlu Monastery 长芦寺 looks back on a similar history of decay, having been completely rebuilt after 2009 and effectively opened to the public in 2015, it is connected with a similarly rare but much more legendary event which has substantially legitimated its post-Mao recovery. As the story goes, Bodhidharma left the capital after his dispute with Emperor Wu of Liang, “crossing the Yangzi River on one giant reed” (yiwei du jiang 一苇渡江) and staying on the northern riverbank for one night. Later, in its heyday during the Northern Song (960–1126), the monastery commemorated this event with a “[Bodhi]Dharma Sanctuary” (Damodian 达摩殿), “One Reed Hall” (Yiwei tang 一苇堂), etc. Building on this legacy, the current Abbot Miaoqiu 妙求 (1973–), who was ordained in 2008, is delighted about a new “Sanctuary of the First Patriarch [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo zushi dian 达摩祖师殿) and emphasises that

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33 In fact, the only story is about Bodhidharma’s occasional visit to the Gaozuo Monastery and his silent disapproval of the teaching activity of Huike 慧可 (487–593). The latter is said to have regretted his behaviour later and followed Bodhidharma to the area of Shaolin Monastery, where he became the Second Patriarch. Although this event is related to two patriarchs, it does not seem to offer much religious capital for the monastery’s self-representation.
the architecture, which follows the plain style of the Song Dynasty, “embodies the direction in which the Chan School is headed” (也体现禅宗追求的方向).\footnote{Quotation from Ven. Miaoqiu according to a 2012 article mentioned in footnote 1 at Baidu 2015.}

Much greater religious capital stemming from Bodhidharma is legitimating efforts to rebuild the Dingshan Monastery 定山寺 at the site where its remaining remnants fell victim to a flood in 1954. The monastery is said to have been a place where Bodhidharma stayed for a longer period of time, before he finally left for the area around the Shaolin Monastery. Based on archaeological relics such as the so-called “[Bodhi]Dharma Rock” (Damo yan 达摩岩), the “Stele of [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo zaoxiangbei 达摩造像碑) etc., and popular legends, the monastery’s Abbot Zhiguang 智光 (?–) has been leading an ambitious project for its religious and touristic development. In an impressive manner, he hints at several superlatives, since the stele is older than one found at Shaolin Monastery. He also explains the slogan of a Song poem, which calls the monastery the “First Monastery of [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo diyi daochang 达摩第一道场), as follows:

“For thousands of years, Shaolin Monastery has been regarded as the [First] Patriarch’s domain in the Chinese Chan School. However, Ven. Zhiguang, the Abbot of Dingshan Monastery, is convinced that Bodhidharma did not reside in Shaolin Monastery at all during his lifetime, but only waited in a cave near Shaolin Monastery for the opportunity to spread the Dharma. This means he did not ‘reside in the monastery [zhu si 驻寺]’, but he ‘resided in the mountains’ [zhu shan 驻山]. Although this does not negate the status of the Shaolin Monastery as a ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ of the Chan School, Dingshan Monastery is the monastery where Bodhidharma [really] resided, so it should be regarded as the original ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ of the Chan School.”\footnote{See the report on the basis of an interview with Ven. Zhiguang in Zheng 2013. See also nearly the same wording from Ven. Zhiguang in a report of the Yangzi wanbao 扬子晚报 (Yangzi Evening News) where he even talks of the “real” (zhenzhengde 真正的) instead of the “original” (zuichude 最初的) “Patriarchs’ Domain” of the Chan School, Zhongguowang 2007.}
然这并不妨碍少林寺禅宗祖庭的地位，但定山寺是达摩驻锡的寺院，应被视为禅宗最初的“祖庭”。

Zhiguang even goes so far as to claim that Dingshan Monastery, according to its literal meaning (“Monastery of the Concentration Mountain”), must have been founded on behalf of Emperor Wu of Liang in order for Bodhidharma to “concentrate on the Dharma” (dingfa 定法) in the mountains.36

Finally, Bodhidharma’s later years after leaving the area of Shaolin Monastery have contributed to a twenty-first century renaissance for the Puti Monastery 菩提寺 in Chongqing and the Kongxiang Monastery 空相寺 in Henan Province. Similarly to the places mentioned above, the Puti Monastery, which was founded many hundreds of years after the death of Bodhidharma, was reopened in late 2015 after years of decay and severe damage that led to its destruction in early 1950. Under the guidance of Abbot Daojian 道坚 (1968–), who was ordained in 1992, the monastery’s name, “Puti” (= Bodhi), is interpreted as a direct reference to “Bodhi”[Dharma], who is said to have spent his later years on that mountain. A slogan from the Northern Song, according to which the monastery was called the “Cultivating Site of [Bodhi]Dharma, Real Lineage of the Chan School” (Damo daochang, Chanzong zhenmai 达摩道场、禅宗真脉) serves as the unique selling point. With the aim of attracting supporters, devotees and tourists, Daojian has not only erected a “Sanctuary of the Patriarch” (Zushi dian 祖师殿) with one of the biggest statues of Bodhidharma in the country but also, in a strategic manner, calls the Puti Mountain “Western Little Forest” [= Shaolin] (Xi Shaolin 西少林) and puts it on a level with the so-called “Northern Little Forest” [= Shaolin] (Dong Shaolin 东少林) and “Southern Little Forest” [= Shaolin] (Nan Shaolin 南少林). More than that, he also links the meaning of Bodhi[Dharma] with the roots of Buddhism in a more general sense by presenting the biggest “Holy Light of Bodhi” (Puti shengdeng 菩提圣灯) in the world, a Bodhi tree from Sri Lanka and a Buddha relic from India. In a fantastic vision, Daojian even gives the Puti Mountain the highest symbolic value by invoking it as the “Fifth Famous [or Holy] Mountain of Buddhism in China” (中国第5大佛教名山).37

36 See Zheng 2013.
37 Traditionally, the Four Famous Buddhist Mountains in China (Wutai Mountain, Putuo Mountain, Emei Mountain, Jiuhua Mountain) are devoted to Bodhisattvas. Although Puti Mountain is not widely known as a heritage site of Bodhidharma, quite a lot of legends seem to have inspired the revival process around old and new sites of worship such as the “Cultivation
As the last station in Bodhidharma’s life, Kongxiang Monastery 空相寺 is a place that has been rebuilt and was reopened in 2002 on the initiative of Yongxin, Abbot of Shaolin Monastery. In contrast to Puti Monastery, the Kongxiang Monastery appears to have a strategic alliance with Shaolin Monastery, as Ven. Yongxin is said to have committed to its revival in 1994. Since a “[Bodhi] Dharma Pagoda” (Damo ta 达摩塔) and the earliest “Stele of [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo zaoxiang bei 达摩造像碑) have been preserved as the main remnants after the monastery’s decay, the First Patriarch has remained at the centre of its revival process, which has included the construction of a “Sanctuary of [Bodhi] Dharma” (Damo dian 达摩殿).

While Bodhidharma’s place of death does not seem to be associated with many legends, the monastery’s head of services (jianyuan 监院), Yanci 延慈 (1969–), has focused on an annual “Commemoration Ceremony for Patriarch Site of [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo daochang 达摩道场), “[Bodhi]Dharma Pagoda” (Damo ta 达摩塔), “Rock of [Bodhidharma’s] Robe” (Jiasha 袈裟石), “[Bodhi]Dharma Fights the Tiger” (Damo fuhu 达摩伏虎), and “[Bodhi]Dharma Cave” (Damo dong 达摩洞). In spite of all the symbolic name dropping, there do not appear to be any direct connections to Chan Buddhism, the Shaolin tradition or the Four Famous Mountains in Daojian’s own biography or in his further teaching. On the “reconstruction plans” (chongjian jihua 重建计划) for Puti Monastery, see Baidu 2020a, on Ven. Daojian, see also Baidu 2020b, and Xiaoliang 2014.

Site of [Bodhi]Dharma” (Damo daochang 达摩道场), “[Bodhi]Dharma Pagoda” (Damo ta 达摩塔), “Rock of [Bodhidharma’s] Robe” (Jiasha 袈裟石), “Rock of [Bodhidharma] Preaching the Dharma” (Shuofa tai 说法石), “[Bodhi]Dharma Fights the Tiger” (Damo fuhu 伏虎), and “[Bodhi]Dharma Cave” (Damo dong 伏虎洞). In spite of all the symbolic name dropping, there do not appear to be any direct connections to Chan Buddhism, the Shaolin tradition or the Four Famous Mountains in Daojian’s own biography or in his further teaching. On the “reconstruction plans” (chongjian jihua 重建计划) for Puti Monastery, see Baidu 2020a, on Ven. Daojian, see also Baidu 2020b, and Xiaoliang 2014.

In contrast to the other monasteries mentioned above (which were reopened late in the 2010s), the Kongxiang Monastery has a classical homepage, with a monastery’s introduction (首页 > 寺院大观 > 空相寺简介), see Kongxiang si 2020. This may be due to its early rejuvenation and the influence on its conventions by Shaolin Monastery. Since it is often called a “Branch Monastery” (xiayuan 下院) of the (contemporary) Shaolin Monastery, a biography of Ven. Yongxin, who functions as its abbot from the distance and who has had a “Stele to the Merits of Master Wangying of Shaolin” (Shaolin Wangying shangren gongde bei 少林皖颖上人功德碑) dedicated to him, is presented first. On the relation between the two monasteries, with an emphasis on the Kongxiang Monastery’s important position, see also the frequent saying, “While the First Patriarch of the Chan School connects the two monasteries, the holy site of Kongxiang [Monastery] connects the two countries” [probably because a legend goes that he returned to India after his death] (Chanzong chuzu lian shuangsi, Kongxiang shengdi xi liangguo 禅宗初祖连双寺, 空相圣地系两国), e.g. quoted in Baohua si 2013.

The inscription of the stele (which is said to have been erected in 538) commemorates the main stations in the life of Bodhidharma, which automatically highlights the last station, of which it is said that he left people in uncertainty about life and death: “He crossed the sea and brought the contents from the West. In Jinling the words [of Emperor Wu of Liang] didn’t match. In Shaolin he gained the merits of facing the wall. In Xionger [Kongxiang Monastery] he left one shoe.” (Hang hai xilai yi, Jinling yu bu qie, Shaolin mianbi gong, Xionger liu zhi lü 航海西来意, 金陵语不契, 少林面壁功, 熊耳留只履).
Bodhidharma” (Damo zushi jinian dadian 达摩祖师纪念大典) since 2002, and founded a “Research Society for the [Bodhi]Dharma Chan Culture” (Damo chan wenhua yanjiusuo 达摩禅文化研究会). Further projects, such as the establishment of a “[Bodhi]Dharma Chan Painting School” (Damo chan huayuan 达摩禅画院), “[Bodhi]Dharma Chan Martial [Arts] School” (Damo chan wuyuan 达摩禅武院), “[Bodhi]Dharma Chan Cultivation Centre” (Damo chan xiuyuan 达摩禅修院), and “[Bodhi]Dharma Charity Centre” (Damo cishan yuan 达摩慈善院) are part of his future vision “in order to better promote, excavate, arrange and develop [Bodhi]Dharma Chan culture” (以更好地弘扬、挖掘、整理、发展达摩禅文化) and “to write a new chapter of the culture of Buddhist Chan School” (书写着佛教禅宗文化的又一个新篇章). As the introduction on the monastery’s homepage emphasises in the different descriptions of its uniqueness, the monastery has not only “become a natural place for the worship of the [First] Patriarch of the Chan School” (成为禅宗祭祖的当然之所), but has also “developed into a representative [place] of Chan, the Chan School and Chan culture, [and] into the shining gem in the history of Chinese Buddhism” (成为禅、禅宗、禅文化的代表, 成为中国佛教史上的熠熠生辉的瑰宝) – or in other words, “by virtue of the tomb of the Chan School’s [First] Patriarch, into a holy site of Buddhism” (成为禅宗祖茔, 佛教圣地).

3.2. Huike

Among the two places in Hebei Province associated with the Second Patriarch, Huike, the Kuangjiao Monastery 匡教寺 is known as a site of the so-called “Platform of Teaching the Dharma” (Shuofa tai 说法台), where he stayed for 34 years, while the Yuanfu Monastery 元符寺 is known for its “Pagoda of the Second Patriarch” (Erzu ta 二祖塔), where Huike is said to have been buried. After decades of secular use, Kuangjiao Monastery was opened in 1996 on a relatively small scale, but a more expansive initiative was started under the new-generation leadership of Ven. Huikong 会空 (1974–), who was ordained in 1993 and became the abbess in 2006 (under the leadership of Jinghui’s male disciple Minghai 明海 (1968–)). A “leitmotif”, which probably goes back to earlier times but still seems to have been spread under her guidance, appears at Baidu and proposes the uniqueness of the patriarch’s legacy as follows:

“Master Huike was the first representative of the Chinese Chan School, and [this] Second Patriarch’s Kuangjiao Chan Monastery is the birthplace of the Chinese Chan School. Not reviving the
Second Patriarch’s cultivation site until today may be my fault as well as your fault. But reviving the Second Patriarch’s cultivating site is [now] my responsibility as well as your responsibility.”

Huike大师是中国禅宗第一人, 二祖匡教禅寺是中国禅宗的发源地, 但二祖道场至今迟迟未能复兴, 吾之过也, 汝之过也; 然复兴二祖道场, 吾之责也, 汝之责也。

Ven. Jinghui also paid attention to the Yuanfu Monastery early on, in 1988. This led to its opening in the 1990s, but the main efforts to bring new life into this “Precious Site of the Second Patriarch” (erzu baocha 二祖宝刹) were driven by his disciples (Minghai, Minghan 明憨, Chonglang 崇朗) after 2007. Under the abbotship of Fajing 法镜 (?~) from 2008, Jieyu 戒毓 (?~) (who later disrobed) from 2015, and now Chonglang (?~), visions of new projects have included a “Sanctuary of the Second Patriarch” (Erzu dian 二祖殿) and, more generally, a “Museum of the Chan School” (Chanzong bowuguan 禅宗博物馆) and a “Research Centre for Chan Culture” (Chan wenhua yanjiu zhongxin 禅文化研究中心). Although the name Erzu Monastery (Erzu si 二祖寺) has been used for the monastery revived by Ven. Shaoyun, as mentioned above, both of these monasteries have in common that erzu (二祖) is frequently placed in front of their names – thereby questioning the monopoly of the former, so to speak. In connection with one cornerstone ceremony in April 2017, there has been held a Symposium under the guidance of master Minghai, about which there was reported that “the aim of the ‘Symposium […]’ is to excavate and spread the Buddhist culture of Handan, to base it on the unique influence of Chan-Buddhist thinking of the Second Patriarch of Cheng’an in order to establish a position for Handan within the history of Chinese cultural exchange and to promote the power of the Chan-culture of Cheng’an with regard to society, economy and culture.” (本届“[…]研讨会”的主旨是积极挖掘弘扬邯郸佛教文化, 以独树一帜的成安二祖禅思想的影响力, 树立邯郸在中国文化交流史上的地位, 提升成安禅文化对于社会经济文化的带动力).

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40 See Baidu 2020c. On Huike as the “first representative” (diyi ren 第一人), see also Gao 2001.
41 See Baidu 2020d, especially the part on “Launch of the Repair Project” (xiufu gongcheng qidong 修复工程启动).
42 See Fenghuangwang 2017.
3.3. Huineng

While the third, fourth and fifth patriarchs do not appear to be associated with further monasteries in operation today, the case of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng, is a completely different story. The Liuzu Monastery mentioned above appears to have been founded at a later date in the mountain area where Huineng took refuge among hunters – after he had received transmission from Hongren in the north and before he started his public career in Guangdong Province. However, the following three stations in Huineng’s later life are now associated with him in a much more prominent manner.

The Guangxiao Monastery 光孝寺 in present-day Guangzhou already existed before Huineng went there for his tonsure ceremony, and it even commemorates the earlier times of Bodhidharma with a legendary “Spring of Washing the Bowl” (Xibo quan 洗钵泉), as Bodhidharma is said to have given occasional lectures there during his stay at the neighbouring Hualin Monastery. Although the Guangxiao Monastery once included a Tang Dynasty “Pagoda of [Huineng’s] Sacrificed Hair” (Yifa ta 瘡发塔), a “Hall of [Disputing] the Wind and the Sail” (Fengbo tang 风幡堂) and a Song Dynasty “Sanctuary of the Sixth Patriarch” (Liuzu dian 六祖殿), much has been restored since the 1980s, because the monastery was secularised at the beginning of the twentieth century and remained so for almost 80 years. The current Abbot Mingsheng 明生 (1960–), started his career in Guangxiao Monastery in 1990 and took over its leadership in 2006. Since the Guangxiao Monastery has many historical facets and Huineng stayed there for a short time only, he appears as a central figure but not the only one, as can be seen from the presentation of the monastery on the website of the province’s Buddhist Association:

“The old masters Benhuan and Xincheng 新成 (1919–?) were successive abbots of the monastery, and led the monks to restore […]. The current Abbot Mingsheng, on the basis of the two old masters’ vigorous rebuilding and development, is now leading the monastic community, intensively promoting the monastic style and cultural progress, and the overall planning and construction of the monastery.

43 The Fourth Patriarch, Daoxin, appears to be associated with another place called Guangfa Monastery 广法寺 in Hubei Province, but on the homepage no information is given about it, see Guangfa si 2020.
In the history of Guangxiao Monastery, several generations of patriarchs emerged, and the eight schools [of Chinese Buddhism] were spread simultaneously. It has become famous for being a ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ of the Chan School and a cultivation site for [Buddhist] translators. Therefore, Guangxiao Monastery occupies an important position in the history of Chinese Buddhism and the history of Sino-foreign exchanges, and has a profound impact on Lingnan’s [Southern Chinese / Southeast Asian] politics, economy, and culture.”

The most famous relic of Huineng, his mummified corpse, is located at the Nanhua Monastery in the northern part of Guangdong Province. Whereas its “Pagoda of the Shining Soul” (Lingzhao ta 灵照塔) and a “Sanctuary of the Sixth Patriarch” (Liuzu dian 六祖殿) have been preserved over the centuries, restoration work has been highly necessary and was initiated by Ven. Xuyun in the period 1936–1943. His strong ambition to revitalise the site where Huineng is said to have taught for most of his life may have triggered the next revival process after the Cultural Revolution, more so than was the case with the other monasteries in this study. Ven. Weiyin 惟因 (1914–1990) led the first post-Mao period of reanimating the monastery’s religious life, and Ven. Chuanzheng 传正 (1944–) is presented as the new generation, having taken over the leadership as Abbot in 1999. His detailed biography on the Nanhua Monastery’s homepage (divided into “The Abbot of Nanhua” [Nanhua fangzhang 南华方丈], “Abbot’s News” [Fangzhang dongtai 方丈动态], “Right Words, Rights Actions” [Zhengyu zhengxing 正语正行]) is remarkably different from any other biographical material analysed in this study: the earliest years of Chuanzheng’s religious career are directly connected to Nanhua Monastery and Huineng’s legacy, and also fill the gap of the Cultural Revolution:

44 Quoted from Guangzhou Guanxiaosi 2017.
“At that time [1970], he made a vow that he would definitely revive the ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ at Caoxi [River] and make the wisdom of the Sixth Patriarch shine in new splendour. Since then, Master Chuanzheng has formed an indissoluble bond with the Nanhua Chan Monastery.”

于时即发大誓愿, 他日定当重振曹溪祖庭, 光大六祖慧业。此后, 传正大和尚即与南华禅寺结下了不解的法缘。

In contrast to most other self-representations, Chuanzheng’s biography does not stand alone, but is supplemented by a comprehensive collection of biographical material about the monastery’s former generations of great masters. Mainly based on Huineng’s legacy, Chuanzheng aims to promote the “Sixth Patriarch’s Religious Style” (liuzu daofeng  六祖道风) and, most recently, develops the monastery and its surrounding into a “Leisure Area of the Culture of the Chan School – Tourist Area for Religious Pilgrimage” (Chanzong wenhua xiuxian qu, zongjiao chaosheng lüyou qu  禅宗文化休闲区, 宗教朝圣旅游区). The biography concludes with a statement reminiscent of the dual legitimation by virtue of religious and political circles, as mentioned in section §2.1.2.:

“‘Continuing the [Sixth] Patriarch’s Work, Protecting the Cultivation Site’ was the congratulatory message of the Buddhist Association of China during Master Chuanzheng’s inauguration as Abbot of Nanhua Chan Monastery. It also resembled the earnest expectations from the Party and the government, as well as from all social groups. The historical task of revitalising the ‘Patriarch’s Domain’ at Caoxi [River] once again fell on the shoulders of Master Chuanzheng.”

“传续祖业, 正护道场”, 这是中国佛教协会在传正大和尚升座南华禅寺住持之际的贺辞, 也是党和政府、社会各界对传正大和尚的殷切期望。振兴曹溪祖庭的历史重任, 又一次落到了传正大和尚的肩上。

45 Quoted from the abbot’s introduction (南华寺首页 > 南华方丈: www.nhcs.cn/?cid-238_about.html (accessed September 20, 2020)) on the Nanhua Monastery’s homepage, Nanhua si 2020.
46 Ibid.
In order to emphasise Nanhua Monastery’s uniqueness, the introduction on its homepage highlights the significant role of the monastery towards the end of Huineng’s life:

“If Guangxiao Monastery is the prelude to the Chinese Chan School, Nanhua Monastery is the magnificent first act.”

In a similar way, it highlights the Nanhua Monastery’s exclusive role at the end of the Six Patriarchs’ lineage of transmission:

“The Sixth Patriarch of the Chan School of Chinese Buddhism, Master Huineng, came to Baolin Monastery [= Nanhua Monastery], teaching Buddhism for 37 years and spreading the Dharma of Chan of the southern school all over the world. Therefore, Nanhua Monastery is known as the ‘Southern Chan Patriarch’s Domain’ [Nan Chan zuting 南禅祖庭], and, like Shaolin Monastery in the Song mountains, it is also called the ‘Patriarch’s Domain of the Chan School’ [Chanzong zuting 禅宗祖庭]. It thus exerts an important influence in Southeast Asia, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Europe, America, and other countries and regions.”

The last place dedicated to the memory of Huineng is Guo’en Monastery in the southern Guangdong Province. In contrast to all the other monasteries, it is said to have been personally founded by Huineng. Similarly to the ductus of former slogans, a Tang Dynasty saying defines it as “Number One among the Holy Sites in the Area of Lingnan” (Lingnan diyi shengyu 岭南第一圣域). The monastery’s Baidu entry classifies it among the “Sixth Patriarch’s Three

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48 Ibid.
Great Patriarch’s Domains” (*Liuzu san da zuting* 六祖三大祖庭), in line with Guangxiao Monastery and Nanhua Monastery. But the entry goes beyond that when it points out the monastery’s uniqueness as follows:

“Guo’en Monastery is not only the original accommodation of the flesh-body bodhisattva of the Sixth Patriarch, it is also the Holy Site where the Sixth Patriarch spread the Dharma, where he passed away, and where his ‘Platform Sūtra of the Dharma Treasure’ has been compiled.”

国恩寺因为既是六祖肉身菩萨的故居, 又是六祖弘法、示寂以及辑录六祖“法宝坛经”的圣地。

After centuries of decay, the latest damage inflicted by the Cultural Revolution is portrayed in an unusual way, since a group of monks is said to have defended the monastery as much as possible. One of them, Dingguang 鼎光 (?–?) became the first abbot in the post-Mao period, followed by Ruchan 如禅 (1963–) in 2004, who actually took over the first leadership positions at Guo’en Monastery much earlier, in the 1980s. He can build on a rich capital of old and new commemoration sites focused on Huineng, such as the “Sanctuary of the Sixth Patriarch” (*Liuzu dian* 六祖殿), the “Grave of the Sixth Patriarch’s Parents” (*Liuzu fumu fen* 六祖父母坟), the “Thousand-Years-Old Litchi Tree Planted by the Sixth Patriarch” (*Liuzu shouzhi qiannian lizhishu* 六祖手植千年荔枝树), etc. According to Ruchan:

“Four changes can be used to summarise the Sixth Patriarch Huineng’s contribution to Buddhism – that is, he sinicised, popularised, vitalised and monasticised it.”

可以用四化来概括六祖惠能对佛教的贡献, 就是他把印度的佛教中国化、平民化、生活化、丛林化。

In his parallel function as Vice President of the “Research Society of the Culture of the Sixth Patriarch’s Thought” (*Liuzu sixiang wenhua yanjiuhui* 六祖思想文化研究会), Ven. Ruchan is convinced of Huineng’s worldwide significance:

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49 See Baidu 2020e. The mummified corpse of Huineng was later transferred to the Nanhua Monastery.

50 Quoted from his statement in an interview, Wuming xuefo 2009.
“The Sixth Patriarch Huineng’s Chan School thought plays an important role in our Buddhism, in our beings, and in the harmony of society. I believe that in the near future, the Sixth Patriarch Huineng’s Chan School thought will be carried forward to the whole world […].”

六祖惠能禅宗思想，对我们的佛教也好，对我们众生也好，对社会的和谐也好，起到很重要的作用。我相信在不久的将来，六祖禅宗思想将会弘扬到整个世界，[…].

While the Liuzu Monastery’s self-representation also includes an emphasis on the “Platform Sūtra”, the only Sūtra written in Chinese, Ruchan goes further in his assessment of the Sūtra:

“The ‘Sixth Patriarch’s Platform Sūtra’ is the only one of its kind in China and even in the world. Having been taught by a great monk, it has been given the title of a jīng [sūtra 经], as was only usual for the teachings of the Buddha himself, while all the Dharma teachings by great virtues of the Saṃgha have been called lún [śāstra 论]. This is why we Chinese call the Sixth Patriarch Huineng ‘China’s Shakyamuni’ [Zhongguo de shijiamouni 中国的释迦牟尼] and ‘Little Shakyamuni of the East’ [Dongtu xiao shijia 东土小释迦]. It is because of his Chan Buddhist thinking that the Sixth Patriarch Huineng dared to innovate and reform […], and increased the confidence of our people to the extreme.”

《六祖坛经》是中国, 乃至世界上唯一一部, 除了佛祖说法以外的高僧大德所说的佛法被称为“经”的, 其他高僧大德说法都只能称为“论”。我们中国人称六祖惠能为“中国的释迦牟尼”、“东土小释迦”, 就是这样来的。因为六祖惠能的禅学思想，他敢于创新改革[...], 把我们人的自信提高到了极致。

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
4. Conclusion

From the perspective of a new generation of Buddhist abbots who were born in the 1960/70s and ordained after the Cultural Revolution, taking over or even completely revitalising a monastery appears to be challenging work in many respects. It might be easier for these abbots to define their jobs according to the contemporary sociopolitical circumstances they have grown up with and based on their own personal religious careers full of biographical and educational experiences. However, when it comes to the leadership of a “Patriarch’s Domain” (zuting 祖庭), abbots cannot help but also reflect on the legacy of the relevant patriarch of the distant past.

As can be seen from this study, the religious sites historically connected with one of the first Six Patriarchs of Chan Buddhism have been associated with quite a rich collective memory over the centuries. In the course of time, many slogans, sanctuaries, etc. have become tools in their leadership’s self-representation. A new wave of consciousness arose when some of these monasteries became part of the early Buddhist revival of the 1980s and registered as “Main National [Buddhist] Monasteries”, when BAC President Zhao Puchu fostered the revival of forgotten sites, or when at a later stage the status of a “Patriarch’s Domain” even became an opportunity to be recommended for the international World Heritage List.

The current leaders of these monasteries are strategically using this growing religious capital, although they seem to be aware of several “floating gaps”: Firstly, there is mostly no “lineage” between their own religious biographies and those of the patriarchs that can be made visible in the classical sense of Chan Buddhism. Secondly, there has been a series of interruptions in the monasteries’ leadership and the related collective memory between the current religious sites and their conditions when the patriarchs were active. Against this backdrop, the current abbots’ self-representations on the monasteries’ homepages (jianjie 简介) usually offer conventional biographical data instead of (re)constructing any direct or indirect link to the patriarchs or the monasteries. Because many abbots today are responsible for more than one monastery (unlike the case in the 1980s) and it may eventually be the case that they will have to transfer to other sites (unlike many of their predecessors), it appears to be inopportune to become identified with one single patriarch or monastery. Further, the biography on a homepage may not be regarded as a suitable place to define one’s own position.
Nevertheless, concerning the new generation’s agenda, the legacy of Chan Buddhist patriarchs appears to be of significant historical relevance. To be the abbot of a “Patriarch’s Domain” provides legitimation to represent Chinese Buddhism from a leading position. Based on historical precedents, it is a common pattern for these abbots to demonstrate the uniqueness of the religious site and the patriarch’s legacy. However, there is a new quality of self-promotion. While the interrelation between these Six Patriarchs’ former domains has played a minor role in recent centuries, there are some new alliances. But for the most part, each monastery’s contemporary self-representation is focused more than ever on its singularity. Being exclusive in the sense that it is not comparable with any other monastery, in more or less direct competition with other “Patriarch’s Domains”, the examples of self-representation in modern times analysed in this study imply a highly inclusive approach: This ranges from the claim that a monastery is the cradle of Chan Buddhism as a whole (including its relevance for East Asia and the world), to the statement that a monastery is the essential link between India, the extinct motherland of Buddhism, and China, its new homeland. In this regard the study about “Patriarchs’ Domains” in China by Cao/Fang gives a notable hint at the historical development of those sites according to which they explicitly commemorate Chinese representatives of the Buddhist development and contribute to China’s evolution as the centre of the Buddhist world, promoting the “Eastern World” (dongtu 东土) instead of the vanishing “Western World [India]” (xitu 西土). It mirrors a continuous sinicisation of Buddhism and, as Cao/Fang argue prospectively, prepares the ground for an ongoing strengthening of “[the government’s expectation that] ‘religion adheres to the direction of sinicisation’” (zongjiao jianchi zhongguohua fangxiang 宗教坚持中国化方向).53

By virtue of such perspectives, Buddhist followers and visitors of all kinds are offered a collective memory that is not focused simply on a narrative about the distant past that could be viewed quite independently from the current abbots’ biographical relation to it. This memory also aims for identification with a future development of Chinese Buddhism which has the potential to have a global impact and which the new generation of Buddhist leadership is responsible for. Many questions about the compilation and presentation of historiographical and

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biographical material, as well as the interpretation of Buddhist teachings, the development of an individualised Buddhist agenda, and the emergence of an intra-Buddhist competition are worthy of more in-depth research in the future.

**Appendix 1: Monasteries Named after the Six Patriarchs’ Succession Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)(^{54})</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Navigation Path to the Monastery’s Introduction (M-Introduction) / Leadership’s Introduction (L-Introduction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{54}\) It has happened quite often in China that names of monasteries have changed over the centuries several times. Here are given the historical names which nowadays are in use for the monasteries alternatively to the patriarch’s succession number.

\(^{55}\) While the Shaolin Monastery is usually not called “Chuzu Monastery” (*Chuzusi 初祖寺*), it is in charge of the so-called “Chuzu Hermitage” (*Chuzu’an 初祖庵*) which is situated nearby. No other monastery related to the First Patriarch Bodhidharma seems to make use of the term chuzu in a similar institutional way. It is the privilege of the Shaolin Monastery that is has been recognised as World Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO, the architectural complex of which officially includes “the Kernel Compound, the Chuzu Temple [in my terminology: Chuzu Hermitage], the Pagoda Forest, and the surrounding pagodas”, see UNESCO 2020. So “Chuzu Monastery” is in the following, apart from the other Bodhidharma-related cases, only used in brackets analogously as an artificial synonym for the “Shaolin Monastery”.

\(^{56}\) There is one more monastery that is sometimes called “Erzu Chan Monastery” (*Erzu chan si 二祖禅寺*), since it has been the burial place of the Second Patriarch being situated in a village named after him, the “Village of the Second Patriarch” (*Erzu cun 二祖村*), and including a so-called “Pagoda of the Second Patriarch” (*Erzu ta 二祖塔*), while its original (and current) name is Yuanfu Monastery (*Yuanfu si 元符寺*, see appendix 2).
### IN QUEST OF THE LEGACY OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain <em>(zuting 祖庭)</em></th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Navigation Path to the Monastery’s Introduction <em>(M-Introduction)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Huike 慧可** *(ca. 487–593)* | Sanzu Monastery 三祖寺 *(Monastery of the Third Patriarch)* also called: Ganyuan Chan Monastery 乾元禅寺 | Anhui 安徽 | (short version) [homepage > 寺院简介](http://www.sanzusi.com/index.php/about.html)  
(long version) [homepage > 网站首页 > 三祖文化 > 详细内容](http://www.sanzusi.com/index.php/news_detail/id-319.html)  
[additional source](http://bodhi.takungpao.com/special/mjdhs/) |
| **Daoxin 道信** *(580–651)* | Sizu Monastery 四祖寺 *(Monastery of the Fourth Patriarch)* also called: Youju Chan Monastery 幽居禅寺 | Hubei 湖北 | [homepage > 西山胜境](http://www.hmszs.org/106/)  
[additional source](http://www.hmszs.org/145/2014/03/20140318635.html) |
| **Hongren 弘仁** *(601–674)* | Wuzu Monastery 五祖寺 *(Monastery of the Fifth Patriarch)* also called: Dongshan Chan Monastery 东山禅寺 | Hubei 湖北 | [homepage > 五祖寺简介](http://www.hmwzs.net/html/newslist/list-2-1.html)  
[additional source](http://hmwzs.zrcase.com/) |

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57 In contrary to the other monasteries’ websites, on the Sizu-Monastery’s homepage there is only to be found this short entry as a biographical background summary at the end of the report about the inauguration of master Mingji as new Abbot of the Sizu Monastery which happened at March, 21, 2014. In the same context, there was presented a more elaborate introduction of Mingji at Takungpao 2014, used here as an additional source.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)$^{54}$</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huineng 慧能 (638–713)</td>
<td>Liuizu Monastery 六祖寺 (Monastery of the Sixth Patriarch)</td>
<td>Guangdong 广东</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Navigation Path to the Monastery’s Introduction (M-Introduction) / Leadership’s Introduction (L-Introduction)***

首頁 > 六祖禅寺 > 禅风独领 缘满天下 > 六祖寺简介

see also
首頁 > 六祖寺 > 禅寺简介 > 遇会则藏——四会六祖寺
https://lzs.hrzh.org/2018/04/20/遇会则藏-四会六祖寺/
首頁 > 六祖禅寺 > 祖庭重兴 贤德住世 > 大愿法师简介
https://china-liuzusi.cn/portal.php?mod=view&aid=21

see also
首頁 > 六祖寺 > 大愿法师 > 大愿法师简介 > 大愿法师
https://lzs.hrzh.org/2018/04/20/大愿法师简介
### Appendix 2: All Monasteries Historically Related to the Six Patriarchs, with Their Current Abbots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (祖庭)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reopened in/after</th>
<th>Current Abbot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaozuo Monastery</td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td>2011/2015</td>
<td>Lingshan (1958–); ordained: ?; Since ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dingshan Monastery</td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Zhiguang (1958–); ordained: ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(初祖寺) (“Monastery of the First Patriarch”)</td>
<td>Henan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kongxiang Monastery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henan</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Yongxin (see Shaolin Monastery) Head of Services (jianyuan); Yanci (1969–); ordained: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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58 Not all data could be verified or given in a precise manner, however, I prefer to make that visible by a question mark.
### Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reopened in/after</th>
<th>Current Abbot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erzu Monastery 二祖寺 (Monastery of the Second Patriarch)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Related master(s) according to the <em>L-Introduction</em>: Xuyun 虚云, Haideng 海登</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erzu Monastery 二祖寺 (see footnote 56) (Monastery of the Second Patriarch) Yuanfu Monastery 元符寺</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanzu Monastery 三祖寺 (Monastery of the Third Patriarch) also called: Ganyuan Chan Monastery 乾元禅寺</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Related master(s) according to the <em>L-Introduction</em>: Changming 常明, Rende 仁德, Shenghui 圣辉, Jingkong 净空, Qiling 旗凌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hubei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sizu Monastery 四祖寺 (Monastery of the Fourth Patriarch) also called: Youju Chan Monastery 幽居禅寺</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Related master(s) according to the <em>L-Introduction</em>: Jinghui 净慧</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hubei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangfa Chan Monastery 广法禅寺</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## In Quest of the Legacy of Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reopened in/after</th>
<th>Current Abbot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
— Related master(s) according to the L-Introduction: Changle 常乐 |
— Related master(s) according to the L-Introduction: Tianzhu 天柱, Shengyi 圣一, Songshan 崇山, Qingding 清定, Foyuan, 佛源, rGyal-mtshan Sha-kya 坚赞释迦, Byams-pa-blo-gros 强巴洛珠, Qizhu 祈竹, Jigme Phüntshog 晋美彭措, Long Duo 龙多, Penor 贝诺, Wu Xinru 吴信 |
### Appendix 3: Zuting Status emphasised in the M-Introduction of the Monasteries Named after the Six Patriarchs’ Succession Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)</th>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chuzu Monastery / 初祖寺</td>
<td>“故司空山被称为「中华禅宗第一山」” (“That is why the Sikong-Mountain has been called 'The Mountain No. 1 of the Chinese Chan school’” )</td>
<td>20th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erzu Monastery / 二祖寺</td>
<td>“「禅林谁第一, 此地冠南州」” (“If you ask which is the No. 1 of Chan Assemblies, the champion is here in the Southern country.”)</td>
<td>12th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanzu Monastery / 三祖寺</td>
<td>“北有赵州, 南有黄梅.” (“In the North there is Zhaozhou, in the South there is Huangmei.”)</td>
<td>21st cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sizu Monastery / 四祖寺</td>
<td>“天下祖庭 五祖寺” (“All under the Heaven’s Patriarch’s Domain, the Wuzu-Monastery”)</td>
<td>11th cent. 21st cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuzu Monastery / 五祖寺</td>
<td>“历代祖师的开示, 称之为经的惟有《六祖大师法宝坛经》.” (“Throughout the generations, among all the patriarchs’ revelations there is only the ‘Dharma Treasure’s Platform Sutra of the Grandmaster Sixth Patriarch’ which [roots in the Liuzu-Monastery and] has the rank of a Sutra”)</td>
<td>21st cent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Biographical Structure in the *L-Introductions* of Monasteries Named after the Six Patriarchs’ Succession Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patriarch’s Domain (zuting 祖庭)</th>
<th>Chuzu Monastery / 初祖寺</th>
<th>Erzu Monastery / 二祖寺</th>
<th>Sanzu Monastery / 三祖寺</th>
<th>Sizu Monastery / 四祖寺</th>
<th>Wuzu Monastery / 五祖寺</th>
<th>Liuzu Monastery / 六祖寺</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbot</td>
<td>Yongxin 永信</td>
<td>Shaoyun 绍韵</td>
<td>Kuanrong 宽容</td>
<td>Mingji 明基</td>
<td>Zhengci 正慈</td>
<td>Dayuan 大愿</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Abbot’s Introduction**
  - Hometown: 鄉貫
  - Education: 學歷
  - Experiences: 經歷
  - Current Positions: 現職
  - Past Events: 往事

- **Abbot’s Works**
  - 印象: Impressions
  - 金句: Golden Phrases
  - 履历: Resume
  - 往事: Past Events

- **Main Traces of Events**
  - Gi-Learning – Studying and Spreading the Scriptures
  - Ci-Culture – Travels of the Heart around Culture
  - Ci-Recommendations – The Way of Cultivating the Health
  - Ci-Books – Clear Sounds of Chan Literature
  - Ci-Words – Words of Love and Compassion
  - Ci-Conditions – Compassion leading to Happiness

- **Outing**
  - 出家受戒: Becoming a Monk
  - 诸方参学: Studying with Masters
  - 建寺安僧: Renovating Monasteries
  - 弘法利生: Serving the Sangha; Spreading the Dharma and Benefiting the People
  - 讲经说法: Teaching the Sutras and Praying the Dharma; Writings and Sayings
References

[For the links of the L-Introductions and M-Introductions of the monasteries analysed in section §2, see appendix 1]


Bai, Bing 白冰. 2017. Chanzong jiqi zuting 禅宗及其祖庭 [The Chan School and its Patriarchs’ Domains]. Xi’an: Xi’an dianzi keji daxue chubanshe 西安电子科技大学出版社 [Xidian University Press].


