

**Interpreting Fazun (法尊 1902-1980) in the Context of the Chinese Buddhist Reform
during the Early 20th Century**

by

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Abstract

Fazun was one of the first Chinese monks dedicated to introducing Tibetan Buddhism into China proper during the early 20th century, a time when Chinese Buddhism itself was undergoing a thorough reform. Past academic works examine Fazun primarily through the lens of the dissemination of Tibetan esotericism in China proper at the time, while leaving his thoughts regarding the on-going Chinese Buddhist Reform led by Taixu largely unexamined. This thesis explores Fazun's roles and thoughts in this regard by examining a selection of his writings previously untranslated.

A Note on the Chinese Translation and Abbreviations

In some cases, Fazun uses now obsolete Chinese translation of Tibetan terms in his writings. For instance, he uses “拏墟” instead of “那曲” for a Tibetan town, Nagqu. In those cases, the translation used by Fazun comes first in the bracket, and the modern translation comes in second.

Here is a list of abbreviations used:

Ch. = Chinese

Skt. = Sanskrit

Tib. = Tibetan

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I. Introduction

My foundation is weak. I did not receive any images from meditative concentration or any empowerment from the object of veneration. Moreover, I do not have any deceiving supernatural power. Therefore, I am very indifferent towards esoteric teachings.¹ — Fazun

During the early 20th century, Chinese Buddhism was undergoing an ambitious reform led by Taixu (太虛 1890-1947), while Tibetan esoteric teachings and rituals were rapidly gaining popularity in China proper. Resulting from this combination, a thorough exchange between Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists took place on an unprecedented level in the 1920s and the 1930s. During this period, some accomplished Chinese monks, including Nenghai (能海 1886-1967) and Fazun (法尊 1902-1980), imported both exoteric and esoteric teachings from their Tibetan counterparts. Yet, previous scholars primarily examine Fazun through the lens of the increasingly popular Tibetan esotericism (*zangmi* 藏密) in China proper and in tandem with Nenghai. As a result, Fazun's roles in and views on the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform have been largely overlooked. Therefore, this thesis aims to interpret Fazun by decentralizing Tibetan esotericism and emphasizing his affiliation with the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform. With this approach, this thesis also examines many Fazun's writings in the Chinese Buddhist discourse at the time previously untranslated and unexamined. Overall, this thesis tries to show that Fazun, with a mindset of a Gelugpa-trained scholar, was a critic of Chinese Buddhist traditions, an advocate for reforming Chinese Buddhism, and a defender for Tibetan Buddhism and its esotericism within the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform.

¹ Fazun 1988, 263

II. Historical Background: the Chinese Buddhist Reform

To understand Fazun, it is necessary to first understand the historical background of his time in order to identify his position within the so-called Chinese Buddhist Reform. The origin of the reform can be traced as far back as to the Taiping Rebellion (*taiping tianguo qiyi* 太平天國起義 1851-1864), a rebellion led by Chinese Christian converts which ravaged through southern China governed by the Qing Dynasty (*qingchao* 清朝 1644-1911) at the time. During the rebellion, Chinese Buddhist establishment faced a serious threat to its existence for the first time, as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (*taiping tianguo* 太平天國) exercised various practices to suppress Buddhism while promoting Christianity.² Even though the rebellion was eventually put down by warlords who rose to the occasion due to the ineptness of the now weakened Qing court, the threat to Chinese Buddhism only grew larger in the following decades.

The devastating losses by the Qing Empire to foreign forces throughout the 19th century, including the First and the Second Opium Wars (*diyici yapian zhanzheng* 第一次鴉片戰爭 1840-1842; *dierci yapian zhanzheng* 第二次鴉片戰爭 1856-1860) and the First Sino-Japanese War (*jiawu zhanzheng* 甲午戰爭 1894), created a strong sense of urgency in the Chinese secular intellectual community. In response to these national crisis and difficulties, the secular intellectuals, as Pittman nicely describes, engaged themselves in a reevaluation on an unprecedented scale of the very foundations of the Chinese culture in an attempt to modernize the Chinese society in order to combat formidable external threats and to stabilize the society tormented by economic hardships and constant rebellions.³ Yet, due to political strife within the Qing court, the only thorough reform,

² Pittman, 1

³ Pittman, 13

the Reform of Wuxi (*wuxu bianfa* 戊戌變法 1898), came too late. The reform is also called the Hundred Days' Reform (*bairi weixin* 百日維新), as it only lasted for about a hundred days before its spearheads, Kang Youwei (康有为 1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (梁启超 1873-1929), were both ousted by their political rivals. Despite the failure of the reform, a prominent intellectual and minister in the Qing court, Zhang Zhidong (张之洞 1837-1909), wrote an influential proposal, *Exhortation to Study* (*quanxue pian* 劝学篇), in 1898 to Emperor Guangxu (光緒 1871-1908) which was particularly damning to Chinese Buddhism. In this work, Zhang lays out specific measures for modernization across various sectors of the society. In the third chapter of the second volume, *Establishing Schools* (*she xue* 设学), Zhang advocates for improving secular education by establishing numerous new schools modeled after the western educational system across China proper. While addressing a question regarding the logistics of such an ambitious project, he writes,

What if the number [of construction sites] is also limited? We can transform Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples in to [schools]. Now, the monasteries and temples in All Under Heaven are more than tens of thousands. A metropolis has hundreds of them, a large prefecture has tens of them, and a small prefecture has ten of them. Furthermore, [these monasteries and temples] all have real estate, and all their properties come from donations. If they are turned into schools, houses and farming equipment will all be readily available, so this is the most fitting and easiest strategy at the moment. Moreover, nowadays, Christianity is on the rise while Buddhism and Taoism are on the decline, and their influences cannot last long. ... I propose that we turn seven tenths of a prefecture's monasteries and temples into schools while leaving three tenths of them to accommodate monks and Taoist priests, and that we give seven tenths of their farmlands to the schools while leaving three tenths of them to the monks and the priests.⁴

⁴ Zhang, 17-18

Thus, according to Zhang, the best way to establish new schools on an extensive scale is to convert Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples which already exist in numbers of tens of thousands. Although the reform itself ended in 1898, the local governments continued to practice this measure across China proper through the final days of the Qing Dynasty.

At the turn of the century, the Qing Dynasty was on its last legs and finally gave way to a democratic government after the 1911 Revolution (*xinhai geming* 辛亥革命) led by Sun Yat-sen (孫中山 1866-1925). Yet, instead of stability and prosperity promised by the revolution, the new Republic of China (*zhonghua minguo* 中華民國) faced a series of new crisis: the majority of China proper was still carved up by various warlords; China, as a new nation, was still looked down upon by colonial powers; and the Republican government (*minguo zhengfu* 民國政府) faced the total separation of the frontier regions, including Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet which were previously under indirect control by the Qing court. These difficulties prolonged the sense of urgency among forward-thinking Chinese intellectuals, and stimulated them continue to reevaluate the core of Chinese cultures.

In this context, intellectuals, including Hu Shi (胡适 1891-1962) and Chen Duxiu (陈独秀 1879-1942), started to target traditional Chinese cultures as the culprit of the inability of the Chinese society to raise above the mire. This sentiment gathered much support from a new generation of students educated in universities founded after the revolution, and finally culminated into the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) starting in 1915, which reached its peak in the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong* 五四運動) in 1919. The New Culture Movement called for a total abandonment of the “old culture” and establishment of a “new culture,” and was characterized by “anti-tradition, anti-Confucian, and anti-classics.” Amid these social

movements, Chinese Buddhism was characterized as “superstitious (*mixin* 迷信)” by secular scholars and seen as the embodiment of a backward-thinking culture.⁵ Furthermore, the Chinese Buddhist establishment was under heavy pressure from the Republican government. Propelled by the New Culture Movement, the government started a new series of policies which called for “using monastic properties to establish schools (*miaochan xing xue* 廟產興學)” to further the Movement’s call for improving secular education, a reincarnation of Zhang’s proposals from 1898. Over the years, this measure resulted in demolition or confiscation of thousands of monasteries in China proper and displacement of the majority of the Chinese monastic community.⁶

Labeling Chinese Buddhism as “superstitious” was not all ill-founded or politically motivated. Since the late Qing Dynasty, due to the lack of proper administration and regulation, monasteries in China proper had begun to tonsure people wishing to join the Sangha en masse (*lanshou tuzhong* 濫收徒衆) while paying no attention to their qualities (*suzhi* 素質), including their literacy, faith, willingness to follow monastic laws, etc. Because of the turmoil of the Chinese society at the time, most of these new monks came from poor backgrounds and joined the Sangha for financial reasons. Mostly undereducated or, even, illiterate, they engaged themselves primarily in various ritual activities, especially funeral rituals, for financial gain instead of cultivating their own spirituality.⁷ Furthermore, most monks at the time completely discarded monastic laws laid out in the Vinaya, as an article published in 1923 reads,

Monks nowadays either [pointlessly] recite names of buddhas and mantras, or smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol all day. Many of the topics that they discuss are

⁵ Goossaert and Palmer, 50-55

⁶ Goossaert and Palmer, 58

⁷ Welch, 14

those Buddha Shakyamuni was very unwilling to discuss. Many things that they are happy to do are those Buddha Shakyamuni prohibited.⁸

Granted, it is possible that secular writers at the time could have exaggerated Chinese monks' low qualities to further their accusations against Chinese Buddhism. Yet, considering that this article was published in *The Young Men's Buddhist Monthly* (*fohua xin qingnian* 佛化新青年), a Buddhist magazine, it can be argued that the passage objectively reflects the situation of the Chinese Sangha to some extent. More importantly, it reveals how forward-thinking Chinese Buddhists thought about their own community at the time.

Just as the new national crisis gave rise to new intellectual leaders and movements in the secular society, the new crisis faced by Chinese Buddhism also gave rise to a new generation of Buddhist leaders and reforms. In this context, Taixu, perhaps the most famous Chinese monk of the last century, rose to prominence in the early 1920s and initiated a series of reforms in the Chinese Sangha. In general, he called for modifying Buddhist doctrines according to the modern philosophy and using Buddhism to “elevate people and to improve social conditions.”⁹ As for specific measures, he advocated for increasing regulation of the Chinese Sangha, reforming monastic education, and forming a new Chinese Buddhism encompassing elements of all three major vehicles — Mahāyāna, Theravāda, and Vajrayāna.¹⁰ As one major step to achieve these goals, in 1922, he founded the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute (*wuchang foxueyuan* 武昌佛學院) in Hubei Province (湖北), which attracted many young talents in the Chinese Sangha, including Fazun who was among the first class of the Institute. Later in 1924, he commissioned

⁸ Cai, 22

⁹ Welch, 264

¹⁰ Tuttle 2005, 27

his closest disciple, Dayong (大勇 1893-1929), to establish the Buddhist Institute for the Study of Tibetan Language (*fojiao zangwen xueyuan* 佛教藏文學院) in Beijing to train more scholars to aid his project of importing Tibetan Buddhist teachings to create a new Chinese Buddhism. Then, in 1925, having admitted both Fazun and Nenghai, Dayong reorganized the Institute into the Group of Studying Dharma in Tibet (*liuzang xuefa tuan* 留藏學法團) consisting of thirty members, and the Group departed for Tibet with Taixu's support later that year.¹¹ At the same time, prompted by the difficulties faced by Chinese Buddhism and Taixu's call for reform, multiple Buddhist magazines were also set up to give Buddhists channels to voice their own opinions, including *The Sound of Tides* (*hai chao yin* 海潮音) set up by Taixu in 1920. As a result, a vibrant discourse among Chinese Buddhists also emerged, in which both monastic and lay Buddhists, including Fazun, voiced their own opinions and debated with each other on various Buddhism-related topics.¹²

It is important to note another important development in the Chinese Buddhist world during the 1920s, the growing influence of Tibetan esoteric teachings and rituals in China proper, the embryo of the following Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchanges. At the time, Bai Puren (白普仁 1870-1927) was the one of the first Tibetan lamas to be widely known among the Chinese general public for his efficacious rituals. In 1914, in front of a huge Chinese audience, he performed a ritual to protect Beijing from a flood.¹³ Later on, inspired by a Tang Dynasty (*tangchao* 唐朝 618-907CE) quasi-esoteric text called the *Sutra of Golden Light* (*jin guang ming jing* 金光明經), he began to perform rituals to "save and protect the country (*jiu hu guo* 救護國)" in his native region, Rehe

¹¹ Mei 1998, 260

¹² Chen and Deng ,23

¹³ Tuttle 2005,79

(熱河). In early 1925, Duan Qirui (段祺瑞 1865-1936), the titular head of the Beiyang government (*beiyang zhengfu* 北洋政府) at the time, sponsored Bai to perform a *Golden Light Dharma Ritual* at Temple Yonghe (雍和宮) in Beijing to turn the political situation of Northern China in his favor.¹⁴ Later, Duan also invited the Ninth Panchen Lama (Ch. *dijiu shi banchan e er de ni* 第九世班禪額爾德尼; Tib. *thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma* 1883-1937) to visit Beijing in 1925, who was exiled from central Tibet due to the conflict with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (Ch. *di shisan shi dalai lama* 第十三世達賴喇嘛; Tib. *thub bstan rgya mtsho* 1876-1933). After arriving in Beijing, the Panchen Lama lectured at the aforementioned Buddhist Institute for the Study of Tibetan Language in early 1925. Later, he visited Jiangsu (江蘇) and Zhejiang (浙江) provinces to teach heart mantras (*xin jing* 心經) to Chinese audiences in Hangzhou (杭州) and Shanghai (上海) respectively. On this tour, he gained huge popularity among Chinese Buddhists and built a religious following oriented towards Tibetan esotericism.¹⁵

Despite the fact that the Chinese secular intellectuals were rather hostile to these “superstitious” esoteric teachings and rituals, the Republican government acted otherwise. As noted above, the new Republic of China was facing the danger of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia separating into totally independent states. Thus, the Republican government saw the influx of Tibetan Buddhist masters as an opportunity to retain some influence on Tibet and Mongolia and to bridge the Chinese society with these frontier regions on a cultural level.¹⁶ Hence, the government officials were keen to make a good impression on the Tibetan masters by sponsoring

¹⁴ Temple Yonghe, a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Beijing, is one of the most prestigious religious sites in China proper. Formerly as the residence of Qing Prince Yinzhen (later Emperor Yongzheng), it was converted into a monastery by Qing Emperor Qianlong in 1744.

¹⁵ Tuttle 2005, 90

¹⁶ Tuttle 2005, 12

esoteric rituals and supporting their activities in China proper. In this context, Taixu saw the interests in Tibetan esoteric teachings as an opportunity with which he, as a representative of Chinese Buddhism, could improve the relation with the Republican government. Thus, the 1920s saw extensive interactions among the Republican officials, Tibetan masters, and Taixu. In turn, this improved relationship with officials helped Taixu to achieve his goal of renovating Chinese Buddhist monastic education. In fact, it was only possible for Taixu to establish the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute with the support from local officials in the first place.¹⁷ Furthermore, in this context, Taixu took interests in the Gelugpa School (Ch. *gelu pai* 格鲁派; Tib. *dge lugs*) of Tibetan Buddhism, because its rich repertoire of esotericism and emphasis on precepts fit nicely with his vision for a new Chinese Buddhism.

To summarize, during the early 20th century, Chinese Buddhism was facing tremendous political and social difficulties to the extent that the very existence of the Chinese Buddhist establishment was threatened. At the same time, esoteric teachings and rituals were gathering popularity and momentum in China proper. In this context, Taixu advocated for thoroughly reforming Chinese Buddhism while using esoteric Buddhism as a leverage in dealing with the Republican government to gather support for his larger enterprise, especially for reforming monastic education. At the same time, he also saw Tibetan Buddhism as a source of valuable teachings to aide his project of renewing Chinese Buddhism. Amid all these developments, Fazun came to the scene and became Taixu's disciple.

¹⁷ Tuttle 2005, 13

III. Secondary Sources Review and a New Approach

Having introduced the historical background within which Fazun was situated, it is now fitting to examine the current academic understanding of and approach to him. While Taixu's reform and its effect have been studied extensively by scholars in the last five decades, one significant part of Taixu's reform, promoting Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchanges, has only captured the scholarly attention in the last decade.¹⁸ Similarly, figures like Fazun and Nenghai, who were involved heavily in this Sino-Tibetan exchange at the time, have only attracted scholarly attention recently.

Here, I shall first briefly introduce a few notable works on the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange and the two masters' careers during the early 20th century. In his 2005 book, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, Gray Tuttle examines the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange from a political and historical perspective, and covers Fazun and Nenghai in the 3rd Chapter. Tuttle also briefly examines the legacies of the two masters in his 2006 article, "Tibetan Buddhism at Ri bo rtse lnga/Wutai shan in Modern Times." Another scholar, Ester Bianchi, has also written a couple of articles on this subject, one dedicated to the spreading of Tibetan Buddhist esoteric teachings and rituals in China proper and one dedicated to Nenghai.¹⁹ In these works, both Tuttle and Bianchi have touched on various aspects of Fazun's career, and their approach is to see Fazun primarily in the context of the growing influence of Tibetan esotericism in China proper and in tandem with Nenghai. However, as this section shall show, this approach does not do full justice to Fazun who primarily engages himself in the broader Chinese Buddhist reform and differs

¹⁸ Notable works on Taixu's reform in general include *The Buddhist Revival in China* written by Holmes Welch in 1968, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism* written by Don Alvin Pittman in 2001, etc.

¹⁹ The two articles are "The Tantric Rebirth Movement in Modern China: Esoteric Buddhism Re-Vivified by the Japanese Tibetan Traditions" written in 2004 and "The 'Chinese Lama' Nenghai (1886-1967): Doctrinal Tradition and Teaching Strategies of a Gelugpa Master in Republican China" written in 2009.

from his colleague in various ways. That is, the current scholarly approach to study Fazun overemphasizes his connection with esoteric Buddhism in the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange at the time while downplaying his role in the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform.

To further understand the current scholarly interpretation of Fazun, it is useful to first examine the common ground shared by Tuttle and Bianchi in their analysis of Sino-Tibetan exchanges at the time. First, they both agree that promoting esoteric Buddhism plays a major part in the Chinese Buddhist Reform led by Taixu. In his book, Tuttle examines Taixu's close relationship with several Tibetan tantric masters, how Taixu uses esotericism as a leverage in his engagement with secular officials, and how he urges his disciples to import esoteric teachings from Japan and Tibet. In a similar vein, Bianchi constructs the scheme of "Tantric Rebirth" in her 2004 article, "The Tantric Rebirth Movement in Modern China: Esoteric Buddhism Re-Vivified by the Japanese and Tibetan Traditions," by characterizing the importation of esoteric Buddhism as an integral part of Taixu's reform efforts. Second, both scholars agree that both Fazun and Nenghai played significant roles in spreading Tibetan Buddhism, especially teachings of the Gelugpa School, in China proper after their studies in Tibet.²⁰ In his book, Tuttle shows that Fazun lays the foundation of spreading Tibetan Buddhist teachings by translating key Tibetan Buddhist texts and teaching Tibetan language to a new generation of Chinese monks. He also shows how Nenghai inherits and spreads an authentic Tibetan Buddhist tantric lineage from his Tibetan master, Khangsar Rinpoche (Ch. *kang sa renboqie* 康薩仁波切 ; Tib. *khang sa rin po che* 1888-1941), to his Chinese disciples. Similarly, Bianchi also notes the respective roles played by the two masters. Additionally, she offers a more in-depth examination of Nenghai's esoteric lineage in her article,

²⁰ Founded by Tsongkhapa in the 13th century C.E, the Gelugpa school has been the largest sect of Tibetan Buddhism ever since the 17th century until today, eclipsing schools including Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu. Both Fazun and Nenghai were trained in the Gelugpa school during their stay in Tibet in the 1930s.

“The ‘Chinese Lama’ Nenghai (1886-1967): Doctrinal Tradition and Teaching Strategies of a Gelugpa Master in Republican China.” Thus, both scholars see Fazun and Nenghai as the primary facilitators of spreading Tibetan Buddhism in China proper at the time. Lastly, both Tuttle and Bianchi agree that the growing popularity of esoteric Buddhism at the time influenced Fazun and Nenghai to the extent that they decided to study in Tibet. Tuttle writes in his book,

Thus, prior to going to Tibet, Fazun said that his interests differed from those of teacher Dayong. He was *not only attracted to the esoteric tradition of Tibet* but also wanted to seek valuable additions to exoteric Chinese Buddhism teachings, such as those dedicated to the monastic precepts.²¹

Similarly, Bianchi writes in her 2004 article,

The activities of these Tibetan and Mongolian masters, within the context of the reforms taking place among Chinese Buddhist circles, facilitated the exodus of many Chinese monks and laymen towards the West. The pioneers of this movement are Dayong, Fazun, and Nenghai, in the predominant *dGe lugs* tradition, and Fahai for the *rNying ma* tradition.²²

Regarding this quote, it should be made clear that the “Tibetan and Mongolian masters” mentioned here mainly engaged themselves in performing Tibetan Buddhist esoteric rituals for the Chinese lay community at the time.²³ Thus, both scholars heavily emphasize the effects that increasingly popular Tibetan esotericism in China proper had on Fazun.

Now, while I agree with the first and the second points, I cannot accept the third common ground shared by the two scholars. That is, I agree that promoting esoteric Buddhism plays a major part in the Chinese Buddhist Reform, and that both Fazun and Nenghai are foundational in

²¹ Tuttle 2005, 98, emphasis added.

²² Bianchi 2004, 43

²³ See more in Chapter 3 of Tuttle 2005

spreading Tibetan Buddhism in China proper after their studies in Tibet. Yet, I disagree with the argument that Fazun's motivation to study in Tibet was in any way affected by an interest in esotericism. In fact, Fazun held a begrudging feeling against esoteric Buddhism prior to his education in Tibet, as he writes in his autobiography,

During the second year there (Taixu's Buddhist Institute in Wuchang), Master Dayong returned to Wuchang [after studying esoteric Buddhism in Japan] to transmit the teachings of the Eighteen Paths. Most [Chinese] Buddhists from everywhere, either monastic or lay, all hold esoteric Buddhist teachings as the only noble teaching [at the time]. I served Master Yong as an attendant for several days and studied the Eighteen Paths and some tantric offerings too. Although I did not receive the two tantric empowerments brought back from Japan [by Dayong], I felt that the flavor of esoteric teachings is only that rich. ... Some of my friends even said that I am overly indifferent towards esoteric Buddhism, and I just sneered at them.²⁴

There are a couple of revelations about Fazun's attitude towards esoteric Buddhism worth noting in this quote. First, Fazun does not approve of the overwhelming interests in esoteric teachings and rituals from the Chinese Buddhist community at the time. Second, towards the end of the quote, he shows an attitude of indifference towards esotericism and a slight contempt towards those who are interested in them and urge him to take part in them. Thus, it is inappropriate to attribute Fazun's decision to study in Tibet to the raising popularity of Tibetan esotericism among his peers. Surely, if Fazun were annoyed by the blind interests in esoteric teachings and rituals among Chinese Buddhists and were to decide to study in Tibet to get to the root of its esoteric teachings, it could be said that "the Tantric Rebirth Movement" influenced Fazun to some extent prior to his commitment to Tibetan Buddhism. However, as seen in Fazun's writings, he was mostly

²⁴ Fazun 1988, 264

indifferent towards esotericism, so one can hardly argue that it influenced Fazun to the extent that he decided to study Tibetan Buddhism. Granted, Tuttle characterizes the motivation for Fazun and Nenghai as searching for “authentic and potent teachings,” as he writes,

What motivated these monks to learn Tibetan, travel and live in a foreign land for years, and study and translate Tibetan Buddhist texts? According to their biographies, both Nenghai and Fazun embraced Tibetan Buddhism as a source of authentic and potent teachings in order to redress perceived inadequacies of Chinese Buddhism.²⁵

Yet, the sentence cited earlier, “[Fazun] was *not only attracted to the esoteric tradition of Tibet...*” still shows that Tuttle does not do justice to Fazun in the light of his autobiography quoted here. The same thing can be said in regards with Bianchi’s approach to Fazun too. Bianchi writes in her 2009 article,

The two principal Chinese masters within the “Movement of Tantric Rebirth” in modern China were the monks Nenghai and Fazun, both representatives of the Gelugpa tradition and both authors of dozens of works and translations.²⁶

Granted, her framework aptly interprets the career of Nenghai, who received the full tantric transmission of the “Supreme Vajrayāna lineage of Yamāntaka-Vajrabhairava (*daweide wushang micheng fatong* 大威德無上密乘法統)” from Khangsar Rinpoche and devoted his later career into transmitting the lineage to his Chinese disciples. However, it is not well suited to interpret the career of Fazun, who, in Bianchi’s own words, “focused on the teaching and translation of exoteric works.”²⁷

²⁵ Tuttle 2005, 98

²⁶ Bianchi 2009, 295

²⁷ Bianchi 2009, 295

Tuttle's and Bianchi's treatment of Fazun shows a couple of shared implicit assumptions in the approaches used in their studies. First, as their attempts to associate Fazun with the spreading of Tibetan esotericism in China proper show, they apparently assume that it should be the focal point in studying Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchanges at the time. Second, Tuttle and Bianchi take for granted that Fazun should always be studied in tandem with his esotericism-loving peer, Nenghai. In a way, the first assumption inevitable leads to the second. That is, having Tibetan esotericism at the center of the research necessarily makes the project revolving around Nenghai who is very esoteric-minded. In this way, Fazun is inevitably deemphasized and misunderstood in a Nenghai-dominated narrative. To be clear, I am not arguing that the first assumption is detrimental to our understanding of Fazun. In fact, it is natural to examine his involvement with Tibetan esotericism because of its popularity in China proper and its part in Taixu's reform at the time. Yet, combining the first and the second assumptions gives rise to an unwanted effect when studying Fazun, leading us to see him primarily through the narrow lens of esotericism while overemphasizing his similarity with Nenghai. Therefore, this thesis shall resituate Fazun in the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform in which he actively participated under Taixu's lead, in order to provide a more holistic examination of his role and thoughts at the time.

IV. Fazun's Monastic Education

The last section provides an overview of the current academic discourse regarding Fazun, and proposes an alternative approach to study him. This section shall provide a detailed account of Fazun's monastic education during the 1920s and the 1930s in order to illustrate how his thoughts and opinions were formulated before becoming a fully-fledged Buddhist scholar and entering the on-going Chinese Buddhist discourse. Overall, Fazun's monastic education can be divided into two stages: the first stage spans from 1920 to 1925 during which he received teachings from Chinese Buddhist masters; the second stage spans from 1925 to 1933 during which he studied with Tibetan Buddhist masters, primarily those from the Gelugpa School.

a. Fazun's Education in China Proper

Fazun was born in a family living in Shen prefecture (深縣) of Hebei province (河北) in 1902, and was given the name, Wen Genggong (溫庚公). Due to the family's financial difficulty, he dropped out of his elementary school after the third grade. In 1919, to alleviate his family's financial burden, Wen went to Baoding (保定) and became a disciple of a shoemaker. Yet, his health quickly deteriorated thereafter to the extent that he had to end his apprenticeship in the middle of 1920. Through all these worldly hardships, Wen soon developed a weariness of the world (*yanshi* 厭世) which prompted him go to Mt. Wutai (五臺山) and to become a renunciant in the same year.²⁸ There, he was tonsured by Master Juexiang (覺祥 ?-?) of Yuhuang Temple (玉皇廟), and was given the dharma name, Miaogui (妙貴), and the courtesy name, Fazun. During the fall of 1920, one of Taixu's closest disciples, Dayong passed by the Temple. Thereupon, Fazun

²⁸ Fazun 1988, 243

became acquainted with and requested teachings from Dayong. Happily accepting the request, Dayong lectured on *The Sutra on the Eight Kinds of Attentiveness of Great Persons* (*ba da ren jue jing* 八大人覺經) and *The Sutra on the Bequeathed Teachings of the Buddha* (*fo yijiao jing* 佛遺教經) in the following days. This is the first turning point of Fazun's life as a monk. First, his acquaintance with Dayong makes it possible for him to meet and become a disciple of Taixu in the following years. Second, Dayong made him aware of the range of possibilities of being a monk at the time, as he writes,

[At the time,] I often heard Master Yong talking about the stories of accomplished monks in the past. From that, I started to understand that a monk not only can aspire to be reborn in a pure land and to attain nirvana, but also can, in this samsara, translate scriptures and uphold the true teachings. There are many things that should be done [by a monk].²⁹

As seen in this passage, Dayong played a significant role in guiding Fazun to formulate his own aspiration and identity during the early days of his monkhood. As a result, Fazun began to aspire to become a successful Buddhist scholar by translating Buddhist literatures just like many his predecessors, a wish that he maintained throughout his life.

In the next year, Fazun transferred to a nearby monastery, Bishan Monastery (碧山寺), where he continued to study Chinese Buddhist scriptures with Dayong. In the fall of 1921, Fazun followed Dayong to Beijing where Taixu was lecturing on *The Lotus Sutra* (*fahua jing* 法華經 or *miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) at Guangji Monastery (廣濟寺) at the request of the city's lay community. At this occasion, Fazun met Taixu for the first time. Taixu immediately started to like this young prospective monk eager for teachings and guidance to the extent that he invited Fazun

²⁹ Fazun 1988, 263

to enroll into the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute which was about to open its door.³⁰ In the winter of the same year, Fazun became fully ordained during a ceremony hosted by Master Daojie (道階法師 ?-?) at Fayuan Monastery (法源寺) in Beijing. At the beginning of 1922, Fazun followed Master Daojie to Mt. Baohua (寶華山) in Nanjing (南京) where he studied the taxonomy (*pan jiao* 判教) of the Tiantai School (天台宗). Later that year, Fazun traveled from Nanjing to Wuchang, as Taixu's institute officially opened. There, Fazun first received teachings on the general history of Buddhism, the Abhidharma literatures, and Buddhist logic (Ch. *yinming* 因明; Skt. *hetuvidyā* ; Tib. *gtan tshigs kyi rig pa*). Then, he went on to study Mahāyāna literatures including *The Noble Sutra of the Explanation of the Profound Secrets* (Ch. *jie shen mi jing* 解深密經; Skt. *saṃdhanirmocana-sūtra*), *Saptaśatikā's Teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom* (Ch. *wenshu bore* 文殊般若 or *wenshushili suoshuo mohe bore boluomi jing* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若波羅蜜經; Skt. *saptaśatikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), and *The Discourse on the Perfection of Consciousness-only* (Ch. *cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論; Skt. *viññaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra*). During his stay, Fazun also had the first taste of Buddhist esoteric teachings, as he studied *The Outline of Esoteric Teachings* (Ch. *mizong gang yao* 密宗綱要) composed by a Japanese monk, Raifu Gonda (Ch. 權田雷斧 1847-1934), in 1920 and translated into Chinese in 1921. In 1923, after Dayong returned to Wuchang from Japan where he spent two years studying Japanese Buddhist esoteric teachings, Fazun got a glimpse into the eastern esoteric teachings (*dongmi* 東密) after receiving teachings on the Eighteen Stages (*shiba dao* 十八道 or *shiba dao cidi* 十八道次第) from Dayong.

³⁰ As mentioned above, the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute officially opened its door in 1922. Thus, although the Institute was not established yet, it was already in conception at the time when Fazun and Taixu met for the first time.

After graduating from the Institute in 1924, Fazun joined Dayong's Buddhist Institute for the Study of Tibetan Language in Beijing where he spent one year studying the Tibetan language. During this year, Fazun also attended two series of lectures held by Taixu in Beijing, one on an esoteric text, *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra for Humane Kings Protecting Their Countries* (Ch. *renwang huguo jing* 仁王護國經 or *renwang huguo bore boluomi jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜經; Skt. *karunika-rāja prajñāpāramitā sūtra*), and another one on a Yogācāra text, *Mahāyānasamgraha* (*she dacheng lun* 攝大乘論). In the summer of 1925, together with Dayong and his classmates, Fazun began his journey to Tibet.

Thus, during his studies with Chinese Buddhist masters, Fazun was exposed to both exoteric and esoteric teachings. As for the exoteric teachings, he started with those of the Tiantai School, mainly its taxonomy. Then, he received a solid training at Taixu's institute in terms of the fundamentals needed to become a competent Buddhist scholar. As for the esoteric teachings, Fazun was mostly exposed to those preserved in Japanese Buddhism thanks to Dayong's efforts. Yet, as noted in the section of "Historical Background: the Chinese Buddhist Reform," it should also be pointed out that Fazun was living during a time when the Tibetan esoteric teachings and rituals were gaining tremendous popularity among the Chinese general public and support from Chinese government officials. Therefore, Tibetan esotericism and Tibetan Buddhism in general were also in his purview at the time. In fact, Fazun was well aware of the overwhelming interests in Tibetan esotericism around him, as he writes when reflecting on his years in Wuhan, "[Chinese] Buddhists from everywhere, either monastic or lay, all hold esoteric Buddhist teachings as the only noble

teaching.”³¹ That been said, there is no evidence indicating that Fazun attended any Tibetan esoteric rituals or received any formal transmission during this time period.

Furthermore, having studied with Taixu for two years, Fazun developed a strong respect for and a feeling of indebtedness to his teacher. Fazun’s recollection about his decision to come back to China proper from Tibet is a prime example, as he writes in an article titled “The Experience of My Journey into Tibet (*wo ruzang de jingguo* 我入藏的經過),”

In 1933, I received several letters from Master Xu, urging me to return immediately to administrate the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute. [However,] in my own opinion, I find what I have learned is not sufficient, and there are still many teachings to be learned. ... Yet, even though I did not want to return, I still had to for three reasons. First, Master Xu is the only mentor respected by me in China proper. My understanding of Chinese Buddhism all came from his instructions. He is a true bodhisattva, reforming the sangha, teaching students, reviving Buddhism, and upholding the true teachings. In the last twenty years, for the sake of upholding the true teachings and establishing institutes, it is unknown how many difficulties he has suffered and how many efforts he has made. Now, having established the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute, he asked me to teach Tibetan language. If I were to disobey his order, would it not be a huge blow for him? How can I not obey him based on the mentality of repaying [my debt to him]?³²

Thus, this quote clearly shows the deeply felt sense of respect and indebtedness that Fazun had towards Taixu at the time. Furthermore, it is important to note that, when Fazun recollects Taixu’s deeds in this quote, he does not mention Taixu’s efforts to promote esoteric teachings. Instead,

³¹ Fazun 1988, 264

³² Fazun 1988, 266

Fazun only mentions “reforming the sangha, teaching students, reviving Buddhism, and upholding the true teachings.” This choice first shows Fazun’s indifferent attitude towards esoteric teachings as discussed earlier. Second, it shows that Fazun primarily sees Taixu as a Chinese Buddhist reformer striving to overhaul the monastic system and to improve monastic education rather than a propagator for esoteric teachings.

Fazun’s view of Taixu as a reformer and his interests in the broader Chinese Buddhist reform can be further seen in his eulogy for Taixu written in 1947, *Briefly Discussing Master Taixu’s Dearest Wish and Great Accomplishment* (*lueshu taixu dashi zhi beiyuan jiqi weiye* 略述太虛大師之悲願及其偉業). Fazun starts this eulogy by recollecting his disciple-teacher relationship with Taixu. Then, he groups Taixu’s accomplishment into six areas, “master’s movement to save Buddhism, reforming the Sangha, establishing monastic educational institutes, participating in Buddhism of the world, organizing Buddhist followings, establishing schools for bodhisattvas.” At the end, Fazun voices his opinions regarding preserving Taixu’s legacies, as he writes,

Regarding how to inherit and continue the master’s legacies, considering that the master established too many institutions to improve the Chinese Buddhist establishments, it is [logistically and financially] impossible to preserve them all. Therefore, we should examine them closely and choose the important ones. Most importantly, regarding the institutions for monastic education, we should preserve the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute and the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute in order to cultivate young talents to revive Chinese Buddhism.³³

Once again, Fazun does not mention Taixu’s efforts to promote esoteric teachings. Instead, he remembers Taixu as a figure reforming Chinese Buddhism on a larger scale. Furthermore, as the

³³ Fazun 1990

quote shows, Fazun aligns himself with Taixu's wish to improve the monastic education. That is, Fazun sees reforming monastic education as the biggest accomplishment of Taixu, and intends to inherit this legacy as a disciple. Overall, these examples show a deep connection between Fazun and Taixu and a shared vision for Chinese Buddhism. Furthermore, they indicate that Fazun sees himself as a participant in the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform at the time instead of an actor dictated by the Tantric Rebirth Movement. Thus, it is important to decentralize esotericism and to emphasize other components of the Chinese Buddhist Reform in studying Fazun.

Moreover, Fazun clearly values the education received in Wuhan and the bond formed with Taixu thanks to Dayong. In fact, he values them so much that he extends the feeling of indebtedness to Dayong, as he writes at the beginning of the article, "The Experience of My Journey into Tibet,"

Ever since I went to Mt. Wutai and got close to Master Yong, Master Yong saw me as his own tonsured disciple, taking care of me and helping me out all the time. After coming back from Japan, when he wanted to isolate himself for meditation on Mount Lu, the first candidate for servant he chose was me. When he changed his plan in Beiping, my personal plan surely would change, so he sent me a letter to invite me to Beiping and to discuss in person. When I was studying Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra in Wuchang, I was already deeply admiring the virtuous qualities of pioneers including Kumārajīva, Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing. Thus, when I received the letter [inviting me to] go to Tibet with Master Yong, I was surely very happy and only afraid of losing the opportunity.³⁴

Thus, this quote shows that Fazun respects Dayong so much that he was willing to entrust his future to Dayong. Either being a humble servant in isolated meditation or a follower on an arduous

³⁴ Fazun 1988, 264

and dangerous trip, Fazun was ready to devote himself to Dayong upon request. This level of commitment reflects how much Fazun valued the tremendous support from Dayong including leading him into the world of Buddhist texts on Mount Wutai and introducing him to Taixu in Beijing. Furthermore, this passage shows that Fazun did not change but only deepened his original aspiration after studying with Taixu in Wuchang. As discussed above, after learning briefly with Dayong on Mt. Wutai, Fazun started to aspire to become a successful Buddhist translator. Here, reflecting on the time immediately after his graduation of the Wuchang Institute, he once again brings up the same aspiration deepened after studying Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra teachings at the Institute by explicitly naming four great translators whom he admires and seeks to emulate — Kumārajīva (Ch. 鸠摩罗什; Skt. *kumārajīva* 344-413), Faxian (法显 377-422), Xuanzang (玄奘 602-664), and Yijing (义净 635-713). At last, this quote shows how Fazun comes to the decision to study Tibetan Buddhism. That is, his ever-deepening aspiration to become a great Buddhist translator is his main motivation. At the same time, after receiving valuable education in Wuchang made possible by Dayong, Fazun deepens his devotion to Dayong on a personal level out of gratitude. Facilitated by this selfless devotion and coinciding with Dayong’s eventual plan to study Tibetan Buddhism under Taixu’s wish to import Tibetan esotericism, Fazun’s motivation eventually matures into his decision to follow Dayong to Tibet for its Buddhist teachings.

Thus, my interpretation of Fazun’s motivation differs Tuttle’s interpretation. As discussed in the previous section, Tuttle argues that Fazun’s decision to study Tibetan Buddhism results from being attracted to the Tibetan esoteric teachings and desiring to seek additions to exoteric Chinese Buddhist teachings. However, as shown in the last section, Fazun was indifferent towards esoteric teachings at the time. Moreover, as seen in this section, Fazun’s decision resulted from his personal bond with Dayong and his commitment to become an accomplished translator. Granted, Fazun did

translate some important Tibetan esoteric texts later in his career. Yet, from the primary sources presented here, it is safe to conclude that being attracted to esoteric Buddhism did not factor into Fazun's initial decision to go to Tibet.

b. Fazun's Education in Tibet

After traveling for half of a year, Fazun's group finally arrived in Jiading (嘉定), Sichuan (四川) in the fall of 1925.³⁵ There, he spent another three months at Wuyou Monastery (烏尤寺) making the final preparation for the trip by making a copy of a Chinese-Tibetan dictionary published during the reign of Qianlong Emperor (乾隆 1711-1799), called *The Unity of Four Bodies* (*siti hebi* 四體合璧).³⁶ Then, together with the group, Fazun spent one more year in Kangding (Ch. 打箭爐 or 康定; Tib. *tar mto*) in eastern Tibet where he continued to study Tibetan language with local tutors. At the same time, he received his first Tibetan Buddhist teachings from Master Ciyuan (慈願大師 ?-?), a local Gelugpa master based on the nearby Mt. Paoma (跑馬山). The master first lectured on two Tibetan Buddhist texts on precepts, *The Explanation of the Bhikṣu Precepts* (Ch. *bichu jie shi* 苾芻戒釋; Tib. *dge slong gyi bslab bye*) and *The Explanation of the Bodhisattva Precepts* (Ch. *pusa jie shi* 菩薩戒釋 or *pusa jie pin shi lun* 菩薩戒品釋論; Tib. *byang chub gzhung lam zhes bya ba*), both written by the founder of the Gelugpa School, Je Tsongkhapa (Ch. 宗喀巴; Tib. *tsong kha pa* 1357-1419). He also lectured on *The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path* (Ch. *puti dao cidilue lun* 菩提道次第略論; Tib. *lam rim bsdus don*), a short version

³⁵ Jiading is the name of the of the prefecture at the time, and its governing area roughly equates to today's Leshan (乐山).

³⁶ As a whole, *The Unity of Four Bodies* is a dictionary consisting of thirty-two volumes and covering Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian, and Tibetan. For practical purposes, Fazun only copied the Chinese-Tibetan section of the dictionary.

of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* (Ch. *puti dao cidì guang lun* 菩提道次第廣論; Tib. *lam rim chen mo*) which is the most famous work among the Stages of the Path literature (Ch. *ci di* 次第 ; Tib. *lam rim*) written by Tsongkhapa.³⁷ Upon receiving the teachings, Fazun immediately developed a deep interest in and a strong fondness of Tibetan Buddhism and, more specifically, the Gelugpa teachings. In “The Experience of My Journey into Tibet,” he describes the two texts on precepts as “something which cannot be found in China proper” and *The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path* as an “inconceivable treasured gem.”³⁸

In the spring of 1927, while Dayong led the rest of the group with the protection offered by local Chinese officials, Fazun joined a group of Tibetan merchants and started traveling westwards into Tibet through Garze (Ch. 甘孜; Tib. *garze*). However, due to the political tension between China and Tibet at the time, Dayong’s grand entourage startled the Tibetan government. Therefore, following orders from Lhasa (Ch. 拉薩; Tib. *lhasa*), Tibetan officials in Garze forbid the group from going any further. As a result, Fazun reunited with the group, and had to stay in Lithang (Ch. 理塘; Tib. *li thang*) for three years. There, he continued to study Tibetan Buddhism at a Gelugpa monastery called Drakkar Monastery (Ch. 札噶寺; Tib. *brag dkar dgon*) where he received teachings on the Tibetan version of *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (Ch. *xianguan zhuangyan lun* 現觀莊嚴論; Skt. *abhisamayālamkāra-sāstra*; Tib. *mngon rtog rgyan*) and another Je Tsongkhapa’s work, *The Essence of the Good Explanations* (Ch. *bian liaobuliaoyi shanshuo zang lun* 辨了不了義善說藏論; Tib. *rang nges legs bshad snying po*). Guided by the masters at

³⁷ Dreyfus, 21

³⁸ Fazun 1988, 269

the monastery, Fazun also studied the insight meditation (Ch. *pi bo she na* 毗钵舍那; Skt. *vipaśyanā*; Tib. *lhag mthong*) section of the full version of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. At the same time, he also started his translating career by making a Chinese translation of Tsongkhapa's *Praise of Dependent Arising* (Ch. *yuan qi zan* 緣起贊 or *yuan qi zan wushiba song* 緣起贊五十八頌; Tib. *rten 'brel bstod pa*) which he later published in Taixu's magazine, *The Sound of Tides*. Furthermore, in 1928, Fazun became acquainted with a famous Gelugpa teacher, Amdo Geshe (Ch. 安东格西; Tib. *a mdo dge bshes* 1888-1936), who was traveling through Lithang on his way to Chamdo (Ch. 昌都; Tib. *chab mdo*).³⁹ After some pleasant exchanges, the two soon established a master-disciple relationship which greatly influenced and benefited Fazun in the following years.

Just as everything appeared to be going well for Fazun, disaster struck for the group, as Dayong, Fazun's long-time teacher and companion, passed away in Lithang in the summer of 1929. Yet, instead of being devastated, Fazun became even more determined to study Tibetan Buddhism in order to carry out the will of Dayong who told him to follow Amdo Geshe and to bring the teachings of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* back to China.⁴⁰ In the following two years, the group traveled back and forth between Sichuan and eastern Tibet for the Dayong's funeral. After finally finishing the funeral process in the spring of 1931, the group disbanded, and Fazun traveled westwards to Chamdo to regroup with Amdo Geshe.⁴¹ In the

³⁹ Amdo Geshe is the courtesy name of the master used in Fazun's writings. His full name is Jampel Rolwai Lodro (*jam dpal rol ba'i blo gros*).

⁴⁰ Fazun 1990

⁴¹ The dates of events between 1929 and 1931 are controversial. In one account, Fazun says that he traveled to Chamdo in the spring of 1930. (Fazun 1988, 246) However, in another account, he says that he arrived in Chamdo in the spring of 1931. (Fazun 1988, 271). Here, I am following the second account for two reasons. First, in the first account, Fazun says himself that he cannot remember clearly regarding the dates of these events. Second, the second account appears

following months, Fazun received his first set of Tibetan esoteric teachings as Amdo Geshe gave him forty sets of esoteric empowerments (Ch. *guanding* 灌頂; Tib. *wang*). Led and endorsed by Amdo Geshe, Fazun departed for Lhasa in August. After passing through Nagqu (Ch. 拏墟 or 那曲; Tib. *nag chu*), they turned south and arrived in Lhasa in October.

Upon arriving in Lhasa, Fazun enrolled into Drepung Monastery (Ch. 哲蚌寺; Tib. *bras spungs dgon pa*) to obtain a legal identity. Yet, for most of the time in the following years, he still stayed and studied with Amdo Geshe. In 1932, Fazun devoted himself to studying Tibetan Buddhist exoteric teachings including Buddhist logic and the entirety of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. In 1933, he transitioned to study Tibetan esoteric texts including *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Esoteric Path* (Ch. *mizong dao cidi guanglun* 密宗道次第廣論; Tib. *sngags rim chen mo*) and *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages* (Ch. *wu cidi guanglun* 五次第廣論; Tib. *gsang 'dus rim lnga gsal sgron*), two pieces of the Stages of the Path literature written by Tsongkhapa synthesizing esoteric teachings. At the same time, thanks to Amdo Geshe's connection, he also became acquainted and studied with other prominent Tibetan Buddhist masters including the Ninety-second Ganden Tripa (Ch. *ge deng chi ba* 格登墀巴; Tib. *dga' ldan khri pa*) and the Dharma Master of the Jangtse (Ch. *jiangze fawang* 絳則法王; Tib. *byang rtse chos rje*), who further strengthened Fazun's aspiration to become a translator to introduce Tibetan Buddhism to China proper.⁴² The former of the two once told Fazun after they met in Lhasa,

in the middle of a prose in which Fazun recounted important events and activities between 1925 and 1933 with clarity and fluidity.

⁴² Literally meaning the “the holder of the throne of the Ganden,” Ganden Tripa is the official name for the nominal heads of the Gelugpa school. However, in his writings Fazun only writes “格登墀巴” without pointing out the name

Even if you were to stay in the three main monasteries, to become the best Geshe, and to raise to the position of a Ganden Tripa having a yellow parasol above your head just like me, [all you can get] would be dry and fake renown, and you would not greatly benefit the Buddha's teachings. Now, you should go back [to China] first and translate Je Tsongkhapa's *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* [in order to] build a house for true teachings in the region of Han Chinese. In this way, you will make real contribution to the Buddha's teachings and all sentient beings. If you can find a way to invite Amdo Geshe [to China] in order to establish Je Tsongkhapa's exoteric and esoteric teachings, [your merit] will be much greater than becoming a Geshe or a Ganden Tripa.⁴³

In fact, these words influenced Fazun so much that he decided to make another arduous trip to Tibet later in 1935 to bring back Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and to invite Amdo Geshe. Yet, just as he was making great progress in Tibet, Fazun received several letters from his Chinese Buddhist teacher, Taixu, towards the end of 1933 urging him to come back and to work at the newly founded Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute (*hanzang jiaoli yuan* 漢藏教理院). Slightly reluctant, Fazun still accepted Taixu's request in the end out of the heartfelt indebtedness towards his master as discussed in the last section.

To summarize, first, it is important to note that Fazun strictly followed the Gelugpa School's Stages of the Path during his stay in Tibet. This notion continued to guide his thinking

or the position in succession of the one he met. (Fazun 1988, 272) Moreover, a transition of the throne took place in 1933 when Fazun just arrived in Lhasa. The Ninety-second Ganden Tripa, Tubten Nyinje, passed away and passed the throne to the Ninety-third Ganden Tripa, Yeshe Wangden, who held the position from 1933 to 1939. Yet, Fazun does give use some clues later in the same article where he writes, "that retired elder Ganden Tripa once told me..." Thus, considering that Tubten Nyinje retired from the position before his death, it is more likely that the one he met is the Ninety-second Ganden Tripa. Yet, as Tubtan Nyinje's biographical information is extremely scarce, the only certainty is that he served as the Ganden Tripa for several months in 1933 after the death of his predecessor. However, Fazun's wording still gives me enough confidence to go with the Ninety-second Ganden Tripa in this case. See more about Ganden Tripa in Dreyfus, 341. See more about Yeshe Wangden in Khetsun Sangpo, Vol. 6, pp. 221.

⁴³ Fazun 1988, 277. "three main monasteries (*san da si* 三大寺)" refers to the three prominent Gelugpa monasteries in Lhasa — Ganden Monastery (Ch. 甘丹寺; Tib. *dga' ldan dgon pa*), Drepung Monastery, and Sera Monastery (Ch. 色拉寺; Tib. *se ra dgon pa*).

later during his career which shall be discussed in the following sections. That is, he began with an extensive training in Tibetan exoteric teachings, and only moved onto esoteric teachings afterwards. As seen in this section, Fazun started by learning the short version of Tsongkhapa's *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, the foundational Gelugpa text synthesizing exoteric teachings, with Tibetan masters in Kangding. Then, he continued to study exoteric teachings at Drakkar Monastery in Lithang, including *The Ornament of Clear Realization* and *The Essence of the Good Explanations*. It was not until 1931, Fazun sixth year in Tibet, when he received his first set of Tibetan esoteric teachings from Amdo Geshe in Chamdo. Moreover, even after being permitted to receive esoteric teachings, Fazun continued to study Tibetan Buddhist exoteric teachings during his years in Lhasa, including Buddhist logic and the full volume of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. In fact, Fazun was aware of the importance of the Stages of the Path regarding exoteric and esoteric teachings prior to studying with Gelugpa teachers. In "The Experience of My Journey into Tibet," he writes when reflecting on receiving the teachings of the Eighteen Paths from Dayong in Wuchan,

Only those who have studied [exoteric] teachings and theories can understand the real meaning inside them. If common people without any foundation of [exoteric] teachings and theories studies them, they can only get some wrong views from them. As for the better ones [among the common people who study esoteric teachings], after receiving a few images from meditative concentration and a little empowerment from the object of veneration, they will think that they have achieved the best of accomplishment — attainment of Buddhahood within this body, and no one will dare to deny [their assertions]. As for the worse ones [among the common people], only after getting some gloominess and agitation [from meditation] mixed with some evil karma and supernatural power, they will think that they have attained Buddhahood. My foundation is weak. I did not receive any images from meditative concentration or any empowerment from the object of veneration.

Moreover, I do not have any deceiving supernatural power. Therefore, I am very indifferent towards esoteric teachings. Studying [exoteric and esoteric teachings] means getting [their] real meanings. Practicing [them] means practicing firmly. I do not want to choose the seemingly easy way or to skip stages. Furthermore, I do not want to make false speech deceiving and harming myself and others.⁴⁴

Thus, this passage shows that the notion of the Stages of the Path had already taken root in Fazun's mind during his days in Wuchang thanks to studying Raifu Gonda's *The Outline of Esoteric Teachings* with Taixu. Later throughout his training within the Gelugpa system, this notion was further strengthened in Fazun's thinking, and continued to play a major part in his opinions after returning to China proper and entering the discourse of Chinese Buddhist reform. Second, while Fazun's interests in Tibetan Buddhism and translation continued to grow, unlike his peer, Nenghai, he did not develop a special interest in Tibetan esotericism even after receiving many esoteric instructions and empowerments. When documenting his years in Tibet in "The Experience of My Journey into Tibet," Fazun puts more emphasis on exoteric teachings, while descriptions about esoteric teachings appear to be afterthoughts.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Fazun wrote another shorter article in 1979, titled "Master Fazun's Own Account (*fazun fashi zishu* 法尊法師自述)," documenting important events in his life year by year. In this article, he only includes descriptions about exoteric teachings received in Tibet while leaving out all the esoteric empowerments given by Tibetan masters and only mentioning two esoteric scriptures — *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Esoteric Path* and *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*.

⁴⁴ Fazun 1988, 263

⁴⁵ Fazun 1988, 267-273

V. Fazun amid the Broader Chinese Buddhist Reform

Having made up his mind to assist Taixu at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute in Chongqing, Fazun departed from Lhasa in October 1933. Heading southwards, he first traveled through Nepal and India. Then, in January 1934, he traveled from Kolkata to Yangon, Myanmar where he spent two months in isolated meditation. In April, Fazun embarked on a ship to Shanghai and reunited with Taixu in May. After some more personal errands, Fazun finally arrived at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute in August. In the next two years, while teaching students, Fazun continued to work on translating Tibetan Buddhist texts including *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, a short version of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Esoteric Path*, and *The Explanation of the Bodhisattva Precepts*.⁴⁶ Towards the end of 1935, Fazun departed for Tibet once again to invite his beloved teacher, Amdo Geshe, to teach at the institute. Yet, as soon as he arrived in Lhasa in January 1936, Amdo Geshe passed away leaving Fazun devastated. However, he did not return empty-handed, as he sent back many chests of Tibetan Buddhist texts with the help from merchants traveling between China and Tibet. Upon returning to Chongqing in the winter of 1936, Fazun was installed as the director of the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute by Taixu, and taught at the institute until its closure in 1950.

As for now, there has been some excellent scholarship done on the Institute itself. In several chapters of his 2005 book, Gray Tuttle examines the background of the Institute, Taixu's motivation to establish it, and the logistical processes involved. In an essay titled "Venerable Fazun at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute (1933-1950) and Tibetan Geluk Buddhism in China," Brenton Sullivan examines the curriculum implemented by Fazun and his rationale behind the

⁴⁶ Fazun 1988, 276

curriculum. Despite the current academic focus, it is wrong to assume that Fazun isolated himself from the vibrant Chinese Buddhist discourse at the time. Apart from teaching and translating, he also entered this discourse as a full-fledged Buddhist scholar. Throughout the years, Fazun published many articles on the prominent Chinese Buddhist monthly, *The Sound of Tides*, introducing Tibetan Buddhism to other Chinese Buddhists, asserting his own views on Buddhism in general, and engaging in heated debates with other Chinese Buddhists, activities largely underexamined by scholars. Thus, this section aims to examine some of Fazun's most important writings during the 1930s in order to present a more holistic image of him in the broader context of the Chinese Buddhist Reform.

a. Fazun as a Critic of Chinese Buddhism

Fazun's first major article was published in the fourth issue of *The Sound of Tides* as soon as he returned to China proper in 1936 from his second trip to Tibet, titled "From the Rise and Fall of Tibetan Buddhist Schools to the Reestablishment of Chinese Buddhism (*cong xizang fojiao xuepai xingshuai de yanbian shuodao zhongguo fojiao zhi jianli* 從西藏佛教學派興衰的演變說到中國佛教之建立)."⁴⁷ In this article, Fazun systematically expresses his thoughts regarding Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism and the latter's reform. In the first half of the article, he dedicates six sections to introducing various Tibetan Buddhist schools and examining the reasons behind their growth and decay. In the first section, he explains that he intends to let his fellow Chinese

⁴⁷ Throughout the article, Fazun uses the term "*jian li* 建立," literally meaning "establishment" or "to establish." Although it is not obvious in the title, Fazun clearly uses the term in the sense of "reestablishment" or "to reestablish," as he starts with the premise that Chinese Buddhism is in a state of decay, and addresses how it can be revived. Thus, I am translating the term as "reestablishment" to best capture Fazun's thoughts.

Buddhists to learn from the history of Tibetan Buddhism in order to facilitate the revival of Chinese Buddhism, as he writes,

China is a country which received Buddhism from India. Ever after receiving it, [Chinese people] established Chinese Buddhism. For over a thousand years, it is needless to talk about how much Chinese people have benefited from Buddhism. Regarding the Tibetan people [living near] the border of China, they are no exception. Therefore, I shall introduce the history and the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism to [my] fellow Chinese Buddhists here in order to facilitate the reestablishment of Buddhism. This is my intention behind writing this article.⁴⁸

In the next five sections, Fazun introduces and examines five Tibetan Buddhist schools, including the Nyingma School (Ch. *jiu pai* 舊派 or *ningma pai* 寧瑪派; Tib. *nying ma*), the Kadampa school (Ch. *jiadang pai* 迦當派 or *gadang pai* 噶當派; Tib. *bka' gdams pa*), the Sakya School (Ch. *sajia pai* 薩迦派; Tib. *sa skya*), the Kagyu School (Ch. *jiaju pai* 迦舉派 or *gaju pai* 噶舉派; Tib. *bka' brgyud*), and the Gelugpa School.⁴⁹ Then, in the seventh section, “Summarizing the Reasons behind the Rise and Fall of Tibetan Buddhism (*zongtan xizang fojiao xingshuai zhi yuanyin* 總談西藏佛教興衰之原因),” Fazun summarizes all the preceding sections, as he writes,

To summarize the history [of Tibetan Buddhist schools] briefly introduced above, there are three reasons behind the rise and fall of [Tibetan Buddhist schools] apart from the propagation or the destruction done by various kings:

1. Whether [practitioners] value precepts or not.

⁴⁸ Fazun 1988, 135

⁴⁹ In this article, Fazun uses the term “*jiadang pai* 迦當派” to refer to both the Kadampa school and the Gelugpa school. In another article, titled “Tibetan Buddhism during the Era of the Later Dissemination (*xizang houhongqi fojiao* 西藏后弘期佛教),” Fazun explains his naming practice, as he writes “Because Je Tsongkhapa used to live in Kadampa monasteries and disseminate teachings there, this school can be called as ‘Kadampa’ or ‘Gelugpa.’” (Fazun 1988, 52) For a more detailed examination of the relation between the two schools, see Samuel, 32-39.

2. Whether [practitioners] gladly practice according to the teachings or not.
3. Whether [practitioners] are able to practice according to the stages or not.

As for the rise of any [Tibetan Buddhist] school, first, its [practitioners] must have strictly following the precepts as a foundation. Then, [they] must diligently practice according to their capabilities and teachers' teachings in order to seek the true realization. Then, [they] must not seek speed or skip any stage. [Instead, they] must vigorously and constantly practice according to the truth step by step. Only then, [they] can give rise to true benefits. Only then, because of true benefits, [they] can elucidate, establish, and preserve Buddhist teachings. As for the fall of any [Tibetan Buddhist] school, it is because [their practitioners] relegate precepts to the lesser vehicle. Or, it is because [they] only lecture on the teachings, but do not practice them. Or, it is because [they] do not follow any right path, but seek convenience and shortcut. Gradually, [they] disintegrate the teachings and the path. Taking off the head, cutting off the tail, passing down only one mantra, or holding onto only one concept, [they] use these pieces of words to substitute the great teachings to the extent that the scriptures of the Tripiṭaka all become scrap paper, and that the teachings of meditation and wisdom all become empty talks. In this way, [they] destroy the banner of dharma, and extinguish the torch of wisdom. Is this kind of destruction because of the imperfection of previous masters? Or, is this because of the psychology of later students? All those of our generation who wish to reestablish Buddhism, who wish to maintain Buddhism, and who wish to spread and protect Buddhism, should carefully consider these [points] and take [lessons] from them. As for the scale of monasteries, the number of monks, the color of robes, the availability of funds, I think that their [influences] on the rise and fall of Buddhism are secondary. As for combining political and religious power, I think that its [influence] is even more inconsequential.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Fazun 1988, 147

Thus, for Fazun, following precepts and the Stages of the Path are the two most important factors for Buddhism to flourish in both China and Tibet. This line of thoughts shows the strong influence that the Gelugpa education has on Fazun, a sign of his “Geluk Bent,” a term coined by Sullivan in his article.⁵¹ Having discussed Tibetan Buddhism, Fazun briefly summarizes the history of Chinese Buddhism, and expresses his views on various Chinese Buddhist schools in the eighth section, “A Brief History of Chinese Buddhist Schools (*handi fojiao ge zong guoqu zhi lue shi* 漢地佛教各宗過去之歷史).” Here, he surveys and criticizes four major Chinese Buddhist schools — the School of the Three Treatises (*sanlun zong* 三論宗), the Tiantai School (*tiantai zong* 天臺宗), the Huayan School (*huayan zong* 華嚴宗), and the Chan School (*chan zong* 禪宗). On the School of the Three Treatises, Fazun writes,

Although [its teachings] talks about the resources and the stages of the five paths in detail, among the Han Chinese, [its practitioners] believe themselves that these are the foundational vessels of the Great Vehicle. Regarding the teachings in the *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, they only study but do not practice them. Regarding conscious-only teachings, they only imitate and take from the Tiantai School or from the name of vipaśyanā teachings established by the Huayan School. Then, they say that they have studied the view of conscious-only. As for how to study and practice the stages of the path which leads a common person to become an enlightened being or a non-learner, it is something that I have never studied or heard about [from this school].⁵²

Having criticized the School of the Three Treatises, Fazun turns his attention to the Tiantai School by writing,

⁵¹ Sullivan, 227

⁵² Fazun 1988, 148

As for the Tiantai School, its noble ones admire *The Lotus Sutra*. When they talk about theory, they only fear that their school's [reasoning] is not complete or solid. When they talk about practices, they only fear that their school's [practices] are not superior or encompassing. Thus, when the Tiantai School [talks] about the establishment of objects and cognition, it surely talks about three truths seen in one object. When [it talks about] the luminous mind, it surely talks about three insights being in one thought. When [it] talks about the words and deeds, it talks about the ten vehicles of meditation of the complete teaching. Moreover, [according to its teachings], each realm of the ten vehicles has ten more realm. Furthermore, the one hundred realms then establish one thousand thusnesses. Furthermore, by adding and depending on the five skandhas, they turn into a chiliocosm. Then, [the Tiantai School] talks about the perfect and unobstructed meaning of a chiliocosm being in a single thought and a single thought being in a chiliocosm. It is indeed extreme! As for its taxonomy, it holds the āgamas and the wisdom teachings as the two teachings which are either of the lesser vehicle or the shared [between the lesser and the great vehicles]. Thus, [it holds that] these two are definitely not needed for us who have the innate character of the great vehicle. Therefore, [they hold that] the non-shared teachings, the teachings of hearers, and the teachings of self-realizers as the teachings of the great vehicle. Furthermore, [they] aspire to obtain the unreachable perfect teaching. Who wish to be a narrow-minded person content with the distinct teachings? Therefore, this school cannot escape the blame for turning [Buddhist] students of our country into mad persons who all seek to reach for what is beyond their grasp.⁵³

Then, Fazun proceeds to criticize the Huayan School,

As for the Huayan School, it came much later than the Tiantai School. Therefore, as for the teachings promoted, they are hundred times more mysterious than those [promoted by the Tiantai School]. When the scholars of this school talk about theory, they surely talk about the ten mysterious gates and the six characteristics of

⁵³ Fazun 1988, 149

conditioned phenomena. As for the taxonomy, they surely talk about all things existing in perfect harmony and mutual interrelation. As for contemplating on objects, [they surely talk about] non-obstruction among individual phenomena and contemplation of universal inclusion. Only then, they fulfill their selfish desires. If someone teaches them with the foundational stages of practice and analytical meditation, then they will surely blame the person with angry eyes, saying, “Are you kidding me? Do you not know that we are not the beginning learners of the complete teachings [of the Tiantai School]?”⁵⁴

At last, Fazun criticizes the Chan School by writing,

As for the Chan School which is a separate transmission outside of the texts, although it cannot be said that [its] speedy, marvelous, and stable pure land did not benefit the beginning learners of our country, its [influence on] obstructing the transmission of scriptures and the studies of precepts is not small either.⁵⁵

To cap off, Fazun writes,

Furthermore, throughout many centuries, observing monastic rules has become slacked, non-Buddhist religions have invaded, various dynasties have been destroying [Chinese Buddhism], and the fate of the noble teachings has become uncertain. As a result, during the last years of the Qing Dynasty, names of important scriptures of various Buddhist schools have become unknown [by practitioners]. How is it possible to practice according to the teachings without skipping a Stage of the Path? Therefore, as for those practitioners who have studied sutras and practiced teachings for a long time, if they reflect on themselves one day and find themselves lacking the capability of being full and wealthy while talking about food and counting money, they must have set aside previous practitioners’ commentaries on a tall shelf or have cast them in a trash can. Having done so, they either chant buddhas’ names in isolation or meditate with eyes closed. [These practitioners’

⁵⁴ Fazun 1988, 149

⁵⁵ Fazun 1988, 149

practices] are like those practiced by ignorant people and utter fools, lacking any skillful means. Is this because of the imperfection of the Buddha's teachings? Or is this because of the mistake of students not following their teachers? I can only hope that those aspiring to preserve and to spread the true teachings can abandon arrogance and carefully examine the reasons behind the decline of Buddhism in our country.⁵⁶

Thus, for Fazun, all four major Chinese Buddhist schools have their shortcomings: the School of Three Treatises lacks the notion of the Stages of the Path; the Tiantai School and the Huayan School only focus on developing profound theories, urging practitioners to pursue the “unreachable;” the Chan School causes the deemphasis of scriptures and precepts. In the end, relating with his judgement on Tibetan Buddhist schools, Fazun identifies three major internal reasons behind the decline of Chinese Buddhism — not observing the precepts, ignoring the Stages of the Path, and sidelining scripture studies. Coupled with the “invasion of non-Buddhist religions,” mainly Christianity, Chinese Buddhism finds itself in the crisis as described previously in the section of “Historical Background: the Chinese Buddhist Reform.”

It is interesting to notice that, although Fazun spends a lot more efforts criticizing the School of Three Treatises, the Tiantai School, and the Huayan School compared to the Chan School, his final verdict on the decline of Chinese Buddhism mainly focuses on the negative outcomes that the Chan School facilitates — obstructing the transmission of scriptures and the studies of precepts while only promoting chanting and meditation. In fact, he strongly criticizes Chan practitioners at the end, saying that they only chant and meditate like “utter fools.” In a similar fashion, Fazun writes in an article published in 1938, “After Reading Master Xu’s *The*

⁵⁶ Fazun 1988, 149-150

History of the Failure of Buddhist Revolution (du xu dashi fojiao geming shibai shi hou 讀虛大師
《佛教革命失敗史》後),”

[After] Buddhist teachings disseminated eastwards, [Chinese Buddhism] reached its zenith during Sui and Tang dynasties. Yet, after Emperor Wu of Tang Dynasty destroyed the teachings, [the teachings] have been incomplete for more than a thousand years. During this period of decline, only the Chan School, which does not depend on discourses, stood out and prevailed. Precisely because of this, [Chan practitioners] transformed the Thus Come One’s system of Sangha and Vinaya into a system of feudal monasteries. [They] turned scriptures, which should be widely spread and lectured on, into exhibits stored on tall shelves. Learned and knowledgeable monks became ignorant common practitioners.⁵⁷

Thus, Fazun sees the Chan School as the main driving force behind the deemphasis of precepts and scriptures among Chinese Buddhists. This rationale echoes with Tsongkhpa’s view shown in the sixth section of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, “Refuting Misconceptions about Meditation.” Here, one objection reads,

What is determined through study and reflection is not intended for meditation, but is merely for promoting superficial knowledge and eliminating others’ misconceptions. Therefore, when you meditate, you must meditate on something unrelated to your study and reflection.⁵⁸

Like the Chan School described by Fazun, this position presents a direct dichotomy between meditation and scripture study, while favoring the former and devaluing the latter. In response,

⁵⁷ Fazun 1990

⁵⁸ Tsongkhapa, vol.1, 110

Tsongkhapa argues that such statement is incoherent, and attributes this position to the Chan School, as the text reads,

Moreover, to claim that all conceptual thought involves the apprehension of signs of true existence, and thus prevents enlightenment, is the worst possible misconception insofar as it disregards all discerning meditation. This is the system of the Chinese abbot Ha-shang. I explain its refutation in the section on serenity and insight. This misconception also interferes with the development of deep respect for the classic texts, because these texts are mainly concerned only with the need to use discerning analysis, whereas Ha-shang's system sees all analysis as unnecessary during practice. This is also a major cause of teaching's decline, because those who have this misconception do not recognize the classic scriptures and their commentaries to be instructions and therefore belittle their value.⁵⁹

In this quote, "Ha-shang" refers to Moheyan (摩訶衍), the eighth-century Chinese Chan Buddhist who lost to Kamalaśīla (Ch. 蓮花戒; Tib. *pad+ma'i ngang tshul*) in the Samye Debate. In short, Tsongkhapa's rationality is as follows: the Chan School's obsession with non-discursive meditation devalues scriptures, and, in turn, leads to the decline of Buddhism. Thus, Fazun's harsh attitude towards the Chan School in particular can be interpreted as another sign of his so-called "Geluk Bent."

b. Fazun as an Advocate for the Chinese Buddhist Reform

Having harshly criticized all major Chinese Buddhist traditions and identified the reason behind the decline of Chinese Buddhism, Fazun moves onto his suggestions for reforms in the ninth section of his 1936 article. Titled "Opinions regarding the Reestablishment of Chinese

⁵⁹ Tsongkhapa, vol.1 112

Buddhism in the Future (*jinhou jianli zhongguo fojiao zhi yijian* 今後建立中國佛教之意見), this section is the most systematic collection of Fazun's advices for the Chinese Buddhist Reform. In opening paragraph and the first suggestion, he writes,

As for our country's Buddhism in the past, whether it was good or not, it has become an object in past dreams. [We] cannot return to the time when it was flourishing or correct it when it was in decay. [We] can only use it as valuable experience and create plans based on it. As for the environment of our nation in this modern world, lifestyle changes and [our nation is] poverty-stricken. [The government] uses all kinds of extreme measures to destroy or grab from Buddhist establishment to the extent that monks have nothing to depend on or laws to protect themselves. On the one hand, this is because the Sangha is in a slump. On the other hand, this is because our nation's politics is without a proper track. Therefore, those who wish to reestablish Buddhism must consider the following aspects.

1. From now on, the government officials and secular scholars who feel positive [about Buddhism] must support it, protect it, and facilitate its reform. Those who feel negative [about Buddhism] must act according to laws, regulations, and commonly accepted values, and should not invade or take from [Buddhist establishment] unreasonably. Only in this way, the Sangha will have a nation and a society on which it can depend.⁶⁰

In the opening paragraph, Fazun reiterates the dire situation of Chinese Buddhism: the Republican government's infringement upon Chinese Buddhist establishment threatens its very existence and demands Buddhists to take immediate actions. Then, he recalls the internal and external reasons behind its decline — the regression of the Buddhist community itself and the ever-changing worldly condition. In the first suggestion, Fazun addresses the Republican Government, and seeks to garner supports from those government officials and secular scholars willing to back up the

⁶⁰ Fazun 1988, 150

Chinese Buddhist reform, a tactic highly valued and often used by Taixu.⁶¹ For instance, in 1928, Taixu was able to gain enough support from Chiang Kai-shek (蒋介石 1887-1975), the president of the Republic of China at the time, to fund his world tour in the following two years.⁶² Furthermore, the establishment of the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute was only possible due to the fact that Taixu secured support and funding from Liu Xiang (刘湘 1890-1938), the head of Sichuan's provincial government at the time.⁶³ At the same time, Fazun stands firm against officials and scholars hostile towards Buddhism on the ground of law and reason. This shows that Fazun was well aware of the complicated political and social situation in China proper despite of spending years in Tibet. Moreover, bringing the political and social situation into attention in the very first suggestion signals that Fazun recognizes the strong influences politics and social opinions have on the state of a religion. When explaining the rise and fall of various Tibetan Buddhist schools in the same article, Fazun also emphasizes the importance of political and social support for the survival and prosperity of Buddhism. For instance, he attributes the initial flourishing of Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century primarily to the support given by Trisong Detsen (Ch. 赤松得真 or 赤松德赞; Tib. *khri srong lde btsan*), the Tibetan king reigning from 755 to 797.⁶⁴ At the same time, by referring to the decline of Tibetan Buddhism during the reign of Langdarma (Ch. 朗达玛; Tib. *glang dar ma* 799-841) between 838 and 841, he also cautions against the possible disaster for Buddhism if it loses political support.⁶⁵

In the second suggestion, Fazun writes,

⁶¹ Shan, 226

⁶² Welch, 59

⁶³ Sullivan, 203

⁶⁴ Fazun 1988, 136

⁶⁵ Fazun 1988, 137-138

2. All the Buddhists from all Buddhist organizations and communities should clearly know this. Today's Buddhism cannot be revived or even survive without new reforms and complete reestablishment. In order to battle the offense from the tide of modern vileness, we should all give rise to the intention to reform. If we want to support [Buddhism] after [it] collapses, I sincerely fear that it cannot be achieved, just like one cannot bite his navel.⁶⁶

Here, Fazun addresses traditionalists among Chinese Buddhists who were still unwilling to rally behind Taixu's call for thoroughly reforming Chinese Buddhism despite its shortcomings and difficulties. This split between the reformists and the traditionalists formed in the 1900s and reached its climax in 1912 when the Invasion of Jinshan (*danao jinshan* 大鬧金山) took place at the prominent Jinshan Monastery (金山寺) in Jiangsu province (江蘇省). At the time, backed by the Republican government, Taixu and his companion, Renshan (仁山 1887-1951), set out to transform the Jinshan Monastery into a modern school for monks and the headquarter of the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (*fojiao xiejin hui* 佛教協進會). Yet, some of the residents of the monastery considered their plan to be too radical, so much so that they physically assaulted Renshan on December 20th, 1912.⁶⁷ As Pittman explains in his book, after the incident, Taixu was characterized to represent the radical modernism and aggressive tactics that traditionalist Chinese Buddhists feared and resisted.⁶⁸ Similarly, when commenting on the effect of the incident, Welch writes,

Whatever the motives of its perpetrators, the "Invasion of Jinshan" epitomizes the shock with which the Republican era burst upon the Buddhist establishment. It dramatically foreshadowed the long conflict ahead between conservatives and

⁶⁶ Fazun 1988, 151

⁶⁷ See more about the Invasion of Jinshan in Dongchu, 94-99.

⁶⁸ Pittman, 77

radicals in the sangha. It caused as much of a scandal as if, let us say, the editors of *Commonweal* occupied the office of the Roman Curia and announced that they were turning it into a school for worker-priests.⁶⁹

In the following decades, the gorge between the reformists and the traditionalists further widened, and the supporters from each camp regularly engaged in heated debates on various Buddhist publications.⁷⁰ This struggle between traditionalists and reformists continued for the rest of Taixu's career, as Charles Brewer Jones writes, "Before the latter organization (Buddhist Association of the Republic of China; *Zhongguo Fojiao Hui* 中國佛教會) relocated to Taiwan with the Nationalist government in 1949, it had been subject to years of internecine power struggles between a traditionalist faction led by Yuanying, and a reformist faction led by Taixu."⁷¹ In the light of this conflict inside the Chinese Sangha, Fazun's second suggestion can be seen as a wake-up call directed at the traditionalist camp, urging them to rally behind Taixu's efforts.

Having addressed traditionalists, Fazun addresses his fellow reformists in the third suggestion regarding the guiding principles that they should follow. Spanning for almost one page in dense classical Chinese, it is the longest among the five. Therefore, it is selectively translated and discussed in several sections here. To start, Fazun writes,

3. Great masters who have the aspiration to reform Buddhism must understand that it is impossible to reestablish or reform Buddhism only by meditating in isolation and chanting Buddha's name, closing one's eyes and resting one's mind, or climbing up high and shouting out loud. However, if [we] were to abandon all and become someone not chanting Buddha's name, not meditating, not spreading teachings, being in a slump all the time, and taking pleasure in

⁶⁹ Welch, 33

⁷⁰ Shan, 244-258

⁷¹ Jones, 135

food and sleep, we would destroy the real teachings for sure and become unparalleled scums.⁷²

Here, Fazun cautions against two extremes — overemphasizing certain Buddhist practices and ignoring them altogether. This comment can be read in relation with his criticism of the Chan School in the previous section of the article. There, Fazun harshly accuses the Chan School of leading Chinese Buddhists to solely focus on meditation and chanting while ignoring scriptures. Yet, it is wrong to assume that he denies these two practices as valuable parts of Buddhist teachings. Instead, he suggests that Buddhist practitioners take a balanced approach to them without going to either of the two extremes.

Then, Fazun addresses Chinese Buddhist masters and disciples separately, as he writes,

As for [the people involved with] the real teachings of the Thus Come one, it can be divided into two groups. The first group is those who teach the real teachings, and the second group is those who actualize the real teachings. Teaching the teachings requires passing them from teachers to teachers, receiving them, upholding them, explaining them, revealing them, establishing them. Only then, [the real teachings] can stay in the world. It is not the case that one can show off his learning just because he stores Tripitaka at his house. Actualizing the real teachings requires receiving the precepts from a master, strictly upholding the precepts according to the Vinaya, abiding in the precepts according to the Vinaya, actively seeking and listening to [teachings], thinking according to the received [teachings], practicing according to thoughts, paying attention to both studying and practicing. [In this way,] one can avoid being a ridiculous person who talks about food but does not eat it or who counts money but does not spend it. Moreover, one can avoid being a misled person who practices [teachings] blindly.⁷³

⁷² Fazun 1988, 151

⁷³ Fazun 1988, 151

On the one hand, Fazun urges all masters to transmit teachings and practices actively and responsibly. This comment is clearly directed at the Tiantai School and the Huayan School which he criticizes in the previous section. There, he strongly opposes the two schools' primary focuses on developing profound theories for the sake of it without making them accessible to common practitioners. Therefore, he advocates that learned Buddhist teachers should actively pass down teachings instead of dwelling in their ivory towers. On the other hand, he suggests that all disciples strictly uphold the monastic codes, diligently seek out and practice the teachings. This comment alludes to the declining monks' quality mentioned multiple times throughout the article. For Fazun, apart from monks' literacy and diligence, their ability to abide to the monastic rules constitutes a major part of their quality too. This emphasis on following the precepts continues throughout his later career. In a speech delivered at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute in 1940, titled "The Problem of Belief — A Speech at the Anniversary of the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute (*xin de wenti — zai hanzangyuan jinianzhou jiang* 信的問題 — 在漢藏院紀念周講),"

Fazun says,

Precepts have the ability to prevent bad deeds. If we follow the laws of the precepts, we can avoid doing bad and evil things, and, in this way, we can cease many past evil deeds. Therefore, [upholding precepts] can let our bodies and minds rest in peace, and can let us depart from sufferings and obtain happiness. This is true. Believe that this must be the case. At the same time, believe that we must uphold the precepts in order to obtain the "treasure" of the three jewels, the "virtue" of the three jewels, and the "power" of the three jewels. Regarding this kind of reasoning, believing it to the extreme and without any doubt is called "believing the precepts."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Fazun 1990

Here, Fazun first articulates the benefit of upholding monastic rules: following them can prevent any wrongdoing which, in turn, leads to peace in one's body and mind. Then, he suggests that upholding monastic rules is not only a basic requirement for monks but also a necessity for anyone wishing to actualize Buddhist teachings. Although this notion may appear to be a common sense nowadays, it is important to take the Chinese Buddhist monastic situation at the time into consideration. As examined in the second section of this thesis, "Historical Background: the Chinese Buddhist Reform," ignoring the precepts had been prevalent among Chinese monks for decades by the time Fazun gave this speech. The particularly harsh tone in the second half of this passage further reflects the dire situation. Moreover, although Fazun does not states this explicitly in either the 1936 article or the 1940 speech, upholding precepts can bring one more benefit to Chinese Buddhism — curbing the Republican government's infringement on the Chinese Buddhist establishment. As discussed above, the government's campaign of "using monastic properties to establish schools" starting from the 1910s demolished or repurposed thousands of monasteries and temples across China proper over the following years. This campaign was backed by the prevalent social sentiment that viewed Chinese Buddhism as "superstitious," a sentiment fueled by the fact that monks primarily engaged themselves in rituals and ignored monastic laws. Therefore, reinstating observance of the precepts can also contribute to create a more positive social image of Chinese Buddhism, eschewing away the social support for the Republican government's destructive campaign.

Then, Fazun continues to address the disciples, he writes,

It is definitely not the case that someone sitting inside alone, only practicing one kind of teachings, and treating the scriptures of Tripitaka as scrap paper is able to take up these tasks. As for practicing according to the teachings, although one clearly understands that all the speeches of the Buddha are the teachings which

should be practiced by us — sentient beings in this age of the decline of the Dharma, he should still start with the shallow and easy teachings and proceed to the deep and profound ones. [Moreover,] he should first seek the foundation of rebirth as humans and gods, practice the right path to transcend from this mundane world, and then seek to become a Buddha for the purpose of saving all sentient beings. One can only escape from evil rebirth by practicing good deeds. One can only gradually eliminate afflictions and transcend from the three realms of saṃsāra by having the wisdom that apprehends emptiness. One can only enter the path of the great vehicle and achieve Buddhahood by depending on an enlightened mind and the practice of a bodhisattva. This is the Thus Come One's hard work and the correct view on the Buddha's teachings which should be believed and accepted by students from all [Buddhist] schools. However, one who abandons the fundamental teachings and blindly pursues the profound ones, who ignores various teachings to seek the "harmony" [of teachings and theories], who belittles the teachings and only meditates, and who denies exoteric teachings and only loves the esoteric teachings, cannot know this teaching, understand its reason, form this viewpoint, or practice according to this [teaching] for sure.⁷⁵

At first, again alluding to the split between the Tiantai School and the Huayan School and to the obsession with meditation of the Chan School, Fazun suggests that practitioners take a holistic and open-minded approach during their studies instead of limiting themselves to certain kind of teachings, and that they pay more attention to scriptures. Then, showing his "Geluk bent" again, he advocates that Buddhist practitioners shall practice according to the Stages of the Path. Towards the end, alluding to the huge popularity of esotericism in China proper at the time, he further cautions against abandoning exoteric teachings in favor of esoteric ones. Overall, Fazun's suggestion here advocates that reformists should see various Chinese Buddhist traditions' shortcomings previously criticized which leads to the decline of Chinese Buddhism. In turn, with

⁷⁵ Fazun 1988, 151-152

emphasis on following precepts and the Stages of the Path, they should change the way in which they teach, study, and practice in order to rectify these shortcomings while avoiding certain extremes.

To conclude the section and the article, Fazun states two more suggestions regarding the specific measures of reforming Chinese Buddhism,

4. [One should consider] the number of Buddhists and the organization of abbots and followers.

5. Regarding the management and the allocation of monasteries' properties, one should improve them according to Master Taixu's *The Treatise on Reforming the System of the Sangha*. [However,] because the scale of this plan is too huge, I sincerely fear that it cannot be realized in a short time. Therefore, scholars of our generation should choose and implement [parts of the plan] according to one's capability and responsibility. Furthermore, those who intend to reestablish Buddhism should pay attention to [all the projects] prepared and implemented [according to *The Treatise on Reforming the System of the Sangha*].⁷⁶

Here, Fazun advocates that reformists should follow measures laid out in *The Treatise on Reforming the System of the Sangha* (*zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* 整理僧伽制度論) written by Taixu during his isolated retreat between 1914 and 1917. In this text, he lays out various detailed measures for reforming Chinese Buddhism on an institutional level, including renewing regulations for taking in disciples, reorganizing existing monasteries and lay organizations, etc.⁷⁷ These measures are so ambitious at the time that even Fazun acknowledges this shortcoming, and only advocates for following this text as a basic guideline for the on-going reform. Furthermore,

⁷⁶ Fazun 1988, 152

⁷⁷ Taixu 1929

as seen in this suggestion, despite his long-term close relationship with and heartfelt gratitude and respect for Taixu, Fazun does not refrain from voicing his own opinions when they differ from those of Taixu. As this passage shows, he is more pragmatic regarding the state and the process of the Chinese Buddhist Reform compared to his mentor who can be characterized as overly optimistic at times. In the light of this subtle difference between the two, it is important not to read Fazun's opinions and suggestions purely as repetitions of those of Taixu within the context of the broader Chinese Buddhist discourse at the time. Instead, it is crucial to note subtle differences like this in order to better interpret Fazun as an advocate for the Chinese Buddhist Reform.

To summarize, as a reformist, Fazun sees the reform as a necessity for the survival and the revival of Chinese Buddhism during the early 20th century, a time period when the political and social situation threatened its existence. In this context, he sees a stable and relatively friendly political environment as a bare minimum for Chinese Buddhism to survive based on lessons learned from the history of Tibetan Buddhism. In the light of the internal split between the reformists and the traditionalists within the Chinese Buddhist community, Fazun adamantly supports the former while warning the latter about the danger of non-action. Regarding the guiding principles for the reform, Fazun advocates for the rectification of Chinese Buddhist traditions' shortcomings, and emphasizes the importance of precepts and the Stages of the Path, showing influences from his Gelugpa training. As for specific measures for the reform, Fazun suggests that reformists should follow Taixu's writings as a basic guideline, showing his more pragmatic attitude and subtle difference from his teacher. Furthermore, it is important to notice that Fazun does not mention promoting esotericism throughout these suggestions. This omission signifies that he primarily sees himself as an actor within the broader context of Chinese Buddhist reform instead of a propagator for Tibetan esotericism.

c. Fazun as a Defender for Tibetan Buddhism and Its Esotericism

As discussed in the third section of this thesis, “Secondary Sources Review and a New Approach,” Fazun’s attitude towards esoteric Buddhism is much less enthusiastic than his peers including Nenghai. Moreover, as described in the fourth section, “Fazun’s Monastic Education,” he focused primarily on exoteric Buddhist teachings during his training both in China proper and Tibet. However, it is important to note that Fazun did not try to limit the spread of Tibetan esotericism in China proper, or openly criticize it during his career. In fact, Fazun actively and strongly defended Tibetan Buddhism and its esotericism when they came under criticism from other Chinese Buddhist scholars. This section examines one such exchange in order to present Fazun’s nuanced position regarding this subject.

i. Troubling Phenomena Surrounding Tibetan Esotericism in China

As discussed in the section of “Historical Background: the Chinese Buddhist Reform,” several prominent Tibetan Buddhist teachers, including the Ninth Panchen Lama, came to China proper to propagate Tibetan Buddhism with the support from the Republican government in the 1920s which was deeply interested in its esoteric rituals. Under the influence of Taixu’s project of importing Tibetan esoteric teachings, the influx of Tibetan lamas continued throughout the next decades. Under this circumstance, although many renowned and accomplished Tibetan Buddhist teachers arrived in China proper contributing to the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange, lots of unqualified ones also came to cater for the spiritual needs of the Chinese general public by performing esoteric rituals and transmitting esoteric consecrations with little restrictions while amassing financial gains and disregarding monastic rules.⁷⁸ The situation was so severe that the

⁷⁸ Mei 1999, 257-258

Republican government, a firm supporter of Tibetan Buddhism in China proper at the time, had to issue a formal complaint to the Ninth Panchen Lama exiled in Beijing in 1935, which reads,

Only by observing monastic rules, one can attain Mahāyāna teachings. Master, you are the leader of Tibetan esotericism, benefiting all sentient beings. The general public sees you as the Sun, and the Republican government depends on you like [a person depending on] legs and arms. When you are going to Gansu and Qinghai, please ask lamas to follow the monastic rules. Only then, they can stay from the mistaken path, and reach the other side.⁷⁹

Moreover, the scene around Tibetan Buddhism became more convoluted, as these unqualified lamas often used Tibetan esotericism as an excuse for their Vinaya-breaking behaviors, including drinking alcohol, mingling with females, etc. In fact, this phenomenon was so prevalent that even Taixu, a firm advocate for importing Japanese and Tibetan esotericism throughout the 1920s, had to address it in a 1934 article, titled “The Current Trend of the Revival of Buddhist Esotericism in China (*zhongguo xianshi mizong fuxing zhi qushi* 中國現時密宗復興之趨勢),” which reads,

Nowadays, many Chinese Buddhists long for esotericism. Therefore, after hearing that someone is transmitting esoteric teachings, some chase after him to achieve Buddhahood in this life, some chase after him to cleanse bad luck and to wish for good luck, some chase after him blindly, and some worship him to gather fame and fortune. ... Moreover, when some Mongolian and Tibetan lamas come to China proper to spread esoteric teachings, they dress up like common people, and consume alcohol and meat in public. They see the monastic rules of conduct, long cherished by the Chinese Sangha, as something useless and have abandoned them. ... Furthermore, when the common people eat meat, [those lamas] persuade them to practice vegetarianism. However, those lamas, falsely claiming to be Tulkus, can only be fulfilled by killing [and consuming] sentient beings everyday,

⁷⁹ Quoted in Fafang, 4-5

while saying that killing sentient beings can bring them nirvana. Alas! Isn't this the non-Buddhist practice of sacrificing sentient beings for gods in Hinduism? If so, those lamas should bring nirvana to themselves by killing each other. Or, those people who blindly follow these lamas should ask to be killed and eaten first, instead of shamelessly living in the society! Alas, if this trend continues, the dignity of Buddhism will be lost before we can get a glimpse into and the benefit of the true teachings of esotericism.⁸⁰

Thus, due to the disturbance and chaos in the Chinese Buddhist community created by some unruly Tibetan lamas using esotericism as an excuse, some Chinese Buddhists began to publish articles on various Chinese Buddhist publications to criticize Tibetan Buddhism and its esotericism in the 1930s.

ii. Fazun as a Defender for Tibetan Buddhism

Within this broader context, the first installment of an article, titled “Answers and Questions about Tibetan Esotericism (*zangmi dawen* 藏密答問),” appeared in the ninety-fourth issue of *Buddhist Studies Bimonthly* (*foxue banyue kan* 佛學半月刊) published in January 1935, a Chinese Buddhist magazine based in Shanghai, with its final installment appearing in the ninety-seventh issue in February. This article records a series of questions and answers regarding Tibetan Buddhism during a speech given by a Chinese monk, Huiding (慧定 ?-?), who recently received his full ordination during a two-month stay in eastern Tibet in 1934. Overall, Huiding's attitude towards Tibetan Buddhism and Fazun's project of importing it is dismissive and pessimistic. Furthermore, he is extremely critical of Tibetan esotericism. In response, Fazun published an article in *The Sound of Tides*, titled “Comments on *Answers and Questions about Tibetan*

⁸⁰ Taixu 1934

Esotericism (ping zangmi dawen 評《藏密答問》),” in which he systematically and harshly refuted Huiding. As this exchange has largely been ignored by past scholars, the following sections shall use it as a springboard to explore Fazun’s view on Tibetan Buddhism and its esotericism in China proper in details.

The first six pairs of questions and answers of Huiding’s article introduce readers to some general information regarding eastern Tibet, Huiding’s background and decision to study in Tibet, and some general Buddhist monastic practices. In short, Huiding was first tonsured in China proper, and studied Tibetan Buddhism with Master Ciyuan from April to June 1934 near Kangding, the very same Tibetan Gelugpa master with whom Fazun stayed during 1926. As Huiding explains, he decided to go to Tibet mainly because he wanted to witness Tibetan Buddhism himself after hearing lots of rumors about it.⁸¹ The seventh pair draws the readers’ attention to Tibetan Buddhism itself and the reason behind Huiding’s relatively short stay in Tibet, as it reads,

Question: Master, you are fascinated by Tibetan esotericism in recent years. Why didn’t you take the opportunity and stay in Tibet, instead of hastily return? Is there any benefit?

Answer: Regarding my travel, although it was short, I received great benefit. Most of the Tibetan monks and Chinese students in eastern Tibet are happy to stay there, and wish to be reborn in Tibet. Most of them had their wishes fulfilled. During my stay, there were also many monks from central Tibet wishing to be reborn in eastern Tibet, like inmates wishing to stay in jails. Most of them had their wishes fulfilled too. These prove that my wish to be reborn in a pure land is definitely not unreal. Therefore, I say that I have received great benefit. In my opinion, it is important to study the essentials quickly. Thus, it is not important to stay after studying them.⁸²

⁸¹ Huiding, no.94, 6

⁸² Huiding, no.94, 6

Since Huiding brings up the topic of reincarnation in his answer, the audience follows up with a question regarding Dayong, Fazun's beloved teacher who passed away in Lithang in the summer of 1929, as the eighth pair reads,

Question: In recent months, it is reported that Master Taixu's disciple, Dayong, is reborn in eastern Tibet. Do you believe it?

Answer: Yes. When I arrived in Kangding, my fellow students all talked about Master Dayong's reincarnation coming to the monastery to be tonsured. When Master Dayong's former disciples prostrate to this child, he also happily accepted and blessed everyone. It was indeed uncommon and extraordinary.⁸³

Continuing the subject of reincarnation, the ninth pair reads,

Question: Regarding the unimpededness of Tibetan monks' rebirths, it is good and pretty easy. However, you seem to be unsatisfied with it, why?

Answer: You are mistaken. In my point of view, their rebirths are heavily impeded. Yet, most of the lay followers are ignorant, blindly believing in [the unimpeded rebirth] and negatively influencing each other. Personally, I sense danger in my heart. Therefore, I am not satisfied with it.⁸⁴

Then, in order to clarify his definition of a truly unimpeded rebirth (*zizai zhuan sheng* 自在轉生), Huiding points out three historical Chinese monks as prime examples of unimpeded rebirths, which are characterized by freely choosing birth and fulfilling the prophecy given during the previous life.⁸⁵ Based on these two characteristics, Huiding continues to criticize the system of rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism, and alludes to the unruly lamas in China proper, as he says,

⁸³ Huiding, no.94, 6

⁸⁴ Huiding, no.94, 6

⁸⁵ The three examples given by Huiding are a Tang Dynasty monk, Yuanze (圓澤), a Song Dynasty monk, Kexuan (可宣), and the fourth patriarch of Chan School, Daoxin (道信). Huiding, no.95, 6-7

Regarding the discussions about rebirths in Tibet, those revolving around the Dalai Lama are the most prominent ones. Yet, only the rebirths of the first, the fifth, and the sixth Dalai Lamas show the signs of unimpededness. The rest of [Dalai Lamas' reincarnations] are all found through human endeavors. If multiple children were found [to be possible reincarnations], conflicts would break out. Therefore, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, the system of the golden urn was devised to resolve such conflicts. Then, how can these [Dalai Lamas' rebirths] be called unimpeded? As for the rest [of Tibetan lamas], most of them practice diligently for their whole lives, but fall into coma prior to their deaths. Thus, others have to do divination for them, and have to seek [for their incarnations] in many directions. Even the reincarnation of Master Dayong was found through divination. Whether these reincarnations are true or not cannot be known. How can they be compared to even a fraction of the previously mentioned noble ones' truly unimpeded rebirths? Isn't [admiring Tibetan lamas' rebirth] praising others' pot jar after destroying [our own] golden bowl? As the leader of Chinese student monks in Tibet, Master Dayong gives away a piece of jade for a brick, resulting in today's situation. Recently, I met a so-called "reincarnated lama." Once he arrived in China proper, he started to lose his proper demeanor, to indulge himself in alcohol and meat, to enjoy western products, to wear Chinese and western clothes, and to become morally corrupt. One can see where he had been reborn previously. [Many people] do not use him as a warning, but admires him. Aren't they wrong?⁸⁶

Next, in the tenth pair of question and answer, Huiding continues to criticize the common Tibetan Buddhist practice of chanting the great six-syllable mantra (Ch. *liuzi daming zhou* 六字大明咒; Tib. *oM ma Ni padme hU~M*), a practice he sees as an inefficacious way to achieve higher rebirth, as the article reads,

⁸⁶ Huiding, no.94, 7

Question: Tibetan monks strongly uphold the great six-syllable mantra. Its efficacy is hard to be fully described. I have heard that all Tibetan people chant it. What kind of efficacy can they obtain?

Answer: There are four volumes of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* focusing on the efficacy, usage, and history of the great six-syllable mantra. It is said that practitioners upholding the mantra can be reborn in the pure and adorned world inside the pores of Avalokitêsvara, receiving great happiness. As for those common people who chant the mantra, they do not have any knowledge or understand the logic of the consciousness-only and that of cause and effect. Although they chant the mantra everyday, they drown their minds in searching for rebirths. It is called one's wish and practice diverging from each other. It can be deduced that they cannot be reborn in a pure land. It is also hard for them to be reborn in the human realm.⁸⁷

Thus, Huiding views Tibetan Buddhist system of rebirth with suspicion, and sees it as inferior to the supposedly truly unimpeded rebirths recorded in Chinese Buddhist literatures. He also questions one of the most fundamental Tibetan Buddhist practice, chanting the six-syllable mantra. Furthermore, he sees most of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, both monastic and lay, as ignorant if not superstitious, drowning in mantra chanting and not understanding the theory behind it. Moreover, throughout these answers, Huiding's tone signifies a distain towards Tibetan Buddhism in general, likening it to a "brick" while likening Chinese Buddhism to a "piece of jade."

Yet, there is a glaring inconsistency in Huiding's logic. As seen in his answer to the seventh question, Huiding acknowledges that most Tibetan Buddhist practitioners can be reborn according to their wishes. However, in the ninth answer, he suggests that even the most advanced practitioners have little to none agency in their reincarnation process. Furthermore, he directly

⁸⁷ Huiding, no.94, 7

contradicts himself in the tenth answer by saying that most of Tibetan Buddhists cannot be reborn according to their wishes by chanting mantra. Fazun acutely and harshly points out this inconsistency in his response by writing,

Regarding Tibetan lamas' rebirths, he likens them to inmates wishing to stay in jails. Yet, he acknowledges that most of them have their wishes of rebirths fulfilled in order to prove that he can be reborn a pure land. Furthermore, he criticizes that all members of the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute greedily wish to be reborn in Tibet. This is clearly an attack out of greed and jealousy. ... In the case of a bodhisattva who can be reborn in a pure land but chooses to be reborn in a defiled land or evil destinies in order to maintain Buddhist teachings for the benefit of sentient beings, it is due to the power of one's vow instead of the power of karma. Similarly, in the case of common people who cultivate good karma and can be reborn in a heaven, they can still be reborn in evil destinies or in the human realm due to the power of their own minds. This is also due to the wishing power of one's own mind. This kind of rebirth according to one's wish is undoubtedly possible and many times easier than being reborn in another buddha's pure land. He believes that he himself can be reborn in a pure land through chanting a buddha's name and giving rise to intentions, but he does not believe in the truth that one can be reborn in the human realm through Buddhist practices and one's wish. This is a truly distorted view.⁸⁸

Fazun continues to respond to Huiding's criticism of chanting mantra by exposing its self-contradiction, as he writes,

Regarding Tibetan people's practice of chanting the great six-syllable mantra, on the one hand, he criticizes, "Although they chant the mantra everyday, they drown their minds in searching for rebirths. It is called one's wish and practice diverging from each other. It can be deduced that they cannot be reborn in a pure land. It is

⁸⁸ Fazun 1990

also hard for them to be reborn in the human realm.” On the other hand, he says, “Nowadays, Tibet is the transformation land of Avalokitêśvara. Everyone in Tibet upholds the great six-syllable mantra. It is a unique Buddhist country in the world.” How can any person with a clear mind say these self-contradictory words? If Tibet is the transformation land of Avalokitêśvara, how is it not a pure land? If Tibetan people’s wishes and practices diverge from each other and they cannot be reborn in a pure land or in the human realm, how can Tibet be the transformation land of Avalokitêśvara? You are just mindlessly praising and criticizing according to your own emotions.⁸⁹

Fazun’s tone here may seem too harsh. Yet, considering Huiding’s comment on Dayong towards the end of the ninth answer, it is understandable that Fazun feels offended and the need to vehemently counter Huiding. More importantly, Huiding characterizes Taixu’s, Dayong’s, and Fazun’s project of importing Tibetan Buddhism to complement Chinese Buddhism as “giving away a piece of jade for a brick (*pao yu yin zhuān* 抛玉引砖),” signaling that he carries a prejudice against Tibetan Buddhism from the point of view as a Chinese Buddhist practitioner. In other words, having experienced Tibetan Buddhism firsthand, Huiding eventually judges it as inferior to Chinese Buddhism. In turn, he insinuates that the project of introducing Tibetan Buddhism to China proper is unbeneficial and disturbing to the Chinese Buddhist community, a topic he further discusses later in the twelfth pair of question and answer which reads,

Question: Master, you met with local advisers and brigadiers [in Sichuan] last year, who were planning to send a couple of monks from each prefecture in Sichuan to study Tibetan esotericism in Tibet. They would stay there for ten years before returning to China proper to spread the teachings. Can this wish be realized?

⁸⁹ Fazun 1990

Answer: At the time, because I used ears as eyes, I thought that even the excrement in Tibet is fragrant and sweet. Now, I know that it is not true or reasonable. Sending monastic students [to Tibet] to study [Tibetan Buddhist] teachings and letting them save [Buddhism] in China proper are as difficult as ascending to heavens. If these people do not have the knowledge and the determination like those of Master Xuanzang and Master Yijing, they surely cannot [achieve these goals]. The better ones of them would be mediocre and undiligent in their studies. How can they translate [Tibetan Buddhist scriptures]? If their views are not superior, how can they choose and decide? If their aspirations are not grand, how can they benefit others? If they do not [have these qualities], they can only add more lamas to Tibet. It is not only unbeneficial but also harmful to the root [of Chinese Buddhism]. As for monastic seminaries in Tibet like the three major monasteries [around Lhasa], they have a strong aristocratic atmosphere. If one does not have a wealthy patron constantly supporting him, he probably cannot obtain the great teachings for his whole life. After examining the so-called “great teachings” they do not have any excellent teaching surpassing that of chanting buddhas’ names and seeking better rebirths. Therefore, I now regret [my previous wish to send monks into Tibet].⁹⁰

Here, Huiding makes three major claims. First, he argues that, for the project of importing Tibetan Buddhism to succeed, the Chinese students must have extraordinary qualities — great knowledge and determination. Otherwise, they would not bring back anything beneficial to Chinese Buddhism, and would risk further unsettling it. Second, he suggests that Tibetan Buddhist seminaries mainly benefit monks from wealthy families, making the “great teachings” inaccessible to common people. At last, he argues that Tibetan Buddhism itself does not have anything valuable to add to Chinese Buddhism other than “chanting buddhas’ names and seeking better rebirths.” Thus, for Huiding, the project of importing Tibetan Buddhism undertaken by Taixu, Dayong, and Fazun rests upon the premise that Tibetan Buddhism holds teachings which are superior to those already existent in

⁹⁰ Huiding, no.94, 7-8

Chinese Buddhism, a premise that he refutes. Even if this premise is true, Huiding further argues that these superior teachings are not accessible to Chinese students, because only Tibetan monks from wealthy families are able to attain them due to the environment favoring aristocrats in Tibetan seminaries. Even if Chinese students have gained access to these teachings, he insists that they will not make any contribution to Chinese Buddhism, because they lack the knowledge and determination “like those of Master Xuanzang and Master Yijing.” Thus, in Huiding’s view, sending Chinese monks to study and import Tibetan Buddhism for the sake of reviving Chinese Buddhism is a project doomed from the beginning.

Needless to say, Fazun is enraged by Huiding’s claim, and sets out to debunk it, as Fazun continues to write in his responding article,

Regarding Tibetan monastic education, he criticizes, “As for monastic seminaries in Tibet like the three major monasteries [around Lhasa], they have a strong aristocratic atmosphere. If one does not have a wealthy patron constantly supporting him, he probably cannot obtain the great teachings for his whole life.” Not knowing the truth at all, you are only spreading rumors. With these false speeches, you think that you can discourage countless students. Have you ever stayed in the three major monasteries? Are you familiar with the organization and the situation at the three major monasteries? I shall tell you, and you shall listen carefully! There are more than twenty thousand monks at the three major monasteries. Ninety-nine percent of them are poor and non-aristocratic. Less than one percent of them have wealthy patrons. However, even those with wealthy patrons cannot be exempted from chores like gathering firewood and carrying water. As for their participation in chanting, studying, and debating, it is not different from that of the rest of ninety-nine percent of the monks who are poor. This is my personal experience from the many years that I spent in the three major monasteries. This is the truth. Wealthy people being exempted from manual labor is a common

sense. Also, there are clear regulations in the Vinaya regarding meritorious and wise ones being exempted from monastic chores. There is no special treatment at the three major monasteries like that enjoyed by Master Xuanzang at the Nālandā Monastery. Your speeches do not depend on reality. You lack far-reaching insight, and make sloppy criticisms. Are you not just messing around? When I was at the three major monasteries, I was one of those exempted from monastic chores. Yet, when observing and studying teachings, I was not as free as regular monks sometimes. Therefore, I gave up the slightly higher status of being exempt from monastic chores, and became a regular monk to study teachings. I chose freely from both exoteric and esoteric teachings. How can it be said that [many] cannot hear [the teachings] for [their] entire lives?

Furthermore, regarding the great teachings in Tibet, Master Huiding criticizes, “After examining the so-called ‘great teachings’ they do not have any excellent teaching surpassing that of chanting buddhas’ names and seeking better rebirths.” What exact kinds of Buddhist teachings are there in Tibet? In my opinion, you do not know the answer, so you make this general statement without going into details. Moreover, what are the so-called “great teachings?” You do not give a definition either. Perhaps, the countless sutras and śāstras — *Nyāyamukha*, *Vinaya*, *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-śāstra*, etc. — and the countless esoteric scriptures do not even appear in your dreams. I think, you do not even have a taste of the most popular dharma gate in Tibet of chanting buddhas’ names. Yet, you falsely declare, “[Dharma gate of chanting in Tibet] does not exceed the dharma gate of chanting buddhas’ names practiced by Chinese grandmas.” [This statement] makes people puke after hearing it. Yet, you still say, “after examining ...” You are truly overestimating yourself.⁹¹

Thus, Fazun refutes Huiding’s second and third claims while tacitly acknowledging the first claim. That is, Fazun first uses his personal experience to refute Huiding’s claim that Tibetan seminaries

⁹¹ Fazun 1990

only benefit monks from wealthy families while limiting others' access to higher teachings. As he explains, although a wealth gap does exist among monks in Tibetan seminaries, their treatments do not depend on their financial backing but depend on their merits as prescribed in the Vinaya. Furthermore, Fazun uses himself as an example showing that even a monk from China proper can be exempted from daily chores and freely acquire teachings based on one's merit and capability. Second, regarding Huiding's claim that Tibetan Buddhism does not have any superior teachings, Fazun argues that this claim is too general and lacks any basis, and lays out a series of exoteric and esoteric teachings mainly existent in Tibetan to demonstrate the depth of Tibetan Buddhist teachings. In this way, Fazun poses a direct counterargument against Huiding: not only does Tibetan Buddhism have valuable teachings to complement Chinese Buddhism, but also Chinese students have unrestricted access to them. Moreover, Fazun calls Huiding's credibility into question, a tactic used throughout his responding article, as he writes in the very beginning,

Having read "Answers and Questions about Tibetan Esotericism" published in *Buddhist Studies Bimonthly*, I feel that Huiding does not have a correct view on Buddhist teachings, and only thinks about the easiness of chanting. He has no common sense regarding Tibetan geography and culture. Furthermore, he is a total amateur regarding Tibetan monastic education.⁹²

Despite Fazun's harsh criticism of Huiding, it is important to notice the only agreement between the two throughout this debate. That is, Fazun tacitly agrees that benefiting Chinese Buddhism by importing Tibetan Buddhist teachings does require Chinese monks with exceptional qualities — great knowledge and determination — which were hard to come by at the time. As Fazun writes in a 1949 essay, "Regarding the Origin, Translation, Content, and Commentary of *the Great*

⁹² Fazun 1990

Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (*putidao cidi guanglun de zaozuo fanyi neirong he tijie* 《菩提道次第廣論》的造作, 翻譯, 內容和題解),

Because of the length and the complexity of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, it is hard for practitioners to acquire all its teachings. As I remember, when I was seeking for teachings in Tibet, I studied the chapter on meditation with Master Rigpa from Garze during 1927. At the beginning, many students studied with me, but only Hengming and I were left after some days. In the end, Hengming left too, and I was unable to study it fully too.⁹³

This short passage signifies the lack of determination and perseverance even among the Group of Studying Dharma in Tibet which consists of the most forward-thinking, diligent, and talented Chinese monks at the time. This situation is further exemplified by an article written by Su'an (粟庵 ?-?), a member of the Group who gave up in 1926, titled "My Confession about Abandoning Studying after Reaching Tibet (*ruzang tuixue zhi zishu* 入藏退學之自述)." He writes,

During our two-month stay at Wuyou Monastery, when we were to study the Tibetan language, we would get wary before even opening the book. When we were to study sutras and commentaries, we would get tired as soon as we look at them.⁹⁴

In fact, out of the thirty members of the Group, only ten of them made it to Garze, and only Fazun along with three others were able to reach Lhasa in the end.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the lack of determination and perseverance was a wide-spread problem among the reformists at the time. As Shan observes in her book, "Many reformist monks did not have a firm determination [at the time]. As soon as they met any kind of difficulty, their belief was shaken. ... Some of them even

⁹³ Fazun 1988, 180

⁹⁴ Su'an, 6

⁹⁵ Fazun 1988, 271

converted to Christianity in the end.”⁹⁶ Perhaps due to his personal experience of the lack of determination among his fellow students and colleagues, Fazun constantly emphasizes his strong aspiration throughout all his major articles published after his return to China proper, hoping to cultivate determination and perseverance among his audiences. To summarize, against Huiding’s criticism of Tibetan Buddhism, Fazun questions his credibility and makes two counterarguments: 1. Chinese monks can access higher exoteric and esoteric teachings in Tibetan seminaries; 2. Tibetan Buddhism has valuable teachings which can complement Chinese Buddhism. Despite their disagreements, they both agree that realizing the project of importing Tibetan Buddhist teachings requires Chinese monks with exceptional determination.

iii. Fazun as a Defender for Tibetan Esotericism

Up to this point, Huiding has addressed Tibetan Buddhism in general in his speech. Then, in the second installment of the article in the ninety-fifth issue of the *Buddhist Studies Bimonthly*, Huiding turns the attention to and strongly criticizes Tibetan esoteric Buddhism, as the first pair of question and answer reads,

Question: Master, you studied the *Sutra of the Adorned Mind of Enlightenment* preserved in the Tibetan Buddhist canon last year. I also studied it before. It says that all sentient beings are like one’s parents. After carefully examining it, its teachings are indeed extremely marvelous. Yet, those [Tibetan] lamas all delight in eating meat. How can this be explained according to the meaning of the *Sutra of the Adorned Mind of Enlightenment*?

Answer: After I was ordained [in Tibet last year], I asked my teacher, “I have maintained a vegetarian diet for fifteen years. Should I continue to practice it?” My

⁹⁶ Shan, 259

teacher said, “There is no piece of meat in the world which is not from a sentient being’s life. You are accumulating great virtues by keeping a vegetarian diet for the benefit of other sentient beings. [Therefore,] you should continue to practice it.” This proves that [Buddhist practitioners] should never consume meat according to the true Buddhist teachings. According to my observation, there has been a demonic and heretic habit of eating meat in Tibet from the past. [As for the current situation of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners eating meat], it is a result of the mixture of this demonic and heretic practice and the Buddhist path which have been mingled too long to be separated. Furthermore, those Tibetan people’s habitual karma is so heavy that they turn [consuming meat] into an addiction, instead of abandoning it. Fearing others’ criticism, they make up obscure theories, openly saying that consuming meat is the highest of esoteric teachings which shall not be questioned or destroyed. This kind of discourse is just like a fraud. All unsurpassable Buddhist teachings, either exoteric or esoteric, are from Buddha Shakyamuni. Yet, I do not hear that the Thus Come One consumes meat after renouncing his secular life. Furthermore, at a gathering in Lañkā, [Buddha Shakyamuni] admonishes, “Those meat-eaters are like wolves and tigers. They are not my disciples, and I am not their teacher. Instead, butchers are their teachers.” Recently, a virtuous lay practitioner, Nie Yuntai, says, “Many Confucians talk about all people and animals being their companions. Isn’t it sad for them to say so? Before finishing their sentences, they have already started to use chopsticks to send duck and pork into their mouths.” Tibetan monks studying the *Sutra of the Adorned Mind of Enlightenment* and shamelessly eating their parents’ meat are just like this joke. How can it be tolerated that they use unsupported claims to mask their wrongdoings? If this can be tolerated, what cannot be tolerated? [They say that] it is taught by the Buddhist teachings. [They say that] the highest practice of esoteric teachings is eating meat. If so, would those Buddhist practitioners who do not consume meat be the lowest of all? The Thus Come One likens those meat-eaters to wolves and tigers. Now, their teachings are so supreme that they reach the realm of wolves and tigers. It can be said that they just want to cover up things. No one, except for the most stupid ones, would

tolerate their wrongdoings. Nowadays, there are [Chinese] monks who had stayed in Tibet saying that [Tibetan monks eating meat] is because the land of Tibet, different from that of China proper, does not produce vegetables. Yet, I see with my own eyes that eastern Tibet has all kinds of vegetables. Furthermore, the climate around Lhasa is just like that around Chengdu, so how can they not have vegetables there? Except for a couple of virtuous ones, many [Chinese] monks in Tibet follow suit and adopt [the norm of eating meat]. Furthermore, they cover up their dirt and filth, and collectively deceive others. This is a truly great misfortune during this age of latter dharma.⁹⁷

Here, from the standpoint of a Chinese Buddhist, Huiding addresses one of the most controversial practices of Tibetan Buddhism among his fellow Chinese Buddhists — its non-vegetarianism. At first, by citing his Tibetan master, Huiding argues that accomplished Tibetan masters also see the vegetarian diet as a virtuous and meritorious practice. Then, by using Buddha Shakyamuni’s life experience and speech, he suggests that a non-vegetarian diet is forbidden according to the “true Buddhist teachings.” As for the reason of their non-vegetarian diet, Huiding sees it as a result of influences from the long-standing meat-eating tradition in Tibet. Furthermore, he sees Tibetan esoteric teachings’ tolerance of the non-vegetarian diet as a fraud attempting to coverup and justify this “heretic” practice. At last, he laments the fact that many Chinese monks gave up their vegetarian diet under the influence from Tibetan Buddhism at the time, and advocates that all intelligent and reasonable Chinese Buddhist practitioners should stay away from Tibetan esotericism. In other words, Huiding uses Tibetan Buddhists’ non-vegetarian diet as a basis to argue that Tibetan esotericism is fraudulent and deceiving in nature.

⁹⁷ Huiding, no.95, 6-7

Moreover, Huiding's harsh criticism does not stop here. In his view, Tibetan Buddhist non-vegetarianism is not the only source of bad influence on the Chinese Buddhist community. Later in the third pair of question and answer of the second installment of the article, he addresses another controversial Tibetan esoteric practice — the dual-bodied practice (*shuangshen fa* 雙身法) — which was gaining huge popularity in China proper at the time. The article reads,

Question: Last year, a lama in Beijing secretly transmitted the most advanced dual-bodied practice leading many to corrupt their moralities. This affair attracted many criticisms. Many have been harmed by this kind of behavior. Monks in China proper deem it as a great and disastrous flood. This so-called “the most advanced teachings” of Tibet [often lead to] debauchery and defilement, if not delusion and killing. Wherever Lamaism reaches, precepts-violating, alcohol-drinking, and meat-eating monks emerge, so do non-virtuous laypeople who shamelessly indulge themselves in whoring and gambling. Before seeing its benefits, many receive its harms first. Now, [the influence of Tibetan esoteric teachings] has become a great current, so what should we do in the future?

Answer: During my travel this time, I received the great consecration of Yamântaka from my teacher. This should be a dual-bodied practice, but my teacher only transmitted the single-bodied part. I asked why, and my teacher said, “Single-bodied practice is suitable for practicing in China-proper.” As for my teacher, he entered an esoteric monastic college after obtaining the degree of Geshe at the age of twenty. He studied esoteric teachings diligently for ten years, and spent thirty years meditating in eastern Tibet. Surely, he is an honored elder in the world. Many other [Tibetan] teachers praise that his rhetoric skill is the best these days. Therefore, his teachings can often skillfully match one's ability. Now, the custom of sharing wives still pervades among those Tibetan people, which is the result of their historical traditions. As for the debauchery [among them], it does not concern us. As for China proper, we have practiced Confucian rites for a long time which are

very different [from Tibetan traditions]. After many years, Buddhist teachings also differ [between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism]. Those [lamas mentioned in the question] think to themselves that they can skillfully guide their people by the esoteric teachings passed down by the traditions of their people and land. ... Yet, they want to spread their practices here [in China proper]. Needless to say, they are making a big mistake. ... My teacher's instructions and transmission of the single-bodied practice are indeed correct. He clearly sees that the dual-bodied practice is not suitable for the situation in China proper. [His view] shall be a good example. As for Chinese Buddhist esoteric teachings, they flourished during the Tang Dynasty. At the time, masters [propagating esoterism in China proper] — Amoghavajra, Śubhakarasiṃha, and Vajrabodhi — and Padmasambhava [in Tibet] were all the same. They lived in China proper for a long time, and translated scriptures without any omission. Yet, it is not heard that their teachings include this kind of defiled [dual-bodied] practice. During the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of Song, contradictions and differences between [Chinese and Tibetan esoteric teachings] gradually emerged. In 1017, Emperor Zhenzong issued a decree, saying, “A virtuous recluse passes down teachings in order to benefit sentient beings. Texts are scribed on *patra* leaves for transmission and translation. If teachings passed down by various teachers differ, they shall be examined by the [standard] of wrong and right. It has already lost details, and is filled with errors. Furthermore, the sacrifices of flesh and blood defy truth. The words of hateful curses are clearly against the wonderful principle. Now, because it attracts increasing admiration, this decree is made. The four newly translated volumes of scriptures on the Dual-Bodied Vināyaka Practice shall not be compiled into the canon. From now on, the Department of Transmitting Teachings shall not translate any scripture similar to this one.” [This decree] is recorded in the annals [of Song Dynasty], and it was a fortune at the time. In the past, there were virtuous emperors [like Emperor Zhenzong] guiding from above. If [their guidance] is followed, it can prevent disasters, not letting them spread. Now, our government often engages itself in military affairs, and does not care about political and educational affairs. Therefore,

many people have become ignorant and superstitious, ignoring diligence and rigor. Many have been deeply harmed by the evil spirit [of such esoteric practices], like insects inside of a lion. How can we have another Emperor Zhenzong who can lead with force to exterminate all the ghosts and demons?⁹⁸

To clarify, in the Chinese Buddhist discourse at the time, “the dual-bodied practice” usually refers to the spiritual yoga of sexual union (Ch. *shiyè shouyìn* 事業手印 ; Skt. *karmamudrā* ; Tib. *las kyi phyag rgya*) which can involve practicing with a female consort.⁹⁹ In the classification of New Translation Schools (*gsar ma*) of Tibetan Buddhism, such practice is categorized in the Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra (Skt. *anuttarayogatantra* ; Tib. *bla med kyi rgyud*), the highest of the four categories of tantric practices.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, it is usually reserved for the most advanced practitioners. As Mei summarizes in her article, a Gelugpa monk usually needs to spend about thirty years studying exoteric teachings and to pass various strict exams before he can enter esoteric seminaries to engage in tantric practices.¹⁰¹ Yet, to some Chinese Buddhists unfamiliar with Tibetan esotericism at the time, the dual-bodied practice, like Tibetan lamas’ non-vegetarian diet, appears to be a direct violation of the Vinaya and attracts much opposition. In this context, Huiding argues that Tibetan dual-bodied practice is not suitable for China proper. First, by quoting his Tibetan master, he suggests this is a shared opinion among the most accomplished practitioners in Tibet interested in disseminating Tibetan Buddhism in China proper. Then, he suggests that Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist teachings differ significantly due to their respective historical and social backgrounds. Therefore, it is impossible to adapt Tibetan esotericism to Chinese Buddhism.

⁹⁸ Huiding, no.95, 7-8.

⁹⁹ See more about the term, “dual-bodied practice,” in Mei 1999, 263-264. See more about the term, “spiritual yoga of sexual union,” in Simmer-Brown, 216-223.

¹⁰⁰ Simmer-Brown, 137-139. The term, “New Translation Schools,” refers to the Tibetan Buddhist schools which were formulated after a new wave of translations of Indian tantric materials in the late tenth century, including the Sakya School, the Kagyu School, and the Gelugpa School.

¹⁰¹ Mei 1999, 263-264.

Furthermore, he suggests that the dual-bodied practice was not heard of when the three Indian masters — Amoghavajra (不空 705-774), Śubhakarasiṃha (善無畏 637-735), and Vajrabodhi (金剛智 671-741) — first brought Buddhist esotericism into China proper during the Tang Dynasty. Saying so, Huiding insinuates that Tibetan esotericism, like the non-vegetarian diet, does not originate from India, and, therefore, is not proper Buddhist teachings. Then, he cites Song Emperor Zhenzong's (宋真宗 968-1022) ban on the Dual-Bodied Vināyaka Practice (Ch. *dashengtian huanxi shuangshen pinayejia fa* 大聖天歡喜雙身毘那夜迦法; Skt. *mahārya-nandikēśvara*) to justify the exclusion of any kind of dual-bodied practice from Chinese Buddhism. At the same time, he uses this occasion to criticize the Republican government's support for spreading esotericism in China proper and its lack of proper guidance regarding religious affairs. To cap off his criticism, Huiding voices his strongest disapproval of Tibetan esotericism at the end, as he accuses Chinese Buddhists chasing after it as being “ignorant and superstitious,” and likens it to “insects inside a lion” which should be eradicated in China proper.

Lastly, Huiding claims that Tibetan esotericism has nothing to offer to Chinese Buddhism in the last pair of question and answer appearing in the ninety-seventh issue of *Buddhist Studies Bimonthly*, in which he addresses the Doctrine of Becoming a Buddha in this Very Body (*jishen chengfo yi* 即身成佛義) promised by Tibetan esotericism,

[Despite that] the Doctrine of Becoming a Buddha in this Very Body is real, when compared to the dharma gate of Pure Land [of Chinese Buddhism], [the Pure Land teachings] are much more skillful. ... Everyone, including men, women, elders, children, and people of all professions, can study [the Pure Land teachings]. Everyone of them can practice them, and everyone can go to [the Pure Land]. Furthermore, [the Pure Land teachings] do not require studying exoteric teachings

for decades as a basis. Moreover, they do not require transmitting the teachings in one lineage. ... Therefore, why should [Chinese Buddhists] travel far into [Tibet] only to realize that [the teachings they find] are still [the same as those] in China proper? Why should they waste money [on this project]? I wish that the wise ones can contemplate on this.¹⁰²

As seen in this passage, just like his claim about Tibetan Buddhism in general earlier, Huiding once again argues that Tibetan esotericism does not have superior teachings to complement Chinese Buddhism, so Chinese Buddhists should not waste efforts on importing it. Here, he uses the Pure Land teachings already existent in Chinese Buddhism as an example, and claims that it is superior to Tibetan esoteric Doctrine of Becoming a Buddha in this Very Body, because it is suitable for everyone and does not require time-consuming and strict prerequisites, including years of preliminary studies and abiding in one lineage.

In response, Fazun continues his harsh tone, as Huiding's hostile and dismissive attitude towards Tibetan esotericism further agitates him. Countering Huiding's harsh criticism of Tibetan esotericism based on its non-vegetarianism and dual-bodied practice, Fazun writes in his responding article,

He is deeply upset by Tibetan monks' diet, and scolds it based on scriptures. Surely, Buddhist practitioners should strive towards a vegetarian diet. Yet, meat-eating [Buddhist practitioners] are found not only in Tibet. Even depending on the scriptures of Tripiṭaka, it is hard to thoroughly refute [an omnivorous diet], just like what Master Taixu explains in detail in *Answers and Questions* published in the second issue of *Sound of Tides* this year. Strictly according to *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, if all meat-eaters are not Buddhists, there will be no Buddhists in other countries except for a few vegetarian Buddhists in China! Furthermore, the sutra says, "Meat-eaters sever the seed of great compassion." If this statement is interpreted according to its explicit meaning, the meat-eaters at the gathering [in Laṅkā] and those

¹⁰² Huiding, no.97, 7

nowadays can never obtain minds filled with great compassion! The Buddha gives teachings according to the audience's ability, [so] not every sentence should be interpreted according to its explicit meaning. Furthermore, Buddhist practitioners should not be attached to one [tradition] and attack the rest. Instead, they must be all-encompassing. Master Ciyuan whom you believe is also a meat-eater. If so, does Master Ciyuan have the seed of great compassion? Is he a Buddhist? Do you not fear that saying so contradicts your own belief? Now, I shall firmly declare that I am a vegetarian, and I do not advocate for meat-eating. [On the one hand], I am not saying that meat-eaters cannot study the unsurpassed esoteric teachings. [On the other hand], I am not saying that non-vegetarians cannot study Buddhist teachings.¹⁰³

Regarding Tibetan Buddhists' non-vegetarianism, Fazun first points out that Chinese Buddhists' vegetarian diet itself is an outlier among various Buddhist traditions in the world. Then, regarding Huiding's argument based on Buddha Shakyamuni's life experience and speech, Fazun points out that the Buddha taught based the audience, so it is incorrect to extrapolate meanings from sutras after taking them out of the context. Therefore, he argues that it is unjustified to judge certain Tibetan Buddhist practices based on the tradition and the value palatable to Chinese Buddhism. Hence, it is incorrect to accuse Tibetan esotericism as a fraud covering up the so-called "defiled" practices existing in Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Then, Fazun exploits a loophole in Huiding's logic. On the one hand, Huiding claims that vegetarianism is correct "according to the true Buddhist teachings" by quoting Master Ciyuan. On the other hand, he claims that non-vegetarian Buddhists are not true Buddhists. Yet, having studied with Master Ciyuan, Fazun points out that the master himself is a non-vegetarian. Therefore, Huiding's argument is paradoxical. Having said

¹⁰³ Fazun 1990

so, Fazun continues to refute Huiding's argument regarding the dual-bodied practice based on the same loophole, as he writes,

You do not believe in the dual-bodied esoteric practices at all. On the one hand, you characterize them as filthy teachings. On the other hand, you want to study esoteric teachings in order to follow today's trend, so you learned the great consecration of Yamântaka, and you started to praise Master Ciyuan without limit. You surely can observe opportunities. Yet, you scold the dual-bodied practices as an evil spirit, insects inside a lion, a wide-spread disaster, and [teachings of] ghosts and demons. Not understanding the Buddhist teachings, speaking your minds mindlessly, not examining the real meaning of Buddhist teachings and the skillful means benefiting all sentient beings, and only seeking your own selfish pleasures, people like you are especially laughable and truly pitiful! If the dual-bodied practices should not be practiced, how can Master Ciyuan practice them? Scolding [the dual-bodied practices] like this, are you not scolding Master Ciyuan at the same time? If the master is a ghost or a demon, is he not your teacher? Is he not the only one who should be honored [by you]? Then, what are you? You are disciple of a ghost and a demon! If Master Ciyuan really has great knowledge and is a respected elder, then the teachings studied, practiced, and spread by him cannot be [teachings of] a ghost or a demon, and they cannot be the filthy insects inside a lion! Now, [on the one hand], the teachings unsuitable for China proper or those that you cannot understand or study cannot be said to be non-Buddhist teachings or demonic teachings. On the other hand, the teachings suitable for China proper or those that you can understand and study cannot be said to be Buddhist teachings or non-demonic teachings. All in all, esoteric teachings are esoteric. If you can understand them, how can they be called "esoteric?" I can decisively assert that you do not even understand the single-bodied practice of the great consecration of Yamântaka that you received, because the single-bodied practice of the consecration of Yamântaka still depends on the ritual commentary of the dual-bodied practice. I

shall only say this much, leaving you dreaming indefinitely inside darkness! If you do not repent, you can never have a luminous and golden dream!¹⁰⁴

As Fazun points out, on the one hand, Huiding scolds the dual-bodied practice as “filthy teachings.” On the other hand, Huiding praises and receives consecration from Master Ciyuan who himself practices the dual-bodied practice. Therefore, Huiding’s argument is self-contradictory and falls apart. Furthermore, based on Huiding’s paradoxical position, Fazun continues to characterize him as an opportunist who does not really understand Tibetan esotericism and just makes claims according to the audience’s liking. Regarding Huiding’s argument that the dual-bodied practice and, in turn, Tibetan esotericism are not suitable for Chinese Buddhists, Fazun once again points out that one should not use the Chinese Buddhist tradition and value to judge other forms of Buddhist practices.

Lastly, countering Huiding’s claim that Tibetan esotericism, like its exoteric counterpart, does not have valuable teachings to be imported into China proper, Fazun once again calls Huiding’s credibility into question, as he writes,

Lastly, since you know nothing about esotericism, how can you understand the Doctrine of Becoming a Buddha in this Very Body? You equate the Pure Land teachings to the Doctrine of Becoming a Buddha in this Very Body, [a move showing that] you are just a blind person touching an elephant. Readers can see this themselves, so I do not have to refute you extensively [in this regard].¹⁰⁵

In this way, Fazun refutes Huiding’s harsh criticism and biased characterization of Tibetan esotericism.

¹⁰⁴ Fazun 1990

¹⁰⁵ Fazun 1990

iv. Fazun's View on Propagating Tibetan Esotericism

Although Fazun's defense of Tibetan esotericism based on the flaws of Huiding's reasoning is logically sound, there is one glaring problem in Fazun's response the criticism of the dual-bodied practice. That is, Fazun avoids one of Huiding's strongest arguments: used by some corrupt lamas as an excuse, Tibetan esotericism unsettles and causes declining morality among the Chinese Sangha, so it should not be imported into or practiced in China proper. As discussed previously, some unruly Tibetan lamas created disturbance among the Chinese Buddhist community by publicly breaking the most fundamental monastic rules under the pretense of esotericism to the extent that firm supporters, including the Republican government and Taixu, had to voice their complaints. In this environment, Tibetan esotericism negatively influenced many Chinese Buddhists who were fanatically chasing after its rituals and blessings, just as Huiding's audience puts it, "Wherever Lamaism reaches, precepts-violating, alcohol-drinking, and meat-eating monks emerge, so do non-virtuous laypeople who shamelessly indulge themselves in whoring and gambling. Before seeing its benefits, many receive its harms first."¹⁰⁶ Yet, in this context, it is incorrect to read Fazun's avoidance as a tacit approval for the problematic practices in China proper under the pretense of Tibetan esotericism.

In fact, just like Taixu, Fazun was also deeply unsettled by the troubling phenomena surrounding Tibetan esotericism at the time. In 1936, Fazun published a letter to a layperson in *The Sound of Tides*, titled "Replying to Layman Liu Yu's Letter (*fu liuyu jushi shu* 複劉宇民居士書)," expressing his opinion regarding an incident involving a Chinese monk mingling with female consorts using Tibetan esotericism as an excuse. He writes,

¹⁰⁶ Huiding, no.95, 7

Regarding the incident involving Hengming, how can I know what he truly has in his mind? Therefore, I can only comment on it according to scriptures and precepts. On the one hand, according to the precepts of the lesser vehicle, [Hengming] has been violating monastic rules for a long time, so he should not practice with the Sangha anymore. On the other hand, according to the bodhisattva precepts of the great vehicle and the esoteric practices of the three most advanced categories of tantras, there is no way that a monastic practitioner is allowed to practice with a female consort. Only according to the teachings of the Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra, the mingling [between practitioners and females] can be argued to be permissible to certain extent. Yet, there is a detailed ruling on this incident in *A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. It is said that a celibate bodhisattva cannot practice *The Secret and Insight Initiations* under any circumstance, because they require practicing with physical female consorts. ... If a celibate monk practices these initiations without renouncing precepts first, then he violates the fundamental precepts of bhikkhu and esotericism. ... In other words, even if he is practicing the real esoteric teachings, he needs to renounce the precepts first. There is no justification for a celibate monk receiving and practicing *karmamudrā*. If a celibate monk practices *karmamudrā*, he will not only attract criticism but also violate the true teachings.¹⁰⁷

Thus, Fazun upholds that a practitioner who has taken the precepts of bhikkhu should never practice the dual-bodied practice which involves mingling with females. That is, a monk should only practice those esoteric teachings which do not violate monastic precepts in the first place. To justify his position, Fazun refers to *A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (Ch. *putidao ju lun* 菩提道炬論 ; Skt. *bodhipathapradīpa* ; Tib. *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*) written by Atīśa (Ch. *di xia* 阿底峽 ; Tib. *jo bo rje*), one of the fundamental texts for later the Stages of the Path literature

¹⁰⁷ Fazun 1990

in the Gelugpa school.¹⁰⁸ Although Fazun does not specify the verse, he refers to verse 64 and 65 of the text here, which reads,

- 64 The Secret and Insight Initiations
 Should not be taken by religious celibates,
 Because it is emphatically forbidden
 In the *Great Tantra of Primal Buddha*.
- 65 If those Initiations were taken by one who stays
 In the austerity of a religious celibate,
 It would violate his vow of austerity
 Since he would be practicing what is forbidden.¹⁰⁹

Here, the Secret Initiation (Skt. *guhya* ; Tib. *gsang ba*) and the Insight Initiation (Skt. *prajñā* ; Tib. *shes rab*) are two sets of tantric initiations requiring female partners and categorized within the Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra.¹¹⁰ Based on these two verses, Fazun points out that the dual-bodied practices are not intended for and forbidden to be practiced by the monastic community in Tibet let alone that in China proper. Thus, like Huiding, Fazun also holds certain aspects of Tibetan esotericism are not suitable for the Chinese Sangha. Yet, one subtle difference still remains between the two. On the one hand, Huiding outright rejects these practices as non-Buddhist from the standpoint of a Chinese Buddhist based on their negative influences in China proper. On the other hand, Fazun interprets and explains these practices from the standpoint of a Gelugpa-trained scholar based on precepts and scriptures. That is, for Fazun, the Chinese Buddhist community, either monastic or lay, should practice esotericism according to precepts and pre-existing scriptures,

¹⁰⁸ Atīśa, x

¹⁰⁹ Atīśa, 12

¹¹⁰ Atīśa, 185

especially those upheld by the Gelugpa School, instead of blindly taking whatever Tibetan lamas in China proper have to offer. This position coincides with that of Taixu, who writes in his 1934 article, “The Current Trend of the Revival of Buddhist Esotericism in China,”

Therefore, Chinese [Buddhists] should establish the Chinese esotericism by following Tsongkhapa who uses precepts to regulate [esoteric teachings], instead of accepting all of them. Essentially, in order to revive [Chinese] esotericism in a harmless and beneficial way, we need capable monks, using monastic precepts as the basis and the teachings of nature and characteristics as the regulation, to assimilate Japanese and Tibetan esoteric teachings after studying them thoroughly.¹¹¹

Thus, for both Fazun and Taixu, to combat the chaotic situation surrounding Tibetan esotericism in China proper, it is important to reemphasize the role and the importance of monastic precepts, instead of setting them aside while mindlessly chasing after the efficacies and benefits promised by certain esoteric practices. Furthermore, the emphasis on precepts and the reference to the concept of Stages of the Path in his letter further indicates that Fazun, as a scholar within the broader Chinese Buddhist discourse, operates with the Gelugpa School’s values as a framework for his thoughts and opinions, a result of his extensive Gelugpa training as described earlier.

Moreover, as seen in this passage, Taixu has a high expectation for Fazun, hoping that Chinese esotericism can be revitalized under the lead of capable and learned monks like him. Yet, despite his thorough training in Tibetan Buddhism and the high expectation from Taixu, Fazun’s attitude towards the future of esotericism in China proper and, in turn, Taixu’s project of importing esoteric teachings is rather pessimistic, as he concludes his 1936 letter by writing,

¹¹¹ Taixu 1934

Yet, during this period of latter dharma, the virtue is weak, and the evil is strong. Foolish people are chasing after other foolish ones, and blind people are guiding other blind ones. Those who can speak great lies, who can exhibit crazy behaviors, who can violate precepts, and who can exaggerate are seen as accomplished practitioners not falling under the law of cause and effect, easily amassing great profit from the society. Alas! As for how things will be in the future, it is beyond my deliberation.¹¹²

Thus, Fazun's attitude towards the future of esotericism in China proper differs from Taixu's. On the one hand, as seen in his article, Taixu still has high hopes for the project of reviving Chinese esotericism in a beneficial way by importing teachings from Japan and Tibet, despite the worsening environment around esotericism in China proper. On the other hand, Fazun senses that the situation is too dire to be rectified, and pessimistically admits the project is beyond his capability. Again, this difference between the two's opinions here shows that it is important not to assume Fazun's opinions as repetitions of Taixu's based on the long-term close relationship between the two. That is, as discussed at the end of last section, Fazun shows a more pragmatic attitude towards the measures of the Chinese Buddhist Reform compared to his ambitious teacher. Here, regarding the future of esotericism in China proper, Fazun's sentiment is clearly more pessimistic than Taixu's more optimistic attitude.

Thus, like Huiding and Taixu, Fazun was also deeply troubled by the state of the Tibetan esotericism in China proper. However, unlike Huiding, Fazun holds that the Tibetan esotericism itself is not the root of all the problems, and should not be criticized or rejected unfairly. Instead, the lack of emphasis on precepts, both exoteric and esoteric, during its transmission among both Tibetan lamas and Chinese students leads to the chaos and disturbance in the Chinese Buddhist

¹¹² Fazun 1990

community. Furthermore, as a Gelugpa-trained scholar, Fazun suggests that rectifying this situation requires following precepts and the Stages of the Path, especially those upheld by the Gelugpa School, a position that he shares with Taixu. However, unlike Taixu, Fazun judges the situation around esotericism in China proper to be too severe for him to amend.

VI. Conclusion

Thus, during the late 19th century and the early 20th century, China as a nation was facing tremendous difficulties. After losing several wars against foreign powers and enduring severe internal rebellions, the Qing Empire finally gave way to the Republic of China after the 1911 Revolution. Yet, the nascent nation still faced a series of daunting challenges: the country was poverty-stricken and carved up by various warlords; the frontier regions — Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Tibet — were about to become totally independent states. Propelled by these challenges, Chinese secular intellectuals started to target traditional cultures as the culprit of the Chinese society's inability to overcome its difficulties. In this context, due to the declining quality of the Chinese Buddhist community, Chinese Buddhism was characterized as a “superstition” by secular intellectuals, which should be discarded along with the rest of “old cultures.” Backed by this social sentiment and the call for overhauling the educational system, the Republican government began to confiscate Chinese Buddhist properties on a scale so large that the survival of Chinese Buddhism itself was questionable.

Propelled by the internal problems and the external pressures, Taixu initiated a series of ambitious reforms to overhaul Chinese Buddhism in the 1920s, trying to ensure its survival and creating a new form of Buddhism fit for the modern Chinese society. Simultaneously, a vibrant discourse among Chinese Buddhists also emerged, as many monastic and lay scholars started to voice their opinions regarding many Buddhism-related topics on various newly established Buddhist publications. At the same time, Tibetan esotericism was gaining popularity among the Chinese general public and garnering support from the Republican government. On the one hand, it caters to the spiritual need of Chinese people during a time of instability and hardship. On the other hand, it serves as a bridge with which the Republican government can reach out to and

maintain some influence over Mongolia and Tibet. In this context, Taixu took interests in Tibetan Buddhism. On the one hand, he saw supporting Tibetan Buddhism in China proper as an opportunity to gain political support for his efforts in reforming and improving Chinese Buddhist monastic education. On the other hand, he saw Tibetan esotericism as a source of valuable teachings to further his project of creating a new form of Chinese Buddhism encompassing all three major vehicles. More specifically, he found the Gelugpa School most fitting to his cause with its emphasis on monasticism and precepts and repertoire of esoteric teachings, elements that Chinese Buddhism was lacking at the time. As a result, a Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange ensued in the following decades.

In this context, Fazun, somewhat forced into monkhood by worldly difficulties, started his monastic life as a normal monk in 1920. Through a series of fortunate events, he became acquainted with and a disciple of Dayong who saw potential in him and influenced him to aspire to become a successful Buddhist translator. From 1922 to 1924, thanks to Dayong's connection, Fazun received valuable trainings from Taixu at the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Institute, which made him a competent monastic scholar well-trained in terms of exoteric Buddhism and exposed to esotericism. At the same time, Fazun developed a heartfelt gratitude towards both Dayong and Taixu. Coupled with his aspiration to become a translator and Dayong's eventual plan to study Tibetan esotericism under Taixu's call, Fazun decided to follow Dayong and undertake the project of importing Tibetan Buddhism to China proper. Hence, from 1925 to 1933, Fazun spent almost a decade in Tibet studying with many prominent Gelugpa masters. During this period, he primarily focused on Tibetan exoteric teachings, and received a selection of esoteric teachings and empowerments in the second half of his stay. Despite this experience, his indifferent attitude towards esotericism did not change much compared to that during his early monastic training. Yet,

thanks to being trained in the Gelugpa system, the emphasis on precepts and the notion of the Stages of the Path took root in Fazun's mind, which continued to guide his thinking throughout the 1930s and 1940s after becoming a fully fledged Chinese Buddhist scholar.

Regarding Fazun's career after 1936, the year in which he became the director of Taixu's Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute, past academic works primarily examine it through the lens of increasingly popular Tibetan esotericism in China proper and in tandem with Nenghai, his esotericism-focused colleague. While this approach has its merits, it inevitably leaves Fazun's role and thoughts within the broader Chinese Buddhist Reform underexamined. As this thesis shows, first, Fazun is a critic for Chinese Buddhism at the time. That is, he sees shortcomings in all major Chinese Buddhist traditions, which eventually led to the decline of Chinese Buddhism in the early 20th century. In particular, he sees the Chan School's focus on meditation as the major reason behind Chinese Buddhists' deemphasis on precepts and scriptures, a sign showing influences from his Gelugpa training. Second, Fazun is a firm advocate for Taixu's reform in the context of the split between reformists and traditionalists within the Chinese Buddhist community. In this regard, he suggests that Chinese Buddhists should change the way they teach, study, and practice with an emphasis on precepts and the Stages of the Path. Regarding specific measures, Fazun stands firm behind Taixu's plan while showing a more pragmatic attitude than his ambitious teacher. Lastly, Fazun is firm defender for Tibetan Buddhism, its esotericism, and the project of importing Tibetan Buddhism, when other Chinese Buddhists criticize them due to the troubling situation surrounding esotericism in China proper. Furthermore, he sees Tibetan esotericism primarily through the lens of a Gelugpa-trained scholar, again, with an emphasis on precepts and the Stages of the Path. Despite his firm argument against unjustified criticism, Fazun still acknowledges the disturbance create by Tibetan esotericism in Chinese Buddhist community. Moreover, he holds a rather

pessimistic view regarding the future of properly transmitting esotericism in China proper, while his teacher, Taixu, has a more optimistic attitude. These subtle differences between the master and the disciple signify that it is important not to read Fazun's opinions as repetitions of Taixu's, despite the long-term close relationship between the two.

Overall, I hope that this thesis sheds some light on the role and thoughts of Fazun within the broader context of Chinese Buddhist Reform during the early 20th century, who has been primarily interpreted with an emphasis on esotericism in the past. Furthermore, despite the fact that the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute was shut down in Fazun, as an excellent translator and a Buddhist scholar, continued to contribute to the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist exchange after the founding of People's Republic of China (*zhonghua renmin gongheguo* 中華人民共和國) in 1949. In fact, he continued to translate Tibetan texts even after the devastating Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming* 文化大革命 1966-1976), during which he was treated harshly and even physically assaulted, until his death in 1980.¹¹³ This latter half of Fazun's career has never been examined in depth in either western or Chinese academia, and is beyond the scope of this thesis. In this regard, I hope that this thesis can also serve as foundation upon which future scholars can properly examine his later career.

¹¹³ Fazun 1990

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