

Transplanting the Dharma: The Transmission, Territorialization, and Localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Modern Taiwan

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In memory of Hubert Decleer (1940–2021)



Photo by Sierra Gladfelter, 2011. Used with permission.

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Transcription and Transliteration Conventions

Tibetan terms and names are given throughout this dissertation following the Tibetan and Himalayan Library's (THL) Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan. In this system, most of the letters in a Tibetan word or name can be pronounced following their standard English pronunciations. The primary exceptions are:

- *ö* and *ü*, which are pronounced as in their German usage.
- *e* and *é*, which are both pronounced as the French *é* at the end of a word. This indicates that the final *e* or *é* is not silent. For example, Rinpoché
- *z* and *zh*, which are pronounced more like *s* and *sh*.

On occasions when an individual or organization already commonly used or uses a Romanized spelling of their name, I have chosen to follow the preferences of these persons and organizations instead of the THL phonetic transliteration. I have included the correct orthography in Tibetan script following the first instance of Tibetan terms and names. Transcriptions of direct quotations from recorded interviews and texts translated in-text from Tibetan are included in the footnotes. Anyone who wishes to convert Tibetan terms or text into Wylie transliteration can do so using THL's Online Tibetan Transliteration Converter.¹

For Chinese names and terms, I generally follow standard Pinyin transliteration without the inclusion of tone marks. The primary exceptions to this practice occur in the names of some individuals and places in Taiwan where other transliterations (primarily based on the Wade-Giles

¹ Tibetan and Himalayan Library, "THL's Online Tibetan Transliteration Converter," accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/wyconverter.php>.

system) are more commonly accepted in the Republic of China (Taiwan). For example, *Hualien* not *Hualian*, *Tzu Chi* not *Ci Ji*, *Hsingyun* not *Xingyun*, and so forth. I have included Traditional Chinese characters following the first instance of Chinese terms and names. Additionally, transcriptions of direct quotations from recorded interviews and textual sources in Chinese that I have translated into English in the text of this dissertation are located in the footnotes.

Glossaries of Tibetan and Chinese terms I employ through this text are provided at the end of the dissertation.

List of Abbreviations

BAROC	Buddhist Association of the Republic of China 中國佛教會
BDRC	Buddhist Digital Resource Center
CCP	Chinese Communist Party 中國共產黨, ལུང་གོ་གུང་ཁབ་ཏང་།
CTA	Central Tibetan Administration བོད་མིའི་སྤྱི་གཞི་འཛུགས།, 藏人行政中央
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party 民主進步黨
GTBA	Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association 上密院台北佛學會, ཐའི་པེ་ཁྱུང་རྫོང་ཚོས་ཚོགས།
IFTB	International Forum on Tri-Tradition Buddhism 國際佛教三傳高峰論壇
ITBSI	Taiwan International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute ཐའི་ཨན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཛུགས་ཚོགས་པ།, 中華民國國際藏傳佛教研究會
KMT	Kuomintang 國民黨, གོ་མིན་ཏང་།
MTAC	The Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission 蒙藏委員會, བོད་སོག་ལས་ཁུངས།
MTCC	The Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center 蒙藏文化中心, བོད་སོག་རིག་གཞུང་ལས་ཁུངས།
PLA	People's Liberation Army 中國人民解放軍, ལུང་གོ་མི་དམངས་བཅིངས་འགོའལ་དམག
PRC	People's Republic of China 中華人民共和國, ལུང་ཁྱུ་རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་སྤྱི་མཐུན་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།
ROC	The Republic of China (Taiwan) 中華民國, ལུང་ཁྱུ་མི་མེར་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།

STDBA	The Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association 正法源學佛會
TEPA	True Enlightenment Practitioners Association 佛教正覺同修會
TKBI	Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute 台灣噶舉佛學院
TNPDC	Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyül Dharma Center 台灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心
TRFDL	The Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, ཐའེ་ཨན་པོད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་ཚབ་དོན་གཙོད་ཁང་།
TTBTV	Taiwan Tibetan Buddhism Web TV 台灣藏傳佛教網路電視台/心動新媒體, ཐའེ་ཨན་པོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་པ་རྒྱུ་འབྲས་ལམ་ལུ་འཕྲིན་ལྷན་ཁང་།
TWAT	Tibetan Welfare Association in Taiwan ཐེ་སྡེད་པོད་རིགས་ཚོགས་པ།, 在台藏人福利協會

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Introduction

Over the past forty years, Tibetan Buddhist traditions have thrived in Taiwan, officially the Republic of China (中華民國, ལྷན་རྒྱུ་མེད་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།, hereafter ROC). Tibetan Buddhism has expanded and transformed from an obscure religious minority, with only a small handful of semi-covert practice communities scattered across the island, to a highly visible and dynamic force within contemporary Taiwan's religious landscape. Contributing to the wave of new religious organizations that emerged with "Taiwan's new Buddhism"² starting in the late-1960s, Tibetan Buddhist communities have grown steadily in Taiwan alongside better known Chinese Buddhist organizations, such as Tzu Chi (慈濟基金會), Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), and Buddha's Light Mountain (佛光山). The number of Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan increased drastically from sixty-one in 1980,³ to 131 in 2000,⁴ to 473 in the mid-2010s.⁵ Although difficult to know with certainty, rough estimates put the number of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist faithful at over 500,000 in the late 1990s⁶ and at over 600,000 in the mid-2000s.⁷

² David C Schak, "Community and the New Buddhism in Taiwan," *Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore* 民俗曲藝 163 (2009): 162.

³ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu: minguo mizong nianjian (1911...1992)* 金剛乘事件簿: 民國密宗年鑑 (1911-1992) (Taipei shi 臺北市: Shang zhou chuban 商周出版, 2019), 168.

⁴ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Dongda tushu gufen youxian gongsi 東大圖書股份有限公司, 2007), 119.

⁵ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, "Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi: han zang zhengjiao chuancheng de jiexian yu jiaorong 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制: 漢藏政教傳承的界限與交融," in *Zangchuan fojiao gelupai yu sajiapai: xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji* 藏傳佛教格魯派與薩迦派: 學術研討會論文集, ed. Xu Guixiang 徐桂香 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Wenhua bu 文化部, 2018), 34.

⁶ Abraham Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection: Politics, Piety, and Patronage in Transnational Tibetan Buddhism," in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 391; Kensaku Okawa, "Lessons from Tibetans in Taiwan: Their History, Current Situation, and Relationship with Taiwanese Nationalism," *Dongyang Wenhua Yanjiu Suo Jiyao* 東洋文化研究所紀要 152 (December 19, 2007): 587, <https://doi.org/10.15083/00026962>.

⁷ Government Information Office, *Taiwan Yearbook 2006* (Taipei: Government Information Office, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2006), 345.

Concurrent to the growth in the number of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist centers and practitioners, reincarnate teachers or tulkus (ལྷུ་སྐྱེ།, 活佛), rinpoché (རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 仁波切), lamas (ལྷེ།, 喇嘛), khenpos (མཁན་པོ།, 堪布), geshés (དགེ་བཤེས།, 格西), and other Tibetan Buddhist teachers have come to Taiwan in ever larger numbers. In the thirty years between 1949 and 1979, there were *in toto* only about a dozen Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan. These were a mixture of Tibetan, Mongolian, Han, and Manchu teachers, most of whom came to Taiwan as refugees from the Chinese mainland. The number of local Tibetan Buddhist teachers increased starting in 1980 with a new wave of Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming from the global Tibetan diaspora. By 2000, this number had ballooned to over 500 Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan annually for short durations and over 120 who had long-term residency.⁸ This number has continued to climb, with an average of nearly 1,850 Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan from the global diaspora each year between 2015 and 2019.⁹ These several thousand maroon-robed Tibetan Buddhist clerics are a conspicuous presence on an island that in 2000, according to André Laliberté, had an estimated 9,300 Chinese Buddhist nuns and monks.¹⁰

In short, Tibetan Buddhism has become a significant and increasingly visible part of Taiwan's contemporary religious landscape. Moving around Taipei, the uncontested center of

⁸ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 115.

⁹ The number of Tibetan Buddhist monastics coming from the PRC over the same five-year period was significantly smaller, with only an average of fifty-one each year.. See: Wenhua bu mengzang wenhua zhongxin 文化部蒙藏文化中心, "Haiwai zang seng lai tai hongfa ren ci ji dalu zang seng lai tai hongfa ren ci tongji biao 海外藏僧來臺弘法人次及大陸藏僧來臺弘法人次統計表," Mengzang wenhua zhongxin 蒙藏文化中心, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://mtcc.moc.gov.tw/home/zh-tw/statistics/96663?mark=>.

¹⁰ There are no precise statistics on the number of Chinese Buddhist clergy in Taiwan. Some figures suggest a far higher number of Chinese Buddhist monastics in Taiwan. For example, Elise Anne Devido suggests that in 2010 there may have been around 15,000 active nuns alone in Taiwan. See: André Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003: Safeguarding the Faith, Building a Pure Land, Helping the Poor* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 3; Elise Anne DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 1.

Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, it is almost impossible not to see signs of Tibetan Buddhist life. Billboards advertising Tibetan Buddhist centers hang on the outsides of buildings and maroon-clad monastics ride on the metropolitan region's subways, trains, and buses. Tibetan Buddhist divinities can be glimpsed on necklaces worn by many Taiwanese, on amulets hung from the rear-view mirrors of taxis and private vehicles, as well as on scroll paintings and posters hung in Buddhist-affiliated vegetarian restaurants. The religion sections of many commercial bookstores often have nearly as many shelves filled with translations of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and works by contemporary teachers as they have devoted to works about Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, Tibetan Buddhist teachers are frequently invited as guests or co-officiants at public religious events hosted by Chinese Buddhist organizations, universities, and local governments.

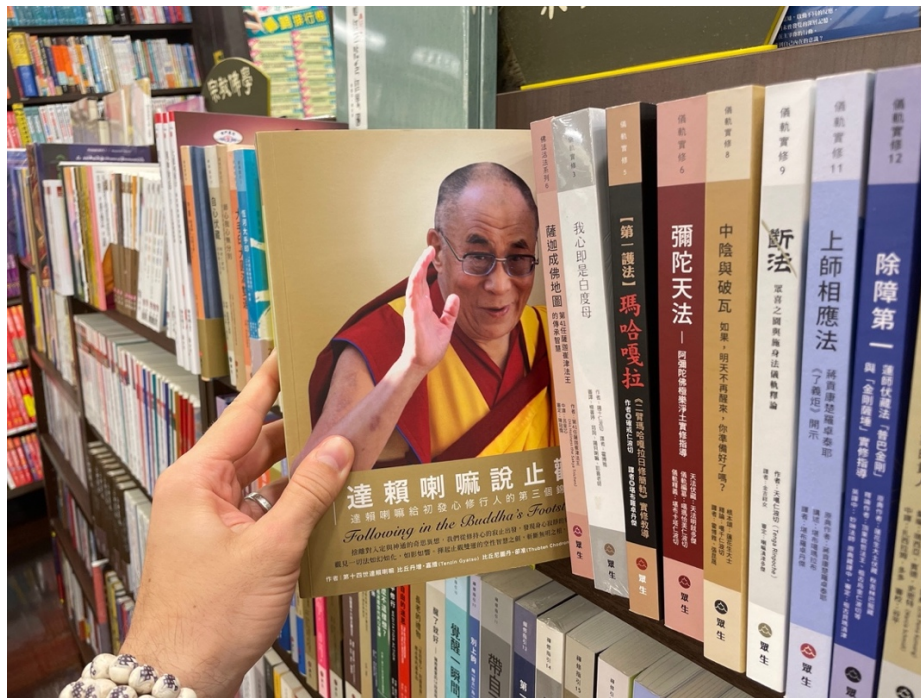


Figure 1: One of several shelves of books related to Tibetan Buddhism at Stepping Stone Bookstore (墊腳石圖書文化廣場), a leading Taiwanese commercial bookstore chain, in Zhongzheng District, Taipei. Photo by author, 2022.

In addition to Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan being notable for its impressive local growth, Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists have long been a critical economic force behind the rebuilding and

flourishing of Tibetan Buddhist religious life in the global diaspora. Despite political tensions between the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (བོད་ས་སྐབས་མགོན་ཏུ་ལའི་ལྷ་མ་ ༡༤ བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་མཚོ།, 第十四世達賴喇嘛丹增嘉措 b. 1935) and the ROC that extended as late as 1997, Taiwanese faithful have been major financial backers of Tibetan Buddhist institution building in South Asia for over forty years. As Yao Lixiang 姚麗香 observed in 2008, “Although they were deeply impressed with the piety of believers in Taiwan...the exiled Tibetan lamas were also impressed with the financial generosity of the Taiwanese...They were fully aware that without the generous donations given by Taiwanese Buddhists, their monasteries in India, Nepal, and Tibet could not be rebuilt, and they would have a much heavier burden meeting living and educational expenses.”¹¹ Taiwanese generosity was not limited to Tibetan Buddhist institutions in South Asia, but as Abraham Zablocki notes, even extended to monastics and Tibetan Buddhist institutions in North America.¹² While Taiwanese disciples have provided magnanimous support, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and leaders have also invested in stationing religious teachers in Taiwan and local institution building. Thus, the impressive growth of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan has been fueled both by the burgeoning local interest of Taiwanese followers as well as the large body of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who have looked to Taiwan as a key source of patronage.

Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ combined interest in growing Tibetan Buddhism has led to Taiwan’s emergence as an important hub in the transnational “constellative networks”¹³ of most Tibetan Buddhist schools and lineages by the turn of the

¹¹ Lixiang Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 605.

¹² Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 407–409.

¹³ Dan Smyer Yü, “A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism: Religious Marketplace, Constellative Networking, and Urbanism,” in *Buddhism and Business: Merit, Material Wealth, and Morality in the Global Market Economy*, ed. Trine Brox, Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, and Mark Michael Rowe (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020), 45.

millennium. Most Tibetan Buddhist institutions in exile have at least one branch center in Taiwan from which they receive significant financial support and many contemporary jet-setting Tibetan Buddhist teachers come to Taiwan regularly to bestow tantric empowerments (རྣམ་འགྲུབ།; 灌頂), lead rituals, and give religious teachings to hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese faithful. Not only that, but the Taipei-Keelung Metropolitan Area (臺北都會區), host to approximately 30% of Taiwan's total population, likely has the most Tibetan Buddhist institutions of any urban area outside of Tibet and the Himalayan region. The cosmopolitan area's more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist centers (中心), associations (會), societies (協會), foundations (基金會), and study centers (學會) make the Taipei region home to one of the highest densities of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the world and a capital in the post-1959 global transmission of Tibetan Buddhism.

This dissertation examines the historical development and contemporary manifestations of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, with a particular focus on communities in the Taipei region. Based upon fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2021 and 2023, this work explores both the historical situation of Tibetan Buddhism during Taiwan's martial law and the subsequent emergence of a major Tibetan Buddhist religious movement in Taiwan over the last forty years. Additionally, I trace the ongoing processes through which Tibetan Buddhism continues to be transmitted across Taiwan, reterritorialized within its physical and spiritual landscape, and localized among the island's diverse religious and social milieu. It is my hope that this study illuminates both the history and central aspects of contemporary Tibetan Buddhist life within this global center of contemporary Tibetan Buddhism.

1. State of Research on Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan

Despite the impressive local growth of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan since 1980, the critical role that Tibetan Buddhist followers on this island have played in the rebuilding of Tibetan Buddhist life in exile has remained largely unexamined. Moreover, the striking scale of Tibetan Buddhist activity in contemporary Taiwan has received surprisingly little attention in English, German, or French language scholarship. On the one hand, the entire phenomenon of Tibetan Buddhism has essentially been largely overlooked in studies examining Taiwan's late-twentieth century Buddhist renaissance. For example, Tibetan Buddhism is not mentioned in most major works that discuss the emergence of new Buddhist organizations in Taiwan starting in the late-1960s, the scale of Tibetan Buddhist growth being far overshadowed by that of the better-known Tzu Chi, Dharma Drum Mountain, Buddha's Light Mountain, and Chung Tai Shan (中台山). Laliberté, for example, only mentions Tibetan Buddhism in passing in his important study of Buddhist organizations in Taiwan between 1989 and 2000.¹⁴

Charles Jones acknowledges the surge of interest in Tibetan Buddhism in the introduction to his monumental history of Buddhism in Taiwan only to say that the "current popularity of Tibetan esoteric Buddhism with its concomitant influx of Tibetan masters" is not within the scope of his work.¹⁵ Jones does briefly mention the role that one Tibetan Buddhist teacher, the Seventh Changkya Qutuytu who I discuss in chapter one, played in the founding of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (中國佛教會, hereafter BAROC), but he does not offer much about Changkya Qutuytu's activities teaching Buddhism.¹⁶ Other oft cited works that

¹⁴ Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 6, 14, 67, 70–71, 138.

¹⁵ Charles Brewer Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State, 1660-1990* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), xiii.

¹⁶ Jones, 138–148.

overview new developments across Buddhist life in Taiwan in the late twentieth century completely omit any mention of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁷

David Schak and Michael Hsiao are perhaps the only scholars who include a Tibetan Buddhist community, Bliss and Wisdom or Fuzhi (福智團體), as part of their broader consideration of the late twentieth century growth of Taiwan's Buddhist institutions.¹⁸ Their work, however, focuses on Bliss and Wisdom's charitable and socially engaged projects. They do not provide much discussion of this Geluk-affiliated organization's history or course of religious study focused on Jé Tsongkhapa's (རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་སློབ་ཐོན་གྲགས་པ།, 宗喀巴羅桑札巴 1357–1419) *Great Treatise on the Stages to the Path of Enlightenment* (ལམ་རིམ་ཚཱེན་མོ།, 菩提道次第廣論).

In Taiwan, scholarly consideration on the local development of Tibetan Buddhism has both a longer history and a much broader diversity of coverage areas. An article by Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟 in 1990 offered the first historical overview of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions in Taiwan. Chen further discusses several obstacles to the tradition's local transmission and its potential benefits for Taiwanese society.¹⁹ Huang Yingjie's 黃英傑 1992 work is similarly historical, providing a timeline for Tibetan Buddhism in the late-Qing and ROC from 1911–1992. In doing so, Huang contextualizes the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan as a direct inheritor to the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism on the Chinese mainland during the late Qing

¹⁷ Cheng-tian Kuo, *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Philip Clart and Charles Brewer Jones, *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Richard Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁸ David C Schak, "Socially-Engaged Buddhism in Taiwan and Its Contributions to Civil Society," in *Development and Practice of Humanitarian Buddhism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mutsu Hsu, Jinhua Chen, and Lori Meeks (Hualien: Tzu Chi University Press, 2007), 197–226; David C Schak and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, "Taiwan's Socially Engaged Buddhist Groups," *China Perspectives* 2005, no. 3 (June 1, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2803>; Schak, "Community and the New Buddhism in Taiwan."

¹⁹ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, "Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教," in *Xizang yanjiu lunwen ji 西藏研究論文集*, vol. 3 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Xizang yanjiu weiyuanhui 西藏研究委員會, 1990), 105–17.

Dynasty (清朝 1644–1911) and early Republican period (approximately 1912–1949). Huang also presents data from a survey he conducted among Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in Taiwan, providing details about their engagement with different Tibetan Buddhist teachings and observations on the obstacles to the local success of Tibetan Buddhism.²⁰

These early works were followed by a flood of other journal articles and book chapters in the late 1990s and early 2000s,²¹ and eventually, in 2007, by the first monograph devoted to Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.²² Most of these studies are broadly concerned with the history and development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, providing historical overviews of prominent teachers and the institutions they started. These studies also illuminate how Taiwan's changing political landscape impacted the local growth of Tibetan Buddhism. While many articles largely

²⁰ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Minguo mizong nianjian* 民國密宗年鑑 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Quan fu wenhua chuban she 全佛文化出版社, 1992).

²¹ Chen Youxin 陳又新, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在台灣," in *Renshi zangchuan fojiao* 認識藏傳佛教, ed. Zheng Zhenhuang 鄭振煌 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Hui ju chuban she 慧炬出版社, 2001), 47–59; Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao: yi xizang xiehui mizong fengzhi jigou zizhi wei zhongxin* 藏傳密宗在台灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討: 以西藏協會密宗分支機構組織為中心 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Xinzheng yuan guojia kexue weiyuanhui 行政院國家科學委員會, 1996); Huang Huili 黃慧琍, "Zangchuan fojiao zai tainan 藏傳佛教在台南," *Nan ying wenxian* 南瀛文獻 2 (2003): 132–45; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu: yi zangchuan fojiao zhongxin wei zhuti zhi fenxi* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究: 以藏傳佛教中心為主體之分析 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Meng zang weiyuanhui 蒙藏委員會, 2003); Liu Guowei 劉國威, "Xizang fojiao zai taiwan de fazhan liucheng 西藏佛教在臺灣的發展歷程," in *Fashen fan xiang: xizang fojiao yishu zhan* 法身梵像: 西藏佛教藝術展 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Guoli lishi bowuguan 國立歷史博物館, 2012), 18–25; Wang Junzhong 王俊中, "Taiwan yu xizang ji zai tai de zangchuan fojiao yanjiu 台灣與西藏及在台的藏傳佛教研究," *Si yu yan* 思與言 37, no. 2 (1999): 69–101; Xiao Jinsong 蕭金松, "Taiwan zangchuan fojiao fazhan guankui 台灣藏傳佛教發展管窺," *Fa guang xuetan* 法光學壇, no. 6 (2002): 102–16; Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, "Zangchuan fojiao daochang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在台灣的發展概況," *Taiwan wenxian* 臺灣文獻 56, no. 2 (2005): 130–52; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," *Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao* 佛學研究中心學報 5 (2000): 313–39; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan: zhongxin lingdao zhe de jingyan fenxi 藏傳佛教在台灣: 中心領導者的經驗分析," in *Taiwan xinxing zongjiao hui lunwen ji* 台灣新興宗教研討會論文集 (Xinxing zongjiao xianxiang yantao hui 新興宗教現象研討會, Zhongyang yanjiu yuan shehui xue yanjiu suo 中央研究院社會學研究所, 2002), 25–39; Zhang Fucheng 張福成, "Zangchuan fojiao zaitai fazhan jianjie 藏傳佛教在台發展簡介," *Fa guang* 法光, no. 141 (2001): 1–8; Zheng Zhiming 鄭志明, "Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan de xiankuang yu sheng si 藏傳佛教在台發展的現況與省思," *Pumen xuebao* 普門學報 30 (2005): 1–21.

²² Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在台灣。

repeat Chen and Huang's historical overviews, studies by Geng Zhenhua 耿振華,²³ Liu Guowei 劉國威,²⁴ and Yao Lixiang²⁵ are noteworthy for including data from interviews and surveys of Taiwanese practitioners and local Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Their data is particularly revealing of the community dynamics, demographics, pressing concerns, and activities of Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan from the mid-1990s to the turn of the millennium.

Starting in the mid-2000s, a number of works have been published in Taiwan that take a narrower focus. Some of these deal with the history of individual Tibetan Buddhist schools in Taiwan. Liu, for example, published monographs on institutions and teachers associated with the Kagyü (ཀུན་གྲུབ།, 噶舉派)²⁶ and Nyingma (འདུན་མཁའ།, 寧瑪派) schools²⁷ of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Similarly, chapters by Weng Shijie 翁仕杰²⁸ and Nawang Jiongnei 拿望炯內²⁹ focus on the local history of the Geluk (དཀོའ་ལྷན་པ།; 格魯派) and Sakya (སུ་བློ།; 薩迦派) schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Contributing to this trend, a handful of Taiwanese graduate students have written theses on the history of individual Tibetan Buddhist communities,³⁰ specific ritual practice

²³ Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao* 藏傳密宗在臺灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討.

²⁴ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究.

²⁵ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在臺灣發展的初步研究”; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan: zhongxin lingdao zhe de jingyan fenxi 藏傳佛教在臺灣:中心領導者的經驗分析.”

²⁶ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Yu zhi chuancheng: zangchuan fojiao gajupai ji qi zai ta fazhan xiankuang* 語旨傳承: 藏傳佛教噶舉派及其在臺發展現況 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Meng zang weiyuanhui 蒙藏委員會, 2017).

²⁷ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin: Zangchuan fojiao ningmapai ji qi zai tai fazhan xiankuang* 承舊鼎新: 藏傳佛教寧瑪派及其在臺發展現況 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Meng zang weiyuanhui 蒙藏委員會, 2015).

²⁸ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, “Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制.”

²⁹ Nawang Jiongnei 拿望炯內, “Fo ri zenghui: sajiapai zai taiwan zhi fazhan jinkuang yu zhangwang 佛日增輝: 薩迦派在臺灣之發展近況與展望,” in *Zangchuan fojiao gelupai yu sajiapai: xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji* 藏傳佛教格魯派與薩迦派: 學術研討會論文集, ed. Xu Guixiang 徐桂香 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Wenhua bu 文化部, 2018), 69–85.

³⁰ Shi Yiyu 石義宇, “Zangchuan fojiao ningmapai zai taiwan de fazhan: yi zhonghua minguo ningmaba larong sangcheng falin foxuehui wei yanjiu 藏傳佛教寧瑪派在臺灣的發展: 以中華民國寧瑪巴喇榮三乘法林佛學會為研究” (Master's Thesis, Jiao xi xiang 礁溪鄉, Fo guang daxue 佛光大學, 2018); Zhuang Lechan 莊樂禪, “Xizang

traditions,³¹ Tibetan Buddhist liturgical music,³² Tibetan Buddhist art,³³ local conversion to Tibetan Buddhism,³⁴ and the development of Tibetan Buddhism in specific regions of Taiwan.³⁵

The first scholarship devoted to Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan published in non-Chinese language publications appeared much later than the earliest works in Taiwan just mentioned. In 2008, Taiwanese scholar Yao Lixiang published a chapter in English that largely repeats information from several of his Chinese language publications mentioned above. Yao provides a succinct overview of the development of different Tibetan Buddhist sectarian traditions and some of the most active Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. Furthermore, he shares data from his interviewees about the demographics and religious activities of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan, as well as the views Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and teachers have of one another and regarding obstacles to Tibetan Buddhism's local growth.³⁶

mizong de xinxing zongjiao tezhi yanjiu: yi jingguangcheng xuehui wei li 西藏密宗的新興宗教特質研究:以金剛乘學會為例”(Master’s Thesis, 大林鎮, 南華大學, 2013).

³¹ Li Renzheng 李仁正, “Fojiao caishen xinyang yu yishi zhi tantao: yi ningmaba zhi ga jing xu foxuehui weili 佛教財神信仰與儀式之探討: 以寧瑪巴智噶經續佛學會為例”(Master’s Thesis, Xinzhu shi 新竹市, Xuanzang daxue 玄奘大學, 2014); Yao Manjing 姚曼菁, “Jingyou baoli fangshi de zheng wu: zangchuan fojiao puba jingang xiu chi de zhuanbian 經由暴力方式的證悟:藏傳佛教普巴金剛修持的轉變”(Master’s Thesis, Taibei shi 臺北市, Guoli zhengzhi daxue 國立政治大學, 2016).

³² Chen Yiling 陳怡伶, “Taiwan zangchuan fojiao gelu jiaopai zhi zongjiaoshi yinyue: yi taibeishi ‘jingxu falin’ zhi ‘shangshi huigong’ wei yanjiu duixiang 台灣藏傳佛教格魯教派之宗教儀式音樂: 以台北市「經續法林」之「上師蒼供」為研究對象”(Master’s Thesis, Taibei shi 臺北市, Zhongguo wenhua daxue 中國文化大學, 2004); Ye Fu’an 葉馥安, “Zangchuan Fojiao Yishi Yinyue Janyjiu Ji Qi Zai Taiwan de Shijian: Yi ‘Qiyuan Fahui’ We Li 藏傳佛教儀式音樂研究及其在台灣的實踐:以「祈願法會」為例”(PhD Dissertation, Jiao xi xiang 礁溪鄉, Fo guang daxue 佛光大學, 2022).

³³ Xie Lingling 謝玲玲, “Tainan zuo zhe gama gaju si fojiao yishu zhi chutan 台南左鎮噶瑪噶居寺佛教藝術之初探”(Master’s Thesis, Jiao xi xiang 礁溪鄉, Fo guang daxue 佛光大學, 2011).

³⁴ Lu Jiachang 盧家昌, “Zangchuan Fojiao Gaju Pai Gui Xin Licheng Zhi Yanjiu 藏傳佛教噶舉派皈依歷程之研究”(Master’s Thesis, Xinzhu shi 新竹市, Xuanzang daxue 玄奘大學, 2014).

³⁵ Huang Huili 黃慧琍, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan chutian: yi tainan diqu de zangchuan fojiao tuanti wei yanjiu duixiang 藏傳佛教在台發展初探: 以台南地區的藏傳佛教團體為研究對象”(Master’s Thesis, Tainan shi 台南市, Tainan shifan xueyuan 臺南師範學院, 2000).

³⁶ Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.”

In 2009, Abraham Zablocki published a chapter about Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan based on research he conducted in Taiwan around the turn of the millennium. Zablocki's chapter provides a historical overview very similar to Yao's. However, whereas Yao highlighted the perspectives of individual Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and teachers, Zablocki's study offers an analysis of the political tensions between the ROC government and exiled Tibetan administration across most of the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Zablocki gives the first analysis in English of the key role the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit to Taiwan played in easing these tensions and opening the door for all Tibetan Buddhist schools to operate openly in Taiwan.

Fabienne Jagou has contributed more than any other scholar to the modest body of literature on Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in English and French. In addition to an article that overviews the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan³⁷ and a chapter examining the history of Tibetan Buddhism in the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan,³⁸ Jagou also edited a volume on Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國, ལྷང་རྒྱ་རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་སྤྱི་མཐུན་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།, hereafter PRC). The studies in this volume offer a sociological analysis of Tibetan Buddhist communal life in contemporary Taiwan,³⁹ an examination of the architecture of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist monasteries,⁴⁰ an account of the recognition of a

³⁷ Fabienne Jagou, "Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taiwan," *Le Monde chinois, nouvelle Asie* 27 (2011): 52–63.

³⁸ Fabienne Jagou, "Tibetan Buddhism in the Tainan Area: A Case Study of Two Karma bKa'rgyud School Monasteries," in *Nan ying lishi, shehui yu wenhua III: bianqian zhong de nan ying zongjiao 南瀛歷史、社會與文化 III: 變遷中的南瀛宗教*, ed. Ye Chunrong 葉春榮 (Tainan shi 台南市: Tainan shi zhengfu wenhua ju 台南市政府文化局, 2014), 407–25.

³⁹ Cécile Campergue, "Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan: Observations Sociologiques Préliminaires," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 21–40.

⁴⁰ Sarah E. Fraser, "Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan: An Exploration of Transnational Religious Architecture," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 41–65.

Taiwanese spirit medium as a Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teacher,⁴¹ and a biographic sketch of one of Taiwan's earliest ethnically Han, Geluk teachers,⁴² among others. In addition to the volume's introduction, Jagou contributed a chapter examining the funerals and post-cremation legacies of two of the earliest teachers of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.⁴³ Most recently, in 2021 Jagou published a monograph-length study of one of these teachers, the Manchu Tibetan Buddhist nun Gongga Laoren (貢嘎老人, née Shen Shuwen 申書文 1903–1997), that analyzes her dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism, local institution building, and influence on the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in the period after 1980.⁴⁴

2. Contributions to Scholarship

Taken together, this body of Chinese, English, and French language scholarship contains several surveys of the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from 1949 through the early 2000s, as well as insights into the lives of several Tibetan Buddhist teachers, communities, as well as ritual and practice traditions in Taiwan. Nevertheless, there remains much more that can be elucidated about the historical development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and its current manifestations. While there are many areas that warrant further consideration, in the following pages I highlight five research gaps that my dissertation addresses.

⁴¹ Ying-chieh Huang, "Spirit-Possession: Identities of a Master and the Rise of a Karma Kagyü Monastery in Taiwan," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 159–76.

⁴² Chin-sung Hsiao, "The Academic Contributions of Ouyang Wuwei Lama (1913–1991): A Disciple's Testimony," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 177–87.

⁴³ Fabienne Jagou, "Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 67–89.

⁴⁴ Fabienne Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997): Her Role in the Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2021).

First, while there have been several publications devoted to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in southern Taiwan,⁴⁵ there has been no work that examines Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei. This is the case despite the fact that Taipei has long been the capital of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan and emerged by the late-1980s as a hub within the global dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism. In extant studies, Taipei is often a passive backdrop, the landing point for Tibetan Buddhist teachers, the host city for empowerments, and the location of Tibetan Buddhist centers. However, there is as far as I am aware, no study that takes Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei as its central subject. This lacuna leaves open a number of questions. How did Taipei become the center of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan? Why have such an astonishing number of Tibetan Buddhist centers formed in the Taipei area? What connects Tibetan Buddhist communities across the Taipei region and what distinguishes these communities from other local Buddhist traditions?

Second, there are almost no studies based upon in-depth qualitative research among *both* Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and teachers in Taiwan. Most of the extant body of ethnographic work was conducted orally in Mandarin or written in Chinese. However, as the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan who are fluent in Mandarin continues to be limited, and the number fully literate in Chinese even smaller, Tibetan Buddhist teachers have been unable to fully participate in these studies on an equal level with Taiwanese. As a result, the research participants in these studies were either exclusively⁴⁶ or majority⁴⁷ Taiwanese practitioners. The

⁴⁵ Huang Huili 黃慧琄, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan chutian 藏傳佛教在台發展初探”; Huang Huili 黃慧琄, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tainan 藏傳佛教在台南”; Jagou, “Tibetan Buddhism in the Tainan Area: A Case Study of Two Karma bKa’rgyud School Monasteries”; Luo Weishu 羅妮淑, “Tainan chongqingsi de fazhan licheng yu nan taiwan zangchuan fojiao fazhan guanxi yanjiu 台南重慶寺的發展歷程與南台灣藏傳佛教發展關係研究,” *Zhonghua foxue xuebao 中華佛學學報* 20 (2007): 305–30.

⁴⁶ Campergue, “Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taiwan”; Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu 金剛乘事件簿*, 180–216.

⁴⁷ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 31–49; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 115–181; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究.”

primary exception is Geng's study, which was based upon a survey offered in Chinese, Tibetan, and English.⁴⁸ Most other ethnographies of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan remain focused on the voices of participants with advanced or native fluency in Mandarin and literacy in Chinese. The perspectives, experiences, and personal histories of Tibetan, Himalayan, and Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist teachers conveyed in their own words remains a rarity.

Third, there has been limited research among Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan in the period after the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's visits to the island in 1997, 2001 and 2009. Studies by Chen,⁴⁹ Huang,⁵⁰ Huang Huili 黃慧琄,⁵¹ Geng,⁵² Liu,⁵³ Wang Junzhong 王俊中,⁵⁴ Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥,⁵⁵ Yao,⁵⁶ and Zablocki,⁵⁷ for example, were all written before or conclude with the Dalai Lama's 1997 or 2001 trips. Studies by Cécile Campergue,⁵⁸ Sarah Fraser,⁵⁹

⁴⁸ Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao* 藏傳密宗在臺灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討.

⁴⁹ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, "Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教."

⁵⁰ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Minguo mizong nianjian* 民國密宗年鑑.

⁵¹ Huang Huili 黃慧琄, "Zangchuan fojiao zai tainan 藏傳佛教在台南."

⁵² Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao* 藏傳密宗在臺灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討.

⁵³ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究; Liu Guowei 劉國威, "Xizang fojiao zai taiwan de fazhan liucheng 西藏佛教在臺灣的發展歷程"; Liu Guowei 劉國威, "Zangchuan fojiao jingdian fanyi zai taiwan zhi fazhan 藏傳佛教經典翻譯在臺灣之發展," *Taiwan mizong guoji xueshu yantaohui* 台灣密宗國際學術研討會1 (November 14, 2004): 1–14.

⁵⁴ Wang Junzhong 王俊中, "Taiwan yu xizang ji zai tai de zangchuan fojiao yanjiu 台灣與西藏及在台的藏傳佛教研究."

⁵⁵ Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, "Zangchuan fojiao daoqiang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在臺灣的發展概況."

⁵⁶ Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan"; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在臺灣發展的初步研究"; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan: zhongxin lingdao zhe de jingyan fenxi 藏傳佛教在臺灣:中心領導者的經驗分析."

⁵⁷ Abraham Zablocki, "The Global Mandala: The Transnational Transformation of Tibetan Buddhism" (PhD Dissertation, Ithaca, Cornell University, 2005), 187–255; Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection."

⁵⁸ Campergue, "Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taiwan."

⁵⁹ Fraser, "Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan."

Huang,⁶⁰ Jagou,⁶¹ Liu,⁶² and Nawang Jiongnei⁶³ discuss developments after 1997. However, these studies remain a minority amongst the extant scholarship and, for the most part, do not offer a broader discussion beyond specific communities, personages, or institutions. Similarly, ethnographic studies of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in the last fifteen years are also rare with only a handful, most of which are based on a rather modest amount of field data.⁶⁴

Fourth, while a sizable number of Taiwanese scholars have written about Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan for over thirty years, their body of work has largely been neglected by Western scholars. Apart from Jagou who draws deeply upon a wide range of Taiwanese scholarship throughout her publications, works by Campergue,⁶⁵ Joshua Esler,⁶⁶ Fraser,⁶⁷ and Zablocki⁶⁸ engage with research published by Taiwanese scholars either in a limited fashion or not at all. This is despite the fact that these scholars focus directly on or touch upon Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan as part of their work. As a result, there is a need to engage the results and insights of Taiwanese scholars more fully in non-Chinese language academic scholarship.

Fifth and finally, scholarly studies in Chinese, English, and French have had relatively little to say concretely about the activities of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and community life in Taiwan in the period before 1980. This is somewhat surprising, given that many of the works

⁶⁰ Huang, “Spirit-Possession: Identities of a Master and the Rise of a Karma Kagyü Monastery in Taiwan.”

⁶¹ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 120–138.

⁶² Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin 承舊鼎新*, 117–119.

⁶³ Nawang Jiongnei 拿望炯內, “Fo ri zenghui 佛日增輝.”

⁶⁴ Li Renzheng 李仁正, “Fojiao caishen xinyang yu yishi zhi tantao 佛教財神信仰與儀式之探討”; Liu Haoqi 劉皓齊, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai zhi zongjiao chuanbo celue yanjiu: yi tai ji senglu de yilu xiaochu celue wei li 藏傳佛教在台之宗教傳播策略研究：以「台籍僧侶」的疑慮消除策略為例” (Master’s Thesis, Taibei shi 臺北市, Guoli zhengzhi daxue 國立政治大學, 2021); Zhuang Lechan 莊樂禪, “Xizang mizong de xinxing zongjiao tezhi yanjiu 西藏密宗的新興宗教特質研究.”

⁶⁵ Campergue, “Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taiwan.”

⁶⁶ Joshua Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese: Mediation and Superscription of the Tibetan Tradition in Contemporary Chinese Society* (Lanham & London: Lexington Books, 2020).

⁶⁷ Fraser, “Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan.”

⁶⁸ Zablocki, “The Global Mandala”; Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection.”

cited above have sections of sometimes several pages devoted to this period. Most discussions of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan before 1980 do little more than list the names of teachers and institutions. There is a paucity of engagement with internal records and publications, leading to a relatively superficial depiction of the activities of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners during the strictest period of Taiwan's nearly forty-years of martial law. How did these Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Han teachers navigate transmitting Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan's strictly controlled social environment? Who were their disciples and how did they engage with each other? What teachings and practices did they transmit and teach to their disciples in Taiwan? How did they relate to BAROC and other Chinese Buddhist institutions? Except for Jagou's excellent study of Gongga Laoren, few answers to these questions have been offered for most of the Tibetan Buddhist teachers and communities in Taiwan before 1980.

These gaps in the extant scholarship on Tibetan Buddhism are significant and I certainly do not fully address all of them or the questions they raise in this dissertation. Nevertheless, my dissertation makes progress and, in some cases, significant strides towards addressing all five areas. While developing a more accurate picture of specific Tibetan Buddhist communities and the actions of individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan before 1980 would require a series of studies well beyond the scope of this dissertation, in chapter one I provide further detail of the lives and dharma promoting activities of several early Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. To do so, I draw upon internal publications from these teachers' followers, historical materials, and photographs that have recently come to light, in addition to works by several Taiwanese scholars.

In chapter two, I provide the first focused study of the most important features shared across communities in the greater Taipei area. Drawing primarily upon ethnographic data I collected while attending several hundred events at fifty-five Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the

Taipei region, this chapter examines some of the most prominent threads that connect Tibetan Buddhist life across this diverse cosmopolitan area and distinguish Tibetan Buddhist communities from other religious organizations. In doing so, this chapter provides the clearest and most detailed study to date of this capital of global Tibetan Buddhist networks.

Above all, my dissertation provides a detailed ethnographic examination of the Tibetan Buddhist landscape of Taiwan in the period after the Dalai Lama's visits. Chapters two, three, four, and five all concern Tibetan Buddhism in twenty-first century Taiwan, drawing upon in-depth qualitative research in Mandarin, Tibetan, and English among Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners. By highlighting the perspectives, experiences, and stories of both Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers as conveyed in their preferred languages, this dissertation discusses the ongoing development of Tibetan Buddhist traditions in Taiwan through the voices of the people most actively contributing to it. Their words highlight not only the complex ways in which Tibetan Buddhism has manifested in Taiwan in the past, but also the ongoing efforts and future aspirations of practitioners and teachers alike for the deeper localization of Tibetan Buddhism as an integral part of Taiwan's future.

3. The Same, Only Different: Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and the PRC

Unlike the relative nascent state of studies about Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, there has been a wealth of scholarly interest in both the revival and spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC following the end of Cultural Revolution (文化大革命, རིག་གནས་གསར་བཟུང་ཆེན་པོ། 1966–1976). In addition to the revival of Buddhism in culturally Tibetan areas, many scholars have paid particular attention to Han peoples' growing interest in Tibetan Buddhism. Their studies have

yielded a number of important insights, for example, regarding the economic significance of Han support for rebuilding and expanding Buddhist institutions in Tibetan cultural areas.⁶⁹ Other studies focus on the interpersonal relations between and among Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Han disciples, underscoring the importance of Tibetan reincarnate teachers' charisma,⁷⁰ illuminate the networks that connect urban Han disciples with remote Tibetan monasteries,⁷¹ and describe Han practitioners' pilgrimage practices to Tibetan monasteries.⁷² Other work focuses on Han mythologization of the Tibetan landscape⁷³ as well as both positive and negative valuations of Tibetan Buddhism that either lubricate or pose obstacles to its broader transmission among Han peoples.⁷⁴ Still other studies examine Tibetan Buddhist practices among Han Chinese, elucidating instances of religious hybridization and superscription across Tibetan and Chinese

⁶⁹ Dan Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China: Charisma, Money, Enlightenment*, Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 99–125; Jane Caple, “Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift: Moral Discourses on Chinese Patronage of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries,” *Religion Compass* 9, no. 11 (November 2015): 462–82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12181>; Jane Caple, “The Lama’s Shoes: Tibetan Perspectives on Monastic Wealth and Virtue,” in *Buddhism and Business: Merit, Material Wealth, and Morality in the Global Market Economy*, ed. Trine Brox and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020), 22–39; John Osburg, “Consuming Belief: Luxury, Authenticity, and Chinese Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism in Contemporary China,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, no. 1 (March 2020): 78–82, <https://doi.org/10.1086/708547>; Magdalena Maria Turek, “The Contemporary Revival of the Barom Kagyü School in Kham,” in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2018), 133–58.

⁷⁰ Alison Denton Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism: A Case Study from Nanjing,” *Social Compass* 58, no. 4 (December 2011): 540–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768611421134>; Dan Smyer Yü, “Pilgrimage to the Illusory: The Tibetan Buddhist Revival And the Politics of Religion in the PRC” (PhD Dissertation, Davis, CA, University of California Davis, 2006), 149–192; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 29–50.

⁷¹ Smyer Yü, “A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism,” 42–51; Turek, “The Contemporary Revival of the Barom Kagyü School in Kham.”

⁷² Catherine Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbeL7KmN_-w; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 75–98.

⁷³ Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 155–190; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 51–74.

⁷⁴ Chen Bing, “The Tantric Revival and Its Reception in Modern China,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito, Études Thématiques (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 415–423; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism,” 547–549; Osburg, “Consuming Belief,” 73–75.

religions,⁷⁵ Han Tibetan Buddhist practice in Chinese cities,⁷⁶ and the ways Tibetan Buddhist practices are adopted by Han Chinese who do not identify as Tibetan Buddhists.⁷⁷ Finally, a growing body of research examines how Tibetan institutions, the Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy (ལྷོ་ཅུང་ཕུ་སྒྲིག་ནང་བསྟན་སྐྱོབ་སྒྲིག་ལེ, 喇榮五明佛學院) foremost among them, and their charismatic leaders have developed programs to teach Tibetan Buddhism to a Mandarin-speaking audience.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 41–70; Ester Bianchi, “Lama Nenghai’s Imprint on Mount Wutai: Sino-Tibetan Buddhism among the Five Plateaus since the 1930s,” in *The Transnational Cult of Mount Wutai: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Kuan Guang, Studies on East Asian Religions (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2021), 255–87; Monica Esposito, “rDzogs Chen in China: From Chan to ‘Tibetan Tantrism’ in Fahai Lama’s (1920-1991) Footsteps,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito, Études Thématiques (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 473–548; Monica Esposito, *The Zen of Tantra: Tibetan Great Perfection in Fahai Lama’s Chinese Zen Monastery*, Buddhism Series (Wil & Paris: UniversityMedia, 2013).

⁷⁶ Alison Denton Jones, “Accidental Esoterics: Han Chinese Practicing Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Sino-Tibetan Buddhism across the Ages*, ed. Ester Bianchi and Weirong Shen (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2021), 378–316; Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 109–154; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism”; Kai Shmushko, “Between the Tibetan Plateau and Eastern China—Religious Tourism, Lay Practice and Ritual Economy during the Pandemic,” *Religions* 14, no. 3 (March 2023): 291, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030291>; Kai Shmushko, “Buddhism, an Urban Village and Cultural Soft Power: An Ethnography of Buddhist Practitioners in Wutong,” *Entangled Religions* 13, no. 1 (June 23, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9709>; Kai Shmushko, “On Face Masks as Buddhist Merit: Buddhist Responses to COVID-19. A Case Study of Tibetan Buddhism in Shanghai,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 22, no. 1 (April 24, 2021): 235–44, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4727565>; Kai Shmushko, “Religious Commodities or Cultural Elements?: Lay Han Practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism and the ‘Living Hall’ (Shenghuo Guan 生活館) Model,” *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, February 28, 2022, 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-08020015>.

⁷⁷ Jones, “Accidental Esoterics: Han Chinese Practicing Tibetan Buddhism.”

⁷⁸ Catherine Hardie and Nicholas S. Hobhouse, “Shouldering His Guru’s Legacy: Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro’s Discourse in Relation to Thos-Bsam-Sgom after the Death of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok,” *Religions* 13, no. 1 (December 1, 2021): 23–24, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010016>; David Germano, “Re-Membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People’s Republic of China,” in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, ed. Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 84–87; Ester Bianchi, “A Religion-Oriented ‘Tibet Fever’. Tibetan Buddhist Practices Among the Han Chinese in Contemporary PRC,” in *From Mediterranean to Himalaya. A Festschrift to Commemorate the 120th Birthday of the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci*, ed. Dramdul and F. Sferra (Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, 2014), 347–74; Ester Bianchi, “Sino-Tibetan Buddhism: Continuities and Discontinuities: The Case of Nenghai’s Legacy in the Contemporary Era,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2017), 300–319, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004340503_013; Ester Bianchi, “Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī: ‘Great Perfection’ (Dzokchen / Dayuanman 大圓滿) and Related Tantric Practices among Han Chinese and Taiwanese Believers in Sertar and Beyond,” in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2018), 109–31; Ester Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery: Tiexiangsi : A Buddhist Nunnery of Tibetan Tradition in Contemporary China*, Orientalia Venetiana (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2001); Holly Gayley, ed., *Voices from Larung Gar: Shaping Tibetan Buddhism for the Twenty-First Century* (Boulder: Snow Lion Publications, 2021); Jue Liang and Andrew Taylor, “Tilling the Fields of Merit: The

There are indeed many parallels that can be drawn between the findings of these studies and Tibetan Buddhism in the Taiwanese context. For example, Bianchi and Jones' contention that many Han practitioners in the PRC are drawn to Tibetan Buddhism because of the spiritual power they believe reincarnate teachers possess⁷⁹ is echoed by claims made by Yao and Liu, as well as in my own ethnographic analysis of Taiwanese faithful.⁸⁰ Similarly, numerous scholars identify the desire to secure patronage as a central motivating factor for Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in both the PRC and Taiwan. Further parallels could be drawn by studying the hybridization of Chinese and Tibetan religious practices, linguistic translation efforts, or pilgrimage practices undertaken by practitioners in both the PRC and Taiwan.

Nevertheless, there are important factors that distinguish the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from that of the PRC. In fact, I would argue that there are compelling reasons why it is more productive to consider Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan as part of the global transnational transmission of Tibetan Buddhism, distinct in many ways from what is occurring on the Chinese mainland. The first reason has to do with the vastly divergent historical trajectories of Taiwan and the PRC in the second half of the twentieth century, which have resulted in starkly different contemporary political and social contexts. The nascent spread of Tibetan Buddhism among Han peoples during the early twentieth century came to a halt on the Chinese mainland during the Cultural Revolution. During this time, Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist institutions were utterly decimated. An estimated 6,000 Tibetan monasteries, shrines,

Institution of Feminine Enlightenment in Tibet's First Khenmo Program," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 27 (January 1, 2020): 231–62, <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/facultypubs/1519>.

⁷⁹ Bianchi, "Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī," 118–119; Jones, "Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism," 547–548.

⁸⁰ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 48; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu" 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," 334.

stūpas and other sites were demolished or damaged,⁸¹ their 115,000–175,000 monastic initiates⁸² imprisoned, tortured, killed, fled into exile, or defrocked and forced to return to lay life. Chinese Buddhism fared little better, as Red Guards were “allowed to ransack temples, destroy images and scriptures, and humiliate monastics,” resulting in Buddhism experiencing “the worst destruction in its whole history in China.”⁸³ As a result, the Cultural Revolution marked a violent break that halted virtually all public Buddhist life in the PRC, including the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism among Han peoples.⁸⁴

While the conditions of Taiwan’s martial law from 1949–1987 placed heavy restrictions on public religious life, Tibetan Buddhism continued to be transmitted, practiced, and, in some cases, was even part of state-sponsored events. While most Tibetan Buddhist teachers kept their activities private and led only modest communities of disciples, they nevertheless continued the process of transmitting Tibetan Buddhism to Han disciples that had begun earlier on the Chinese mainland. As a result, there has been a certain degree of continuity in the public presence and transmission of Tibetan Buddhism among Han peoples in Taiwan that did not exist in the PRC.

Second, the political realities of Tibetans and their Han Chinese disciples in the PRC are very different from the situation in Taiwan. In the PRC, the government in Beijing actively administers the historically Tibetan regions of Ütsang, Kham, and Amdo as the contemporary

⁸¹ Ashild Kolas and Monika P. Thowsen, *On the Margins of Tibet: Cultural Survival on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 48.

⁸² Kolas and Thowsen, 49; Melvyn C. Goldstein, “Bouddhisme Tibétain et Monachisme de Masse,” in *Des Moines et Des Moniales Dans Le Monde: La Vie Monastique de La Parente*, ed. Adeline Herrou and Gisèle Krauskopff (Paris: Éditions L’Harmattan, 2009), 411.

⁸³ Ji Zhe, Gareth Fisher, and André Laliberté, “Introduction: Exploring Buddhism in Post-Mao China,” in *Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions*, ed. Zhe Ji, Gareth Fisher, and André Laliberté (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019), 2.

⁸⁴ There were several Han Tibetan Buddhist teachers who survived the Cultural Revolution by maintaining a low profile. Some of these teachers, such as Ven. Longlian (隆連法師 1909 – 2006) and Fahai Lama (法海上師 1920 – 1991) re-emerged in the early 1980s and even reconnected with some of their students from before the Cultural Revolution. For discussions of these two figures, see: Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery*; Esposito, “rDzogs Chen in China: From Chan to ‘Tibetan Tantrism’ in Fahai Lama’s (1920-1991) Footsteps”; Esposito, *The Zen of Tantra*.

Tibet Autonomous Region along with parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces. While the majority of Han devotees of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC have little to do with the direct governance of ethnic Tibetan areas, they nevertheless are part of an ethnic majority that violently seized control over most of the Tibetan Plateau, led the destruction of Tibetan religious life during the Cultural Revolution, and continues to exercise strict control over the areas where Tibetan Buddhist teachers and monasteries are based. This leads to an uneven power dynamic where although Tibetan Buddhist teachers are elevated over their Han disciples in a spiritual hierarchy, they are structurally disenfranchised as members of an ethnic minority that has and continues to be the recipients of acts of state violence, persecution, denigration, and suppression by the Han-majority Chinese Communist Party (中國共產黨, ལྷོ་ཕོ་ལྷོ་ཐུན་ཏུ་ hereafter, CCP).

The situation in Taiwan, on the other hand, is quite different. Although the ROC Constitution still maintains nominal territorial claims to the Tibetan Plateau,⁸⁵ these claims have been increasingly downplayed in recent years. It is true that there long existed a tense and fraught relationship between the ROC government and the Tibetan government in exile. As I describe in chapter one, this tension was largely the result of a series of attempts by the ROC government to meddle, manipulate, and extend its influence through elements of the Tibetan diaspora. These attempts by the ROC government to extend its influence across the Tibetan exile community led the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile to advocate for a boycott of Taiwan by all Tibetans until as late as 1997.

However, at no point since 1949 has the ROC government controlled Tibetan territory or Tibetans outside of Taiwan. The Taiwanese government was neither involved in the destruction

⁸⁵ A translated version of the latest ROC Constitution can be found here: “Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan),” *Quan guo fagui ziliaoku* 全國法規資料庫 Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed March 4, 2024, <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=A0000001>.

of religious institutions in Tibet nor in their reconstruction and subsequent administration. While the ROC government may have been deeply unpopular among Tibetans in exile until its rapprochement with the Dalai Lama in 1997, its policies, statements, and plans have had relatively negligible impact on the lives of Tibetans both in and outside of Tibet. Additionally, the ROC government has not directed the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist institutions or (at least in the post-martial law period) suppressed local Tibetan Buddhist life.

As a result, while Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan have contended with both strict policies during martial law and more liberal policies in the post-marital law period, the extent of the ROC government's control over Tibetan Buddhism has never extended beyond Taiwan's shores. Moreover, in the past thirty years Taiwan's political climate has become increasingly supportive of the Tibetan diaspora and the plight of Tibetans inside the PRC. Many Taiwanese today see themselves in solidarity with Tibetans as suffering from the PRC's coercive attempts to enforce its ever-growing territorial claims. Concrete evidence of Taiwan's rapprochement with Tibetans can be seen in the establishment of The Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, ཐའེ་ཕན་བོད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་ཚེ་དོན་གཅོད་ཁང་།, hereafter TRFDL) in 1997 as a de facto embassy for the Tibetan government in exile,⁸⁶ the decision in 2017 to defund and restructure the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (蒙藏委員會, བོད་སོག་ལས་ཁུངས་།,

⁸⁶ Pema Thinley, ed., "Taiwan Approves Tibet Office," *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 10 (October 1997): 11–12.

hereafter MTAC),⁸⁷ the establishment of the Taiwan Parliamentary Group for Tibet (台灣國會西藏連線) in 2020,⁸⁸ and Taiwanese politicians' regular participation in local pro-Tibet protests.⁸⁹

Third, although both Taiwan and the PRC experienced significant political reforms in the 1980s, the results of these reforms and their impacts on public religious life have been radically different in each context. While Tibetan Buddhist institutions were rebuilt and Tibetan Buddhism public life re-emerged at an impressive scale across Tibetan areas of the PRC starting in the early 1980s, these institutions were tightly regulated under state control. A range of aspects including the scale of a monastery's infrastructure, the number of monastic initiates, and the organization of large rituals and events are all subject to strict regulation.⁹⁰ State-mandated "Patriotic Education" (爱国主义教育, ལྷོ་གཅེས་ཚོས་གཅེས་ཀྱི་སློབ་གསོ།) began in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in 1996⁹¹ and has only intensified in subsequent years.⁹² The avowedly-atheist PRC state has even become actively involved in the recognition and management of Tibetan reincarnate teachers.⁹³

Moreover, while PRC law allows for the freedom of individual religious belief, it does not allow for public missionization or hosting religious events outside of officially registered venues. While Tibetan Buddhist teachers can often offer public religious teachings to Han disciples who travel to religious institutions in Tibetan areas of the PRC, they cannot legally

⁸⁷ "Renshi fei yu 7000 wan jin 53 ming zhengzhi chuan meng zang hui niandi xideng 人事費逾 7000 萬僅 53 名正職 傳蒙藏會年底熄燈," Ziyou shibao dianzibao 自由時報電子報, August 14, 2017, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2162151>.

⁸⁸ "Cu tai zang lianxi jiaoliu: taiwan guohui xizang lian xian jin cheng li 促台藏聯繫交流:台灣國會西藏連線今成立," RTI Zhongyang guoangbo diantai 中央廣播電臺, July 8, 2020, <https://www.rti.org.tw/news/view/id/2071247>.

⁸⁹ Brian Hioe, "61st Anniversary of Tibetan Uprising Day Commemorated on Sunday," New Bloom Magazine, March 10, 2020, <https://newbloommag.net/2020/03/10/tibetan-uprising-61st/>.

⁹⁰ John Powers, *The Buddha Party: How the People's Republic of China Works to Define and Control Tibetan Buddhism* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 160; Kolas and Thowsen, *On the Margins of Tibet*, 84–90.

⁹¹ Kolas and Thowsen, *On the Margins of Tibet*, 81.

⁹² On Patriotic Education campaigns in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, see: Powers, *The Buddha Party*, 52–91.

⁹³ Osburg, "Consuming Belief," 80–81; Powers, *The Buddha Party*, 104–129.

teach in public outside of culturally Tibetan areas. While many Tibetan clergy continue to travel and clandestinely teach groups of Han students or host life release (ཚོམས།, 放生) and other events in private venues, they cannot openly establish Buddhist centers among their urban-based Han disciples.⁹⁴ Indeed, new regulations in 2022 governing the online dissemination of religious materials have even restricted Tibetan teachers from sharing Buddhist information online.⁹⁵ The reach of this policy endangers the existence of both public and private WeChat groups that have become popular avenues for Tibetan Buddhist teachers to communicate with, offer spiritual guidance, and lead distance Buddhist education courses to groups of their Han disciples.

Starkly contrasting the situation in the PRC, in Taiwan there has been a general lack of regulations passed on religious life following the end of martial law in 1987 and major revisions to the Civil Associations Act (人民團體法) in 1989. As a result, today Taiwan has a highly pluralistic and open religious landscape. Since the presidency of Lee Tenghui (李登輝 1923–2020), governments led by both of Taiwan’s major political parties have maintained an attitude of “religious neutrality,” signaling that the government in the post-martial law period has “relinquished any role in the management of religious affairs.”⁹⁶ Tibetan Buddhist organizations are governed by the same laws as all other civil organizations in Taiwan. Their main requirements are to have a minimum of thirty initiators,⁹⁷ a governing body that hosts regular meetings, articles of association, and to submit an annual report of their financial accounting.

⁹⁴ Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts,” John Osburg, personal communication with author, December 8, 2023.

⁹⁵ Hu Zimo, “Crackdown on Religious Content on the Internet Coming March 1, 2022,” Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights, December 28, 2021, <https://bitterwinter.org/crackdown-on-religious-content-coming-march-2022/>.

⁹⁶ André Laliberté, “Taiwan’s Covenantal Pluralism,” *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. 1 (March 2021): 46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1874144>.

⁹⁷ It is important to note that since most Tibetan, Himalayan, and Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist teachers are neither citizens nor long-term residents of Taiwan, they cannot count towards this number.

Beyond these measures, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and communities face limited regulation and have flourished since the late 1980s in Taiwan's spiritual free market.

Today, Tibetan Buddhist organizations and centers are found across Taiwan, in mixed-use apartment buildings, office buildings, private homes, and stand-alone structures. In contrast to the often-clandestine nature of Tibetan Buddhist teachers operating in the "grey market" of tolerated but not-quite-legal religious activities in the PRC,⁹⁸ Tibetan teachers in Taiwan travel around the island to teach, give empowerments, and conduct rituals in full public view. Together with their Taiwanese disciples, they can establish dharma centers and build monasteries, as well as print and distribute books and translations of Tibetan Buddhist materials. Tibetan Buddhist communities advertise their programming on billboards, websites, public transportation, and anywhere else advertising is allowed. So long as they obtain the required permitting, Tibetan Buddhist groups can hold large-scale empowerments and other events can be held at stadiums, concert halls, conference venues, and even in public outdoor spaces.

Finally, the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan differs from the PRC by virtue of the cohort of Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in disseminating Buddhism and their primary places of affiliation. For the most part, Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in the PRC come from culturally Tibetan and Mongolian areas of the PRC. While there are a number of teachers from the Tibetan diaspora who have been able to travel to the PRC, their public religious activities are largely limited to institutions within ethnic Tibetan areas. Some diasporic teachers have been able to attract a base of Han students from the PRC who participate in events broadcast online

⁹⁸ Fenggang Yang, "The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China," *The Sociological Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 106–114, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2006.00039.x>.

via platforms such as Zoom⁹⁹ or attend teachings given outside of the PRC. However, these teachers have not, as far as I am aware, been able to travel and openly teach outside of Tibetan areas of the PRC due to the tightly controlled religious environment. Most notably, there is a conspicuous absence in the PRC of published materials as well as access to teachings given by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and other closely allied Geluk teachers.

By contrast, the vast majority of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan come from the global Tibetan diaspora rather than the PRC. While some high-profile teachers from the PRC, such as Khenpo Tsültrim Lodrö (མཁན་པོ་ཚུལ་ཁྱིམ་སྒྲོ་ཤོས།, 堪布慈誠羅珠 b.1962), Khenpo Södargyé (མཁན་པོ་བསོད་དེར་རྒྱལ།, 索達吉堪布 b. 1962), and Alak Dorzhi Rinpoché (ཨ་ལགས་དོར་ཞི་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 多識仁波切 b. 1936), have managed to come to Taiwan on one or more occasions and offered teachings to huge crowds in fluent Mandarin, visits to Taiwan by PRC-based Tibetan clergy are a rarity. Statistics from the Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center (蒙藏文化中心, བོད་སོག་རིགས་ལུང་ཁང།, hereafter MTCC) report that only 450 or 2.3% of the 19,863 Tibetan Buddhist teachers who traveled to Taiwan between 2010 and 2023 came from the PRC. The other 97.7% or 19,413 Tibetan clergy who visited Taiwan in this period came from the Tibetan diaspora.¹⁰⁰ Thus, nearly all Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan today come from the global Tibetan diaspora.

⁹⁹ The Forty-first Sakya Tridzin (སྐུ་ཁྱིམ་འཛིན་ ༤༡ པ་གོང་མཁའ་མི་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第四十一任薩迦法王 b. 1945), along with his sons, the Forty-second Sakya Tridzin (སྐུ་ཁྱིམ་འཛིན་ ༤༢ པ་རྒྱ་བཟོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第四十而任薩迦法王 b. 1975) and the Forty-third Sakya Tridzin (སྐུ་ཁྱིམ་འཛིན་ ༤༣ པ་ རྗེན་བཟོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第四十三任薩迦法王 b. 1979), for example, all regularly disseminate teachings online to a global audience that includes disciples in the PRC. For example, on February 20, 2021 I attended an online Green Tārā empowerment at the Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri Center (薩迦文殊佛學會) in Songshan District, Taipei. One of the center’s technology team noted in conversation after the event that in addition to nearly 1,000 viewers on the Chinese language Youtube broadcast (presumably mostly from Taiwan and Hong Kong), more than 3,000 attendees joined a Chinese language stream on Zoom from the PRC. Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri Center technology coordinator, personal communication with author, February 20, 2021.

¹⁰⁰ Wenhua bu mengzang wenhua zhongxin 文化部蒙藏文化中心, “Haiwai zangseng lai tai hongfa renci ji dalu zangseng lai tai hongfa renci tongji biao 海外藏僧來臺弘法人次及大陸藏僧來臺弘法人次統計表。”

Given the background of the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, it is no surprise that most of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist communities are primarily affiliated with monastic institutions in India, Nepal, and Bhutan rather than in the PRC. Even at Tibetan Buddhist centers affiliated with monasteries that have branches in both the PRC and South Asia, the primary reference point when Taiwanese disciples speak of “our monastery” is nearly always an institution in South Asia. Similarly, when Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist communities organize pilgrimages to their “mother monastery” (མ་དགོན།; 母寺/主寺), this almost always means traveling to India, Nepal, or (in rare cases) to Bhutan. Organized travel of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist communities to Tibetan areas of the PRC is much less common.

Accordingly, it is no surprise that the names of Tibetan Buddhist teachers familiar to Tibetan Buddhists in Europe or North America are also familiar to practitioners in Taiwan. Many of these teachers such as Dzongsar Khyentsé Rinpoché (ཇོང་གསར་འཇམ་དབྱེས་མཁེན་བཙུན་པུན་པོ་ཆེ།, 宗薩欽哲仁波切 b. 1961), Mingyür Rinpoché (ཡོངས་དགེ་མི་འགྱུར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 詠給明就多傑仁波切 b. 1975), Garchen Rinpoché (མགས་ཆེན་འཇམ་དགོན་མཚོ་གྲུ་ལ་མཚན།, 第八世噶千仁波切 b. 1936), Gosok Rinpoché (གྲོ་བ་རྗེ་ལྷོ་མགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 怙主果碩仁波切 b.1948), the Forty-first Sakya Tridzin, and Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché (གྲོ་བ་མགོན་ཆེ་ཚང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་འཕྲིན་ལས་ལྷུན་འགྲུབ།, 直貢澈贊法王 b. 1946) are regular visitors to Taiwan. As most of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist centers are primarily affiliated with teachers in the global Tibetan diaspora and institutions in South Asia, it is little surprise that most practitioners feel more connected along transnational networks of these teachers' disciples outside of the PRC than to networks within the PRC. Similarly, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan are more likely to regularly travel across a network of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in

India, Nepal, Taiwan, Singapore, or the United States than they are to secure permission to travel to institutions connected to their lineage or school within PRC.

There is perhaps no starker difference between Han Tibetan Buddhist communities in the PRC and Taiwan than their public relationship to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. In the PRC, the current Dalai Lama is a leading persona non grata and while many Han disciples may privately revere him, public praise of the Dalai Lama is virtually verboten. On the other hand, the Dalai Lama has come to Taiwan on three occasions where he gave teachings to stadiums filled with tens of thousands of followers and was welcomed by most of Taiwan's Buddhist and political establishment. In contrast to the PRC where possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama is either forbidden or politically risky, in Taiwan portraits of the Dalai Lama are displayed in nearly every Tibetan Buddhist center. Images of the Dalai Lama smiling and holding a map of Taiwan appeared on billboards across Taipei in 2018 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the TRFDL.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Taiwanese legislator Freddy Lim (林昶佐 b. 1976) is even known to have a mural of the Dalai Lama on display in his office.¹⁰² Books by the Dalai Lama are found in bookstores across Taiwan and thousands of Taiwanese practitioners travel to Dharamsala every October to attend religious teachings the Dalai Lama offers to Taiwanese disciples.

Taken together, the starkly different historical trajectories of the PRC and Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century and the widely differing approaches their governments take toward governing religion in public life and Tibetan Buddhism specifically have created two vastly different religious landscapes. In the PRC, Tibetan Buddhism exists in Tibetan areas under

¹⁰¹ Xia Xiaohua 夏小华, "Ganxie taiwan: juanzhu xizang liuwang zhengfu quanqiu di yi 感谢台湾：捐助西藏流亡政府全球第一," Radio Free Asia 自由亚洲电台, July 4, 2018, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gangtai/hx-07042018101012.html>.

¹⁰² Brian Hioe, "Will the Dalai Lama Visit Taiwan?," New Bloom Magazine, July 14, 2020, <https://newbloommag.net/2020/07/14/dalai-lama-visit/>.

the tight control of the state and its dissemination in Han-majority areas occurs clandestinely. By contrast, Tibetan Buddhism has thrived in Taiwan's spiritual free market and thousands of monastics come annually to transmit their traditions among Taiwanese faithful. Additionally, Taiwanese practitioners remain largely disconnected from Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC, while Han practitioners within the PRC are often closely connected to teachers and institutions in culturally Tibetan areas of the PRC. For these reasons, this dissertation largely steers away from situating the history and current situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan as part of or representative of the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism among Han peoples in the PRC. Instead, I argue that the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan is more closely tied to the global Tibetan diasporic dissemination of Buddhism or perhaps, considered more narrowly, as part of the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism among Chinese diasporic peoples outside of the PRC.

4. Taiwan's Contemporary Religious and Buddhist Landscape

According to the Pew Research Center's 2014 Global Religious Diversity Report, Taiwan ranks second in the world for its religious diversity.¹⁰³ A 2021 survey by Academia Sinica's Institute of Sociology cited in the United States State Department's "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan" noted that among Taiwan's population of 23.6 million people, 27.9% of the population primarily identified as practitioners of Chinese folk religions, 19.8% as Buddhists, 18.7% as Daoists, and 23.9% as not having any specific religious affiliation. In addition to these larger religions, the report noted significant parts of the population who practice Protestant Christianity (5.5%), the Way of Unity or Yiguandao (一貫道) (2.2%), and

¹⁰³ Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Diversity: Half of the Most Religiously Diverse Countries Are in Asia-Pacific Region" (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, April 2014), 15, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/>.

Catholicism (1.4%), plus a dozen or so other religious.¹⁰⁴ Other statistics give rather different numbers, estimating Taiwanese who practice Chinese folk religions at 42.9%, Buddhism at 26.5%, Daoism at 12.6%, New Religions at 6.8%, Christianity at 6.1%, and those not professing any religion at only 4.5% of the total population.¹⁰⁵ One reason for the variation in these statistics is that many Taiwanese people's religious identities are not exclusive to any one tradition. In fact, some sources claim that up to 80% of the population practice multiple religions.¹⁰⁶

To accommodate such diverse traditions, Taiwan has one of the highest concentrations of religious infrastructure anywhere in the world. Taiwan's Executive Yuan (行政院) notes that there are nearly 33,000 places of worship in Taiwan, with an average of one temple, church, monastery, or other religious building every square kilometer.¹⁰⁷ The concentration is much higher in Taiwan's urban areas, with places of worship affiliated with diverse traditions existing side-by-side or even on top of one another. This was the quite literally the case at a Tibetan Buddhist center I visited in a high-rise building in Taoyuan, for example. During an interview, the resident teacher told me that his center on the eighth floor was sandwiched between a Daoist shrine on the building's seventh floor and a Protestant home church on the ninth floor.¹⁰⁸

Much of Buddhist life in Taiwan in the period since Taiwan's political and social liberalization has been dominated by the island's three largest Buddhist organizations: Tzu Chi, Dharma Drum Mountain, and Buddha's Light Mountain. Founded by the Taiwanese Buddhist

¹⁰⁴ Office of International Religious Freedom, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan" (Washington DC: United States Department of State, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/taiwan/>.

¹⁰⁵ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "National Profiles: Taiwan," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=50c&u=6r>.

¹⁰⁶ Office of International Religious Freedom, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan."

¹⁰⁷ Nei zheng bu 內政部, "Zongjiao xinyang zai taiwan 宗教信仰在臺灣," Xingzheng yuan quanqiu zixun wang 行政院全球資訊網, July 13, 2022, <https://www.ey.gov.tw/state/D00B53C98CD4F08F/0fe638e7-c0bf-401e-b9f2-3db11eed508>.

¹⁰⁸ Geluk rinpoché, interview with author, Taoyuan, September 9, 2022.

nun, Master Chengyen (證嚴法師 b. 1937), as well as the mainland-born monks Master Shengyen (聖嚴法師 1931–2009), and Master Hsingyun (星雲法師 1927–2023) respectively, these organizations grew in popularity especially starting in the 1980s. All three promote Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教), an approach to Buddhist philosophy, practice, and living made popular in Taiwan by the Buddhist master Yinshun (印順導師 1906–2005) that emphasizes active concern for humanity over other realms of existence.¹⁰⁹ While membership estimates are imprecise, in 2007 Richard Madsen noted that Tzu Chi claimed four million members globally,¹¹⁰ Buddha’s Light Mountain claimed over one million global members,¹¹¹ and Dharma Drum Mountain over 300,000 followers. In line with their commitment to engaging human society, these organizations have founded a number of universities and charitable organizations in Taiwan and internationally. For example, Tzu Chi has been particularly active in promoting public health and has built nine hospitals and clinics across Taiwan,¹¹² founded a medical school, and manages one of the largest bone-marrow databanks in the world.¹¹³

In addition to these organizations, other forms of Chinese Buddhism also thrive across Taiwan with thousands of smaller Buddhist temples and shrines as well as monasteries and nunneries, such as Chung Tai Shan in Nantou County, Incense Light Mountain Nunnery (香光山寺) in Daxi District, Chengtian Chan Temple (承天禪寺) in New Taipei City, and Miaotong Monastery (妙通寺) in Kaohsiung. Across virtually all of Taiwan’s Buddhist groups, female

¹⁰⁹ Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), 43–45.

¹¹⁰ Madsen, *Democracy’s Dharma*, xv.

¹¹¹ Madsen, 51.

¹¹² “Yiliao tixi 醫療體系,” *Ci ji yiliao zhe ye 慈濟醫療志業*, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.tzuchi.com.tw/home/index.php/jian-jie/yi-liao-ti-xi>.

¹¹³ C. Julia Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 219.

clergy and worshippers vastly outnumber men. Chün-fang Yü notes that between 1953 and 1998, 75% of participants in monastic ordinations in Taiwan were women. Today, nuns outnumber monks by about four to one.¹¹⁴ Similar ratios are common among lay-dominated Chinese Buddhist¹¹⁵ and, as I will discuss in chapter two, Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan.

In addition to Mahāyāna traditions, in recent years a handful of Vietnamese Buddhist temples and organizations have also been founded in Taiwan. These groups were initially formed to provide religious services to the growing number of Vietnamese migrant laborers who came to Taiwan starting in the 1990s.¹¹⁶ Today, many devotees in these communities are Vietnamese women who have entered transnational marriages with Taiwanese men. Indeed, as Wei-Yi Cheng has documented, several Vietnamese Buddhist organizations were established by Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in direct response to the difficulties faced by Vietnamese women in Taiwan.¹¹⁷ However, as the number of families with members of Vietnamese-descent increase and Vietnamese Buddhist teachers are becoming more widely known, these Vietnamese Buddhist temples and institutions are attracting increasingly wider circles of local faithful.¹¹⁸

Theravāda Buddhism is also present in Taiwan, albeit to a more limited degree. The first Theravāda centers were established in 1995¹¹⁹ and by the early 2010s a study by Chen Jialun 陳

¹¹⁴ Chün-fang Yü, *Passing the Light: The Incense Light Community and Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Taiwan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2013), 26.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 152–153.

¹¹⁶ Wei-Yi Cheng, “Transitioning the Vietnamese Ullambana Festival to Taiwan,” in *Transnational Religious Spaces: Religious Organizations and Interactions in Africa, East Asia, and Beyond*, ed. Philip Clart and Adam Jones (Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020), 169.

¹¹⁷ Wei-Yi Cheng, “Gender Roles in Transmitting Vietnamese Buddhism to Taiwan: Two Case-Studies of Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 23, no. 1 (July 7, 2022): 35–39, <https://doi.org/10.26034/lu.jgb.2022.1990>.

¹¹⁸ In addition to the works cited above, on Vietnamese Buddhism in Taiwan see also: Wei-Yi Cheng, “Transnational Buddhism and Ritual Performance in Taiwan,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 21, no. 1–2 (July 2, 2020): 51–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2020.1723287>; Yu Mingren 俞明仁, “Yuenan xinyimin yu fojiao xinyang: yi taiwan yuenan zhide fojiao wenhua jiaoliu xiehui weili 越南新移民與佛教信仰：以「台灣越南智德佛教文化交流協會」為例,” *Yuanguang fojiao xue xuebao* 圓光佛學學報 30 (2017): 135–98.

¹¹⁹ Wei-Yi Cheng, “Theravada Buddhism in Taiwan,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJZXtppZopM>.

家倫 included data from twenty-seven Buddhist communities that either identified as Theravāda or drew on teachings and practices from the Theravāda tradition.¹²⁰ Unlike Vietnamese Buddhist groups that cater to Vietnamese migrants, Theravāda communities are largely missionizing organizations founded by visiting Theravāda teachers or communities of Taiwanese interested in Theravāda Buddhism.¹²¹ Among this latter population, there have even been some Chinese Buddhist monastic communities who regularly utilize Theravāda concentration (*jhāna*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*) meditation techniques as part of their religious practice regimens.¹²²

Among all of the non-Chinese Buddhist traditions in Taiwan today, however, Tibetan Buddhism is the most widespread by far. As mentioned above, there are more than four hundred Tibetan Buddhist temples, dharma centers, and other organizations across Taiwan and hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese who attend Tibetan Buddhist events and support Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions. These organizations are affiliated with different Tibetan Buddhist teachers, lineages, and monasteries, and mostly operate independently or have only a modest number of local branches. When taken in aggregate, however, these communities make Tibetan Buddhism the largest non-Chinese Buddhist tradition in Taiwan today and one that plays an increasingly prominent role within Taiwan's rich religious landscape.

5. Research Methodology

In terms of my research methodology, I am heavily indebted to Meredith McGuire, Robert Orsi, and other scholars who have articulated guiding methodological concerns for a lived

¹²⁰ Chen Jialun 陳家倫, "Nanchuan fojiao zai taiwan de fazhan yu yingxiang: quanqiu hua de fenxi guandian 南傳佛教在台灣的發展與影響: 全球化的分析觀點," *Taiwan shehuixue* 台灣社會學 24 (2012): 172.

¹²¹ Wei-Yi Cheng, "Theravada Buddhism in Taiwan."

¹²² Yü, *Passing the Light*, 130, 212–213.

religions approach to scholarship. As McGuire notes, a lived religions framework emphasizes “how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people (rather than official spokespersons) in the context of their everyday lives.”¹²³ Scholars of lived religions do not situate their studies within the relative neatness of religious doxographies and prepackaged creeds, or take the “prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices”¹²⁴ present especially in the sacred texts of a tradition as supremely authoritative. Instead, they “grapple with the complexities, apparent inconsistencies, heterogeneity, and untidiness of the range of religious practices that people in any given culture and period find meaningful and useful.”¹²⁵ While this is, in some ways, a far messier process than examining official doctrines, research on lived religions yields a rich picture of how religious traditions are interpreted, practiced, pushed against, ignored, and clung to by their faithful across diverse walks of life. In other words, this approach is deeply invested in illuminating the cornucopia of ways people live out, relate to, negotiate with, and find meaning in their religious traditions and is less interested in exegesis of these religions’ official tenets and soteriological claims.

Such an approach calls for scholars of religion to attend to the continuously unfolding and dynamic ways in which individuals and communities understand, interpret, and embody religious ideas and practices within specific cultural and temporal contexts. As Orsi describes, a lived religions approach is concerned with “what people do with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them, and how in turn people are fundamentally shaped by the worlds they are making as they make these worlds.”¹²⁶

¹²³ Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

¹²⁴ McGuire, 12.

¹²⁵ McGuire, 16.

¹²⁶ Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 3rd ed (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), xxxvii.

Accordingly, such an approach requires becoming deeply embedded within specific cultural contexts and historical moments.

Guided by a lived religions approach, this dissertation is based upon my direct participation in hundreds of hours of Tibetan Buddhist rituals and classes, as well as countless conversations, both in-depth and fleeting, with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners at dozens of dharma centers across Taiwan. Although I was studying the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism, I was not terribly concerned with questions of “correctness” or religious “orthodoxy.” Instead, my investigations centered around understanding what Tibetan Buddhism meant to its Taiwanese faithful, the quotidian successes and obstacles faced by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, and the creative ways both Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners mutually negotiate and co-create new forms of Tibetan Buddhist life and practice.

I completed my ethnographic research primarily in and around the Taipei area over the course of fifteen months between November 2021 and January 2023. Following a path that “jaywalks,” to borrow Greg Johnson’s term,¹²⁷ across the intersections of religious studies, anthropology, history, media studies, geography, and sociology, my dissertation examines the history, development, and current manifestations of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from several angles. During my research, I visited sixty-three Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan, fifty-five of which were in the Taipei region. I conducted seventy-six one to two hour-long semi-structured interviews and led six one to three hour-long focus groups with Tibetan Buddhist teachers, practitioners, Chinese Buddhists, local scholars, government officials, and translators. Moreover, I had innumerable informal conversations with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese attendees and engaged in participant observation at nearly 250 Tibetan Buddhist

¹²⁷ Greg Johnson, *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition*, Studies in Religion and Culture (Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 13.

classes, group practices, and other community events. I conducted these interviews, focus groups, and conversations in Mandarin, Tibetan, and English, depending on which language my conversation partners preferred. Additionally, I collected and reviewed dozens of locally published institutional histories, community periodicals, government publications, biographies of Tibetan Buddhist teachers, and academic studies by Taiwanese scholars.

As Ann Gleig notes, multi-sited ethnographies allow researchers to examine their topics “across multiple time-space boundaries as well as form connections across disparate sites.”¹²⁸ The inherently transnational nature of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan required that I not only attend to Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan, but also the ways in which these groups are connected across transnational networks to other teachers and institutions in South Asia, as well as with communities in Tibetan areas of the PRC, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and even the United States and Canada. Accordingly, in addition to time in Taiwan, I also spent two weeks in October 2022 accompanying a Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist community on their annual pilgrimage from Taipei to their mother monastery and other pilgrimage sites in northern India. My experiences witnessing the group dynamics among the Taiwanese pilgrims, the interactions between Taiwanese pilgrims and the teachers and initiates at their mother monastery, as well as subsequent discussions with Taiwanese and Tibetan leaders of this community form the basis of my discussion in chapter three.

In addition to being able to trace connections and networks over time and across different physical geographies, multi-sited ethnography also increasingly demands that we take seriously “unbounded spaces such as social media as valuable ethnographic sites.”¹²⁹ As online spaces

¹²⁸ Ann Gleig, *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2019), 13.

¹²⁹ Gleig, 13.

have increasingly become supplemental or alternative mediums for religious study, practice, and expression, they are critical to consider in any study of contemporary religious life. This demand became increasingly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic when online spaces often served as the only option for religious communion in areas under lockdown. Accordingly, my research also involved conducting discourse analysis of the social media pages, websites, community messaging groups, and other online spaces of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist communities. I also participated in numerous online events, which included weekly community group dharma practices (ཚོགས་པ་ཚོགས།; 共修), religious teachings (ཚོས་གསུང་།; 說法), dharma assemblies (法會), and even online empowerments hosted by Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei area.

In terms of my time in Taiwan, it was divided into roughly two stages. During the first several months of research, I conducted participant observation at a broad swath of weekly ritual and practice sessions, as well as at teachings, empowerments, and other public Tibetan Buddhist events across the Taipei region. Although I conducted some interviews during this period, I devoted most of my time to getting acquainted with Taipei's vast Tibetan Buddhist landscape by participating in public events and speaking with teachers and members of different Tibetan Buddhist communities. To locate communities, I first looked for a map of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei. Unable to find one, I decided to make a map myself during my fifteen days of hotel quarantine after I arrived in Taiwan in November 2021. Some of the information included came from sectarian websites and lists of dharma centers available from the TRFDL¹³⁰ the

¹³⁰ Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, “Taiwan zangchuan zhongxin 台灣藏傳中心,” Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, July 16, 2017, <https://www.tibet.org.tw/learn-about-tibetan-buddhism/topic/78>.

MTCC,¹³¹ as well as the website Lama.com.tw,¹³² which serves as a clearing house for information related to Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Most of the information, however, came through keyword searches and hours of searching through pages on Google and Facebook.

To ensure that the communities I located were currently active, I only included those organizations that had activity on their websites or social media pages within the last six months. I added communities that met these criteria to a list and a Google My Maps page sorted by primary sectarian affiliation.¹³³ A screenshot of this map appears in chapter two. After my quarantine ended, I continued to expand this map to include other communities I visited or learned about that I had not located or that did not have an online presence. While this map is not exhaustive, at the time of writing it includes information about 186 Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the Taipei region. My hope is that this online map will continue to serve as a living resource being updated by myself as well as members of my evolving network of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners with whom I have shared this resource.

For the latter nine months of my research, I engaged in in-depth ethnographic research among a smaller number of communities affiliated with different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. I continued to conduct participant observation in these communities through regularly attending rituals, study groups, empowerments, and other events. In addition, I used snowball sampling to expand my network of connections beyond the individuals I met at individual dharma centers. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the management of these dharma centers,

¹³¹ Wenhua bu 文化部, “Guonei foxue tuanti wangzhi lianjie yilianbao 國內佛學團體網址連結一覽表,” Kaifang ziliao fuwu wang wenhuabu 開放資料服務網 文化部 (文化部, July 27, 2023), <https://opendata.culture.tw/frontsite/openData/detail?datasetId=625>.

¹³² “Xiuxing yuandi 修行園地,” Lama wang 喇嘛網, accessed October 27, 2023, <https://lama.com.tw/content/place/index.aspx>.

¹³³ Eben Yonnetti, 台北的藏傳佛教中心 བའེ་བའེ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཞུགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་ཁག་ *Tibetan Buddhist Centers in Taipei*, December 18, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1PrstEQZsQmDIYKMAVCXJP_iHtIPwezA&usp=sharing.

the cleric-scholars who lead or assist in leading them, and individual practitioners. Foremost among these communities were the Geluk-affiliated Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association (上密院台北佛學會; ཐའི་ལེ་རྒྱུད་སྟོན་ཚོས་ཚོགས།), the Kagyü-affiliated Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society (善曼日光林佛學會; རུས་མང་ཉི་འོད་གླིང་།), as well as the Taiwan International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute (ཐའི་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།; 中華民國國際藏傳佛教研究會), a trans-sectarian organization with members from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. These organizations are at the center of my discussions in chapters three, four, and five. In addition, I occasionally attended events and spoke with practitioners and leaders of several other dharma centers, including the Sakya-affiliated Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association (正法源學佛會; རྩོམ་སང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འབྲུང་གནས་ཚོས་ཚོགས།) and Taiwan Sugata Dharma Center (社團法人台灣頌噶達佛學會), the Nyingma-affiliated Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyül Dharma Center (台灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心) and Great and Broad Buddhist Lecture and Practice Association (大方廣佛學講修學會), as well as the Kagyü-affiliated Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute (台灣噶舉佛學院) and Taiwan Palmé Monastery Buddhist Society (台北市巴麥佛學會; ཐའི་ཕན་ལྗོད་དཔལ་མེ་དགོན་པའི་ཚོས་ཚོགས།).

All of these communities were led by ethnic Tibetan and Himalayan teachers. For this reason, my discussion in this dissertation should be understood as primarily dealing with the majority of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist communities that are led by ethnic Tibetan, Himalayan, or Mongolian teachers. Although some of Taiwan's largest contemporary Tibetan Buddhist communities, such as Bliss and Wisdom mentioned above, are led by Han teachers, engaging deeply with these communities was beyond the scope of my field research. As a result, Han-led communities appear only occasionally in the discussion that follows.



Figure 2: Author with Kyabgön Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché holding a photo of Pārṇāśavarī following an interview on November 9, 2022. Photo used with permission by Dri Bargyal.

At the outset of this dissertation, it is also important to make clear something of my own positionality as I moved across Taiwan’s Tibetan Buddhist landscape. Not only is this a response to Orsi’s call to break down “the great taboo of religious studies” by being open about our own faith commitments,¹³⁴ but it is also necessary to explain something of how I was able to conduct the research for this dissertation. My identity as a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner with academic training in the study of Buddhism, as well as Mandarin and Tibetan languages greatly facilitated my access to and acceptance among both Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers. For example, many Taiwanese practitioners visibly expressed their approval at my personal religious history and interest in researching Tibetan Buddhism. Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist

¹³⁴ Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 14.

practitioners most frequently addressed me with a sense of shared religious identity as “Dharma Brother Yang” (楊師兄), Yang being my Chinese language surname. Similarly, whether it was because we were speaking in Tibetan or after learning of my years of living in South Asia, many Tibetan Buddhist teachers I conversed with also often expressed a sense of familiarity and appreciation for our shared knowledge of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, history, as well as contemporary institutions and personas. Such expressions confirming our shared acceptance of Tibetan Buddhist worldviews and even social spheres helped, as Gleig describes, to “lubricate the ethnographic encounter”¹³⁵ and undergirded my relationships with conversation partners.

Orsi rightfully notes that “fieldwork proceeds through relationships.”¹³⁶ Ethnographic fieldwork is not a process of extracting information from informants who “possess” it, in order to compile, synthesize, and present it for academic audiences. Rather, it occurs through an intersubjective exchange of stories, memories, disappointments, hopes, joys, and sorrows in which we, as researchers, and those we study among are collectively involved in processes of interpreting, contesting, and understanding. Karen McCarthy Brown declared that whatever else it might be, ethnographic research is foremost “a form of human relationship.”¹³⁷ It is mutually transformative as we engage with people’s accounts of themselves and their worlds openly, attentively, and with a willingness to also disclose our own world and imagination. The work we produce from such research does not stand outside of these interpersonal connections, but rather exists “within the network of relationships...in the company of those among whom we have gone to study, in the field or in the archives.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Gleig, *American Dharma*, 14.

¹³⁶ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xliii.

¹³⁷ Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2001 [1991]), 12.

¹³⁸ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 6.

It is no exaggeration to say that my fieldwork was only possible through the network of relationships that I made across Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan. Many of my meetings and interviews were the result of my own outreach efforts to Tibetan Buddhist teachers, translators, community leaders, and scholars. On numerous occasions, I even approached Tibetan Buddhist teachers who I saw on the subway or met while coming to and from Mandarin language classes at National Taiwan Normal University's Mandarin Training Center (國立臺灣師範大學國語教學中心), where I was also studying Chinese for the first half of my research. While such meetings usually began with me rather awkwardly approaching complete strangers, more often than not, after a period of chatting in Tibetan about what each of us was doing in Taiwan, they ended with exchanging contact information and mutual wishes to meet again in the future.

Other interpersonal connections in Taiwan were facilitated through my personal network among Tibetan Buddhist teachers, monastics, and practitioners that I have developed over more than a decade of living, working, and studying Tibetan language and religion in Nepal, India, and Bhutan. Some individuals I met in Nepal and India were actually in Taiwan during my fieldwork and participated in my research. Other acquaintances introduced me to their colleagues, friends, and sometimes also family members who were in Taiwan. Some of these individuals became key interlocutors as well as good friends over the course of my fifteen months in Taiwan.

Still other connections manifested through my presence as an interested but conspicuous outsider (a white male with curly brown hair) at events that were otherwise attended almost exclusively by Han Taiwanese congregants and ethnic Tibetan or Himalayan teachers. During my initial visits to Tibetan Buddhist centers, I was frequently approached by community members who were often surprised when I replied to them in Mandarin and even more surprised to learn that I preferred reading the Tibetan over the Chinese versions of the course materials and

liturgical texts. Many times, I was invited to meet dharma centers' resident teachers who were also, for the most part, pleasantly surprised to be addressed in a form of Central Tibetan that circulates today as something of a lingua franca among Tibetan Buddhist teachers of Tibetan and Himalayan ethnic backgrounds in diaspora. These teachers would often have nearly as many questions for me as I had of them, providing sufficient reason for additional meetings. Curious community members would also often approach me to inquire where I had studied Chinese and Tibetan, thereby providing a window for me to share about not only my linguistic training but also about my research in Taiwan.

Orsi notes that a lived religions approach demands that we “recognize what people in these other times and places share with us, the ways our stories overlap, and the way in which a shared humanity creates the possibility for deeper understanding.”¹³⁹ To do otherwise, would be to cling to a fallacious objectivity and to refuse those with whom we spend so much time together with in the field the same openness and trust that we hope to receive from them. Moreover, it would also deny our work the ability to speak to the diverse and creative ways the peoples and communities we study have historically and continue to navigate our shared human condition. In my research, I found that an openness to sharing my personal background, academic training, religious identity, and past experiences studying Tibetan religion in Nepal, India, and Bhutan was often an important first step to establishing connections with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners. While many interactions were pleasant and passing, others led to deeper relationships and sustaining friendships with individuals and communities who became central conversation partners and field sites for this research.

¹³⁹ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xlvi.

It is also not an overstatement to note that my ability to communicate with individuals in Mandarin and Tibetan was critical to forming most of these relationships. As I noted above, previous studies by scholars or teams who did not engage Tibetan Buddhist teachers in their preferred language of communication led to the exclusion of most Tibetan speakers' voices from the extant body of research on Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In my own research, I actively sought to include the perspectives of Mandarin and Tibetan speakers equally, communicating and conducting interviews and focus groups in the preferred language of each interlocutor. On many occasions, this involved me code-switching throughout the course of a single interview, following my conversation partners as they switched among languages of communication.

In order to convey the diverse ways in which Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers understand, adapt, and apply religious ideas and practices within their lives, I aspire in this dissertation to let the voices of my interlocutors speak for themselves as much as possible. While I was unable to capture direct quotations during informal conversations, most of my interviewees and focus group participants allowed me to audio record our conversations. As a result, in the pages that follow I include not only my English translations but also transcriptions of my interlocutors' original words in the footnotes.

Throughout this dissertation I use the term "Tibetan Buddhism" to refer broadly to the diverse traditions, schools, and practice lineages of Buddhism that were transmitted from India to the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalayas starting between the seventh and eighth centuries. This is, in some ways, a problematic term. First, it does not acknowledge the myriad groups (Amdowa, Khampa, Minyagpa, Sherpa, Manangi, Mustangi, Dolpopa, Tamang, Hyolmopa, Walungpa, Bhote, Ladakpa, Spitipa, Drukpa, Sharchogpa, Mongol, Buryats, Kalmyks, and many others) who may or may not self-identify as "Tibetan," either by ethnicity or nationality, although they

largely share religious beliefs and numerous cultural practices. Additionally, this is a term that was not used historically by “Tibetan Buddhists,” who referred to their religion as the “religion of the insiders” (ནང་ཚོས།), “the teachings of the insiders” (ནང་བསྟན།), “the holy dharma” (དམ་པའི་ཚོས།), “the buddhadharma” (སངས་རྒྱས་ཚོས།), or “the teaching of the victors” (རྒྱལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ།).

I utilize “Tibetan Buddhism” throughout this dissertation for several reasons. First, “Tibetan Buddhism” is the closest translation of the most common terms used by Tibetan and Mandarin speakers I spoke with in Taiwan. The Chinese term *Zangchuan fojiao* (藏傳佛教) or “Tibetan lineage Buddhism,” and its literal correlate in Tibetan *bö gyü nang ten* (བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།), were the most common ways I heard Tibetan Buddhism referred to in conversations. These Tibetan and Chinese terms are also commonly used in the books, statements, announcements, and online posts that I encountered in my research.

Additionally, alternative terms, such as Vajrayāna Buddhism or Vehicle of Secret Mantra, seem to offer poor alternatives to Tibetan Buddhism. Vajrayāna Buddhism (དོན་ཐེག་པ།), for example, can be claimed by a variety of esoteric traditions in places like Nepal, Japan, China, and Korea that all practice tantric Buddhism. The Vehicle of Secret Mantra (གསང་སྟགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ།), while the translation of an emic Tibetan term, does not technically include the body of exoteric Buddhist teachings and practices that are also vital parts of “Tibetan Buddhism.” Moreover, this term is neither widely used nor readily legible to many readers. Thus, despite its limitations, I employ “Tibetan Buddhism” for its public legibility and because it is the closest correlate to the Chinese and Tibetan terms that were widely used in the communities I researched.

6. Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on this Research

In addition to my research methods, I would be remiss if I did not share some of the profound impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei and my research among them. Border restrictions, limitations on public gatherings, contact tracing requirements, and individual concerns about the coronavirus all contributed to a significant reduction in Tibetan Buddhist activity in Taiwan during the time I was conducting my fieldwork. At dharma practices, rituals, and classes I attended, I was told repeatedly how many more people used to attend such events prior to the pandemic. This was especially true at large events, such as empowerments or dharma assemblies that, even after they were legally allowed, only attracted a fraction of their pre-pandemic crowds. Even at individual dharma centers, I was frequently told that participation had shrunk in some cases by as much as half. This is perhaps not surprising, given that a plurality of Taiwanese participants in Tibetan Buddhist events were themselves at elevated risk due to being over sixty-five years old or caregivers for others at high-risk, especially children and elders. In addition, all in-person gatherings ceased during local spikes in cases, leading some communities to close only for several weeks or even months.

In addition to limits on the size of gatherings and the health concerns of individual Taiwanese practitioners, the Taiwanese government's border policies also had a significant impact on local Tibetan Buddhist communities. Starting in March 2020, the Taiwanese government adopted border restrictions that largely forbade any non-citizens or permanent residents from entering Taiwan. This policy did, however, allow any non-permanent residents and individuals with limited-term visas who were present in Taiwan when it took effect to remain in Taiwan on automatically renewing visas until such time as the borders reopened. As a result of these policies, the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan during my research

was greatly reduced from its pre-pandemic numbers, limited to those with Taiwanese citizenship, permanent residency, or who had been in Taiwan since before border closures came into effect.

In light of these policies, it is little surprise that data from the MTCC on the annual number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who come to Taiwan shows a precipitous drop following the onset of the pandemic. In 2019, MTCC reported 2,080 Tibetan Buddhist teachers who visited Taiwan, 2,014 from the global Tibetan exile community and sixty-six from the PRC. In 2020, this number dropped to only 422 Tibetan Buddhist teachers, 415 from the exile community and seven from the PRC, virtually all of whom came to Taiwan before March. In 2021, while the strictest border controls were in place, the MTCC reported only three Tibetan Buddhist teachers who came to Taiwan from the exile community. In 2022, the numbers recovered somewhat, with 173 Tibetan Buddhist teachers, all from the exile community, entering Taiwan after border closures started to be lifted in the late summer of 2022.¹⁴⁰ When I completed my fieldwork in early 2023, Tibetan Buddhist communities were in the midst of a transition wherein many teachers who had weathered the pandemic in Taiwan were traveling outside for the first time in nearly three years and there was simultaneously an influx of new teachers entering Taiwan.

Many dharma centers I visited relished the automatic visa-extensions that allowed their teachers to remain in Taiwan without having to leave and apply for new visas every few months. With the prospect of not being able to re-enter Taiwan if they left, many Tibetan Buddhist teachers chose to remain and/or were requested by their Taiwanese disciples to remain in Taiwan. With the full-time presence of a religious teacher during the pandemic, some communities actually had more programming than before the pandemic. Other communities I visited, however, noted the difficulties they encountered with their teachers kept outside of

¹⁴⁰ Keoni Everington, "Taiwan's First Stage of Opening Border Starts Sept. 29," Taiwan News, September 22, 2022, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4665244>.

Taiwan by border closures. Some of these communities attempted to organize communal practices on their own or with their teachers leading them remotely. Other communities simply ceased hosting events altogether until border restrictions were lifted.

Taken together, these factors meant that the overall scale of Tibetan Buddhist life that I witnessed in Taipei was greatly reduced and communal dynamics were quite different from the period before the pandemic. This made it difficult for me to assess the scale of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan as it existed before March 2020. Additionally, the border closures meant that while I was able to develop deeper relationships with some Tibetan Buddhist teachers who would otherwise have had to leave Taiwan repeatedly during my fieldwork period, I was also not exposed to the “normal” flow of teachers in and out of Taiwan that most local practitioners are accustomed to. Given the impacts of the pandemic, I hope that my own longitudinal engagement with this topic as well as others’ research in the future may remedy any limitations in my consideration of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in this dissertation.

7. Chapter Outline

This dissertation takes a telescoping approach, starting with an overview of the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and progressively zooming in, first on the city of Taipei, and then on individual Tibetan Buddhist communities, teachers, and practitioners. Chapter one explores the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from its introduction in 1949 through its mass popularization by turn of the millennium. This chapter demonstrates how Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan continued a trend of transmitting Tibetan Buddhism to Han Chinese disciples that had begun on the Chinese mainland during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republican

period. Moreover, I argue that it was not only Han and Manchu teachers, but also Mongolians and Tibetans who were active Buddhist teachers in Taiwan from an early date.

I also contend in this chapter that the post-1980 popularization of Tibetan Buddhism was primarily due to a unique set of circumstances both in Taiwan and among Buddhist teachers in the global Tibetan diaspora. From the Taiwanese side, these factors included Taiwan's "economic miracle," rapid urbanization, the opening of Taiwanese civil society following the end of martial law, and the ensuing "period of pluralization."¹⁴¹ From the Tibetan side, these conditions included the economic uncertainty of life in exile and the commencement of a global search for patronage to support the reconstruction monasteries across South Asia and the maintenance of their monastic bodies. I conclude by considering the impacts of the Dalai Lama's groundbreaking 1997 visit to Taiwan on the local development of Tibetan Buddhism.

The second chapter focuses on Taipei as the capital of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan, examining the diversity and scale of Tibetan Buddhism in the greater Taipei metropolitan area. This chapter asks, what are the primary factors that connect the diverse network of Tibetan Buddhist institutions across Taipei? How do they organize themselves and what types of activities do these communities offer? How do they accommodate and synthesize Tibetan and Chinese religious cultures and languages? What features do Tibetan Buddhist communities share, and what characteristics distinguish them from other religious communities across Taipei's kaleidoscopic religious landscape? What differentiates Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei not only from Tibetan Buddhism in heritage areas, but also from the ways Tibetan Buddhism has manifested in other global contexts, such as in Europe or North America? Applying Ludwig

¹⁴¹ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, esp. 178–183; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Taiwan diqu guangfu hou fojiao bianqian chutan 台灣地區光復後佛教變遷初探," *Furen xue zhi: fa, guanli xueyuan zhi bu* 輔仁學誌: 法, 管理學院之部 20 (1988): 237, 242–244.

Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance" (*Familienähnlichkeit*),¹⁴² this chapter presents seven characteristics that are shared across much of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei. While not an exhaustive list, these characteristics are helpful to identify some of the common threads that connect communities across this capital of global Tibetan Buddhism. Furthermore, they help to distinguish members of Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist "family" from other local religious traditions.

Telescoping in further, chapters three, four, and five each illuminate specific aspects of the transmission, territorialization, and localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan through the lens of specific Tibetan Buddhist communities and organizations. Chapter three describes how the exchange of financial support and spiritual services continues to be a primary animating force in the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan. Drawing on Bradford Verter¹⁴³ and Hugh Urban's¹⁴⁴ discussions of spiritual capital, this chapter highlights the exchange of spiritual and financial capital as a central dynamic that animates the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese faithful. It asks what are the specific avenues and strategies pursued by Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers to facilitate the exchange of spiritual and financial capital? What roles do Taiwanese laity and Tibetan Buddhist teachers play in recognizing and ascribing value to spiritual capital? How are the rates at which these forms of capital are exchange renewed and reset? What are the potential consequences of disruptions in the rates of exchange? Through the example of the Taipei Gyütö Buddhist Association's annual

¹⁴² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: The MacMillan Company, 1963), 32.

¹⁴³ Bradford Verter, "Bourdieu and the Bāuls Reconsidered," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 182–92, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570068042360198>; Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 2 (June 2003): 150–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9558.00182>.

¹⁴⁴ Hugh B. Urban, "Sacred Capital: Pierre Bourdieu and the Study of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 15, no. 4 (January 1, 2003): 354–89, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006803322697416>; Hugh B. Urban, "Spiritual Capital, Academic Capital and the Politics of Scholarship: A Response to Bradford Verter," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2005): 166–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570068054305583>.

pilgrimage to their mother monastery in northern India, this chapter illustrates how the rates at which religious teachers, institutions, and laity exchange different types of capital are not static, but are actively maintained and renewed through iterative practices.

Chapter four considers how Tibetan Buddhist divinities are introduced and become established as agentive forces within the Taiwanese landscape. It asks how can the area wherein Tibetan Buddhist deities are understood to effect apotropaic change be expanded into new geographies? How does a previously unknown divinity get introduced and come to be accepted by a new community of practitioners? Through examining the process through which Tibetan Buddhist teachers introduced the protectress Parṇaśavarī (འཇམ་ལེ་བུ་མ་ལོ་མ་གྲོ་བ་མཎའ་ཤེས་པ་མཚན་མོ།, 葉衣佛母) to the members of the Taipei-based Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society starting in March 2020, this chapter considers the process through which Parṇaśavarī took root within the Taiwanese landscape. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's discussions of de- and reterritorialization,¹⁴⁵ I argue that Buddhist divinities like Parṇaśavarī go through processes of *spiritual de- and reterritorialization* as they are carried across geographies and their spheres of agentive influence are extended into new locales. Examining this process as it occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, this chapter considers what role moments of acute collective crisis play in catalyzing religious change. Ultimately, I argue that the Bhumang Nyiöling community's adoption of practices to Parṇaśavarī demonstrates how Buddhist teachers and communities today enact processes of *spiritual de- and reterritorialization* as they transmit, adapt, and create homes for their religious traditions and cosmologies in new geographic and cultural contexts.

¹⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Finally, chapter five considers efforts to organize and localize Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan's kaleidoscopic religious landscape. This chapter examines the founding impetus and work of the Taiwan International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute. Specifically, I describe how this organization has pursued strategies to localize Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan by responding to public criticism of Tibetan Buddhism, collectively organizing Tibetan Buddhist monastics from diverse sectarian backgrounds, engaging in dialogue with other local Buddhist traditions, and by providing pastoral services to Taiwan's small population of ethnic Tibetans. I ask how can responses to public criticism precipitate a religious tradition growing deeper roots in a new locale? What mechanisms have helped to unite the otherwise disparate and autonomous body of Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan? How have outreach efforts to teachers and organizations from other Buddhist traditions contributed to a greater acceptance of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan? In what ways is non-sectarianism being mobilized to unite Tibetan Buddhist clerics in Taiwan? And finally, what avenues have Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan taken to partner with and provide services for Tibetans in Taiwan? I suggest that the work of this organization has contributed to Tibetan Buddhism growing deeper local roots and may, in fact, mark the emergence of a novel, Taiwanese form of Tibetan Buddhism.

In the conclusion, I suggest that Tibetan Buddhism had recently entered a distinctly new phase in its development in Taiwan. Tibetan Buddhism came to Taiwan in 1949 as a small minority religious tradition, practiced by only a handful of individuals within their modest communities. As Taiwanese society liberalized in the 1980s and 1990s, there was considerable growth in the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who came to Taiwan and Taiwanese interested in practicing Tibetan Buddhism. In recent years, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and communities have increasingly turned their attention towards localizing and institutionalizing

their traditions in Taiwan. Continuing my discussion from chapter five, I conclude that Tibetan Buddhism has now become an active, conspicuous and, for the most part, publicly accepted member of Taiwan's rich religious landscape.

Far from an exotic religion associated with only a small number of individuals as it was in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, or a burgeoningly popular but still "novel" religion as it was in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, Tibetan Buddhism today has become a mainstay of religious life especially in Taiwan's metropolitan areas. While far from a majority among Buddhists in Taiwan, Tibetan Buddhists are now an important force within contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhist teachers are invited to most prominent intra-Buddhist and public gatherings and prayer ceremonies, Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and popular works by contemporary teachers are increasingly available in Chinese translation, and Tibetan Buddhist organizations are increasingly contributing to various social welfare projects across Taiwan. As a result, Tibetan Buddhism has moved in from the fringes and taken an active place at the table among Taiwan's other prominent Buddhist traditions.

At the same time, Taiwan, and the Taipei region in particular, has grown in significance as a global capital of Tibetan Buddhist transnational networks. As a result, Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan not only form an important part of the local religious landscape, but also play a critical role in supporting the global transmission of Tibetan Buddhism. For these reasons, my discussion of the processes through which Tibetan Buddhism has been, and continues to be transmitted, territorialized, and localized in Taiwan in this dissertation is not only a topic of relevance to scholars of Taiwanese religion and history, but is also of broader import for scholars of Tibetan Buddhism and of the contemporary global transmission of Buddhist traditions.

Chapter 1

Like Bamboo Shoots After Spring Rain: Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from 1949 to 1997 and Beyond

1. Introduction: When Padmasambhava Came to Formosa

Buddhist histories of Tibet narrate how during the so-called Yarlung Dynasty (?–c. 850),¹⁴⁶ the Thirty-eighth Tsenpo (བཙན་པོ།, 贊普), or emperor, Tri Songdetsen (ཁྲི་སྲོང་ལྷེ་བཙན།, 赤松德贊 r. 756–797) invited the great tantric adept Padmasambhava (པདྨ་འབྲུང་གཞུང་།, 蓮花生大師), affectionately known to Tibetans as Guru Rinpoché (གུ་རུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), to come to the Land of Snows. Guru Rinpoché was requested to quell the forces obstructing the construction of Samyé Monastery (བསམ་མ་ཡས་དགོན།, 桑耶寺) and therefore, the spread of Buddhism into Tibet. Stories relate how Guru Rinpoché made the journey from his meditation cave at the southern edge of the Kathmandu Valley to the Tibetan border not by the normal footpaths and trade routes. Instead, “with his miraculous powers, Master Padma journeyed through the sky and remained for three months on the plateau of the Sky Plain in Mang-yul.”¹⁴⁷ In other words, Guru Rinpoché flew to Tibet, bringing tantric Buddhism with him.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew Kapstein rightly notes that there is no consensus on a collective name for the dynasty of Tsenpos. The term Yarlung Dynasty is attributed to Erik Haarh, while Christopher Beckwith cites early Tibetan inscriptions referring to the rulers as Pugyel (ཕུ་གྱེ།). See: Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power Among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 8; Erik Haarh, *The Yar-Lun Dynasty: A Study With Particular Regard to the Contribution by Myths and Legends to the History of Ancient Tibet and the Origin and Nature of Its Kings* (København: G.E.C. G.A.D.’s Forlag, 1969); Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 211.

¹⁴⁷ Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal, *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, trans. Erik Pema Kunsang and Marcia Binder Schmidt (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992), 60.

Tibetan Buddhism also first came to Taiwan by air in 1949. However, whereas Guru Rinpoché flew to Tibet through special powers (དེའོས་གྲུབ།, 成就) achieved through his meditative practice, the first Tibetan Buddhist teacher who came to Taiwan, the Seventh Changkya Qutuytu Lozang Penden Tenpé Drönme (ལྷུང་ལྷུ་ཉི་ཐོག་ཐུང་ལྷོ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྷན་བསྟན་པའི་བོན་མེད།, 第七世章嘉大師/章嘉呼圖克圖 1891–1957), flew by more conventional means. Following orders from Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek (蔣中正/蔣介石 1887–1975), the Mongolian reincarnate teacher or *tulku* and ROC loyalist, Changkya Qutuytu, flew to Taiwan aboard a military aircraft accompanied only by his secretary and nephew.¹⁴⁸ Departing from the Kuomintang’s (國民黨, གོ་མིན་ཏང་།, hereafter KMT) final remaining stronghold in Chengdu shortly before their defeat by the CCP’s People’s Liberation Army (中國人民解放軍, ལྷུང་གོ་མི་དམངས་བཅེངས་འགྲོལ་དམག།, hereafter PLA), Changkya Qutuytu arrived in Taiwan in early December. His disembarkation at what is now Songshan Airport in Taipei marked the beginning of Tibetan Buddhism’s presence on the island.

While Changkya Qutuytu may have brought Tibetan Buddhism to Taiwan, the island was home to a diversity of rich Buddhist traditions for hundreds of years before his arrival. In his history of Buddhism in Taiwan, Charles Jones notes that the earliest historical records of Buddhism in Taiwan begin in the Ming (明朝 1368–1644) and Qing Dynasties. As there were no large monasteries or traditions of offering monastic ordinations in Taiwan during this period, Jones describes Buddhist life in Taiwan as centered around local Buddhist or syncretic religious temples, led by largely non-ordained monastics.¹⁴⁹ The focus of Buddhist life at these temples

¹⁴⁸ Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” in *Di qishi zhangjia dashi tulu 第七世章嘉大師圖錄*, vol. 1 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Wenhua bu 文化部, 2018), 14.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 13.

was mainly on providing funerary and other ritual services for local residents. However, the predominance of Buddhist activity in Taiwan during this period was not centered around these temples, but rather occurred among several unorthodox Buddhist sects grouped under the moniker *zhaijiao* (齋教). These groups, which Jones identifies as part of a broader movement of “folk Buddhism”¹⁵⁰ or “popular Buddhism”¹⁵¹ in Chinese societies, were composed primarily of lay practitioners who focused especially on vegetarianism and fasting practices.

During the period of Japanese colonization of Taiwan (1895–1945), Buddhist life experienced several significant shifts. On the one hand, the Japanese occupiers brought increased scrutiny, monitoring, and regulation over Chinese Buddhist traditions in Taiwan, especially among non-monastic Buddhist and *zhaijiao* communities. The Japanese also brought their own Buddhist traditions to Taiwan, with missionary efforts undertaken by representatives from the Sōtō, Shinshū Honganji, Shinshū Ōtani, Jōdo, Shingon, Rinzai, Nichiren, Tendai and other schools. Although these efforts yielded only limited success in spreading Japanese Buddhism among Taiwan’s non-Japanese populace,¹⁵² they resulted in the eventual presence of clergy and institutions of twelve schools and sub-schools of Japanese Buddhism in Taiwan.¹⁵³

While they did not inspire mass conversion, the influx of Japanese traditions did catalyze emic efforts to reform and strengthen Chinese Buddhist traditions. These efforts were led by an influx of fully ordained monastics into Taiwan during an era when the Japanese government had a fairly liberal policy regarding Buddhist clergy traveling between Japan, Taiwan, and Mainland

¹⁵⁰ Jones, 14.

¹⁵¹ Charles Brewer Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, ed. Philip Clart and Charles Brewer Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 11.

¹⁵² Jones notes that Japanese missionizing efforts only succeeded in attracting just over 28,300 Taiwanese devotees out of a total population of nearly six million people. Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 34.

¹⁵³ Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” 34–36.

China.¹⁵⁴ Some of these monastics were born in Taiwan and went to Fujian Province to receive full ordination, while others were born in Mainland China and came to Taiwan after receiving full ordination and completing their religious training.¹⁵⁵ These monastics led a new wave of local Buddhist institution building, introduced monastic ordinations,¹⁵⁶ and worked to strengthen the quality of educational training offered to monks and nuns. Although done in a careful way that did not offend Taiwan's Japanese rulers, Jones notes that these efforts to strengthen Chinese Buddhist traditions were nevertheless attempts to "check against the Japanization of Buddhism in Taiwan"¹⁵⁷ and to "resist the encroachment of Japanese Buddhist customs and practices," such as clerical marriage and the consumption of meat and alcohol, on Chinese Buddhism.¹⁵⁸

Thus, by the time of Changkya Qutuytu's arrival in 1949, there had already been a burgeoning effort for several decades to strengthen Chinese Buddhist traditions on the island. With the KMT's full-scale retreat to Taiwan and the re-installment of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC) in Taipei, efforts to organize Chinese Buddhist institutions in Taiwan became centralized under a "small group of traditionalist monks"¹⁵⁹ who led BAROC and were closely aligned with the KMT government. Over the subsequent three decades, BAROC "almost completely monopolized the field of Buddhist organizations"¹⁶⁰ in Taiwan as the "official representative of Buddhism on the island."¹⁶¹ While BAROC did not have direct

¹⁵⁴ Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1968), esp. 163–173.

¹⁵⁵ For a discussion of six of these Chinese Buddhist monastic teachers (Venerable Shanhui 善慧法師 1881–1945, Venerable Benyuan 本圓法師 1883–1946, Venerable Jueli 覺力法師 1881–1933, Venerable Miaoguo 妙果法師 1884–1964, Venerable Yongding 永定法師 1877–1939, and Venerable Yimin 義敏法師 1875–1947), see: Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 37–63.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 38.

¹⁵⁷ Jones, 53.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, 62.

¹⁵⁹ Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 61.

¹⁶⁰ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 178.

¹⁶¹ Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 45.

supervisory authority over the lives of Buddhists in Taiwan, their monopoly over monastic ordinations meant that they acted as gatekeepers and exercised significant influence over the Buddhist *sangha* or monastic community in Taiwan.¹⁶²

During the decades of BAROC's dominance of Buddhist life in Taiwan, Tibetan Buddhism continued to be practiced by a small number of individuals active in a handful of semi-clandestine groups. It was not until the beginning of the 1980s with the liberalization of Taiwanese political and civil society that Tibetan Buddhist teachings and practices began to be held in public and Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to arrive in increasing numbers. This trickle of public Tibetan Buddhist activity in Taiwan in the early 1980s expanded into a flood following the end of martial law in 1987 and major revisions to the Civil Associations Act in 1989. By the turn of the millennium, Tibetan Buddhism was surging in Taiwan with more than 2,000 Tibetan Buddhist teachers traveling annually to Taiwan,¹⁶³ and Tibetan Buddhist empowerments regularly filling stadiums, arenas, and halls at Taiwan's most prominent convention centers.

This chapter traces the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from 1949 through 1997 and beyond, charting its development from a small minority tradition to its emergence as a significant force within Taiwanese Buddhism. The chapter is divided into four parts, which examine 1) the historiography of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, 2) the history and development of Tibetan Buddhism in the periods between 1949 and 1979, and 3) 1980 and 1997, and finally 4) the effects of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's groundbreaking 1997 visit to Taiwan on the local development of Tibetan Buddhism. The first section examines the historiography of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, focusing on several periodization schemas of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan put forward by Taiwanese, French, and American scholars. Foreshadowing my subsequent

¹⁶² Laliberté, 48.

¹⁶³ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 27.

discussion, this section examines how scholars have conceptualized the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and the reasoning behind the historical divisions each draws in their work.

Following a three-fold periodization schema, I then examine the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in three phases: between 1949 and 1979, between 1980 and 1997, and post-1997. In the first period, which Chen called the “Early Transmission Period” (前弘期)¹⁶⁴ and Zablocki termed the “Mainlander Transmission,”¹⁶⁵ there were only a small number of Tibetan Buddhist faithful led by a handful of religious leaders. This group of Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Han monastics and lay teachers, most of whom were refugees from Mainland China and Tibet, were the first local disseminators of Tibetan Buddhism and established Taiwan’s first Tibetan Buddhist communities.

In this second section, I provide brief biographic sketches of several teachers active during this early period, including Changkya Qutuɣtu, Kangyurwa Qutuɣtu (བཀའ་འགྱུར་བ་ཉོ་ཐོག་ལྷུ་; 甘珠爾瓦呼圖克圖/甘珠佛爺 1914–1978), the Third Gelek Rinpoché Jamyang Khedrup Tenkyong Gelek Gyatso (དགེ་ལེགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ ༣ ། འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁའ་གྲུབ་བསྟན་སྐྱིད་དགེ་ལེགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, 第三世格賴仁波切 蔣央喀主登炯格賴嘉措 1924–2009), the Thirteenth Mingyür Rinpoché Ngakwang Tendzin Mingyür (མི་འགྱུར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དག་དབང་བསྟན་འཛིན་མི་འགྱུར།; 第十三明珠活佛 1935–2018), and Gongga Laoren. Although their activities were curtailed under martial law, they nevertheless continued to disseminate Tibetan Buddhist teachings and practices in private, if not secret, settings. In doing so, these teachers continued a trend that emerged during the early twentieth century of Tibetans and Mongolians transmitting Buddhism in culturally Chinese, Han-majority urban areas.

¹⁶⁴ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 106.

¹⁶⁵ Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 385.

The period from 1980 to 1997, which Chen termed the “Later Transmission Period” (後弘期)¹⁶⁶ and Zablocki called the “Tibetan Exile Transmission,”¹⁶⁷ started with the visits of several teachers from the global Tibetan exile community affiliated with the Karma Kagyü (ཀུན་འགྲུབ་བརྒྱུད།, 噶瑪噶舉) sub-school of Tibetan Buddhism in the early 1980s. In the subsequent two decades, the number of teachers visiting Taiwan grew significantly along with the number of local Tibetan Buddhist communities. This growth was so prolific that Chen, Liu, and Yao all describe the emergence of new Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan during this period metaphorically as growing “like bamboo shoots after spring rain” (如雨後春筍).¹⁶⁸

In this third section of this chapter, I argue that remarkable growth of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan during this period was largely the result of a combination of push and pull factors in Taiwanese society and among the global Tibetan diaspora. In Taiwan, these factors include rapid economic development, urbanization, as well as political and social liberalization leading to a period of religious “pluralization” (多元化期).¹⁶⁹ Taiwanese interest in Tibetan Buddhism was also a result of highly romanticized ideas about the power of Tibetan Buddhist rituals and the potent blessings of Tibetan Buddhist teachers. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in exile were increasingly “pushed” to Taiwan as a magnanimous source of funding to support the rebuilding and maintenance of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in South Asia. Even though traveling to Taiwan in the period before 1997 risked contravening a boycott advocated by the

¹⁶⁶ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 109.

¹⁶⁷ Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 387.

¹⁶⁸ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 108; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 4; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 316; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在臺灣發展的初步研究,” 336.

¹⁶⁹ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Taiwan diqu guangfu hou fojiao bianqian chutan 台灣地區光復後佛教變遷初探,” 237; Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 179.

Dalai Lama, the Tibetan exile government, and the broader Geluk establishment, many non-Geluk teachers were nevertheless drawn by the financial support offered by Taiwanese devotees.

I conclude this chapter by discussing the groundbreaking visit of the Dalai Lama to Taiwan in 1997. This visit, along with subsequent trips to Taiwan in 2001 and 2009, not only calmed political tensions between the Taiwanese government and exiled Tibetan administration, but also opened a new phase in the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In the wake of the Dalai Lama's visit, Geluk teachers joined the surging number of Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya teachers traveling to Taiwan, establishing dozens of new communities and providing alternate pathways for Taiwanese to engage Tibetan Buddhism. Additionally, the Dalai Lama's visit galvanized public interest, igniting what some journalists described as a "Tibetan Buddhism Fever" (藏傳佛教熱)¹⁷⁰ among Taiwanese. These developments set the course for the ways Tibetan Buddhism has developed in the years that have elapsed since the Dalai Lama's visit.

2. Periodizing the History of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan

A number of articles, chapters, and even several monographs have been written about the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Most of these works structure their discussions by using one of several different periodization schemes that divide the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan into two or three periods. The first periodization scheme was appeared in Chen Yujiao's 1990 article "Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhism."¹⁷¹ In this article, Chen divides the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan into two phases: an early transmission period from 1949 through

¹⁷⁰ Wang Ying 王瑩 and Chen Miaoling 陳妙鈴, "Dalai di tai, xianqi zangchuan fojiao re 達賴抵台, 掀起藏傳佛教熱 The Dalai Lama Sparks a Fever for Tibetan Buddhism," *Taiwan Panorama Taiwan guanghua zazhi 台灣光華雜誌*, 1997, 78, <http://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/Articles/Details?Guid=ca18b738-3597-42dc-b8ba-e32d7caa6848&langId=1&CatId=7>.

¹⁷¹ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, "Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教."

1981 and a later dissemination period from 1982 through the time of writing.¹⁷² Chen describes these two using the terms “early transmission period” and “later transmission period,”¹⁷³ a reference to similar terms used in Tibetan sources to describe the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet in two periods: an early diffusion period (བསྟན་པ་ལྔ་པ་རྗེས་སུ་སྤྱི་བུ་དུས་འཇམ་པ་སྟེང་གི་དུས་འཇམ་པ་སྟེང་།) from the seventh to the ninth centuries and a later diffusion period (བསྟན་པ་ལྔ་པ་རྗེས་སུ་སྤྱི་བུ་དུས་འཇམ་པ་སྟེང་།) from the late tenth to the thirteenth centuries.¹⁷⁴

Chen notes that during the early transmission period, most Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan were Han householders who had previously studied in Tibet. Chen characterizes the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism during this period as occurring on a small scale and centered around groups in northern Taiwan. By contrast, Chen describes how the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan greatly increased during the later transmission period through the invitations of local faithful. During this later period, “the scale of Tibetan Buddhist transmission increased day by day” and the religion spread quickly across all of Taiwan.¹⁷⁵

For Chen, the key event that marked the transition between these two periods was the 1982 visit to Taiwan by the Shangpa Kagyü (ཤང་པ་ཀུ་གུ་འཇམ་པ་སྟེང་།, 香巴噶舉派) teacher Kalu Rinpoché (ཀལུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 迦盧/卡盧仁波切 1905–1989). Later, following the appointment of Dong Shufan (董樹藩 1932–1986) as Chairman of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC) in 1984, restrictions that had previously proven prohibitive to Tibetan Buddhist teachers from South Asia visiting Taiwan were lifted. Subsequently, with Dong “fanning the flames, Tibetan

¹⁷² Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, 106–111.

¹⁷³ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, 106.

¹⁷⁴ Geoffrey Samuel, *Introducing Tibetan Buddhism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 31.

¹⁷⁵ “傳法規模與日俱增” Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 106.

Buddhism spread like wildfire” and dharma centers (中心), temples (精舍), and study associations (學會) for spreading Buddhism grew “like bamboo shoots after the spring rain.”¹⁷⁶

Writing a few years later, Huang Yingjie followed Chen’s two-fold periodization but adjusted the dates. Huang points out that prior to Kalu Rinpoché, two other teachers from the Tibetan exile community, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoché (འཇམ་གུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་འཇམ་མགས་ལུང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། 第9世創古仁波切 1933–2023)¹⁷⁷ and Khenpo Karthar Rinpoché (མཁའ་ལོ་ཀམ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། 堪布卡塔仁波切/堪布噶塔仁波切 1924–2019), had already visited Taiwan in 1980 and 1981.¹⁷⁸ Thus, Huang claims that 1980 should mark the beginning of Tibetan Buddhism’s later dissemination period.

Subsequent research by Taiwanese scholars such as Chen Yiling 陳怡伶,¹⁷⁹ Geng,¹⁸⁰ Huang,¹⁸¹ Li Renzheng 李仁正,¹⁸² Liu,¹⁸³ Liu Haoqi 劉皓齊,¹⁸⁴ Luo Weishu 羅媿淑,¹⁸⁵ Xue,¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁶ “在他推波助瀾之下，西藏佛教遂如火如荼地展開。傳教的「中心」，「精舍」，「學會」，如雨後春筍” Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, 108.

¹⁷⁷ Although Huang’s claim is widely repeated by later scholars, Fabienne Jagou raises the caution that there exists a paucity of evidence that Thrangu Rinpoché actually visited Taiwan for the first time that year. See: Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 92.

¹⁷⁸ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu: minguo mizong nianjian (1911–1992)* 金剛乘事件簿: 民國密宗年鑑(1911-1992) (Taipei shi 臺北市: Quan fo wenhua chuban she 全佛文化出版社, 1992; Taipei shi 臺北市: Shang zhou chuban 商周出版, 2019), 157.

¹⁷⁹ Chen Yiling 陳怡伶, “Taiwan zangchuan fojiao gelu jiaopai zhi zongjiaoshi yinyue 台灣藏傳佛教格魯教派之宗教儀式音樂,” 34–38.

¹⁸⁰ Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao* 藏傳密宗在台灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討, 64.

¹⁸¹ Huang Huili 黃慧琍, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tainan 藏傳佛教在台南,” 132–143.

¹⁸² Li Renzheng 李仁正, “Fojiao caishen xinyang yu yishi zhi tantao 佛教財神信仰與儀式之探討,” 50–53.

¹⁸³ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin 承舊鼎新*, 24–26; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 21–30; Liu Guowei 劉國威, “Xizang fojiao zai taiwan de fazhan liucheng 西藏佛教在臺灣的發展歷程,” 19–25; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Yu zhi chuancheng 語旨傳承*, 129–130.

¹⁸⁴ Liu Haoqi 劉皓齊, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai zhi zongjiao chuanbo celue yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台之宗教傳播策略研究,” 23–28.

¹⁸⁵ Luo Weishu 羅媿淑, “Tainan chongqing de fazhan licheng yu nan taiwan zangchuan fojiao fazhan guanxi yanjiu 台南重慶寺的發展歷程與南台灣藏傳佛教發展關係研究,” 316.

¹⁸⁶ Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, “Zangchuan fojiao daochang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在臺灣的發展概況,” 130–146.

Weng,¹⁸⁷ Yao,¹⁸⁸ Zhang Fucheng 張福成,¹⁸⁹ and Zheng Zhiming 鄭志明¹⁹⁰ has tended to follow this two-part periodization schema, utilizing the timeframes either proposed by Chen or Huang. These scholars follow Chen and Huang in linking the beginning of a second period of Tibetan Buddhism's dissemination into Taiwan to demographic changes among the individuals transmitting Tibetan Buddhism. For these authors, the critical event they use to define a break in the local development of Tibetan Buddhism and the commencement of a new period of growth is the arrival of a new wave of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan starting in the early 1980s.

However, not all scholars highlight the arrival of Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global Tibetan diaspora as a turning point in the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Jagou¹⁹¹ and Hu Junyu 胡峻玉,¹⁹² for example, point to the end of martial law in 1987 as marking a period-defining shift in the local development of Tibetan Buddhism. Jagou notes that “the lifting of martial law allowed Tibetan masters to come to Taiwan under the strict control of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission,” which started to grant visas to Tibetan monks.¹⁹³ Prior to this policy shift, Tibetan Buddhist teachers could only come to Taiwan through politically well-connected Taiwanese sponsors who were able to secure them special permission.¹⁹⁴ Once Tibetan Buddhist communities could legally register following revisions to

¹⁸⁷ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, “Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制,” 32–33.

¹⁸⁸ Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 581–595; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 14–18, 55–112; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在臺灣發展的初步研究,” 323–331.

¹⁸⁹ Zhang Fucheng 張福成, “Zangchuan fojiao zaitai fazhan jianjie 藏傳佛教在台發展簡介,” 1.

¹⁹⁰ Zheng Zhiming 鄭志明, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan de xiankuang yu sheng si 藏傳佛教在台發展的現況與省思,” 1–2.

¹⁹¹ Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 57–59.

¹⁹² Hu Junyu 胡峻玉, “Zangchuan fojiao gelupai zai taiwan zhi fazhan 藏傳佛教格魯派在臺灣之發展” (Master's Thesis, Tainan shi 台南市, Guoli tainan daxue 國立臺南大學, 2012), 67–87.

¹⁹³ “La levée de la loi martiale permet à des maîtres tibétains de venir à Taiwan sous le strict contrôle de la Commission des affaires mongoles et tibétaines.” Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 57.

¹⁹⁴ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 98.

Taiwan's Civil Associations Act, however, individual communities could invite Tibetan teachers to visit Taiwan through the MTAC.¹⁹⁵ Accordingly, Jagou sees political changes with the end of martial law and legalization of Tibetan Buddhist communal activity as period-defining.

Hu points to Taiwanese government policy changes toward the Tibetan government in exile following the election of President Lee Tenghui as marking a new period in the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Hu notes that “in 1988, President Lee Tenghui publicly announced that the Dalai Lama's position on Tibetan autonomy was in accordance with Taiwan's policies. At the same time, he publicly welcomed the Dalai Lama to visit [Taiwan]. After this clear change to the entire political situation, all the high masters of the Tibetan Buddhist world formally endorsed greater contact with Taiwan, especially the Geluk school.”¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, Hu elevates President Lee's 1988 olive branch and attempts to ease tensions with the Tibetan exile government as beginning a new period of Tibetan Buddhism's development in Taiwan.

Still other works by Chen Youxin 陳又新,¹⁹⁷ Huang,¹⁹⁸ Fraser,¹⁹⁹ Jagou,²⁰⁰ Xiao Jinsong 蕭金松,²⁰¹ Zablocki,²⁰² and Zheng Weizu 鄭欸足²⁰³ offer three part periodization schemes. Chen

¹⁹⁵ MTAC was in charge of issuing travel permissions to Tibetan Buddhist monastics until 2002 when this power reverted to the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部). See: Xu Zhixiong 許志雄, “Tuidong yi taiwan wei zhuti de menggu zhengce: mengzang weiyuanhui xinchung jizhehui weiyuanzhang jianghua 推動以台灣為主體的蒙古政策: 蒙藏委員會新春記者會委員長講話,” *Meng zang zhi you 蒙藏之友* 84 (February 29, 2004): 4.

¹⁹⁶ “1988年, 李登輝總統公開宣布十四世達賴喇嘛關於西藏自治的主張符合臺灣的政策, 同時公開歡迎十四世達賴喇嘛的來訪, 整個政治情勢被認為有明顯改變之後, 整個藏傳佛教界的高僧大德正式公開地與臺灣有進一步接觸, 特別是格魯派。” Hu's claims are somewhat curious given that, in fact, Geluk teachers did not start arriving in Taiwan in significant numbers until after 1997. Hu Junyu 胡峻玉, “Zangchuan fojiao gelupai zai taiwan zhi fazhan 藏傳佛教格魯派在臺灣之發展,” 83.

¹⁹⁷ Chen Youxin 陳又新, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣.”

¹⁹⁸ Huang Huili 黃慧琍, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan chutian 藏傳佛教在台發展初探,” 34–42.

¹⁹⁹ Fraser, “Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan,” 42.

²⁰⁰ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 98.

²⁰¹ Xiao Jinsong 蕭金松, “Taiwan zangchuan fojiao fazhan guankui 台灣藏傳佛教發展管窺,” 107–112.

²⁰² Zablocki, “The Global Mandala,” 196–207; Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 385–390.

²⁰³ Zheng Kuanzu 鄭欸足, “Kangsa renboqie zai taiwan hongfa de shizheng yanjiu 康薩仁波切在臺灣弘法的實證研究” (Master's Thesis, Dalin zhen 大林鎮, Nanhua daxue 南華大學, 2018), 28–29.

points to 1995 as the start of a third period, noting how the MTAC started that year to require all Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan to register themselves and began to cooperate with these centers on policies concerning inviting Tibetan teachers to Taiwan. In consultation with dharma centers, MTAC drafted the “Points to Note for Assisting Domestic Tibetan Buddhist Organizations in Inviting Overseas Tibetan Monks to Return to their Home Country to Propagate the Dharma”²⁰⁴ and the “Points to Note for Examining Overseas Tibetan Monastics’ Applications for Long-Term Residence to Propagate the Dharma in Taiwan,”²⁰⁵ which Chen describes as creating a more organized system for dharma centers to invite Tibetan Buddhist teachers to Taiwan. For Chen, these new efforts to collect information about domestic Tibetan Buddhist activity mark a turning point in the local development of Tibetan Buddhism.²⁰⁶

Other scholars, such as Fraser, Huang, Jagou, Xiao, Zablocki, and Zheng all point to the Dalai Lama’s first trip to Taiwan in 1997 as a watershed moment that marked the dawning of a third period of Tibetan Buddhism’s local development. They describe this visit as marking a major political shift and precipitating a surge in popular interest in Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Regarding the political outcomes of the Dalai Lama’s visit, Zablocki describes how this trip “effectively ended the debate within the Tibetan diaspora regarding the propriety of visiting or receiving funds from Taiwan” and ended the boycott of Taiwan advocated by Geluk leaders.²⁰⁷

This boycott was a longstanding policy of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government in exile, and the broader Geluk establishment who were opposed to ROC’s territorial claims over Tibet. Additionally, the Dalai Lama and Tibetan government in exile objected to what they perceived as the ROC attempting to meddle in the affairs of the Tibetan exile community and

²⁰⁴ “協助國內西藏佛（教）學團體邀請海外藏僧回國弘法注意事項”

²⁰⁵ “審查海外藏僧申請在臺弘法長期居留實施要點”

²⁰⁶ Chen Youxin 陳又新, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在台灣,” 50–51.

²⁰⁷ Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 389–390.

efforts “to buy influence among the Tibetans in an effort to co-opt their struggle against the Communists and bring them under Taiwan’s control.”²⁰⁸ One instance of interference occurred in 1989 when rumors emerged that Taiwan was secretly trying to purchase influence among Tibetan exile community leaders. Similarly, in 1994 the ROC government through MTAC signed an agreement with the Tibetan guerilla organization Chushi Gangdruk (ཅུ་བཞི་སྐོར་བུ་གྲྀ་, 四水六崗), wherein Chushi Gangdruk’s representatives assented to the ROC’s territorial claims over Tibet. These events incensed the Tibetan exile world. As a result of these long-simmering tensions, the Dalai Lama urged lay and monastic Tibetans not to travel to Taiwan. This policy led to a widespread anti-Taiwan sentiment across a majority of the Tibetan exile population.²⁰⁹

The Dalai Lama’s visit Taiwan in 1997 ended this boycott and opened the doors for Tibetans to openly travel to Taiwan without fear of being ostracized in their home communities. After the Dalai Lama’s visit, teachers from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism could openly engage in dharma propagation activities in Taiwan without fear of damage to their reputation or support within the Tibetan diaspora. For this reason, Jagou describes the Dalai Lama’s visit as “a turning

²⁰⁸ Zablocki, 394.

²⁰⁹ For more on the tensions between the ROC government and the Tibetan exile government, see: Dolma Tsering, “Taiwan and the Exiled Tibetan Relations: Exploring Historical Ties and Current Challenges and Opportunities,” *Asian Ethnicity* 25, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 323–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2023.2257142>; Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan: Who Are They and Why They Are Invisible (1),” *Taiwan Insight*, November 16, 2022, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2022/11/16/tibetan-diaspora-in-taiwan-who-are-they-and-why-they-are-invisible-1/>; Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan: Who Are They and Why They Are Invisible (2),” *Taiwan Insight*, November 17, 2022, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2022/11/17/tibetan-diaspora-in-taiwan-who-are-they-and-why-they-are-invisible-2/>; Peter Moran, *Buddhism Observed: Travelers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 82–83; Tsering Namgyal, “The Twisting Saga of Tibet-Taiwan Relations,” *Phayul*, May 22, 2003, <https://www.phayul.com/2003/05/22/4225/>; Tsering Namgyal Khortsa, “Both Tibet and Taiwan Aspire for Freedom and Democracy,” ed. Pema Thinley, *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 5 (May 1997): 17–19; Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 381–382, 393–405.

point in the relations between the Tibetan exile government and the Taiwanese government and contributed to the development of Tibetan Buddhism on the island.”²¹⁰

Additionally, these scholars highlight a swell of popular interest for Tibetan Buddhism following the Dalai Lama’s visit. Huang notes that “when the Dalai Lama came to Taiwan for religious exchange, many people scrambled to see the Dalai Lama, listen to his teachings, and receive his initiations.”²¹¹ After this visit, there was a sharp increase in the number of Taiwanese interested in attending Tibetan Buddhist rituals, teachings, and empowerments, as well as purchasing Tibetan artwork, artifacts, incense, and books. Zablocki further cites the significant growth in the number of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan following the Dalai Lama’s visit as evidence for this event’s impact on the local development of Tibetan Buddhism.

Despite the slight differences in how they divide the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, these scholars collectively highlight several distinct religious, demographic, and political shifts in Taiwan and the Tibetan exile community as major turning points in the local development of Tibetan Buddhism. First, most agree that for several decades after 1949, Tibetan Buddhism existed on a very limited scale in Taiwan, with activities predominantly conducted in private settings. Second, they highlight shifts following the arrival of Buddhist teachers from the Tibetan diaspora in the early 1980s and the opening of Taiwanese society in the late 1980s as contributing to Tibetan Buddhism’s local growth. Finally, scholars have suggested that political shifts and the influx of Geluk teachers starting in the late 1990s, witnessed most visibly with the Dalai Lama’s visit, mark a third watershed moment in Tibetan Buddhism’s local development.

²¹⁰ “Les visites du dalaï-lama en 1997, 2001 et 2009 marquèrent un tournant dans les relations entre le gouvernement en exil tibétain et le gouvernement taiwanais et contribuèrent au développement du bouddhisme tibétain sur l’île.” Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 59.

²¹¹ “達賴來台進行宗教的交流，多少人趨之若鶩，為的只是見得達賴的一面，傾聽他的開示，接受他的灌頂。” Huang Huili 黃慧琄, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan chutian 藏傳佛教在台發展初探,” 40.

In the remainder of this chapter, I divide my consideration of the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan into the periods 1949 to 1979, 1980 to 1997, and post-1997. Although these dates most closely mirror the periodizations of scholars who highlight demographic shifts in the Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan, I also draw upon works that emphasize the importance of political and social shifts as well. While such periodizations can be conceptually useful, they are far from perfect. They can be rightfully critiqued for, among other things, drawing artificial boundaries over lives that continued through them. One could question, for example, how helpful such periodizations are for understanding the activities of teachers who were active across multiple periods. One could also query the extent to which certain events labeled as turning points, such as the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit, were viewed as transformational by individual practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. Individuals may have their own timelines that include such dates as when they met their religious teachers, received certain empowerments, or went on their first pilgrimage to their center's mother monastery. Likewise, communities, lineages, and sects may have their own sense of significant temporal junctures. Thus, although I utilize a periodization for its sociological utility in revealing shifts in the overall dynamics of Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan, I remain cautious of overly emphasizing certain events as distinctive breaks in the lives of all of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners.

3. The Early Transmission of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan: 1949–1979

As mentioned at the opening of the chapter, Tibetan Buddhism arrived as part of the KMT's massive retreat to Taiwan. This retreat included not only the movement of an estimated

600,000 soldiers and other military assets,²¹² but also financial holdings, educational institutions, tangible cultural artifacts, as well as bearers of intangible cultural heritage and knowledge.²¹³ It was a period of immense upheaval as an estimated one and a half to two million people fled to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland.²¹⁴ Among those fleeing, there were around one hundred ordained Buddhist nuns and monks,²¹⁵ who came to Taiwan as refugees and even as soldiers in the ROC military.²¹⁶ The KMT swiftly established a heavy handed rule in Taiwan, imposing what would eventually be a nearly forty-year period of martial law starting on May 20, 1949. They also established one-party rule wherein “there was little distinction between the KMT and the government.”²¹⁷ Particularly in the first few decades after their retreat to Taiwan, the KMT governed Taiwan with a tight fist, prioritizing developing the economy and preparing the military for an eventual retaking of the mainland. Strict social controls were implemented as a necessary price for the pursuit of these priorities.

Buddhist life in Taiwan was not exempt from the KMT’s control. After the relocation of BAROC to Taiwan in 1949, its leadership quickly filled with monastics aligned with the KMT. In 1952, the KMT completed its efforts to reorganize the governance of civil society and declared that every section of society be represented by only one national-level organization.²¹⁸ In exchange for endorsing KMT policies, BAROC became the only organization in Taiwan that represented Buddhist clergy and institutions. As Laliberté describes, BAROC was “expected to follow guidelines dictated by the ruling party, receiving in exchange the privilege of being the

²¹² Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 78.

²¹³ In addition to Changkya Qutuylu, these bearers of intangible cultural heritage and knowledge include Zhang Enpu (張恩溥 1904–1969), the Sixty-Third Master of Celestial Master Daoism, as well as Kung Te-cheng (孔德成 1920–2008), the Seventy-seventh generation descendent of Confucius.

²¹⁴ Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, 78.

²¹⁵ Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 38.

²¹⁶ On the Buddhist clergy who arrived in Taiwan with the KMT, see: Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 105–111.

²¹⁷ Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, 77.

²¹⁸ Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 38–39.

exclusive representative of Buddhism in Taiwan. The Buddhist association was then required to transmit instructions from the KMT to members of the *sangha* and lay devotees and was, in return, mandated to relay the concerns of the whole Buddhist community to the ruling party.”²¹⁹ The revising of the Civil Associations Act led to BAROC losing its role as the representative of the Taiwan’s Buddhist clergy and thus much of its influence over Buddhist life in Taiwan.

Tibetan Buddhism continued to exist in Taiwan throughout this period, albeit mostly on a very small scale and often under semi-clandestine conditions. Among the handful of Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan at this time were two Mongolians,²²⁰ the Seventh Changkya Qutuɣtu and the Fifth Kangyurwa Qutuɣtu,²²¹ both of whom arrived in Taiwan in 1949. Later, several Tibetans from Lihang, Kham arrived in Taiwan through the invitation of the ROC government. They included the Thirteenth Mingyür Rinpoché who arrived in 1959²²² and the Third Gelek Rinpoché who arrived in 1961.²²³ The most numerous Tibetan Buddhist teachers active during this period, however, were Han and Manchu, most of whom had studied in Tibet prior to fleeing to Taiwan. These included the Geluk Geshé Ouyang Wuwei (君庇亟美格西/歐

²¹⁹ André Laliberté, “Religious Change and Democratization in Postwar Taiwan: Mainstream Buddhist Organizations and the Kuomintang, 1947–1996,” in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, ed. Philip Clart and Charles Brewer Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 165.

²²⁰ In fact, both Changkya Qutuɣtu and Kangyurwa Qutuɣtu were born in the region around Lake Kokonor (མཚོ་སྐོན་གླིང་།, 青海), an ethnic and cultural melting pot of Tibetan, Mongolian, Uyghur, and Han peoples. Although both appear to have been born to Amdo Tibetan families, their recognitions as reincarnate teachers affiliated with Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist institutions led them to be educated and take up residence primarily in Mongolian areas. Consequently, both later came to identify as Mongolian. In the final pages of his (auto)biography, for example, Kangyurwa Qutuɣtu states “One thing uppermost in my mind, which I will never forget, is that I am a Mongol. I am continually concerned for my fellow countrymen and greatly desire the restoration of our Mongolian people of the benefits of freedom, a good life, and the blessings of the Buddha. To me, the ideal is a well-developed Mongolia that is a Buddhist nation...I feel that I am first and last a Mongol.” Paul Hyer and Sechin Jagchid, *A Mongolian Living Buddha: Biography of the Kanjurwa Khutughtu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 193.

²²¹ Hyer and Jagchid, 191.

²²² Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan,” November 16, 2022.

²²³ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie: jiangyang kezhu danjiong gelai jiacuo xiande suo xing yisheng wei zuo xiugai zhi lue chan 至尊格賴仁波切：降央克珠丹炯格列嘉措賢德所行一生未作修改之略傳,” in *Yun dan feng qing: hu zhi kanqian gelai renboqie jilu 雲淡風輕：怙主堪千格賴仁波切輯錄*, ed. Gelie Queshang 格列卻尚 and Guoshuo Renboqie 果碩仁波切, trans. Xiaba Renboqie 夏壩仁波切 (Yunlin xian 雲林縣: Bai ma puti si 白馬菩提寺, 2012), 53.

陽無畏, དགེ་བཤེས་ཚོས་འཕེལ་འཇིགས་མེད། 1913–1991) who came to Taiwan in 1952,²²⁴ the Nyingma teachers Qu Yingguang (屈映光上師 1883–1973) who came in 1952, Wu Runjiang (吳潤江上師 1906–1979) who came in 1958, Liu Rui (劉銳之上師 1914–1997) who came in 1959,²²⁵ and Han Tong (韓同上師), whose arrival dates in Taiwan are unclear.²²⁶ Finally, several teachers trained by the Kagyü master, the Ninth Gangkar Rinpoché (གངས་དཀར་རྒྱལ་འཕེལ་འཇིགས་ཀྱི་སེང་གེ, 第九世貢噶仁波切 1893–1957) also came to Taiwan during this period. These included Gongga Laoren in 1958 and, for a very brief period, Zhang Chengji (張澄基, better known in English as Garma C. C. Chang 1920–1988) in 1963.²²⁷ In the pages below, I provide biographical sketches of some these figures and describe their activities teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. While much of my discussion relies on secondary scholarship, I also draw on publications by students of Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché, as well as recent articles by Taiwanese involved in the historical preservation of local Tibetan Buddhist sites. In doing so, I provide further details on the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan during this poorly understood period.

3.1. Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist Teachers in Taiwan

Changkya Qutuytu²²⁸ was part of a generation of politically engaged Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist leaders in the early twentieth century who had extensive contacts and

²²⁴ Hsiao, “The Academic Contributions of Ouyang Wuwei Lama (1913–1991): A Disciple’s Testimony,” 181.

²²⁵ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 23–24.

²²⁶ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 41.

²²⁷ Jagou, 41.

²²⁸ For biographical accounts of Changkya Qutuytu, see: Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang: zhangjia dashi shiji liushi zhounian jinian* 源遠流長: 章嘉大師示寂六十週年紀念 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Jinkong xueyuan 淨空學院, 2017); Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 68–80; Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, *Hu guo jing jue fu jiao dashi zhangjia hutuketu shi* 護國淨覺幅教大師章嘉呼圖克圖史 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Zhangjia dashi yuanji dianli weyuanhui 章嘉大師圓寂典禮委員會, 1957); Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟.”

influence among a number of warlords and KMT officials across China.²²⁹ He was recognized by the Manchu government during the Qing Dynasty and remained close to the government during the early Republican period, becoming a member of the MTAC as early as 1930.²³⁰ During his life, Changkya Qutuytu received numerous titles and awards in recognition for his service to the ROC. These included the titles “National Teacher and Upholder of the Geluk Tradition” (持黃教大國師) awarded in 1932 and “Protector of the Nation, the Pure Enlightened One, Serving the Doctrine,” (護國淨覺輔教大師) awarded in 1947.²³¹ In 1936, Changkya Qutuytu was presented with the Order of Brilliant Jade with Grand Cordon (采玉大勳章), the highest honorary medal awarded by the ROC government.²³² Shortly after his arrival in Taiwan, Changkya Qutuytu was elected president of BAROC, and appointed as a counselor to the president’s office and a member of the KMT’s central committee.²³³ Changkya Qutuytu was a staunch anti-communist and believed the ROC would ultimately prevail against the CCP.²³⁴

Prior to his arrival in Taiwan, Changkya Qutuytu had long been active in intra-Buddhist organizations. As early as 1917, he partnered with the Chinese Buddhist reformist Taixu (釋太虛 1890–1947) in a failed bid to revive the Chinese Buddhist Association. He repeated this effort in

²²⁹ On the relations between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Chinese political powers during this period, see: Bianchi, “Sino-Tibetan Buddhism”; Carmen Meinert, “Gangkar Rinpoché between Tibet and China: A Tibetan Lama among Ethnic Chinese in the 1930s to 1950s,” in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 215–38; Ester Bianchi, “Chinese Lama” Nenghai (1886–1967): Doctrinal Tradition and Teaching Strategies of a Gelukpa Master in Republican China,” in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 295–346; Fabienne Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883–1937): A Life at the Crossroads of Sino-Tibetan Relations* (Paris & Chiang Mai: École Française d’Extrême-Orient & Silkworm Books, 2011); Gray Tuttle, “Tibet as a Source of Messianic Teachings to Save Republican China: The Ninth Panchen Lama, Shambhala and the Kālacakra Tantra,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito, Études Thématiques (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 303–27; Gray Tuttle, “Tibetan Buddhism at Ri Bo Rtse Lnga/Wutai Shan in Modern Times,” 2006; Gray Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

²³⁰ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 71.

²³¹ Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang 源遠流長*, 32–33.

²³² Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, 32; Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” 13.

²³³ Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” 15.

²³⁴ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 79–80.

1947 with more success, helping to found BAROC and was elected its president in the wake of Taixu's death.²³⁵ Holmes Welch argues that Changkya Qutuytu's election was likely due to the importance the ROC government placed on him as an intermediary with Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists,²³⁶ while Jones cites Jiang Canteng's suggestion that Changkya Qutuytu's election may have had more to do with his status as an outsider to rivalries among Chinese monastic factions vying for control of BAROC.²³⁷ Whatever the reason, following BAROC's reformation in Taiwan, Changkya Qutuytu was re-elected as its president in 1952 and 1955.²³⁸

Changkya Qutuytu was a powerfully influential figure who led efforts to revive and spread Buddhism across Taiwan from the time he arrived in Taiwan until his death in 1957. One of his most celebrated achievements was his successful negotiation of the return of relics of the much-revered seventh century Chinese Buddhist monk and translator Xuanzang (玄奘 602–664) from Japan. Heading a BAROC delegation to the Second World Buddhist Friendship Conference in Japan in 1952, Changkya Qutuytu was informed that relics from Xuanzang had been rediscovered in Japan, likely taken from Nanjing sometime during the Second World War. While the relics had been re-enshrined in Japan at Jion-ji Temple (慈恩寺), Changkya Qutuytu and the other BAROC leaders sought their return to Taiwan. As a result of lobbying efforts through a Japanese interlocutor Ryusuke Takamori (高森隆介) and the ROC ambassador to Japan, Dong Xiangguang (董顯光 1887–1971), Changkya Qutuytu successfully brought the relics to Taiwan in 1955 and oversaw their reception at Songshan Airport. As Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘 notes, the impact of these relics' arrival was felt across Taiwan. “When Master Xuanzang's relics were

²³⁵ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 141.

²³⁶ Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 47.

²³⁷ Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 141.

²³⁸ Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, *Hu guo jing jue fu jiao dashi zhangjia hutuketu shi* 護國淨覺幅教大師章嘉呼圖克圖史, 35.

returned to Taiwan, people in the Buddhist community regarded these [relics] as a ‘symbol of the reappearance of Mainland Buddhism in Taiwan’ and considered it to be of great significance.”²³⁹

In addition to securing the return of Xuanzang’s relics, Changkya Qutuγtu was also active promoting Buddhism across Taiwan and abroad. In 1955, for example, he embarked with Venerable Daoyuan (道源法師 1900–1988), a fellow-BAROC leader, on a twenty-five day teaching tour around Taiwan. The tour, organized by BAROC’s View the Island and Spread the Dharma Society (中國佛教會視導弘法圖案)²⁴⁰ visited more than a dozen towns and villages and is reported to have attracted thousands of believers and converts.²⁴¹ While I am unaware of records of the speeches Changkya Qutuγtu made or of the specific “empowerments and blessings [he bestowed] according to the circumstances”²⁴² in each locale, photographic evidence reveals the warm reception these masters received. Photos of Changkya Qutuγtu and Venerable Daoyuan with dozens of Chinese Buddhist monastics²⁴³ at elaborately decorated temples suggest that their stops were well attended and marked important occasions for the communities they visited.

Changkya Qutuγtu also presided over many important Buddhist ceremonies and had local Chinese Buddhist disciples. In 1955, he was one of three preceptors at BAROC’s ordination ceremony at Lingquan Chan Temple in Keelung.²⁴⁴ According to the ordination statistics given

²³⁹ “玄奘大師的骨灰來臺，當時佛教界有人將其視為「大陸佛教重來臺灣的象徵」，認為意義非常重大。” Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” 16.

²⁴⁰ Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, 17.

²⁴¹ Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, *Hu guo jing jue fu jiao dashi zhangjia hutuketu shi 護國淨覺幅教大師章嘉呼圖克圖史*, 35.

²⁴² “隨緣方便灌頂加持” Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, 35.

²⁴³ Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, 15–16; Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang 源遠流長*, 24–25.

²⁴⁴ Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” 17.

by Meei-hwa Chern, this would have meant that Changkya Qutuŷtu assisted in giving ordination vows to seventy-three Chinese Buddhist nuns and fourteen monks in this position.²⁴⁵

Among Changkya Qutuŷtu's most influential students was Master Chin Kung (淨空法師 1927–2022) who studied weekly with him for several years. Master Chin Kung called Changkya Qutuŷtu his “first Buddhist teacher”²⁴⁶ and noted that “the foundations of my studies of Buddhism were laid during those three years with Changkya Qutuŷtu.”²⁴⁷ He further credited Changkya Qutuŷtu with instilling in him a careful and comprehensive approach to studying Buddhist scriptures.²⁴⁸ Master Chin Kung eventually became a highly influential Pure Land teacher across the Asia-Pacific region.

As a public religious figure, Changkya Qutuŷtu presided over or co-led many large-scale dharma assemblies, Buddhist temple opening ceremonies, and other Buddhist celebrations. These included a seven-day Dharma Assembly to Protect the Nation, Disperse Disasters, Benefit Beings, and Ferry Across the Deceased (護國消災利生薦亡法會) in 1950, the Humane King State Protection Sūtra Dharma Assembly (仁王護國般若波羅蜜經) in 1951, and a seven-day Medicine Buddha Dharma Assembly (藥師法會) in 1954. Moreover, he led BAROC's 1955 celebrations for the 2,500th anniversary of the historical Buddha's enlightenment.²⁴⁹ At many of these events, Changkya Qutuŷtu is reported to have given Buddhist refuge vows to several

²⁴⁵ Meei-Hwa Chern, “Encountering Modernity: Buddhist Nuns in Postwar Taiwan” (PhD Dissertation, Philadelphia, Temple University, 2000), 274.

That Changkya Qutuŷtu served as one of the main preceptors in a Chinese Buddhist ordination ceremony is quite remarkable as ordinations involving multiple Buddhist traditions co-efficiating were not common at this time.

²⁴⁶ Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang 源遠流長*, 94.

²⁴⁷ “我佛學的底底是跟章嘉大師那三年奠定的” Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, 102.

²⁴⁸ Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, 96.

²⁴⁹ Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, *Hu guo jing jue fu jiao dashi zhangjia hutuketu shi 護國淨覺幅教大師章嘉呼圖克圖史*, 35.

hundred lay Buddhists.²⁵⁰ At many of these events, Changkya Qutuytu is explicitly reported to have been in charge of the “esoteric altar” (主密壇), suggesting that at least a portion of these public rituals were done according to Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

Given the extent of his activities promoting Buddhism across Taiwan in the span of less than a decade, it is little surprise that the funerary celebrations following Changkya Qutuytu’s death on March 4, 1957 were held on a grand scale. His funeral was organized by MTAC under its then-president Liu Lianke (流廉克),²⁵¹ who coordinated the more than fifty member Master’s Funerary Ceremony Committee (大師圓寂電力委員會).²⁵² The funeral was held over five days at three separate locations,²⁵³ and was presided over by fellow Mongolian reincarnate teacher, Kangyurwa Qutuytu. Photos taken during the funeral reveal throngs of people, dozens of monastics, and government officials at Shandao Temple and Chan Zhonghe Monastery, temples richly adorned with flowers and banners with Tibetan mantras. There were also impressive military parades with crowds of onlookers as Changkya Qutuytu’s body was moved between venues.²⁵⁴ Buddhist leaders as well as MTAC’s leadership and other top government officials also attended. Even Chiang Kai Shek paid his respects and offered a plaque that read “Propagate the Dharma to Educate the People” (弘教牖民) in honor of Changkya Qutuytu’s work spreading Buddhism.²⁵⁵ Following Changkya Qutuytu’s cremation, MTAC successfully petitioned the Executive Yuan for funds to erect a memorial stūpa, which was consecrated in 1959.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, 35.

²⁵¹ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 79.

²⁵² Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang* 源遠流長, 42.

²⁵³ These include Changkya Qutuytu’s residence in Taipei’s Da’an District (大安區), Shandao Temple (善導寺), and Chan Zhonghe Monastery (北投禪中和寺)

²⁵⁴ Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang* 源遠流長, 40–47; Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正, *Hu guo jing jue fu jiao dashi zhangjia hutuketu shi* 護國淨覺幅教大師章嘉呼圖克圖史, 17–22.

²⁵⁵ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 79.

²⁵⁶ Yang Jiaming 楊嘉銘, “Zhangjia dashi shiji 章嘉大師事蹟,” 19.

Although Changkya Qutuytu was held in high regard by both the ROC government and Chinese Buddhist clergy across Taiwan, his impact on Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan is debatable. Some, like Jagou and Zablocki, maintain that he had little direct impact on the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.²⁵⁷ Jagou, for example, states that Changkya Qutuytu “displayed a great degree of Buddhist ecumenism, however, without contributing in any significant way to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.”²⁵⁸ Jagou points to Changkya Qutuytu’s lack of dharma heirs as a critical factor limiting his impact on the local spread of Tibetan Buddhism. Was this because his Chinese Buddhist disciples never learned Tibetan language and lacked the ability to study Tibetan Buddhist scriptures at a time when few were available in translation? Perhaps Changkya Qutuytu lacked access to the religious scriptures he needed to instruct and bestow tantric initiations? Or, perhaps he hesitated to teach because some conservative Chinese Buddhist monastics were opposed to elements within Tibetan Buddhism (such as the use of alcohol and meat in some rituals, and certain depictions of divinities in sexual union)?

While he did not have direct dharma heirs, Changkya Qutuytu did influence the next generation of Chinese Buddhist leaders and their perspectives on Tibetan Buddhism. Master Chin Kung, for example, was a strong supporter of Tibetan Buddhism even if he did not teach it. Not only have his followers provided financial support for the maintenance of Changkya Qutuytu’s stūpa, but they have also supported Tibetan Buddhist publishing. The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation (財團法人佛陀教育基金會), which Master Chin Kung

This memorial stūpa still stands today behind the Chan Zhonghe Monastery. While the stūpa fell into a state of disrepair as apparently no entity wanted to take ownership for its management, in 2008 a volunteer group called the Changkya Rinpoché Stūpa Protection Association (章嘉活佛舍利塔護持會所管理) was founded to repair and upkeep the stūpa. In addition to donations from the Association’s volunteers, the group successfully secured funding from Master Chin Kung for the stūpa’s renovation, re-consecration, and preservation. Currently, the group organizes regular clean-up days at the stūpa and employs a local caretaker who regularly checks on the status of the stūpa. Director of Changkya Rinpoché Stūpa Protection Association, interview with author, Taoyuan, December 17, 2022.

²⁵⁷ Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 55; Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 412.

²⁵⁸ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 39–40.

founded in 1984, has republished more than a thousand Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, and works by contemporary Tibetan Buddhist masters for free distribution and download.²⁵⁹ Many of these publications are utilized in Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers across Taiwan today. Much more research remains to examine the paths other Chinese Buddhist monastics who studied under Changkya Qutuytu took before a clearer conclusion about the scale of Changkya Qutuytu's impact on the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan can be made.



Figure 3: Changkya Qutuytu's memorial stūpa on a raised area behind Chan Zhonghe Monastery, Beitou District, Taipei. Photo used with permission from Sierra Gladfelter, 2021.

Kangyurwa Qutuytu was another Mongolian Geluk reincarnate teacher who arrived in Taiwan in 1949. Kangyurwa Qutuytu sought to cooperate with the ROC government due to his opposition to the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia by Communist forces.

²⁵⁹ A complete list along with free download links to the 1071 Tibetan language texts The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation has (re)published can be found on their website. See: “Jingshu fabao: zangwen 經書法寶:藏文,” Caituan faren fotuo jiaoyu jijinhui 財團法人佛陀教育基金會, accessed January 23, 2024, <https://www.budaedu.org/#/books/tibetan>.

As a result, he was welcomed to Taiwan and assisted by the then Governor Chen Cheng's (陳誠 1898–1965) office.²⁶⁰ After living at Puji Temple (普濟禪寺) in Beitou for a number of years, Kangyurwa Qutuytu established his own temple, Kangyur Temple (甘珠精舍), in New Taipei City's Xindian District in 1965²⁶¹ and lived there until his death in 1978.

Scholarship to date has been terse about Kangyurwa Qutuytu's life in Taiwan. For example, in Yao devotes only one sentence to Kangyurwa Qutuytu and another early Geluk teacher, Gelek Rinpoché, who I will discuss further below, in his monograph-length study of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Yao states, "although Kangyur Living Buddha and Gelek Living Buddha both founded their own dharma promotion centers and had some students who took refuge with them and clandestinely received dharma transmission, nevertheless they did not have many externally oriented public dharma promotion activities."²⁶² Most of what has been written about Kangyurwa Qutuytu comes from his biography, which contains only several pages about the last three decades of his life in Taiwan. This text mentions how after the death of Changkya Qutuytu, Kangyurwa Qutuytu served as Director of the Board of Directors of BAROC until 1962. Furthermore, it mentions that Kangyurwa Qutuytu went on several teaching tours of Taiwan in 1952 and 1953, and led a BAROC delegation to Thailand and Cambodia as part of the celebrations for the 2,500th anniversary of the historical Buddha's enlightenment. Additionally, Kangyurwa Qutuytu's biography notes how he traveled to Hong Kong three times between 1961 and 1971 where he "performed special ceremonies and blessings" for his followers there.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Hyer and Jagchid, *A Mongolian Living Buddha*, 191–192.

²⁶¹ Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, "Zangchuan fojiao dao chang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在台灣的發展概況," 131.

²⁶² "甘珠活佛和格賴活佛雖然都有設立弘法中心, 也有一些信徒皈依及私下傳法, 不過對外部少有公開的弘法活動。" Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 57.

²⁶³ Hyer and Jagchid, *A Mongolian Living Buddha*, 192–193.

After 2015, efforts to restore Kangyur Temple, particularly by Taiwan’s ethnic Mongolian community, precipitated a handful of articles by Baatar C.H. Hai (海中雄), the Director of the ROC Mongolian Cultural Association (中華民國蒙古文化協會) and former Director of both MTAC and MTCC, that shed additional details on Kangyurwa Qutuytu’s death and cremation. Hai notes that following Kangyurwa Qutuytu’s death in 1978, a large public funeral celebration was held, first at Kangyur Temple, then at Shandao Temple, and finally at Fayu Temple (法雨寺) in Beitou. The funeral ceremonies were organized by BAROC, MTAC, Shandao Temple, Kangyur Temple, and the Mongolian Association (蒙古同鄉會) and were attended by dignitaries including BAROC leader Venerable Baisheng. ROC President Chiang Ching-Kuo (蔣經國 1910–1988) also paid homage to Kangyurwa Qutuytu, presenting a plaque identical to the one his father, Chiang Kai Shek, had presented Changkya Qutuytu that read “Propagate the Dharma to Educate the People.” In addition to these dignitaries, Hai notes that “hundreds of elders, faithful, and people from all walks of life gathered to take leave [from] the Buddha [Kangyurwa Qutuytu].”²⁶⁴ Kangyurwa Qutuytu’s funeral ceremonies were presided over by one of his local disciples, the Chinese Buddhist monk Master Guanding (釋廣定 b. 1939).

Similar to Changkya Qutuytu, Kangyurwa Qutuytu was cremated in a cremation stūpa specially erected for the occasion. Several of his disciples donated over 200,000 New Taiwanese dollars (NTD) or approximately 5,400 United States dollars (USD) (~24,600 USD in the 2024 economy)²⁶⁵ for the occasion, along with enough agarwood, sandalwood, and other fragrant

²⁶⁴ “諸山長老、信徒及各界人士數百人齊聚辭佛。” Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, “Ganzhu hufo 「jingang sheli」 tupi jishi 甘珠活佛「金剛舍利」荼毘紀實,” 風傳媒 The Storm Media, January 8, 2023, <https://www.storm.mg/article/4684357>.

²⁶⁵ This and other figures below are based on historical annual exchange rates published by the Central Bank of the ROC. Adjustments for inflation are based on the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator. See: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed March 17, 2024, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm; Zhongyang yinhang 中央銀行, “Wo guo yu zhiyao maoyi

woods to burn for five days. When the stūpa was opened at the end of five days, Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's disciples discovered not only many small bone relics, but also that a majority of Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's torso and some pieces of his robes remained intact.²⁶⁶ As a result of this apparent miracle,²⁶⁷ Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's disciples launched efforts to mummify his body relics. They engaged renowned Taiwanese sculptor Yang Yingfeng (楊英風 1926–1997) to cast a slightly larger than life bronze statue of Kangyurwa Qutuγtu to house his intact torso and coated the completed statue in gold leaf. Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's disciples raised 350,000 NTD or 9,500 USD (~31,200 USD in the 2024 economy) to pay for the project, which was finished in 1981. The completed statue was returned to Kangyur Temple where it remains today.²⁶⁸

duishou toghuo dui meiyuan zhi huilu 我國與主要貿易對手通貨對美元之匯率,” Zhongyang yinhang 中央銀行, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://www.cbc.gov.tw/tw/cp-520-36599-75987-1.html>.

²⁶⁶ Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, “Ganzhu hufo 甘珠活佛”; Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, “Tan liehuo buneng fen 「 ganzhu foye fayi zhi mi 」 談烈火不能焚「甘珠佛爺法衣之謎」,” 風傳媒 The Storm Media, February 12, 2023, <https://www.storm.mg/article/4725835>.

²⁶⁷ Jagou offers a different take on Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's relics. She notes that “the cremation of the body was poorly conducted and had to be repeated several times” (“La crémation du corps fut mal conduite. Il fallut s’y reprendre à maintes reprises.”). Jagou cites an article by Douglas Gildow and Marcus Bingenheimer that alleges “the whole-body relic was merely the accidental product of an ineptly staged cremation.” See: Douglas Gildow and Marcus Bingenheimer, “Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan: Two Case Studies,” *Asia Major* 15, no. 2 (2002): 93; Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 55.

²⁶⁸ Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, “Ganzhu hufo 甘珠活佛.”

After an apparent period of disuse when the temple was largely locked and off limits to the public, efforts by Master Haitao (釋海濤 b. 1958), the ROC Mongolian Cultural Association, the ROC Retired Veterans Association, and others to restore Kangyur Temple and Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's mummified remains started in 2015. For more on these efforts, see: Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄; Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, “Ganzhu jingshe fojie qiji 「 jingang zhi ti quanshen sheli 」 zai ying can bai 甘珠精舍佛界奇蹟「金剛之體全身舍利」再迎參拜,” 風傳媒 The Storm Media, September 4, 2022, <https://www.storm.mg/article/4494305>.



Figure 4: Kangyurwa Qutuytu's gilded mummified body relics as they appeared at the re-opening of Kangyurwa Temple. Photo by author, 2023.

While Kangyurwa Qutuytu may not have been fluent in Chinese, it appears that he was nevertheless more active in teaching Tibetan Buddhism than has been suggested. An undated photograph, for example, shows Kangyurwa Qutuytu standing on the third-floor balcony of Kangyur Temple surrounded by a group of more than twenty disciples. Other photographs from Kangyurwa Qutuytu's funeral ceremonies reveal crowds of dignitaries, Chinese Buddhist monastics, and lay disciples gathered at the different funeral venues. These photos also show Kangyurwa Qutuytu's disciple Master Guanding enacting Buddhist rituals and later opening the cremation stūpa in front of a large crowd.²⁶⁹ That Master Guanding led these rituals, instead of

²⁶⁹ These and other photos of Kangyurwa Qutuytu are available on a Facebook page created by a group involved in the restoration and current management of Kangyur Temple. See: Ganzhu jing she hufa hui 甘珠精舍護法會, "Ganzhu jing she hufa hui/ ganzhu erwa hutuketu 甘珠精舍護法會/甘珠爾瓦呼圖克圖/Kanjurwa Hotogtu," Facebook, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/kanjurwa>.

other Tibetan Buddhist teachers then-present in Taiwan, suggests that he must have received sufficient training under Kangyurwa Qutuγtu to be qualified to do so.

In addition to the photographic evidence from his funeral, the scale of Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's cremation and mummification also suggest his influence was broader than has been suggested. Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's cremation was very well funded, with more than a half a million NTD donated for his cremation stūpa and mummification. Moreover, his body relics were encased in a bronze statue cast by one of Taiwan's preeminent sculptors and covered in gold leaf. Such lavish treatment was not accorded to other contemporary Chinese Buddhist monastics in Taiwan whose body relics were preserved in far more modest conditions.²⁷⁰ That Kangyurwa Qutuγtu received such lavish treatment following his death suggests that he had a sizable and well-endowed community of supporters in Taiwan at the time of his death.

Accordingly, it seems that at the time of his death Kangyurwa Qutuγtu led a modest, but flourishing temple in Xindian and had a number of wealthy and well-connected donors. The paucity of public evidence of his activities available to scholars to-date is likely more a result of the semi-clandestine and furtive nature of much Buddhist activity not officially sanctioned by BAROC while Taiwan was under martial law, rather than an indication that Kangyurwa Qutuγtu hardly taught Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Perhaps now, following Kangyur Temple's 2023 reopening to the public, more internal documents that have been stored there for nearly fifty years will become available and we will be able to gain a clearer picture of Kangyurwa Qutuγtu's life in Taiwan and the impact he had on the local development of Tibetan Buddhism.

3.2. Khampa Tibetan Buddhist Teachers in Taiwan

²⁷⁰ For a discussion of two examples of Chinese Buddhist teachers whose remains were mummified at close to the same time as Kangyurwa Qutuγtu, see: Gildow and Bingenheimer, "Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan," 96–117.

The two Mongolian teachers described above were not the only Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan before 1980. While Changkya Qutuṅtu and Kangyurwa Qutuṅtu came to Taiwan as part of the KMT's retreat from the mainland, the earliest ethnic Tibetan teachers came to Taiwan via India. After the 1959 Tibetan Uprising (ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༩ ལོའི་བོད་མིའི་རང་དབང་སྐྱེར་ལངས།, 1959 年藏區騷亂), the KMT sought to support armed Tibetan resisters to the PLA, especially the Khampa organization Chushi Gangdruk or Four Rivers, Six Mountains,^{271, 272} and invited a number of Khampas to come to Taiwan. The Thirteenth Mingyür Rinpoché was among the first group of eight Khampas the KMT flew to Taiwan in 1959.²⁷³ Mingyür Rinpoché was followed to Taiwan by his elder brother,²⁷⁴ the Third Gelek Rinpoché, in 1961.

As with Kangyurwa Qutuṅtu, scholarship to date has said very little about these two figures. Mingyür Rinpoché was a teacher of both the Sakya and Geluk schools. After his arrival in Taiwan, he worked for the MTAC and later taught at National Chengchi University (國立政治大學), while still maintaining his vocation as a Buddhist teacher.²⁷⁵ Gelek Rinpoché, a Geluk teacher, is described as having “kept a low profile during his whole stay in Taiwan.”²⁷⁶ The pair

²⁷¹ On the history of Chushi Gangdruk and their role in armed resistance to the PLA, see: Carole McGranahan, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

²⁷² Okawa, “Lessons from Tibetans in Taiwan,” 603–598.

²⁷³ Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan,” November 16, 2022.

²⁷⁴ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切,” 50; Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu: mingzhu guofo 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖: 明珠活佛* (Yunlin xian 雲林縣: Li jinzhi 李錦治, 2012), 29.

I confirmed this blood relationship with long-time student of Gelek Rinpoché and head of the office at Bodhi Monastery. Head of office Bodhi Monastery, personal communication with author, February 21, 2024.

²⁷⁵ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 40; Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 56; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究,” 325; Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 107; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 22; Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, “Zangchuan fojiao daochang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在台灣的發展概況,” 131–132.

²⁷⁶ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 40.

founded several dharma centers as well as Bodhi Monastery (菩提法洲寺/白馬山菩提寺, ཕྱེ་ཚུལ་ཚོས་གྲིང་།), one of the first Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Taiwan.²⁷⁷

While public records of these brothers' activities are scant, their followers produced a pair of publications in 2012 that shed additional light on their activities in Taiwan. These include a more than four hundred page volume about Gelek Rinpoché, which contains a nearly seventy-page autobiography and several hundred photographs from his life.²⁷⁸ Additionally, one of Mingyür Rinpoché's students compiled a shorter volume that contains a biography, a selection of dharma teachings, as well as dozens of photographs.²⁷⁹ While space here does not permit a complete examination of these two texts, their biographic content and photographs shed additional light on the scale of these teachers' activities in this early period in Taiwan.

Mingyür Rinpoché and Gelek Rinpoché fled to India along with several of their relatives in January 1958. After finding refuge in Kalimpong, the two were approached by KMT agents who were trying to form relations with Tibetans in Kalimpong and Calcutta.²⁸⁰ The agents offered the Khampa monks support from the ROC government if they came to Taiwan. With little to leave behind, Mingyür Rinpoché was the first to travel to Taiwan in January 1959.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 22.

²⁷⁸ The foreword to the biography notes that it was written and dictated by Gelek Rinpoché between 1992 and 2008. Following Gelek Rinpoché's passing in 2009, the text was edited by Kyabjé Gosok Rinpoché in Taipei in 2009. In 2010, the edited text was translated into Chinese in Chengdu by Zhagpa Rinpoché (བཀའ་པོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ཆེ།, 夏壩活佛 b. 1968), a disciple of Gelek Rinpoché. The autobiography was published in Taiwan in 2012 by Bodhi Monastery as part of a larger commemorative volume. Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, "Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切," 26.

²⁷⁹ Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu* 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖.

²⁸⁰ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, "Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切," 49.

²⁸¹ Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu* 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖, 32.



Figure 5: R–L Mingyür Rinpoché, Gelek Rinpoché, and another male relative in Kalimpong shortly after their arrival in 1958. Photo used with permission from Bodhi Monastery.²⁸²

Mingyür Rinpoché’s biography does not reveal much about his first years in Taiwan. Although he was invited in the hopes that he would contribute to the KMT’s relationship with Chushi Gangdruk, his students note that he “loved peace” and “appealed to the government in the National Assembly to protect minorities and not send guerilla forces to Tibet.”²⁸³ He held various jobs for Radio Taiwan International (中央廣播電臺) and MTAC and immersed himself in studying the Chinese language. Following the arrival of Gelek Rinpoché to Taiwan in 1961, Mingyür Rinpoché devoted himself as a caregiver to his elder brother, who had significant health problems and was increasingly unable to walk unassisted, requiring a wheelchair for mobility.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Gelie Queshang 格列卻尚, ed., *Yun dan feng qing: hu zhi kanqian gelai renboqie jilu 雲淡風輕：怙主堪千格賴仁波切輯錄* (Yunlin xian 雲林縣: Bai ma puti si 白馬菩提寺, 2012), 50.

²⁸³ “還好和平的明珠仁波切要在陽山中山樓的國民黨大會中呼籲政府，保護少數民意，不要派遣游擊隊到西藏。” Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖*, 32.

²⁸⁴ Ming Miao 明妙, 32–34.

As a Buddhist teacher, Mingyür Rinpoché appears to have initially remained somewhat out of the spotlight. For example, Mingyür Rinpoché repeatedly accompanied Gelek Rinpoché to Hong Kong, where he served as a translator for Gelek Rinpoché and the pair performed rituals and bestowed empowerments. Gelek Rinpoché’s biography contains descriptions and photographs that show the two together in Hong Kong in 1969, 1972, 1974, 1975, and 1979.²⁸⁵ Mingyür Rinpoché’s biography also notes how he assisted Gelek Rinpoché in giving empowerments for Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara (སྤུན་རས་གཟིགས་ཕྱག་སྟོང་སྤུན་སྟོང་།, 千手千眼觀世音菩薩), Uṣṇīṣavijayā (གཙུག་གཏོར་ནམ་རྒྱལ་མ།, 佛頂尊勝佛母), Yamāntaka (གཤམ་རྗེ་གཤམ་ལྷ།/རྗེ་འཛིགས་བྱེད།, 大威德金剛), and a Long-life Empowerment from White Tārā’s Wish-Fulfilling Wheel (སྤྲེལ་དཀར་ཡིད་བཞིན་འཁོར་ལོའི་སྤོ་ནས་བརྟན་བཞུགས།, 白度母如意經的長壽灌頂).²⁸⁶

Mingyür Rinpoché does not appear to have branched out on his own until the late 1970s or early 1980s. His biography recalls that following the death of Kangyurwa Qutuṣtu, some of the Mongolian teacher’s disciples requested Mingyür Rinpoché to continue teaching them. These disciples helped Mingyür Rinpoché found the Tibetan Buddhist Institute (西藏佛教學會) in 1983 and the Tianmu Temple (天母精舍) in 1985.²⁸⁷ Later, Mingyür Rinpoché’s students formed a community in Yunlin and in 1993 a female disciple purchased a plot of land nearby.²⁸⁸ With funds from both Mingyür Rinpoché and Gelek Rinpoché’s disciples, Bodhi Monastery was constructed on this land between 1994 and 1997.²⁸⁹ Although Mingyür Rinpoché’s biography

²⁸⁵ Gelie Queshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 54, 144–158.

²⁸⁶ Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu* 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖, 38–39.

²⁸⁷ Ming Miao 明妙, 36.

²⁸⁸ Fraser, “Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan,” 49.

²⁸⁹ On the architecture of Bodhi Monastery, see: Fraser, 48–53; Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu* 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖, 64–65.

does not list many specific teachings, it describes how he taught and led community practices on the four outer preliminaries required for engaging in advanced tantric practices. It also mentions that Mingyür Rinpoché gave empowerments for Amitāyus (མངས་རྒྱལ་ཚོ་དཔག་མེད།, 無量壽佛), Hayagrīva, (རྩ་མགྲིན།, 馬頭明王) and Green Tārā (སྒྲོལ་ལྷ་དེ།, 綠度母), although no dates are given.²⁹⁰



Figure 6: Mingyür Rinpoché and Gelek Rinpoché participating in a ritual organized by BAROC in Taipei, c. 1970s. Photo used with permission from Bodhi Monastery.²⁹¹

Gelek Rinpoché’s autobiography gives a more detailed picture of his activities teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.²⁹² Although he was invited to Taiwan at the same time as his brother, Gelek Rinpoché was not able to go to Taiwan in 1959 for reasons not specified in either his or Mingyür Rinpoché’s (auto)biographies. Instead, Gelek Rinpoché made his way first to Hong Kong in 1961 after receiving an initiation to teach from the Vajrayana Esoteric Society (金

²⁹⁰ Ming Miao 明妙, *Di shisan shi minji hutuketu* 第十三世敏吉呼圖克圖, 38.

²⁹¹ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 175.

²⁹² On Gelek Rinpoché’s life before he came to Taiwan, see: Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切,” 28–51.

剛乘學會). Once in Hong Kong, he was able to secure a visa and proceeded to Taiwan. Gelek Rinpoché received a warm welcome from KMT officials, with MTAC offering to pay for his living expenses and medical treatment.²⁹³

The earliest public Buddhist activities Gelek Rinpoché records after his arrival in Taiwan was not for Taiwanese, but for ethnic Tibetans living in Taiwan.²⁹⁴ In 1962, Gelek Rinpoché recalls meeting with elders among the Tibetan population in Taiwan²⁹⁵ and suggesting that they gather on Tibetan Buddhist holidays to collectively recite prayers and make offerings to the buddhas. Thereafter, he notes how Taiwan's Tibetan community gathered on Tibetan holidays, such as Sagadawa (སྐྱམས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལོ་སྐྱུས་, 薩噶達娃節), the Dalai Lama's Birthday, Lhabab Düchen (ལྷ་བབས་རྒྱས་ཆེན་མོ།, 佛祖天降), and Ganden Ngachö (དགའ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ་ཆེན་མོ།, 燃燈節).²⁹⁶ Interestingly, Gelek Rinpoché reports that he was able to gain official support and a 30,000 NTD (~7,600 USD in the 2024 economy) annual subvention from the ROC government for these gatherings.²⁹⁷ How many years these gatherings continued or the government provided such a generous stipend is not mentioned.

²⁹³ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, 51–53.

²⁹⁴ On the history of (primarily) lay Tibetans in Taiwan, see: Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan,” November 16, 2022; Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan,” November 17, 2022; Okawa, “Lessons from Tibetans in Taiwan”; Tenzin N. Tethong, “Tibet and Taiwan: Past History and Future Prospects,” *Meng Zang Xiankuang Shuan Yuebao* 蒙藏現況雙月報 5, no. 4 (December 27, 2005): 59–70; Tsering Namgyal, “The Twisting Saga of Tibet-Taiwan Relations.”

²⁹⁵ Gelek Rinpoché's autobiography reports there were more than three hundred ethnic Tibetans in Taiwan in 1962. This is significantly more than related in other sources, which suggest that less than two hundred Tibetans in total came to Taiwan in the period before 1980. See: Dolma Tsering, “Tibetan Diaspora in Taiwan,” November 16, 2022; Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切,” 53.

²⁹⁶ Sagadawa celebrates the historical Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvāṇa or enlightenment after death, and is generally commemorated starting on the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the Tibetan lunar calendar. According to the Tibetan lunar calendar, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's birthday is celebrated on the fourth day of the sixth month. Lhabab Düchen celebrates the Buddha's descent from Trāyastriṃśa Heaven and is celebrated on the twenty-second day of the ninth lunar month. Ganden Ngachö commemorates the birth and passing into enlightenment upon death of Jé Tsongkhapa, founder of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism. It is celebrated on the twentieth day of the tenth lunar month.

²⁹⁷ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切,” 53.

Although he was less fluent in Mandarin than his brother, Gelek Rinpoché was still active in disseminating Tibetan Buddhism among Taiwanese. While many of the teachings and empowerments he records in his autobiography in the period before 1980 were in Hong Kong, he records giving several empowerments and participating in public rituals in Taiwan as well. For example, in 1963 Gelek Rinpoché recalls being requested by a Taiwanese disciple to give teachings at their private temple, where he recited prayers over the course of three days and bestowed a Long-Life Empowerment from White Tārā's Wish-Fulfilling Wheel.²⁹⁸ In 1975, Gelek Rinpoché was invited by BAROC to participate in a seven-day dharma assembly at Shandao Temple dedicated to eliminating disasters and bringing good fortune to the nation.²⁹⁹



Figure 7: Gelek Rinpoché deplaning at Taipei's Songshan Airport, 1961. Photo used with permission from Bodhi Monastery.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, 53–54.

²⁹⁹ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, 56.

³⁰⁰ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 165.

In 1970, a group of Gelek Rinpoché's disciples, primarily Hongkongers, sponsored the construction of a temple with living quarters in Taipei's Tianmu District. This building, referred to as Gelek Temple (格賴精舍), was consecrated and opened at a ceremony attended by a large crowd of Hongkonger, Taiwanese, and Tibetan supporters. There were a number of Chinese Buddhist monastics and ROC government officials present, including BAROC leader Master Daoan (道安法師 1907–1977), Cui Chuyan (崔垂言) from the MTAC, and a representative from the KMT's Central Committee.³⁰¹ After Gelek Temple was completed, Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché lived and conducted dharma activities there. Unfortunately, Gelek Rinpoché's autobiography does not note the frequency of events at this location during that time.

Most scholars maintain that Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché had quite limited public activities in Taiwan during this period. For example, Yao suggests that the pair “had few activities offered to the public.”³⁰² Jagou writes that the two rinpochés “advised the Taiwanese wishing to receive esoteric teachings to go to Hong Kong where religious regulations were less strict and where resided Tibetan masters, themselves in exile but free to do as they pleased.”³⁰³ This makes sense given both the difficulties of offering Buddhist teachings outside of BAROC sanctioned venues during martial law and the sensitivities of Tibetan Buddhist teachers, especially from the Geluk school, contravening the boycott of Taiwan advocated for by the Dalai Lama. As Geluk teachers (or in Mingyür Rinpoché's case, Sakya and Geluk) who remained on

³⁰¹ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, “Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切,” 55.

³⁰² “對外少有公開活動。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在臺灣發展的初步研究,” 325.

³⁰³ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 40–41.

cordial terms with the Dalai Lama and other Geluk leaders,³⁰⁴ Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché were cautious not to openly act contrary to their Geluk peers and spiritual leaders.

³⁰⁴ The exact relationship between Gelek Rinpoché, Mingyür Rinpoché, and the Dalai Lama remains unclear. Gelek Rinpoché's autobiography records that he studied with the Dalai Lama's tutors Trijang Rinpoché (ཐི་བྱང་འགྲོ་བཏགས་ལེ་ཤེས་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་མཚོ།, 第三世赤絳仁波切 1901–1980) and Ling Rinpoché (ལྷིང་ལོ་ལྷ་བསྟན་ལུང་རྟོགས་བསྟན་འཛིན་འཕྲིན་ལས།, 第六世林仁波切 1903–1983) and had a positive relationship with the Dalai Lama before leaving Tibet. Gelek Rinpoché notes that he had intended to personally consult the Dalai Lama prior to departing for Taiwan, but was unable to do so because of poor health and lack of funds. Instead, he wrote a letter to inform the Dalai Lama of his intentions. On their first return trip to India in 1977, Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché were unable to meet with the Dalai Lama, who was on retreat, but they were received warmly by other Geluk teachers. In 1980, Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché met the Dalai Lama in Vancouver. During the hour-long meeting, Gelek Rinpoché recalls that the Dalai Lama apologized for not being able to meet the pair in India and asked Gelek Rinpoché to investigate the full ordination lineage of Buddhist nuns present in Taiwan. Later, when the Dalai Lama visited Taiwan in 1997 and 2001, he visited Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché and the newly constructed Bodhi Monastery. Photographs from these occasions show the Dalai Lama warmly greeting Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché. While Gelek Rinpoché suggests they enjoyed a cordial relationship, ultimately it is difficult to know for certain their private thoughts and communications and how their relationship may have been strained by Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché's residence in Taiwan. See: Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, "Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切," 52, 57, 61; Gelie Queshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 218, 257–260.



Figure 8: Portrait of Gelek Rinpoché in the 1980s. Photo used with permission from Bodhi Monastery.³⁰⁵

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to take their limited public activity as a sign that these two brothers were not active in teaching Tibetan Buddhism on Taiwanese soil during this period. As noted above, Gelek Rinpoché records giving an empowerment in Taiwan as early as 1963 and participating in at least one public Buddhist ceremony sponsored by BAROC. Additionally, the crowd at the opening of Gelek Temple suggests that Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché had conducted sufficient religious activities to have developed a sizable community of local supporters. Photographs of events at Gelek Temple starting in 1970 show between a handful and several dozen disciples,³⁰⁶ suggesting that the two Tibetans were active in teaching Tibetan Buddhism from their Tianmu residence, even if they did not do so very publicly.

³⁰⁵ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 18.

³⁰⁶ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, 55, 171–176.

By the 1980s, Gelek Rinpoché recalls offering empowerments and other Buddhist teachings almost annually, often at a sizable scale. Among others, he records the following: in 1982 he gave a Three Great Protectors (三怙主的灌頂)³⁰⁷ empowerment, in 1983 he gave an Avalokiteśvara empowerment (大悲觀音的灌頂) to approximately three hundred people, in 1985 he taught the Hundred Deities of Tushita (兜率天上師瑜伽), gave a Yamāntaka empowerment (獨勇大威德金剛的預備和正式等圓滿的灌頂), and gave refuge vows to one hundred lay disciples, in 1986 he gave another Avalokiteśvara empowerment to approximately three hundred people, in 1987 he taught the hagiography of Tsongkhapa to a group of disciples, in 1988 he gave an Uṣṇīṣavijayā Long-life empowerment (尊勝佛母的長壽灌頂) and refuge vows to thirty people, and in 1989 he gave a Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara empowerment (四臂觀音的隨許灌頂) and refuge vows to fifty people.³⁰⁸ The scale of these events is corroborated by photographs, which show up to several dozen lay disciples in attendance at many events.³⁰⁹

That Gelek Rinpoché would suddenly have had developed a local following after twenty years of inactivity in Taiwan seems unlikely. Rather, I would suggest that Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché were active in transmitting Tibetan Buddhism almost from the time they arrived on the island. If scant public records of their activities exist, it is likely due to the sensitivities of openly teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan at that time. Even if they operated circumspectly, these brothers seem to have built a community of supporters, given numerous Buddhist teachings, empowerments, and led rituals from an early date. Future research into their (auto)biographies and among their disciples may further illuminate their activities.

³⁰⁷ Gelek Rinpoché's autobiography does not contain the Tibetan names of these empowerments.

³⁰⁸ Gelai Renboqie 格賴仁波切, "Zhizun gelai renboqie 至尊格賴仁波切," 61–67.

³⁰⁹ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 177–192.

3.3. Han and Manchu Teachers of Tibetan Buddhism

As several scholars have noted,³¹⁰ a majority of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan during the period before 1980 were not Mongolians or Tibetans, but Manchu and Han Chinese who had studied with Tibetan Buddhist masters outside of Taiwan. Many of these teachers were refugees, part of a broader population who fled to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland. Some, such as Liu Rui and Wu Runjiang, taught Tibetan Buddhism between Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the United States, and other locales. Others, such as Ouyang Wuwei and Gongga Laoren, stayed in Taiwan long-term. Apart from Ouyang Wuwei, all of these teachers were primarily affiliated with the Nyingma or Kagyü schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The earliest of these teachers was Qu Yingguang, who fled to Taiwan in 1952. Qu had been a student of Norlha Qutuytu (ནོ་ལྷ་འཕྱི་གཤམ།, 諾那呼圖克圖, 1865–1936) and was an early proponent of Tibetan Buddhism in Shanghai during the 1930s. After his arrival in Taiwan, Qu was hired by the ROC government as a national policy advisor and also started to teach Tibetan Buddhism at Zhaiming Temple (齋明寺) in Daxi. Later, he also taught at other venues across the Taipei region. In 1971 he and his disciples began to construct the Southern Baosheng Buddha Temple (南方寶生佛剎) in Xindian. Following Qu's death, his disciples Ouyang Chongguang (歐陽重光) and Lin Xianghuang (林祥煌) led this early hub of Nyingma activity in Taipei.³¹¹

Wu Runjiang was another student of Norlha Qutuytu who later taught Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Although he was based in Hong Kong following his flight from China, Wu came to Taiwan seven times to teach Buddhism between 1958 and 1977. His Taiwanese students Qian

³¹⁰ Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, "Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教," 106; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," 324; Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 386.

³¹¹ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 325.

Zhimin (錢智敏) and Zhu Huihua (朱慧華) established Norlha Temple (諾那精舍) in 1975 and taught in Wu's lineage until their deaths in 2004. Yao notes that although Wu was not a permanent resident, he nevertheless had many Taiwanese disciples and “had considerable influence on the early practitioners and students of tantric Buddhism in Taiwan.”³¹²

Liu Rui, a student of the Nyingma master and scholar Dudjom Rinpoché Jigdel Yeshe Dorjé (བདུད་འཛོམས་འཇིགས་བྲལ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྗེ།, 敦珠仁波切吉札耶謝多傑 1904–1987), also taught Tibetan Buddhism between Hong Kong and Taipei. After establishing the Vajrayana Esoteric Society in Hong Kong in 1961,³¹³ Liu established a branch of this organization in Taipei in 1974.³¹⁴ In subsequent years, he founded additional centers in Taizhong, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. In 1979, the Vajrayana Esoteric Society started to publish the *Vajrayana Quarterly* (金剛乘季刊), which was one of the earliest publications about Tibetan Buddhism regularly produced in Taiwan.³¹⁵

In addition to these Nyingma teachers, there was also at least one Han Geluk teacher in Taiwan in the period before 1979. Geshé Ouyang Wuwei lived in Tibet for a total of ten years between 1934 and 1951 and graduated with a geshé degree from Drepung Monastery (འབྲས་བུ་སྡེ་དགོན།, 哲蚌寺) in Lhasa in 1950.³¹⁶ After a brief period in India, Ouyang came to Taiwan in 1952

³¹² “因此對於臺灣初期密法修學者然仍有相當影響。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 66.

³¹³ On the history of this organization and Tibetan Buddhism in Hong Kong, see: Henry C. H. Shiu, “Tibetan Buddhism in Hong Kong: The Polarity of Two Trends of Practice,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito, Études Thématiques (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 551–77.

³¹⁴ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 42.

³¹⁵ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 69.

The Vajrayana Esoteric Society of Taiwan has made scans of many historical issues of the *Vajrayana Quarterly* available on their website. See: Jingang cheng xuehui 金剛乘學會, “Jingang cheng jikan 金剛乘季刊,” Jingang cheng xuehui shuwei foxue wang 金剛乘學會數位佛學網, accessed June 3, 2024, <https://vajrayana.org.tw/%E6%9B%B8%E7%B1%8D%E5%88%8A%E7%89%A9%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E4%B9%98%E5%AD%A3%E5%88%8A/>.

³¹⁶ Ouyang Wuwei's personal journals from his time in Tibet through his flight to India have recently been published. See: Ouyang Wuwei 歐陽無謂, *Xizang ta cha (yi): ouyang wuwei cang ni youji 西藏踏查 (一) : 歐陽*

where he eventually found work for the ROC government's Mainland Retrocession Planning Commission (光復大陸設計研究委員會), as well as at Academia Historica (國史館) and Chengchi University's Department of Border Affairs. While Ouyang did not start his own Tibetan Buddhist center, starting in 1975, he began to offer weekly Tibetan language classes at his home. Later, Ouyang began to teach the Five Major Treatises (གཞུང་ཚན་བཀའ་པོད་ལྔ་),³¹⁷ a set of texts by Indian Buddhist masters that form the basis for Buddhist philosophical studies in the Geluk school, and texts by Jé Tsongkhapa. He continued to teach a circle of students at his home until his death in 1991.³¹⁸ Although Ouyang did not leave an institutional legacy, one of his disciples stressed that he had a lasting impact on Taiwanese scholarship, noting that “numerous contemporary Tibetologists and Buddhism studies experts owe their knowledge to him.”³¹⁹

One of the foremost Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan before 1980 was the Karma Kagyü teacher Gongga Laoren.³²⁰ Not only was Gongga Laoren successful as a solo female teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, a fact remarkable during the period before 1979 and still rarely seen in Taiwan today, but as Jagou and Liu have argued, she was also a critical bridge builder for teachers from the global Tibetan exile who came to Taiwan after 1980.³²¹

無畏藏尼遊記, ed. Han Jingshan 韓敬山 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Minguo lishi wenhua xue she youxian gongsi 民國歷史文化學社有限公司, 2022); Ouyang Wuwei 歐陽無謂, *Xizang ta cha (er): ouyang wuwei da wang diaocha ji* 西藏踏查(二): 歐陽無畏大旺調查記, ed. Han Jingshan 韓敬山 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Minguo lishi wenhua xue she youxian gongsi 民國歷史文化學社有限公司, 2022).

³¹⁷ These are the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (*Ornament of Realization*), the *Pramāṇavārttika* (*Commentary on Valid Cognition*), the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, the *Abdharmakośabhāṣya*, and the *Vinayasūtra*.

³¹⁸ Hsiao, “The Academic Contributions of Ouyang Wuwei Lama (1913–1991): A Disciple’s Testimony,” 181–182.

³¹⁹ Hsiao, 182.

³²⁰ For additional biographic details of Gongga Laoren, see: Gongga Laoren 貢噶老人, *Baiyun jian de chuanqi: gongga laoren xueshan xiuxing ji* 白雲間的傳奇: 貢噶老人雪山修行記 (Taipei shi 臺北市: Zheng fa yan chuban she 正法眼出版社, 2002); Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*; Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future”; Stefania Travagnin, “Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903-1997) between China, Tibet and Taiwan: Assessing Life, Mission and Mummification of a Buddhist Woman,” *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 3 (2016): 250–72.

³²¹ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 92–96; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 24; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Yu zhi chuancheng* 語旨傳承, 133.

Gongga Laoren was born into an ethnic Manchu family in Beijing in 1903. She became interested in Tibetan Buddhism as a young woman and eventually traveled to Kham where she studied under the guidance of Bo Gangkar Rinpoché and completed an extended retreat from 1942 to 1945. After her return from Tibet, she taught Buddhism and continued her meditation practice until 1958 when, for reasons not entirely clear, she fled to Taiwan.³²² Although she arrived bereft of her Tibetan texts and ritual implements, Gongga Laoren nevertheless started to perform rituals and give teachings shortly after her arrival in Taiwan at the request of private individuals. Jagou notes that Gongga Laoren started to attract disciples and supporters in earnest after a Hong Kong businesswoman requested that she perform post-mortem rituals for her recently deceased husband in 1959.³²³ The woman was apparently so touched that she started a campaign to collect funds for a Buddhist institute for Gongga Laoren, which culminated in the construction of Gongga Temple (貢噶精舍) in New Taipei City's Zhonghe District in 1961.³²⁴

During these early years, Gongga Laoren not only received invitations to teach, perform rituals, and offer empowerments in the Taipei region, but also in southern Taiwan. She was first invited to teach at Zhuxi Monastery (竹溪寺) and Guanyin Jiang Monastery (觀音講寺) through the Tainan BAROC branch. However, Gongga Laoren appears to have attracted some controversy since she was not an ordained nun, utilized meat and alcohol, and “wasted” food by tossing rice during rituals.³²⁵ Despite, or perhaps because of, these difficulties with Tainan's Buddhist establishment, Gongga Laoren's network of supporters continued to grow. Her first autobiography, published in 1961, contained several miraculous tales of Gongga Laoren's tantric feats and established her credibility as a Tibetan Buddhist teacher based upon her training under

³²² Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 35.

³²³ Jagou, 42–43.

³²⁴ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 74.

³²⁵ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 75–76.

Gangkar Rinpoché. Her reputation grew further as she completed numerous extended meditative retreats in Taiwan in 1962, 1965, 1969–1971, and 1972–1975.³²⁶ As Gongga Laoren’s disciples grew reportedly into the thousands,³²⁷ she not only taught at Gongga Temple in Taipei, but also took over Chongqing Temple (台南重慶寺) in Tainan. Later, her disciples constructed Gongga Monastery (貢噶寺, གངས་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་དགོན་པ།) for her in Tainan’s Anping District between 1992 and 1997.



Figure 9: Gongga Monastery in Anping District, Tainan. Photo by author, 2022.

Jagou notes that before 1980, Gongga Laoren’s approach to teaching Tibetan Buddhism corresponded with “the habits of the time, when religious rituals and ceremonies were organized in great secrecy and in places only the initiated knew about.”³²⁸ Jagou notes that Gongga Laoren gave teachings and initiations into the practices of transference of consciousness (འཕོ་བ།, 頗瓦法),

³²⁶ Jagou, 44–69; Travagnin, “Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903-1997) between China, Tibet and Taiwan,” 255.

³²⁷ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903-1997) between China, Tibet and Taiwan,” 255.

³²⁸ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 42.

the six thoughts (六想),³²⁹ the great seal (ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ།, 大手印), and Red Avalokiteśvara (རྒྱལ་བ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, 紅光音菩薩) on several occasions.³³⁰ However, given the size and resources of the communities in Taipei and Tainan around Gongga Laoren, this list must surely be an underestimate. Even if details were not made public or printed in internal publications, the scale of Gongga Laoren's activities teaching Tibetan Buddhism was likely much larger. Similar to Kangyurwa Qutuγtu, Gelek Rinpoché, and Mingyür Rinpoché, the clandestine nature in which Gongga Laoren and her disciples operated during this period left only incomplete traces of her activities.

In addition to building her own Buddhist institutions, Gongga Laoren also played an instrumental role connecting Buddhist teachers in the post-1959 Tibetan diaspora, especially from the Kagyü school, to disciples in Taiwan. Jagou notes that following Gongga Laoren's ordination by the Sixteenth Karmapa (ཀམ་པ་ ༡༦ རང་བྱུང་རིག་པའི་འོ་ཇེ།, 第十六世噶瑪巴讓炯日佩多傑 1924–1981) in 1980, she became increasingly connected with the broader international network of Karma Kagyü teachers and introduced her students to them by publishing their biographies and excerpts from their teachings.³³¹ Additionally, Gongga Laoren used her personal relations, especially with the MTAC official responsible for issuing visas, as well as her local institutional and financial support, to secure permission for and organize early visits to Taiwan by important Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the early 1980s.³³² These included Khenpo Karthar Rinpoché, the Ninth Thrangu Rinpoché, Tenga Rinpoché (བསྟན་དགའ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཀམ་བསྟན་འཛིན་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།, 天噶仁波切 1933–2012), the Fourteenth Shamar Rinpoché (ལྷ་དམར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ ༡༤ སི་ཕམ་ཚས་ཀྱི་སློབ་གོས།, 第十四世夏瑪巴

³²⁹ Jagou reports that Gongga Laoren gave initiations for and taught this practice to her students, but I have been unable to locate its Tibetan equivalent. See: Jagou, 69–71.

³³⁰ Jagou, 69–70.

³³¹ Jagou, 90.

³³² Jagou, 98.

米龐確吉羅佐 1952–2014), the Twelfth Tai Situ Rinpoché (ཉི་མི་ཏུ་ །༢ བཟླ་དོན་ཡོད་ཉིན་བྱེད་དབང་ཡོ།, 第十二世大司徒巴貝瑪東由寧傑旺波 b. 1954), and the Third Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoché (འཇམ་གསོན་ ཀོང་སྐུལ་ འམ་ ལྷོ་གྲོ་མཚོ་སྐྱི་སེང་གེ།, 第三世蔣貢康楚仁波切 1954–1992), among others.³³³



Figure 10: Gongga Laoren's portrait atop a throne for her on the first floor of Gongga Monastery. Photo by author, 2022.

4. Like Bamboo Shoots after the Spring Rain: Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan 1980–1997

Starting in 1980, the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan began to change as Buddhist teachers from the Tibetan exile community started to visit Taiwan. What began as a trickle of a few Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan each year in the early 1980s swiftly turned into a flood by the end of the decade, spurred on by Taiwan's burgeoning economy and

³³³ Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 77.

Tibetan teachers' search for wealthy patrons. Throughout the 1990s, an increasing number of Tibetan Buddhist centers were founded as thousands of Tibetan Buddhist teachers visited Taiwan and hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese attended Tibetan Buddhist events and patronized Tibetan teachers. Leading teachers from the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools regularly traveled to Taiwan where they bestowed empowerments and offered other religious teachings in stadiums, conference centers, and hotel ballrooms. Even the custom of recognizing reincarnations started to take root in Taiwan with the recognition of locally born reincarnate teachers. By the end of the 1990s, Tibetan Buddhism was flourishing in Taiwan to the extent that a local periodical declared Taiwan was experiencing a "Tibetan Buddhist fever."³³⁴

The popularization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan started with the visits of several teachers, mainly from the Karma Kagyü school in the early 1980s. As Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan were in somewhat of an awkward position vis-à-vis the Tibetan government in exile, the visits of many of these teachers were facilitated, organized, and likely also funded by Han and Manchu Tibetan Buddhist teachers. As noted above, Gongga Laoren played a central role in Khenpo Karthar Rinpoché's 1981 visit to re-consecrate Gongga Temple as Karma Triyāna Dharmacakra (噶瑪三乘法輪中心). The next year, she also organized visits by Bardor Tulku (བསའ་རོ་བུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ།, 巴都仁波切 1949–2021) and Lama Gangga (剛噶喇嘛, གུ་ཀ་ཀཱ།? 1931–1988).³³⁵

Among the first of this new wave of Tibetan exile teachers was Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoché, who reportedly visited Taiwan in 1980. As very little is known about his visit, however, its organization remains unclear. Slightly more can be said about Kalu Rinpoché's 1982 visit. Yao notes that Kalu Rinpoché held several dharma assemblies and met with

³³⁴ Wang Ying 王瑩 and Chen Miaoling 陳妙鈴, "Dalai di tai 達賴抵台."

³³⁵ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 92–93.

prominent public figures, such as Taiwanese actress Chen Lili (陳麗麗 1951–2017). Kalu Rinpoché also met with the Chinese Buddhist teacher Master Chanyun (懺雲法師 1915–2009), who was particularly renowned for his strict adherence to the code of monastic discipline, vegetarianism, and fasting. The two apparently engaged in extended conversations, including a public dialogue wherein Master Chanyun requested Kalu Rinpoché to instruct his monastic students.³³⁶ According to Yao, Master Chanyun’s praise for Kalu Rinpoché “not only helped to resolve prejudices against esoteric [Tibetan] Buddhism among Mahāyāna [Chinese] Buddhists, but also indirectly contributed to the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.”³³⁷

Following these two visits, many of the Karma Kagyü’s leading teachers also started to stream into Taiwan. By 1988, Liu records that, Sangsang Rinpoché (བསམ་བཤམ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 桑桑仁波切 b. 1959), Dabzang Rinpoché (ཐཱ་བཟང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 達桑仁波切 1929–1992), Beru Khyentsé Rinpoché (རི་མཁུན་བཟེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 貝魯欽哲仁波切 b. 1947), Shamar Rinpoché, Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoché, Salje Rinpoché (གསལ་ལྗེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 薩傑仁波切 1910–1991), Tenga Rinpoché, Gyaltzab Rinpoché (རྒྱལ་ཚབ་ཀྱི་གསལ་པ་བསྟན་པ་ཡར་འཕེལ།, 第十二世嘉察仁波切 b. 1954), Trungram Gyaltrül Rinpoché (བློ་རམ་རྒྱལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 宗南嘉措仁波切 b. 1968), and Tai Situ Rinpoché had all visited Taiwan. Several of these teachers even made repeated trips to Taiwan before the end of the decade.³³⁸ In addition to the Karma Kagyü, teachers from the Drukpa Kagyü first journeyed to Taiwan in 1981 and Drikung Kagyü teachers came to Taiwan for the first time in 1988.³³⁹

³³⁶ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu* 金剛乘事件簿, 160–161.

³³⁷ “此舉不僅有助於化解以往學佛者對密教的成見，也間接促成了藏傳佛教在臺灣的開展。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 79.

³³⁸ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Yu zhi chuancheng* 語旨傳承, 134.

³³⁹ Liu Guowei 劉國威, 138–144.

Reincarnate teachers from the Nyingma and Sakya schools also began to travel to Taiwan around the same period. Liu notes that the Nyingma teacher Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché (འཇམ་ལོ་དྲོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 蔣波羅曾仁波切 1930–1987), and the Sakya teacher Dezhung Rinpoché (འཇིག་རྒྱུད་འཇུག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第三世德松仁波切) both came to Taiwan in 1983. By 1990 many of the leading lights of both schools had journeyed to Taiwan one or more times. Liu lists visits by Dudjom Rinpoché, Dzatrül Rinpoché (ཇུ་བློ་ལ་ཀྲུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第十二札珠仁波切 b. 1959), Penor Rinpoché (ཕེན་པོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 第三世卓望貝瑪諾布仁波切 1932–2009), Dakchen Rinpoché (ཏཱ་ཅན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 達欽仁波切 1929–2016), Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoché, Khenchen Apé Rinpoché (མཁའ་ཆེན་ཨ་པེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 堪布阿貝仁波切 1926–2010), and Tharig Rinpoché (ཐར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 塔立仁波切 1929–1998), among others.³⁴⁰

Most of these teachers came to Taiwan only for very brief visits to give empowerments or lead rituals. According to a retired visa officer at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong, where many of these teachers secured their travel permissions,³⁴¹ before 1995 Tibetan teachers could only come to Taiwan on sightseeing or business visas for either seven or fourteen days.³⁴² As a result, most teachers limited their activities to Taiwan’s major cities. Only a few, such as Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché, managed to stay in Taiwan for extended durations.

³⁴⁰ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 25–27.

³⁴¹ In addition to Hong Kong, this retired officer noted that many Tibetan Buddhist teachers also went to Thailand and Singapore to secure travel permission to Taiwan. After the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Center was opened in New Delhi in 1995, many Tibetans also applied for travel permission in New Delhi. Retired visa officer at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong, personal communication with author, September 13, 2022.

³⁴² Retired visa officer at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong, personal communication with author, September 13, 2022.

Whereas the number of Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya teachers visiting Taiwan grew quite rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, visits from Geluk teachers to Taiwan were scarce. While Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché continued to lead communities and offer public activities, for the most part Geluk teachers from the Tibetan exile community avoided Taiwan due to the boycott advocated by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile. Liu lists only three Geluk teachers who came to Taiwan between 1980 and 1997: Longda Rinpoché (龍塔仁波切), who reportedly came to Taiwan in 1985, Khenchen Tala Rinpoché (堪布塔拉仁波切),³⁴³ and Lama Zopa Rinpoché (ལྷ་མ་ལྷུབ་བསྟན་བཟོད་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 土丹索巴仁波切/圖敦梭巴仁波切 1946–2023) who came to Taiwan in 1988.³⁴⁴ Yao notes that another Mongolian Geluk teacher, Khenpo Ngawang Nyendrak Rinpoché (མ་ལག་པོ་དག་དབང་སྟན་གྲགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 堪布阿旺念札仁波切) came to Taiwan in 1990 and established the Tsongkhapa Buddhist Society (宗喀巴佛學會).³⁴⁵

Scholars have been terse about how these teachers were able to travel to Taiwan without angering the Dalai Lama and the Geluk establishment. Weng, for example, merely states that “in 1988 the Dalai Lama suggested Lama Zopa go to Taiwan to spread the dharma,” and does not provide any further explanation.³⁴⁶ While details of how these individuals navigated internal Geluk politics are scarce, their visits were clearly exceptions. For the majority of Geluk teachers, traveling to Taiwan remained essentially verboten until after the Dalai Lama’s visit in 1997.

³⁴³ I have been unable to locate the Tibetan names of either Longda Rinpoché or Tala Rinpoché

³⁴⁴ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 27.

³⁴⁵ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 88.

³⁴⁶ “1988年，達賴喇嘛方授意梭巴仁波切來臺弘法” Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, “Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制,” 36.

Neither Liu nor Yao mention if any teachers from the Jonang school (རྫོག་པལ།, 覺囊) or the Bön tradition (བོན།, 本教) came to Taiwan between 1980 and 2000. While there are, to the best of my knowledge, only a small handful of teachers but no Bön centers in Taiwan today, there are several Jonang centers as well as Jonang teachers who regularly come to Taiwan. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate information about when the first Jonang teachers came to Taiwan either in the existing scholarship or during my fieldwork.

In addition to a growing number of Tibetan teachers visiting Taiwan, the number of Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, associations, and other institutions also grew during this period. While it is difficult to know how many Tibetan Buddhist communities existed during martial law, Huang estimates there were a total of twenty-four communities founded in Taiwan before 1979, with an average of one or two new groups forming each year. The rate at which new groups formed accelerated starting in the early 1980s, so that by the time Huang completed his study in 1988 he identified sixty-one Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan.³⁴⁷

Policy changes by MTAC in 1995 allowed Tibetan teachers to come to Taiwan for up to thirty days.³⁴⁸ In an effort to take a more active role in regulating Tibetan Buddhist activity, MTAC began to conduct more detailed investigations of domestic Tibetan Buddhist activity, making the growth of Tibetan Buddhist institutions easier to track. By 1996, MTAC recorded eighty-two registered Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan.³⁴⁹ The number of registered groups further increased to 101 by 1997.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Yao Lixiang lists only fifty-six Tibetan Buddhist centers in 1988. See: Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu* 金剛乘事件簿, 168; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 121.

³⁴⁸ Retired visa officer at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong, personal communication with author, September 13, 2022.

³⁴⁹ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 118.

³⁵⁰ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, 118–121.

In addition to dharma centers, several Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were also founded in Taiwan during this period. In 1986, Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché and his disciples founded the Taiwan Nyingma Palyül Dharma Center in a three-story building in New Taipei City's Shenkeng District. This monastery eventually housed a rotating group of over ten Tibetan monastics, largely from Namdröling Monastery (ཐེག་མཚོག་རྣམ་གྲོལ་བཤད་སྐབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།, 南卓林寺) in southern India.³⁵¹ As noted above, Gongga Laoren's disciples also financed the purchase of land and the construction of Gongga Monastery between 1992 and 1997, and Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché's disciples supported the construction of Bodhi Monastery over the same period. Additionally, ground was broken on two other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, Karma Kagyü Monastery (噶瑪噶居寺) and Dzokchen Monastery (大圓滿廟) both in Tainan County.³⁵²



Figure 11: The entrance to Bodhi Monastery in Linnei Township, Yunlin County. Photo by author, 2022.

³⁵¹ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, 82.

³⁵² Fraser, "Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan," 55–57, 61–64.



Figure 12: An eighteen by sixteen meter mosaic of the Potala Palace on the rear of Bodhi Monastery. Photo by author, 2022.

Finally, even reincarnate lineages started to take root in Taiwan. In 1987, the first Taiwanese-born Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teacher was recognized. A then-four year old Lobsang Jigmé (ལྷོ་བཟང་འཕམ་མེད།, 羅桑吉美 b. 1983), who had been born in Taiwan to Tibetan parents, was recognized as the Fourth Bhumang Rinpoché (བུམ་མང་འཕམ།, 第四世菩曼仁波切).³⁵³ In 1991, Wei Chengxiang (魏呈祥 b. 1960), a spirit medium and Tibetan Buddhist teacher, was recognized as the reincarnation of Loppön Tenzin Jigmé Rinpoché (ལྷོ་བ་དཔོན་བསྟན་འཛོན་འཕམ་མེད་ཅིན་པོ་ཚེ།, 洛本天津吉美仁波切). Wei's disciples supported the construction of Karma Kagyü Monastery, which was completed in 2003.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Lin Jiancheng 林建成, *Puman renboqie: taiwan di yi wei zhuan shi hufo* 菩曼仁波切: 臺灣第一位轉世活佛 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Xiangshu lin wenhua, chengbang wenhua bang fen youxian gongsi 橡樹林文化, 城邦文化邦份有限公司, 2012), 56–63.

³⁵⁴ For additional biographical details about Wei and his recognition, see: Huang, “Spirit-Possession: Identities of a Master and the Rise of a Karma Kagyü Monastery in Taiwan.”

Thus, whether looking at the number of local disciples, visiting teachers, or local institutions, Tibetan Buddhism grew significantly in Taiwan in the period between 1980 and 1997 by a number of measures. The obvious question then is why did Tibetan Buddhism expand so swiftly in Taiwan during this period? What conditions and circumstances led a rising number of Taiwanese to take interest in Tibetan Buddhism? And why did so many Tibetan Buddhist teachers, especially from the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools, seek Taiwanese supporters even at the risk of offending the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exile political establishment?

4.1. The Tibetan Side: Searching for Financial Support

There are numerous reasons Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to travel and transmit Tibetan Buddhism internationally in increasing numbers in the 1970s and 1980s. Some teachers, like the Dalai Lama, spread word about the political and humanitarian plight of the Tibetans and engaged in lobbying efforts to gain political support. Other teachers were likely motivated to spread the Buddhist teachings by their Mahāyāna Buddhist commitments to benefit all beings. In the case of Taiwan, however, the most obvious reason so many Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to travel and cultivate local communities of disciples during this period was financial. Indeed, it is often mentioned in scholarship, and I was frequently told during my fieldwork, that the main reason Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to come to Taiwan was the generosity of Taiwanese donors. Yao summarizes this point in the following manner:

Of course, we cannot deny that Tibetan Buddhist monks come to Taiwan not only due to the faith and piety of Taiwanese believers, but most importantly because of Taiwanese disciples' willingness to give alms. This is one of primary motivating factors behind why Tibetan Buddhist teachers come to Taiwan. Regarding Tibetan monastics in exile, Taiwanese disciples' magnanimous donations are the largest source of support for them to rebuild their monasteries, support [their] monastic communities, and even their families. For this reason, many monastics

think: ‘If you want to spread the dharma, you have to go to America or Europe. If you want to raise funds, you have to travel to Taiwan.’³⁵⁵

Yao’s conclusion that Taiwanese disciples’ donations were critical for the rebuilding and maintenance of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in exile is corroborated by Peter Moran’s and Zablocki’s research around the Boudha Stūpa (བུ་མོ་ལོ་ཤོ་ཤོ།, 满愿塔), an important Buddhist pilgrimage site in Kathmandu, Nepal in the 1990s and early 2000s. Both scholars note how Taiwanese were among the main sponsors financing the Tibetan Buddhist monastery construction boom that had been occurring in the area around Boudha since the early 1980s.³⁵⁶

The reasons for Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ search for funders are complex but can largely be traced to the invasion of Tibet by the PLA in the early 1950s and the resulting flight of nearly one hundred thousand ethnic Tibetans, including tens of thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monastics, into exile, mainly in South Asia. As the prospects of swiftly returning to Tibet grew dimmer, many Tibetan Buddhist leaders sought to build more permanent religious institutions in South Asia. Their felt need to preserve Tibetan religious culture grew even more acute with the mass destruction of Tibetan religious institutions during the Cultural Revolution in the PRC.

Robyn Brentano describes the early precarity of Tibetan Buddhist monastic refugees in India, noting how the Indian government and international aid agencies were initially resistant to providing support for institutions dedicated to the ordained. Eventually, in August 1959 the Indian government agreed to support 500 Tibetan monks in Dalhousie and 1,500 monks at a

³⁵⁵ “當然我們也不能否認，藏僧來台除了因為台灣信眾的信心虔誠外，最主要是為了台灣的信眾樂於布施，這是促使藏人喇嘛相繼來台的一大動力。對於流亡的藏僧而言，台灣信眾的大量供養金，是支助他們重建寺院、養活流亡的僧團、甚至家族的最大來源。也因此，不少喇嘛認為：‘如果要傳法，要到歐美去；如果要募款，要到台灣來。’ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香，“Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究，” 334–335.

³⁵⁶ Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 81–84; Zablocki, “The Global Mandala,” 22, 45, 151, 183–184.

camp in West Bengal, which became known as Buxa Chögar (ཕུམ་ཅོག་མོག་གླིང་།).³⁵⁷ At both camps, the monks lived in difficult conditions, suffering from poor food and outbreaks of diseases, such as tuberculosis. Moreover, these settlements were heavily dominated by Geluk monastics. Brentano notes that the 500 spots in Dalhousie were all given to senior Geluk teachers as well as monks from Gyütö (ཐུག་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་གླིང་།, 上密院), Gyümé (ཐུག་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་གླིང་།, 下密院), and Namgyel Monasteries (རྣམ་རྒྱལ་གླིང་།, 大乘法苑), all Geluk institutions. At Buxa Chögar, 1,300 spots were reserved for Geluk monks, while only 200 were allocated for Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya monks.³⁵⁸

With limited aid and increased pressure from the exiled Tibetan government to conform under Geluk authority,³⁵⁹ many non-Geluk teachers started looking elsewhere for support. Most struggled to find a sufficiently stable financial base among the largely impoverished Tibetan refugee community. Some Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya reincarnate teachers went to existing monasteries in the Himalayas affiliated with their traditions, such as the Thirty-Seventh Chetsang Rinpoché, who went to Ladakh's Lamayuru Monastery (ལྷ་མ་གཡུང་རླུང་གླིང་།, 拉瑪胡魯寺). Others

³⁵⁷ Robyn Brentano, "Buxa Chogar: Saving Tibetan Buddhism in Exile," *The Tibet Journal* 43, no. 2 (2018): 25.

³⁵⁸ Brentano, 25.

³⁵⁹ One of the starkest descriptions of the pressure felt by non-Geluk Tibetans at this time is described in Dudjom Rinpoché's biography. His biographer, Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoché notes: "Though Tibetan culture and religion were nicely taking root in their new environment, a few high Tibetan officials had a different idea about how to maintain and strengthen Tibetan culture and political autonomy. They said, 'Due to a lack of unity, we lost our country. Now is the perfect opportunity for change. Let us call ourselves Tibetans rather than identify with our local region. Let's have a single school of Tibetan Buddhism rather than the excess of traditions that exist currently.' That message made many people nervous, particularly devotees of the Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya schools. On the street they began saying, 'If we make one school, which will it be?' 'This is only a plan to destroy the schools of Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya.' 'Look how the Tibetan settlement schools are running these days. Morning and evening prayers are Gelugpa prayers, and the religious teacher in each school is Gelugpa.' Rumors spread among the refugees, and people began saying, 'In Tibet the Communist party gathered all the children, giving them a Communist education and way of life. In exile, the children are gathered and given Gelugpa teachings.' The official statements and actions, therefore, didn't promote unity; rather, the strategy created deep dissension in the hearts of many Tibetans." Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoché, *Light of Fearless Indestructible Wisdom: The Life and Legacy of His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2008), 129–130.

found new patrons, such as Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoché (དིལ་མགོ་མཚེན་བཟེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 頂果欽哲仁波切 1910–1991) who was supported by King Jigmé Dorjé Wangchuk (འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་པོ་འཛིན་པ་མེད་དོན་རྗེ་དབང་ཕུག་ 1928–1972) of Bhutan, the Sixteenth Karmapa who rebuilt Rumtek Monastery (རུམ་ཐེག་དགོན།, 隆德寺) with funds from the royal family of Sikkim, or Tulku Orgyen Rinpoché (སྤུལ་སྐྱེ་ཨོ་རྒྱན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 祖古烏金仁波切 1920–1996) who was supported by a Sikkimese aristocrat. Still others decided to leave South Asia. The Sakya teachers Dezhung Rinpoché and Dakchen Rinpoché left for the United States in 1960 and 1963, the Kagyü teachers Akong Rinpoché (ཨ་དཀོན་འཛམ་གཤམ་སྐུ་བཙུག་ཅེས་གྱི་ཉི་མ།, 第二十阿貢仁波切 1940–2013) and Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoché (ཚུང་པ་ཀུན་མཁོ་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, 第十二世創巴仁波切 1939–1987) went to the United Kingdom in 1963, and the Nyingma teacher Tarthang Tulku (ཏཱ་རྩ་གླུ་ལྷ།, 塔尚活佛 b. 1934) came to the United States in 1969.

Beginning in the 1960s and accelerating in the 1970s and 1980s, teachers from all schools started to (re)build Buddhist institutions in exile at a remarkable rate. Zablocki cites a 1999 survey by the Tibetan government in exile that lists 181 monasteries and eight nunneries that were built in India and Nepal after 1959.³⁶⁰ The area around the Boudha Stūpa alone saw the number of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples increase from two in 1959³⁶¹ to between twelve and fifteen in 1980, to thirty-two by 1999.³⁶²

To construct monasteries at this scale, however, required a tremendous amount of resources. Bereft of most of their historical sources of wealth, Tibetan Buddhist teachers were

³⁶⁰ Zablocki, “The Global Mandala,” 148–149.

³⁶¹ Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 66–67.

³⁶² Ellen Bangsbo, “The Tibetan Monastic Tradition in Exile: Secular and Monastic Schooling of Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Nepal,” *The Tibet Journal* 29, no. 2 (July 1, 2004): 71–72.

forced to look elsewhere for financial backing. As Moran notes, “far removed from the economic situation of pre-1959 Tibet, in which large monasteries held land, or more properly, the labor of people attached to said land, the new gompas [monasteries] built in exile depend primarily upon donations from jindak, that is, lay sponsors, to survive.”³⁶³ Even with the explosive growth of the Tibetan carpet industry in the 1970s and 1980s, donations from lay Tibetan Buddhists were far from sufficient to support the large number of monasteries and monastics. Instead of looking inward to the lay Tibetan community, many Tibetan teachers saw the necessity of looking outward to new sources of patronage. Very quickly, many teachers focused on a new group of prospective supporters: Chinese Buddhists from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia.

In his ethnography, Moran recounts two conversations that are especially revealing about Tibetan Buddhist teachers attitudes towards their new patrons. First, in 1994 Moran recounts speaking with two monks at the monastery of the recently deceased Karma Kagyü teacher Pawo Rinpoché (པལ་འབོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། 1912–1991). Although Pawo Rinpoché had lived in France for nine years and had many European students, his monastery and its ten resident monks were struggling. As Moran recalls, the monks told him that while Pawo Rinpoché’s French disciples had supported the initial construction of the monastery, however, “now that [Pawo] Rinpoche had passed away and his rebirth had yet to be identified, it was very difficult for them to finish building, or even keep up, the gompa [monastery].”³⁶⁴ Although he had taught in France for nearly a decade, Pawo Rinpoché’s French students did not provide a stable financial base for this modest monastery.

Moran draws a contrast between these two monks’ remarks and a conversation he had with Gyeltsen Rinpoché (གྱེལ་མཚན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།). Moran writes,

³⁶³ Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 63.

³⁶⁴ Moran, 81.

[Gyeltsen] Rinpoche told me that from his travels in Europe and North American, it seemed that ‘poor’ Americans, or at least not the truly ‘rich,’ are most interested in the Dharma...As we talked about religious sponsors, and his opinion that Western people rarely gave a tremendous amount of money to support religious activities like building gompas [monasteries] or elaborate ritual events, he juxtaposed this with some Taiwanese patrons. Rinpoche maintained that one Taiwanese patron had given \$300,000 to build a house for a very high-ranking Tibetan lama in the Bodhanath area. Yet another group of Taiwanese had been the main sponsors for a very important series of ritual empowerments that had just been conducted in Bodhanath. These particular jindak [donors] had provoked a great deal of talk among Tibetans...after they invited monks from various monasteries to come and recite prayers with a lama...Monks were offered NRs [Nepalese rupees] 550 each at the close of the ceremony, a very large amount, and many were presented with attractive cloth monks’ bags printed in Thailand for the occasion.³⁶⁵

Although just two examples, Moran shares these as illustrations of a much broader trend. The two monks and Gyeltsen Rinpoché were not the only ones to come to the conclusion that Euro-North American supporters offered a relatively meager level of financial support in contrast to Taiwanese, Hongkonger, and other Han patrons. As the notion circulated that “if you want to raise funds, you have to travel to Taiwan,”³⁶⁶ more and more Tibetan teachers did just that.

Yao estimates that between 1990 and 2000 Taiwanese patrons donated several hundred million NTD to Tibetan teachers, making them “first in the world” among Tibetan Buddhism’s financial supporters.³⁶⁷ While I cannot verify this amount or the comparative status of Taiwanese donors, Yao’s conclusion that “without the group of devoted disciples in Taiwan, most of the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Nepal, India, and Tibet would either not have been able to be constructed or [they would have been] built on a much smaller scale”³⁶⁸ is difficult to refute.

Even with pressure from the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, the prospect of

³⁶⁵ Moran, 81–82.

³⁶⁶ “如果要募款，要到台灣來。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究,” 334–335.

³⁶⁷ “居全世界之冠。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, 335.

³⁶⁸ “如果沒有台灣這一群虔誠的弟子，印度、尼泊爾、西藏的大部份藏傳佛教寺院不是蓋不起來，就是規模將小得多。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, 335.

Taiwanese financial support was too great for most non-Geluk teachers to ignore. Some found ways around the boycott by avoiding securing visas through MTAC. Others came to Taiwan discretely under pretenses of traveling elsewhere. Still others disregarded the boycott altogether. That even many Geluk teachers were eager to receive Taiwanese patronage is evidenced by the large number who traveled and established organizations in Taiwan in the years after the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit. In fact, it seems likely that the Dalai Lama was motivated to visit Taiwan by a desire to open the channel for Taiwanese patronage of Geluk institutions.

4.2. The Taiwanese Side: A Religious Renaissance and the Search for Blessings

4.2.1 Conditions of Taiwan's Religious Renaissance

As the above discussion has illustrated, many exiled Tibetan Buddhist teachers came to Taiwan motivated by a need to secure new sources of patronage. However, this is only part of the story. Moran cites lay and monastic Tibetans and even several Taiwanese who told him that the generosity of Han was principally cultural. Since these people came from cultures deeply saturated in Buddhist ethics and practices of giving, it was only natural that they should donate to Tibetan Buddhist teachers. As Moran describes, "they are *already* familiar with the idea of religious sponsorship... and they want to give as much as they can."³⁶⁹ While this may be true, it glosses over a more complex series of circumstances and reasons behind why Tibetan Buddhism grew so quickly in Taiwan in the period between 1980 and 1997 specifically. Moreover, it does not explain why Taiwanese specifically, even more than Hongkonger or Singaporean patrons, played such an outsized role in financially backing Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions.

One of the leading causes behind Tibetan Buddhism's growth in Taiwan during this period was the vibrant state of Taiwan's economy and the expendable wealth many Taiwanese

³⁶⁹ Italics in original. Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 63.

had rather swiftly accumulated. Following a period of economic instability at the beginning of the Nationalist period, the economy of Taiwan started to grow in the early 1950s. This growth expanded during the 1960s and 1970s, when Taiwan's GDP grew by an average of 9.7% annually.³⁷⁰ There was particularly strong growth in the industrial and manufacturing sector, which grew by an average of 13.3% annually between 1952 and 1982.³⁷¹ With this growth, the workforce also shifted from being predominantly engaged in primary sector jobs (mostly farming and fishing) to manufacturing. Between 1952 and 1982, primary sector jobs fell from 56% to 18.3% of the workforce, while industrial sector jobs grew from 12.4% to 31.6% of the workforce.³⁷² These factors, combined with low inflation rates (dropping from 3,000% in 1949 to 1.9% in 1960),³⁷³ a falling birthrate (2.7% between 1961 and 1980),³⁷⁴ rising levels of education and household income, and a more equitable distribution of wealth precipitated a transformation of the Taiwanese economy. The "Taiwan Miracle"³⁷⁵ led to the metamorphosis of Taiwan from a developing to a developed economy in just over thirty years.

Economists have offered many explanations for why Taiwan, along with the other so-called "Four Asian Tigers,"³⁷⁶ Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore, experienced such rapid economic growth during this period. Taiwan's growth was supported by the KMT party-state's strong hand in directing economic policy and their commitment to both unity and stability. Other factors include land reforms between 1949 and 1953, which capped rents and redistributed land to tenant farmers, economic aid (especially investments in the public sector, infrastructure, and

³⁷⁰ Samuel P.S. Ho, "Economics, Economic Bureaucracy, and Taiwan's Economic Development," *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 2 (1987): 226, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2758133>.

³⁷¹ Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 4.

³⁷² Gold, 5.

³⁷³ Gold, 4.

³⁷⁴ Ho, "Economics, Economic Bureaucracy, and Taiwan's Economic Development," 226.

³⁷⁵ This term came into wider usage following through the work of sociologist Thomas B. Gold. See: Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1986).

³⁷⁶ Or, in Chinese, "Asia's Four Little Dragons" (亞洲四小龍).

agriculture) from the United States between 1951 and 1965, and the promotion of mass education. A further series of economic reforms between 1950 and 1968 supported Taiwan's development into an export-oriented economy, with strengths in heavy machinery, plastics, and later in electronic equipment and semiconductors.³⁷⁷ Finally, some scholars point to the resourcefulness and economic thrift of Taiwan's numerous small family business owners, many of whom were women, as contributing to families' growing incomes during this period.³⁷⁸

One result of this economic growth was that many Taiwanese had a substantial amount of financial capital available to offer and invest in social and religious organizations. In Chinese cultural contexts like Taiwan, many people donate to religious societies and temples as well as a way of investing in a ritual economy. The logics behind this ritual economy differ from those that drive capitalist pursuits. As Mayfair Yang describes, "in family enterprise production, the principles of thrift, asceticism, discipline, and antagonistic stinginess with suppliers, hired laborers, and sometimes clients are the operational rules. However, in family and community ritual activities, often a very different ethos of exaggerated generosity and almost feverish ritual expenditure takes over."³⁷⁹ In other words, expenditures for the construction of temples, rituals, festivals, and community organizations are not seen as a wasteful consumption of accumulated capital that could better be reinvested elsewhere, but as a productive investment that will yield future returns. In Wenzhou, PRC where Yang did her research, she notes how the spiritual and

³⁷⁷ For analyses of the causes of Taiwan's Economic Miracle, see: Christian Aspalter, "The Taiwanese Economic Miracle: From Sugarcane to High-Technology," in *Understanding Modern Taiwan: Essays in Economics, Politics, and Social Policy*, ed. Christian Aspalter (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2001); Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*; Ho, "Economics, Economic Bureaucracy, and Taiwan's Economic Development"; Wu Tsongmin, "Economic Development of Taiwan: 1945 to Present," Taiwan jiyi shuwei ce zhan 臺灣記憶數位策展, 2018, <https://tme.ncl.edu.tw/en/economy>.

³⁷⁸ Hill Gates, "Small Fortunes: Class and Society in Taiwan," in *Taiwan: Beyond the Economic Miracle*, ed. Michael Ying-Mao Kav and Denis Fred Simon (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 1993).

³⁷⁹ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Re-Enchanting Modernity: Ritual Economy and Society in Wenzhou, China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 281.

material economies were so intertwined that “wealth generated in the material economy spilled over into the ritual economy and propelled it forward. At the same time, the desire to expand and build up the supernatural economy, for divine protection and community pride, for personal salvation or gratitude for divine help, spurred on the growth of the material economy.”³⁸⁰ Similar dynamics were at play in Taiwan during this period of economic and religious growth.

In 1994, David K. Jordan noted how “the enormous increase in standard of living” precipitated by Taiwan’s Economic Miracle “has been shared not just by private families and individuals, but also by virtually all Taiwan institutions, including religious institutions.”³⁸¹ Since that time, numerous scholars have noted how Taiwan’s economic growth precipitated a boom in contributions to religious communities, temple construction, rituals, and social projects. It is no coincidence that Buddha’s Light Mountain or Foguangshan, one of Taiwan’s major Chinese Buddhist organizations, was able to buy land and begin to construct its massive monastic complex in the period coinciding with Taiwan’s economic boom. Stuart Chandler notes this connection explicitly, maintaining that “the expanding economy and growing interest in Buddhism” in Taiwan during the 1970s and 1980s “resulted in a flood of donations for Foguangshan’s many large-scale projects.”³⁸² Studies of Tzu Chi similarly report how after modest beginnings, fundraising efforts for the construction of a hospital Hualien and other social welfare projects took off in the late 1970s and 1980s.³⁸³ Reflecting on the rapid expansion of Buddhist, Daoist, and Chinese folk religious institutions in Taiwan at this time, Jordan concluded that “pious individuals with more money to spend have spent more of it on religious causes.”³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Yang, 296.

³⁸¹ David K. Jordan, “Changes in Postwar Taiwan and Their Impact on the Popular Practice of Religion,” in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, ed. Stevan Harrell and Chün-chieh Huang (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 139.

³⁸² Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 21.

³⁸³ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 184–193.

³⁸⁴ Jordan, “Changes in Postwar Taiwan and Their Impact on the Popular Practice of Religion,” 139.

Thus, that Taiwanese patrons proved to be such generous supporters of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions cannot be understood as the result of cultural factors alone. Nor should Taiwanese patrons' extensive donations be taken as a phenomenon unique to Tibetan Buddhism. Rather, they occurred within a broader context of rapidly increasing wealth in Taiwan and a flood of financial support Taiwanese were offering to a range of religious institutions. At risk of stating a truism, one of the reasons that Taiwanese supported Tibetan Buddhism so generously during this period was quite simply that they had the resources to do so. Just as Yao doubted the scale at which Tibetan religious institutions could have been reconstructed without Taiwanese donors, it is equally doubtful that these donors could have offered such generous patronage without the rapid increase in their own wealth precipitated by Taiwan's Economic Miracle.

While Taiwan's economic prosperity and the growing financial support Taiwanese offered to Buddhist and other religious organizations illuminates some of the causal factors behind Taiwanese disciples' support for Tibetan Buddhism, it is far from the entire picture. Significant shifts in Taiwanese society and government that occurred during this period also contributed to the burgeoning Taiwanese interest in Tibetan Buddhism. The ending of martial law in 1987 and major revisions to the Civil Associations Act in 1989 were watershed moments in the liberalization and democratization of Taiwanese society. While, the KMT had started to loosen some of its absolute grip on power in the early 1970s, the toleration of a diversity of voices was punctuated by continued crackdowns and acts of repression, imprisonment, and torture of opposition leaders. The ending of martial law opened the way for greater freedom of expression, media publications and broadcasting, and reduced the number of politically motivated imprisonments. It was not until extensive revisions were made to the law on civil associations, however, that Taiwanese gained greater freedom of assembly and affiliation.

While the revised Civil Associations Act led to the legalization of the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨, DPP) and a handful of other opposition political parties,³⁸⁵ it also had the effect of providing a legal pathway for the formation of a multitude of social and religious organizations. For Buddhists in Taiwan, this new law effectively ended the monopoly BAROC held over Buddhist institutional life and opened the floodgates for the formation of thousands of new Buddhist communities and organizations across Taiwan. For Tibetan Buddhists, this revised law provided teachers and their communities a mechanism to become officially registered and extend invitations for Tibetan teachers and monastics to visit Taiwan.

In addition to economic prosperity and political liberalization, one of the starkest changes in Taiwan during this period was rapid urbanization. As farming and aquaculture decreased as primary vocations with the rise of factory work, young men and women increasingly moved to work and live in cities along Taiwan's northern and western coast.³⁸⁶ The percentage of Taiwan's population living in urban areas increased from 24.7% in 1940, to 32.2% in 1958, and to 61.6% in 1980.³⁸⁷ In the 1980s, urbanization further intensified as housing developments were increasingly constructed on the fringes of core urban areas and older urban neighborhoods were razed in order to construct skyscrapers, resulting in the further scattering of communities.³⁸⁸

One consequence of Taiwan's urbanization was a shift in the basis for local religious life. For many among Taiwan's newly urban population, the place-based religious practices of their forbears that were tied to geographies and long-term family and communal relations were neither

³⁸⁵ On Taiwan's liberalization and democratic transition, see: Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, 152–182.

³⁸⁶ Social changes caused by the rise in factory labor played an important part in Margery Wolf's study of women and families in rural Taiwan. See: Margery Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), esp. 97–99.

³⁸⁷ Cheng-hung Liao, "Urbanization in Taiwan: 1900–1985," *Journal of Population Studies* 人口學刊 11 (June 1988): 130.

³⁸⁸ Schak, "Community and the New Buddhism in Taiwan," 166–167.

tenable nor met their desires for community, spiritual solace, and superhuman assistance. For many newly urban Taiwanese, religious life shifted to being based on voluntary affiliation. As Richard Madsen describes, after its economic boom, Taiwan generated “a large urban middle class whose members have different forms of community than their rural forebears. In particular, they find it difficult to maintain the kind of long-term, fixed social relationships that came with many generations of family residence in farming villages. They increasingly move around a great deal and seek fellowship and mutual support through voluntary chosen associations.”³⁸⁹

Membership in these urban religious associations was and continues to often be highly gendered, drawing in a particularly large percentage of female followers. Economic growth contributed to an emergent middle class, but as Chien-yu Julia Huang and Robert Weller note, Taiwan’s economic success also created a sense of social crisis and uncertainty about the role of women in the family as they “faced problems of rapid urbanization and the growth of a more market-oriented morality.”³⁹⁰ Some emergent religious organizations, such as Tzu Chi, placed a particular emphasis on recruiting middle class women by offering them opportunities within a “new free space for social action beyond the family.”³⁹¹ Beyond Tzu Chi, many of Taiwan’s urban religious organizations drew a significant amount of their support from a burgeoning female membership who had the financial resources and time to contribute to their development.

In addition to being majority female and based primarily upon individuals’ affiliative choices, urban religious life in Taiwan was also increasingly based on participation in trans-local communities whose claims were universal rather than tied to specific geographies and village and town patron gods and temples. Weller describes this emergent religiosity as involving

³⁸⁹ Madsen, *Democracy’s Dharma*, 107–108.

³⁹⁰ Chien-Yu Julia Huang and Robert P. Weller, “Merit and Mothering: Women and Social Welfare in Taiwanese Buddhism,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 2 (1998): 392, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2658829>.

³⁹¹ Huang and Weller, 394.

“universalizing deities that claim relevance to all humanity, not just to their local turf.”³⁹² Beings tied to specific locales, like village Earth Gods (土地公), became increasingly eclipsed by deities with broader spheres of influence. As Jordan notes, Taiwanese “worshippers are freer than ever before to worship any gods they please.”³⁹³

While Weller and Jordan’s discussion is primarily situated within the contexts of Chinese Buddhism and folk religion, their arguments might also be applied to Tibetan Buddhism. That Tibetan Buddhist teachers introduced deterritorialized forms of their traditions to Taiwan, with deities whose purported apotropaic powers jaywalked across cultural boundaries, and teachings that claimed to express universal truths fit quite well with the emergent religious ethos.

Furthermore, Taiwan’s growing population of urbanites looking to (re)create religious lives in the concrete jungle provided an eager audience for Tibetan teachers who mostly stayed in Taiwan’s urban centers. As most could only stay in Taiwan for a few days at a time, Tibetan teachers generally flew into Taipei and conducted their activities in Taiwan’s major cities. These brief visits did not demand long-term commitments and afforded Taiwan’s growing urban population of spiritual seekers opportunities to attend whatever events they wished.

The shifts to Taiwan’s religious landscape precipitated by these political and social changes led sociologist Yao Lixiang to describe the last decades of the twentieth century as a “period of Buddhist pluralization and division.”³⁹⁴ While it is true that Buddhist communities diversified in Taiwan during this period, it is important not to overlook the fact that this growth occurred alongside a broader pluralization and expansion of many other religious traditions. For

³⁹² Robert P. Weller, “Identity and Social Change in Taiwanese Religion,” in *Taiwan: A New History (Expanded Edition)*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 352.

³⁹³ Jordan, “Changes in Postwar Taiwan and Their Impact on the Popular Practice of Religion,” 155.

³⁹⁴ “佛教多元分化期” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Taiwan diqu guangfu hou fojiao bianqian chutan 台灣地區光復後佛教變遷初探,” 242.

example, Weller describes the proliferation of spirit mediums and private altars starting in the 1970s. As the spiritual needs and concerns of Taiwan's growing urban population evolved, so did these mediums' and private altars' services and ability to "meet the needs of a wider variety of clients, just like a shop that expands its selection of wares."³⁹⁵ Hsun Chang similarly attributes the expansion of Mazu (媽祖) worship, in part, to Taiwan's economic prosperity and the opening of travel to the PRC.³⁹⁶ Other scholars have discussed the expansion of Daoist communities,³⁹⁷ Chinese folk religious traditions,³⁹⁸ salvationist sects,³⁹⁹ Christian denominations,⁴⁰⁰ and the emergence of a variety of new religious movements⁴⁰¹ in Taiwan in this period.

Thus, the last several decades of the twentieth century was a period of pluralization and a proliferation of all manner of religious traditions and organizations in Taiwan. In this context, the popularization of Tibetan Buddhism was less of a unique development, than a part of a broader cultural trend toward religious pluralization and an increasingly diverse religious Taiwanese landscape. The end of martial law and opening of a pathway to create new civic organizations led to a boom in new religious congregations, including but not limited to Tibetan Buddhist ones.

³⁹⁵ Weller, "Identity and Social Change in Taiwanese Religion," 351–352.

³⁹⁶ Hsun Chang, "Multiple Religious and National Identities: Mazu Pilgrimages across the Taiwan Strait after 1987," in *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, ed. Cheng-tian Kuo (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 373–96, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048535057-010>.

³⁹⁷ Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*, 104–129.

³⁹⁸ Paul R. Katz, "The Cult of the Royal Lords in Postwar Taiwan," in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, ed. Philip Clart and Charles Brewer Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 98–124.

³⁹⁹ Ching-chih Lin, "Yiguandao under the Shadow of Nationalism: Traitors, Conspirators, Traditionalists, or Loyalists?," in *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, ed. Cheng-tian Kuo (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), esp. 234, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048535057-010>; Weller, "Identity and Social Change in Taiwanese Religion," 352; Yunfeng Lu, *The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan: Adapting to a Changing Religious Economy* (Lanham & New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 5.

⁴⁰⁰ Hsing-Kuang Chao, "Conversion to Protestantism among Urban Immigrants in Taiwan," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2006): 193–204, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/67.2.193>.

⁴⁰¹ Kai-Ti Chou, "Strategies to Gain Adherents Employed by New Religious Movements and Revived Traditional Religions: The Case of Taiwan" (PhD Dissertation, Manchester, The University of Manchester, 2006); Paul James Farrelly, "Spiritual Revolutions: A History of New Age Religion in Taiwan" (PhD Dissertation, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2017).

4.2.2 The Allure of Tibetan Buddhism and Search for Blessings

So far, my discussion about the conditions for the rapid growth of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in the period starting in 1980 has largely situated Tibetan Buddhism within a broader local religious renaissance. The question remains then, what drew an increasing number of Taiwanese to Tibetan Buddhism in particular? What was unique about Tibetan Buddhism that Taiwanese seekers did not find in other emergent Chinese Buddhist communities, Daoist organizations, folk religious institutions, Yiguandao or new age religions? Or, to flip the question around, what were those Taiwanese who started to practice, patronize, and support Tibetan Buddhism looking for that they found in Tibetan Buddhism?

Already in 1990, Chen summarized what he felt Tibetan Buddhist traditions offered Taiwanese Buddhists. “Tibetan Buddhism is all inclusive. [It] has profound philosophies, a well-organized practice sequence, and carries a mysterious flavor that is somewhat elusive to people. [It] can satisfy many facets of modern people’s religious needs.”⁴⁰² More than thirty years later, many Taiwanese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism whom I spoke with during my fieldwork continued to mention the systematic presentation of Buddhist thought and practices in Tibetan Buddhism, the efficacy of Tibetan rituals, and the swiftness of the Tibetan Buddhist path to enlightenment as reasons they were drawn to it over Chinese Buddhist traditions.

While individual Taiwanese have had and continue to have diverse reasons for engaging with Tibetan Buddhism, most scholars agree that during the period from 1980 to 1997 it was the “mysterious flavor” of Tibetan Buddhism that proved particularly attractive to many Taiwanese. As Yao notes, despite some reservations about tantric Buddhism, especially from monastics in Taiwan’s Chinese Buddhist establishment, many Taiwanese were drawn to Tibetan Buddhism

⁴⁰² “西藏的佛教包羅萬象，有高深的哲理，有層次井然的修道次第，更帶著幾分迷人的神秘色彩，跟能多方面滿足現代人宗教心裡的需要。” Chen Yujiao 陳玉蛟, “Taiwan de xizang fojiao 台灣的西藏佛教,” 111.

due to its reputation for “mystical rites and ceremonies and the [purported] magic powers of its gurus.”⁴⁰³ Foremost among these “mystical rites and ceremonies” were the tantric empowerments bestowed by Tibetan teachers. Empowerments can be part of a series of rituals that grant permission and offer instruction to Tibetan Buddhist disciples regarding how to engage in meditative practices devoted to a particular deity. For most Taiwanese, however, empowerments were, and still are today, considered to be pathways to receive the apotropaic blessings of Tibetan teachers and divinities. Taiwanese disciples often request and attend empowerments not so that they can receive the requisite permission and instructions for intensive meditative practices, although this is surely the case for some. Indeed, most lay attendees at such events have jobs, families, and other commitments that are not conducive to engaging in hours of daily practice. Instead, most Taiwanese hope to partake in the power charismatic reincarnate teachers’ channel and the capacities of Tibetan Buddhist divinities to offer protection, bring commercial success, ensure good health, and engender auspicious conditions in their lives.

For many Taiwanese, exotified images of Tibetan Buddhism caused the tradition to be wrapped in a cloak of mystery and allure. Many Taiwanese felt that Tibetan esoteric Buddhism (密教) had more potent rituals and powerful teachers than the exoteric Buddhism (顯教) common locally. One article published by the *Agence France-Presse* at the time of the Dalai Lama’s first trip to Taiwan in 1997 recorded how many Taiwanese “worship the lamas, or Tibetan monks, as masters who have supernatural powers to chase away evil and bring luck, blessings and wealth through unique rituals.”⁴⁰⁴ That such beliefs were present across Taiwan, even outside of Tibetan Buddhist communities, was evidenced in a rather awkward exchange in 2001 when a Taiwanese television journalist asked the Dalai Lama to display his supernatural

⁴⁰³ Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 586.

⁴⁰⁴ Hsin-hsin Yang, “Taiwanese Believe Tibetan Masters Have Supernatural Powers,” *AFP*, March 23, 1997.

powers. The Dalai Lama responded to this request with a flood of laughter.⁴⁰⁵ Whether or not the journalist personally believed the Dalai Lama possessed such powers, the very act of posing the question suggests it was an idea that had some broader currency across Taiwanese society.

Zablocki claims that the overwhelming interest in Tibetan Buddhist rituals and blessings by many Taiwanese practitioners stands in stark contrast to Euro-North American converts, who are mostly drawn to Tibetan Buddhist meditative and philosophical traditions.⁴⁰⁶ Taiwanese interest in Tibetan Buddhist techniques for affecting apotropaic benefits did not manifest in a vacuum, however, but emerged out of a long history of Chinese fascination with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and the purported power of their rituals as early as the Yuan Dynasty (元朝 1271–1368).⁴⁰⁷ While engagement with Tibetan Buddhist teachers had largely been limited to the Chinese aristocracy and those living along the borders of Chinese and Tibetan cultural regions during the dynastic period,⁴⁰⁸ this changed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to travel widely in China and some Chinese even went to study with teachers in Tibet.⁴⁰⁹ Gray Tuttle notes that at this time, “many Chinese

⁴⁰⁵ Tsering Namgyal, “The Road to Enlightenment: Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” Taiwan Today (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), April 1, 2003), <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=12&post=21919>.

⁴⁰⁶ Zablocki, “The Global Mandala,” 197.

The unacknowledged caveat to Zablocki’s claim is that exotified images have historically and continue today to play a significant role in many “Western” ideas about Tibet, its people, and its religions. On Euro-North Americans’ exotification of Tibetan Buddhism, see: Donald S. Jr. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Martin Brauen, *Traumwelt Tibet: Westliche Trugbilder* (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 2000); Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power: Tibetan Buddhism and the Western Imagination* (London & Rutherford, N.J.: Athlone Press, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993); Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther, eds., *Mythos Tibet: Wahrnehmungen, Projektionen, Phantasien* (Köln: DuMont, 1997).

⁴⁰⁷ Bing, “The Tantric Revival and Its Reception in Modern China,” 280–287; Max Oidtmann, *Forging the Golden Urn: The Qing Empire and the Politics of Reincarnation in Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 35.

⁴⁰⁸ Gray Tuttle, “An Unknown Tradition of Han Chinese Conversions to Tibetan Buddhism: Han Chinese Incarnate Lamas and Parishioners of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Amdo,” *Journal of Tibetology* རོད་རྒྱལ་པོ་འཛིན་པའི་དུས་དེའི་བཀའ་བློན་གྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ 藏学学刊 9 (2014): 274–98.

⁴⁰⁹ On Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Mainland China during the late-Qing and early Republican periods, see: Bianchi, “Chinese Lama” Nenghai (1886–1967): Doctrinal Tradition and Teaching Strategies of a Gelukpa Master in Republican China”; Bianchi, “Sino-Tibetan Buddhism”; Ester Bianchi, “The Combined Practice of Vinaya and Tantra in Nenghai’s Path to Liberation,” in *Sino-Tibetan Buddhism across the Ages*, ed. Ester Bianchi and Weirong

hoped to find a source of power in esoteric (*mizong*) Buddhism to help them cope with the difficulties of the Republican period—revolution, civil wars, natural disasters, imperialism, and modernization.” It was not only elites, but “Chinese from all walks of life [who] had direct and practical problems that they hoped esoteric Buddhism could ameliorate.”⁴¹⁰

Many scholars have documented how a similar romanticization of Tibetan religion and conviction in the potency of Tibetan Buddhist rituals and powerful, charismatic reincarnate teachers has contributed to the nascent interest in Tibetan religion by urban Han Chinese in the PRC that emerged after Deng Xiaoping’s (邓小平 1904–1997) reforms in the 1980s.⁴¹¹ Esler, for example, describes how many Han devotees view Tibetan Buddhist teachers as a type of “spiritual superhero,” whose powers offer their followers protection from harm, illnesses, ghosts, and other malevolent forces.⁴¹² Many Han practitioners believe that Tibetan Buddhism has more spiritual power (靈) than Chinese Buddhist traditions. This is, in part, due to distrust of Chinese Buddhist teachers and institutions in the PRC, which many practitioners feel have lost their lineage during the Cultural Revolution and become corrupted by modern materialist forces.⁴¹³

While many Taiwanese may share a belief with Han Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in the PRC that Tibetan Buddhism is a “pure” and unbroken tradition whose teachers are “reputed to be imbued with profound knowledge and spiritual realization,”⁴¹⁴ there is less evidence that they

Shen (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2021), 225–52; Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937)*; Meinert, “Gangkar Rinpoché between Tibet and China: A Tibetan Lama among Ethnic Chinese in the 1930s to 1950s”; Tuttle, “Tibet as a Source of Messianic Teachings to Save Republican China”; Tuttle, “Tibetan Buddhism at Ri Bo Rtse Lnga/Wutai Shan in Modern Times”; Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*.

⁴¹⁰ Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 78–79.

⁴¹¹ Bianchi, “Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī,” 118–119; Bing, “The Tantric Revival and Its Reception in Modern China,” 410–411; Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 23–31, 196–234; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism,” 548; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 29–50.

⁴¹² Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 218.

⁴¹³ Bianchi, “Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī,” 118–119; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism,” 548; Osburg, “Consuming Belief,” 74.

⁴¹⁴ Bianchi, “Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī,” 118.

also feel a similar mistrust of Chinese Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. As Taiwan did not experience the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, there is little notion in Taiwan that today's Chinese Buddhist traditions have lost their traditions of study and practice. In fact, many Taiwanese feel quite the opposite and stress that Taiwan's Chinese Buddhist traditions preserve what was lost across the Strait. Instead of issues of authenticity, it was the purported power of Tibetan Buddhist rituals and the charisma of its teachers that attracted many Taiwanese.

Weller notes that in the 1980s, "the ghostly side of Chinese religion grew very rapidly [in Taiwan]...at the point when many Taiwanese had achieved some significant wealth for the first time, but when the market economy also appeared particularly threatening and capricious."⁴¹⁵ As many Taiwanese saw Tibetan Buddhist teachers as possessing a range of efficacious skillful means (方便, བློ་སྤྲོད།), they took their anxieties to these teachers and requested that they provide spiritual safeguards around their prosperity and well-being. As Yao notes, many Taiwanese felt that Tibetan Buddhism possessed "all types of practices that can address different practical needs. Moreover, [they] believe that they can be helped by the blessings and strength of empowerments and that the rituals that lamas do on their behalf can solve their problems."⁴¹⁶ As Taiwanese requests for empowerments, private rituals, divinations, and other spiritual services increased, the overall demand for Tibetan Buddhist services in Taiwan grew. While some Tibetan Buddhist teachers offered instruction on Buddhist doctrine when they visited Taiwan, the focus of most teachers' activities in Taiwan during this period was on rituals, empowerments, and enacting other spiritual services on behalf of Taiwanese devotees and patrons.

⁴¹⁵ Weller, "Identity and Social Change in Taiwanese Religion," 351.

⁴¹⁶ "有各種應付不同現實需要的法可修，更甚者，認為藉助灌頂加持力量，以及上師為其修法可代為解決問題。" Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," 334.

Among the most desired services by Taiwanese were rituals for prosperity. One Taiwanese Nyingma monastic who served as a translator for Tibetan Buddhist teachers recalled in an interview that the most common request Taiwanese made was for Tibetan teachers to perform rituals and empowerments to Dzambhala (རྩོམ་ལ། རྩོམ་ལ།, 財神), the deity associated with wealth. This monk noted that many wealthy business owners invited Tibetan teachers to perform rituals to bless their businesses and homes.⁴¹⁷ He cited the example of Penor Rinpoché, who first came to Taiwan in 1988, telling me that by the late 1990s and early 2000s Penor Rinpoché's private blessings would garner donations of ten million NTD (~340,000 USD).⁴¹⁸ At a second interview, this monk recalled that when he accompanied the late Yangthang Rinpoché (མཚོ་མཚོ་གཡུང་པོ་ལྷོ་མཚོ་, 多芒揚唐仁波切 1930–2016), who first came to Taiwan in 1990,⁴¹⁹ it seemed that “Yangthang Rinpoché would be called to go from one house blessing to another.”⁴²⁰

In addition to wealth, many Taiwanese requested Tibetan Buddhist teachers for assistance in ensuring good health and controlling natural forces. Zablocki recalls speaking with a government official who admitted to sponsoring a Tibetan Buddhist teacher to perform a ritual to divert a typhoon away from Taiwan.⁴²¹ In my own fieldwork, I heard numerous stories of miraculous healing attributed to the blessings of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and divinities. For instance, one Taiwanese practitioner reported a fever lifting after he touched the hands of his teacher. Another reported a remarkable decrease in headaches and other ailments after she started

⁴¹⁷ Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 590.

⁴¹⁸ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, December 11, 2021.

⁴¹⁹ Que zha jiang cuo 卻札蔣措, *Wo de jingtu daole: duo mang yangtang renboqie chuan 我的淨土到了: 多芒揚唐仁波切傳* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Xiangshu lin wenhua, chengbang wenhua bang fen youxian gongsi 橡樹林文化, 城邦文化邦份有限公司, 2022), 408.

⁴²⁰ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, April 8, 2022.

⁴²¹ Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 393.

to recite daily prayers to Tibetan Buddhist deities. Monthly rituals that propitiate the Medicine Buddha (ལྷ་སྐྱེ་སྐྱེ་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་, 藥師佛) continue to be well attended at many dharma centers today.

Thus, during this period of political, demographic, and social changes in Taiwan, it was foremost Tibetan Buddhism's rich repertoire of practices enacted by reincarnate teachers who were seen as embodying a sense of exotic power that attracted many Taiwanese. Most of the concerns that Taiwanese brought to Tibetan Buddhist teachers were not novel. Wishes for material prosperity, good health, success in education and business ventures, finding a suitable life partner, and harmonious family relations are all common reasons that Taiwanese, and indeed many culturally Chinese peoples, go to consult temples and religious professionals of a variety of stripes. Living in a rapidly urbanizing environment, facing the unraveling of connections to land-based religious communities, and the uncertainties of a market economy that held the potential for both wealth and ruin, however, many Taiwanese believed Tibetan Buddhism had particularly efficacious means to meet these enduring needs amidst the shifting world around them.

Attracted to Tibetan Buddhism for its efficacy as well as its “mystery,” many Taiwanese viewed Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhist teachers in highly romanticized terms. Tibetan Buddhism, it seems, was a religion simultaneously untarnished by the stains of modernity that nevertheless possessed the ability to protect against and deal with problems emerging out of Taiwan's modernization. As Tibetan Buddhist teachers seemed to offer Taiwanese an intriguing set of spiritual tools that was both novel (to the Taiwanese) and “ancient” (or at least, rooted in a highly mythologized and timeless Tibetan landscape), the demand for Tibetan Buddhist rituals, divinations, empowerments, and the blessings of Tibetan “living Buddhas”⁴²² was a central driver behind Taiwanese interest in Tibetan Buddhism in the period from 1980–1997.

⁴²² This is the literal translation of the Mandarin term for a reincarnate Tibetan Buddhist teacher: 活佛 .

5. The Dalai Lama’s Visit and Tibetan Buddhism Post-1997

As discussed above, the explosion of Tibetan Buddhist activity in Taiwan between 1980 and 1997 was largely limited to the Nyingma, Kagyü, and Sakya schools. Activity by Geluk teachers was rather muted during this period due to the boycott of Taiwan called for by the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government in exile, and the broader exile Geluk establishment. One Geluk teacher who I interviewed described how strong the anti-Taiwan feelings were at this time, especially among Geluk-dominated Tibetan settlements and communities. He recalled,

I arrived in India in the 1990s. At that time in the 1990s, Tibetans outside [of Tibet] had this view. [They] said that ‘both the ‘black’ Chinese [from Taiwan] and ‘red’ Chinese [from the PRC] are our enemies. There’s no difference [between the two]. Since they’re [both] our enemies, there’s no difference. If someone cooperates with the ‘black’ Chinese, they’re our enemy. Anyone who cooperates [with] them is our enemy. Someone who cooperates with the ‘red’ Chinese is [also] our enemy.’ There was even a slogan written on a wall that said ‘There’s no difference between someone who cooperates with either the ‘black’ or the ‘red’ Chinese.’ It was written just like that.⁴²³

This attitude that cooperation with either the CCP or KMT was akin to turning one’s back on the Tibetan people not only applied to the laity, but also to Tibetan Buddhist teachers. As a result, there was a strong prejudice across the Tibetan diaspora against monastics who visited Taiwan.

This entire situation changed drastically in March 1997 when, in a reversal of his previous policy, the Dalai Lama made a six-day visit to Taiwan. Just one month before his trip, the Dalai Lama released a statement, later reprinted in the *Tibetan Review*, describing how after many years of receiving invitations from various local organizations, he would soon travel to Taiwan to give religious teachings. The Dalai Lama’s statement went on to stress that the visit

⁴²³ “སྐབས་དེ་དུས་ད་རྒྱ་གར་ལ་སླེབས་དུས་ལོ་རབས་༩༠ པའི་ནང་ལ་རྒྱ་གར་ལ་སླེབས་པ་རེད། ད་འདི་གོང་ནས་བྱས་ལོ་རབས་༩༠ ནང་ལ་ག་རེད་ཡོད་ཅེད་ཟེར་ན་ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ་ཡོད་མཁན་ བོད་ལ་ཚོ་གྱི་ལྷ་སྐྱེས་ག་རེ་ཡོད་ཅེད་ཟེར་ན་རྒྱ་མི་དམར་པོ་དང་རྒྱ་མི་ནག་པོ་གཉིས་ད་ཚོ་དྲག་ཡིན་པ་ལ་ཁྱད་པར་མེད་ཟེར། ད་ཚོ་དྲག་པོ་ཡིན་པ་ལ་ཁྱད་པར་མེད་ཟེར། རྒྱ་མི་ནག་པོ་ལ་འབྲེལ་ བར་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ད་ཚོ་དྲག་ཅེད་ཟེར། འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་མཁན་མི་ཞིག་ཡོད་ན་ཁོ་ད་ཚོ་དྲག་ཅེད། རྒྱ་མི་དམར་པོ་ལ་འབྲེལ་བར་བྱེད་ནས་འདི་ད་ཚོ་དྲག་ཅེད་ཟེར། ཡིག་གེ་ཕྱིགས་པའི་སྐོར་ ལ་ཡིག་གེ་བྲིས་རྒྱ་དམར་ནག་གཉིས་སུ་ལ་འབྲེལ་བར་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ནས་ཁྱད་པར་མེད་ཟེར། དེ་འདྲ་བྲིས་ཡོད་ཅེད།” Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

was strictly for religious purposes and that he was eager to learn more about the full ordination lineage for Buddhist nuns preserved in Chinese Buddhism and explore possibilities for its reintroducing in Tibetan Buddhism.⁴²⁴ A key factor during backdoor negotiations was the Taiwanese government's consent to the Dalai Lama's demand that the politically suspect MTAC not be involved in organizing his visit. Instead, the Dalai Lama was officially invited to Taiwan and hosted by BAROC. Although BAROC had lost much of its prestige and power following Taiwan's pluralization, its leadership were still respected Chinese Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

Despite the Dalai Lama and ROC governments' insistence that the visit was of a purely religious nature, it was interpreted by many in starkly political terms. Many global media outlets were quick to report that the PRC government was, as expected, extremely critical of the visit. *The New York Times*, for example, cited an article in the *People's Daily*, which accused both Taiwanese authorities and the Dalai Lama of "colluding and using one another... consorting with evildoers and going further and further down the road of splitting with the motherland."⁴²⁵ For his part, the Dalai Lama insisted that his choice to come to Taiwan, a place ruled by a government that still maintained theoretical territorial claims over Tibet, was proof that he did not advocate Tibetan independence.⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, the fact that the Dalai Lama's visit included meetings with Taiwanese political leaders, including President Lee Tenghui, Vice-President and Premier Lien Chan (連戰 b. 1936), Interior Minister Lin Fongcheng (林豐正 b. 1940), and leaders of the DPP, Taiwan's pro-independence opposition party, greatly enraged Beijing.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ The Fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, "The Dalai Lama on His Taiwan Visit," ed. Pema Thinley, *Tibetan Review* 33, no. 4 (April 1997): 6.

⁴²⁵ Quoted in Seth Faison, "Taiwan Welcomes the Dalai Lama, Much to China's Displeasure," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1997, sec. 1, 8, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/23/world/taiwan-welcomes-the-dalai-lama-much-to-china-s-displeasure.html>.

⁴²⁶ Central News Agency, "Dalai Lama Notes Positive Reaction to Request for Tibetan Office," March 24, 1997; Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 380.

⁴²⁷ Andrew Higgins, "Dalai Lama Risks Wrath of China," *The Guardian*, March 27, 1997, 16; Pema Thinley, ed., "Taiwanese Greet the Dalai Lama with Tibetan Flags," *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 5 (May 1997): 14.

On the ground in Taiwan, the Dalai Lama's first visit was considered a great success. He was accompanied for most of his trip by Chinese Buddhist leaders from BAROC, including Master Jingxin (靜心法師 1929–2020) and Master Xinding (心定法師 b. 1944).⁴²⁸ The Dalai Lama also had meetings with prominent Chinese Buddhist leaders, including Master Hsingyun, founder of Buddha's Light Mountain, and Master Shengyen, founder of Dharma Drum Mountain,⁴²⁹ and visited a number of Buddhist temples, including Buddha's Light Mountain, Guangde Temple (光德寺), Gongga Monastery, and Bodhi Monastery.⁴³⁰ Moreover, he engaged local faith leaders from Taiwan's Buddhist, Daoist, Catholic, Muslim, and Yiguandao communities to promote greater dialogue and collaboration toward world peace.

In addition to his interactions with local political and faith leaders, the Dalai Lama also received broad public attention. The Dalai Lama's first public teaching, for example, attracted a crowd of 50,000 to Kaohsiung Stadium.⁴³¹ His second event, an inter-religious prayer ceremony dedicated to world peace attracted more than 20,000 people.⁴³² The Dalai Lama's final public appearance at Taoyuan Arena, during which he gave a Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara empowerment, was attended by more than 10,000 people.⁴³³ All 80,000 free

⁴²⁸ Master Jingxin and BAROC produced a commemorative volume with photos from the Dalai Lama's six-day visit. See: Shi Jingxin 釋精心, *Dalai lama lai tai hongfa xing: 1997 nian jinian zhuanji 達賴喇嘛來台弘法行: 1997 年紀念專輯* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhongguo fojiao hui 中國佛教會, 1998).

⁴²⁹ Central News Agency, "Tibet's Dalai Lama Meets Religious Leaders in Taiwan," March 24, 1997.

⁴³⁰ Pema Thinley, "Taiwanese Greet the Dalai Lama with Tibetan Flags."

⁴³¹ Central News Agency, "Dalai Lama Welcomed in Taiwan's Kaohsiung," March 23, 1997; Huashi xinwen 華視新聞, "Dalai zai taiwan 1 達賴在台灣 (一)," Huashi xinwen wang 華視新聞網, March 26, 1997, <https://news.cts.com.tw/cts/life/199703/201010120583200.html>; Pema Thinley, ed., "50,000 Hear the Dalai Lama's First Sermon in Taiwan," *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 4 (April 1997): 5.

⁴³² Pema Thinley, "50,000 Hear the Dalai Lama's First Sermon in Taiwan."

⁴³³ Huashi xinwen 華視新聞, "Dalai zai taiwan 3 達賴在台灣 (三)," 華視新聞網, March 26, 1997, <https://news.cts.com.tw/cts/life/199703/201010120583202.html>.

tickets offered to the public for these events were quickly snapped up and thousands of individuals showed up to welcome the Dalai Lama at the sites he visited during his stay.⁴³⁴

In the end, both sides assessed the trip in positive terms. Taiwan's government-funded Central News Agency reported that the President's office declared the visit a "great success" and noted how it "opened a new chapter in Taiwan's relations with exiled Tibetans."⁴³⁵ From his side, the Dalai Lama called for continued intra-religious dialogue and welcomed groups of Taiwanese Buddhists to come and visit him in Dharamsala.⁴³⁶ The *Tibetan Review* later reported that the Dalai Lama started to talk about making another visit to Taiwan almost as soon as his first trip concluded.⁴³⁷ He would eventually visit Taiwan again in 2001 and 2009.

Beyond these platitudes, the Dalai Lama's trip had long-lasting impacts on relations between the ROC and Tibetan exile governments as well as on the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. First, his visit greatly cooled simmering political tensions between Taipei and Dharamsala. The exclusion of MTAC from the Dalai Lama's visit paired with increased calls in Taiwan, especially from DPP legislators,⁴³⁸ to eliminate MTAC altogether was greatly welcomed by the Dalai Lama and others in the exiled Tibetan administration who viewed MTAC as a central stumbling block in their relations with Taiwan. Additionally, the ROC government went even further to improve relations by agreeing to establish a representative office for the

⁴³⁴ Wang Ying 王瑩 and Chen Miaoling 陳妙鈴, "Dalai di tai 達賴抵台," 79.

⁴³⁵ Central News Agency, "Presidential Office Says Dalai Lama's Trip a 'Great Success,'" March 31, 1997.

⁴³⁶ Central News Agency, "Tibet's Dalai Lama Meets Religious Leaders in Taiwan."

⁴³⁷ For example, an article in the June 1997 issue of the *Tibetan Review* reported Dalai Lama saying "that his Taiwan visit was more successful than expected and that he may pay another visit in a year or two." Pema Thinley, ed., "Dalai Lama May Visit Taiwan Again," *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 6 (June 1997): 14.

⁴³⁸ On the eve of the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit, then-Chairman of the DPP, Hsu Hsinliang (許信良 b. 1941), published a statement welcoming the Tibetan religious leader to Taiwan and calling for an immediate abolishment of MTAC. A reprint of his statement can be found in the May 1997 issue of the *Tibetan Review*. See: Hsinliang Hsu, "Let Us Learn from the Dalai Lama...", ed. Pema Thinley, *Tibetan Review* 32, no. 5 (May 1997): 16–17. DPP leaders continued to call for the abolishment of MTAC until it was eventually defunded and transitioned into the Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center under the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture (文化部) in 2018.

Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile in Taiwan. The Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (TRFDL) was opened in Taipei in September 1997 and serves as a de-facto embassy of the Tibetan exile government.⁴³⁹ With the opening of TRFDL, MTAC was further sidelined from conversations between the Tibetan exile and Taiwanese governments.

Second, the Dalai Lama's visit essentially ended the boycott of Taiwan which he had long advocated. During his visit, the Dalai Lama had several positive meetings with lay Tibetans⁴⁴⁰ and Tibetan Buddhist teachers living in Taiwan.⁴⁴¹ On the one hand, these meetings ended the stigma against lay Tibetans living and working in Taiwan within the Tibetan community in exile. As Zablocki notes, after the Dalai Lama's visit, Taiwan "was no longer envisioned as the habitat of 'black Chinese,' as hated and feared as the 'red' variety."⁴⁴²



Figures 13 & 14: Gelek Rinpoché welcoming the Dalai Lama during his 2001 visit to Bodhi Monastery.
Photos used with permission from Bodhi Monastery.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁹ Pema Thinley, "Taiwan Approves Tibet Office," 11–12.

⁴⁴⁰ Huashi xinwen 華視新聞, "Dalai zai taiwan 2 達賴在台灣 (二)," Huashi xinwen wang 華視新聞網, March 26, 1997, <https://news.cts.com.tw/cts/life/199703/201010120583201.html>.

⁴⁴¹ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 218.

⁴⁴² Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 390.

⁴⁴³ Gelie Qeshang 格列卻尚, *Yun dan feng qing* 雲淡風輕, 258, 260.

On the other hand, these meetings also opened the door for Geluk teachers to begin missionizing work in Taiwan. Within a few years of the Dalai Lama's visit, many major Geluk monasteries had sent teachers to Taiwan and started local branch centers. By the early 2000s, Sera Jé (ཤེ་ར་ཇེ་སྐོ་རྒྱལ།, 色拉傑寺), Sera Mé (ཤེ་ར་མེ་སྐོ་རྒྱལ།, 色拉昧寺), Ganden (དགའ་འཕེན་རྒྱལ།, 甘丹寺), Drepung, Gyütö, and Gyümé Monasteries all had centers in Taiwan.⁴⁴⁴ In addition to these large Geluk institutions, the Dalai Lama's visit also allowed individual Geluk monastics to come to Taiwan. Among my interviewees, for example, there were two Geluk teachers from Sera Jé who came to Taiwan in the early 2000s to establish their own dharma centers there, an action that would have been scorned by their peers only a few years before.⁴⁴⁵

Finally, the Dalai Lama's visit set off a wave of Taiwanese public interest in Tibetan Buddhism. One local article entitled "The Dalai Lama Sparks a Fever for Tibetan Buddhism" described how The Dalai Lama's trip had incited "an unprecedented passion in Taiwan for Tibetan Buddhism" and "engendered the desire among a great portion of the society to peek into the mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism."⁴⁴⁶ Another article by Taiwan's CTS News described Taiwan as being "in the midst of a whirlwind of Dalai Lama Fever,"⁴⁴⁷ while a reporter writing for *Agence France-Presse* noted how, "the visit to Taiwan by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has fueled fervor for Tibetan Buddhism considered by some people here as a mysterious ancient belief."⁴⁴⁸ The "media sensation" around the Dalai Lama's visit brought about an entirely unprecedented level of public attention to Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁴ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, "Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制," 37.

⁴⁴⁵ Geluk rinpoché, interview with author, Taoyuan, September 9, 2022; Geluk geshé, interview with author, Taipei, November 2, 2022.

⁴⁴⁶ "造成了一般空勤的藏傳佛教熱... 達賴來訪引起社會大眾欲一窺密宗的奧秘。" Wang Ying 王瑩 and Chen Miaoling 陳妙鈴, "Dalai di tai 達賴抵台。"

⁴⁴⁷ "台灣正處在達賴熱的旋風中" Huashi xinwen 華視新聞, "Dalai zai taiwan 2 達賴在台灣 (二) ."

⁴⁴⁸ Yang, "Taiwanese Believe Tibetan Masters Have Supernatural Powers."

⁴⁴⁹ Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 389.

Whether due to the mystique that Taiwanese wrapped around Tibetan Buddhism, the promise of efficacious rituals, the Dalai Lama's personal charisma, or just sheer curiosity, there is little question that the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit galvanized public interest in Tibetan Buddhism. While there are no reliable figures on the number of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist faithful at this time,⁴⁵⁰ data on the number of registered Tibetan Buddhist centers suggests significant growth in the years immediately following the Dalai Lama's visit. In 1997, MTAC reported 101 Tibetan Buddhist centers.⁴⁵¹ By 2005, this number had risen dramatically to 238 registered centers.⁴⁵² Although it is difficult to quantify how much the number of Tibetan Buddhist faithful increased following the Dalai Lama's visit, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that this number grew in parallel to the growth of centers, potentially more than doubling during this eight-year period.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has described the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from 1949 through the aftermath of the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit to Taiwan. I began with a historiographic survey of existing scholarship, summarizing several periodization schemas scholars have used to conceptualize the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In doing so, I highlighted several pivotal moments scholars have identified, such as the arrival of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers to Taiwan in 1949, the onset of a new wave of Buddhist teachers from the Tibetan exile community starting in 1980, and the first visit of the Dalai Lama in 1997.

⁴⁵⁰ Some sources claim there were as many as 500,000 followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan at this time out of an estimated six million total Buddhists. Zablocki notes, however that this number "probably substantially overestimates the number of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners" in Taiwan. See: Pema Thinley, "Taiwanese Greet the Dalai Lama with Tibetan Flags"; Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 384.

⁴⁵¹ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 119.

⁴⁵² Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 391.

Next, this chapter discussed Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan between the periods of 1949–1979, 1980–1997, and in the aftermath of the Dalai Lama’s 1997 visit. I described Tibetan Buddhism between 1949 and 1979 as being present on a small-scale, with only a handful of semi-covert communities led by teachers who had mostly fled as refugees to Taiwan. Some of these early teachers, such as Changkya Qutuytu and Kangyurwa Qutuytu, were Mongolians, while others, such as Mingyür Rinpoché and Gelek Rinpoché, were Tibetans. A plurality were Mandarin-speaking, Manchu and Han peoples, such as Gongga Laoren, Ouyang Wuwei, and Liu Rui. Due to strict social controls in Taiwan during martial law and the dominance of BAROC, most Tibetan Buddhist communities conducted their activities in private, if not absolute secrecy.

Between 1980 and 1997, Tibetan Buddhism became more widespread, especially in Taiwan’s urban areas. This growth was tentative at first, with visits from only a handful of Buddhist teachers from the global Tibetan diaspora in the very early 1980s. With greater support from MTAC starting in 1984 and the increased liberalization of Taiwanese society, however, the number of exiled Tibetan Buddhist teachers traveling to Taiwan started to expand. Following the end of martial law in 1987 and major revisions to the Civil Associations Act in 1989, this trickle of Tibetan Buddhist teachers had swelled to a torrent. By 2000, MTAC was awarding nearly 500 visas annually to Tibetan Buddhist teachers to visit Taiwan.⁴⁵³ Alongside this increase in visiting Tibetan Buddhist teachers, the number of registered Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist centers also increased, growing from sixty-one in 1989 to eighty-two in 1996, and 101 in 1997.

While there are many reasons for this growth, I have argued that it was a combination of push and pull factors in the Tibetan exile and Taiwanese communities that created the conditions for Tibetan Buddhism’s rapid expansion in Taiwan during this period. On the Tibetan side, the

⁴⁵³ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 115.

difficult conditions of the Tibetan diaspora and efforts by Tibetan Buddhist teachers to rebuild Buddhist institutions in exile led to a global search for financial support. This search was led by a jet-setting body of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who began to travel around the world, spreading Tibetan Buddhist teachings, performing empowerments and other rituals, and fundraising for their home institutions in India and Nepal. As word spread about the magnanimity of Taiwanese disciples, an increasing number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers started to make regular trips to Taiwan. For many, the pull of Taiwanese financial support even overpowered inhibitions about contravening the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exile government's boycott of Taiwan.

From the Taiwanese side, rapid economic development combined with democratization and urbanization led to dramatic changes across multiple sectors of Taiwanese society. Religious life was one area that saw significant growth, as was the emergence of a host of new religious organizations and communities, including several very prominent Chinese Buddhist organizations, such as Tzu Chi, Buddha's Light Mountain, and Dharma Drum Mountain. Amidst this religious renaissance and proliferation of diverse religious communities, it was the exoticized air of mystery many Taiwanese ascribed to Tibetan Buddhism, its purported possession of powerful ritual methods to promote prosperity and overcome life's challenges, as well as the promise of potent blessings given by Tibetan "living buddhas," "dharma kings,"⁴⁵⁴ and "god kings"⁴⁵⁵ that drew many Taiwanese to Tibetan Buddhism in particular.

Finally, the last section of this chapter discussed the Dalai Lama's groundbreaking 1997 visit to Taiwan and its important ripple effects. As a result of this visit, tensions eased between

⁴⁵⁴ 法王 While "living buddha" is a more general term for reincarnate teachers, "dharma king" is typically reserved for the heads of different Tibetan Buddhist schools and sub-schools.

⁴⁵⁵ This term appeared in some local media coverage, even by the government-sponsored Central News Agency (中央通訊社), of the Dalai Lama's first visit to Taiwan. See: Central News Agency, "Dalai Lama Meets Taiwan Premier Lien," March 26, 1997; Central News Agency, "Dalai Lama Welcomed in Taiwan," March 23, 1997.

the Taiwanese government and the Tibetan government in exile. The boycott that had kept many lay and monastic Tibetans from visiting Taiwan was lifted and new cordial relations were established between both sides.⁴⁵⁶ This détente precipitated the widespread transmission of the Geluk tradition in Taiwan as well as a time of burgeoning interest in Tibetan Buddhism by the Taiwanese public. These factors led to a remarkable increase in the scale of Tibetan Buddhist activities in Taiwan and opened new paths for Taiwanese to engage with Tibetan Buddhism.

More than twenty-five years after the Dalai Lama's visit, the impacts of this trip continue to resonate and shape Tibetan Buddhist life across the island. In the absence of social pressure against traveling to Taiwan, thousands of Tibetan Buddhist teachers come regularly to Taiwan each year. With Taiwan's open religious environment and Taiwanese devotees' generous financial support, a burgeoning number of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist faithful have established numerous urban dharma centers and even several monasteries in Taiwan's rural areas. Publications of both scholarly and popularly oriented works about Tibetan Buddhism and translations of Tibetan scriptures have increased, including the first monograph length study of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in 2007.⁴⁵⁷ Additionally, Taiwanese faithful have become engaged in a wide range of Tibetan Buddhist activities that include not only rituals, but also textual study and (albeit in far fewer cases) extended meditation practices. This diversification of pathways for Taiwanese to engage with Tibetan Buddhism has become possible due to a growing body of

⁴⁵⁶ Even after the dissolution of MTAC, another lingering issue has been the visas offered to Tibetan laity and Buddhist teachers visiting Taiwan. Today, Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan must apply for a unique class of visa that allows most to stay in Taiwan for a maximum of several months. There is no pathway for long-term residency and its affiliated benefits, such as enrollment in Taiwan's national health insurance. On this issue, see: Dolma Tsering, "Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist Monk Dilemma and Its Unintended Consequences," *Taiwan Insight*, June 28, 2023, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2023/06/28/taiwans-tibetan-buddhist-monk-dilemma-and-its-unintended-consequences/>.

⁴⁵⁷ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣.

Tibetan Buddhist teachers who have studied Mandarin and are interested in more effectively presenting their traditions to a mostly urban, college-educated, and middle-class audience.

It is in this context that the ethnographic research that forms the basis of subsequent chapters of this dissertation took place. Indeed, it was in a religious landscape dominated by the post-1997 dynamics that most of my interviewees and conversation partners first encountered Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, both as practitioners and as teachers. Accordingly, most of what I observed and was told about occurred within contemporary Taiwan's multitude of urban, multi-sectarian, and affluent Tibetan Buddhist communities. In the next chapter, I turn to Taipei, an undeniable capital in the contemporary global transmission of Tibetan Buddhism and the nexus around which most Tibetan Buddhist life in Taiwan circulates. By examining some of the characteristics and trends that span across and connect Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist communities with one another, I illustrate more concretely the specific ways in which Tibetan Buddhist life has taken shape in Taiwan in the wake of the Dalai Lama's 1997 visit.

Chapter 2

Monastics Across the Metropolis: Tibetan Buddhism in Contemporary Taipei (1997–Present)

1. Introduction

Tibetan Buddhism has thrived in Taiwan in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, with temples, dharma centers, and monasteries, on all corners of the island: from Jinfalin Temple (金法林), which overlooks the Pacific Ocean on the northeast side of Yangmingshan National Park in the north, to Gosok Tsechen Künphenling Monastery (果碩大慈普利寺, ལྷོ་ཕག་བཙུ་ཚེན་ཀུན་ཕམ་གླིང་དགོན།) on the plains of Pingdong County in the south; from Gongga Monastery in Tainan City’s Anping District in the west, to the Hualien County branch of the Palpung Sherab Ling Taiwan (台灣八蚌智慧林, བའེ་ཕམ་དཔལ་སྤུངས་ཐུག་གསུམ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་ཚེ།) in the east. Tibetan Buddhism has even spread into Taiwan’s interior, with Bodhi Monastery in Yunlin County, and Taiwan Mindröling Monastery (台灣鄔金敏卓林寺, བའེ་ཕམ་སྤྱིན་པོལ་གླིང་དགོན་པ།) in Nantou County. It is no exaggeration to say that since arriving in Taiwan in 1949, Tibetan Buddhism has spread in each of the five directions⁴⁵⁸ and established a presence on all parts of the island.

While scholars may have claimed that starting in the early 1980s Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan grew “like bamboo shoots after spring rain,”⁴⁵⁹ the period following the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s visits to Taiwan in 1997 and 2001 saw an even steeper increase. Yao

⁴⁵⁸ The four cardinal directions and the center.

⁴⁵⁹ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 30; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究,” 337.

notes that in 1996 there were eighty-two registered Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan.⁴⁶⁰ This number increased to 101 in 1997, 122 in 1998, and 131 in 2000.⁴⁶¹ By 2004, the number of centers had risen sharply to 229,⁴⁶² and by 2005 to 238, a 140% increase over the number of centers a decade earlier.⁴⁶³ The most recent survey of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist centers that I was able to locate was compiled by MTAC in the mid-2010s and listed 473 Tibetan Buddhist centers.⁴⁶⁴ Among these, 211 centers were affiliated with the Nyingma School, 147 with the Kagyü School, forty-two with the Sakya School, fifty-five with the Geluk School, one with the Jonang School, and seventeen were non-sectarian.⁴⁶⁵ As with previous surveys, this study did not identify any centers affiliated with the Bön tradition. The total number of centers confirms a 477% increase over the number of centers in 1996, the year prior to the Dalai Lama's first visit to Taiwan.

⁴⁶⁰ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 118.

Also citing data from this MTAC survey, Zablocki claims that there were 101 Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan already in 1996. As I have been unable to locate the original surveys, I cannot verify which figure is correct. See: Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 391.

Citing vastly different numbers, Geng Chenhua claimed that if one were to include communities that were not registered with the Taiwanese government, by 1996 there already were more than 200 Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan. If correct, Geng's figures would indicate a far larger number of Tibetan Buddhist centers than is recorded in official statistics cited by Yao and Zablocki. However, Geng also does not give a source for how she tabulated the actual number of registered and unregistered centers. See: Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao 藏傳密宗在台灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討*, 11.

⁴⁶¹ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 119.

⁴⁶² Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 66–90; Xue Rongxiang 薛榮祥, "Zangchuan fojiao daochang zai taiwan de fazhan gaikuang 藏傳佛教道場在台灣的發展概況," 132–133.

⁴⁶³ Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection," 391.

⁴⁶⁴ While I am unsure exactly when this list was completed or how data collection may have been impacted by the defunding of MTAC in 2017, this survey was cited across multiple chapters in anthology of papers presented at the 2018 Academic Seminar on Tibetan Buddhism. See: Wenhua bu 文化部 and Xu Guixiang 徐桂香, eds., *Zangchuan fojiao gelupai yu sajiapai: xueshu yantao hui lunwen 藏傳佛教格魯派與薩迦派: 學術研討會論文 Academic Seminar on Tibetan Buddhism* (Taipei shi 臺北市: Wenhua bu 文化部, 2018).

A leading Taiwanese Tibetologist also confirmed that this was the most recent data regarding the number of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan. Liu Guowei 劉國威, personal communication with author, November 1, 2023.

⁴⁶⁵ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, "Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制," 34.

Year	Number of Tibetan Buddhist Centers in Taiwan
1988	61
1996	82
1997	101
1998	122
2000	131
2004	229
2005	238
mid-2010s	473

Table 1: Number of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taiwan between 1979 and mid-2010s

Although Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, temples, monasteries, and retreat centers can be found across Taiwan, the vast majority are located in Taiwan’s urban areas, concentrated along the island’s northern and western coastline. Geographically, most Tibetan Buddhist organizations are northern Taiwan, especially in the Taipei Metropolitan Area or greater Taipei region, composed of Taipei City, New Taipei City, and Keelung City. This has largely been the case since Tibetan Buddhism started to spread widely in Taiwan in the 1980s. In 1988, for example, Huang reported that there were thirty Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei area, composing 48% of the sixty-one total Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taiwan at that time.⁴⁶⁶

By the turn of the millennium, the Taipei region had sixty-three Tibetan Buddhist centers, likely the largest number in a metropolitan area outside of Tibet and the Himalayas.⁴⁶⁷ In 2000, Yao noted that “The number of lamas coming to spread the dharma in Taiwan is impossible to

⁴⁶⁶ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu* 金剛乘事件簿, 168.

Again, Yao’s study provides different numbers. Yao claims that in 1988 there were fifty-six Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan. See: Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 120–121.

⁴⁶⁷ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 122.

count. Since so many different centers host empowerments all the time, as far as the frequency of empowerments is concerned, Taiwan is first in the entire world outside of areas where Tibetan Buddhism is endemic.”⁴⁶⁸ The sheer number of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei was frequently remarked upon in conversations I had with Taiwanese practitioners. Two female practitioners I was speaking to one afternoon even noted that the phrase, “There’s a dharma center on every street corner” had emerged as common aphorism (說法) among Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist devotees in Taipei to reflect the ubiquity of Tibetan Buddhist centers.⁴⁶⁹

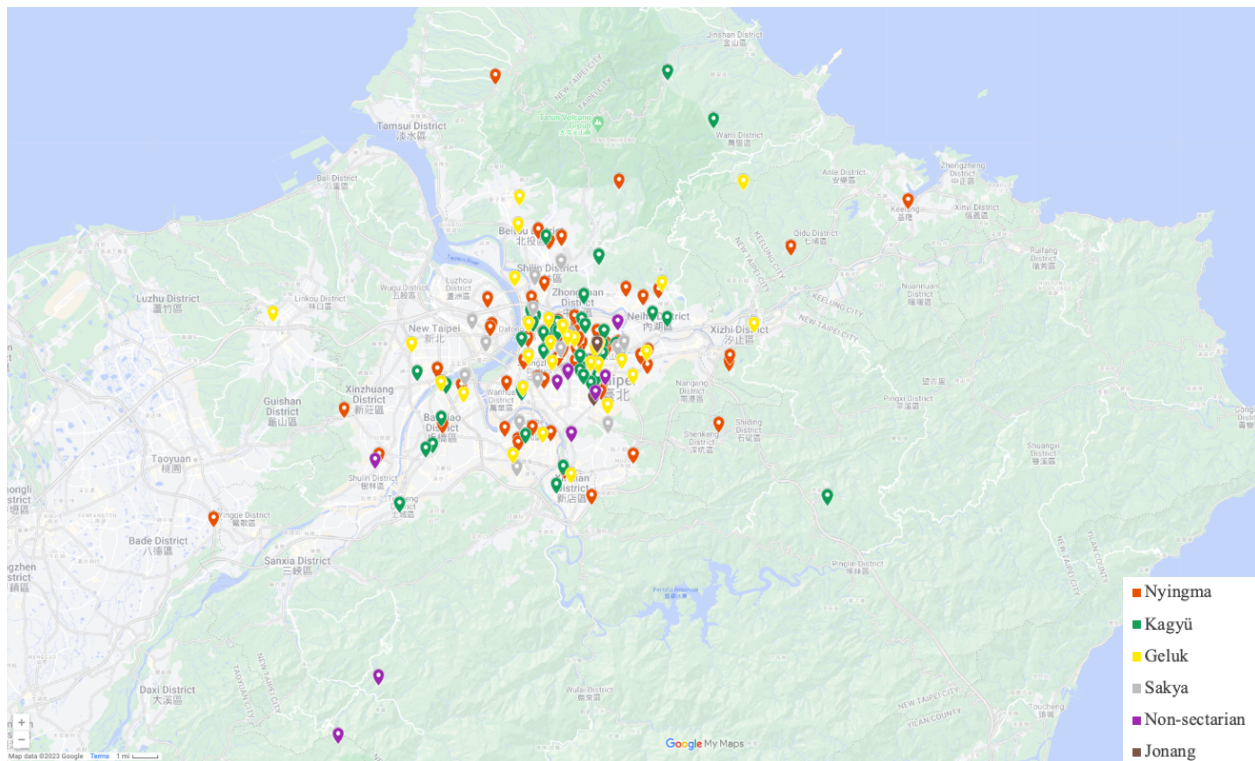


Figure 15: Distribution of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the greater Taipei region (as of March 2024).

⁴⁶⁸ “來台灣弘法的喇嘛多不勝數，不同的中心隨時都有灌頂法會，因此，以灌頂法會的頻率而言，除了藏傳佛教的跟本地之外，台灣可算是居世界之冠了。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, “Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究,” 334.

⁴⁶⁹ “在每個街口都有一個中心。” Tibetan import store owner and friend in Taipei, personal communication with author, March 12, 2022.

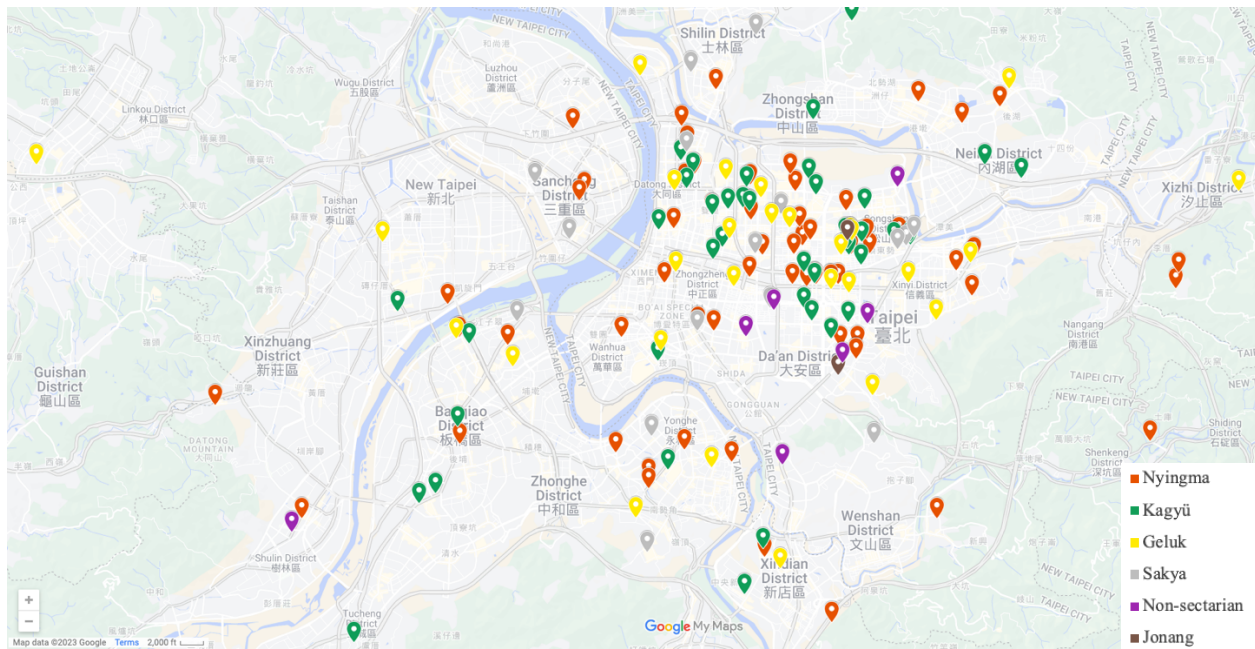


Figure 16: Closer image of the distribution of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in central Taipei (as of March 2024).

At the time of my fieldwork between 2021 and 2023, I documented at least 186 active Tibetan Buddhist centers, temples, institutes, monasteries and other organizations in the greater Taipei region.⁴⁷⁰ A searchable map I created of all of the Tibetan Buddhist organizations I located in the greater Taipei area grouped by sectarian affiliation is available to view [online](#).⁴⁷¹ Although time and resources did not permit me to conduct an island-wide survey of centers,⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ This hybrid survey was conducted both digitally and on-site in the Taipei region. As I noted in the “Introduction,” I do not claim this survey to be exhaustive and so have noted this list of 186 organizations is a minimum rather than an exact figure. I expect that there are perhaps several dozen more Tibetan Buddhist communities in the great Taipei area that I was unable to identify during my fieldwork.

⁴⁷¹ Yonnetti, “台北的藏傳佛教中心 ཐའའུ་ཐའའི་ཐོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་ཁག་ Tibetan Buddhist Centers in Taipei.”

⁴⁷² The number of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan, as with the total number in Taipei, is extremely difficult to estimate. Dharma centers open and close with surprising regularity based in part upon the presence or lack of a local teacher, as well as the available local financial support. Moreover, there is no single database of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taiwan. As mentioned above, the most recent survey was conducted by MTAC shortly before its defunding in 2017. Other lists are available from several different authorities. MTCC, for example, published a list last updated July, 27, 2023 of fifty Tibetan Buddhist centers and organizations across Taiwan. TRFDL also has a list of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan, last updated July 16, 2017, with information for 107 organizations mostly in the Taipei region. Finally, the website Lama.com.tw has an undated list of 173 Tibetan Buddhist centers, organizations, and institutes in Taiwan. Considering also that I located more Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the greater Taipei region alone, I would contend that the lists published by TRFDL and Lama.com.tw are similarly significant underestimates of the total number of Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taiwan. See: Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, “Taiwan zangchuan zhongxin 台灣藏傳中心”; Wenhua bu 文化部, “Guonei foxue tuanti wangzhi lianjie yilianbao 國內佛學團體網址連結一覽表”; “Xiuxing yuandi 修行園地.”

the results of my survey showed significant growth of Tibetan Buddhism in the Taipei region over the last several decades. The 186 centers I documented in the Taipei region is an increase of 189% from Yao’s survey in 2000, and a 507% increase over Huang’s 1988 survey.

In terms of sectarian affiliations, there are currently seventy-eight centers, or 42% of all Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the Taipei region, affiliated with the Nyingma school. Forty-six centers or 25% are affiliated with various branches and sub-branches of the Kagyü school, thirty-four centers or 18% with the Geluk school, sixteen centers or 8% with the Sakya school, and three centers or 2% are affiliated with the Jonang school. In addition, I identified nine other Tibetan Buddhist organizations or approximately 5% of all Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the Taipei region that have multiple sectarian affiliations or self-identify as non-sectarian (རིས་མེད།, 利美/無派別). I did not locate any centers that were affiliated with the Bön tradition.

Year	Number of Tibetan Buddhist Organizations in Taipei Area
1988	30
2000	131
2023	186

Table 2: Growth in the number of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei area between 1988–2023

Sectarian Affiliation	Number of Organizations
Nyingma	78
Kagyü	46
Geluk	34
Sakya	16
Jonang	3
Non-sectarian/ Multiple sectarian affiliations	9

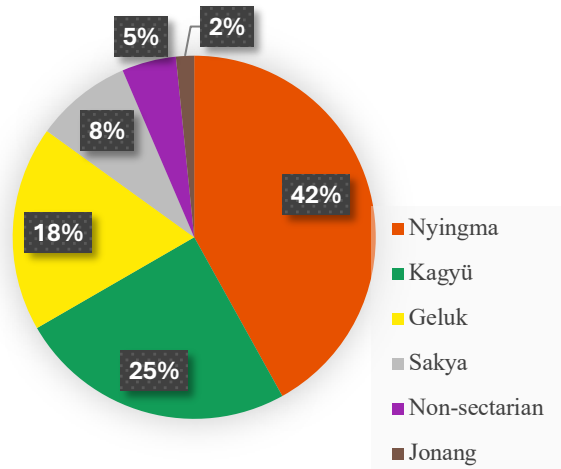


Table 3 & Figure 17: Number of Tibetan Buddhist organizations by sectarian affiliation and percentage out of total number of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei metropolitan area (as of March 2024).

The rapid growth of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in Taipei is especially significant when viewed alongside the parallel spread of Tibetan Buddhist traditions in other major urban areas around the world. Although Tibetan Buddhism expanded in Europe, Australia, and North America during a similar period as Taiwan, the extent of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in these locales remains far more limited. While reliable data regarding the number of Tibetan Buddhist groups in Europe, Australia, and North America’s largest metropolitan areas is often as difficult to locate as in Taipei, there are some estimates that can help contextualize the unique situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei. In Germany, for example, the Deutsche Buddhistische Union lists a total of sixteen Tibetan Buddhist groups in Berlin⁴⁷³ and Brandenburg,⁴⁷⁴ nine in Hamburg,⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ Deutsche Buddhistische Union e.V., “Buddhistische Religionsgemeinschaft: Berlin,” accessed October 30, 2023, https://buddhismus-deutschland.de/zentren-und-gruppen/?post_tupe=zentren&ss=berlin&plz=&searchsubmit=Suchen.

⁴⁷⁴ Deutsche Buddhistische Union e.V., “Buddhistische Religionsgemeinschaft: Brandenburg,” accessed October 30, 2023, https://buddhismus-deutschland.de/zentren-und-gruppen/?post_tupe=zentren&ss=brandenburg&plz=&searchsubmit=Suchen.

⁴⁷⁵ Deutsche Buddhistische Union e.V., “Buddhistische Religionsgemeinschaft: Hamburg,” accessed October 30, 2023, https://buddhismus-deutschland.de/zentren-und-gruppen/?post_tupe=zentren&ss=hamburg&plz=&searchsubmit=Suchen.

and ten in Munich.⁴⁷⁶ In France, L'Union Bouddhiste de France lists sixteen Tibetan Buddhist centers in the region of Île-de-France (which includes Paris),⁴⁷⁷ five in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (which includes Lyon),⁴⁷⁸ and five in Nouvelle-Aquitaine (which includes Bordeaux).⁴⁷⁹ In Italy, L'Unione Buddhista Italiana lists two Tibetan Buddhist communities in the region of Lazio (which includes Rome), eight in Lombardy (which includes Milan), and just one in Campania (which includes Naples).⁴⁸⁰ In Australia, the Buddhist Council of New South Wales lists thirty Tibetan Buddhist organizations around Sydney and the Australian Capital Territory.⁴⁸¹ In Canada, the Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism lists thirty-one Tibetan Buddhist groups in Toronto⁴⁸² and the surrounding area,⁴⁸³ nineteen in Montreal⁴⁸⁴ and the surrounding area,⁴⁸⁵ and fifteen in Vancouver.⁴⁸⁶ Very rough estimates⁴⁸⁷ of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in metropolitan

⁴⁷⁶ Deutsche Buddhistische Union e.V., “Buddhistische Religionsgemeinschaft: München,” accessed October 30, 2023, https://buddhismus-deutschland.de/zentren-und-gruppen/?post_tupe=zentren&ss=m%C3%BCnchen&plz=&searchsubmit=Suchen.

⁴⁷⁷ “Annuaire des membres: Île-de-France,” L’UBF : Fédération des Associations Bouddhistes de France, accessed October 30, 2023, [https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=35&mots\[\]=0](https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots[]=0&mots[]=0&mots[]=35&mots[]=0).

⁴⁷⁸ “Annuaire des membres: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes,” L’UBF : Fédération des Associations Bouddhistes de France, accessed October 30, 2023, [https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=57&mots\[\]=0](https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots[]=0&mots[]=0&mots[]=57&mots[]=0).

⁴⁷⁹ “Annuaire des membres: Nouvelle-Aquitaine,” L’UBF : Fédération des Associations Bouddhistes de France, accessed October 30, 2023, [https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=0&mots\[\]=36&mots\[\]=0](https://www.bouddhisme-france.org/centres-de-pratique/annuaire-des-membres/?mots[]=0&mots[]=0&mots[]=36&mots[]=0).

⁴⁸⁰ Unione Buddhista Italiana, “I Nostri Centri, Per Regione,” Unione Buddhista Italiana, December 2, 2022, <https://unionebuddhistaitaliana.it/centri/per-regione/>.

⁴⁸¹ Buddhist Council of NSW, “Find A Buddhist Centre: Vajrayana,” Buddhist Council of NSW, accessed October 30, 2023, https://www.buddhistcouncil.org/directory-member_organ/?filter_field_tradition1%5B%5D=Vajrayana&filter=1&sort=field_region4.

⁴⁸² John Harvey Negru, “Toronto Archives,” The Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism, March 2022, <https://directory.sumeru-books.com/category/ontario/toronto-gta/toronto/>.

⁴⁸³ John Harvey Negru, “Toronto and Surroundings Archives,” The Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism, March 2022, <https://directory.sumeru-books.com/category/ontario/toronto-gta/>.

⁴⁸⁴ John Harvey Negru, “Montreal Archives,” The Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism, March 2022, <https://directory.sumeru-books.com/category/quebec/montreal-et-environs/montreal/>.

⁴⁸⁵ John Harvey Negru, “Montreal et Environs Archives,” The Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism, March 2022, <https://directory.sumeru-books.com/category/quebec/montreal-et-environs/>.

⁴⁸⁶ John Harvey Negru, “Vancouver Archives,” The Sumeru Guide to Canadian Buddhism, March 2022, <https://directory.sumeru-books.com/category/british-columbia/bc-vancouver-and-lower-mainland/vancouver/>.

⁴⁸⁷ There are, to the best of my knowledge, no up-to date directories of Tibetan Buddhist communities in the United States. Harvard’s The Pluralism Project has an extensive directory of religious institutions, but stopped being updated in 2020 (Jeff Wilson, personal communication with author, October 19, 2023). Indeed, many entries on the Pluralism Project’s website have not been updated since the mid-2000s, making much of the directory out of date.

areas of the United States list twenty Tibetan Buddhist communities and organizations in the New York City metropolitan area,⁴⁸⁸ twenty-two in the Los Angeles metropolitan area,⁴⁸⁹ ten in the Chicago metropolitan area,⁴⁹⁰ and fourteen in the Boston metropolitan area.⁴⁹¹ Pierre Salguero's survey of Buddhist Philadelphia lists only four Tibetan Buddhist communities in Philadelphia.⁴⁹² This number increases to seven in the broader Philadelphia metropolitan area.⁴⁹³

The Pluralism Project's complete directory can be found here: "Pages," Harvard Pluralism Project Archive, accessed December 11, 2023,

https://hwpi.harvard.edu/pluralismarchive/browse/pages/?f%5b0%5d=sm_og_vocabulary%3Ataxonomy_term%3A167274&fbclid=IwAR3_cXHePb7brn3kPEVJ8AJWEZ_jCJmWT5Kn8vJk7hU4LIELpvkpD7ZHOBw.

For historical perspective, Jeff Wilson's 2000 survey of Buddhism in New York City listed twenty-one Tibetan Buddhist institutions in New York City. Yao's survey conducted the same year Wilson's book was published found triple the number of centers in Taipei as in New York City. See: Jeff Wilson, *The Buddhist Guide to New York: Where to Go, What to Do, and How to Make the Most of the Fantastic Resources in the Tri-State Area* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 43–136; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 122.

Directories in Buddhist periodicals, such as *Lion's Roar* or *Tricycle* are limited only to those centers who pay to have their centers listed. The *World Buddhist Directory* is also a useful resource with listings broken down by American states. However, these lists contain many repeat entries and, if their data on Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan is an indicator, do not appear to be complete in all locales. See: Buddhanet, "World Buddhist Directory," Buddhanet, accessed December 11, 2023, <https://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/>.

⁴⁸⁸ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area - Metro Area Membership Report (2020)," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed October 30, 2023, <https://thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership?y=2020&y2=0&t=2&c=35620>.

⁴⁸⁹ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area - Metro Area Membership Report (2020)," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed October 30, 2023, <https://thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership?y=2020&y2=0&t=2&c=31080>.

⁴⁹⁰ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area - Metro Area Membership Report (2020)," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed October 30, 2023, <https://thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership?y=2020&y2=0&t=2&c=16980>.

⁴⁹¹ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area - Metro Area Membership Report (2020)," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed October 30, 2023, <https://thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership?y=2020&y2=0&t=2&c=14460>.

⁴⁹² Pierce Salguero, "Location Finder," The Jivaka Project, accessed October 30, 2023, http://www.jivaka.net/finder/?w2dc_action=search&hash=e5d47824e4fcfb7ab0345a0c7faaa5d2&controller=directory_controller&include_categories_children=1&radius=5&categories=0&what_search=&address=&use_advanced=1&field_geographic_origins_of_institution_founder_or_network%5B%5D=12&action=w2dc_controller_request&hide_order=0&hide_count=0&hide_paginator=0&show_views_switcher=0&listings_view_type=list&listings_view_grid_columns=1&listing_thumb_width=250&wrap_logo_list_view=0&logo_animation_effect=1&grid_view_logo_ratio=56.25&scrolling_paginator=0&perpage=10&onpage=0&base_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.jivaka.net%2Ffinder%2F&directories=1&with_map=1.

⁴⁹³ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area - Metro Area Membership Report (2020)," The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed October 31, 2023, <https://thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership?y=2020&y2=0&t=2&c=37980>.

Although many of the above statistics likely warrant corrections through deeper study, it is nevertheless clear that the scale of Tibetan Buddhist institution building in these metropolitan areas pales in comparison to Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei. Indeed, even if the above cited statistics drastically undercounted Tibetan Buddhist organizations, new surveys that identified triple, quadruple, or even quintuple the number of Tibetan Buddhist communities in these metropolitan areas would still be dwarfed by the more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei. This is all the more remarkable given the fact that many of the metropolitan areas mentioned above have approximately the same or even significantly larger overall populations, not to mention larger ethnic Tibetan populations, than the Taipei region, which has a population of just over seven million people⁴⁹⁴ and only a few hundred ethnic Tibetans.⁴⁹⁵ Given these statistics, it is no overstatement to claim that the greater Taipei region has one of, if not the largest number and highest concentration of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in any urban area on earth outside of the Tibetan and Himalayan region. As such, the scale of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei is perhaps only second within the Tibetan exile world to the density and number of institutions that have grown in and around Kathmandu over the past seventy years.⁴⁹⁶

Most of Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist centers are not very large and only occupy a few rooms or an apartment in a mixed mixed-use building. Some centers, however, span several floors or even an entire building, and a few Tibetan Buddhist communities have even built their

⁴⁹⁴ For the most recent Taiwanese census data from late 2020, see: National Statistics Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan), "Statistical Tables of Summary Report," National Statistics, Republic of China (Taiwan), November 2020, https://eng.stat.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx&n=2401&state=1327FD6AD8DCDA52&s=231350&ccms_cs=1&sms=10889.

⁴⁹⁵ Office of Tibet Taiwan, personal communication with author, December 18, 2023; "Zai tai zang bao ji juliu zangren renkou shu 在臺藏胞及居留藏人人口數," Meng zang wenhua zhongxin 蒙藏文化中心, April 8, 2022, <https://mtcc.moc.gov.tw/home/zh-tw/statistical/2260>.

⁴⁹⁶ For a study of Tibetan Buddhism in the area around the Boudha Stūpa in one part of Kathmandu, see: Moran, *Buddhism Observed*.

own monasteries or taken over monasteries and nunneries from Chinese Buddhist communities with dwindling local support. Many Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei are led by a single teacher, almost exclusively monks from Tibetan Buddhist institutions in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and to a much smaller extent the PRC. However, some centers are led by teams of four, five, or even more monastics or are led by non-celibate teachers. While some Tibetan Buddhist teachers have permanent residency in Taiwan or even Taiwanese citizenship, most centers are led by teachers on visas issued by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部). To adequately staff the hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist centers, as well as offer empowerments, teachings, and dharma assemblies led by prominent Tibetan Buddhist leaders, Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist communities sponsor the visits of approximately 2,000 Tibetan Buddhist teachers to Taiwan annually.⁴⁹⁷ As the Taipei region is home to Taiwan's highest concentration of Tibetan Buddhist centers and its largest international airport, the vast majority of teachers enter Taiwan and conduct some, if not all, of their activities in the Taipei region. In this way, Taipei is not only host to the highest number of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in Taiwan, but also sees the most traffic of teachers and hosts a predominance of public Tibetan Buddhist events.

This chapter presents a qualitative description of Tibetan Buddhism in the greater Taipei region based upon data I collected while attending hundreds of events at more than fifty-five different Tibetan Buddhist centers, institutes, and organizations around Taipei. In addition to participant observation, I draw upon data from formal interviews with Tibetan Buddhist teachers, translators between Tibetan and Mandarin, and Taiwanese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, as

⁴⁹⁷ As I noted in the "Introduction," the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions in Tibetan Buddhist teachers traveling to Taiwan between 2020 and 2022. Figures from 2023 suggest that the number of Tibetan Buddhist monastics coming to Taiwan has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic numbers. For statistics on the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who come to Taiwan both from the PRC and elsewhere, see: Wenhua bu mengzhang wenhua zhongxin 文化部蒙藏文化中心, "Haiwai zang seng lai tai hongfa renci ji dalu zang seng lai tai hongfa renci tongji biao 海外藏僧來臺弘法人次及大陸藏僧來臺弘法人次統計表."

well as countless informal conversations I had with attendees and Tibetan Buddhist teachers at the many empowerments, classes, dharma assemblies, and rituals I attended. My aim is not to provide an exhaustive description of all the manifestations of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei, but rather to identify some of the shared threads that span across Taipei's vibrant Tibetan Buddhist landscape. While there have been some graduate theses by Taiwanese scholars that incorporate ethnographic data from individual Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei,⁴⁹⁸ a city-wide analysis of Tibetan Buddhist life in this global capital of Tibetan Buddhism is long overdue.

In this chapter, I take a telescoping approach that begins by discussing some of the shared characteristics across Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei before examining these qualities in the context of three different Tibetan Buddhist communities. I hope that by beginning at a more abstract level of description and then focusing in on how these qualities manifest in individual communities, this chapter will provide readers with both a sufficient overview to understand some of the threads that connect communities across Taipei's diverse Tibetan Buddhist landscape, as well as enough detail to locate these threads in individual communities, practices, and people. Whatever lack of specificity remains at the end of this chapter, I hope will be at least partially rectified by the closer case studies that follow in the second half of this dissertation.

In the first part of the chapter, I offer synthetic descriptions of seven characteristics of Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei. I describe Tibetan Buddhist life in Taipei as characterized by having: 1) significant freedom to establish and affiliate with specific religious communities as well as advertise and hold public events, 2) numerous physical objects and

⁴⁹⁸ Chen Yiling 陳怡伶, "Taiwan zangchuan fojiao gelu jiaopai zhi zongjiaoshi yinyue 台灣藏傳佛教格魯教派之宗教儀式音樂"; Li Renzheng 李仁正, "Fojiao caishen xinyang yu yishi zhi tantao 佛教財神信仰與儀式之探討"; Shi Yiyu 石義宇, "Zangchuan fojiao ningmapai zai taiwan de fazhan 藏傳佛教寧瑪派在台灣的發展"; Zheng Kuanzu 鄭欵足, "Kangsa renboqie zai taiwan hongfa de shizheng yanjiu 康薩仁波切在台灣弘法的實證研究"; Zhuang Lechan 莊樂禪, "Xizang mizong de xinxing zongjiao tezhi yanjiu 西藏密宗的新興宗教特質研究."

practices that synthesize Tibetan and Chinese religious traditions, 3) a large number of small but mostly autonomous communities, 4) highly-gendered demographics with female-majority congregations and male leadership, 5) multi-lingual environments dominated by Tibetan and Mandarin, 6) organizational structures split between monastery-affiliated and privately run centers, and 7) schedules focused on rituals, educational classes, and personal services performed by Tibetan Buddhist teachers. I offer these qualities not as an exhaustive list of descriptors, but as a series of shared qualities that connect Tibetan Buddhist communities across Taipei.

Following the discussion of these seven characteristics of Tibetan Buddhist communal life in Taipei, I examine how they manifest collectively in the context of three specific Tibetan Buddhist communities. My aim is not to claim that these communities share a common essence or manifest all characteristics identically. Nor do I put them forth as prototypes or “best examples of the category”⁴⁹⁹ of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei. Rather, drawing on Wittgenstein’s idea of “family resemblance”⁵⁰⁰ I illustrate how these communities are connected to one another through the ways they manifest a variety of shared characteristics. While these individual traits are not necessarily exclusive to Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei, taken collectively they manifest a picture of Tibetan Buddhist communal life distinct to the Taipei region.

2. Family Resemblances Among Taipei’s Tibetan Buddhist Communities

It would be impossible to fully capture the rich diversity of religious life among the hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region in this chapter alone. Indeed,

⁴⁹⁹ Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B Mervis, “Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories,” *Cognitive Psychology* 7, no. 4 (October 1, 1975): 574, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285\(75\)90024-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(75)90024-9).

⁵⁰⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 31–36.

each community has its own unique history, schedule of rituals, classes, community of practitioners and supporters, Tibetan Buddhist teacher(s), and relations with other dharma centers in Taiwan and monasteries in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Tibetan areas of the PRC. Some communities have only a few dozen congregants while others have several hundred or even thousands of supporters. Most Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers are led by monastic teachers from South Asia, but some are led by non-celibate Tibetans and Himalayans, as well as by both monastic and lay Taiwanese, Hongkonger, and Chinese teachers. Yet, despite their diversity, there are many shared characteristics that extend across Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei area. While I did not witness these qualities manifesting identically in any two centers I visited, nevertheless there was sufficient overlap to identify these communities as part of a broader community of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the Taipei region.

To understand the diversity of the Tibetan Buddhist landscape in contemporary Taipei, it is useful to start by examining some of the strands that collectively weave together the varieties of Tibetan Buddhist communal life. The pages below draw upon Wittgenstein's idea of *Familienähnlichkeit* or "family resemblance"⁵⁰¹ to examine seven traits shared across Tibetan Buddhist communal life in Taipei. As Wittgenstein noted, family resemblances manifest similarly to a spun thread. "The strength of the thread," he argued, "does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres."⁵⁰² Members of the "family" of Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei are not so much defined by how they exhibit all of these characteristics, but are linked through their unique manifestation of a constellation of interwoven qualities. Having witnessed a "complicated network of similarities

⁵⁰¹ Wittgenstein, 32.

⁵⁰² Wittgenstein, 32.

overlapping and criss-crossing”⁵⁰³ at numerous centers during my fieldwork, these qualities are worth identifying and discussing as features that both connect Tibetan Buddhist communities across Taipei to one another, as well as distinguish them from other local religious groups.

2.1. Freedom to Organize, Practice, Participate, and Advertise

One of the most notable characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan today is the relative lack of restrictions on Tibetan Buddhist activities compared to the period of martial law in Taiwan and the restrictions on religious organizations in the PRC. On the one hand, there is the freedom that (especially urban) Taiwanese have to choose the religious communities in which they participate and to which they offer patronage to. As discussed in the previous chapter, this type of voluntary religious affiliation stands in stark contrast to more place-based ritual-social religious networks of rural Taiwanese life and has characterized much of urban religious life in Taiwan in the post-martial law Taiwan.⁵⁰⁴ Practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei often are active in more than one community, and many continue to also frequent Chinese Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religious sites in addition to a Tibetan Buddhist center.

On the other hand, there is the freedom that Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners enjoy to establish communities and pursue religious activities. This freedom is not unique to Tibetan Buddhists but is, indeed, part of a collection of rights shared by civic organizations in Taiwan in the post-martial law period. So long as communities are legally registered and abide by the conditions of the Civil Associations Act and other applicable laws,⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Wittgenstein, 32.

⁵⁰⁴ Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*, 1–4; Randall Nadeau and Hsun Chang, “Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Religious Studies and the Question of ‘Taiwanese Identity,’” in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, ed. Philip Clart and Charles Brewer Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 293–294; Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 304.

⁵⁰⁵ “Renmin tuanti fa 人民團體法,” Quanguo fagui ziliao ku 全國法規資料庫, February 8, 2023, <https://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=D0050091>.

any religious community has significant liberty to pursue a variety of activities in both private and public settings. Provided a group of thirty Taiwanese citizens signs a petition needed to register a civil association and there are enough financial backers to support their needs (a living space, visa and travel costs, food and medical needs, etc.), Tibetan Buddhist teachers are free to establish religious communities in Taipei, or anywhere else in Taiwan. In their own rented, purchased, or donated spaces, Tibetan Buddhist communities have the autonomy to establish their own schedules of classes, dharma assemblies, life release events, and other rituals in consultation with their religious leaders. Beyond the activities in their private spaces, Tibetan Buddhist communities also operate publicly across Taipei. They regularly hold large-scale events, such as empowerments, dharma assemblies, or religious teachings in rented venues, such as hotel ballrooms, conference centers, private temples, and even stadiums.⁵⁰⁶ So long as the organizing community has secured the requisite permissions, Tibetan Buddhist communities can hold events in prominent public spaces, such as in parks, near train stations, or even Liberty Square (自由廣場) in front of the Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall (中正紀念堂).⁵⁰⁷

In addition to differing from the period of martial law in Taiwan, the freedoms enjoyed by Tibetan Buddhist communities today also contrast quite markedly from the situation in the PRC. Catherine Hardie rightly notes that PRC law requires that collective religious activities take place in official state-sanctioned religious sites and that religions like Tibetan Buddhism, which

⁵⁰⁶ For an example of a Tibetan Buddhist ritual held in the Taipei World Trade Center (臺北世界貿易中心), see: Campergue, “Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan,” 32–33.

⁵⁰⁷ For an example of a prayer ceremony led by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Liberty Square, see: International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕྱོགས་སྐྱེའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Zuotian wanshang zai ziyou guangshang taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui juban [wei fagu shangwang renmin qifu, we shijie heping zhudao] qiyuan fahui... 昨天晚上在自由廣場台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會舉辦【為法國傷亡人民祈福，為世界和平祝禱】祈願法會...,” Facebook, November 20, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02oQXwXb2sPwztsWwp4pVVRJYneNzQdT6fyQyEV6qQ83umi6QYvMXgFp2EiWp3bwYAl>.

are associated with specific ethnicities, “should cleave to their respective ethnic territories” and are not allowed to open centers or hold public events outside of these regions.⁵⁰⁸ While such laws are often worked around by Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Han disciples in the widespread “grey market” of tolerated but not-quite-legal religious activities,⁵⁰⁹ nevertheless public engagement by Han Chinese with Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the PRC happens mostly in areas classified as ethnically Tibetan. Thus, in studies of contemporary Han engagement with Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC, Chinese disciples’ pilgrimage practices to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries receive considerably more attention than the travels of Tibetan teachers to east coast cities where most of their Han disciples live.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, Hardie notes that “it is very difficult in Mainland China to imagine a situation like in Taiwan or in the West, where you have large, public facing [Buddhist] dharma organizations that embrace a trans-regional audience.”⁵¹¹

By contrast, Tibetan Buddhist communities are scattered across all parts of Taipei, most founded by Tibetan Buddhist teachers who came to Taiwan with the express purpose of recruiting students and establishing a local center. These urban dharma communities often have large signs displayed to advertise their centers and the school or lineage with which they are associated. They also frequently have active public presences online and share announcements on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as on the prominent messaging and social networking mobile application Line.⁵¹² Additionally, many communities

⁵⁰⁸ Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts.”

⁵⁰⁹ Yang, “The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China,” 106–114.

⁵¹⁰ Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*, 155–190; Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts”; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, esp. 29–74.

⁵¹¹ Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts.”

⁵¹² Line is the most popular internet-based communication platform in Taiwan. Similar to WeChat, it offers numerous services including direct and group messaging and calling options, a digital wallet, news, taxi, shopping, and others via smartphone and computer-based applications. The majority of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan utilize groups on Line for announcing news, events, and sharing other important community information.

advertise on third-party websites, such as Lama.com.tw or Beclass.com, to share information about upcoming public events and manage public registration. In short, Tibetan Buddhist communities are generally free to publicly advertise their events within the same legal limits as apply to all other civic organizations in Taiwan and to pursue whichever practices they choose.

Numerous Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners I spoke with remarked upon the degree of freedom communities enjoyed in Taiwan. For example, following a ritual I attended on a Wednesday afternoon at a small Tibetan Buddhist dharma center in Taipei's Da'an District, I was speaking with a group of three women who had also participated in the event. After I shared that I came to Taiwan to study the development and current situation of Tibetan Buddhism there, one woman immediately remarked how good it was for me to be doing this research in Taiwan instead of the PRC. She continued, explaining that a friend had recently shared information about a new policy restricting attendance at religious teachings in Tibet. She lamented that several prominent Tibetan teachers, such as Khenpo Tsültrim Lodrö, who had previously visited Taiwan, were currently in the PRC and would unlikely be allowed to come to Taiwan again.⁵¹³ For this woman, the freedoms enjoyed by Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners in Taiwan stood in stark contrast with the restrictions she saw characterizing Tibetan Buddhist activity within the PRC. In her opinion, the freedom of movement, speech, and religious practice in Taiwan made it an ideal place to not only practice Tibetan Buddhism, but also for me study it.

In another conversation, a Geluk geshé who has resided in Taiwan for more than twenty years, expressed a similar view. When I asked him during an interview about the communities that he taught, I was surprised to learn that in addition to teaching five courses each week at several different dharma centers in Taipei, he also had taught three courses on WeChat (微信) to

⁵¹³ Ritual participant, personal communication with author, August 31, 2022.

nearly 1,500 students mainly from the east coast of the PRC for nearly a decade. Similar to the woman above, the geshé contrasted the freedom he had to teach in Taiwan, including posting hundreds of videos and livestreaming his teachings on YouTube and Facebook, with a lack of freedom to teach publicly in the PRC. He noted that following a new law restricting the dissemination of religious information online in the PRC that went into effect on March 1, 2022,⁵¹⁴ he and one of his disciples had had to devise various covert methods for sharing his teachings with students in the PRC in ways that avoided catching the eye of online censors. Although the geshé did not have nearly as many students in Taiwan as in the PRC, he did not have to worry about the same types of restrictions on his activities in Taiwan.⁵¹⁵

As the above examples demonstrate, many Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and teachers in Taipei describe the importance of freedom to their religious activities. These include the freedom to establish religious institutions, to hold public events, as well as freedom from arbitrary persecution. Describing their religious lives in Taipei partially through the freedoms they enjoy there does not so much contrast Tibetan Buddhism with other religions in Taiwan. Rather, as the above examples demonstrate, the freedoms enjoyed by Tibetan Buddhists in Taipei and Taiwan more broadly are viewed more in contrast with the circumstances of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC. Although not expressed by these individuals quoted above, these freedoms also sharply contrast with the strict control of public Buddhist life in Taiwan during the period of martial law.

2.2. Sino-Tibetan Religious Hybridity

In addition to extensive freedoms enjoyed in the areas of religious practice and institution building, Tibetan Buddhist communal life in Taipei is also characterized by religious syncretism

⁵¹⁴ For a brief summary and an English translation of this law, see: Zimo, “Crackdown on Religious Content on the Internet Coming March 1, 2022.”

⁵¹⁵ Geluk geshé, interview with author, Taipei, November 2, 2022.

or the blending and hybridizing of religious objects, practices, and customs between Tibetan and Chinese religious traditions. First, there is a noticeable diffusion of Tibetan Buddhist symbols, art, and objects beyond the walls of Tibetan Buddhist centers to other religious institutions and spaces across Taipei. These include, for example, Tibetan amulets and religious talismans (護身符, ལྷུང་བ།/ལྷུང་འཕྲོ་ལོ།), prayer flags (經幡, དར་ལྗོངས།), prayer wheels (轉經筒, མ་ཎི་འཕྲོ་ལོ།), and speakers intoning the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara “Om maṇi padme hūṃ.” I even witnessed Tibetan Buddhist divinities utilized on political campaign posters. While some of these public manifestations emerge from an individual’s personal devotion to Tibetan Buddhism, in other cases the presence of Tibetan Buddhist deities and materia sacra corresponds to their growing reputation for efficacy and power within a wider field of Chinese Buddhist, Daoist, and other religious’ images and power objects.



Figure 18: A political advertisement on the side of a public bus in the lead up to Taiwan’s 2022 local elections features the face of Guru Rinpoché over the candidate’s right shoulder. The advertisement attempts to connect the compassion and power of Guru Rinpoché with the candidate, Lin Ruiyu 林瑞圖. It bears the sub-text “Black-faced Bodhisattva, I am present always” (黑面菩薩, 我始終都在) and “Compassionate aid to the weak, Bodhisattva activity among people.” (慈心濟弱, 人間菩薩行). Photo by author, 2022.

Tibetan Buddhist communities have also, in turn, absorbed numerous religious practices, images, and customs from Chinese Buddhism and other local religions and integrated these into their practices and teachings, and traditions. This is perhaps not surprising given that similar to Euro-North American contexts, Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in Taipei are virtually all non-heritage converts. As most Taiwanese faithful have previously engaged with Chinese Buddhism, Daoism, and Chinese folk religions, they bring a variety of practices and sacred objects from these traditions with them to Tibetan Buddhism. Some of the Chinese religious elements adopted within Tibetan Buddhist communities are devotional, such as statues and other icons, while others are chiefly aesthetic, such as calligraphy or floral and bamboo arrangements. Some elements are related to Chinese religious culture, such as ancestor tablets (神位), divination blocks (筊杯), beacon lamps (光明燈), and the ubiquitous gifting of red envelopes (紅包, དུལ་ལྷན་ རྩམ་པོ།). Others, such as Chinese-style incense pots and furniture, serve more utilitarian purposes.

Take, for example, the central shrine of Taipei Jetavan Buddhist Association (臺北市祇園佛學會) in Taipei's Shilin District. In addition to a Tibetan-style throne with an image of the present Gyalwang Drukpa (ལྷུང་དབང་འབྲུག་པ་ ༡༢ འཇིགས་མེད་པ་ལྷ་དབང་ཚེ་ལ།, 嘉旺竹巴法王 b. 1963), spiritual leader of the Drukpa Kagyü (འབྲུག་པ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 竹巴噶舉) sub-school of Tibetan Buddhism with which this community is affiliated, and Tibetan-style scroll-paintings or thangkas (ཐང་ཀམ།, 唐卡) of Green Tārā and Mañjuśrī (འཇམ་མཉམ་དཔལ་དབྱེར་ལ།, 文殊菩薩), there are also two vertical banners with the Chinese text “*Namo Benshi Shijiamouni Fo*” (南無本師釋迦牟尼佛, *Praise to the Original Teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha!*). Additionally, the main images on the shrine are not Tibetan, but are Chinese Buddhist style depictions of the bodhisattvas and buddhas Samantabhadra (普賢菩

薩, ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ།), Vairocana (毗盧遮那佛, རྣམ་པར་སྤྲུང་མཛད།), and Mañjuśrī from the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* (華嚴三聖), a text widely revered in Chinese Buddhism. These statues are flanked by the Chinese Buddhist guardians Lord Guan (護法關聖, ཀུན་ཏུ་ལྷོ།) and Skanda (護法韋馱, གཞོན་ཏུ།). Below these larger images are a mixture of smaller Tibetan and Chinese-style statues of deities such as Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, Śākyamuni Buddha (སངས་རྒྱལ་ཤ་ཀྲ་ཐུབ་པ།, 釋迦摩尼佛), Guru Rinpoché, and others.



Figure 19: Women praying in front of the shrine of the main hall of Taipei Jetavan Buddhist Association in Shilin District, Taipei. Photo by author, 2022.

In addition to these statues, the shrine also contains a synthesis of other Chinese and Tibetan material elements. The shrine itself is made in a Chinese-style with heavy, dark wood,

while smaller Tibetan-style tables carved with clouds and dragons are lined in front. There are several rows of Tibetan-style offering bowls and sculpted offering cakes or *torma* (朵瑪, གཏོར་མ།), along with Chinese-style offering platters filled with fruits and packaged snacks, vases of lilies and orchid arrangements, as well as an incense pot for offering vertical sticks of incense.

Other examples of Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity are present in the image below from Sugata Dharma Center, a Sakya-affiliated center located in New Taipei City's Sanchong District. In this image, religious syncretism is not so much apparent on the main shrine, although there are several local Buddhist elements present such as the floral and bamboo arrangements. Rather, it is the spaces to the left and right of the shrine that contain the most conspicuously Chinese religious elements: tables covered with rows of vertical yellow and red paper slips and a board for offering beacon lamps. The red slips or disaster elimination emolument tablets (消災祿位)⁵¹⁶ contain the names of congregants' living family members. These papers contain the pre-printed words "Buddha's light flows and illuminates...emolument tablet for long life" (佛光注照...長生祿位), with space left in the middle for the sponsor to write the name(s) of those to whom the tablets are dedicated. The far more numerous yellow slips, called transcendence memorial tablets (超度牌位/超薦牌位) are dedicated to the deceased. These contain the pre-printed words "The Buddha's power delivers...to the Pure Land's lotus seat" (佛力超薦...往生蓮位), and again space contain space for the name(s) of deceased person(s) to whom the tablet is dedicated.

Both the disaster elimination emolument tablets and transcendence tablets are commonly employed in Chinese Buddhist religious communities in Taiwan,⁵¹⁷ especially in rituals for the

⁵¹⁶ My thanks to Steven Zhao for assisting with the Chinese terms most commonly used for these types of tablets.

⁵¹⁷ For one study of these tablets in a Chinese Buddhist temple in Xinpu, see: Wang Yuhua 王鈺涵, "Gongde yu changsheng: xin bu miaoyu luwei yanjiu 功德與長生：新埔廟宇祿位研究" (Master's Thesis, Xinzhu shi 新竹市, Guoli jiaoting daxue 國立交通大學, 2007).

deceased held during the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar or Ghost Month (鬼月). Indeed, this photo was taken prior to a transcendence dharma assembly (超度法會) that Taiwan Sugata Dharma Center held during the Ghost Festival (中元節). For each slip, congregants submitted names in advance to the dharma center's organizers, along with a small donation to the center. After the slips were printed, they were placed on either side of the shrine to benefit from the daily rituals performed by the center's monks as well as the collective merits accrued through several dharma assemblies held throughout the month. At these dharma assemblies, the center's four monks led the congregation in prayers to Medicine Buddha. At the end of the month, the tablets were burned as per the custom for making offerings to ancestors in Chinese religion.



Figure 20: The main shrine room at Taiwan Sugata Dharma Center in Sanchong District, New Taipei City, in preparation for a transcendence dharma assembly (超度法會) during Ghost Month. Photo by author, 2022.

Also visible in the photo is a small cabinet in the top right corner. This cabinet is filled with small statues of Tibetan Buddhist divinities that are each illuminated with small lights. These illuminated statues, often called “beacon lamps” or “bright lamps,” are a common sight,

ubiquitous in both Daoist and Chinese Buddhist temples across Taiwan. Although apparently of Daoist origin,⁵¹⁸ today worshippers at both Chinese Buddhist and Daoist temples make offerings especially around the lunar new year to have their names or the names of their family members inscribed beneath the statue “to pray for peace and prosperity in the new year.”⁵¹⁹ Donations that temples receive for keeping these lamps lit are utilized to support rituals which are understood to benefit those whose names are inscribed beneath the lamps. Today, this practice is widely present at Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taipei. Some Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers even have a range of deities to choose from, allowing supporters to offer to Dzambhala for wealth, Amitābha (འོད་དཔག་མེད།, 阿彌陀佛) for rebirth in the Western Paradise, Tārā (སྒྲུབ་མེད།, 度母) for protection, Mañjuśrī for wisdom, Medicine Buddha for good health, and so on.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ This argument is articulated in Wu Meixing 吳美杏, “Tainan shi guang mingdeng xinyang zhi yanjiu 台南市光明燈信仰之研究” (Master’s Thesis, Tainan shi 台南市, Guoli tainan daxue 國立臺南大學, 2009), 8–18.

⁵¹⁹ “祈求新的一年平安順遂。” Wu Meixing 吳美杏, 18.

⁵²⁰ One Tibetan Buddhist center lists statues of the following deities and their purported capabilities as options for sponsored beacon lamps: “供養釋迦牟尼佛獲相好莊嚴等功德

供養阿彌陀佛生西方極樂世界

供養藥師佛消除突發之緣所生的疾病等

供養金剛薩埵清淨一切生世造的惡業

供養文殊菩薩取捨處無誤證得之智慧增長

供養觀世音菩薩自續生起悲心能如父母般守護

供養至尊度母救度脫離盜匪等的八種畏難

供養財神獲得財富和一切共成就”

“Make offerings to Śākyamuni to obtain merits for a good appearance, dignity, and so forth.

Make offerings to Amitābha Buddha to be reborn in the Western Land of Bliss.

Make offerings to Medicine Buddha to eliminate diseases caused by unexpected causes.

Make offerings to Vajrasattva to purify negative karma created in all lifetimes.

Make offerings to Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva to increase the wisdom without error and accepting or rejecting [through] the sense organs.

Make offerings to Avalokiteśvara to continuously generate the compassion that will protect [you] like a parent.

Make offerings to Tārā to be saved and escape from the eight fears of robbers, and so forth.

Make offerings to Dzambhala to obtain wealth and all success and glory.” (Author’s translation).

Zhengfayuan xuefohui 正法源學佛會, “2024 nian du guangming deng dengji 2024 年度光明燈登記,” BeClass, accessed December 8, 2023,

https://www.becclass.com/rid=284b3c6654dfa0f5e828?fbclid=IwAR2aATF6Wfq1HlqngrX_tN06rzGX3lmmQQ7OYQ4foZCwvnn7cO-zQAFK4Iw.

Thus, Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity and synthesis manifests in numerous ways across the Taipei region. Tibetan Buddhist symbols, artwork, power objects, and even prayers have spread beyond the walls of Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers to other spaces. At the same time, Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taipei often contain both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist materia sacra, imagery, as well as local religious customs. As the examples above illustrate, these religious power objects and traditions, such as statues of Chinese Buddhist deities and practices dedicated to the mortal and postmortem well-being of ancestors and loved ones, are often integrated into Tibetan Buddhist spaces and practices. The result is that Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei contain a mixture of Tibetan and Chinese elements, making them spaces of practices both familiar and novel for Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers.

2.3. Autonomous Communities

In addition to religious freedom and hybridity, the more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei can also be characterized by their relative autonomy. Indeed, most Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei function more or less independently from one another. In general, dharma centers are either official branches of monasteries in South Asia and Tibetan areas of the PRC⁵²¹ or were founded by individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers. While most dharma centers in Taipei are connected in some way with Tibetan Buddhist institutions outside of Taiwan and may even be one of multiple centers associated with the same monastery, each center generally functions as a separate organization with their own students and patrons.

In some cases, Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan are affiliated with rather small monasteries and schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Liu Guowei alluded to this in an interview, noting

⁵²¹ Although several of the earliest Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan were from Mongolia, over the course of my research I did not locate any dharma centers whose mother monastery was in Mongolia. More research particularly among the ethnic Mongolian population in Taiwan may prove fruitful in revealing contemporary religious linkages.

that “even minor lineages have centers in Taipei. For example, the Barom Kagyü were originally only in Nangchen. Now, they have several lamas and rinpoché’s who regularly travel to Taiwan.”⁵²² In this example, Professor Liu referenced a relatively small Kagyü sub-school that historically was largely limited to two monasteries in the Nangchen region of Kham.⁵²³ Today, there are at least two Barom Kagyü-affiliated (འབའ་རོམ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 巴隆噶舉) organizations in the Taipei area, in addition to at least two other centers in Taizhong.

Another example is the Jonang school of Tibetan Buddhism. Starting in the seventeenth century, the Jonang endured several hundred years of persecution and was nearly pushed to extinction. The tradition survived in a few dozen monasteries and temples mostly in Dzamthang, Gyalrong, Ngawa, and Golok. As of 2018, Filippo Brambilla reported that there were only two Jonang monasteries in South Asia.⁵²⁴ Today, there are three dharma centers affiliated with the Jonang School in the Taipei region alone. What is more, the head of the Jonang School, Jonang Gyaltsab Rinpoché (ཇོ་ནང་རྒྱལ་ཚབ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དབང་ཚལ་ཀྱི་སྐུ་བ།, 嘉察秋能仁波切 b. 1963), spends a lot of time teaching and leading practices in these communities. He regularly gives empowerments in venues across Taiwan and in 2024, Jonang Gyaltsab Rinpoché even spearheaded a World Peace Prayer Festival (ཐེ་ཕམ་ཇོ་ནང་འཛམ་གླིང་ཞི་བདེའི་སློན་ལམ་ཆེན་མོ།, 屆台灣覺囊世界和平祈願大會) at a Jonang center in Taiwan’s Changhua County that was attended by Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist leaders from different sectarian traditions, as well as several hundred monastics and lay devotees.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Liu Guowei, interview with author, Taipei, March 16, 2022.

⁵²³ Turek, “The Contemporary Revival of the Barom Kagyü School in Kham,” 135.

⁵²⁴ Filippo Brambilla, “A Late Proponent of the Jo Nang gZhan Stong Doctrine: Ngag Dbang Tshogs Gnyis Rgya Mtsho (1880–1940),” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 45 (April 2018): 9, https://www.academia.edu/36475965/A_Late_Proponent_of_the_Jo_nang_gZhan_stong_Doctrine_Ngag_dbang_tshogs_gnyis_rgya_mtsho_1880_1940_.

⁵²⁵ Taiwan jue nang da dan lin fo xuehui 台灣覺囊達丹林佛學會, “The wan jo nang ’jam gling zhi bde’i smon lam chen mo/ ཐེ་ཕམ་ཇོ་ནང་འཛམ་གླིང་ཞི་བདེའི་སློན་ལམ་ཆེན་མོ།,” Facebook, February 27, 2024,

In many other cases, however, dharma centers in Taipei are not affiliated with minor practice lineages or monasteries, but with major monastic institutions in South Asia, and to a much lesser extent in Tibet. Yet, even in cases when there are multiple teachers from major monasteries like Sera, Namdröling, Dzongsar (རྫོང་སང་བཤའ་གྲྭ་, 宗薩佛學院) or Rumtek Monasteries, or even from the same monastic college (གྲྭ་ཚང་།, 札倉) or house (ཁམས་ཚཱ།, 康村) within these monasteries, individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers most frequently direct dharma centers in Taipei that function independently from one another.

Take, for example, the centers in Taipei that are affiliated with Namdröling Monastery. Namdröling was founded in 1963 by Penor Rinpoché, the eleventh holder of the Palyül lineage (དཔལ་ལྷུ་ལྷུགས།, 白玉傳承) of the Nyingma school, and today is a sprawling monastic complex in southern India with thousands of initiates. As Liu⁵²⁶ and Yao⁵²⁷ both note, the Palyül lineage began to spread widely following the attention Penor Rinpoché attracted in Taiwan starting in the late 1980s. Liu writes that after Penor Rinpoché came to Taiwan in 1988, “other Tibetan monks from the Palyül lineage came to Taiwan one after another...developing other Buddhist societies and dharma centers of the Palyül lineage. Today, it can be said that [these Palyül centers] are the most numerous dharma centers affiliated with the Nyingma school in Taiwan.”⁵²⁸ A Taiwanese Nyingma monastic I interviewed confirmed this, remarking that rather than appointing any one

<https://www.facebook.com/hijonang/posts/pfbid0g4uRcwNumtcaFu8dwAvFFBDbpk8Xzu2mnrXy2AUQ6B1ZhbVSFyhLUz5BDtJWwr11>.

⁵²⁶ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin 承舊鼎新*, 115; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 28.

⁵²⁷ Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 590; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 82.

⁵²⁸ “陸續有其他白玉傳承的藏僧來臺...開展出其他白玉傳承的學會與佛法中心，現可以說是在臺灣的寧瑪傳承中分支中心最多。” Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin 承舊鼎新*, 115. While Liu describes these dharma centers using a word that can be translated as “branch” (分支), in the case of the Palyül-affiliated centers he is discussing it would be more accurate to describe them as “affiliates” rather than “branches.”

teacher or center to be his local representative in Taiwan, Penor Rinpoché told the khenpos and reincarnate teachers from Namdröling Monastery to go and teach on their own, thereby establishing their own communities.⁵²⁹

Today, Namdröling Monastery's website lists four affiliated centers in the greater Taipei region.⁵³⁰ However, during my fieldwork I located at least twenty-eight dharma centers in the Taipei region that are all affiliated with Namdröling Monastery and whose leadership all claim Penor Rinpoché as their root teacher (ཙུང་ལོ་གླེ་མ།, 根本上師). Nearly all twenty-eight centers, however, are led by different teachers, have separate event calendars, and function independently from one another. One Namdröling monk with whom I spoke following a ritual at a Palyül-affiliated center in Taipei's Zhongzheng District told me that most of the Namdröling-affiliated monastics and teachers know one another and sometimes assist each other in performing rituals. However, he confirmed that by and large each of these teachers pursues their own affairs. This monastic, for example, normally stayed at a center in New Taipei City's Banqiao District and only came for the day to assist the rinpoché in Zhongzheng.⁵³¹ Thus, while many Tibetan Buddhist teachers from Namdröling Monastery have contact with one another, their Palyül-affiliated dharma centers in Taipei function largely autonomously from one another. They do not share an organizational structure, are not part of a broader organization uniting Palyül lineage centers, and function mostly under the authority of different local teachers.

The autonomy of the more than two dozen centers affiliated with Namdröling and the Palyül lineage reflects the situation across most of Taipei's more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist

⁵²⁹ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, November 14, 2022.

⁵³⁰ "Dharma Center Taiwan," རྫོག་མཚོག་རྣམ་གྲོལ་བཤད་སླབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་། Namdrooling Monastery, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://www.namdroling.net/Portal/Page/Dharma-Center-Taiwan>.

⁵³¹ Namdröling monastic living in Taiwan, personal communication with author, February 2, 2022.

dharma centers and institutions. There are some Tibetan Buddhist teachers who lead multiple centers across Taiwan. For example, the Nyingma teacher Khenpo Orgyen Tenzin (མཁན་པོ་ཨོ་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་འཛིན།, 堪布烏金徹林) of Shechen Monastery (ཞེ་ཚེན་བསྟན་གཉིས་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།, 雪謙寺) heads communities in Taipei and Kaohsiung, and Sönam Gyatso Rinpoché (བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མོ་ཚེ།, 蘇南嘉措仁波切), also a Nyingma teacher, has a monastery in Miaoli County and directs centers in Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Changhua, and Kaohsiung. Some Tibetan Buddhist teachers even oversee multiple institutions in the greater Taipei area. For example, the Nyingma teacher Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché, leads a small monastery in New Taipei City's Shengkeng District and a dharma center in Taipei's Songshan District, and the Shangpa Kagyü teacher Lama Changchub (ལྷ་མ་བྱང་ཚུབ།, 喇嘛江秋) oversees a dharma center in Taipei's Zhongzheng District as well as a temple and a retreat center in New Taipei City's Jinshan and Shiding Districts. However, cases such as these stand as exceptions. Most Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the Taipei area are not organizationally connected to other local centers. Instead, they are the autonomous communities connected more or less formally with monasteries in South Asia and Tibet or they are the private religious communities of individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

2.4. Female-dominated Congregations with Male Leadership

While Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei region largely function independently from one another, most of these institutions share very similar gendered demographics. In terms of their congregations, most communities have a clear majority of female-presenting participants. Numerous scholars have remarked how female participants far outnumber men in Chinese

Buddhist spaces across Taiwan.⁵³² In some contexts, such as the Tzu Chi communities Julia Huang conducted research among, women outnumber men two to one.⁵³³ In other cases, such as the lay education courses offered by the Incense Light Mountain Nunnery community examined by Chün-fang Yü, women composed between 75 and 80% of participants.⁵³⁴

In the first monograph-length study of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, Yao hypothesized that Tibetan Buddhist communities might break with this trend and have a fairly balanced gender ratio or even slightly more male than female participants.⁵³⁵ Nevertheless, the two studies⁵³⁶ that Yao referenced to support his hypothesis were based on voluntary surveys with small sample sizes. Neither study included data on gender demographics collected in situ while attending events at Tibetan Buddhist centers. By contrast, recent ethnographic studies in Taipei⁵³⁷ and Tainan⁵³⁸ have documented female-presenting majorities that more closely mirror other Chinese Buddhist communities in Taiwan. Additionally, in her 2013 survey of 151 Tibetan Buddhist practitioners across Taiwan, Campergue found that 64% of respondents identified as female, a percentage she stressed was well below the nearly 75% of female-presenting participants at large Tibetan Buddhist empowerments she attended while conducting her research.⁵³⁹

My own experience attending events at Tibetan Buddhist centers in the greater Taipei region, reflects Shi, Huang, and Campergue's findings that Tibetan Buddhist centers mirror other

⁵³² DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*, 1–3, 111–118; Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 66–72, 166–169, 242; Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 152–156; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 128–129; Yü, *Passing the Light*, 25–26, 154–155.

⁵³³ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 169.

⁵³⁴ Yü, *Passing the Light*, 154–155.

⁵³⁵ Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 128.

⁵³⁶ Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao 藏傳密宗在台灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討*, 81–109; Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu 金剛乘事件簿*, 181–215.

⁵³⁷ Shi Yiyu 石義宇, “Zangchuan fojiao ningmapai zai taiwan de fazhan 藏傳佛教寧瑪派在台灣的發展,” 49–50.

⁵³⁸ Huang Huili 黃慧琍, “Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan chutian 藏傳佛教在台發展初探,” 74–75.

⁵³⁹ Campergue, “Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan,” 24.

local Buddhist communities in attracting more female than male-presenting participants. While occasionally I attended events with a nearly even gender ratio and even rarely saw more male than female-presenting attendees, most activities that I attended had approximately 60 to 75% female-presenting participants and only 25 to 40% male-presenting participants. For example, during the month of February 2022, I attended twenty events hosted by eleven different Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei region. The average gender ratio among attendees at these events was 66% female-presenting and 34% male-presenting. I noticed a particularly high percentage of female-presenting attendees at events that were held during normal business hours.

While most of Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist communities may have female-presenting majority congregations, they are almost universally led by male teachers. Yao contrasts the gender ratio and power in Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist communities, noting that "Among [Chinese Buddhist] monastics in Taiwan, nuns compose an absolute majority. At the same time, their impact is no less than monks. However, Tibetan Buddhist teachers are nearly all male lamas. The impact of female teachers is extremely weak."⁵⁴⁰ Several surveys of Tibetan Buddhist teachers, such as by Geng⁵⁴¹ and Liu,⁵⁴² contain only responses from male teachers. Similarly, most historical studies of Tibetan Buddhist sectarian traditions in Taiwan are male dominated. Several studies of the Geluk⁵⁴³ and Sakya⁵⁴⁴ schools, for example, only mention the activities of

⁵⁴⁰ “在台灣的出家僧眾中，以比丘尼占絕對多數，同時影響力也不列於比丘；然而藏傳佛教的上師則幾乎全是男眾喇嘛，女性上師的影響力極其微弱。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 129.

⁵⁴¹ Geng Zhenhua 耿振華, *Zangchuan mizong zai taiwan diqu de fazhan jiqi shehui gongneng de tantao 藏傳密宗在臺灣地區的發展及其社會功能的探討*, 112–115.

⁵⁴² Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 95–126.

⁵⁴³ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, “Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制”; Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 582–583, 593–595; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 57–58, 78–81.

⁵⁴⁴ Nawang Jiongnei 拿望炯內, “Fo ri zenghui 佛日增輝”; Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 583, 591–593; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 58, 84–87.

male teachers. Apart from Yao's passing mention of Zhu Huihua,⁵⁴⁵ surveys of the Nyingma school similarly discuss only male teachers.⁵⁴⁶ Studies of the Kagyü school are also male dominated with the notable exception of all mentioning the contributions of Gongga Laoren.⁵⁴⁷

My own fieldwork experiences concur with these studies. All of the hundreds of ethnically Tibetan and Himalayan Tibetan Buddhist teachers I encountered during my research were male. While I met many Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist nuns, some of whom wielded significant influence within centers as major funders, senior students or translators, none of these nuns were identified as having the role of the primary teacher in their communities. Similarly, while I met some lay female-presenting practitioners who helped to lead liturgies, they were also not the primary spiritual teacher of their communities. In all of the more than fifty-five Tibetan Buddhist communities that I visited around Taipei, the main teachers were always men.

That Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leaders in Taipei are virtually all male is far from unique within the broader scope of Tibetan Buddhism's transnational dissemination. Indeed, if one consults nearly any study of the transmission of Buddhist traditions into Europe or North America,⁵⁴⁸ for example, one will find what Rita Gross called "the male near-monopoly on the teacher role."⁵⁴⁹ This virtual monopoly is especially apparent among Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

⁵⁴⁵ Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," 591.

⁵⁴⁶ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Cheng jiu dingxin 承舊鼎新*, 110–132; Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," 583–584, 589–591; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 58–59, 81–84.

⁵⁴⁷ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Yu zhi chuancheng 語旨傳承*, 129–144; Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," 584–589; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 藏傳佛教在臺灣*, 59–61, 78–81.

⁵⁴⁸ For example, see: Charles S. Prebish, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1999); Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth Ken'ichi Tanaka, *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1998); Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America* (Boston & New York: Shambhala Publications, 1986).

⁵⁴⁹ Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism Beyond Gender: Liberation From Attachment to Identity* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2018), 23.

June Campbell argues that the historical development of reincarnate religious teachers enshrined “the promotion of patriarchal ideals in which male power, both secular and spiritual, was central to society” and that the vesting of religious power in male spiritual leaders across Tibetan society “ensured that notions of male superiority were embedded in all aspects of Tibetan life.”⁵⁵⁰ While there have been and continue to be numerous Tibetan Buddhist female saints and teachers,⁵⁵¹ it is difficult to dispute that religious power in Tibetan Buddhism has historically been, and continues today to be, dominated by men. Given that male teachers predominate in the global dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism, the ubiquity of male teachers in Taipei is a manifestation of a broader trend rather than a phenomenon specific to the local context alone.

Thus, although Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region resemble many other local Buddhist communities in terms of the gender demographics of their congregations, the almost exclusive male religious leadership stands out from the more mixed-gender (if still largely male) leadership among Taiwan’s Chinese Buddhist communities. While women do wield considerable power within Taipei’s Tibetan Buddhist communities, this power is nearly always in a role other than the primary religious teacher. Some women gain considerable influence within dharma centers due to their roles managing centers or serving as administrators and volunteers. Other women gain access to Tibetan Buddhist teachers and influence through serving as major funders. Finally, senior female students and female Tibetan–Mandarin translators also wield considerable influence and are often consulted by congregants about

⁵⁵⁰ June Campbell, *Traveller in Space: Gender, Identity, and Tibetan Buddhism* (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), 69–70.

⁵⁵¹ For several examples, see: Elisabeth A. Benard, *The Sakya Jetsunmas: The Hidden World of Tibetan Female Lamas* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2021); Holly Gayley, *Love Letters From Golok: A Tantric Couple in Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *Himalayan Hermitess: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Liang and Taylor, “Tilling the Fields of Merit”; Sarah Jacoby, *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Tsultrim Allione, *Women of Wisdom* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2000).

everything from proper decorum around a Tibetan Buddhist teacher to how to perform various hand gestures or mudrās (མཎ་ལྷན་, 印章) during a ritual to the finer points of a philosophical text being studied. Although Taiwanese female practitioners have significant influence in centers across Taipei, there is still a glass ceiling within Tibetan Buddhist centers on the role of primary religious teacher. Virtually all the elevated dharma thrones across the Taipei region's nearly two hundred Tibetan Buddhist centers continue to be occupied by men.

2.5. Tibetan and Mandarin-dominated Multilingual Spaces

Walking into a Tibetan Buddhist center in Taipei to attend a ritual, class, or other activity almost certainly results in being confronted with a rich mixture of languages, Tibetan and Mandarin foremost among them. The native language(s) of most Tibetan Buddhist teachers is/are either a dialect of Tibetan and/or a Himalayan language, such as Nepali, Ladakhi, or Dzongkha. The attendees at events, on the other hand, are virtually all Taiwanese and speak primarily Mandarin and/or Taiwanese Hokkien (台語/閩南語). Thus, while attending an event one may encounter congregants speaking to each other in Mandarin and Taiwanese, Tibetan Buddhist teachers reciting or offering textual commentaries in Tibetan, translators moving between Tibetan and Mandarin, and monastics communicating with one another in Nepali. In a few cases, I even heard English used as the common medium of communication between Taiwanese community members and their Tibetan Buddhist teachers. In short, Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region are intensely multilingual spaces.

The religious texts at Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei region are similarly multilingual. In contrast to forty or even twenty years ago when there were only a handful of Tibetan Buddhist texts available in Chinese, primarily translated during the early Republican

period,⁵⁵² today most canonical and commentarial texts being taught in Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist centers are available in Chinese translation, published in Taipei by a host of Taiwanese presses. Indeed, Liu provides a list of fifty-four Tibetan Buddhist treatises and other religious texts that were translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan between 2000 and 2009 alone. This list does not include several dozen works by contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teachers translated from English also published in Taiwan over the same period. Furthermore, Liu notes that his study only includes works published by commercial presses, leaving out scores of translations of liturgies and other texts privately commissioned by individual centers.⁵⁵³ As a result of this flurry of translation and publishing activity, many Tibetan Buddhist centers have increasingly elaborate libraries of scriptures, commentaries, liturgies, narratives, histories, songs, and even scholarly studies in both Tibetan and Chinese.

It is equally common to find liturgical texts in Tibetan Buddhist centers as bound books or as Tibetan style *pecha* (འཕྲིམ་ཆེ།), a collection of double-sided loose sheets held between two covers. Most liturgies contain three lines of text: the original Tibetan, a phonetic transliteration of the Tibetan into Chinese characters, and a translation of the meaning of the Tibetan text in Chinese characters. Sections of a liturgy that contain mantras usually only have a phonetic transliteration. Similarly, sections of a liturgy that contain instructions, such as the number of repetitions or what to visualize at a certain point, generally only have the meaning translated into Chinese. The main teacher at a center is likely the only participant who reads the Tibetan.

⁵⁵² Many of these early translations were done by figures affiliated with the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (漢藏教理院), the Western Border Culture Institute (西陲文化院), and by Chinese monastics who studied under Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the early twentieth century. See: Brenton Sullivan, "Venerable Fazun at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies Institute (1932-1950) and Tibetan Geluk Buddhism in China," *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, no. 9 (2008): 199–241; Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 194–220.

⁵⁵³ Liu Guowei 劉國威, "Jin shi nian zai tai de han yi xizang fojiao wenxian fenxi 近十年在台的漢譯西藏佛教文獻分析" (*Xizang fojiao zai taiwan 西藏佛教在台灣*, Taipei shi 臺北市, 2009), 6–9, <http://fguir.fgu.edu.tw:8080/handle/039871000/10873>.

Virtually all the Taiwanese practitioners I met recited the Chinese phonetic transliteration. In many frequently used liturgical texts, it is not uncommon to see hand-written annotations in the margins to mark the moments for liturgical music, offerings, visualizations, or a specific mudrā.

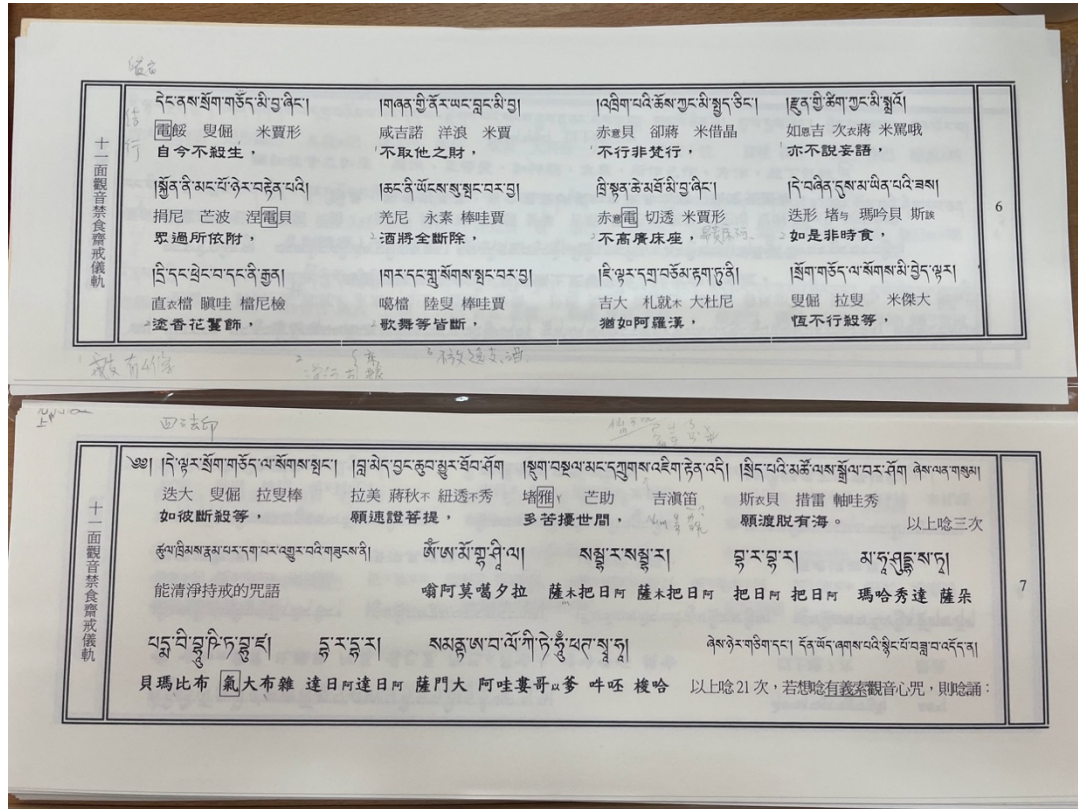


Figure 21: Pecha-style liturgical text used for a ritual to Avalokiteśvara. In the line of phonetic transliteration, some translators use smaller Chinese characters to mark changes in the vowels or final sounds of Chinese characters. Photo by author, 2022.

Most Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei area recite liturgical texts solely in Tibetan or with only a small portion recited in Mandarin. This may seem curious given that nearly all the liturgies have Chinese translations and the communities are majority Mandarin speakers. Indeed, even the difficulties of translating into verse to accommodate Tibetan recitation melodies, a common issue for translators into European languages, is not an issue in Taiwan as Chinese uses a syllabic writing system. Like in Tibetan, syllables can often be added or dropped from a line of Chinese text to help fit the meter of a text. Accordingly, Tibetan liturgical texts written in verse are generally translated into Chinese in verse with little difficulty.

Nevertheless, as one Taiwanese Nyingma monastic told me, the use of Tibetan in rituals persists largely due to a combination of Tibetan teachers' insistence and the result-orientated outlook of Taiwanese practitioners. "Most Tibetan Buddhist teachers insist on keeping rituals in Tibetan because they feel quite strongly about the potent blessings of the language."⁵⁵⁴ The monk continued, reflecting that most Taiwanese do not mind reciting in a language they do not understand if they believe it is more powerful. He noted that "Taiwanese are pragmatic and result-oriented people"⁵⁵⁵ and as a result, they are more interested in the efficacy of rituals rather than understanding them word for word.

A similar sentiment was expressed by a Taiwanese interviewee. Even though she considered herself and was known by her friends to be somewhat of a skeptic who was not fully convinced of the apotropaic efficacy of Tibetan Buddhist rituals, during moments of personal crisis she still sought assistance from them. She explained, "Even I will think sometimes, 'Oh, I'm in such a bad way right now, I should go to a dharma assembly.' If even I get like this, I know that the people around me are even more so. Before I didn't really like this type of 'trade,' but sometimes I'll think... Oh, I have such bad luck! Too much bad luck! I'll [pray] 'No, no, no! Please! Please! [Help me!]' If even I get like this, then there are surely many others who are even more so."⁵⁵⁶ Thus, for many Taiwanese, it is not so much the literal meaning of a liturgical text as the results of its enactment that are at the forefront of their concerns. Accordingly, since Tibetan teachers claim that the blessings are the most potent when a ritual is recited in Tibetan, most Taiwanese do not seem to object to foregoing understanding for efficacy.

⁵⁵⁴ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, December 11, 2021.

⁵⁵⁵ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, December 11, 2021.

⁵⁵⁶ "我也會！有的時候我會覺得 '啊我現在很不順啊，我要去法會一下！' 我也會。我自己都這樣了所以我知道旁邊更多人這樣。因為我自己已經有的時候不是那麼喜歡這樣子的 trade。我有的時候很。。。我太倒霉了！ Too much bad luck! 我就會 '哦 No, no, no! Please! Please! '我也會啊。那很多人一定更這樣。" Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, January 20, 2023.

In contrast to rituals, most classes at Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the Taipei region are offered in Mandarin. This is either done by the Tibetan Buddhist teacher working with a translator or, in rarer cases, through teachers offering instructions directly in Mandarin. While many Tibetan teachers speak sufficient Mandarin to engage in simple conversation or even offer short oral sermons, far fewer can comment in detail on Tibetan Buddhist texts in Mandarin. Tibetan Buddhist teachers' lack of ability to teach in Mandarin has long been identified as an obstacle to the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.⁵⁵⁷ The number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers enrolled in Mandarin classes at local language schools, such as National Taiwan Normal University's Mandarin Training Center, has grown significantly over the last decade, as have the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who teach doctrinal texts in Mandarin, especially among teachers from the Geluk school.⁵⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the inability of many teachers to instruct and engage students in Mandarin remains a significant stumbling block.

One Sakya khenpo I interviewed, for example, lamented how he was unable to convey his full understanding of the texts he was teaching even while working with a translator. This was, to his mind, one of the biggest obstacles to transmitting Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. He said,

⁵⁵⁷ Jagou, "Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan," 56–57; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 48; Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," 602; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," 313–314; Zheng Zhiming 鄭志明, "Zangchuan fojiao zai tai fazhan de xiankuang yu sheng si 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的現況與省思," 17.

⁵⁵⁸ Three notable examples include Geshé Chöwang (དགེ་བཤེས་ཚེས་དབང་།; 曲望格西), Geshé Jampel Chödzin (དགེ་བཤེས་འཇམ་དཔལ་ཚེས་འཇམ་།; 見悲青增格西), and Tenzin Namdröl Rinpoché (བསྟན་འཛིན་རྣམ་གྲོལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།; 丹增南卓仁波切), who all broadcast many of their teachings online. See: Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui foxue ban 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會佛學班, "Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui foxue ban 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會佛學班," Facebook, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084765632370>; Jianbei qingzeng gexi shoufa 見悲青增格西說法, "Jianbei qingzeng gexi shoufa 見悲青增格西說法," Facebook, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/jcteaching2022>; Laranba quwang gexi Geshe choe Wang fensi tuan 拉讓巴曲望格西 Geshe choe Wang 粉絲團, "Laranba quwang gexi Geshe choe Wang fensi tuan 拉讓巴曲望格西 Geshe choe Wang 粉絲團," Facebook, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081565501789>.

What is our problem while explaining the dharma? What is it specifically? First, [we] don't know the language ourselves, right? If [you] speak Chinese well, [you] can introduce whatever understanding you have to others, right? Since we have to depend on translators, our understanding doesn't come across one hundred percent. The translator conveys forty or fifty percent of our understanding as their translation, right?...If we could speak Mandarin well, if an exponent [of the dharma] could speak Mandarin well, then whatever understanding was in their minds, they could introduce this understanding to their students one hundred percent. This is one of the biggest problems [for transmitting Tibetan Buddhism]⁵⁵⁹

This khenpo's frustration at not being able to fully share his knowledge is not only a feeling shared by many Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Many Taiwanese practitioners also shared similar feelings about how much was lost in translation. For example, one woman I met while attending a three-day ritual shared over lunch how she had been practicing Tibetan Buddhism for thirty years after being introduced to it while studying in the United States. Since returning to Taiwan, she has felt that the local situation was much worse than in the United States. It was not the lack of qualified teachers or translated materials that concerned her, so much as the inability of many Tibetan Buddhist teachers to communicate in Mandarin. She summed up her observations in the following way: "Many monks can speak some Chinese, they can converse in Chinese, but they cannot speak well enough to teach Buddhism in Chinese."⁵⁶⁰ While some Taiwanese study Tibetan with the aspiration of accessing Tibetan texts directly, sufficient mastery of this language is something very few practitioners have the time, resources, and determination to achieve.

The fact that Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region are multilingual spaces thus appears to have both supporters and critics. While many Tibetan Buddhist teachers and

559 “དང་ཚོད་ལོར་ན་ཚོས་བཤད་ཡག་རང་གི་དཀའ་ངལ་གཞན་ཟེར་ན་ག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ། རྒྱ་སྐད་ཡག་པོ་ཞིག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ན་སོ་སོ་གྱི་ཚོར་བ་ག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པ་དེ་མི་ལ་འཛུགས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ། ང་ཚོས་སྐད་སྐྱུར་ལ་སྟེན་དགོས་དུས་ཅིམ་པ་ང་ཚོ་གྱི་ཚོར་བ་བརྒྱ་ཆ་བརྒྱ་ཉེ་མ་འགོ་གྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ། རྒྱ་སྐད་ཀྱིས་ཚོར་བ་དེ་གྱི་ནང་ལ་བརྒྱ་ཆ་བཞི་བཅུ་ལྔ་བཅུ་སྐད་སྐྱུར་གྱི་ཚོར་བ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ། ... གལ་སྲིད་ང་ཚོ་གྱིས་[རྒྱ་སྐད་ཡག་པོ་ཤེས། བཤད་མཁན་གྱིས་[རྒྱ་སྐད་ཡག་པོ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་ན་ཁོ་རང་གི་བསམ་སློབ་ཀྱི་ནང་ལོགས་ལ་ཚོར་བ་ག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཚོར་བ་བརྒྱ་ཆ་བརྒྱ་ཉེ་མ་པར་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་སློབ་མ་དེ་ལ་འཛུགས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ། འདི་གྱི་དཀའ་ངལ་ཆེས་ཤོས་ཅིག་ཡོད་ཅིང་མ་ཤོད་པ།” Sakya khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, August 8, 2022.

⁵⁶⁰ Taiwanese ritual participant, personal communication with author, February 28, 2022.

Taiwanese practitioners celebrate the Tibetan language for ensuring ritual efficacy, the uneven ability of Tibetan Buddhist teachers to fully convey Buddhist teachings in Mandarin is much lamented. This is one contributing factor to explain why, as I discuss further below, some centers whose teachers are less fluent in Mandarin focus their activities on ritual enactments. Centers with teachers who can speak fluent Mandarin or those that have the resources to regularly hire translators tend to have more abundant educational offerings than centers whose spiritual leaders have a more limited grasp of Mandarin.

2.6. Monastery Centers and Private Centers

As civic organizations, all Tibetan Buddhist institutions in Taipei must follow the applicable laws governing non-profit organizations. For most Tibetan Buddhist centers, this means following the rules for “social organizations” (社會團體) as detailed in Taiwan’s Civil Associations Act.⁵⁶¹ Only a few of the largest Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei are governed by Taiwan’s Foundations Act (財團法人法).^{562, 563} While they must abide by these laws, nevertheless, most Tibetan Buddhist communities’ internal dynamics are determined by a separate organizing principle, namely, whether they are run as a branch center of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery outside of Taiwan or as a private center led by an individual Tibetan Buddhist teacher. In other words, for religious life within Taipei’s Tibetan Buddhist communities, the more important distinction is not whether a center is classified as a social organization or a foundation, but rather whether they are a monastery center or a private center.

⁵⁶¹ “Renmin tuanti fa 人民團體法.”

⁵⁶² “Caituan faren fa 財團法人法,” Quanguo fagui ziliao ku 全國法規資料庫, August 1, 2018, <https://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=I0020030>.

⁵⁶³ The principal distinction between these two types of organization lies primarily in the size of their financial assets. Only a small handful of extremely well-endowed Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei, such as TRFDL, are classified as foundations under Taiwanese law. Sönam Wangyel, interview with author, New Taipei City, December 29, 2022.

Monastery centers (which my interviewees alternatively called ལྷ་ཚང་གི་ཚོས་ཚོགས།, དགོན་པའི་ཚོས་ཚོགས།, or གཞུང་གི་ཚོས་ཚོགས། in Tibetan and 寺院的中心 in Mandarin) and private centers (which my interviewees called སྒྲེང་གྱི་ཚོས་ཚོགས། in Tibetan and either 私立的中心 or 自己蓋的中心 in Mandarin) are often indistinguishable in terms of their appearance and activities. Both types of centers host a range of rituals, educational classes, and other events, are led by Tibetan Buddhist clerics, and often have hybridized religious spaces and practices. Indeed, the primary distinction between monastery and private centers is not their appearance, activities, or teachings, but their leadership. Monastery centers are, as the name suggests, directed by the leaders of their affiliated mother monasteries, primarily in India, Nepal, Bhutan, or Tibet. Private centers, on the other hand, are controlled by individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers who are often also their founders.

As one Sakya khenpo who led a monastery center in Taipei's Da'an District described, the locus of authority is the key determining variable between the two types of centers. Power and authority, he noted, "That's the difference. For example, like if you take our center, right? The monastery itself controls everything. Internally, sending monks to go here and there [it's all the monastery's decision]. We don't have any power [to decide] privately 'we'll go here' or 'we'll come there.' It's all done by the administration, the administration of the monastery."⁵⁶⁴

Most monastery centers were founded following the visits of rinpoché's and other highly ranked teachers from the mother monastery to Taiwan and the control over these communities continues to lie with the mother monastery. Those teachers appointed by their monasteries to run these centers, such as the khenpo quoted above, have somewhat curtailed agency as much of their life

⁵⁶⁴ “འདི་ལྷུང་པར་ཡོད་པེ། དཔེར་ན་དེ་ཚོ་འདྲ་ལོ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ན་པེད་པ། འདིར་བདག་པོ་རྒྱལ་ཡུག་ཚང་མ་འདི་གྱི་རྒྱལ་གི་ཡོད་པེད་པ་གཞུང་རང་གིས་འདི་གྱི་ནང་ལོགས་ལ་གྲུ་པ་པར་རྒྱུ་འགོ་ཡུག་གཞུང་ཡུག་ཚང་མ་མི་སྒྲེར་ལ་ར་ཚོ་སྒྲེར་གྱིས་ར་འགོ་གྱི་ཡིན་ཡོད་གི་ཡིན་ཟེར་ཡུག་དེ་དབང་ཆ་ཡོད་མ་པེད། ཚང་མ་གཞུང་རང་ནས་དགོན་པ་གཞུང་ནས་བྱེད་གྱི་ཡོད་པེད་པ།” Sakya khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, August 8, 2022.

and their vocational activities as Tibetan Buddhist monastics in Taipei are determined by the administration of a monastery thousands of miles away. In my experience, it is not uncommon for most, if not all, of the liturgical calendar, educational offerings, and other events at monastery centers to be determined by the mother monastery and carried out by their local representatives who have limited choices in how they perform their duties. Furthermore, as the khenpo above explained, monastery appointed representatives are bound to their centers by their duties and have limited ability to travel for reasons other those related to the center's official business.

By contrast, control and decision-making power at private centers lies in the hands of individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Private centers tend to be founded through the personal initiative of individual teachers who also direct their activities and development. Some of these teachers previously served in monastery centers, while others came to Taiwan independently before establishing their own centers. In most cases, these entrepreneurial teachers have completed their religious training and hold a title, such as rinpoché, tulku, khenpo, geshé, lama, loppön (ལོཔོཔོན་, 教師), or druppön (བློན་པོ་, 竹奔). Unlike monastery appointees who must follow the directives of their home institutions, the leaders of private centers have considerable autonomy to decide what takes place in their centers and how they best see fit to respond to the spiritual wishes and needs of their Taiwanese disciples. In addition, these teachers have greater freedom than the teachers at monastery centers to travel within Taiwan and internationally. As the same Sakya khenpo quoted above noted, “Some [teachers] are in Taiwan because previously an abbot came and stayed here [or] a rinpoché, and each privately led [students], right? [They] stationed one or two monks here and established a center like that. The way [they started a

private center] was like that. The schedule of each and whatever [events] there were, the [teacher] decided on this privately.”⁵⁶⁵

With the high degree of freedom that teachers at private centers enjoy comes the larger burden of being the one solely responsible for their religious communities. After all, private centers are not backed by religious institutions in the same way that monastery centers are. They must organize their own schedules, find their own group of disciples, and look after their own finances. Accordingly, the leaders of private centers must possess a certain degree of entrepreneurship to keep their centers open and functioning. As a Nyingma khenpo at a private dharma center in Taipei’s Zhongzheng District told me, at a bare minimum teachers at private centers must find ways to maintain communities of at least fifty or so followers in order to have the resources necessary to sustain an independent religious community in Taipei.⁵⁶⁶ For many Tibetan Buddhist entrepreneurial teachers, the need to secure sufficient funds to operate their own community means they must regularly host rituals, teach classes on Buddhist doctrine and practice, and likely also offer private consultations and divination services to their devotees.

In addition to differences in authority, two other major factors distinguish monastery and private centers: personnel and funding. In terms of personnel, monastery centers are generally led by one or a small cohort of teachers who are sent from the mother monastery for a set period. These individuals are almost all monks who have completed their training and already served as a teacher at their mother monastery (ethnic Tibetan and Himalayan nuns or female teachers being extremely rare in Taiwan). The monastery appointed monastics generally reside in Taiwan

⁵⁶⁵ “དེ་ལྟར་ཤུགས་ཐའེ་མཚན་ནང་ལོགས་ལ་ག་རེ་ཡོད་ཅིང་ཟེར་ན་ད་མཁན་པོ་སྤོན་མ་ནས་རྗེས་པ་བསྐྱབས་བསྐྱུང་མཁན་དེ་འདྲའི་ཡོད་ཅིང་བ། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཡོད་བསྐྱུང་པ་དེ་འདྲའི། ད་ལོ་སོ་ད་སྐྱེར་གྱིས་ཡང་འགོ་འཁྲིད་བྱས་ནས་ཅིང་བ། དེ་འདྲ་གྲུ་པ་གཅིག་གཉིས་དེ་འདྲ་བཞག ལ་ནས་དེ་འདྲ་འཕྲོགས་ཤུགས་དེ་འདྲ་ཡོད་ཅིང་བ། བྱས་ཚང་འདི་ཚང་མ་ལ་སྐོར་ལམ་བྱེད་ཡག་དེ་འདྲའི་འདྲ་པོ་ཅིང་བ། ཚང་མ་ལོ་འདི་ནང་མཚན་སྒྲོལ་མཚན་ལོ་བཟོ་ཡག་ཡིན་ནས་ཅིང་། ག་རེད་བྱས་ཡོན་ན་མི་སྐྱེར་གྱིས་འདི་བྱེད་ཀྱི་རེད་བ།” Sakya khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, August 8, 2022.

⁵⁶⁶ Nyingma khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, July 18, 2022.

between two to four years, after which time they may be recalled to the mother monastery, re-assigned to another branch center, or, in some rarer occasions, renewed as the leaders of the branch center in Taipei. This decision, as the Sakya khenpo quoted above noted, is at the discretion of the mother monastery. Accordingly, the religious teachers at monastery centers in the Taipei area have a fairly high rate of turn over with new cohorts arriving every few years.

The rate of turn over at private centers, on the other hand, tends to be extremely low. As most private centers are still run by their founders or by direct appointees of the founders, they enjoy a relatively high level of continuity in their religious leadership and, more often than not, tend to have Tibetan Buddhist teachers who have lived in Taiwan for long periods of time. With very few exceptions, the Tibetan Buddhist teachers I met who had been in Taiwan for more than five years all led private dharma centers. In the cases where I met a teacher at a monastery center who had been in Taiwan for an extended period, it was largely due to that individual's ability to speak Mandarin. For example, the geshé of the Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association affiliated with Gyütö Monastery has been in Taipei for more than twelve years due to his Mandarin fluency.⁵⁶⁷

The final factor that distinguishes monastery and private centers concerns their funding. As I described in the previous chapter, the generous donations of Taiwanese disciples were critical to (re)building Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in South Asia and were a leading factor attracting Tibetan Buddhist teachers to Taiwan. Accordingly, most monastery centers in Taipei were established as income sources for their mother monasteries. By design then, monastery centers function as remittance institutions that channel capital from Taiwan to Tibetan Buddhist institutions in India, Nepal, Bhutan, or even to the PRC. Therefore, in most monastery centers whatever funds remain after meeting local needs are sent to the mother monastery. One

⁵⁶⁷ Geshé of Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association, interview with author, Taipei, September 11, 2022.

interviewee told me that many monasteries will even insist on auditing (ཕྱི་ཞིབ་བྱེད་པ།) their centers in Taipei to ensure that all excess funds beyond are sent to them.⁵⁶⁸ While regular remittances from monastery centers ensure a reliable income stream for mother monasteries, they limit the degree to which monastery centers can support projects in Taiwan and further develop locally.

The leadership of private centers, on the other hand, has significantly more autonomy to decide where to direct donations received from Taiwanese disciples. While the leaders of many private centers continue to send some funds to their home monasteries to support the body of monastics and practitioners there, they do so at their own discretion and can also use funds for other projects. For example, one Geluk rinpoché told me that for most of the decade since he founded his dharma center in New Taipei City's Linkou District he sent between 30 and 40% of the donations he received back to his home monastery and utilized 60 to 70% for projects in Taiwan. In recent years, however, he has increased his investment in local projects and reduced the amount he sends to India to only about 20% of donations.⁵⁶⁹

There is not a clear breakdown along sectarian lines between private and monastery centers. The four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism present in the Taipei region⁵⁷⁰ all have both monastery and private centers. Observationally, it seems that a particularly high number of Geluk communities in the greater Taipei region are monastery-affiliated institutions. As mentioned in chapter one, many of these, such as the centers of Sera Jé, Sera Mé, Drepung, Ganden, Gyütö, and Gyümé Monasteries were founded in the early 2000s, following the Dalai Lama's trip to Taiwan in 1997.⁵⁷¹ On the other hand, the Nyingma and Kagyü schools seem to have the most

⁵⁶⁸ Nyingma khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, July 18, 2022.

⁵⁶⁹ Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

⁵⁷⁰ I do not have data as to whether the three centers in the Taipei area affiliated with the Jonang school of Tibetan Buddhism are private or monastery centers.

⁵⁷¹ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, "Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制," 37.

private centers. As noted above, the twenty-eight dharma centers affiliated with Namdröling Monastery are all private centers. Similarly, a leading lay supporter of the Drikung Kagyü (འཕྲི་གུ་བ་བཀའ་འགྲུ་བ་ལྟུང་གཡུ་པ་ལྷན་ཁག་, 直貢噶舉派) told me that all eleven Drikung Kagyü centers in Taipei are private.⁵⁷²

Whether these sectarian tendencies toward monastery or private centers are a product of when each school began to flourish in Taiwan, due to differences in how Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions manage their religious teachers, or other reasons requires further investigation.

During my fieldwork, I heard both praise and critiques of monastery and private Tibetan Buddhist institutions. Due to their frequent turn over, I was told that teachers at monastery centers tended to have less knowledge of Mandarin, the local cultural context, and the lives and spiritual aspirations of Taiwanese practitioners. As one Geluk geshé who started a private center after being the resident teacher at Sera Jé's Taipei center for more than five years noted,

Over there [at the mother monastery] they don't understand [the situation here]. Without understanding, they say 'Learning the language will come slowly. It will come by itself, just study as you like. It's not that difficult. Simple conversational knowledge will come.' However, if you [approach] teaching the dharma like that, it will be quite difficult, right? Therefore, from my own experience [I can say that] there are many monastery centers, for example, there are many monastery centers in Taiwan. However, if [I'm] speaking frankly, they have a lot [of students] who have studied for years, but they haven't really developed. Not really at all. The reason they haven't is because of issues here and the relationship with the administrative staff over there [at the mother monastery]. [As a result] of things like that, they can't really develop here.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Taiwanese Drikung Kagyü practitioner, personal communication with author, Taipei, November 8, 2022.

⁵⁷³ “ཁོང་ཚོས་ལ་གིར་ལ་ཡང་དེ་འདྲ་མཐོང་གི་མི་འདུག་ག། ཁོང་ཚོས་མཐོང་གི་མིང་པ་དེ་ག་རེ་དེད་ཟེར་ན་སྐད་དེ་ག་ལེ་ག་ལེ་བྱས་ནས་ཤེས་ཡོང་གི་རེད། ཞོར་ལ་ཞོར་སུ་ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ ལྷོ ལྷོ ལྷོ ཤེས་ཡོང་གི་རེད། ག་རེ་དེད་ཟེར་ན་འདི་ལས་སྒྲུ་པོ་རེད་འདུག་ག། ཟ་སྐད་འཇུག་སྐད་དེ་ཤེས་ཡོང་གི་འདུག་ག། ཡིན་ནའང་ནང་ཚོས་འཇིག་ཡག་དང་དེ་འདྲ་བྱས་ན་ལོ་ཉི་ཤ་ཅེས་དཀའ་ལས་ལག་པོ་འདུག་ག། དེ་ཡིན་དུས་ང་རང་གི་ཉམས་སྦྱོང་བྱས་ན་དགོན་པའི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ཡོད་རེད་ག། དེ་ལེར་ན་དགོན་པ་རང་གི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ཐའེ་ཐའེ་ཡོད་རེད་ག། དེ་ཚོ་དང་པོ་བཤད་ན་ལོ་མང་པོ་སློབ་གཉེར་བྱེད་ཚར་མཁན་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ཡོད་རེད། ཡིན་ནའང་དེ་ཅི་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཟེར་ན་མིན་འདུག་དེ་འདྲ་ཞེ་དུག་མིན་འདུག་ག། དེ་མིང་པ་དེ་ག་རེ་དེད་ཟེར་ན་འདི་གྱི་གནས་དོན་དང་ཕར་གྱི་ལས་ཀ་བྱེད་མཁན་གྱི་བར་འབྲེལ་བ་ལོགས་དེ་འདྲ་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ལ་རྟོན་ནས་ཡར་རྒྱས་འགོ་སྟོན་གྱི་མི་འདུག་” Geshé Nangnang, interview with author, Taipei, September 12, 2022.

For this geshé, there is a serious disconnect between the mother monastery administration's understandings of Taiwan and the actual situation within dharma centers in Taipei. Without taking serious efforts to bridge this gap, mother monasteries direct their monastic representatives to continue to operate as they have been trained and not really make any adjustments to the Taiwanese context. As the geshé stressed, the mother monasteries often do not even recognize the difficulties of learning Mandarin and the necessity of being able to communicate with Taiwanese students at their dharma centers. Taken together, he believes these factors hamper the local development of these centers in Taipei and their congregations, limiting their growth.

Tibetan Buddhist teachers at private centers, on the other hand, are often more responsive to their disciples, have greater faculty with Mandarin, and have a deeper understanding of the local cultural context. As private centers tend to be less fiscally extractive than monastery centers, many are also able to invest more in Taiwanese society. For example, the Geluk rinpoché mentioned above noted that he now directs more donations to support projects in Taiwan because he feels the need in India has decreased as monasteries have been completely rebuilt and are now even experiencing declines in their enrollments. As a result, he utilizes most of his center's funds to support projects that will benefit Taiwanese, such as supporting the basic needs and medical care of the elders living in a remote indigenous-majority village, paying a team of translators to translate the Grand Mönlam Dictionary (ལྷོ་རྒྱ་ལམ་རྒྱུ་མཛོད་ཆེན་མོ།) into Chinese, and funding a team to translate the complete works of Jé Tsongkhapa into Chinese.⁵⁷⁴ As a result, the rinpoché estimates that his center contributes more than a million New Taiwanese dollars each month (nearly 32,000 USD) to projects in Taiwan.⁵⁷⁵ That this rinpoché can direct his center's funds to

⁵⁷⁴ Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

⁵⁷⁵ Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

support local projects and launch expansive translation efforts is due to the fact that he leads a private dharma center and can more exclusively control where resources are allocated.

While they enjoy significantly more autonomy and can invest deeper in Taiwanese society, the entrepreneurial nature of teachers at private centers is also at the heart of several critiques of them. For example, two lay Taiwanese practitioners voiced concerns in a focus group I conducted about the motivations of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who start private centers, especially if these teachers seem to utilize their position as a teacher at a monastery center as a springboard for launching their own organizations. One participant noted,

Most teachers when they leave the monastery, I always... sorry that's my own bad perception, my own bias, but I will always have a question about that. Like, why do you need to leave your home monastery? What's your purpose? What's your motivation? If your purpose is really to teach Buddhism, then why do you want to stay in Taiwan and why do you want to open your own center rather than follow your home monastery's guidance? Yeah, I just will have a question mark.⁵⁷⁶

Another participant voiced similar concerns, putting her sentiments in even stronger terms. This woman had taught Mandarin to several Tibetan monastics who, she felt, betrayed their teachers and monasteries by deciding to start their own private centers in Taipei. She explained,

Actually, no matter who establishes [a center], I think it's [a question of] what is their motivation? Why did they come to Taiwan to establish [a center]? After they've established a center why do they want their center to get bigger and bigger? Why? What's their motivation?... The type [of teacher] who leaves their monastery to start [a center], these are even more problematic. They are the most dangerous, the most horrible! Why? If you want to open [your own center], we all know that good teachers say [they'll teach] only if someone requests [them] to teach [saying] 'Please teach me!' Only if we ask, then they'll teach. If no one asks, [if] no one requests [you] to teach, who will you teach? No one! But if some Tibetan [teacher] or geshé wants to leave and start [their own center], as I've always said, those [geshés] who I've taught [Mandarin to and who left their monastery center], in my heart they're no longer true geshés. They shouldn't even be wearing those robes anymore because they've betrayed their teachers. They've betrayed their teachers because their teachers sent them here [to manage

⁵⁷⁶ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, January 20, 2023.

monastery centers] and suddenly they ignore their teachers and start their own [centers].⁵⁷⁷

Both of these individuals had serious reservations about the motivations behind teachers who establish private centers. They were not entirely against the existence of private centers. Indeed, both individuals told me that they attended teachings and patronized both monastery and private centers. However, they viewed the entrepreneurial zeal of some teachers who had founded their own centers as problematic and even as potentially breaking their sacred commitments to their teachers. I could not corroborate these two individuals' stories of teachers abandoning monastery centers for private pursuits. All the teachers I met at private centers maintained that they had first sought permission from their home monasteries before branching out on their own.

Nevertheless, the sentiments these two individuals' expressed reveal an underlying mistrust some Taiwanese have of private centers and those Tibetan Buddhist teachers who they suspect might be as interested in gaining power, prestige, and financial comfort as benefitting sentient beings.

2.7. Emphasis on Personal Services, Rituals, and Classes, in Contrast to the Absence of Quiet Sitting Meditation

Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the greater Taipei region are home to a wide range of activities. While it would be impossible to provide a systematic examination of everything that occurs within Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, temples, and other organizations in Taipei, it is nevertheless possible to generally classify the majority of activities at Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers as falling under one of three categories: personal services requested of Tibetan Buddhist

⁵⁷⁷ “那我覺得其實不論是誰蓋的...我覺得是他的 motivation 是什麼？他為什麼要在台灣蓋？他蓋了以後，他為什麼想要這個 center bigger and bigger? Why? Motivation 是什麼？... 還有一種是他那個是什麼人就是想自己去出開的。。。自己想去出開的，更有問題。我覺得最可怕。Most horrible! 因為呢，好你自己想開好，我們知道好的老師都說有人拜託你教我，please teach me! 我們請法你才說，你才教啊。沒有人請，跟你請教誰，你想教誰？沒有人啊！但他自己想去出開的那些藏人還是那些格西拉原本我就跟他說，我教過的他們在我心中一定不是格西了。他們也不應該穿那個衣服了因為他背叛他的老師。他背叛他的老師，就是他老師送他來他竟然不理老師自己想去出開。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, January 20, 2023.

religious teachers, rituals, and educational classes. A fourth kind of activity that is notable mainly for its absence from centers in the Taipei region are quiet sitting meditation practices.

The first type of activities that are held primarily, although not exclusively,⁵⁷⁸ in Tibetan Buddhist institutions of all sectarian traditions are personal services performed by Tibetan teachers and monastics for Taiwanese congregants. These services are highly individualized and often come during or following private or semi-private consultations between a center's resident teacher and Taiwanese devotee(s). Common types of services that Taiwanese practitioners request include advice on personal or business issues, ritual services, divinations, and clarification on aspects of a Tibetan Buddhist teaching or practice. In cases where the teacher has sufficient faculty with Mandarin to communicate with the requesters directly, these consultations are largely private affairs only between the two parties. In many centers where the resident teacher lacks a sufficient grasp of Mandarin to either fully understand the request and/or express their response, translators frequently help to bridge the communication gap.

The seventeen translators whom I interviewed generally agreed that the topics Taiwanese seek to consult about in these private or semi-private contexts usually fall into a handful of categories. As one Taiwanese Nyingma monastic and translator noted, "Taiwanese are very pragmatic. They bring their lives with them to the dharma."⁵⁷⁹ Most private consultations these translators witnessed involved Taiwanese petitioners seeking advice or assistance in dealing with issues related to their businesses, the health of themselves or family members, as well as other family-related concerns, such as intrapersonal conflict with a spouse or other family member, questions about their children's education and future, assistance searching for a partner, or

⁵⁷⁸ While many services are performed in dharma centers, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and monastics are also often invited to perform private rituals, such as in support of a business, for a deceased family member, etc. In these cases, Tibetan Buddhist teachers are often invited to the home or business of the individual(s) requesting the rituals.

⁵⁷⁹ Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, December 11, 2021.

assistance following the death of a family member. The translators and Tibetan Buddhist teachers I spoke with were unanimous in noting that only a very small number of Taiwanese privately consult Tibetan Buddhist teachers about aspects of their dharma study and practice. Rather, most Taiwanese are primarily interested in seeking assistance from Tibetan Buddhist teachers in confronting personal and professional problems.

For example, one Taiwanese nun who has served as a translator primarily for Sakya teachers for more than thirty years summarized the hundreds of personal consultations that she had witnessed and helped to facilitate in the following way:

Speaking about what most people ask, since Tibetan Buddhism has divination, there are a lot of people who [ask] for practices following a divination. Actually, there is also [divination] in Chinese [Buddhism], but I should explain that most people come to ask [Tibetan Buddhist teachers] other questions about their business, their health, or when some [aspect of their life] is not going smoothly. Most will ask these types of questions, questions related to their life, work, their children, their ancestors, and so on. These types of questions are the most common. Far fewer will ask questions about their personal practice or some parts of the dharma [teachings] they don't understand. Fewer people ask [these type of questions]. Most people ask [questions] related to their lives.⁵⁸⁰

In other words, most private consultations this nun has witnessed involved Taiwanese faithful requesting services related to the personal, business, or familial affairs rather than questions about Buddhist doctrine and practice. In many cases, as this nun noted, the spiritual services requested of Tibetan teachers, such as divination and assistance in business, mirror the types of requests many Taiwanese make at other Chinese Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religion temples.

⁵⁸⁰ “講一般大部分的人問的，因為他們這個就是在這個藏傳佛教他們會有卜卦，會有很多的就是這個卜卦之後會有一些修法... 其實在漢傳也是一樣，但是我就說解說很多人來問其他的生意啊，他的身體生病啊，或者是這個不順利啊，就是大部分是這些問題。跟生活，跟工作或者小孩，或者是那祖先的問題什麼什麼的問題。這裡的問題是很多的。那麼還有比較少部分的話就是他自己本身的修行，在法上有什麼樣的就是這個不會的地方。這個是人數比較少一點。大部分的人是問跟生活有關的。” Taiwanese Sakya nun and translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 16, 2022.

In addition to personal services offered for Taiwanese congregants, most other activities at Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the Taipei region can be classified as either a type of ritual or an educational class. By rituals, I mean a wide class of Tibetan Buddhist practices that include various *sādhana*s or tantric liturgies devoted to different Buddhist deities (སྐྱུབ་ཐབས།, 修法的儀軌), liturgies devoted to tantric teachers (ལྷ་མ་མཚོ་དཔལ།, 上師蒼供), empowerments, fire rituals (སྐྱུན་སྲིག།, 護摩/火供), fumigation rituals (བསྐྱེད།, 煙供/山淨煙), life-release practices, mantra recitation (གཞུང་སྐྱེད།, 唸咒語), and obstacle dispelling rituals (ཞུགས་བརྟན།, 經懺 what Georges Dreyfus translates literally “foot-firming” rituals,⁵⁸¹ which lay disciples in Taiwan request primarily to cure diseases, bring luck in business, create auspicious conditions, repel evil spirits, and so forth). Additionally, many communal rituals are often given titles and advertised in Mandarin using more general terms such as dharma assembly, group practice, or dharma practice (修法).

Educational classes, on the other hand, tend to be offered to provide Taiwanese disciples with Buddhist doctrinal education, often in the foundational texts of a Tibetan Buddhist tradition. By far the two most common texts Tibetan Buddhist teachers teach at centers across Taipei are Śāntideva’s (ཞི་བ་ལྷོ།, 寂天 seventh and eighth centuries CE) *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ་འོས་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།, 入菩薩行論), a scripture widely revered across all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and Jé Tsongkhapa’s *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path of Enlightenment*, a text which is studied primarily in Geluk-affiliated institutions. Other scriptures and treatises that I saw being taught include Longchenpa’s (ལྷོང་ཆེན་རབ་འབྱམས་པ་འུགས་ལོ་འོད་ཟེེ།, 隆欽然絳巴 1308–1364) *Seven*

⁵⁸¹ Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2003), 46.

Treasures (མངོན་བདུག།, 七寶藏), Gampopa's (སྐམ་པོ་པ་བསོད་ནམས་རིན་ཆེན།, 岡波巴 1079–1153) *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (དམ་ཚེས་ཡིད་བཞིན་གྱི་ནོར་བུ་ཐར་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་རྒྱན།, 解脫道莊嚴論), as well as the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (མངོན་པར་རྟོགས་པའི་རྒྱན།, 現觀莊嚴論), *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (ཚེས་མངོན་པ་ཀུན་ལས་བརྒྱུ་བ།, 大乘阿毘達磨集論), and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (ཚེས་མངོན་པའི་མངོན།, 阿毗達磨俱舍論). In addition to textual exposition, which is the predominant pedagogical form of most classes, some teachers offer more sermon-style classes either on general topics, such as the Six Perfections (སྔོན་ལྷན་གྱི་པ་རྣམས།, 六波羅蜜多), the Intermediary State, compassion and wisdom, and so forth. Many also offer courses on other subjects requested by their Taiwanese disciples, such as on sculpting, tormas or ritual offering cakes, Tibetan Buddhist ritual music, and Tibetan language.

As mentioned in chapter one, rituals of various genres formed the majority of Tibetan Buddhist activity in Taiwan through the late 1990s. While many rituals were held in individual dharma centers on a relatively small-scale with perhaps between fifteen and thirty individuals, tantric empowerments, especially when given by prominent Tibetan teachers visiting Taiwan, often attracted thousands of attendees.⁵⁸² However, Yao notes that “starting around 2000 the situation changed rather visibly. Many centers began to emphasize activities for studying canonical texts and Tibetan language... Although, classes still did not attract as many people as dharma assemblies of empowerments.”⁵⁸³ What Yao does not mention is that there is a strong sectarian correlation to which Tibetan Buddhist centers began to offer these classes. Indeed, the

⁵⁸² Yao, “The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,” 597–598.

⁵⁸³ “不過，在二〇〇〇年左右開始，情況似乎有較明顯的轉變，不少中心開始重視經論和藏文的教學性活動...雖然，說法還是不如法會灌頂來得吸引人。” Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, *Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan* 藏傳佛教在臺灣, 126.

increase in educational offerings at Tibetan Buddhist centers Yao observed around 2000 largely coincided with the rapid growth in centers affiliated with the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism.

While many Tibetan Buddhist institutions offer a mixture of both rituals and classes, in general Geluk-affiliated centers tend to have the most educational offerings. Kagyü, Nyingma, and Jonang-affiliated centers, on the other hand, tend to have the most ritually focused schedules. Sakya centers have somewhat more mixed programming, with many offering both rituals and educational classes. As one Tibetan former monastic who now works as a translator primarily for Geluk centers summarized, “Most Geluk centers [mainly] teach texts. Studies are foremost. All the Geluk centers in Taiwan are like that, they teach texts once or twice a week. Besides teaching texts, there are only a few who beat drums and do rituals. If they enact a ritual, then it will be an offering to their tantric masters. On auspicious days, like the tenth or twenty-fifth [of the Tibetan lunar calendar], they will make offerings to their tantric masters. Otherwise, [they] mostly teach texts.”⁵⁸⁴ By contrast, he continued, centers affiliated with other schools tend to emphasize rituals. “Other [non-Geluk-affiliated] dharma centers have a lot of dharma assemblies. A lot of dharma assemblies. And they have a lot of empowerments, what they call *guanding*. Since Geluk [teachers] work hard at teaching, they have fewer [rituals]. That’s the main difference.”⁵⁸⁵

Another Taiwanese translator who is a Tibetan Buddhist Kagyü monastic concurred with this distinction, noting how these tendencies more toward emphasizing either teaching or rituals

584 “དགེ་ལུགས་པའི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་དེ་འདྲ་ལ་མང་ཆེ་བ་དཔེ་ཁྲིད་རང་བྱུང་གི་ཡོད་པའི་སློབ་སྦྱང་རང་གཞི་བོ་ལོ་རེད། བུ་མོ་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་དགེ་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་ཚང་མ་དེ་འདྲ་རེད། བདུན་ཕྲག་གཅིག་གི་ནང་ལ་ཚར་གཅིག་ཡོད་ན་རེད། ཚར་གཅིག་ཡོད་ན་རེད། དཔེ་ཁྲིད་རང་རེད། དཔེ་ཁྲིད་རང་མ་གཏོགས་རྗེས་ཡིག་དང་ཚོགས་ཚོགས་མཁན་སོགས་དཀོན་པོ་ལོ་རེད། གཤམ་སྲིད་ཚོགས་ཚོགས་ཡིག་ཡོད་ན་སྐྱེ་མ་མཚོན་པ་ཟེར་ཡིག་ཅིག་ཡོད་པའི་ཚོས་བཟང་དུས་བཟང་དཔེ་རྣམས་བཅུ་ཉེར་ལྔ་ལ་སྐྱེ་མ་མཚོན་པ་གཏོང་གི་རེད་མ་གཏོགས། ནམ་རྒྱུན་མང་ཆེ་བ་དེ་དཔེ་ཁྲིད་རང་རེད།” Former Tibetan Buddhist monk and Tibetan–Mandarin translator, interview with author, virtual, May 6, 2022.

585 “ཚོས་ཚོགས་གཞན་པ་ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ཁོང་ཚོ་དེ་ ཆེ་ལྷན་ དེ་དཔེ་མང་པོ་འདུག་ག། ཆེ་ལྷན་ མང་པོ་ཡོད་པའི་ ལ་ནས་ རྒྱ་ཏྲེ་ ལབ་ཡིག་དེ་དབང་བསྐྱར་ཡིག་དེ་འདྲ་དཔེ་མང་པོ་ཡོད་པའི་ ལ་ནས་དགེ་ལུགས་ནང་བཞུགས་དཔེ་ཁྲིད་རང་གི་ཐོག་ལ་ཤུགས་བརྒྱབ་མཁན་ཏོག་ཚམ་ཉུང་ཉུང་རེད། དེ་ལྷན་པར་དཔེ་ཡོད་པའི་དེ།” Former Tibetan Buddhist monk and Tibetan–Mandarin translator, interview with author, virtual, May 6, 2022.

tend to be correlated to the types of students attracted to different schools. “Take the Geluk, for example” he explained, “Geluk [centers] will attract the type of people who have a strong desire for knowledge, who want to ask why, who want to research and who you teach clearly to.”⁵⁸⁶

Another translator shared this view, noting that, “those people who attend classes likely have a thirst for knowledge. There will be more people who have a habit of desiring knowledge. Or, they tend to like reading books. Because there will be some [other] people who see books and think ‘well, that’s not really my thing.’”⁵⁸⁷

By contrast, these translators felt that people interested in rituals would be attracted to centers affiliated with the other Tibetan Buddhist schools. The monastic-translator stated rather matter-of-factly, “As for Nyingma and Kagyü, they stress contemplation and practice. So, people who enjoy contemplation and practice will tend toward Nyingma and Kagyü.”⁵⁸⁸ The other translator concurred, “Most people [who attend] dharma assemblies, they like to recite scriptures and mantras.”⁵⁸⁹ In his view, most individuals who attend dharma assemblies and the like are looking for apotropaic and spiritual benefits gained through ritual means. They are less inclined toward accumulating knowledge or understanding of Buddhist doctrine.

While the above statements point to general tendencies among the types of activities offered in institutions of different sectarian traditions, it would be a mistake to interpret these statements too literally. There are, of course, Geluk-affiliated centers that organize all manner of

⁵⁸⁶ “比方說格魯派，格魯派呢那麼就有一些就會吸引那一些就是求知慾比較強，想要問為什麼，要研究的你教清楚的那一些人。” Taiwanese Kaygü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, May 18, 2022.

⁵⁸⁷ “會上課的人他可能只是那個求知慾，想要有知識的那種習慣比較多巴，或者說他比較喜歡讀書。因為一些人會看到書，他們就會覺得好像不是我們的事情。” Taiwanese Tibetan–Mandarin translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 20, 2022.

⁵⁸⁸ “那麼寧瑪派跟噶舉派就是比較強調思修，所以比較喜歡思修的人會到寧瑪還有噶舉。” Taiwanese Kaygü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, May 18, 2022.

⁵⁸⁹ “法會的人大部分就是喜歡就是喜歡念經啊，然後喜歡念咒語的比較多啦。” Taiwanese Tibetan–Mandarin translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 20, 2022.

rituals, empowerments, and obstacle dispelling practices for their congregations. Similarly, there are Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya, and Jonang-affiliated centers that offer systematized educational programming in addition to ritual services. One translator I spoke with suggested that in addition to sectarian differences, the scope of activities offered in Taipei’s Tibetan Buddhist institutions also depends on the religious training of the center’s resident teacher.⁵⁹⁰ For example a cleric-scholar trained at a monastic college may offer more classes focused on textual exposition than teachers who have more extensive backgrounds in meditative practice. Thus, while it remains broadly true that Geluk centers tend to offer more educational programming and institutions associated with other Tibetan Buddhist schools tend to focus on ritual activities, nevertheless, there are many centers that offer both types of activities.

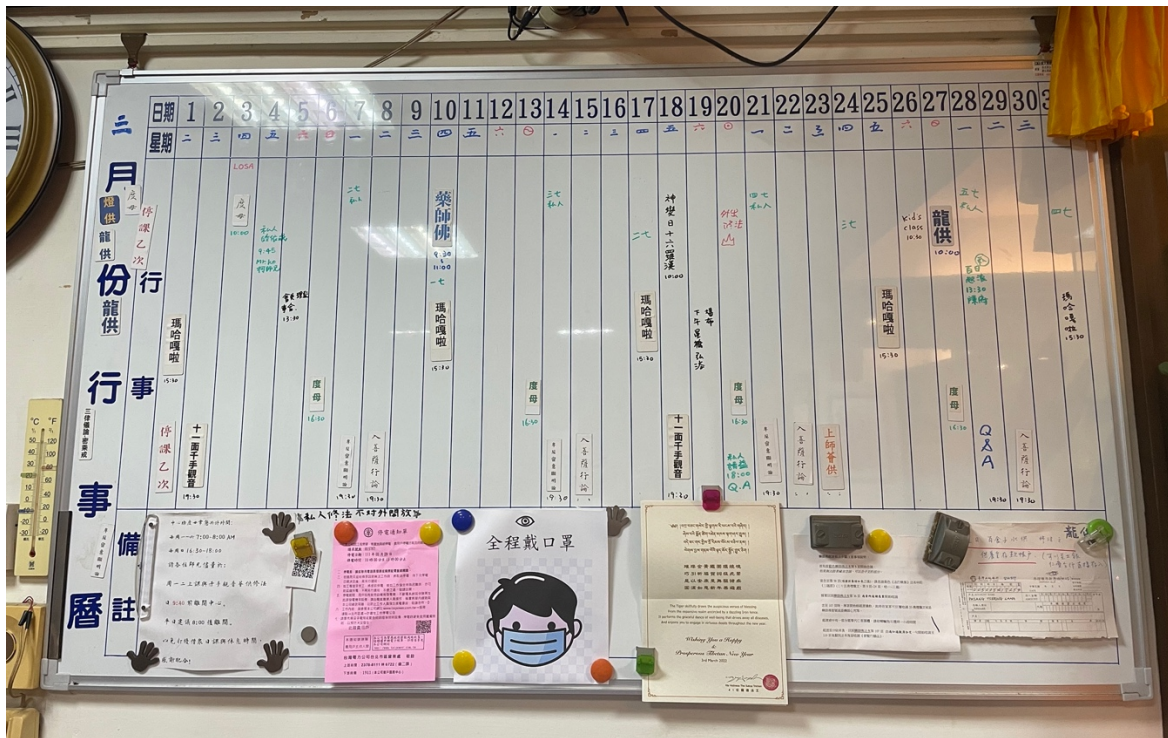


Figure 22: Whiteboard with the schedule of rituals and classes for March 2022 at Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association in Da'an District, Taipei. Photo by author, 2022.

⁵⁹⁰ Taiwanese Tibetan–Mandarin translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 20, 2022.

Among the most common public activities at Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the greater Taipei area I have described, there is one glaring omission: quiet sitting meditation. For readers familiar with Tibetan Buddhism in Euro-North American contexts, the absence of quiet sitting meditation at Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers in Taipei will likely come as quite a surprise. Quiet sitting is so ubiquitous among most convert-majority Buddhist communities in the West that David McMahan writes “most casual observers and many ardent practitioners of Buddhism...would identify meditation as the essential Buddhist practice.”⁵⁹¹ Indeed, meditation is so central to how most Euro-North American converts conceptualize Buddhist practice and identity that Gleig uses the term “meditation-based convert communities” to collectively reference the non-Asian heritage Buddhist organizations in North America she conducted her research among.⁵⁹² And yet, despite the preponderance of quiet sitting among Buddhist communities in the West, it is conspicuously absent among the activities of most Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei. As Campergue rightly notes, “If meditation is the paragon of Buddhism in the West, it does not seem to be the most popular practice in Taiwan even if several centers offer introductory and advanced meditation courses.”⁵⁹³

It is not that there are altogether no Tibetan Buddhists practitioners who engage in quiet sitting meditation or that no Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei offer quiet sitting as part of their programs. There are surely many Taiwanese practitioners who engage in quiet meditation practices outside the context of their dharma centers. Moreover, there are several dharma centers in Taipei, such as Kagyu Drodun Kunchab (金法林利生佛學中心, བཀའ་བརྒྱན་འགྲོ་རྟོན་ཀུན་ལུན་ལྷག་པོ།) and the

⁵⁹¹ David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 183.

⁵⁹² Gleig, *American Dharma*, 6.

⁵⁹³ “Si la méditation est le paragon du bouddhisme en Occident, elle ne semble pas être la pratique la plus plébiscitée à Taïwan même si on retrouve des cours d’initiation ou de perfectionnement à la méditation dans plusieurs centres.” Campergue, “Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan,” 34.

Taiwan Garchen Dharma Institute (台灣噶千佛學會), that even have affiliated rural retreat centers where, I was told, a number of practitioners engage in extended meditative retreats. In his 2003 survey of 115 Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taiwan, Liu noted that 9% of centers responded that they offered quiet sitting practices, such as peaceful abiding and insight or concentration practices (止觀禪定), suggesting that some centers in Taipei offered quiet sitting practices, even if they were a small minority.⁵⁹⁴

Nevertheless, among the hundreds of events I attended at Tibetan Buddhist institutions, there were only a small handful that included periods of quiet sitting of any length of time. Even in those few cases, the community was asked to sit quietly and focus on their breathing for only a few minutes. While many communities regularly hold extensive *sādhana* practices that involved, in theory, periods of quietly abiding in rich visualizations of tantric deities and their environs, in virtually all cases these periods are extremely transient. At most practices that I attended, in fact, there was no pause and the recitation of the *sādhana* continued uninterrupted. I did not experience anything like the twenty minutes, thirty minutes, or even longer periods of quiet sitting that are ubiquitous among Tibetan Buddhist centers in Europe and North America.

The reason why there is so little organized quiet sitting meditation at Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the Taipei region is unclear. I never heard a Taiwanese practitioner disparage quiet sitting meditation. Indeed, when the topic of meditation came up in conversations, I only heard great praise for lay and monastic practitioners who regularly practiced forms of quiet sitting or were known to have completed extensive periods of intense meditative practice. Yet, despite this discursive lauding of individuals who engage in extended periods of quiet sitting meditation by practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers alike, it is not something that is commonly practiced

⁵⁹⁴ Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu* 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究, 43.

communally at Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei. Instead, activities at these centers tend to fall under the umbrellas of either ritual activities or educational classes as described above.

One Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist monastic who I interviewed offered one possible explanation for quiet sitting's lack of popularity. He noted that while quiet sitting meditation had become nearly synonymous with Buddhism during its transmission into the West, this was not the case for Tibetan Buddhism coming to Taiwan. This was, he opined, in part because quiet sitting meditation practices were already a central part of Chinese Buddhism. "This is also due to cultural differences. Within Chinese Buddhism in China, there was already the Chan tradition. Therefore, when people went to Tibetan Buddhism, they didn't go there for meditation. If they wanted to study quiet sitting meditation, they would just go to Chan [centers]."⁵⁹⁵ In contrast to Euro-North American contexts where the transmission of Asian religions also introduced novel contemplative traditions, this monk suggested that silent Buddhist meditation practices have been present in Chinese cultural areas for nearly two thousand years and are, therefore, less attractive to Taiwanese than other forms of Tibetan Buddhist practice not found in Chinese traditions.

While this monk's reasoning seems plausible, it remains an open question why quiet sitting meditation, considered *the* fundamental Buddhist practice in convert-majority Tibetan Buddhist communities in Euro-North American contexts, is mostly absent from Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan. Tibetan Buddhism has myriad systems of quiet, seated meditation that are, in fact, not found in Chinese Buddhism. However, it has been other Tibetan Buddhist meditative practices that conjure and engage with tantric deities and promise these deities' blessings that most captivate Taiwanese. Meditation upon the breath or another object, that

⁵⁹⁵ “這個也是跟文化有關，就是因為在中國漢傳佛教裡面本來就有禪宗。所以人家去跑藏傳佛教他們不是為了要學這個 meditation 到藏傳佛教的，他們如果要學禪修的話他們就會跑去禪宗。” Taiwanese Kagyü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, May 18, 2022.

involve attending to the arising and passing of thoughts or taking in the suffering of others and radiating happiness in return, and other forms of meditation are widely practiced across non-heritage Buddhist communities in the West. These techniques are not, for the most part, reasons that Taiwanese take interest in Tibetan Buddhism. Rather, it is Tibetan Buddhist masters' proficiency with rituals that promise apotropaic benefits for beings in this and future lives that was initially and continues to be of most interest to Taiwanese. Additionally, courses taking lay students through the detailed systems of Buddhist learning also spark Taiwanese engagement with Tibetan Buddhism. Quiet forms of sitting meditation, on the other hand, are not a significant part of communal religious life among Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers.

3. Family Resemblances Across Tibetan Buddhist Communities

In this chapter, I have described a series of shared characteristics or “family resemblances” that span across the Tibetan Buddhist landscape in the greater Taipei region. I explored seven qualities shared by most Tibetan Buddhist institutions and gave examples taken from snapshots of communal life. These family resemblances include: 1) the freedom Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners have to establish religious communities and pursue religious life as they desire, 2) the hybrid forms of religious spaces, teachings, and practices that synthesize Tibetan Buddhism with Chinese religious forms and practices, 3) the autonomous structure of the multitude of (mostly) independent Tibetan Buddhist institutions, 4) the heavily gendered composition of Tibetan Buddhist communities, which largely have female-presenting majority congregations but almost exclusively male religious leadership, 5) the multilingual environments of dharma centers where Tibetan, Mandarin, Taiwanese, and to a lesser extent English, Nepali, and other Himalayan languages are spoken, 6) the organizational

distinction between monastery and private centers that determines the level of local control dharma centers have, and finally 7) the range of rituals, classes, and personal services most commonly offered at Tibetan Buddhist institutions. These family characteristics are likely shared not only across Tibetan Buddhist organizations in the Taipei area, but also across Taiwan. However, as most of my research occurred in communities around Taipei, I am hesitant to claim these traits as being more broadly applicable. Perhaps future research will further illuminate the range of family resemblances that connect Tibetan Buddhist institutions across Taiwan.

While I have provided brief examples throughout the above discussion, in the next section I enliven these characteristics by discussing their integrated manifestation within three specific communities. First, I will offer brief sketches of three Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region: the Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association, the Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute, and the Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyül Dharma Center. These sketches are based upon my experiences attending diverse events at these centers, speaking with their congregants and teachers,⁵⁹⁶ as well as information available through their online presences. Subsequently, I will consider each community in relation to the seven family resemblances I discussed above. Although there is a much more that could be said about each community, my aim is to highlight the ways they express and are connected by the characteristics I have discussed in this chapter.

3.1. Source of Dharma Buddhist Association (STDBA)

The Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association (hereafter, STDBA) is a Sakya center located in Taipei's Da'an District. It was founded by the late Khenpo Künga Wangchuk (མཁའ་ལྷོ་པོ་)

⁵⁹⁶ During my fieldwork I participated in nine events at the Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyül Dharma Center, six at the Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute, and twenty-seven at the Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association. These events ranged in length from one hour to most of a day and included a variety of rituals, textual study classes, interviews with religious leaders, as well as an environmental protection action.

ཀུན་དགའ་དབང་ལྷན་, 堪布貢噶旺秋仁波切 1921–2008) who first came to Taiwan in 1995. After giving teachings in Taiwan for several months annually for seven years, Khenpo Künga Wangchuk and his Taiwanese disciples finally established STDBA as a permanent community in Taipei in 2002.⁵⁹⁷ STDBA is closely affiliated with Dzongsar Monastery in the state of Himachal Pradesh in northern India, which Khenpo Künga Wangchuk constructed largely with donations he received during teaching tours of Taiwan.⁵⁹⁸ STDBA is also informally affiliated with Dzongsar Universal Joy and Freedom Dharma Center (宗薩遍喜自在學佛會) in the southern Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung through their mutual association with Dzongsar Monastery.

STDBA is located on the ground floor of a low apartment building with signs in Chinese and Tibetan and prayer flags hanging around its entryway. The main shrine room, which is primarily used for rituals and classes, is dominated by a large Tibetan Buddhist-style statue of Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, flanked by smaller statues of buddhas and other deities also cast in Tibetan iconographic style. There is an imposing throne with a photo of Khenpo Künga Wangchuk on it and large brocade thangkas on the walls. The center also has a large beacon light wall of illuminated deity statues with the names of their sponsors. In addition to the shrine room, STDBA's several other rooms are utilized as living and cooking spaces for the resident monastics and for the center's office.

The center is led by one khenpo and three supporting monastics all of whom are assigned to STDBA by the administration of Dzongsar Monastery. These individuals are normally in

⁵⁹⁷ For more on Khenpo Künga Wangchuk's activities in Taiwan, see: Sun Xiaoyu 孫小玉, *Cibei de huashen: kanbu gongga wangqiu renboqie shengming ce xie 慈悲的化身: 堪布貢噶旺秋仁波切生命側寫 (Incarnation of Compassion from Raging Blazes: A Profile of Khenpo Kunga Wangchuk Rinpoche)* (Gaoxiong shi 高雄市: Caituan faren xiu xiu wenjiao jijinhui 財團法人休休文教基金會, 2008).

⁵⁹⁸ Taiwanese Sakya nun and translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 16, 2022.

Taiwan for two years,⁵⁹⁹ after which they are relieved by a new team of a khenpo and several supporting monastics from Dzongsar. Among the two teams of khenpos and monks at STDBA during my fieldwork, all had a basic grasp of Mandarin and were studying to improve their fluency with an older female community volunteer. Like other Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei, participants at STDBA's events are mostly (between 65 and 75%) female-presenting.

In addition to consulting privately with congregants and offering a variety of personal ritual services and counseling, STDBA organizes a mixture of rituals and classes for its congregation. The rituals are all enacted in Tibetan and are done according to the liturgical traditions practiced at Dzongsar, with the exception of some including common Chinese Buddhist prayers, such as “Samanthabhadra’s Ten Vows” (十大願王). Many rituals, such as daily practices to Green Tārā, weekly rituals to the Sakya protector deity Pañjarnātha Mahākāla (ནག་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་གུར་གྱི་མགོན་པོ།, 瑪哈嘎拉寶帳估主), and monthly practices to the serpent spirits (ལྷ་གཏོར།, 龍供) are enacted by the khenpo and monastics during the day with limited community participation. Other rituals held in the evenings and on weekends, such as those dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and tantric teachers, tend to attract between ten and fifteen participants.

STDBA also offers classes once and sometimes twice a week taught by the center’s khenpo and translated into Mandarin by a Taiwanese nun who was formerly Khenpo Künga Wangchuk’s Mandarin translator. STDBA’s classes are primarily structured around textual exposition, with the khenpo explaining the entirety of text or a specific chapter verse by verse, and sometimes word by word. STDBA’s most common class, which their khenpos have repeatedly taught since the center was opened, studies Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* or *Entering*

⁵⁹⁹ Due to COVID-19 related border entry restrictions, the first group of monks I met at STDBA had stayed there for more than three years before their replacements were able to travel to Taiwan. Sakya khenpo, interview with author, Taipei, August 8, 2022.

the Way of the Bodhisattva. STDBA’s khenpos have also offered classes on other Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, including the *Diamond Sūtra* (ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་བྱིན་པ་དོན་རྫོང་གཙོག་པ།, 金剛經), Jamgön Kongtrül’s (འཇམ་གཤོན་ཀོང་སྟེན་ལྷོ་གྲོ་མཐའ་ཡས།, 第一世蔣貢康楚羅卓泰耶 1813–1899) *Calling the Guru from Afar* (ལྷོ་མ་རྒྱུད་འབོད་ཀྱི་གསོལ་འདེབས་མོས་གུས་སྦྱིང་གི་གཟེར་འདེབས།, 遙呼上師祈請文), and Sakya Paṇḍita’s (ས་སྐུ་པ་རྗེ་ཏུ་ཀུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།, 薩迦班智達 1182–1251) *Clarifying the Sage’s Intent* (ཐུབ་པའི་དགོངས་པ་རབ་ཏུ་གསལ་བ།, 牟尼密意顯明論). The classes at STDBA that I attended usually had slightly more attendees than the rituals, with an average of between twelve and seventeen participants.

3.2. Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute (TKBI)

The Taiwan Kagyü Buddhist Institute (TKBI) is a Karma Kagyü center that follows the spiritual leadership of the Seventeenth Karmapa Orgyen Trinlé Dorjé (ཀྱུལ་དབང་ཀམ་པ་ ༡༧ ཨོ་རྒྱན་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྗེ།, 第十七世噶瑪巴鄔金欽列多傑 b. 1985). This center occupies most of the tenth floor of a mixed-use high-rise in central Taipei’s Zhongshan District, with spaces dedicated to the dharma center’s shrine room and office, as well as living quarters for the center’s main teacher. TKBI was founded by several Taiwanese followers of the Karma Kagyü school in 2004 and subsequently secured letters of support from the Seventeenth Karmapa, the Twelfth Tai Situ Rinpoché, and the Twelfth Gyaltsap Rinpoché. After founding a center in Taipei, TKBI also started branch centers in Kaohsiung, Miaoli, and most recently a center in Hualien.⁶⁰⁰

TKBI’s main shrine spans one entire wall of the center has a mixture of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist icons. There are Tibetan-style statues of the Buddha Śākyamuni, the Five

⁶⁰⁰ “Taiwan gaju foxueyuan jieshao 台灣噶舉佛學院介紹,” Taiwan gaju foxueyuan 台灣噶舉佛學院, accessed December 6, 2023, <http://www.kagyü.org.tw>.

Buddha Families (རྒྱལ་བ་རིགས་ལྔ།, 五佛) and the Twenty-one Tārās (སྦྱོལ་མ་ཉི་ལྔ་ཙ་གཅིག་, 二十一度母).

The shrine also features equally large Chinese-style statues of seated Guanyin, Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, and the protector Lord Guan.⁶⁰¹ There is a large throne with a photo of the Seventeenth Karmapa on it and a lower throne for TKBI’s resident teacher. In addition to various offerings of food, water, and offering cakes, the shrine is often also adorned with red and yellow disaster elimination emolument tablets and transcendence memorial tablets sponsored by members of TKBI’s congregation.

The resident teacher of TKBI is a khenpo from Palpung Sherabling Monastery (དཔལ་སྤྱུངས་ཤེས་པ་རབ་གླིང་དགོན།, 八蚌智慧林主寺) in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. He has been at TKBI more or less continuously since 2014 after having been invited to come to Taiwan to serve as TKBI’s resident teacher. Today, he works closely with another khenpo who leads TKBI’s affiliated center in Kaohsiung. As he was born in Lithang and spent his childhood inside Tibetan areas of the PRC, the TKBI’s khenpo is fluent in Mandarin and can communicate directly with members of TKBI’s congregation.⁶⁰² Like other Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei, the events I attended at TKBI generally had more female than male-presenting participants, with female-presenting participants composing between 60 to 70% of the congregation.

TKBI offers some classes taught in Mandarin by the resident khenpo. Many of these focus on textual exposition of widely revered Buddhist treatises, foremost among these being

⁶⁰¹ For a discussion of how the Seventeenth Karmapa has reintroduced practices dedicated to Lord Guan into Tibetan Buddhism, see: Joshua Esler, “Superscribing New Meaning on Guan Gong, the Chinese ‘God of War,’” in *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese: Mediation and Superscription of the Tibetan Tradition in Contemporary Chinese Society* (Lanham & London: Lexington Books, 2020), 41–69; “Reviving the Tsurphu Protector Practice of Sangharāma, and Supplicating Amitabha,” The Official Website of the 17th Karmapa, March 26, 2018, <https://kagyuoffice.org/karmapa-revives-the-tsurphu-protector-practice-of-sangharama/>.

⁶⁰² TKBI’s resident khenpo, personal communication with author, February 1, 2022.

Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva. Additionally, the khenpo occasionally teaches Tibetan language through studying common Tibetan Buddhist prayers, such as the “Praise to the Twenty-One Tārās” (སྒྲོལ་མ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ཉི་ཤུ་ཅུ་གཅིག་གིས་བསྟོད་པ།, 二十一度母禮讚文), as well as classes on aspects of ritual performance, such as sculpting offering cakes. Most of TKBI’s activities, however, involve the performance of various rituals. Some rituals, such as to Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara (སྐུན་རས་གཟིགས་ཕྱག་བཞེས།, 四臂觀音), Black-cloaked Mahākāla (མགོན་པོ་བེར་ནག་ཅན།, 兩臂嗎哈嘎啦), the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas (གཤེགས་ལྟ་སོ་ལྔ།, 三十五佛懺), reciting the *Mañjuśrīnāmasamgīti* (འཇམ་དཔལ་མཚན་བརྗོད།, 文殊真實名經),⁶⁰³ and the Four-Session Guru Yoga (བྱམ་བཞིའི་སྐྱ་མའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར།, 四座上師相應法), are enacted on a monthly basis. Other community rituals, such as to the deities Red Avalokiteśvara, Guru Rinpoché, or fumigation practices and hanging prayer flags are done less regularly in accordance with the Tibetan lunar calendar.

In addition to these rituals and classes, KTBI also engages in several social service activities in the Taipei area. For instance, most months KTBI organizes beach clean-up days where they partner with local governments in sea-side areas to collect and dispose of trash that has washed up on shore. While KTBI’s volunteers collect trash on the beach, the resident khenpo performs a fumigation ritual to cleanse the environment.⁶⁰⁴ Additionally, KTBI organizes monthly soup kitchens, which they call “Auspicious and Peaceful Meals” (吉祥平安餐) at both

⁶⁰³ This is a ritual in praise of Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom.

⁶⁰⁴ For photographs from a recent beach clean-up event organized by KTBI, see: Gama gaju jijinhui 噶瑪噶舉基金會, “Gama gaju jijinhui 2022/1/27 baigong xingguang jing tan ji yan gong huaxu fenxiang 噶瑪噶舉基金會 2022/1/27 白宮行館淨灘暨煙供 花絮分享,” Facebook, accessed December 7, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02jRzJP7JvjR7k6RuBPYsPqVdawC3QsLbYErW5Tizuuw29ohPfqtT123Xk1bGNr9HQpl&id=221930324649198.

their Taipei and Kaohsiung branches.⁶⁰⁵ At these events, KTBI members volunteer to cook and package vegetarian meals into lunchboxes (便當) and serve these to populations in need.

3.3. Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyul Dharma Center (TNPDC)

Taiwan Nyingmapa Palyul Dharma Center (TNPDC) is a Nyingma community that runs two branches in the greater Taipei area. The first center occupies a three-story house in a rural area of New Taipei City's Shenkeng District. TNPDC also has an urban branch that occupies the top floor and rooftop of a five-story residential building in Taipei's Songshan District. TNPDC is one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Taipei, founded by the Second Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché who first came to Taipei in 1983. With the gradual liberalization of Taiwanese civil society, the Second Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché and his students were able to open the Shenkeng center in 1986. The Songshan center opened more recently as a more centrally located and accessible for congregants. Through the support of his students in Taiwan, the Second Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché not only supported the construction of Namdröling Monastery in southern India, but also purchased land near Kathmandu's Boudha Stūpa in 1987 and began the construction of Thekchok Ösel Palyül Chöling Monastery (ཐེག་མཚོ་གཞི་འོད་གསལ་དཔལ་ལུས་ཚོས་གྲིང་དགོན།, 帖秋哦瑟白玉確林寺), also called Dzongnang Monastery (རྫོང་ནང་དགོན།, 宗諾寺).⁶⁰⁶ Following his sudden passing later

⁶⁰⁵ For an example with photos of one of TKBI's Auspicious and Peaceful Meal events, see: Gama gaju jijinhui 噶瑪噶舉基金會, "Gama gaju jijinhui handong song nuan huaxu: suixi gewei zhi gong 2022 yuandan ri xinnian kaishi jiu pei fu zhong da futian gongde wuliang 噶瑪噶舉基金會 寒冬送暖花絮~ 隨喜各位志工 2022 元旦日新年開始就培福種大福田, 功德無量🙏," Facebook, accessed December 7, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0FvsDAvunZNXaPFVvSntyQ4JG6rzesRZoZVqr2X6ZsXjEBnNufKDxsXWjZFPbFpetl&id=221930324649198.

For a video summary of an Auspicious and Peaceful Meal event organized by KTBI's branch in Kaohsiung, see: Gama gaju jijinhui 噶瑪噶舉基金會, "2023-10-23 Caituan faren gama gaju jijinhui aixin paing'an can 財團法人噶瑪噶舉基金會 愛心平安餐," October 27, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrGAc5QNJG0>.

⁶⁰⁶ Zhonghua minguo ningmaba baiyu foxuehui 中華民國寧瑪巴白玉佛學會, "Ningmabba baiyu zhongxin shangshi 寧瑪巴白玉中心上師," Taiwan ningmaba baiyu fofa zhongxin 臺灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://palyul-jampal-rinpoche.org/teacher.php>.

in 1987 and the recognition of his reincarnation in 1989, the Third Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché took leadership of both TNPDC centers in Taipei. With the financial support of Taiwanese donors, the Third Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché has been able to significantly expand Dzongnang Monastery and engage in numerous social welfare and animal protection projects in Nepal.⁶⁰⁷

Both TNPDC's Shengkeng and Songshan centers are ornamented predominantly in a Tibetan Buddhist style, with a variety of statues and thangkas of buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as thrones for both Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché and Penor Rinpoché, the head of Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché's Palyül lineage. Moreover, both centers have walls painted deep maroon and ornately carved Tibetan-style wooden shrines and cabinets that house each centers' statues. The centers do not only contain Tibetan materia sacra, however. Both centers have walls for hundreds of beacon lights sponsored by TNPDC's supporters. Moreover, members of the congregation also regularly sponsor disaster elimination emolument tablets and transcendence memorial tablets, which were present in varying amounts all the events I attended on the shrines of both centers.

The Third Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché spends a good portion of each year in Taipei, where he mostly stays at TNPDC's Shengkeng center, leading all the major rituals and empowerments that are open to the public. As he does not speak Mandarin very fluently, Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché communicates hesitatingly with his Taiwanese disciples in Mandarin or more fluently in

⁶⁰⁷ Zhonghua minguo ningmaba baiyu foxuehui 中華民國寧瑪巴白玉佛學會, "Nibo'er zong nuo si 尼泊爾宗諾寺," Taiwan ningmaba baiyu fofa zhongxin 臺灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://palyul-jampal-rinpoche.org/nepal.php>.

In addition to supporting the physical expansion of Dzongnang Monastery and the maintenance of its monastic body, Taiwanese donors also financially support a soup kitchen in Kathmandu and a program to rescue animals before they are slaughtered and house them in a farm that are both run by Dzongnang monastery. See: Zhonghua minguo ningmaba baiyu foxuehui 中華民國寧瑪巴白玉佛學會, "Nibo'er bushi jihua 尼泊爾佈施計劃," Taiwan ningmaba baiyu fofa zhongxin 臺灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://palyul-jampal-rinpoche.org/giving.php>; Zhonghua minguo ningmaba baiyu foxuehui 中華民國寧瑪巴白玉佛學會, "Nibo'er hu sheng jihua 尼泊爾護生計劃," Taiwan ningmaba baiyu fofa zhongxin 臺灣寧瑪巴白玉佛法中心, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://palyul-jampal-rinpoche.org/releasing.php>.

English.⁶⁰⁸ Most events at TNPDC's Songshan center are led by a khenpo or one of several monks from Namdröling Monastery. For larger rituals, TNPDC invites other monastics affiliated with Namdröling who reside at various Palyül-affiliated centers to assist. As with most other Tibetan Buddhist centers in the region, TNPDC's events tend to attract a majority (between 60 and 75%) of female-presenting participants.

TNPDC's event calendar is dominated almost exclusively by rituals practices. These involve students reciting transliterated Tibetan liturgies while being led by one of TNPDC's teachers. Some rituals occur weekly, such as practices dedicated to Green Tārā. Others, such as those dedicated to Guru Rinpoché and the wisdom ḍākinī (མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ།, 空行母) the Great Bliss Queen (བདེ་ཆེན་རྒྱལ་མོ།, 大樂佛母), occur monthly according to the Tibetan lunar calendar. TNPDC also hosts other large-scale rituals each year, such as a multiday Vajrakīlaya (རྗེ་ཕུང་བ།, 普巴金剛) and Dzambhala ritual on the days before and following the Tibetan lunar new year. In addition, Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché intermittently bestows empowerments, oversees life release ceremonies, performs tantric dances (འཚམ།, 金剛舞), and consults privately with TNPDC's students. TNPDC offers very few classes,⁶⁰⁹ most of which focus on instructions for enacting rituals, such as how to make a maṇḍala offering (དཀྱིལ་འཕོར་གྱི་ཚོག་/ མཇུག་འབུལ་བ།, 供養曼達).

3.4. Family Resemblances Across Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist Communities

While much more could be said about each of these three dharma centers than space here allows, these sketches are nevertheless sufficient to demonstrate the ways in which they manifest

⁶⁰⁸ Community members told me that Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché was actively studying Mandarin and that, from their observations, his spoken Chinese had improved significantly over the past several years.

⁶⁰⁹ There were no classes offered at TNPDC during the fifteen months during which I was in Taipei.

many of the family resemblances of Tibetan Buddhism in the Taipei area that have been the focus of this chapter. Although these centers are affiliated with different sectarian traditions, located in different parts of the Taipei region, led by teachers from different monastic institutions, and (at least to the extent I observed) do not share congregants, they nevertheless manifest many of the traits that connect Tibetan Buddhist communities across Taipei. In this way, although each community is unique, they are still recognizable as part of the “family” that spans Taipei’s more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, temples, and other institutions.

In general, these centers and their Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese congregants have had the freedom to legally establish themselves as religious organizations, promote their activities, and decide on which events to host and attend. Although TNPDC had a legally ambiguous status for several years during the mid-1980s when Buddhist public life was still highly controlled in Taiwan, with the end of martial law and the opening of Taiwanese society the Second Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché and his disciples were able to legally register their community. In the post-martial law period, they have been able to establish a second center and conduct their activities freely. STDBA and TKBI were both established following the end of martial law and were able to be registered with only a small group of Taiwanese supporters.

In the minimally regulated religious landscape of Taiwan’s post-martial law period, each of these communities have been able to offer programming of their choice in their centers, promote their activities in both print and online, and disseminate information freely via newsletters, websites, social media, and online messaging groups. Their activities have not been limited to the private space of their centers alone, as activities like fumigation rituals, life release ceremonies, hanging prayer flags, environmental protection, and food distribution actions happen in public venues. Their congregants attend events out of voluntary affiliation and are free to

select what to attend and support, to share information with their friends and relatives, or to decide if they no longer wish to patronize a center and/or begin to attend events at another organization. Moreover, as officially registered religious communities, each center has been able to extend invitations to Tibetan Buddhist teachers outside of Taiwan to come and religious instruction and lead religious practices for extended periods.

In addition to the freedoms enjoyed by Taiwanese supporters of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhist teachers to establish religious communities, to participate in religious services and classes, and to publicly share information about their activities, these three communities are also syncretic Sino-Tibetan religious spaces. While each center clearly self-identifies as Tibetan Buddhist, enacts rituals in the Tibetan language, and studies texts translated from Tibetan Buddhist canonical traditions, they also include various elements from Chinese religious life. For example, TKBI's central shrine has statues whose iconography comes from both Tibetan and Chinese traditions. Although STDBA and TNPDC have predominantly Tibetan Buddhist iconography, they also include some religious materials and practices from local Daoist and Buddhist culture in Taiwan. Several obvious examples present in all three communities are the use of disaster elimination emolument tablets and transcendence memorial tablets, as well as designated walls filled beacon lamps. In this way, all three centers manifest a degree of the Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity, both in the form of physical objects and religious practices.

In terms of their organization, both TKBI and STDBA function autonomously of all other Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei. TKBI is privately run and although it is connected to three other centers across Taiwan, functions independently from the dozens of other Karma Kagyü-affiliated centers in the greater Taipei area. As a monastery center, STDBA has more limited decision-making power as its local leadership must ensure it functions in accordance with the

wishes of the administration of Dzongsar Monastery. Still, like TKBI, STDBA is not part of one organization with multiple centers in the Taipei region. Other private centers run by Tibetan Buddhist teachers affiliated with Dzongsar are only loosely affiliated with STDBA through the personal connections of their teachers. Thus, regardless of whether they are monastery or private centers, both STDBA and TKBI function independently from other centers in the Taipei region affiliated with the same school of Tibetan Buddhism and even with the same monastery.

While STDBA and TKBI both manifest the autonomy and qualities of monastery and private centers, TNPDC stands slightly apart from these characteristics. First, in contrast to STDBA and TKBI, TNPDC has two branches in the Taipei area. These two centers function collaboratively under one administration and are therefore not independent centers in the same way as STDBA and TKBI. Nevertheless, as TNPDC is not officially connected to any of the several dozen other institutions linked to Namdröling Monastery in Taipei, it still manifests a degree of autonomy similar to STDBA and TKBI. Furthermore, although TNPDC could be classified as a monastery center due to its affiliation with and the funds it remits to Dzongnang Monastery, the management of TNPDC holds more in common with private Tibetan Buddhist centers than with monastery centers. Rather than be under the control of the administration of Dzongnang Monastery, TNPDC is led by Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché directly. Moreover, TNPDC does not regularly receive teachers or monastics from Dzongnang Monastery. Indeed, as far as I am aware, the local teacher at TNPDC during my research was not resident at Dzongnang Monastery prior to coming to Taipei but came from Namdröling upon the personal invitation of Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché.⁶¹⁰ Similarly, all the monastics I met at TNPDC's events were there due to their affiliation with Namdröling Monastery, not Dzongnang Monastery. Thus, the

⁶¹⁰ Zhonghua minguo ningmaba baiyu foxuehui 中華民國寧瑪巴白玉佛學會, "Ningmabba baiyu zhongxin shangshi 寧瑪巴白玉中心上師."

organizational structure of TNPDC stands somewhat apart from most other Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei for its mixing of monastic and private management styles.

While the organizational structure of TNPDC shows some unique features, the gendered breakdown of its leadership and congregation largely mirror that of STDBA, TKBI, and the majority of other Tibetan Buddhist institutions across the Taipei region. In all three centers female-presenting congregants were in the majority at virtually all events I attended. In contrast, the religious leadership at these centers, whether the single khenpo at TKBI, the khenpo and several assisting monks at STDBA, or Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché and the other Namdröling monastics at TNPDC's two centers, are universally male.

Although there are no women vested with official religious teaching authority in these communities, I did notice ways in which specific women wielded power in ways other than from the elevated teacher's throne. For example, in the case of STDBA, the Taiwanese nun who translates for the khenpos during teachings and private consultations, Venerable Quezun (確尊法師), was clearly held in high regard by most of the congregation. Venerable Quezun had not only translated the published Mandarin translations of the texts studied in most of STDBA's classes but had also been the oral translator for Khenpo Künga Wangchuk for more than a decade. In that role, she had spent a significant amount of time with this revered teacher. Accordingly, I often witnessed members of the congregation approach her after classes to ask questions related to the content of the evening's teachings or to seek advice on personal matters. While in her characteristic modesty, Venerable Quezun would often refer those consulting her to the khenpo for their queries and requests, other times she would answer them directly. The many professions of thanks and bows directed toward Venerable Quezun following such exchanges clearly expressed community members' high regard for her. Similarly, a Taiwanese nun also yielded

significant authority within TKBI, albeit more in areas related to the center's management. Thus, even as male teachers may officially be vested with religious authority in virtually all of Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist institutions, further examination of communal life would almost certainly reveal numerous women in each center who wield power and lead in other ways.

All three centers are also multilingual spaces where Tibetan, Mandarin, and to a lesser degree Taiwanese, Nepali, and English are used. While STDBA and TKBI occasionally recite some prayers in Chinese, nearly all ritual activities at STDBA, TKBI, and TNPDC are conducted in Tibetan. Classes on the other hand are conducted either in Mandarin in the case of TKBI, or in Tibetan with Mandarin translation in the case of STDBA. At TNPDC, Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché occasionally teaches or offers advice to his students in English. Taiwanese is heard primarily in conversations involving the older members of these congregations, with even most younger congregants who can speak Taiwanese tending to default to Mandarin. At TNPDC, several monastics who were born in Himalayan regions usually speak in Nepali amongst themselves, switching to Tibetan to speak with other monastics who do not speak Nepali. Thus, like other Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei, all three centers are richly multilingual environments.

Finally, in terms of their events, all three centers have an extensive liturgical calendar that includes a wide range of rituals. These include rituals invoking some of the most popular Tibetan Buddhist deities, such as Avalokiteśvara, Green Tārā, Guru Rinpoché, and sectarian-specific dharma protectors (ཚལ་སྐྱོང་།, 護法). TNPDC hosts the most rituals, a manifestation of the trend for Nyingma centers to be primarily ritually oriented. Furthermore, under Jampel Lodrö Rinpoché's leadership TNPDC occasionally offers empowerments, something the khenpos at STDBA and TKBI are not qualified to do. While they cannot bestow empowerments, these khenpos at these centers offer educational classes on Tibetan Buddhist texts, such as *Entering the Way of the*

Bodhisattva. Quiet sitting meditation is not a regular part of communal religious life in any of these three dharma centers. The leadership of STDBA, TKBI, and TNPDC all are available to their disciples for private consultations where they share spiritual advice, bestow blessings, do divinations, give Buddhist refuge vows, and perform other requested services.

Looking across these centers, each manifest many of the characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism in the greater Taipei area that I discussed above. The ways each center shares in the autonomy and freedom, organizational models, Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity, Tibetan and Mandarin-centered multilingual environments, as well as exhibits the specific gendered demographics and range of religious activities and services helps to identify them as part of Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist landscape. Each center need not manifest all characteristics or exhibit them in the same way to be a part of Taipei's broader Tibetan Buddhist "family." Indeed, I have highlighted several examples of divergences, such as TNPDC's distinct organizational structure and the varying degrees of Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity in STDBA, TKBI, and TNPDC.

As Robert McDermott reminds us, shared qualities and traits in the context of family resemblances "are neither essences nor entirely arbitrary, but the kind of descriptions which show us the way around the field of religious phenomena."⁶¹¹ After all, some communities share more deeply in these characteristics, while others manifest them only to a moderate or partial degree. Some of these characteristics, such as freedom and gender demographics, may be shared with other religious communities in the Taipei region. Other characteristics, such as the Sino-Tibetan religious hybridity and Tibetan and Chinese multilingual environment, may be shared with Tibetan Buddhist institutions across the Chinese cultural world. Still other characteristics, such as each centers' autonomy, may be shared with numerous other institutions across Tibetan

⁶¹¹ Robert McDermott, "The Religion Game: Some Family Resemblances," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 38, no. 4 (1970): 394–395, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/xxxviii.4.390>.

Buddhism's global transmission. Taken collectively, however, these characteristics form the fibers that connect Taipei's Tibetan Buddhist communities to one another. That the three Tibetan Buddhist communities I described above share in many of these characteristics illuminates how each manifest as members of a Tibetan Buddhist "family" specific to the Taipei region.

4. Conclusion

Given the Taipei region's unique position as home to one of, if not *the* highest density of Tibetan Buddhist institutions on earth, this chapter has considered what common threads span across and connect the more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, temples, and other organizations in Taipei today. Drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance, I have presented seven shared qualities that manifest in diverse constellations across Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei region. Rather than describing these as definitive markers, I have offered these characteristics as a framework to recognize the unique religious phenomena of Tibetan Buddhism within the rich and complex tapestry of religious life in the Taipei region. Taken collectively, these family resemblances also help to demarcate Tibetan Buddhist communities from other local religious traditions and groups.

The seven characteristics that I discussed are, however, by no means the only factors that might stretch across and connect the Taipei region's Tibetan Buddhist communities. Campergue, for example, suggests on the basis of her survey of 151 practitioners across Taiwan that "in terms of the socio-educational profile of these Tibetan Buddhist devotees, their level of education bears some resemblance to the sociological profile of Western converts."⁶¹² She highlights that a high

⁶¹² "En ce qui concerne le profil socio-éducatif de ces fidèles du bouddhisme tibétain, leur niveau d'éducation présente quelques similarités avec le profil sociologique des convertis occidentaux" Campergue, "Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan," 24.

percentage of respondents reported having pursued some college education, with nearly a quarter having completed a master's degree. Campergue further notes that, in terms of their employment, the highest percentage of respondents were white collar workers in the private sector, followed by teachers, homemakers, and civil servants.⁶¹³ Campergue's findings are revealing of trends in the educational and socio-economic status of Tibetan Buddhists across Taiwan. Would a more targeted survey in the Taipei region with a broader sample size yield similar results? Do Taipei residents with certain professions or levels of education tend to gravitate toward certain schools of Tibetan Buddhism? Are there Tibetan Buddhist congregations with a higher percentage of factory or other blue-collar workers? How might average levels of education and socio-economic status of Tibetan Buddhists differ from other religious communities in the Taipei region?

There may also be connections in terms of the political profiles of Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei. Given that many Taiwanese devotees are exposed through their religious teachers to a wide range of issues facing both Tibetan exile community and Tibetans in the PRC, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that Taiwanese practitioners might be more publicly supportive of Tibetans' political aspirations and human rights than the overall population. Do most Tibetan Buddhists in the Taipei region tend toward a particular position regarding the contemporary political status of Tibet? Do they have a generally shared position regarding the ROC's long-held territorial claims over Tibet or the place of Tibet in Chinese history? Do they tend to publicly support human rights causes, including issues facing minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs within the PRC, any more than other religious groups in the Taipei region?

Relatedly, one could also ask if Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region share any similarities in their domestic and cross-strait political views. Does faith in Tibetan Buddhism

⁶¹³ Campergue, 24.

correlate with practitioners' views of Taiwan's relationship with the PRC or Taiwan's political status? Do Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists tend toward any particular opinion on whether Taiwan should unite with China, declare its independence, or maintain the status quo? As Jacob Tischer and others have documented, religious institutions in Taiwan have long served as both powerful bases of support and sites of struggle for political leaders of various parties.⁶¹⁴ During my fieldwork in Taiwan, I heard that many folk religious temples around Taipei had memberships who strongly supported the KMT-led Pan-Blue coalition of political parties who favored deeper relations with the PRC. Do Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei tend toward supporting the Pan-Blue coalition or do more of their congregants support the DPP-led Pan-Green coalition that favors more autonomy or independence for Taiwan? Do Tibetan Buddhist congregations actively endorse political candidates as many other religious groups in Taiwan do? Or are congregations apolitical spaces, separating members' political views from their religious study and practice?

Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region may also be connected to one another and distinguish themselves from other religious groups based on the ethnic, regional, linguistic backgrounds of their congregants. Do Tibetan Buddhist communities stand out for attracting particularly high or low numbers of congregants whose ancestors came to Taiwan from specific provinces or regions on mainland China? Is there any trend among Tibetan Buddhist centers of attracting a majority of congregants who are *benshengren* (本省人), whose ancestors immigrated to Taiwan before 1949, vis-à-vis those who are *waishengren* (外省人) and came to Taiwan after 1949? What is the percentage of congregants who are primarily Mandarin speakers as compared to primarily speakers of Taiwanese, Hakka, or indigenous languages?

⁶¹⁴ Jacob Friedemann Tischer, "The Invisible Hand of the Temple (Manager): Gangsters, Political Power, and Transfers of Spiritual Capital in Taiwan's Mazu Pilgrimages," *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 8, no. 1 (December 4, 2020): 61–91, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-20200001>; Joseph Bosco, "Taiwan Factions: Guanxi, Patronage, and the State in Local Politics," *Ethnology* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 1992), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3773619>.

Furthermore, factors relating to congregants' gender identities and sexual orientation might also be a connecting thread among Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei area. I heard anecdotally from several practitioners and teachers that their communities had what they perceived as a higher percentage of gay and lesbian congregants than in the general Taiwanese population. Do Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei area attract a larger number of LGBTQIA+ congregants than other religious groups? Is Tibetan Buddhism perceived as being more accepting of non-heteronormative sexualities and non-cisgender congregants than other religions? Are Tibetan Buddhist communities considered by individuals in Taipei's LGBTQIA+ community as more inclusive spaces than other religious groups?

Additionally, the average age of most congregants may be a connecting thread. Campergue found that most congregants she surveyed were in their fifties (29%) and forties (26%) and that there were relatively few faithful under thirty (6%) or over seventy (3%).⁶¹⁵ Do Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region have similar age demographics? If so, why might Tibetan Buddhism not be particularly attractive to Taiwanese youth and elders? Why might Tibetan Buddhism be of particular interest to Taiwanese in their forties and fifties in the Taipei region? How does the age structure among Tibetan Buddhist communities compare to that of other religious communities as well as the overall population of the region?

Finally, I will note that as most devotees today were not themselves raised as Tibetan Buddhists and may participate in activities across multiple religious traditions, investigations into the religious backgrounds and additional religious affiliations of congregants at Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei region may prove illuminating. Are there discernable similarities in the backgrounds of community members? Did their families have one professed religious tradition

⁶¹⁵ Campergue, "Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan," 24.

or did their families patronize multiple religions and temples? Did many congregants come to Tibetan Buddhism via other Chinese Buddhist organizations in Taiwan? How amenable do congregants feel Tibetan Buddhism is to religious syncretism and devotion to an open pantheon of divinities? Are there any religions that devotees find incongruous with Tibetan Buddhism?

In the last several pages, I have offered seven additional factors that might serve as further threads that connect Tibetan Buddhist communities and distinguish them from the “families” of other religious groups across the Taipei region. Although these factors lay outside the scope of my research, and are therefore beyond my ability to comment on, they are important open paths for future inquiry. There are, of course, many more characteristics that may be illuminated through further in-depth ethnographic research, broader sociological surveys, and deeper textual studies among Tibetan Buddhist communities across Taipei.

This chapter has offered the first close examination of Tibetan Buddhism across the greater Taipei metropolitan area. Such a detailed consideration of this global capital of Tibetan Buddhism and some of the most important threads that connect the hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist communities across it is long overdue. Rather a definitive study of Tibetan Buddhism in Taipei, however, it has instead been my intention to convey something of the rich, complex, and dynamic threads that animate Taipei’s contemporary Tibetan Buddhist landscape and to leave an open invitation for others to contribute to this work in the future. In the pages above, I have identified and described some of the most visible and significant features shared by members of the Tibetan Buddhist “family” in contemporary Taipei. However, just as members of a human family may share in manifesting certain traits and not others, there is more work to be done uncovering perhaps less visible or discernable shared characteristics as well as factors that are not present across Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Taipei region. Similarly, just as each

generation both evinces traits shared with their ancestors and contributes new traits that then become part of the overall family of resemblances, so too are Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei dynamic spaces that both manifest earlier traditions and continuously contribute to their ongoing re-definition. As a result, future studies may reveal new prominent features and characteristics that have grown to become important markers of the “family” of Tibetan Buddhists in the Taipei region.

Where this chapter has examined how Tibetan Buddhist communal life manifests in contemporary Taipei, the next three chapters shift to consider ongoing processes of religious transmission, re-territorialization, and localization at work in Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taipei. After establishing hundreds of centers in the 1990s and early 2000s, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Taiwanese disciples are now trying to secure the long-term stability of their traditions. Having “transplanted”⁶¹⁶ Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwanese soil over several waves of transmission, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners today increasingly find themselves less occupied with the establishment of new religious communities. Instead, both practitioners and teachers alike are increasingly active in the work of helping Tibetan Buddhism grow deeper roots in Taiwan to thrive within Taiwan’s diverse religious landscape.

⁶¹⁶ Martin Baumann, “The Transplantation of Buddhism to Germany: Processive Modes and Strategies of Adaptation,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 6, no. 1–4 (1994): 35, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006894X00028>.

Chapter 3

Pilgrims, Patrons, and Priests: The Exchange of Spiritual and Financial Capital and the Transmission of Tibetan Buddhism to Taiwan

On a refreshingly cool afternoon in Dharamsala in early October 2022, I lined up with a group of Taiwanese pilgrims from Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association for our final meeting with Gyütö Monastery's two main Tibetan rinpochés. I had been accompanying this group on a two-week pilgrimage from Taipei to Dharamsala to visit their mother monastery, attend teachings by prominent Tibetan religious leaders including the Dalai Lama, and visit important Buddhist sites in the region. Among the various acts of Buddhist merit making the Taiwanese pilgrims engaged in was one common activity: making extensive monetary offerings to Buddhist monastics. As we shuffled into the receiving room, each pilgrim approached both rinpochés individually with a red envelope wrapped in a white silken khatak (ཁ་ཐག་ལྗང་ལྗང་།, 哈達), combining elements of Chinese and Tibetan offering-making practices. Each member of the Taiwanese group presented khataks to the rinpochés, who in turn placed these khataks around the necks of the Taiwanese offerors and blessed them with a pat on the head. The pilgrims placed red envelopes of varying thicknesses on low tables in front of each rinpoché, the heaping pile of envelopes quickly overwhelming the teacup and plate of cookies that had originally occupied each table.

When everyone had presented their offerings and several group photos had been taken, we made our way outside and up the hill to a handsome four-story building set off to the back of the main monastic complex. This was the monastery elders' home, constructed in 2018 to honor

the sixty or so monks who fled Tibet in the late 1950s and carried forward Gyütö Monastery's system of study and practice into India. The building was constructed with donations above all from Gyütö Monastery's branch centers in Taipei⁶¹⁷ and the United States, as well as from patrons across the world. Today only a half-dozen or so monastic elders remain in residence, each with a private apartment and attendant.

On our way up the hill, as I scrambled to see if I had enough red envelopes in my bag for each monastic elder, I asked the young man I was walking next to what he thought was an appropriate amount to put inside each envelope. He said that he was putting in one hundred Indian rupees, but that ultimately each person should decide how much to offer. Looking around, I saw others in the group stuffing their red envelopes with everything from 100 to 2,000 Indian rupee notes, notes equivalent to between approximately 1.25 and 24.25 USD.⁶¹⁸ As we reached each of the monastic elders' rooms, some individuals pulled out medicines, golden amulets, and even socks to offer in addition to their khataks and red envelopes. The elder monks accepted each offering with a smile, draped khataks around everyone's necks, and spent a few moments

⁶¹⁷ See, for example, a fundraising call posted on the Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association blog in June 2017 soliciting donations, as well as a Facebook post on May 2018 thanking all those who donated to this project. Shangmi yuan taibei fofa xuehui 上密院台北市佛學會, "Shangmi yuan taibei fofa xuehui 上密院台北市佛學會," Facebook, May 3, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/gyuto.tw/photos/a.511104325651048/1740465392714929/>; Shangmi yuan taibei shi foxuehui 上密院台北市佛學會, "Shangmi yuan taibei shi foxuehui: yindu shangmi yuan xingjian lao seng fang ji jianyi yiliao suo mukuan tongqi 上密院台北市佛學會: 印度上密院興建老僧房及簡易醫療所募款通啟," *Shangmi yuan taibei shi foxuehui 上密院台北市佛學會* (blog), June 5, 2017, <http://gyutotaipceneter.blogspot.com/2017/06/blog-post.html>.

⁶¹⁸ The exchange rates here and throughout this chapter are based upon foreign currency rates published by the United States Department of the Treasury on December 31, 2022. See: U.S. Treasury, "Currency Exchange Rates Converter Tool," U.S. Treasury Fiscal Data, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/currency-exchange-rates-converter/>.

The pink-colored 2,000 Indian rupee note was introduced in 2016 and became the highest denomination currency note in circulation. In May 2023 the Indian Central Bank announced that it was withdrawing this note from circulation and requested that all remaining notes be deposited or exchanged by September 2023. See: Ira Dugal, "Explainer: What India's Decision to Scrap Its 2000-Rupee Note Means for Its Economy," *Reuters*, May 22, 2023, sec. Finance, <https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/what-indias-decision-scrap-its-2000-rupee-note-means-its-economy-2023-05-20/>; Ira Dugal and Aftab Ahmed, "India to Withdraw 2,000-Rupee Notes from Circulation," *Reuters*, May 20, 2023, sec. India, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-withdraw-2000-rupee-notes-circulation-central-bank-2023-05-19/>.

chatting with the pilgrims. Many recognized several of the Taiwanese pilgrims from their repeated visits to India over the last dozen years. One of the monastic elders, who I later learned had stayed at the Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association’s center in Taipei for several months, recognized quite a few of the pilgrims and even spoke a few words of Chinese to the group. The elder monks’ attendants standing off to the side were not overlooked and many Taiwanese, especially some of the older women, pressed red envelopes into their protesting hands as well.



Figure 23: Taiwanese pilgrims offer khataks and red envelopes to one of Gyütö’s monastic elders. Photo by author, 2022.

As we started to make our way back down the hill, I stopped and remarked to a woman in the group about the beauty of the large set of eight stūpas (མཚོ་རྩེ་ཆ་བརྒྱད།, 八大佛塔) just outside the elders’ home. “Oh, I sponsored one of them,” she spouted out, “10,000.” Temporarily lost converting between Indian rupees, US dollars, and New Taiwanese dollars (NTD), I replied “Oh,

10,000 NTD?” To which she laughed and retorted, “Of course not, 10,000 US dollars!”⁶¹⁹ As I continued to look at the stūpas in the fading sunlight, five women in our group walked by discussing, among other things, the one hundred protection amulets that one had just purchased in the monastery’s office. At dinner that night, it was announced to great rejoicing that these same women had organized some of their friends in Taiwan to donate 22,000 NTD each month (approximately 720 USD) to sponsor twenty-two young monks at Gyütö for the coming year.

1. Introduction

Time and time again when I asked teachers and practitioners during an interview or informal conversation why Tibetan Buddhism had grown so rapidly in Taiwan, their most common response was that this was due to the freedom of religion in Taiwanese society, the generosity of Taiwanese donors, and the need for funds to support large Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in South Asia. As I detailed in chapter one, for more than forty years Taiwanese financial support of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions has been a primary driver of Tibetan teachers travelling to Taiwan and establishing centers there. As Tibetan Buddhists were constructing or renovating religious institutions across South Asia, maintaining adequate support for a growing number of monastics, and later rebuilding institutions in the PRC destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, Taiwanese financial support was critical to these endeavors.

Matthew Kapstein notes that over his many decades of travel and research in Nepal, he started to notice an interest by Han peoples in Tibetan Buddhism and an increase in the flow of their donations starting in the 1970s.⁶²⁰ As the economy took off during the “Taiwan Miracle”

⁶¹⁹ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 7, 2022.

⁶²⁰ Matthew Kapstein, “Preface,” in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), xv.

and Taiwanese society opened to the growth of diverse social and religious organizations, Tibetan Buddhism with its esoteric teachings and reputation for ritual efficacy became an important recipient of Taiwanese religious patronage. By the 1990s when Moran was conducting fieldwork around the Boudha Stūpa in Kathmandu, Nepal, he remarked that “Taiwanese jindaks [patrons] have been a tremendous source of patronage for virtuous or religious activity (*dge-ba'i spyod-pa*), both monastery building and otherwise, around the Chorten of Bodhanath and elsewhere.”⁶²¹ Moran also notes that although he was primarily interested in researching Euro-North American involvement with Tibetan Buddhism, the topic of financial support from Taiwanese was a common denominator in many conversations he had with Tibetan Buddhist teachers about monastery building in the area around the Boudha Stūpa and that even Western disciples of Tibetan Buddhism were aware that Taiwanese and other East Asian patrons “put the Western jindaks [patrons] to shame.”⁶²²

Thus, for nearly half a century Taiwanese patronage has played a critical role in rebuilding Tibetan Buddhist communities in South Asia, supporting increasingly complex global Tibetan Buddhist networks, and above all encouraging the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist institutions within Taiwan itself. At the same time, it has been above all the esoteric expertise, impressive pedigrees, and mastery of powerful rituals that many Taiwanese believe Tibetan Buddhist teachers embody that has attracted many Taiwanese to empowerments and to request a variety of divinations and other apotropaic ritual services from these teachers. In other words, the dynamics of the relationship between Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers have to a great extent been forged through their exchange of spiritual services for financial patronage. This relationship is far from static. Rather, as I will argue in this chapter, the two-

⁶²¹ Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 83.

⁶²² Moran, 72.

directional flows that animate this exchange are continually renegotiated through a repeated renewal of the “rules of the game”⁶²³ by both sides that undergird this relationship.

Instead of employing the patron-priest model of exchange that has long been used to describe relations between Tibetan Buddhist clerics and Chinese patrons, this chapter advocates for a more nuanced model to describe the contemporary dynamics of the exchange of patronage and other material support for religious and spiritual services. I draw especially upon Bradford Verter⁶²⁴ and Hugh Urban’s⁶²⁵ discussions of spiritual capital, a concept they propose as better suited to analyses of religious life than other types of capital (cultural, social, symbolic, and so forth) elucidated by Pierre Bourdieu. I argue that not only did the exchange of spiritual and financial capital form the bedrock for the early transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan, but that this exchange forms a foundation upon which the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese disciples continues to be built and renegotiated today. Through this exchange, I maintain, both Tibetan teachers and Taiwanese devotees are co-creators of the value ascribed to spiritual capital and the rates at which it can be exchanged for other forms of capital, especially financial. One major avenue through which the rates of exchange between spiritual and cultural capital are created and renewed is through acts of pilgrimage, whereby Tibetan Buddhist teachers lead Taiwanese disciples to their mother or home monasteries.

Pilgrimage brings Taiwanese disciples into proximity with the monastic communities they support and provides a uniquely immersive atmosphere in which to receive Tibetan Buddhist teachings and empowerments, engage in practice, meet with Tibetan Buddhist teachers,

⁶²³ Caple, “Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift,” 463–64, 476–77; Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 60–1.

⁶²⁴ Verter, “Spiritual Capital.”

⁶²⁵ Urban, “Sacred Capital.”

and witness their financial support bearing fruit within living monastic communities. Pilgrimage also provides Taiwanese patrons with myriad opportunities to directly make cash offerings, in-kind donations, and sponsorships, demonstrating their continued commitment to financially supporting Tibetan Buddhist institutions and teachers. Moreover, pilgrimages provide a spiritually charged venue for Tibetan Buddhist teachers to perform spiritual services, bestow blessings, act as fertile fields of merit, and show care for their Taiwanese disciples. In these ways, pilgrimages are not only opportunities for monasteries to showcase their responsible use of and continued need for financial support, but are also settings in which monasteries and teachers demonstrate the abundance of spiritual capital they possess and can share with their disciples.

This chapter considers the role of pilgrimage in renewing the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners. Taking the Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association's (hereafter GTBA) annual pilgrimage to Gyütö Monastery as a case study, I argue that this community's annual trips to their mother monastery play a critical role in renewing the rates of exchange between spiritual and financial capital wielded by Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their disciples. This occurs through both organized acts of giving, such as the performative almsgiving described at the opening of this chapter, as well as spontaneous donations and offerings made for spiritual services and sacred items. At the same time, Gyütö Monastery's leaders give religious teachings, tantric empowerments, and bestow their blessings on the Taiwanese pilgrims, while other Gyütö monks perform both manual and spiritual labor, embodying ideals for Buddhist monastics as suitable recipients of lay Buddhist patronage.

Through examining GTBA's annual pilgrimage to Gyütö Monastery, this chapter will demonstrate the iterative and ongoing negotiation that facilitates the exchange of religious teachings and services for patronage, or the exchange of spiritual and financial capital. Utilizing

a religious marketplace analogy, Verter notes that spiritual capital is “not a stable currency; it is less like gold than like stocks; subject to sudden inflation and Enronesque collapses, the value of particular denominations dependent upon the fluctuations of the market.”⁶²⁶ Applying this approach to spiritual capital, the value of the “goods of salvation”⁶²⁷ that Tibetan Buddhist teachers are revered for and the financial patronage by which Taiwanese disciples support Tibetan Buddhist institutions and monastics are in constant variation. Nevertheless, I argue that pilgrimages provide avenues to renew the rates of exchange between these two types of capital, reaffirming the bonds forged between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Taiwanese disciples.

I should note at the onset that my arguments in this chapter are by no means meant to be reductionist, simplifying the dynamics between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and intuitions and Taiwanese disciples to only the variables of giving, merit, ritual power, and money. I am not arguing that teachers are only interested in spreading Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and around the globe for the purposes of raising funds. Nor am I arguing that Taiwanese are interested in Tibetan Buddhism purely for utilitarian purposes. Nevertheless, it is critical to consider the ways in which material resources are needed to sustain Buddhist monastic communities and the ways Buddhist laity seek to secure positive conditions in this and future lives through the accrual of merit and blessings. In doing so, I take seriously Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg and Trine Brox’s assessment that from the origins of Buddhism to the present, Buddhist monastics “whose dominant value-orientation is primarily assumed to be asceticism, and laity, whose dominant value-orientation is primarily assumed to be merit-making, have been imbricated in mutual-

⁶²⁶ Verter, “Spiritual Capital,” 159.

⁶²⁷ Mathew Guest, “In Search of Spiritual Capital: The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource,” in *A Sociology of Spirituality*, ed. Peter C. Jupp and Kieran Flanagan (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 192.

exchange relationships.”⁶²⁸ Or, stating this point even more succinctly, Matthew King remarks that wherever one looks across centuries and geographies, “Buddhism happens economically.”⁶²⁹

Given the burgeoning interest in the dynamics between Buddhism and economics,⁶³⁰ the case I consider in this chapter of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions and their Taiwanese disciples and patrons warrants particular attention. As mentioned above, numerous scholars have highlighted the specific importance of Taiwanese patronage to the incredible recent growth of Tibetan Buddhist institutions across South Asia, but few have examined the nuances of this exchange. Accordingly, this chapter makes an important contribution by illuminating the diverse avenues of patronage and spiritual services that animate the relationship between Taiwanese disciples and Tibetan Buddhist teachers. I hope that my focus on the dynamics of the exchange of spiritual and financial capital will offer a clearer picture of how Taiwanese patronage of Tibetan Buddhism supports the continued transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan today.

2. Reimagining the Patron-Priest Relationship as Multi-Directional Capital Flows

The interconnectedness of Buddhism and economics is far from a recent development that has accompanied the emergence of capitalist economies. Rather, as Williams-Oerberg and Brox rightly note, Buddhists’ engagement with regional economies began with the historical

⁶²⁸ Trine Brox and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, “Buddhism, Business, and Economics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*, ed. Michael Jerryson (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 507, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199362387.013.42>.

⁶²⁹ Matthew King, “Buddhist Economics: Scales of Value in Global Exchange,” in *Oxford Handbook Topics in Religion*, Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford Academic, July 7, 2016), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935420.013.64>.

⁶³⁰ Most recently, Williams-Oerberg and Brox co-edited a 2019 special issue of the *Journal of Global Buddhism* focused on Buddhism and economics and also edited an anthology on this topic. See: Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, “Introduction: Buddhism and Economics,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 20 (2019): 19–29, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3238225>; Trine Brox and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, eds., *Buddhism and Business: Merit, Material Wealth, and Morality in the Global Market Economy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020).

Buddha Śākyamuni and in the centuries after his death the “spread and development of Buddhism throughout Asia and globally has been largely mediated by economic relations.”⁶³¹ Buddhist traditions have historically spread fastest along “networks of economic exchanges,”⁶³² moving with merchants along major trade routes and targeting the patronage of rulers and social elites.⁶³³ As Ronald Davidson has argued, even with the collapse of trade networks, such as occurred in the seventh to eighth centuries in northern India, Buddhist institutions survived through allying themselves with emergent political centers that had become new loci for economic power. In some cases, such as in medieval India and in Tibet, Buddhist institutions themselves became political centers in order to shore up and secure their economic base.⁶³⁴

Accordingly, Buddhist monastic institutions have from their very beginnings been dependent upon donations and economic surpluses for their construction as well as for the sustenance and needs of their monastic initiates who were, by and large, not materially self-sufficient. As Williams-Oerberg and Brox conclude, “Buddhist individuals and institutions have always depended on economic and material resources in order to operate and expand.”⁶³⁵ At the same time, Jørn Borup and others have argued that not only was an economic surplus necessary for the establishment of the Buddhist sangha as it spread to diverse locales historically, but that Buddhist institutions and monastics actually further catalyzed local economic growth as they

⁶³¹ Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg and Trine Brox, “Introduction: Buddhist Encounters with the Global Market Economy and Consumer Society,” in *Buddhism and Business: Merit, Material Wealth, and Morality in the Global Market Economy*, ed. Trine Brox and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020), 2.

⁶³² Lionel Obadia, “Is Buddhism like a Hamburger? Buddhism and the Market Economy in a Globalized World,” in *The Economics of Religion: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Lionel Obadia and Donald C. Wood, vol. 31, Research in Economic Anthropology (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2011), 104.

⁶³³ Jørn Borup, “Spiritual Capital and Religious Evolution: Buddhist Values and Transactions in Historical and Contemporary Perspective,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 20 (January 1, 2019): 104, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.3238217>.

⁶³⁴ Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), esp. 75–168.

⁶³⁵ Williams-Oerberg and Brox, “Introduction: Buddhist Encounters with the Global Market Economy and Consumer Society,” 2.

spread.⁶³⁶ Buddhist institutions have long been “monastic entrepreneurs,”⁶³⁷ securing and expanding their economic base and promoting economic growth in various roles as landlords and bankers. This form of “monastic capitalism”⁶³⁸ included diversified economic pursuits, which Yang Lien-shang notes extended to Buddhist monasteries in China operating pawnshops, auction houses, leading mutual-finance associations, and even selling lottery tickets.⁶³⁹

In Tibetan history, emic theorizations of the relationship between religious teachers and lay patrons are often described through the model of the patron-priest or patron-spiritual preceptor relationship (མཚན་ཡོན་ཡོན་མཚན།). This idea has its origins perhaps as early as the Minyag or Western Xia Kingdom (མི་ཉག, 西夏 1038–1227),⁶⁴⁰ but was developed and applied especially to describe the relations between Tibetan Buddhist religious teachers and Mongolian, Han, and Manchu elites starting in the Yuan Dynasty.⁶⁴¹ In some cases, the Tibetan teachers and their elite patrons were of the highest stature, such as the relationship between the abbot-prince Phakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen (འཕགས་པ་སློབ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་མཚན།, 八思巴 1235–1280) and Mongol emperor Kublai Khan (ཨེ་ཆེན་ཀྱི་པོ།, 忽必烈 1215–1294).⁶⁴² In other cases, patrons and Tibetan donees were of far lower status, such as local princes or clan chiefs and regionally important clerics.⁶⁴³ Across all of these

⁶³⁶ Borup, “Spiritual Capital and Religious Evolution,” 52–55.

⁶³⁷ Randall Collins, “An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 6 (1997): 855, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657343>.

⁶³⁸ Randall Collins, *Weberian Sociological Theory* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 71.

⁶³⁹ Lien-sheng Yang, “Buddhist Monasteries and Four Money-Raising Institutions in Chinese History,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13, no. 1/2 (June 1, 1950), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2718163>.

⁶⁴⁰ Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 107.

⁶⁴¹ Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 480–481.

⁶⁴² Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yuan--Sa-Skya Period of Tibetan History*, Serie Orientale Roma (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 16–31; Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 77–80.

⁶⁴³ D. Seyfort Ruegg, “The Preceptor-Donor (Yon Mchod) Relation in Thirteenth-Century Tibetan Society and Polity, Its Inner Asian Precursors and Indian Models,” in *Tibetan Studies — Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the*

relationships, however, was a religious and personal connection between an “official and spiritual preceptor with a donor-ruler”⁶⁴⁴ that facilitated the exchange of spiritual services and teachings for economic patronage, political, and even military support.⁶⁴⁵

The patron-priest relationship was also present across Tibetan areas in the relationships between Buddhist teachers and local kings, princes, clan chiefs, as well as merchants and aristocracy. While local rulers’ and elites’ political, military, and economic resources may have varied, their support was nevertheless crucial for the widespread flourishing of Buddhist institutions and their exceptionally large number of monastic initiates across the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. To a great degree, this relationship between religious professionals providing spiritual services and laity offering material resources spanned, and in many cases continues to extend across all levels of Tibetan society, from the connections between aristocracy and high-ranking rinpochés down to the ties between the faithful public (དྲན་ལྷན་གྱི་མང་ཚོགས།) and the village monastics (ཨ་མཚོད།/དཔོན་གཉེན།) who tend to the spiritual needs of local communities.⁶⁴⁶

Externally, the patron-priest relationship proved to be a particularly effective mechanism through which Tibetan Buddhist teachers garnered political, military, and economic support in exchange for serving as spiritual preceptors to political elite. Charismatic Tibetan Buddhist teachers had remarkable success winning over and securing support from Mongol princes, as well as rulers of the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, turning the patron-priest relationship into a

International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz, 1995, ed. Helmut Krasser and Ernst Steinkeller, vol. II (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 867–868.

⁶⁴⁴ Ruegg, 867.

⁶⁴⁵ John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 159; Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1989), 44; P. Christiaan Klieger, *Tibet: A History Between Dream and Nation State* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), 51–60 & 72–86 & 136–137; Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, 10–11; Smyer Yü, “A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism,” 55.

⁶⁴⁶ Caple, “Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift,” 469.

hallmark of Tibetan political strategy and foreign policy. Davidson even describes the formation of patron-priest relationships between Sakya Paṇḍita and Koden Khan (ཉིར་རྒྱལ་བུ་གོ་དགཤ།, 關端 1206–1251) and between Phakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen and Kublai Khan as “one of the most important developments in Central Asian history” due to the fact that as a result of these connections the Mongols “left Tibet largely alone and delegated its administration to a Sakya monk”⁶⁴⁷.

In post-dynastic China and later in the period following the Cultural Revolution, a number of scholars have discussed Han peoples’ financial support for Tibetan Buddhism, especially within the PRC, as a continuation or an adapted version of the historical patron-priest relationship Tibetan Buddhist leaders sought with Mongol, Han, and Manchu leaders.⁶⁴⁸

Although modern patronage is no longer coming from an imperial state and Tibetan Buddhist teachers are (generally) no longer involved in performing rituals for the support of the state or serving as religious preceptors to heads of government, these scholars describe other elements of continuity with the historical patron-priest model. While there has been, as Alison Denton Jones describes, a “democratization of patronage,” wherein financial support has shifted from being offered by a small number of elites to being offered by a larger segment of the public,⁶⁴⁹ the crux of the relationship remains the same. The connections between teachers and patrons are still predicated upon the exchange of spiritual and material resources and power.

While a common metaphor in Tibetan political theory and widely applied by non-Tibetan scholars, there are several reasons why “patron-priest” is perhaps no longer the most accurate

⁶⁴⁷ Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 370.

⁶⁴⁸ Caple, “Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift,” 463; Jones, “Accidental Esoterics: Han Chinese Practicing Tibetan Buddhism,” 280–81; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism,” 541, 545–546; Smyer Yü, “A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism,” 55; Zablocki, “The Global Mandala,” 249 & 372–373; Zablocki, “The Taiwanese Connection,” 407.

⁶⁴⁹ Jones, “Accidental Esoterics: Han Chinese Practicing Tibetan Buddhism,” 281.

conceptual framework through which to understand the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Chinese disciples. First, this metaphor is primarily grounded in the relationships between Tibetan Buddhist masters and political leaders. Well known examples include Phakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen and Kublai Khan during the Yuan Dynasty,⁶⁵⁰ the Yongle Emperor (永樂皇帝/明成祖朱棣, ཡུང་ལོངས་སྐུ་པོ།/ཡུའུ་ཉི་སྐུ་པོ། 1360–1424) and the fifth Karmapa Dezhin Shekpa (ཀམ་པ་ལྷ་བ་དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།, 第五世噶瑪巴德新謝巴 1384–1415) during the Ming Dynasty,⁶⁵¹ and the Fifth Dalai Lama (སྐུ་མཚོག་ལལ་རག་དབང་སློབ་བཟང་སྐུ་མཚོ།, 第五世达赖喇嘛 1617–1682) and the Shunzhi Emperor (順治皇帝, བྱམ་ཙི་སྐུ་པོ། 1638–1661) during the Qing Dynasty.⁶⁵²

Several scholars have even noted how state support for Tibetan Buddhist teachers, such as the Ninth Panchen Lama (པཎ་ཆེན་འོལ་སློབ་བཟང་ལུབ་བསྟན་ཚུལ་གྱི་ཉི་མ།, 第九世班禪額爾德尼麩吉尼瑪, 1883–1937),⁶⁵³ Norlha Qutuyltu,⁶⁵⁴ and Changkya Qutuyltu,⁶⁵⁵ even extended into the Republican period, suggesting that Chiang Kai Shek and others in the ROC government continued to participate in the patron-priest relationship through the mid-twentieth century.

⁶⁵⁰ Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, 16–31; Van Schaik, *Tibet*, 77–80.

⁶⁵¹ Elliot Sperling, “The 5th Karma-Pa and Some Aspects of the Relationship Between Tibet and the Early Ming,” in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson: Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 1979*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi, Aris & Phillips Central Asian Studies (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1980), 291–284; Van Schaik, *Tibet*, 91.

⁶⁵² Oidtmann, *Forging the Golden Urn*, 30–37; Van Schaik, *Tibet*, 124–26.

⁶⁵³ Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu* 金剛乘事件簿, 52; Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937)*, 104–130.

⁶⁵⁴ Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 258.

⁶⁵⁵ Hua zang jing zongxuehui 華藏淨宗學會, *Yuanyuan liuchang* 源遠流長, 5 & 14; Huang Yingjie 黃英傑, *Jingang cheng shijian bu* 金剛乘事件簿, 83; Jagou, “Le bouddhisme tibétain à Taïwan,” 55; Jagou, “Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future,” 70–73.

Today, while there are political elite who remain active supporters of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan,⁶⁵⁶ the relationship between Han devotees and Tibetan Buddhist teachers is built upon rather different foundations than during the dynastic or even early Republican periods. First, patrons of Tibetan Buddhism are not predominantly rulers and political elites. Tibetan masters are no longer awarded official titles, such as Imperial Master (帝師, ཏི་ཤེ།) or National Preceptor (國師, ལུ་ཤེ།), nor do they receive official state support. Instead, Tibetan teachers in Taiwan are supported by congregations of moderate to well-educate, middle- to upper-class Taiwanese.

Furthermore, contemporary Taiwanese patrons' influence lies primarily in their bank accounts rather than in their political or military clout. While they may manage companies and have political connections, Taiwanese patrons do not control imperial bureaucracies and the wealth of kingdoms. They do not have the armies of the Mongols and the Qing at their disposal to intervene on behalf or in defense of their Tibetan Buddhist preceptors. In fact, while most Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists greatly revere the Dalai Lama, they generally do not take much interest in Tibetan political causes.⁶⁵⁷ Nor have Taiwanese practitioners been very successful in

⁶⁵⁶ Rather prominent examples mentioned during multiple interviews and conversations include members of the political elite Chen (陳) family, such as Chen Cheng, a prominent Republican general who also served as the 5th and 7th Presidents of the Executive Yuan (行政院院長) and the second and third Vice-President of the ROC (副總統), and his son Chen Li-an (陳履安 b. 1937), who served among other roles as the eighteenth minister of Economic Affairs (經濟部部長), the eighteenth Minister of National Defense (國防部部長), the Fifth President of the Control Yuan (監察院院長), as well as an independent presidential candidate in the 1996 national elections. One of Chen Li-an's sons, Chen Yu-an (陳宇全 b. 1978), even ordained in the Karma Kagyü school and earned his khenpo degree, equivalent to a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy and practice. Another son, Chen Yu-ting (陳宇廷 b. 1964) is a former monk, prominent Tibetan Buddhist practitioner, and philanthropist. Another supporter of Tibetan Buddhism is Feng Shih-kuan (馮世寬), a retired general in the ROC Air Force, former Minister of National Defense, and currently the fourth Minister of the Veteran Affairs Council (國軍退除役官兵輔導委員會主任委員). In January 2023, I met Feng Shih-kuan while he was presiding over the reopening ceremony of Kangyur Temple discussed in chapter one. Feng spearheaded the extensive renovations of this temple, overseeing the construction and fundraising efforts, as well as, it was rumored, offering eight million NTD (approximately 261,000 USD) of his own funds to support this project.

⁶⁵⁷ A similar statement could also be made for supporters of Tibetan political causes in Taiwan. There are strong pro-Tibet lobbying groups and politicians in Taiwan that generally count ethnic Tibetan residents and Taiwanese advocates of human rights among their supporters. Several Taiwanese politicians, most famously the heavy metal

driving even modest local political change in support of their Tibetan teachers, such as attempts to extend the length of visas issued to Tibetan Buddhist teachers.⁶⁵⁸ Instead, Taiwanese express their support for Tibetan Buddhism predominantly through financial means.

Additionally, the situation of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan today also differs quite markedly from previous preceptors to Mongolian, Manchu, and Han political elites. Tibetan teachers in Taiwan no longer come from landed monastic estates on the Tibetan Plateau, but instead mostly from monasteries rebuilt in exile in India and Nepal. Generally speaking, their monastic institutions do not control vast tracts of land or exert a significant amount of local political power. Rather, these monasteries have been rebuilt in exile contexts and the resident Tibetan Buddhist teachers are often stateless refugees. Above all, contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teachers do not come to Taiwan seeking political, military, and economic support against sectarian rivals or external threats. Instead, they seek funds primarily to support the maintenance of monastic bodies and institutions that depend on diverse sources of revenue.

musician and member of the Legislative Yuan (立法院) Freddy Lim, are strong supporters of Tibetan political aspirations for genuine. However, these individuals are primarily supporters of Tibet politically speaking and are not prominent practitioners or patrons of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

⁶⁵⁸ Since Tibetan Buddhist teachers first started coming to Taiwan, most have had to contend with only being issued visas of a very limited duration, with little hope of a pathway to long-term residency and the benefits such status entails, such as national health insurance. While the visa duration has fluctuated over the last thirty years, during the time of my research each Tibetan Buddhist center was allowed to sponsor one leading teacher, who could be issued a six month visa. Any other monks the center sponsored were issued three month visas. At the end of these three or six months, exceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, Tibetan Buddhist teachers and monastics have to leave Taiwan and apply for a new three or six month visa. This policy only applies to Tibetan Buddhist teachers. All other non-Taiwanese religious professionals who come to Taiwan for missionary work may apply through their sponsoring organization for resident visas. Taiwanese disciples of Tibetan Buddhism sought to change the existing regulations and in 2023 a group representing more than 150 Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan requested the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bureau of Consular Affairs to govern Tibetan Buddhist teachers under the same regulations as apply to all other non-Taiwanese religious professionals in Taiwan. While these petitioners were successful in extending all visas issued to Tibetan Buddhist teachers and monastics to six months, the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused the petitioners' requests to govern Tibetan Buddhist teachers under the same laws as apply to other non-Taiwanese religious professionals. This decision still makes it exceedingly difficult for Tibetan Buddhist teachers to apply for residency in Taiwan. See: Zangseng qianzheng tuidong gaige lianmeng 藏僧簽證推動改革聯盟, "Women hen gaoping gen dajia baogao, lianmeng de nuli you jieduan xing chengguo... 我們很高興跟大家報告, 聯盟的努力有階段性成果..." Facebook, August 17, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/TibetanBuddhismTaiwan/posts/pfbid023rZMWRPmdXCPPpVUFgL83CKCdkJwKy3PGQF5QxBri87kE7a3oLBJ3ytpHEngDUU1>.

For many monasteries, the income earned from small monastery shops, guest houses, and other economic ventures in South Asia is far from sufficient to support the ongoing needs of their communities and they depend heavily on foreign donations from places like Taiwan. GTBA, for example, transfers most of the donations it receives back to Gyütö Monastery in India. As the Tibetan geshé of GTBA told me in an interview, “[We] give everything to the monastery. We [the monks resident in Taiwan] are given 6,000 [NTD] each month from the center. It’s a type of stipend. Other than that, everything [we receive], whatever offerings are made, whatever we receive after performing rituals outside [the center], we offer all of this to the monastery. It’s not ours privately.”⁶⁵⁹ This was confirmed by a Taiwanese leader of GTBA who noted that this 6,000 NTD (approximately 195 USD in 2024’s economy) is considered a living stipend for the monks in Taiwan. “All the rest of the money they receive, whatever private donations are made all belong to [Gyütö’s] monastic assembly. They only have this 6,000 NTD for living expenses, the rest of what they receive belongs to the monastic assembly.”⁶⁶⁰ In this way, most of what is offered to GTBA and the monks for private rituals is sent to support the monastic body in India.

Not only is securing a base of financial support for home monasteries of preeminent importance to most Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, but many also avoid engaging with political topics while in Taiwan. Teachers, especially from non-Geluk schools, for example, generally avoid issues related to the Central Tibetan Administration (བོད་མིའི་སློབ་གཞན་འཛུགས།; 藏人行政中央, hereafter CTA) and debates over independence (རང་བཙན།) versus genuine autonomy (དོན་ལྔ་ན་གྱི་རང་

⁶⁵⁹ “ཚང་མ་དགོན་པོ་ལ་སྤྲོད་གྱི་རེད། རེ་ཚོར་ད་ལྟར་ཐུབ་པའི་རེར་ཚོས་ཚོགས་ནས་སྤོར་མོ་དྲུག་སྤོར་རེ་སྤྲོད་གྱི་ཡོད་པའི་དུང་། རྒྱ་ཆ། རྒྱ་ཆ་ཟེར་ན་རེ་ཚོར་འདི་རེད། དེ་མིན་གཞན་དག་ཚང་མ་ལ་ཞལ་འདེབས་བྱུང་བ་དང་། རེ་ཚོས་ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ་ཞལ་བ་དང་སྐྱབ་ཚང་ནས་གང་བྱུང་བ་ཚང་མ་དགོན་པ་ལ་ཕུལ་དགོས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པའི་དུང་། རེ་ཚོའི་སྤོར་གྱི་ཡོད་པ་རེད།” Geshé of GTBA, interview with author, Taipei, September 11, 2022.

⁶⁶⁰ “那其他他們所收的錢，人家供養的錢都是教會寺院區的。就是說他們只有那個六千塊是生活費那其他所收的錢都是教會寺院區的。”Member of GTBA’s leadership, Line message to author, May 30, 2023.

ལྗོངས་ལྗོངས་) for Tibet as they carefully try to navigate connections with religious communities both inside the PRC and in South Asia. A gathering I attended to commemorate the March 10th uprising⁶⁶¹ organized by the Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan (在台藏人福利協會, བོད་རྒྱལ་ཚོགས་པ།), for instance, was attended by more than twenty members of the local lay Tibetan community, a dozen or so Taiwanese supporters of Tibet, as well as the head of the CTA's office in Taiwan and seven local and national Taiwanese political leaders from different political parties. Amidst this crowd and jostling group of television camera operators and journalists there was a conspicuous absence of any significant monastic presence. Although Tibetan Buddhist monastics likely outnumber lay Tibetans in Taiwan nearly five to one, only three geshés, one of whom was the current resident teacher at the CTA-affiliated TRFDL, attended the event. The presence of only several Geluk monastics at an event for the entire Tibetan community was revealing of the very limited scale of political lobbying by Tibetan Buddhist monastics in Taiwan. This stood in stark contrast to other religiously oriented events organized by the Tibetan community in Taiwan that attracted hundreds of Tibetan monastics. For many Tibetan teachers in Taiwan, Tibetan politics and religion just do not mix. At least, not in public.

Due to the primacy of securing economic patronage and the scant attention given to political concerns in their mutual interactions, I argue that we should reconsider whether the patron-priest metaphor is still the most useful framework to conceptualize the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese disciples. As refugees in a country that itself

⁶⁶¹ March 10th or Tibetan Uprising Day (བོད་མིའི་སྐྱེད་ལངས་གསུམ་བཅུ་ཉེ་ལྔ་ཉིན།; 西藏人民起義日) is an annual commemoration of the 1959 uprising by Tibetans in Lhasa against the PLA's occupation of the city and fears that Chinese authorities were going to arrest the Dalai Lama. These protests led to the Dalai Lama's flight into exile, precipitating a mass exodus of Tibetan laity and monastics.

has an extremely marginalized political status, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan have no viable path to garner political or military support from their largely Taiwanese disciples. Instead of a relationship that is deeply interwoven with a diverse array of spiritual, political, economic, and military concerns, the relationship between Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers is more narrowly focused on concerns of sustenance and salvation. In other words, it hinges most heavily on Tibetan Buddhist monastics securing the resources necessary to maintain their religious traditions and Taiwanese patrons receiving what they perceive to be effective spiritual means for apotropaic protection, worldly well-being and success, and enlightenment.

In the capitalist framework that dominates the current global economy, it may be more helpful to consider this interchange of spiritual prowess and patronage as an exchange of spiritual and financial capital. Framing this relationship in terms of capital exchange is not to take an overly economic approach that reduces the complex dynamics between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Taiwanese disciples to mere utilitarian calculations. Rather, it is to follow Bourdieu⁶⁶² and others in acknowledging that capital takes numerous forms which have their own complex ways of being accumulated, held, reproduced, as well as converted into one another. It is also to acknowledge that while religious concerns are by no means reducible to utilitarian economics,⁶⁶³ they are hardly divorced from economic realities either.

While the case I discuss in this chapter is specific in many of its details to the GTBA community and their relationship with Gyütö Monastery, the dynamics of exchanging spiritual and financial capital are not limited to these communities alone. As I described in chapter one, the economics of patronage were a primary motivating factor for Tibetan Buddhist teachers to

⁶⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

⁶⁶³ Maria Hämmerli, "Religion and Spirituality between Capital and Gift: Religion & Theology," *Religion & Theology* 18, no. 1–2 (2011): 202–203, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157430111X613728>.

travel to Taiwan and invest in local institution building. The success these teachers enjoyed was not only a result of their individual efforts, but also due to many Taiwanese who demanded Tibetan Buddhist spiritual goods. Similarly, concerns for patronage and material support drove many Tibetan teachers to Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere, especially in the early years of exile when Tibetans in South Asia stood on particularly unstable foundations. While Euro-North American students were, generally speaking, less interested in rituals, they eagerly sought other Tibetan Buddhist spiritual goods, such as contemplative and meditative practices. Furthermore, recent interest in Tibetan Buddhism among Han peoples in the PRC has brought a surge in patronage from Chinese who are “primarily interested in the power of Tibetan Buddhist ritual to secure financial success and other worldly benefit.”⁶⁶⁴ This draw is difficult to resist by many Tibetan teachers in the PRC who are eager to secure financial support for their home institutions, and possibly for themselves. In this way, my analysis of the exchange of spiritual and financial capital as an animating dynamic in the relationship between GTBA and Gyütö Monastery may well find purchase in studies of Tibetan Buddhism well beyond Taiwan.

3. The Exchange of Spiritual and Financial Capital

The term spiritual capital was brought into academic discourse nearly simultaneously by Bradford Verter⁶⁶⁵ and Hugh Urban⁶⁶⁶ in two separate articles in 2003. Both authors draw heavily upon Bourdieu’s discussions of multiple forms of capital, a term which for Bourdieu refers to “all goods, material and symbolic, that present themselves as *rare* and worthy of being

⁶⁶⁴ Caple, “Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift,” 465.

⁶⁶⁵ Verter, “Spiritual Capital.”

⁶⁶⁶ Urban, “Sacred Capital.”

sought after in a particular social formation.”⁶⁶⁷ Urban and Verter both take issue with Bourdieu’s assessment of religion, critiquing his analyses as being too static, lacking agentic capacity for religious laity, and not offering sufficient space for religious change.⁶⁶⁸ Urban further critiques Bourdieu for imagining humans as purely capital-driven beings, “essentially interested, acquisitive, competitive creatures, each of us struggling for the accumulation of capital in order to secure an optimal position within the social hierarchy.”⁶⁶⁹ The pair suggest a number of correctives, including putting forth another type of capital, spiritual capital,⁶⁷⁰ that they believe might be better suited for analyzing religion than Bourdieu’s categories of capital. While Bourdieu discusses “religious capital,”⁶⁷¹ Verter critiques this term for being “something that is produced and accumulated within a hierocratic institutional framework” and is insufficiently capacious for less institutional and more diffused manifestations of capital.⁶⁷²

Verter does follow Bourdieu, however, in dividing spiritual capital into three types: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized spiritual capital. In its embodied form, Verter defines spiritual capital as “the knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials an individual has amassed in the field of religion and is the outcome of education or unconscious process of socialization.”⁶⁷³ Urban similarly follows Bourdieu, describing this form of spiritual capital as embodying “the authority to administer the goods of salvation.”⁶⁷⁴ In the Tibetan Buddhist context the “goods of

⁶⁶⁷ Italics in original. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 178, quoted in Urban, “Sacred Capital,” 360.

⁶⁶⁸ Urban, “Sacred Capital,” 364–367; Verter, “Spiritual Capital,” 151.

⁶⁶⁹ Urban, “Sacred Capital,” 366.

⁶⁷⁰ Urban originally used the term “sacred capital” in his 2003 article. However, in a later response to Verter he also adopts the term “spiritual capital.” See: Urban, “Spiritual Capital, Academic Capital and the Politics of Scholarship.”

⁶⁷¹ Bourdieu, “The Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” 9–10, 22–23.

⁶⁷² Verter, “Spiritual Capital,” 158.

⁶⁷³ Verter, 159.

⁶⁷⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991): 22 quoted in Urban, “Sacred Capital,” 362.

salvation” are not limited to a teacher’s liturgical and doctrinal expertise, but might also include their educational and meditative pedigree, religious titles and lineage, as well as more affective dimensions, such as their reputation for kindness and compassion (བཅའ་སྦྱིང་།, 慈悲) or even their “craziness” (སྦྱིང་།, 瘋子).⁶⁷⁵ In its objectified form, Verter describes spiritual capital as manifesting in material and symbolic commodities, while its institutionalized form is the power possessed and wielded by religious organizations. Mathew Guest echoes Urban in describing this last form of spiritual capital as the power of religious organizations to determine “the meaning of and access to the ‘goods of salvation.’”⁶⁷⁶

Collectively, therefore, spiritual capital might be understood as the institutions, objects, teachings, practices, and individuals that amass, embody, control, promote, and distribute the “objects” of spiritual power and value or the spiritual goods within a given religious tradition. While, similar to other forms of capital, the idea of spiritual capital acknowledges that there is something particular about the spiritual resources offered by religious communities that distinguishes them from other social organizations. As Robert Woodberry describes, spiritual capital involves specifically “resources that are created or people have access to when people invest in religion *as religion*.”⁶⁷⁷ He cites the Eucharist, experiences of the divine, and belief in

⁶⁷⁵ The majority of Taiwanese I spoke with during my research were far more familiar and comfortable with the former type of Tibetan Buddhist teacher. One Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist monastic I interviewed summarized the position of many Taiwanese, stating that “Crazy wisdom is not that popular in Taiwan. Most Taiwanese like a monk who wears robes, is not married, performs pūjas, and above all else who achieves results.” Taiwanese Nyingma monastic, interview with author, Taipei, December 11, 2021. Nevertheless, there are several ‘crazy’ masters with centers in Taiwan. The teacher most frequently mentioned to me was Choktrül Rinpoché (མཚོགས་རྒྱལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།; 秋竹仁波切 b. 1966), known also as “Crazy Chok” (མཚོགས་སྦྱིང་། 秋竹瘋子). See: “Qiuzhu renboqie chuancheng shusheng ying hua (7) di si shi qiuzhu renboqie 秋竹仁波切傳承殊勝應化 (7) 第四世秋竹仁波切,” Qiuzhu fengzi 秋竹瘋子, January 1, 2010, <https://choktrul.org/lineage07/>; མཚོགས་སྦྱིང་། 秋竹瘋子 Crazy Chok, “མཚོགས་སྦྱིང་། 秋竹瘋子 Crazy Chok,” Facebook, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/choktrul>.

⁶⁷⁶ Guest, “In Search of Spiritual Capital,” 192.

⁶⁷⁷ Italics added for emphasis. Robert D. Woodberry, “Researching Spiritual Capital: Promises and Pitfalls” (Spiritual Capital Research Program: Planning Meeting 2003, Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2003), 1.

the existence of sin as examples of spiritual resources that do not easily map onto other existing categories of capital.

Like other forms of capital, spiritual capital's value is contextually dependent. Rather than existing innately, spiritual capital is produced and reproduced, accumulated and expended within particular social conditions. First, spiritual capital has to be recognized as something of value in a given context. As Tischer notes, spiritual activity only becomes spiritual capital "when it is externalized and socially recognized and accepted."⁶⁷⁸ In other words, spiritual capital's valuation is foremost dependent upon its manifestation within an environment or social field, to use Bourdieu's preferred term, where people recognize it.

After being recognized, spiritual capital is ascribed a value. This valuation is done both in light of other local forms of spiritual capital as well as vis-à-vis other forms of capital, such as financial capital. The valuation of spiritual capital vis-à-vis other forms of capital fluctuates according to different cultural, political, and economic circumstances. As Verter describes using the metaphor of a spiritual marketplace, "the value of particular varieties of spiritual capital is subject to the fluctuations of the market."⁶⁷⁹ For this reason, in a context where spiritual goods lack value, they may be worth less than in other religious environments or even worthless altogether. Given the right context and religious environment, however, different forms of spiritual capital can be valued quite highly. What Bourdieu terms the "transubstantiation" of different forms of capital,⁶⁸⁰ I would describe as its "exchange" or "conversion." The exchange or conversion rate of spiritual capital can be higher or lower depending on the religious environment or marketplace in which it manifests and the valuation ascribed by participants in

⁶⁷⁸ Tischer, "The Invisible Hand of the Temple (Manager)," 66.

⁶⁷⁹ Verter, "Spiritual Capital," 166.

⁶⁸⁰ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 242.

said marketplace. This fact points to an important role played by non-specialists that Bourdieu in his theorizing of religious capital does not fully consider.

Verter and Urban both critique Bourdieu's view of religious non-professionals as being too facile by limiting agency primarily to religious professionals. For Bourdieu, religious non-professionals or "the laity" are "objectively defined as profane (in the double meaning of religious ignorants and strangers to the sacred and to the body of administrators of the sacred)."⁶⁸¹ In other words, they are primarily passive consumers with little control over the "goods of salvation." The real struggle for control of what Bourdieu called "religious capital" is something the laity do not participate in. Rather, Bourdieu writes, "the struggle for the monopoly over the legitimate exercise of religious power over the laity and over the administration of the goods of salvation is necessarily organized around the opposition between *the church and the prophet*."⁶⁸² The laity, it seems in Bourdieu's view, are little more than spectators to this show.

However, the laity are never merely just spectators or "passive consumers with little agency in the religious marketplace."⁶⁸³ Rather, they play critical roles in both the recognition and valuation of spiritual capital. Verter, for example, discusses how the myth of rational choice has empowered religious non-professionals in North America to become producers who influence the production of spiritual capital. He notes, for example, the importance of celebrity endorsements of esoteric and New Age traditions during the twentieth century to increasing the local spiritual capital of these traditions. Verter maintains that it is these celebrities' high status in their own fields that invests them with "the authority to legitimize these alternative faiths as spiritual options among their cohorts and—through the power of media—the wider public."⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Bourdieu, "The Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," 12.

⁶⁸² Italics in original. Bourdieu, 22.

⁶⁸³ Urban, "Sacred Capital," 375.

⁶⁸⁴ Verter, "Spiritual Capital," 165.

Taking a different approach to critique the lack of agency for religious laity present in Bourdieu's writings, Urban argues that the tradition of the Bāuls, a group of itinerant bards and self-proclaimed spiritual "madmen" in Bengal, demonstrates how laity can resist and dismantle the spiritual capital of religious institutions. He notes that the "Bāul songs show us clearly that ordinary men and women can also appropriate the forms of spiritual marketplace, often in quite subversive and deviant ways" to offer a critique of the dominant religious institutions and norms.⁶⁸⁵ To this end, Urban underscores the agency individuals have to accept, ignore, or resist religious institutions' monopolies over spiritual capital and their critical role in "challenging and even openly rejecting the existing social order."⁶⁸⁶

Beyond bolstering and challenging the existing spiritual capital of religious institutions, I would argue that laity are also critical partners in the creation of spiritual capital. This is starkly apparent in cases where a religious tradition is being introduced or is in a nascent state of establishing local roots, such as Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. With the introduction of new religious traditions to a locale, the laity play an integral role in recognizing and ascribing value to spiritual capital and setting the rate at which various spiritual "goods" can be converted into financial capital. At a time when an emergent tradition's spiritual resources do not yet have broad recognition, the ways local converts value them and convert them into other forms of capital may be particularly fickle and subject to significant fluctuations.

In these situations, both religious teachers and converts play particularly important roles in recognizing and ascribing value to religious goods and establishing the rates at which these goods can be exchanged. For their part, religious teachers must embody spiritual ideals and share teachings, practices, narratives, and philosophies that have currency in their new context in order

⁶⁸⁵ Urban, "Sacred Capital," 375.

⁶⁸⁶ Urban, 384.

to convince converts-to-be to recognize and value their tradition's spiritual resources. However, it is the population being introduced to a religious tradition who have the agency to decide whether to be persuaded that certain rituals, texts, stories, physical practices, objects, institutions, and persons hold value or not. If the laity recognize these spiritual goods as possessing value, both religious professionals and non-professionals must further negotiate the rates at which this spiritual capital can be converted into other forms of capital. As I will argue below, both Tibetan teachers and Taiwanese devotees are parties in the recognition and co-creation of both the value of Tibetan Buddhist spiritual capital and the rates at which it is exchanged for financial capital.

Given the degree of mobility and social uprootedness of the contemporary world, spirituality and religious worlds are no longer strictly tied to specific geographies and ethno-linguistic communities. Rather, spirituality and religions live across a dynamic "global cultural economy"⁶⁸⁷ as territorially disembedded cultural systems and imagined communities that are often "overlapping and at times in competition with the imagined national communities."⁶⁸⁸ As Guest notes, spiritual capital is most commonly evaluated and expressed today within particular religious networks based on selective and often temporary community allegiances.⁶⁸⁹ As religion in contemporary Taiwan, particularly within Taiwan's urban areas, is increasingly based on voluntary affiliations rather than ancestral ties, the contexts in which spiritual capital is recognized and valued have also shifted from networks confined primarily to specific locales to broader national or even multi-national networks.

When many Tibetan Buddhist teachers first came to Taiwan, or even when they arrive in Taiwan today, it was not uncommon for them to initially teach and lead a very small number of

⁶⁸⁷ Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 6.

⁶⁸⁸ José Casanova, "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization," *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 4 (2001): 430, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712434>.

⁶⁸⁹ Guest, "In Search of Spiritual Capital," 190.

disciples in enacting rituals in rather modest or even compromised locations. When the GTBA was founded, for example, it was first located in a small house behind another larger dharma center in Taipei's Songshan District before an independent location was acquired by the community. The first permanent location of the Source of True Dharma Buddhist Association (STDBA), which I discussed in the previous chapter, was in a building where several individuals had previously been gruesomely murdered in a high-profile kidnapping and murder case. Although most Taiwanese disciples of STDBA's founder Khenpo Künga Wangchuk strongly objected to this location, it was the only space that his few disciples could afford in the early years of this community.⁶⁹⁰ Other centers I visited that were newly established by "start-up" or "entrepreneurial lamas" were in similarly modest spaces, such as the basement beneath a fast-food restaurant or the back room of a domestic and commercial water filter showroom.

The geshés, khenpos, and rinpoché's who taught at these centers enjoyed quite high positions at their home institutions,⁶⁹¹ but had much less support upon their arrival in Taiwan. With little recognition by a broad base of Taiwanese laity, the valuation of the spiritual goods they embodied and brought to Taiwan was, however, quite low. Instead of teaching from elevated thrones in monastic assembly halls, they sat on plastic chairs and spoke to only a handful of students in the backrooms of shops or basements of mixed-use buildings. Over time, these teachers sought to win over a larger number of converts and to persuade this growing group of the high value of the teachings and practices they were transmitting as well as the Tibetan

⁶⁹⁰ I was told in an interview that this was in the same building where a plastic surgeon, his wife, and a nurse were shot and killed in 1997 by Kao Tien-meen (高天民) and Chen Cien-hsing (陳進興) who were attempting to evade arrest for the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Pai Hsiao-yen (白曉燕), daughter of Taiwanese actor Pai Bing-bing (白冰冰). Taiwanese Sakya nun and translator, interview with author, Taipei, April 16, 2022.

⁶⁹¹ One of the resident teachers at the above mentioned centers was, for example, the Abbot of Sakya College (སྐུ་མཐོ་ལོ་སྐྱོད་ལྷན་ཁང་།; 薩迦高級佛學院) in Dehradun, India.

Buddhist institutions they were associated with. Early devotees also play an important role in spreading the word, especially among their friends and family, of the power of these charismatic lamas' blessings, the protective potential of certain rituals, and the unique teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. If both parties are successful, they might increase both the number of local converts and the valuation of the spiritual resources embodied and transmitted by these Tibetan Buddhist teachers. With a larger number of patrons, the size of the local node of the center within the “transnational religious field”⁶⁹² of a particular lineage might expand.

In most cases, the goal of the co-creation of the value of spiritual capital by Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese devotees is to reach a rate of conversion that both sides find favorable. While the dharma might be priceless, the costs of rebuilding and maintaining monastic institutions and supporting large congregations of monastics, as well as the costs associated with managing a center in Taiwan are considerable. Thus, most Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan do not want to exchange their spiritual capital for financial capital at a low rate. At the same time, Taiwanese devotees of Tibetan Buddhism are interested in particularly potent rituals, blessings from spiritually advanced teachers, and understanding complex philosophical systems. They offer financial support so that they and their loved ones may benefit from practices and blessings abounding in spiritual power. In other words, both Tibetans and Taiwanese want to be satisfied with the capital they receive in exchange for capital they offer.

Once a mutually favorable rate of spiritual and financial exchange has been established, it is in the interest of both parties to maintain it. If, for example, Taiwanese have received an empowerment or teaching from certain Tibetan Buddhist teachers, they will likely seek to maintain their access to these teachings and teachers. This, in turn, may require them to continue

⁶⁹² Ana Cristina O. Lopes, *Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora: Cultural Re-Signification in Practice and Institutions* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), 85.

to provide a comparable degree of financial support, using their patronage as a means of ensuring continued access. On the other hand, once they receive significant financial support, Tibetan Buddhist monastics and institutions will likely also attempt to maintain a high level of patronage through continuing to perform religious services of a similar degree.

One of the ways in which these rates of exchange are maintained is through pilgrimages where groups of Taiwanese disciples, a select group who have the means to offer significant patronage on top of the costs of international travel, are led by their Tibetan Buddhist teachers to their center's mother monastery. During such pilgrimages, the exchange rates between spiritual and financial are renegotiated through performative actions by both Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese patrons. These include teachers performing various religious services and instruction and patrons making diverse offerings. In doing so, both religious professionals and non-professionals co-create the value of spiritual capital and mutually negotiate the rates at which it is exchanged for financial capital. In the pages below, I will explore GTBA's annual pilgrimage from their center in Taipei to their home monastery in Himachal Pradesh, India to examine the specific arenas and activities that help to facilitate this process of exchange.

4. Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association (GTBA)

GTBA was founded in 2004 around the same time as most of the large Geluk monasteries were establishing centers in Taiwan following the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's trips to Taiwan in 1997 and 2001.⁶⁹³ The center occupies the top floor in a non-descript residential building near a small neighborhood park in Taipei's Xinyi District, with a large vertical sign in Tibetan and Chinese outside and various images of the Gyütö Monastery in India and Tibetan

⁶⁹³ Weng Shijie 翁仕杰, "Gelupai zai taiwan de fazhan jizhi 格魯派在臺灣的發展機制," 37.

Buddhist symbols on the staircase as one ascends. The center itself is the official Taiwan branch (ཡན་ལག, 分支) of Gyütö Monastery or the Upper Tantric Monastery, which was founded in 1474 by Gyüchen Künga Döndrup (རྒྱུད་ཚེན་ཀུན་དགའ་དོན་གྲུབ། 1419–1486) and housed within Ramoché Temple (རམ་ཚེ་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་།, 小昭寺) in Lhasa for most of its history. After the PLA’s invasion of Tibet, sixty of Gyütö’s monks escaped to India. After a period in Dalhousie starting in 1959, these monks rebuilt Gyütö Monastery in 1974 in Tenzin Gang, Bomdila in India’s northeastern Arunachal Pradesh. Later, Gyütö was rebuilt at a much larger scale and shifted in 2003 to its present location in Sidhbari near Dharamsala, in Himachal Pradesh.⁶⁹⁴

Gyütö is one of the two main tantric colleges in the heavily monastic Geluk tradition. Today, it has its own monastic school where novice monks train from a young age before taking full monastic vows. Additionally, monastics, especially newly graduated geshés from the large Geluk monasteries in South India, can come to Gyütö to pursue up to several years of advanced training in tantric rituals and meditation. The practice traditions of Gyütö focus especially on

⁶⁹⁴ For the most recent history of Gyütö Monastery from its founding through its current location, including information about the leadership of the monastery, course of study, practice traditions, etc., see: dPal ldan rgyud stod grwa tshang / དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུད་སྡོད་གྲྲ་ཚོང་།, *gSang sngags rig 'dzin gyi sde chen po dpal ldan stod rgyud grwa tshang gi lo rgyus snying bsdu don ldan tshangs pa'i dbyangs snyan zhes bya ba bzhugs so/ གསང་སྔགས་རིག་འཛིན་གྱི་སྡེ་ཚོན་པོ་དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་གྲྲ་ཚོང་གི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་སྡོད་པའི་དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུད་སྡོད་པའི་དབྱེ་བའི་རྒྱུད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྷན་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ། (Sidhbari, Dharamsala: དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུད་སྡོད་གྲྲ་ཚོང་། Gyuto Tantric University, 2005).*

For an earlier history of Gyütö written in 1744 by the first Purchok Ngakwang Jampa (ཕུར་བུ་ལོག་འགྲུབ་པ་། 1682–1762), see reprints in either of the following two publications: Phur bu lcog ngag dbang byams pa/ ཕུར་བུ་ལོག་འགྲུབ་པའི་བླ་མ་ལ།, *Grwa sa chen po bzhi dang rgyud pa stod smad chags tshul pad dkar 'phreng ba/ གྲྲ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི་དང་རྒྱུད་པ་སྡོད་སྡོད་ཆགས་རྒྱུས་པད་དཀར་འཕྲེང་བ། (Lha sa ལྷ་ས།: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang / བོད་ལྗོངས་མི་དམངས་དཔེ་སྐྱུར་ཁང་།, 1989), 100–104, <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW22024>; Phur bu lcog ngag dbang byams pa/ ཕུར་བུ་ལོག་འགྲུབ་པའི་བླ་མ་ལ།, “Grwa sa chen po bzhi dang rgyud pa stod smad chags tshul pad dkar 'phreng ba/ གྲྲ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི་དང་རྒྱུད་པ་སྡོད་སྡོད་ཆགས་རྒྱུས་པད་དཀར་འཕྲེང་བ།,” in *gsung 'bum/ ngag dbang byams pa/ གསུང་འབྲས་ལ། དག་དབང་བླ་མ་ལ།*, ed. Ngawang Sopa (New Delhi: Ngawang Sopa, 1974), 498–504, http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW1229_DE2784.*

tantric cycles associated with the deities Guhyasamāja (གསལ་བ་འདུས་པ།, 密集金剛), Cakrasaṃvara (འཛོལ་ལོ་བདེ་མཚོ།, 勝樂金剛), and Yamāntaka/Vajrabhairava. Gyütö Monastery has a very close relationship to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the broader leadership of the Geluk school. Retired abbots of Gyütö alternate with the retired abbots of Gyümé or the Lower Tantric College to become the heads of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism.

The GTBA dharma center in Taipei has approximately thirty major supporters and regular attendees at rituals and classes offered at the center. An additional hundred or so individuals intermittently attend and support the center.⁶⁹⁵ The community is led by a geshé sent from Gyütö Monastery in India. Due to his fluency in Chinese, acquired while he was growing up inside the PRC, this geshé has led the GTBA community for a total of twelve years, including most of the last decade.⁶⁹⁶ As I noted in the last chapter, this is an unusually long time for the resident teacher of a monastery-affiliated center in Taiwan. In addition, GTBA also hosts between two and four additional monks sent from Gyütö Monastery for two-year terms. The center holds a variety of rituals each month, including a practice dedicated to tantric teachers, as well as rituals dedicated to deities such as Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara (ལྷོན་པས་གཟིགས།, 觀音菩薩), Tārā, Medicine Buddha, and Mahākāla (མགོན་པོ།, 瑪哈嘎拉). Additionally, GTBA’s geshé teaches weekly classes and leads rituals on other holidays in the Tibetan and Chinese lunar calendars.

⁶⁹⁵ “上密院台北中心目前有三位僧眾（一位是格西），平均法會參加者約三十人（不是參加者都會來現場），護持者主要約 30 人，來來去去的人就約百人吧”

“Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association currently has three monks (one is a geshé). Normally there are about thirty individuals who attend dharma assemblies (although not all attendees come to the center physically) and [the center has] about thirty principal sponsors. Additionally, there are about a hundred people who come and go.” (Author’s translation). Member of GTBA’s leadership, Line message to author, April 28, 2023.

⁶⁹⁶ Geshé of GTBA, interview with author, Taipei, September 11, 2022.



Figure 24: Ritual being performed by GTBA's geshé and two other monks at the GTBA center in Xinyi District, Taipei.
Photo by author, 2022.

GTBA was founded following the visit of one of Gyütö Monastery's abbots, Tokden Rinpoché (ཏོགས་ལྷན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། b. 1944) to Taiwan in 2003. As one of GTBA's leaders recalled, like many other dharma centers in Taiwan, first a rinpoché from Gyütö Monastery came to teach the dharma in Taiwan and then he established a center.⁶⁹⁷ She recalled that the founder of the Chuan Der company,⁶⁹⁸ a prominent supporter of Tibetan Buddhism and disciple of the Seventeenth Karmapa Orgyen Trinlé Dorjé, invited Tokden Rinpoché to come to Taiwan following a request

⁶⁹⁷ “前傳法，然後建立一個中心” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁶⁹⁸ Chuan Der (全德) is a retailer of all manner of ritual, musical, artistic, and devotional objects, as well as books, incense, and other religious objects related mainly to Tibetan Buddhism, as well as secondarily to Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Established in 1987, they have grown into one of the largest suppliers of religious materials for many of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers and individual practitioners. They have an impressive three-story showroom in Taipei's Songshan District reportedly with over 10,000 items on display, as well as a booming online business. In addition to their business, their building houses a dharma center which regularly hosts teachers, classes, and other events. They also offer services to outfit large-scale Tibetan Buddhist events and were the primary suppliers during all three of the Dalai Lama's visits to Taiwan. See: “Guanyu quan de 關於全德,” Quan de fojiao shiye jigou 全德佛教事業機構, accessed May 9, 2023, <https://www.chuan-der.com/product-list.ftl?lg=09>; “Huodong cheng bian 活動承辦,” Quan de fojiao shiye jigou 全德佛教事業機構, accessed May 9, 2023, <https://www.chuan-der.com/product-list.ftl?mid=0701>.

made by the Karmapa, who was then resident at Gyütö Monastery. The Chuan Der company sponsored Tokden Rinpoché's visa and hosted several teachings by him during his visit.⁶⁹⁹

One of GTBA's principal founders and patrons recalled in an interview how he was taking a thangka painting class at Chuan Der when he heard about the visiting rinpoché from Gyütö Monastery. Having grown up the son of a prominent Taiwanese tantric Buddhist (密宗) teacher in the 1950s and 1960s, he described how his father had told him that while he would not likely make it to see the Upper Tantric Monastery during his lifetime, if his son should ever hear this name he should drop everything and at all costs go study the dharma there. Thus, when this founder of GTBA heard of Tokden Rinpoché's arrival in Taiwan, he rushed to meet him.

The GTBA founder and patron recalled that during his meeting with Tokden Rinpoché, "I made the mistake of uttering the sentence: 'Rinpoché, please let me know if there is anything I can do to help.' To which [Tokden] Rinpoché replied, 'Well, actually there is one thing you can do.' Now, I was thinking he would ask me for some funds to see a doctor or to sponsor some construction in India. Instead, Rinpoché said 'I would like to start a *shang mi yuan* (上密院, Gyütö Monastery) center in Taipei!" After some initial hesitation, the Taiwanese patron finally agreed to help establish a center for Gyütö on the conditions that there would be a permanent monastic presence at the center, all dharma materials would be translated into Chinese, and that funds donated within Taiwan would first be used to meet the needs of the local center before being sent to support Gyütö Monastery in India. Initially, a small building behind Chuan Der's shop was used for a center until GTBA's current location in Xinyi District was located. The founding patron, who also runs an architecture and interior design firm in Taipei, purchased the space and oversaw its renovation, painting, and construction of various niches and altars.

⁶⁹⁹ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

Moreover, he also purchased an array of statues and thangkhas to adorn the center. By the time the renovations were completed, and the center was handed over to monks from Gyütö and a lay Taiwanese board, he estimates he had put between seven and eight million NTD of his own funds into the center⁷⁰⁰ in addition to donations from other founding patrons.⁷⁰¹

Thus, beginning with GTBA's founding, the exchange of Buddhist teachings and practices for financial support, or the exchange of spiritual and financial capital, has been centrally operative. The founding Taiwanese patron was first drawn to Tokden Rinpoché because his father had told him about the special tantric teachings and practices at Gyütö Monastery. Thus, when Tokden Rinpoché came to Taiwan, this patron and several other founding members of GTBA already revered not only Tibetan Buddhism and the Geluk school, but Gyütö Monastery in particular. Having recognized and ascribed a high valuation to the spiritual capital embodied by Tokden Rinpoché, institutionalized at Gyütö Monastery, and objectified in Gyütö's unique teachings and practices related to the tantric cycles of Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Yamāntaka, the founding patron was willing to provide extensive donations to establish a branch center in Taiwan. In other words, GTBA's founding Taiwanese patron recognized and so highly valued Gyütö's embodied, objectified, and institutional spiritual capital, that he was willing to offer a significant amount of financial capital to bring these spiritual "goods" to Taiwan.

On the other side, Gyütö also greatly valued the financial capital offered by Taiwanese disciples. Tokden Rinpoché was willing to commit to supplying a geshé ngakampa (དགེ་བཤེས་སྔགས་རྩལ་པ།, 昂然巴格西), a graduate of the highest program of study at Gyütö Monastery, and two to

⁷⁰⁰ This amount was roughly equivalent to between 204,500 and 233,700 USD in 2003, which would be between 346,600 and 396,100 USD in the 2024 economy. See: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "CPI Inflation Calculator"; U.S. Treasury, "Treasury Reporting Rates of Exchange," U.S. Treasury Fiscal Data, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/datasets/treasury-reporting-rates-exchange/treasury-reporting-rates-of-exchange>.

⁷⁰¹ One of GTBA's founders, interview with author, Taipei, January 19, 2023.

three additional monastics to stay at the center in Taipei to support the religious needs and education of Taiwanese disciples. This made the center in Taipei the fourth branch of Gyütö Monastery globally, following their branches in Dharamsala, India and Minnesota and California in the United States.⁷⁰² Additionally, rinpoché and other teachers from Gyütö, starting with then-abbot Tokden Rinpoché, traveled to Taiwan to give teachings, lead dharma assemblies, and bestow empowerments. For the leadership of Gyütö Monastery, Taiwanese patronage was valued highly for its critical support of the monastery’s infrastructure, including the maintenance of nearly 500 monastic residents, as well as educational, publishing, and other projects.

The rates of exchange between spiritual and financial capital that facilitated the opening of the GTBA were not fixed, however, but required continued renegotiation. As mentioned above, one of the ways these conversion rates and the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions and their Taiwanese patrons and students are renewed is through practices of pilgrimage. Similar to practitioners and patrons of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC described by Hardie, Jane Caple, and Smyer Yü,⁷⁰³ many Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan regularly organize pilgrimages to South Asia. These pilgrimages often include visits to sacred sites, such as the Boudha Stūpa or Bodhgaya, or teachings and empowerments by prominent Tibetan Buddhist teachers, such as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

⁷⁰² Gyütö House (རྗེ་སའི་དཔལ་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱུད་སྤྱོད་གྲྭ་ཚང་གི་ཡན་ལན་ཞབས་བརྟན་ཁང་།) in McLeod Ganj was established more than forty years ago (I have been unable to locate an exact date) while Gyütö Monastery was still located in Tenzin Gang. Gyütö Wheel of Dharma Monastery was founded in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota in 1994. The Gyuto Foundation was founded in the Bay Area in 1997. Thanks to Gen Kelsang Dhondup for helping with information about Gyütö House. Also see: “General Information,” ལྷོ་ལྷོ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱོད་ཚུལ་གྱི་ཚོགས་པ། Gyuto Foundation, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://gyutofoundation.org/general-information/>; “rGyud stod chos ’khor dgon/ རྒྱུད་སྤྱོད་ཚུལ་འཁོར་དགོན། Gyuto Wheel of Dharma Monastery,” rGyud stod chos ’khor dgon/ རྒྱུད་སྤྱོད་ཚུལ་འཁོར་དགོན། Gyuto Wheel of Dharma Monastery, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://www.gyutominnnesota.org/>.

⁷⁰³ Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts”; Jane E. Caple, *Morality and Monastic Revival in Post-Mao Tibet* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019), 69–93; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 76–98.

In the PRC, pilgrimage has played an important role in facilitating and renewing the flows of spiritual and financial capital that connect Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Han disciples and patrons. Hardie notes, for example, that visits by Chinese patrons to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries to attend summer dharma assemblies serve as a means by which monastic institutions regularly demonstrate their responsible use of and continued need for funds. Hardie describes Tibetan Buddhist teachers and monastic institutions who host pilgrimages as utilizing them as “opportunities to show Chinese followers the need for fundraising... If Chinese followers have already been contributing to these [monastery] projects, then it enables lamas to show them the state of a project and that their money is being used in an accountable way.” In this way, she asserts that pilgrimages to attend Tibetan dharma assemblies “work as an opportunity to thank Chinese disciples and patrons for their support.”⁷⁰⁴

At the same time, Smyer Yü notes how pilgrimages also serve to create a unique type of *communitas* among Han disciples of Tibetan Buddhist teachers. According to Smyer Yü, this *communitas* is, on the one hand, strengthened through a shared reverence for one or more reincarnate teachers, while on the other hand it also may be strained due to divisiveness among pilgrims according to their varied socio-economic status and interpersonal competition for closer bonding with charismatic teachers.⁷⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Hardie describes how the shared experience of difficult travel and living conditions in addition to other cultural and linguistic challenges that Chinese pilgrims face during the course of a pilgrimage, as well as the special treatment that many Chinese pilgrims receive at Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions serve to strengthen their connections with other pilgrims, and above all with their Tibetan teachers and monasteries.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁴Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts.”

⁷⁰⁵ Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 76 & 97–98.

⁷⁰⁶ Hardie, “‘The Dharma Assembly’: Chinese Participation in Tibetan Buddhist Monastic Contexts.”

For Taiwanese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, pilgrimages often include visits and even lengthy stays at their dharma center's mother monastery where Taiwanese disciples can meet with Tibetan Buddhist teachers, receive empowerments and teachings, engage in meditative practices, experience life in the monastery, and see the fruits of their patronage first-hand. Moreover, pilgrimages provide arenas for disciples to make personal donations to "their monastery." They also provide Tibetan Buddhist teachers with opportunities to showcase the meritorious use of their disciples' patronage and provide various spiritual services for them.

In the next section, I describe the GTBA's pilgrimage practices, including a pilgrimage that I participated in during early autumn 2022. While not representative of the experience of all Taiwanese groups, this example highlights many of the avenues of exchange between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese pilgrims that are often part of contemporary pilgrimage practices. In doing so, I illustrate how pilgrimage practices serve to renew the rates of exchange between spiritual and financial capital that have and continue to prove so central to the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan and especially to the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their Taiwanese disciples.

5. Pilgrimage to the Mother Monastery

Pilgrimage practices to Gyütö Monastery in India have been a regular part of GTBA's religious calendar since their founding. Founding members of the center went on their first pilgrimage the same year GTBA was established, having meetings with the leadership of Gyütö Monastery and an audience with the Dalai Lama.⁷⁰⁷ For several years, annual pilgrimages to India were informal and only a few members of the community would travel each year. In 2008,

⁷⁰⁷ One of GTBA's founders, interview with author, Taipei, January 19, 2023.

however, one of the founders of GTBA helped to start the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan (臺灣國際藏傳法脈總會, བའེ་ཕམ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་མཐུན་ ཚོགས།), which became the official organization that requested religious teachings (請法團) each year from the Dalai Lama on behalf of Tibetan Buddhists in Taiwan. Through this organization, an increasing number of Taiwanese disciples, including from GTBA, started to visit Dharamsala for teachings given by the Dalai Lama each October.⁷⁰⁸ After several years, the number of annual attendees was capped at between 1,300 to 1,500.⁷⁰⁹

From 2008 through 2013, a handful of members of GTBA traveled to attend the Dalai Lama's teachings each fall. During these years, members traveled through the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan and stayed in accommodations organized by a Taiwanese travel agency. GTBA members visited Gyütö Monastery following the Dalai Lama's teachings.⁷¹⁰ Then, in 2014 GTBA organized its own pilgrimage for a group of its members. The

⁷⁰⁸ The Fourteenth Dalai Lama's teachings to Taiwanese disciples started with religious instructions for members of the Bliss and Wisdom or Fuzhi community. Their founder, Master Jih-Chang (日常老和尚 1929–2004) was a disciple of the Dalai Lama. According to a contemporary lay leader within Bliss and Wisdom, Master Jih-Chang started to lead small groups of students to meet with the Dalai Lama in the late 1980s to seek clarification and advice for their spiritual study and practice. These trips expanded until finally a more formal teaching event was arranged for the first time in 1995. Bliss and Wisdom continued to organize yearly teachings for Taiwanese by the Dalai Lama until 2008 when the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan was formed and took over. Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, January 18, 2023.

I was told by numerous interviewees that extreme political sensitivity in 2008 with large-scale protests in ethnic Tibetan areas of the PRC in the lead-up to the Olympics led to Bliss and Wisdom (who have ties with Buddhist communities and teachers inside the PRC) stepping back from organizing teachings by the Dalai Lama. This opening left room for the founding of the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan, of which Bliss and Wisdom is a prominent member. Today, Bliss and Wisdom monastic and lay members still compose more than half of the Taiwanese attendees at the Dalai Lama's teachings each year.

⁷⁰⁹ Due to the global coronavirus pandemic, the religious teachings for Taiwanese disciples were not held in person in 2020 and 2021 but were rather organized live online by the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan and the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. According to one Taiwanese news agency, the 2021 teachings were viewed by an impressive 450,000 people. See: Zhong Zhipeng 種志鵬, "Dalai lama dui taiwan shuo zhe ju hua wennuan 45 wan ren luo lei 達賴喇嘛對台灣說這句話 溫暖 45 萬人落淚," SETN 三立新聞網, October 15, 2021, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=1012262>.

In 2022, the in-person teachings were started again, albeit to a much smaller audience. Estimates I heard from other attendees put the total number of Taiwanese disciples in 2022 at no more than 700.

⁷¹⁰ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

timing of this trip overlapped with the Dalai Lama's teachings, but the group's focus was also on Gyütö Monastery. This pilgrimage differed from previous years in that the group lived in guest accommodations at Gyütö Monastery, stayed longer than previous years, and received additional teachings and opportunities for Buddhist study, practice, and to experience monastery life at Gyütö. This mode of pilgrimage that emphasizes GTBA's unique connection to Gyütö Monastery has now become the dominant model for their annual pilgrimages. The community no longer goes to India only as part of a larger group of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists, but also as members within Gyütö's transnational "constellative network"⁷¹¹ or "global mandala."⁷¹²

Reflecting on this newer model of pilgrimage, two of GTBA's leaders recalled the following changes,

At [Gyütö] monastery there are retreats, sometimes we practice on retreat. Sometimes there are empowerments. Then there are classes. Everyone is generally very happy. Moreover, we also go to holy sites. One time we went to Tso Pema, another time we went to that holy place, the Tilopa [cave].⁷¹³ Then we went to...

One time we went to another monastery, do you remember?

Oh yes, Sakya's Dzongsar Monastery! Right, we went there too!⁷¹⁴

What began as traveling within a larger body of Taiwanese practitioners to attend the Dalai Lama's teachings has now expanded into an independently organized pilgrimage by GTBA⁷¹⁵

⁷¹¹ Smyer Yü, "A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism," 45.

⁷¹² Zablocki, "The Global Mandala," 46–47.

⁷¹³ This refers to a cave complex in contemporary Trilokpur, Himachal Pradesh where the Mahāsiddha Tilopa (ཏིལོཔ་སྐུ་ལྷན་པོ་) 988–1069) is reported to have meditated for twelve years and achieved enlightenment. Today, the site is called the Trilokinath Cave Temple and is primarily a Śaiva holy site. However, the growing number of recently constructed Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions associated with Karma Kagyü school nearby, such as Karma Drubgyu Thargay Ling Nunnery, the Tilopa Buddhist Institute, and Bhatoli Tibetan Monastery, suggests its growing importance as a Tibetan Buddhist holy site (ལྷན་པོ་, 聖地) also.

⁷¹⁴ “在寺院就有閉關，有時候拜閉關，有時候當灌頂，然後又課程。對。啊大家都很高興。然後也會去神地。有一次是去蓮花湖，有一次是去帝洛巴那個聖地。啊又去那個。。。”

“我們一次也有去那個別的寺院，不知道你記不記得？”

“啊那個薩迦的宗薩寺，對對對有一年也去那裡。” Focus group participants in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁷¹⁵ Attendance at the two to three days of the Dalai Lama's teachings is still facilitated through the International Association of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma, Taiwan, of which GTBA is a member.

that includes the Dalai Lama's teachings as part of its itinerary. In addition, there are numerous opportunities for pilgrims to engage with and patronize GTBA's mother monastery and local sacred sites. These include staying at Gyütö Monastery for several weeks, receiving empowerments, attending teachings by the abbot and other reincarnate teachers, going on local pilgrimages and outings, and receiving private audiences and meetings with Gyütö's monastic teachers, as well as numerous opportunities for donations and almsgiving.

With the exception of 2020 and 2021, when no official group pilgrimages were held due to the coronavirus pandemic, the GTBA has organized pilgrimages to Gyütö Monastery each year for the past decade. Most participants on these pilgrimages are not one-time travelers, but as a community leader described to me, "the majority [of the attendees] go regularly."⁷¹⁶ In this way, the pilgrimage to Gyütö Monastery has become an important part of the center's annual calendar and is cherished deeply by members of the community. As one community member described, "We really like going to India because *our* monastery is there."⁷¹⁷ Another regular attendee told me at the end of the 2022 pilgrimage that "every year is so much fun, we nearly forget about home."⁷¹⁸ For participants, the annual pilgrimage to Gyütö is an important opportunity to renew their connection with their spiritual home. It is a chance to visit "*our* monastery" and, to some degree, forget about their familial obligations, work, and worries in Taiwan. In this way, the annual pilgrimage plays a powerful role in renewing the ties between Taiwanese disciples and patrons and their religious teachers, the sangha of monks, and the monastic institutions that they both support and from which they receive spiritual guidance.

5.1. 2022 Gyütö Taipei Buddhist Association Pilgrimage

⁷¹⁶ "大部分是很常去的。" Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁷¹⁷ "我們是很喜歡去印度因為我們的寺院在那邊。" Italics added for emphasis. Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁷¹⁸ "每年很好玩，大家幾乎忘家。" GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

In late September 2022, I boarded a flight from Taiwan’s Taoyuan International Airport via Bangkok to New Delhi along with a group of thirty-one other individuals from GTBA for their two-week pilgrimage. Our group of twenty-five women and seven men⁷¹⁹ included most of GTBA’s lay leadership and the center’s geshé. We were also accompanied by a Taiwanese translator who was himself a former Tibetan Buddhist monk. About half of the group members took time off from jobs to attend the pilgrimage, a quarter were retired, and the remaining pilgrims were either homemakers, students, or unemployed. Due to continued concerns about COVID-19, our group was slightly smaller than in previous years. Moreover, “as a number of centers didn’t travel [to India] this year” because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, our group also included individuals from other Taiwanese dharma centers.⁷²⁰ Indeed, GTBA was among the earliest dharma centers in Taiwan to resume its annual pilgrimage following several years of COVID-related lockdowns, border restrictions, and mandatory quarantine policies.

When we arrived at New Delhi’s Indra Gandhi International Airport, we were met by a monk from Gyütö Monastery who had traveled more than twelve hours to meet our group. We spent our first as well as our final nights in Gyütö Monastery’s guesthouse in Majnukatila, the Tibetan settlement in Delhi. The majority of the two weeks, however, were spent at and around Gyütö Monastery. The pilgrimage had a full itinerary, with three days of religious teachings by the Dalai Lama on chapter two of Dharmakīrti’s (ཚོམ་གྱི་བཀའ་པོ་པ།, 法稱 sixth or seventh century) *Commentary on Valid Cognition*,⁷²¹ as well as daily two to three hours long review classes on the

⁷¹⁹ As discussed in chapter two, this is a typical ratio for many Tibetan Buddhist events in Taiwan.

⁷²⁰ “今年有中心沒去。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁷²¹ The *Pramānavārttika* (ཚོམ་རྣམ་འགྲེལ། 釋量論) is a treatise on Buddhist epistemology that Dharmakīrti wrote to comment on an earlier work by Dignāga (ཚོམ་གྱི་སྐབ་ལོ།; 陳那 c. 480–540), the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (ཚོམ་ཀུན་ལ་བརྟུན་པ།; 集量論). It deals with various forms of valid cognition and inferential cognition and is widely studied, especially in Geluk-affiliated monasteries. See: Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 234–38.

Dalai Lama's teachings taught by the abbot of Gyütö Monastery, Khen Rinpoché Lobsang Khedrup (དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུད་སྤྱོད་མཁན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སློབ་བཟང་མཁས་གྲུབ། b. 1953). Additionally, there was a Four-Armed Mahākāla (མགོན་པོ་ཕྱག་བཞི་པ།, 四臂護髮) empowerment bestowed by the former abbot of Gyütö and one of the highest ranking teachers in the Geluk school, Sharpa Chöjé Jetsün Lobsang Dorjé (ཤར་པ་ཚོ་ཇེ་བཙུན་ལོ་བཟང་དོ་རྗེ། b. 1937), and a very special opportunity for a group audience with the Dalai Lama. There were also other events at Gyütö such as observing parts of the construction of two- and three-dimensional maṇḍalas by senior monastic students, attending morning rituals, and visiting the local residences and sitting rooms of the Dalai Lama and Karmapa. Further, local pilgrimages were offered for GTBA pilgrims to visit Tso Pema, a meditation cave of the Mahāsiddha Tilopa, and a site associated with Vajrayoginī (རྗེ་ཚུལ་འབྱོར་མ།, 金剛瑜伽母).

Beyond these activities planned by the pilgrimage organizers and Gyütö's leadership, there were also chances for individual or small group trips to Dharamsala for shopping or visiting Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan Culture and other local monasteries. Finally, there were numerous opportunities for almsgiving and making both in-kind and monetary donations to monastics primarily, but not exclusively, at Gyütö. Speaking with one of GTBA's leaders after we returned to Taipei, she reflected on the multitude of experiences and the joy she feels on each year's pilgrimage. "We can request teachings, and we can also enjoy ourselves. Moreover, we can receive numerous blessings from virtuous eminent teachers. How could we be unhappy?"⁷²²

Over the course of GTBA's pilgrimage to India, I witnessed numerous instances of Taiwanese disciples making monetary offerings to individual Buddhist monastics as well as

⁷²² “我們可以請佛法也可以玩，而且可以受到很多高僧大德的加持。怎麼會不快樂？” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

Gyütö Monastery as an institution. Additionally, Gyütö's leaders and initiates also performed diverse religious services for their Taiwanese patrons. While it would be impossible to document every instance where spiritual and financial capital were exchanged during this pilgrimage, in the following pages I highlight some of the most common forms that these exchanges took. In the case of support provided by Taiwanese, financial capital was primarily offered in one of the following four forms: 1) direct monetary offerings, 2) offerings earmarked for specific projects or spiritual goods and services, 3) in-kind donations, and finally 4) sponsorships of individual monks. From the side of Gyütö's monastics, spiritual capital was primarily manifested and exchanged through 1) religious educational classes, 2) ritual services, 3) empowerments and bestowing blessings, 4) merit, and finally 5) benevolent acts of service. Discussing each of these nine manifestations through specific examples from GTBA's 2022 pilgrimage, I illustrate how this pilgrimage facilitated renewing the rates of exchange between Gyütö Monastery and its Tibetan Buddhist teachers' spiritual capital and GTBA's Taiwanese disciples' financial capital.

5.2. Financial Capital

5.2.1. Financial Capital: Monetary Offerings

The direct offering of money, either through offerings made to individual monastics or to Tibetan Buddhist institutions is probably the most common form of financial capital offered by Taiwanese disciples. As described at the opening of this chapter, cash offerings of Indian rupees or US dollars were commonly presented inside red envelopes and given to individual monastics. Sometimes, such as when offerings were made to Gyütö's monastic elders or while thanking the monastery's administration during the pilgrimage's final evening, red envelopes were offered in the context of an organized ceremony or event. Most times, however, Taiwanese pilgrims would simply pull pre-filled red envelopes out of their bags and present them to individual monastics

they encountered. One elderly couple, for example, were especially generous with this type of spontaneous offering to Buddhist monastics. I saw them present red envelopes to a pair of monks walking down the street in McLeod Ganj, a group of monks sitting around chatting in the monastery shop, to two shy young nuns who had helped guide us to the meditation cave of Tilopa, and even once to a monk I was in the middle of having a conversation with.

Sometimes, this type of spontaneous giving is met with acceptance, especially by monastics familiar with how ubiquitous red envelopes are in Taiwanese religious culture. The monk just mentioned, for example, was talking with me outside the Gyütö assembly hall when this elderly couple pressed two red envelopes into his hands. After a polite attempt at refusing the envelopes as unnecessary, he smiled and placed them in his bag while muttering about how funny Taiwanese are. On the other hand, sometimes this practice is met with stronger attempts at refusal. While the abbot of Gyütö accepted red envelopes and khataks from the Taiwanese group on the first day of review teachings he gave, when members of the group started to take out red envelopes at the end of the second day, he looked rather shocked and started to vigorously shake his hands and say that the previous day's offerings were sufficient. Only after some persistence by the Taiwanese pilgrims and polite intercessions by GTBA's geshé who explained it was customary in Taiwan to make an offering at each teaching session, did the abbot accept the envelopes. From the Taiwanese side, the pilgrims felt they should meet the spiritual capital being bestowed through the abbot's teachings with offerings of their own. As each day was a new teaching, each day warranted another gesture of gratitude in the form of a financial contribution.

As I noted at the opening of this chapter, the amount that Taiwanese pilgrims put into red envelopes varies significantly. While a younger pilgrim I befriended told me that he mostly only put in one hundred Indian rupees (approximately 1.25 USD), I also witnessed several individuals

inserting multiple 500-rupee notes (approximately 6 USD) or even 2,000-rupee notes (approximately 24.25 USD) into their envelopes. One Taiwanese pilgrim explained that although there are fairly set amounts for how much to give in Taiwan at occasions such as a wedding or Chinese New Year, the appropriate amount to give at a dharma activity is not set and, perhaps most importantly, not really spoken about. Another pilgrim confirmed in an interview that giving in the context of the dharma was an individual decision. “We Buddhists are like this: everyone is very free. However much money you have, [you give] according to your wishes, according to your intention. No one else cares about this. Even if you don’t have a red envelope, it’s fine.”⁷²³

Speaking on another occasion with a Taiwanese practitioner who is a community leader at another Tibetan Buddhist dharma center, he told me that most red envelopes do not contain very much money when given in a group setting precisely because of their anonymity. The exception, he noted is when someone makes a public gift of a very thick red envelope, at which point the thickness of the red envelope is a sign of that patron’s wealth and largesse.⁷²⁴ In the context of GTBA’s pilgrimage, I did not witness any such demonstrative public presentations of especially thick red envelopes. Rather, as the examples above demonstrate, most offerings in red envelopes were made anonymously as a group or through spontaneous gestures of giving.

Public and non-anonymous giving was, however, also present during the pilgrimage. On the last day of our stay at Gyütö, for example, all the GTBA pilgrims assembled on the steps of the main monastic assembly hall (འཇུ་ཁང་།, 大殿) to make offerings to the entire monastic body.

While the monks inside growled through prayers to Six-armed Mahākāla (འཇུ་ཁང་།, 六臂護

⁷²³ “我們的佛教徒就是這樣，就是大家自由的。你有多少錢，你隨心你發心都沒有人去 care 這個。沒有紅包也沒關係。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

⁷²⁴ Taiwanese dharma center leader, personal communication with author, October 29, 2022.

法), Gyütö Monastery’s primary protector, several younger monks buzzed out of the hall to fetch tea and khapsey (ཁ་བས།, 餅乾), a type of deep-fried biscuit. The geshé of GTBA informed everyone that after the monastery’s disciplinarian (དགེ་སྐོས།/ཚེས་ཐེས་པ།, 糾察僧) had read the refuge note (སྐུབ་སྒོ།, 原文), a sheet with all of the dedications and sponsors listed, we would make our collective offerings to the monastic assembly. When the moment came, the GTBA group split up into teams of three and, following the disciplinarian to ensure that offerings were made in the correct hierarchical order, went down each row to present 1,500 Indian rupees (approximately 18 USD) to the nearly 300 monks assembled. Pilgrims alternated between offering rupees and taking photos of others offering, seemingly as eager to do one as the other. As we left the assembly hall, smiles abounded and many were rejoicing in the merit made through the offerings (隨喜功德, རྗེས་སུ་ཡི་རང་བ།).⁷²⁵ I was later told that additional funds were set aside in the monastery office, where they would be kept and given later to the Gyütö monks who were not present in the assembly hall due to illness or having another task.

⁷²⁵ Rejoicing in the good merits of others is a common practice among Buddhists in Taiwan, not only practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. In Chinese Buddhist traditions the concept is often associated with last of the Ten Vows of Samantabhadra (普賢十願) and the *Lotus Sūtra*’s (妙法蓮華經, དམ་ཚེས་པད་མ་དཀར་པོའི་མདོ།) eighteenth chapter “Rejoicing in the Merit” (隨喜功德品). In Tibetan Buddhism, the act of rejoicing (རྗེས་སུ་ཡི་རང་བ།) and related idea of sympathetic joy (དགའ་བ་ཚད་མེད།) is also widespread, foremost perhaps as the third of the Four Immeasurables (ཚད་མེད་བཞི།).

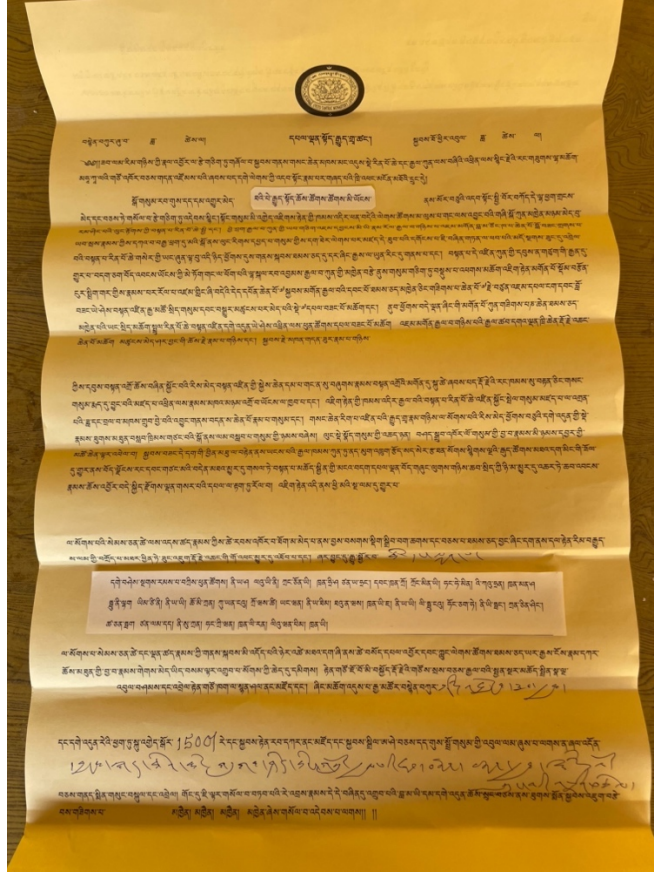


Figure 25: The refuge note for the monastic assembly sponsored by GTBA. While much of the text is standard, the names of GTBA and the individual sponsors, as well as the amount offered to each monk have been added. Photo by author, 2022.

From the main assembly hall, the GTBA group shuffled next door to the assembly hall for the novice monks. As we entered, the 120 or so young monks whose ages ranged from four to mid-teens were reciting the “Praises to the Twenty-One Tārās” under the supervision of their instructors. As in the main monastic assembly hall, the pilgrims broke into teams of three to offer 1,500 Indian rupees to each of the novices, who for the most part looked down humbly and accepted the bills in hands folded on their robes as they continued their prayers. Even more pictures were taken here than in the main assembly hall, as many of Taiwanese took photos and videos of and with the young monks that they sponsored. It was only on the fourth time that the GTBA’s geshé urged the group that everyone finally broke away and stepped out through the rear doors.

Funds for these collective offerings were built into the total cost that each of the pilgrims paid to GTBA to attend the pilgrimage. In addition to donations to Gyütö that had been collected and brought from GTBA members in Taiwan unable to join the pilgrimage, this offering was GTBA's primary group offering to their mother monastery and totaled a considerable sum (approximately 750,000 Indian rupees or 9,080 USD). Similar to concerns raised by Caple, Moran, and Smyer-Yü's research participant,⁷²⁶ I had several conversations with non-Taiwanese individuals who griped about the money flowing from Taiwanese into Tibetan monasteries. One German attendee of the Dalai Lama's 2022 teachings for Taiwanese, for example, accused Taiwanese patrons of exerting an excessive amount of control over Tibetan Buddhist teachers' schedules. Far from seeing themselves as controlling their teachers, however, many of GTBA's pilgrims had a very different view of the role of their financial contributions to Gyütö Monastery.

In a conversation with one of GTBA's leaders, who is the head of a publishing company in Taiwan, at lunch after making offerings to the monastic assembly, I asked her why there was so much money flowing into the monastery from the Taiwanese patrons. Her reply revealed a perspective grounded in the realities of running a large organization. She agreed that there were a lot of donations being made. However, she continued, "every morning nearly 500 sets of eyes open up and need to be fed, clothed, and taken care of." She continued, describing the great costs of providing food, tea, robes, books, clean water, and electricity, in addition to maintaining the monastery's infrastructure. She pointed out the salaries of the monastery's English teacher and full-time nurse, and even reminded me of an elder monk we had met at Gyütö's guest house in Majnukatila whose daily kidney dialysis at a hospital in Delhi is fully covered by the monastery. If you start to think of all these costs, she concluded, it is obvious that Gyütö has a wide range of

⁷²⁶ Caple, "Faith, Generosity, Knowledge and the Buddhist Gift," esp. 464–470; Moran, *Buddhism Observed*, 79–85; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 100–117.

concrete needs that require significant funds to meet. The Taiwanese pilgrims felt it was both their responsibility and privilege to provide this financial support to “their monastery.”⁷²⁷

In addition to seeing the practical costs that Gyütö must meet as a reason for patronage, I also found that there was a general enthusiasm among the Taiwanese pilgrims for donations both large and small. For instance, following the first day of teachings by the Dalai Lama, two group members said that they were going to the office of the Dalai Lama’s monastery, Namgyal Monastery, to make a donation. This remark was met with immediate enthusiasm from other pilgrims who announced that they too would like to donate. In the end, over ten individuals went with GTBA’s geshé to make donations. Over the following two days, this group continued to make donations after each day’s teachings. When I later remarked about this enthusiasm for donations to my roommate during the trip, he replied that this was just how Taiwanese people are. “You see how people rush to offer a donation? If one person goes, everyone goes!”⁷²⁸

Similarly, a community leader described in a later interview how this enthusiasm for giving is a part of Taiwanese culture. She noted, “we are originally a Buddhist country. I mean, historically speaking we are a Buddhist country. So [giving money] is a type of offering, making offerings to Buddhist teachers. *Gong yang*⁷²⁹ is an offering, [making offerings to] Buddhist teachers and offering [money] is the same thing. So, for us, this is completely normal.”⁷³⁰ At this point, another community member chimed in, noting that “Taiwanese people, Chinese peoples

⁷²⁷ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

⁷²⁸ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 6, 2022.

⁷²⁹ *Gong yang* 供養 means to provide support. While it is frequently used to connote providing support for one’s parents, in a Buddhist context it is used for offerings made to a monastic or teacher. See: Charles Muller, “Gongyang 供養,” Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, accessed May 25, 2023, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=供養>.

During my fieldwork, I heard *gong yang* most frequently used as a general term for offerings made to monastics. In this statement by the GTBA leader, it is being used in both the sense of “offerings” in general and “offering money.”

⁷³⁰ “其實我們本來是佛教的國家，就是我們歷史（上）就是佛教的國家。就是這是一個供養，師父供養[sic]，供養就是 offering，就是師父跟供養那個是一樣的。所以對我們來講完全是很正常的。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

all have this type of custom passed down from long, long ago... We have this tradition from previous generations.⁷³¹ From these explanations, making monetary contributions to monastics and receiving religious teachings was a common form of religious praxis that the pilgrims had long before they came to Tibetan Buddhism. Although the religious traditions they practice may have changed, the custom of making financial offerings and patronizing monastic institutions and temples remained. It is through these contributions of financial capital that Taiwanese pilgrims expressed their esteem for and valuation of Tibetan Buddhist monastics and institutions.



Figure 26: Taiwanese pilgrims offering cash donations to Gyütö monastics. Photo by author, 2022.

⁷³¹ “台灣人，漢人都有這種習俗從很久很久以前下來了... 我們是從以前老一輩就有這樣子的傳統。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022.

5.2.2. Financial Capital: Funds for Projects, Religious Services, and Goods

Another common type of financial support I witnessed during GTBA's 2022 pilgrimage were funds given either to support specific projects at Gyütö Monastery or in direct exchange for specific religious services and goods. Although these funds may still be presented in a red envelope, they are different from the donations described above which are offered with no strings attached (at least, not explicitly). These offerings, on the other hand, were made for a specific and predetermined amount for a particular project or expense. The donation amounts might be fixed depending on the actual costs incurred by the monastery or prices set based on the time and energy a service or item might take to prepare. While patrons could certainly still offer beyond the amount requested, there was nearly always a bottom line that was pre-determined.

One instance of this type of donation that I witnessed occurred one afternoon in a van on the way down after attending the Dalai Lama's teachings. One of GTBA's community leaders was asking their geshé along with another monk who works in Gyütö's office about the costs of making tea for the monastic assembly during rituals each year. She was grilling the two monks about the costs for the tea leaves, sugar, milk, butter, and salt used to make both sweet and butter tea. She explained how she was interested in potentially sponsoring one of these costs and knew of further Taiwanese patrons who might also be interested. The monk from Gyütö's office said that he knew that sugar would cost 500 USD for the coming year, although we would have to follow-up after checking the exact cost of other ingredients.

Seemingly satisfied with this answer, the woman continued to ask about other projects at Gyütö that needed sponsors. In particular, she inquired about the status of plans to widen the entrance road to the monastery. This would not only necessitate re-paving the road, but also the construction of a new entrance gate to the monastery. There was a GTBA supporter in Taiwan,

she explained, who wanted to make a sizable donation to the monastery but did not know which project she should support and for how much. A new gateway might be just the right project for this patron, the GTBA community leader explained.

In both cases, funds were not being offered spontaneously by Taiwanese patrons for an amount they decided upon individually. Rather, the monastery was being requested to name specific amounts for particular goods, such as sugar, or projects, such as a new entry gate. The patrons could then make donations of (or perhaps in excess of) the amounts needed to cover these specific expenses. These were neither spontaneous and anonymous gifts, such as red envelopes, nor were they repeated donations offered on a regular basis, such as the sponsorships discussed below. Rather, they were one-time gifts to cover specific purchases or projects. Other examples of this type of patronage from the GTBA community to Gyütö Monastery include funds collected for large projects, such as constructing the home for senior monks and the stūpas described at the beginning of this chapter, a new debate and teaching building,⁷³² or even smaller costs, such as purchasing two washing machines for Gyütö Monastery.

In addition to money for these types of expenses, Taiwanese pilgrims also provide significant donations in exchange for religious goods or services. During the 2022 pilgrimage, for example, several individuals privately sponsored rituals performed by members of Gyütö's monastic assembly. In one instance, two women gave 200 USD each to sponsor a ritual for their sick relatives. While there was not a fixed material price for these rituals, the monastery set a price for the labor and few materials needed to prepare for and enact this ritual. These two

⁷³² This project constructing a new four-story debate and teaching hall at Gyütö Monastery was announced to the GTBA community on May 24, 2023 via Facebook and Line. The total cost of the project they are hoping to raise is twenty million NTD (approximately 641,800 USD). See: Shangmi yuan taibei shi foxuehui 上密院台北市佛學會, “2023 yindu shangmi yuan jiaoxue ji bian jing lou gongcheng mukuan tongqi 2023 印度上密院教學暨辦經樓工程募款通啟,” Facebook, May 24, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/gyuto.tw>.

women spoke with monks in the monastery office about the amount they would “recommend” be donated. In the end, the women gave more than the 150 USD that the monastery had suggested.

Interestingly, in this case it appears the women and monastery did not quite agree on the rate of exchange. For the Taiwanese pilgrims, the rituals and the understood benefits they would have for the women’s relatives was valued at a higher rate than the monastery itself had specified. Perhaps the monastery had not wanted to be embarrassed by asking for such a high rate of exchange? Perhaps the women thought a larger donation would bring better results? The bottom line, however, was that the donations made for this ritual were not completely left up to the Taiwanese to decide but rather determined through negotiated rates between the monastery and Taiwanese devotees. The monastery requested a baseline donation to organize the performance of the ritual⁷³³ and these two women, based on their valuation of the spiritual capital of the monastics' spiritual labor and power, offered further financial capital in exchange.

In addition to rituals, the Taiwanese pilgrims also offer funds for various spiritual goods that the monastery has pre-set donation amounts for. These included a variety of amulets, blessed pills (རྩིལ་བུ།, 丸子), mālās (ཐོང་བ།, 數珠/念珠) or Buddhist rosaries, khataks, envelopes, books, and more. While some of these were sold in the modest monastery store, others were distributed from the monastery office. For example, one morning after breakfast my roommate excitedly informed me that he was going to the office because he had heard there were blessed pills there that you could acquire through a donation. When we arrived, we saw an older pilgrim from GTBA with a wad of 500-rupee notes purchasing more than a dozen pouches of blessed pills made according

⁷³³ This is not unique to rituals done on behalf of Taiwanese patrons. At Gyütö House in McLeod Ganj there was a printed sheet with a list of rituals and their prices (ཐོང་བ།) posted by the entrance to the shrine room. On a visit, one of the monks there informed me that he and the four other monks currently resident are almost exclusively requested to perform rituals by the local Tibetan community.

to rituals devoted to the deity Parṇaśavarī. These pills reportedly had the ability to protect against illnesses like COVID-19.⁷³⁴ Additionally, he was also purchasing a total of ten of two different types of protective amulets that a monk who works in Gyütö’s office was pulling out of large plastic containers. A smaller amulet, Té rül (གཏོད་ཅུལ།), and a larger, Gyütö Iron Mansion Śuṣka Kapāla Protection-Wheel Amulet (རྒྱུད་རྟོད་ལྷགས་མཁར་ཐོད་སྐམ་གྱི་ཕན་ཡོན།), are believed to protect wearers against various malignant forces. Both the amulets and blessed pills were made by Gyütö’s monastics during retreats devoted to the meditative practice of particular deities.⁷³⁵

The monastery asked for donations of different amounts for each of these sacred objects. A pouch of protective pills was forty rupees (approximately .50 USD), the Té rül amulet was 250 rupees (approximately 3 USD), and the Protection Wheel amulet was 500 rupees (approximately 6 USD). In addition to the elder pilgrim and my roommate, these were very popular among other members of the group and by mid-way through our stay at Gyütö more than half of the pilgrims were outwardly wearing one or both amulets. On the last day, I even heard a pilgrim who owns a chain of restaurants in Taiwan describing how she had purchased one hundred Protection Wheel

⁷³⁴ Parṇaśavarī is a Tibetan Buddhist divinity who devotees believe has the power to protect against pandemic and contagious diseases. Much more will be said about her in chapter four.

⁷³⁵ According to small information sheets that a monk from the office later provided me about these amulets, the Té rül is reported to protect the wearer from the harms of various malignant forces from above, such as the planets and constellations (རྟེན་གཏོན་གཟའ་དང་རྒྱ་སྐར།), middling malignant forces, such as tsen and gyalgong spirits (བར་གཏོན་བཙན་དང་རྒྱལ་འཕོང།), and malignant forces from below, such as serpent and earth-lord spirits (འོག་གཏོན་ལྷ་དང་ས་བདག།). It also protects against other’s evil thoughts, curses, black magic, and so forth (གཞན་གྱི་བསམ་སྦྱར་དན་པའི་དན་སྲགས་མཐུག་ཏུ་སྐད་པ་སོགས།). The Gyütö Iron Mansion Śuṣka Kapāla Protection-Wheel Amulet is created specifically through accomplishing rituals to Yamāntaka/Vajrabhairava and the maṇḍala of the third chapter of the *Tantra of the Glorious Vajrabhairava* (དཔལ་ལོ་རྗེ་འཛིགས་ཕྱིད་གྱི་རྒྱུད།). It is similarly reported to protect against malevolent forces from above, such as the planets and constellations (རྟེན་གཏོན་གཟའ།), from the middle, such as tsen (བར་གཏོན་བཙན།), and from below, such as serpent spirits (འོག་གཏོན་ལྷ།). Furthermore, it is described as having the power to avert the harms of Yama, the Lord of Death, which cause untimely death and protects against black magic, curses, evil thoughts, and so on (སྐྱེ་འགྲོའི་སྲིགས་ལ་རྣམས་པའི་འཆི་བདག་གཤིན་ཇིའི་གཏོན་པ་སོགས་བརློག་བྱས་པ་དང་། གཞན་ཡང་མཐུག་ཏུ་བྱད་ཁ་ལ་སོག་པ་བསམ་སྦྱར་དན་པ་རྣམས་བརློག་བྱས་སོ།།).

amulets for her friends and family members. Altogether, while sacred objects such as amulets or blessed pills were perhaps not as significant a source of funds as donations for specific projects at the monastery or for ritual services by Gyütö's monastics, they nevertheless were an important channel through which Taiwanese pilgrims recognized manifestations of Gyütö's spiritual capital and were valued spiritual goods Taiwanese were eager to offer financial capital in exchange for.

5.2.3. Financial Capital: In-Kind Donations

Although nowhere near as ubiquitous as the types of financial support described above, in-kind donations were another common form of financial capital offered by Taiwanese devotees during the GTBA's 2022 pilgrimage. Sometimes this type of donation took the form of services, such as purchasing lunch or coffee for monastics, or even a ticket on the newly opened Dharamshala Skyway. Often, however, these donations were material items that Taiwanese pilgrims had either brought from Taiwan or purchased locally to present to Gyütö's monastics. These included various medicines, golden amulets, electronics, books, and even socks.

One example of this type of donation occurred during an evening of gift giving to the novice monks at Gyütö. Each member of the pilgrim group carried red ponchos for each of the young monks from Taiwan, in addition to two-kilogram bags of organic mushroom soup mix to be used in the monastery's kitchen, medicines, and books. The day before the ponchos were to be distributed, the entire GTBA group decided to purchase additional gifts for Gyütö's youngest monks. That evening, the cramped monastery shop was bursting with activity as the pilgrims shopped and placed orders for goods to offer to the 120 or so young monks. Individuals or groups of two or three people looked at juice boxes, bags of chips, candy, cookies, notebooks, pens, markers, and cartons of milk. I teamed up with my roommate and another woman to purchase notebooks and pencils for all of the young monks. The senior monk who manages the

shop did his best to write down orders to be fulfilled the next day as his extremely modest inventory did not contain sufficient stock of most items the Taiwanese were purchasing.

When most of the pilgrims had placed their orders and the shop had quieted down enough for the shopkeeper monk to finally regain his seat, I commented on how he must be tired after such a busy evening. Not to mention, I added, the impressive pantomiming he had continually performed to communicate with the Taiwanese about prices and assuring them the items would arrive the next day. To my surprise, he immediately replied that he was, in fact, happy for nights like this. In an apparent reference to the red envelope custom described above, he explained how he far preferred helping the Taiwanese to make purchases for items rather than accepting straight cash donations from them. Whether they were buying khataks and goods to offer or soaps and bags for themselves, he thought it was better when the Taiwanese supported the monastery in this way. For him, making purchases from the store was a more even avenue of exchange whereby both sides got something tangible; the monastery received financial support through the shop's income and the Taiwanese pilgrims received items either to offer or keep for themselves.

As I exited the shop into the evening, I thought about how this monk's view about the avenues for exchanging spiritual and financial capital differed from the Taiwanese. What was common practice for the Taiwanese, spontaneous and direct donations to monastics, was an uncomfortable and uneven form of exchange for the shopkeeper. Perhaps he did not agree on the rate of valuation of the spiritual capital that the Taiwanese believed Tibetan monastics embodied. Or perhaps, as Emily Yeh argues in her work drawing on Marcel Mauss, he felt that unsolicited monetary gifts placed an unfair burden to reciprocate on Gyütö's monks. After all, although gifts like money "may appear free and disinterested, they are actually always constraining and

interested, entrapping their recipients in a relationship of obligation.”⁷³⁶ Whatever his internal reasoning, it is clear that while Taiwanese direct financial donations are common and indeed much needed by Gyütö Monastery, on the level of individual monks these may cause more unease than other transfers of financial capital made in exchange for spiritual goods or services.



Figure 27: Taiwanese pilgrim offering chocolate to Gyütö Monastery's novice monks. Other in-kind offerings including the red ponchos brought from Taiwan are seen on the floor in front of each monk. Photo by author, 2022.

Finally, it is notable that the GTBA pilgrims' in-kind donations did not include acts of voluntary service performed on behalf of Gyütö's monastic and novitiate residents. There was no service project that the pilgrims contributed towards nor day of service where they, for example,

⁷³⁶ Emily T. Yeh, *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 15.

helped with a building repair, cleaned the kitchens, or volunteered teaching Mandarin at Gyütö. In fact, as I will describe below, the primary providers of service and labor during the pilgrimage were not the Taiwanese pilgrims, but Gyütö's monks, who served as porters, local guides, translators, cooks, and even electricians to the GTBA group. Instead of expressing their support for Gyütö's monastic initiates through directly performing physical labor on their behalf, the Taiwanese pilgrims expressed their devotion and valuation of Gyütö Monastery's and individual monastics' spiritual capital through almost exclusively financial means. In doing so, the group navigated the dynamics of their relationship with their Tibetan Buddhist teachers and home monastery largely through the exchange of financial and spiritual capital alone.

5.2.4. Financial Capital: Sponsorships

The final avenue through which I observed Taiwanese financial capital flowing to Gyütö was through the individual sponsorship of novice monks. Like many other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in South Asia, Gyütö has a sponsorship program whereby patrons can sponsor novice monks for a set amount each month. This donation goes toward the monastery's costs of providing each novice with robes, housing, food and other basic needs, as well as for their education. Much of this occurs remotely with GTBA's office coordinating with the Gyütö Monastery's office to pair a *xiao lama* (小喇嘛) or "little lama" with a *gyami jindak* (མྱེ་ལྷོན་བདག) or "Chinese sponsor," as each side most commonly refers to the other. Nevertheless, although the logistics of this relationship are coordinated at a distance, pilgrimage serves as an important occasion for sponsorship connections to be initiated, renewed, and potentially even expanded.

In conversation one evening after dinner, one of GTBA's community leaders and another pilgrim who had been coming annually since 2016 both confirmed that many of the pilgrims and other supporters of GTBA in Taiwan sponsor young novice monks. While they did not give a

specific number, they noted that most people (including themselves) sponsor on average one or two monks. They continued, gesturing to an elderly couple and another woman in our group, noting that some individuals even provide donations to support up to five or six young monks. Taiwanese sponsors transfer 1,000 NTD (approximately 33 USD) for each monk they sponsor to GTBA, which then transfers these funds to Gyütö Monastery.⁷³⁷ Although this may seem like a rather modest, sponsorships comes to approximately 32,000 Indian rupees or 390 USD per monk each year. For Taiwanese individuals and families sponsoring five or more monks, yearly sponsorship costs in excess of 60,000 NTD (approximately 1,950 USD) are quite considerable.

While payments from Taiwanese patrons for the sponsorships occur through GTBA in Taipei, many sponsorships start or are renewed during pilgrimages. One particularly striking example occurred at lunch on the last day of the 2022 pilgrimage. As I walked into the room, there was a flurry of activity as five Taiwanese patrons were busy taking photos with a group of twenty-two novice monks, as well as members of Gyütö's monastic administration. When the photos were finished and the young monks returned to their classrooms, the women explained that they, along with a group of their relatives and friends in Taiwan, had just committed to collectively sponsor twenty-two young monks. This was met with tremendous applause and calls of *Suixi suixi!*⁷³⁸ and *Suixi gongde!*⁷³⁹ by other pilgrims rejoicing in the merits of this gift.

This was the first time that this group of women had traveled to Gyütö Monastery and it was clear that their time there, especially with the young monks, had inspired them to reach out and establish a new group of patrons among their own network of relations who would donate 264,000 NTD (approximately 8,600 USD) annually to the monastery. While many pilgrims

⁷³⁷ GTBA leader and pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

⁷³⁸ 隨喜隨喜! *Rejoice! Rejoice!*

⁷³⁹ 隨喜功德! *Rejoice in the merit!*

visited with the young monks they sponsored and renewed their support, as the example of this group of women demonstrates, each pilgrimage to Gyütö might initiate new sponsorships as first-time visitors recognized the spiritual capital of the monastery's young monks.

Furthermore, the pilgrimage provided an opportunity for Gyütö Monastery to reach out through the pilgrims to a broader network of Taiwanese who might also patronize them. As the above instance shows, as individual pilgrims share their experiences with friends and relatives in Taiwan, they become channels through which the spiritual capital of Gyütö's monks flow in the form of photos, videos, and messages sharing their experiences in teachings, empowerments, and monastic life. In other words, through sharing their experiences and stories, pilgrims' personal testimony became a megaphone to amplify and broadcast the spiritual capital of Gyütö's monastics to other Taiwanese. In return, some of their network might recognize the spiritual capital of Gyütö and its young monks and be inspired to invest financial capital in exchange for the merits and other spiritual benefits of supporting the monastery and its monastic residents.

The above four forms of patronage are far from the only ways in which the GTBA community patronize Gyütö Monastery. Community members in Taiwan, for example, also often make similar spontaneous donations in red envelopes, payments to sponsor novice monks or the performance of Tibetan Buddhist rituals. Additionally, donations to GTBA for rituals performed by Gyütö's monks resident in Taiwan are also remitted back to Gyütö on a regular basis, in addition to any financial contributions made during empowerments or teachings by reincarnate teachers from Gyütö Monastery who visit Taiwan. Nevertheless, pilgrimage plays a special role in reconnecting Taiwanese devotees with their spiritual home and, in doing so, also renews their valuation of Gyütö Monastery and its initiates' spiritual capital, and the rates of exchange that they offer to share in and benefit from these spiritual goods. As seen above, sometimes

exchanges take the form of directly offering financial capital for a spiritual “good,” such as for a particular ritual, empowerment, amulet, blessed pill or teaching. Other times, the transfer is further removed from tangible embodiments of spiritual capital, and may occur via transferences of seemingly intangible yet tremendously valued notions of merit (སོད་ནམས།, 功德) or blessings (བྱིན་རྒྱས།, 加持). The common thread throughout, I would argue, is that all of these involve Taiwanese pilgrims recognizing the value of the institutional, objectified, and embodied spiritual capital of Gyütö Monastery, its practices and teachings, and monastic initiates and offering financial capital in exchange for benefits they can gain from these spiritual resources.

Exchange is not a one-way street, however. In the following section, I will explore the main manifestations of spiritual capital into which the financial capital I have been discussing is converted into. While varied and diverse, I group the types of spiritual capital I observed being embodied and transferred to Taiwanese pilgrims in five categories. These include ritual services, empowerments and blessings, education, merit, and service and benevolent care.

5.3. Spiritual Capital

5.3.1. Spiritual Capital: Ritual Services

One of the most publicly legible forms of spiritual capital wielded by Tibetan Buddhist monastics is their ritual virtuosity. As described in chapter one, the power Tibetan Buddhist masters are understood to wield through ritual performances that can engender apotropaic and soteriological benefits has been one of the primary drivers of patronage from Chinese elites historically and was similarly a driving factor in early Taiwanese interest in Tibetan Buddhism. This remains true across many Taiwanese supporters of Tibetan Buddhism today and the GTBA community is no exception. GTBA has an extensive ritual calendar each month with their resident monastics conducting rituals to benefit all sentient beings and the GTBA community in

particular. During the 2022 pilgrimage, there were further opportunities for Taiwanese pilgrims to take part and receive blessings from different rituals performed by Gyütö's monastic body.

Rituals for the pilgrims started the morning we departed from Taiwan. During our layover in Bangkok, photos were shared via a Line group of the two monks who remained at GTBA's Taipei center performing rituals for our safe journey. Once in India, many of the pilgrims attended rituals regularly enacted by Gyütö's monks. For example, on days when there was time, a dedicated group of pilgrims woke up to attend rituals performed by the monastic assembly at five o'clock each morning. Although the pilgrims were not participating in the sense of reciting the same prayers as the monks, they nevertheless sat and performed their own recitations, either reciting mantras on their rosaries or other prayers quietly in Chinese. At breakfast after the first morning prayers some pilgrims attended, I overheard several encouraging those who had not joined to come, receive blessings (受到加持), and rejoice in the merits of these rituals.

Additionally, over the course of the pilgrimage monks at Gyütö performed various rituals at the specific request of Taiwanese donors. On the occasion discussed above, two Taiwanese pilgrims sponsored a ritual by a large part of the monastic assembly for their ill relatives back in Taiwan. Other pilgrims, I heard, made requests on smaller scales, such as requesting the monks who perform daily rituals to Gyütö's protector deities to conduct protection rituals for their families in Taiwan. While requests for private rituals are extremely common among supporters of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, at Gyütö Monastery rituals could be performed on a more elaborate scale. This not only included, for example, a larger number of monastics involved, but also more complete ritual preparations, such as the tormass or sculptures of flour and butter created for a ritual, and ornamented ritual music.⁷⁴⁰

⁷⁴⁰ Private rituals conducted at the homes of sponsors in Taiwan, for example, rarely involve more than a small group of monastics and often do not include time and labor-intensive ritual preparations or the elaborate musical

Additionally, several larger rituals at Gyütö provided occasions for GTBA to act as the official sponsor and, thereby, have direct access to important religious teachers. While I discussed several examples above in the context of monetary offerings by the Taiwanese, serving as the patrons of rituals also meant that members of GTBA were able to take a special place within a ceremony. One instance during the 2022 pilgrimage were the maṇḍala offerings made during an empowerment bestowed by Sharpa Chöjé. Gyütö Monastery requested Sharpa Chöjé, one of the most prominent contemporary Geluk teachers, to bestow a Mahākāla empowerment for their own monks and as well as for the visiting GTBA pilgrims. During the empowerment, two of GTBA’s leaders offered the requesting maṇḍala (གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་ཀྱི་མཛུལ།, 獻供請法曼達) and thanksgiving maṇḍala offerings (རྗེས་སུ་ཡི་རངས་བའི་མཛུལ།, 獻供感謝曼達)⁷⁴¹ to Sharpa Chöjé.

These offerings are made in rituals that accompany a variety of Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies. They are made at the beginning of each session of a teaching or empowerment, for example, to request the teachings or empowerment being bestowed and at the conclusion to give thanks and rejoice in the benefits. During these offerings, supplicants are supposed to visualize an offering maṇḍala “filling the entire cosmos with wealth” and then to transfer it “as a whole, to another being.”⁷⁴² In doing so, offerors are also, as Eric Huntington describes, symbolically exchanging “material wealth for a treasure that is even greater — the teachings that lead to

orchestration that accompanies many Tibetan Buddhist rituals. This is often true even at Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers. In December 2022, for example, I witnessed a conversation where a khenpo was explaining to a dharma center’s Taiwanese leadership why it would not be possible for him and one other monk to perform the ritual they requested as it would require the construction of several hundred tormas each day for five-days. Instead, the khenpo suggested a more condensed ritual that did not involve such elaborate preparations. Mother monasteries, however, have a significantly larger monastic body and can meet pilgrims’ requests for more elaborate rituals.

⁷⁴¹ Special thanks to Khenpo Könchok Pasang and Geshé Ngawang Sönam for help identifying the Tibetan and to Steven Zhao for help identifying the Chinese of these terms.

⁷⁴² Eric Huntington, *Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 110.

enlightenment. In this sense, it signifies the devotion of the student to the teacher, the essential basis of all tantric practice.”⁷⁴³

As the principal sponsor of the empowerment, the GTBA’s leaders made these offerings directly to Sharpa Chöjé on behalf of the entire group of pilgrims. In doing so, they were not just supporting the cost of the ritual and making offerings to the leading Tibetan Buddhist teachers involved. They were actually able to place these offerings directly into the hands of one of the foremost leaders within the Geluk school, an experience clearly treasured by both of the GTBA leaders involved. Accordingly, the enactment of this ritual at Gyütö Monastery during the 2022 pilgrimage provided an occasion for GTBA and their community leaders to take a prominent role in a large-scale Tibetan Buddhist ritual performance and to have direct access to revered religious teachers in a way that would not be possible in other settings.

5.3.2. Spiritual Capital: Empowerments and Blessings

In addition to rituals performed for a diverse pantheon of divinities, empowerments or initiations into the practices of tantric deities were and continue to be held in great regard by Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists. In many ways, GTBA’s pilgrims and other Taiwanese are similar to most lay Tibetans who, as Geoffrey Samuel notes, attend empowerments primarily as meritorious acts and in order to receive blessings or “some of the power that the lama channels.”⁷⁴⁴ They do not, generally speaking, attend empowerments because they intend to pursue serious meditation of the specific practice that they have been authorized to engage in through the empowerment. Rather, most Taiwanese attend empowerments primarily to receive the blessings transmitted to them by the presiding Tibetan master and, hopefully, also aspire for the conditions to engage in more serious practice in the immediate future or in a future lifetime.

⁷⁴³ Huntington, 109.

⁷⁴⁴ Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 260.

Accordingly, the blessings Tibetan masters are understood to bestow through empowerments and other means are an important source of their spiritual capital among their Taiwanese followers.

The power and therefore spiritual capital of a Tibetan Buddhist teacher's blessings is itself not a stable commodity but depends on several factors. While sometimes the difficult life experiences of a teacher, such as enduring extended periods of imprisonment, or a teacher's devotion to meditative retreats contributes to their spiritual capital, in other cases spiritual capital is assessed on more superficial grounds. For many Taiwanese patrons, the loftier a Tibetan teacher's title and lineage and the more esoteric the teachings they offer, the more they are esteemed. As one Tibetan Buddhist monastic summarized during an interview, the most successful teachers "must have a big name, a big lineage, and [be bestowing] a big empowerment."⁷⁴⁵ As practitioners of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, the GTBA community revere above all the Dalai Lama, followed by the three leaders of the Gelukpa: Ganden Tripa (དགའ་ལྷན་ཁྲིའུ་པ། 甘丹赤巴),⁷⁴⁶ Jangtsé Chöje (འཇམ་ཙེ་ཚོ་ལྷེ། 蒋哲曲傑),⁷⁴⁷ and Sharpa Chöjé. After our arrival in India there was a great deal of excitement when GTBA's geshé announced that Sharpa Chöjé would give an empowerment at Gyütö Monastery. This was especially exciting for the pilgrims because not only was this teacher one of the foremost living Geluk teachers, but he was also in the words of one of GTBA's leaders, "one of ours,"⁷⁴⁸ having previously been the abbot of Gyütö Monastery. For these reasons, his blessings and the blessings to be bestowed through the empowerment he was to give were thought to be particularly potent.

⁷⁴⁵ “མིང་ཆེན་པོ། བརྒྱན་ཆེན་པོ། དབང་ཆེན་པོ་དགོས་ཀྱི་རེད།” Drikung Kagyü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, January 2, 2021.

⁷⁴⁶ The present 104th Ganden Tripa is Kyabje Jetsun Lobsang Tenzin Palsangpo (སྐུ་བསམ་རྗེ་རྗེ་བརྩུན་སྒྲོ་བཟང་བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་བཟང་པོ། 加濟濟尊羅桑丹增貝桑布 b. 1935).

⁷⁴⁷ The present Jangtsé Chöjé is Kyabje Gosok Rinpoché.

⁷⁴⁸ “他是我們上密院的。” GTBA community leader, personal communication with author, October 6, 2022.

On the morning of the Mahākāla empowerment, the GTBA group was escorted past rows of monks and novices to the front of the assembly hall and seated on low cushions at the right front corner. The only other non-monastic who sat with the GTBA group was Gyütö Monastery's oracle (སྐྱེ་ཉེན།, 神諭). Otherwise, the assembly hall was shut to all visitors and worshippers who could only peek in through the windows during the ceremony. Following a series of opening prayers, Sharpa Chöjé commenced the empowerment, pausing for GTBA's private translator to translate the empowerment word-for-word.

During the empowerment, the Taiwanese pilgrims played special roles and received individual blessings in several ways. First, as was mentioned in the previous section, two of GTBA's leaders made the maṇḍala offerings to Sharpa Chöjé at the opening and close of the empowerment. Additionally, the Taiwanese group was given special attention during the torma empowerment (གཏོར་དབང་།, 朵瑪灌頂). To bestow this empowerment, several monks assisting Sharpa Chöjé brought around an elaborate torma and an image of Four-Armed Mahākāla and touched each of these to the heads of those assembled. From the throne where Sharpa Chöjé was bestowing the empowerment, these items were brought first to the two ranking reincarnate teachers at Gyütö, followed by those monks who had earned their geshé ngakrampa degrees. While I had expected the monks carrying the torma and image would continue through the monastic hierarchy, but instead they came to give the torma empowerment to the Taiwanese pilgrims and oracle next before proceeding to the remainder of the monastic assembly. In placing the GTBA pilgrims ahead of most of the monastic assembly, the ritual status of the Taiwanese patrons was significantly elevated over the normal position of Buddhist laity.

When the empowerment ended, the Taiwanese group once again received unique treatment as they were all given the chance to offer khataks and red envelopes directly to Sharpa

Chöjé following offerings made by Gyütö's two leading reincarnate teachers. As each GTBA pilgrim stepped forward and bent down to present their white scarf and envelope, Sharpa Chöjé gave each person a strong knock on the crown of their heads with a gilded vajra (རྡོ་རྗེ།, 金剛).

Although this left everyone's heads a bit sore, none of the Taiwanese pilgrims seemed to mind as they returned to their seats with beaming smiles after receiving this blessing. Subsequently, none of the other monastics present nor the monastery's oracle were afforded this opportunity to make a direct offering and receive a personal blessing. Instead, as soon as he had finished blessing the Taiwanese group, Sharpa Chöjé was helped to his feet and led out of the assembly hall.

This empowerment was not the only opportunity organized by Gyütö Monastery for the Taiwanese pilgrims to receive blessings from Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Most special of all was a brief audience that the GTBA pilgrims were granted with the Dalai Lama. This opportunity was arranged through a former Gyütö monk who now works for the Dalai Lama's office.

Although very brief, each member of the community was able to present a khatak, red envelope, and receive a pat on the head by the illustrious Tibetan Buddhist leader before taking a group photo. I later learned that although they had tried for many years, this was the first time the GTBA group had successfully received such an audience. Judging by the wide smiles and more than a few tears being wiped away following the audience, it was clear that the GTBA pilgrims felt that receiving the Dalai Lama's personal blessing was truly extraordinary. As one of the GTBA community leaders remarked to me walking out of the Dalai Lama's temple, this was "one of the most special experiences in the nearly fifteen years I have been coming to India."⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁹ GTBA community leader, personal communication with author, October 11, 2022.



*Figure 28: Taiwanese pilgrims receiving personal blessings from Sharpa Chöjé during a Mahākāla empowerment.
Photo by author, 2022.*

5.3.3. Spiritual Capital: Education

In addition to ritual expertise and spiritual blessings, the high caliber of Tibetan cleric-scholars' education is valued immensely by Taiwanese disciples. The first pilgrimages of Taiwanese to India twenty-five years ago were predicated on requests made to the Dalai Lama to give Buddhist teachings (請法). As mentioned above, the first five years that pilgrims from GTBA journeyed to India were primarily to attend the Dalai Lama's teachings at his temple in Mcleod Ganj. In more recent years, however, Gyütö Monastery has been augmenting these teachings by offering their own classes for Taiwanese pilgrims. While classes at GTBA in Taipei are regularly taught by the center's resident geshé, at Gyütö they are most often taught by teachers of even higher status, such as reincarnate tulkus and rinpoché's at the monastery. In doing so, the classes at Gyütö present another avenue for the monastery's leadership to showcase and exchange their spiritual capital.

During the 2022 pilgrimage, for example, following the hour to hour and a half of teachings the Dalai Lama gave each morning, Gyütö Monastery arranged for afternoon review classes for the group of pilgrims led by their abbot, Khen Rinpoché Lobsang Khedrup. Khen Rinpoché, along with a dozen or so other Tibetan reincarnate teachers, attended the Dalai Lama’s teachings, being seated at the very front on either side of his throne. Each afternoon the GTBA group was ushered upstairs into the abbot’s private receiving room where Khen Rinpoché would teach for between two and three hours based upon his understanding of the morning’s teachings. When he stepped into the room, the Taiwanese pilgrims prostrated three times, recited several opening prayers, including the *Three Daily Observances* (རྒྱན་ཚགས་གསུམ་པ།, 釋迦佛讚), the *Heart Sūtra* (ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་དུ་བྱིན་པའི་སྒྲིན་པོ།, 般若波羅蜜多心經), the *Concise Seven-Heap Maṇḍala Offering* (མཇུག་པ་བསྐྱུས་པ་རྩོམ་བུ་བདུན་མ།, 短曼達供養文), and refuge prayers (སྐྱབས་འགྲོ།, 皈依) both in Tibetan and Chinese. Following these prayers, Khen Rinpoché commenced his review of the morning’s teachings. As he explained at the beginning of the first class, it was very virtuous for the pilgrims to have come and to have this rare opportunity to hear teachings from the Dalai Lama. Although it would be difficult to re-examine the Dalai Lama’s vast and profound teachings, he promised to do his best to share his understanding according to the notes that he had taken each day.

From the first day of the review classes, it was apparent that the GTBA pilgrims thought attending these private classes was a special privilege. For example, on the first morning immediately following the Dalai Lama’s teachings it was announced that there would be a general review session for all Taiwanese pilgrims led by a geshé from Namgyal Monastery and translated by a Taiwanese monk. When I started to move toward the temple, one of the GTBA pilgrims grabbed me by the arm and said there was no need to go to this class because “we have

our own review class at Gyütö.”⁷⁵⁰ Another GTBA pilgrim echoed this remark on the second day, noting additionally that the Gyütö classes were being led by Khen Rinpoché, while these were being taught by a geshé. Over the course of the three days of teachings, I only witnessed two or three GTBA pilgrims attending these public sessions. For the rest, it seemed, the private classes at Gyütö were seen as sufficient and perhaps even superior to the general review classes.

Over the course of the three classes, Khen Rinpoché reviewed in granular detail the morning’s teachings based upon pages of notes he had taken. On the final day, he announced that in addition to summarizing the Dalai Lama’s teachings he had been requested to give a brief introduction to the core points of Buddhism. For this, he gave an summary of the stages of the Buddhist path based on the structure of Jé Tsongkhapa’s *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, as well as Tsongkhapa’s concise outline of the *Great Treatise, The Foundation of All Good Qualities* (ཡོན་ཏན་གཏོར་གུར་མ།, 功德之本頌). In conclusion, Khen Rinpoché stressed that the Taiwanese pilgrims had the good fortune of having a center whose main motive was to make Buddhism useful to Taiwanese and a qualified geshé who was long-term resident. He urged all the pilgrims to attend classes in Taiwan to continue their study and practice of these teachings.

For their part, most of the GTBA pilgrims appeared attentive and grateful for these classes. While several seemed a bit lost during the abbot’s explanations of the finer points of Buddhist logic, many pilgrims made audio recordings of each day’s teachings and took copious notes in notebooks or in the margins of the Chinese translation of Dharmakīrti’s *Commentary on Valid Cognition*. Regardless of whether they would continue to study this specific material once the pilgrimage had ended, it was clear from the pilgrims’ body language that they truly valued these occasions to listen to him teach and immensely respected him as a source of knowledge.

⁷⁵⁰ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 3, 2022.



Figure 29: Taiwanese pilgrims line up to make offerings of khataks, red envelopes, and other in-kind gifts to Gyütö Abbot Khen Rinpoché Lobsang Khedrup on the final day at Gyütö Monastery. Photo by author, 2022.

5.3.4. Spiritual Capital: Merit

Rituals, empowerments and blessings, and dharma classes are all performative ways through which Gyütö’s monastic leaders and other monks showcase their spiritual capital. All of these involve monastics performing specific religious services on behalf of the Taiwanese pilgrims. However, there are additional avenues through which Gyütö’s monastic initiates amass and embody spiritual capital. Although these may not have as tangible manifestations, they are nevertheless important means through which Taiwanese patrons assess and value the monastics’ spiritual capital. One such avenue is the presence of Gyütö monastics and novices as fertile fields of merit (བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།, 福田/功德田).

The idea of Buddhist nuns and monks serving as fields of merit for the offerings of laity goes back to the lifetime of the historical Buddha and early sangha. As Bhikkhu Bodhi notes, “by accepting the gifts of lay people, the monastics give them the opportunity to acquire merit.”⁷⁵¹ This exchange does not come without conditions, however, as monastics must maintain their vows to be worthy recipients of these gifts. As Rupert Gethin explains, “a monk is only a fertile and productive field of merit as long as he lives according to the Vinaya [monastic code of disciple], behaving as a monk should.”⁷⁵² In other words, being a fertile field of merit is not a passive status, but one that comes through strict self-discipline and the active adherence to vows governing one’s speech and conduct. In this way, actively upholding vows also serves as a method for nuns and monks to accumulate spiritual capital that is valued by lay patrons.

For Buddhist laity, offerings to the sangha can bring benefits that may manifest both in their current and in future lifetimes. As Bhikkhu Bodhi describes, “gifts to the Sangha, it is said, conduce to great blessings; they lead to one’s welfare and happiness for a long time and can bring rebirth in heavenly realms.”⁷⁵³ As discussed above, GTBA pilgrims made a wide number of offerings to diverse sections of Gyütö’s monastic assembly. These included making monetary donations to the entire monastic body, sponsoring individual ritual enactments, making donations to specific teachers, in-kind donations, and even spontaneously presenting red envelopes to monks. One further way the Taiwanese pilgrims planted meritorious seeds through exchanging financial capital was through their sponsorship of young novice monks at Gyütö.

As described above, many GTBA pilgrims sponsor one or two novice monks, with a few patrons sponsoring up to six. When I asked one community member, who was herself a sponsor

⁷⁵¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 152.

⁷⁵² Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 102.

⁷⁵³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words*, 153.

of two novices, why she sponsored these young monks she replied that it was primarily due to the merits gained through her patronage. She explained, “it is good to get merit from these monks. So even though sponsorship is a lot of money, it brings you a lot in return.”⁷⁵⁴ In other words, although the sponsorships involve a degree of financial sacrifice, this Taiwanese patron felt the investment was worth this price. By investing money now, she was sowing seeds in a fertile field of merit that would later yield positive results in the future.

Although some of the sponsors have personal connections with the novice monks they sponsor, by and large their connections are rather loose and provisional. For example, one evening as I was walking back to my room, I was stopped by a Taiwanese pilgrim trying to figure out which from a group of young monks were the six monks she sponsored. She had located four but was still missing two novices and wanted to know where they were to invite them for lunch during their weekly holiday. Since the young monks looked very similar with their shaved heads and robes, she could not recognize which ones might be the other two she sponsored. The young monks who all had “Chinese sponsors” were similarly in the dark. After a few minutes discussing back and forth, a monk from Gyütö’s office came over and upon hearing me explain the woman’s query, he replied that the young monks the woman was searching for had, in fact, disrobed and returned to their villages several months before. I braced myself as I translated the story for the woman, expecting her to express disappointment. Instead, she took the news very matter-of-factly and concluded that she would just take the four remaining novices she sponsored to lunch. When I mentioned this instance later to one of GTBA’s leaders, she assured me that it was very normal for novice monks to leave the monastery. The woman was not concerned because the monastery would just help find new novices for her to sponsor.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁴ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

⁷⁵⁵ GTBA community leader, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

Similarly, among the group described above who coordinated new sponsorships for twenty-two novices, there was no mention of which young monks these would be. Rather than the donors selecting young monks to sponsor, this decision was left up to the monastery.⁷⁵⁶ In this way, sponsorships were essentially slots offered by Taiwanese patrons and left for the monastery to fill rather than requests by Taiwanese community members to support specific monks. This is rather different from offerings made to specific Tibetan Buddhist teachers, such as Sharpa Chöjé or Khen Rinpoché. In the case the sponsorship program, GTBA supporters' are driven primarily by the idea of gaining merit through sponsoring young monks in general, rather than receiving blessings or apotropaic benefit from a specific individual.

It would be inaccurate, however, to depict the relationship between the Taiwanese sponsors and novice monks as distant or detached. In fact, most interactions between the pilgrims and young novices, whether it was playing badminton in one of the monastery courtyards or taking selfies together, were immensely warm. Indeed, many GTBA pilgrims expressed such affection for the monks they sponsored that they even referred to the young novices using kinship terms. The most common way that pilgrims referred to the novices they sponsored were as “my son” (“我兒子”), “my child” (“我孩子”), or even “my lama son” (“我喇嘛兒子”). When speaking about the young monks others' sponsored, it was common for the pilgrims to refer them as “your lama son” (“你喇嘛兒子”) or “her lama son” (“她喇嘛兒子”).⁷⁵⁷ Through such remarks, the pilgrims expressed a form of parental relationality to the young novice monks.

⁷⁵⁶ GTBA community leader, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

⁷⁵⁷ Not only were the vast majority of GTBA pilgrims women, but nearly all GTBA pilgrims who sponsored young monks were women. Within our group, there was only one elder man who, along with his wife, sponsored five novice monks. The other thirteen 2022 pilgrimage attendees who sponsored novices were women. I do not have information on the overall gender break-down among all of sponsors from GTBA.

Although the pilgrims I spoke with did not seem to think much of referring to the novices using kinship terms,⁷⁵⁸ I interpreted the use of such intimate and relational terms as connected to deeply rooted cultural ideas about Buddhist monasticism, the family, and merit-making. Indeed, from the time of the early introduction of Buddhism to China, apologists tried to reimagine Buddhism as deeply compatible with and even the ideal expression of filial values. Buddhist monasticism, they argued, is actually the highest form of filial piety because “in embracing the Buddhist *dharma* and joining the *sangha*, the individual seeks enlightenment so as to bring salvation to his parents and all sentient beings.”⁷⁵⁹ This idea of Buddhist monastics and children more broadly, generating merit for the salvation of their parents appears in the immensely popular canonical story and later folk opera of the monk Mulian (目連) who rescues his mother from the suffering of the hell realms.⁷⁶⁰

While the ideal of merit-generating monastic children certainly does not manifest across Taiwan in Buddhist families sending their sons and daughters *en masse* to be ordained, it is still a familiar idea. Indeed, sending children to ordain has even experienced somewhat of a revival among some Taiwanese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. Bliss and Wisdom, the largest

⁷⁵⁸ Questions to several pilgrims on the reasons behind using these familial terms yielded little more than smiles and casual remarks that it was because “the novice monks are children” or that “they are children that I sponsor.”

⁷⁵⁹ Italics in original. Mugitani Kunio, “Filial Piety and ‘Authentic Parents’ in Religious Daoism,” in *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, ed. Alan Kam-leung Chan and Sor-hoon Tan (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 117.

On the early history of the compatibility of Buddhism with filial piety in Chinese cultural areas, see also: E. (Erik) Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, Sinica Leidensia (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 283–285; Guang Xing, “The Teaching and Practice of Filial Piety in Buddhism,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 31, no. 2 (July 2016): 222–225, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2016.20>.

⁷⁶⁰ The legend of Mulian (目犍連, Maudgalyāyana) was introduced to China as early as the third century with the translation of the *Ullambana Sūtra* (盂蘭盆經) into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa (竺法護 c. 233–310). It came to hold an important place in both monastic and popular Buddhist practice and led to the tradition of offering prayers to ease the suffering of hungry ghosts (餓鬼) known as the Ghost Festival (盂蘭盆節). For more on the legend of Mulian, see: Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998), 80–102; Beata Grant and W. L. Idema, *Escape From Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); David Johnson, ed., *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: “Mu-Lien Rescues His Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1989).

Tibetan Buddhist community in Taiwan today, for example, strongly encourages its members to send their children to ordain in order to bring spiritual benefit to themselves and their families. Some of Bliss and Wisdom's leaders that I spoke with had even sent all of their children to nunneries and monasteries.⁷⁶¹ As most of the GTBA pilgrims had some connection with Bliss and Wisdom, they were quite aware of the idea of sending one's children to ordain as a meritorious act. While Gyütö's young novices might not be their biological children, it appeared to me that the pilgrims nevertheless saw their "lama sons" as making merits for their Taiwanese "parents." Perhaps this is why sponsors dubbed them their "children" or "sons."

Furthermore, the novices might also function as ersatz children whose virtues are laudable particularly when compared to the "shortcomings" of Taiwanese children. For example, after a lunch with a group of several novices she sponsors, one GTBA pilgrim remarked on how well behaved the young monks were and how they all played together without fighting. She continued, describing how happy the young monks were despite their relative poverty. She contrasted this with Taiwanese children, who "have so many material things, but *still* complain about things left and right."⁷⁶² This pilgrim's comments were echoed by another woman who also praised the behavior of the monks she sponsored. This woman singled out the oldest among the three novices she sponsored who, she said, at the age of eight or nine was already so mature and responsible that he helped to take care of two younger monks who had just arrived at the monastery.⁷⁶³ In this way, the GTBA pilgrims felt that the Gyütö novices' virtues made them worthy of remark, sometimes even in contrast to Taiwanese children whom they implied lacked these virtues. Accordingly, calling them "lama sons" put the young monks in a similar category

⁷⁶¹ Administration members of Fuzhi, interview with author, Taipei, January 18, 2023.

⁷⁶² GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 9, 2022.

⁷⁶³ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 9, 2022.

as their own children in Taiwan, albeit one that was set apart by the novices' embodiment of Buddhist virtues such as kindness, compassion, and non-grasping.

While the GTBA pilgrims sought merit through donating to Gyütö's fully ordained monastics, Gyütö's young monks were clearly also seen as generators of merit. Although they had not yet taken full monastic vows and were therefore, not quite as worthy of almsgiving according to more canonical definitions, it is clear from how the pilgrims interacted with them that the novices lack of full monastic vows was not a great concern. Their time spent memorizing religious texts, reciting prayers, studying Buddhist texts, and participating in rituals at Gyütö were reason enough for the pilgrims to see the novices as having amassed a significant amount of spiritual capital that was worthy of being reciprocated with financial sponsorship. The same cannot be said, however, of those novices who disrobed. Their spiritual capital dissipated when they departed Gyütö's gates and, along with it, the financial capital it could be exchanged for.

5.3.5. Spiritual Capital: Service

The final avenue through which I witnessed Gyütö's monastics manifest and exchange spiritual capital was through non-religious services that they provided to the GTBA pilgrims. In addition to ritual and educational services, and serving as a field of merit, the monastics at Gyütö also provided an array of hospitality services to their Taiwanese patrons. From meeting the group at the airport, to carrying luggage and shopping purchases, cooking meals, completing minor repairs in the monastery's guest accommodations, driving, translating, guiding, consulting on the purchase of religious items, and helping to organize rituals, monks from Gyütö provided services that extended far beyond those that might more commonly be thought of as strictly religious.

Much of this service involved manual labor by lower-ranking monks and was quite a far step from the choreographed gestures of respect and reverence witnessed during empowerments

or religious teachings given by Gyütö's monastic leadership. For example, on the first afternoon I struck up a conversation with the monk Gyütö had sent to meet us in New Delhi. This monk had finished his required studies at Gyütö but had not gone on to complete his geshé ngakampa degree. While he was sitting in a boutique in Khan Market, watching over a pile of bags filled with purchases made by the Taiwanese pilgrims, I asked if he often came shopping? He replied only when a group from GTBA comes to India and wants to shop. Since he is one of the few monks at Gyütö fluent in Chinese, he is often sent to meet the GTBA group and accompany them for most of their time in India. "It's tiring going with them here and there," he confessed. "Last time there was a group here, I went around with them all day. Then in the evening before their flight we had to find a place to do last minute COVID tests. I didn't get to eat anything the entire day. It's a lot of work!"⁷⁶⁴ No more than an hour after we had spoken, the same monk had to go search for a pilgrim who did not arrive at a designated meeting point to return to the guest house for dinner. For this monk, the arrival of pilgrims from GTBA meant temporarily taking up a job whose responsibilities lay somewhere between a tour guide and a camp counselor. Rather than teaching or performing ritual services for the Taiwanese, he served them by sitting patiently, guarding their bags and cell phones, and making sure no one was left behind on outings.

In other contexts, Gyütö's monks and the monastery administration provided services that were decidedly more refined and polished. For example, on the day after the Dalai Lama's teachings concluded, the administration of Gyütö monastery invited all the pilgrims to dinner at a luxurious, five-star resort and hotel in the hills outside of Dharamsala. As we were served chai, mocktails, and hors d'oeuvres on the balcony overlooking the Kangra Valley, one of GTBA's leaders told me that although the Taiwanese group had originally wanted to invite the monastic

⁷⁶⁴ Gyütö monastic, personal communication with author, October 1, 2022.

leadership to a special meal, Gyütö’s leadership had insisted on treating the Taiwanese pilgrims instead. She continued, noting how the leadership at Gyütö does this one evening each year as a “nice gesture for the Taiwanese students, because they know how the Taiwanese students feel about food and that the Indian conditions are a bit difficult for them.”⁷⁶⁵ She was referencing the difficulties that many Taiwanese pilgrims have with eating the very rich flavors of Indian food. Although the three monastic cooks appointed for the Gyütö pilgrims did their best to prepare vegetarian meals that suited the Taiwanese students’ taste preferences, this evening provided a special treat with plenty of food options more palatable to the pilgrims.

This generous gesture of inviting the GTBA pilgrims is another example of the services provided by the monks at Gyütö. Mayfair Yang notes in her work on social relations in China that banqueting is an important venue in Chinese cultures for establishing and maintaining relations, as well as to commemorate when friends or relatives visit from afar or are preparing to depart on a journey. In these contexts, banqueting functions as a medium of social, economic, and political exchange.⁷⁶⁶ Similar to how local leaders might be invited to banquets to bolster the status of the host, Gyütö invited their abbot as well as two high-ranking reincarnate teachers, Sharpa Chöjé and Gangkar Tulku (གཤམ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ, 貢噶活佛 b. 1964) to the dinner. The pilgrims were very impressed at the presence of these important teachers and not only requested group photos, but also brought plates of food to serve them personally over the course of the evening.

Yanjie Bian notes that banquets in Chinese cultural contexts are not solely “intended as a means to return favors to helpers,” but are more generally gestures or social habits “necessary for

⁷⁶⁵ GTBA community leader, personal communication with author, October 6, 2022.

⁷⁶⁶ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 137–139.

maintaining social relations.”⁷⁶⁷ The banquet served not only as a way to recognize the GTBA pilgrims as the monastery’s patrons but was also a way for the monastery to affirm its close relations with the Taiwanese as their guests. In fêting the Taiwanese at a luxury resort, the monastery was both renewing their religious and financial ties with the GTBA pilgrims and also taking care of them as one might celebrate a special guest or family member. In this way, the banquet was another avenue through which Gyütö provided service to the Taiwanese group.



Figure 30: Gyütö monk assisting a Taiwanese pilgrim by transporting their newly purchased suitcase. Photo by author, 2022.

⁷⁶⁷ Yanjie Bian, “Guanxi Capital and Social Eating in Chinese Cities: Theoretical Models and Empirical Analyses,” in *Social Capital: Theory and Research*, ed. Nan Lin, Karen S. Cook, and Ronald S. Burt (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 283.

Tibetan Buddhist monastics are perhaps not often thought of as caregivers or service providers outside of the contexts of religious rituals and teachings. After all, it is the monastics who are themselves most frequently the recipients of cash and in-kind donations, offerings, and sponsorships, not to mention respect and admiration. Nevertheless, the services that Gyütö's monks provided the Taiwanese pilgrims as gracious hosts, guides, translators, consultants, and even luggage porters were all important means to demonstrate the value of their spiritual capital.

From the perspective of the GTBA pilgrims, these services were not viewed as separate from, but rather as deeply connected to the overall spiritual capital of the monastics. For example, during one of the final days at Gyütö a pilgrim on her first trip to India remarked to me how truly special it was to have “so many opportunities to interact with Tibetan Buddhist masters” and to “experience first-hand their patience and benevolence.”⁷⁶⁸ When I asked her for an example, the woman did not cite a verse from the text we were studying or an audience with a teacher. Rather, she noted how on the previous day, three monks had waited without complaint at a department store for more than an hour while the Taiwanese pilgrims shopped for suitcases. “They waited and waited until everyone was finished. They did not seem bothered or make us feel any urge to leave” she concluded.⁷⁶⁹ For this pilgrim, the monks' patience and friendly attitude as they waited for the Taiwanese group was a manifestation of their spiritually advanced inner state. In other words, their easygoing nature and general cheerfulness were attributed to their spiritual development. Their service thus became a manifestation of their spiritual capital and contributed to their overall valuation by the Taiwanese pilgrims and patrons.

Of course, from one perspective the above pilgrim's comments about the patient benevolence of the Gyütö monks along with other remarks I heard from the Taiwanese group

⁷⁶⁸ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

⁷⁶⁹ GTBA pilgrim, personal communication with author, October 12, 2022.

about the monks' kindness, compassion, and simplicity could be interpreted as continuing the exotification of Tibetan Buddhist monastics. Scholars such as Mara Lisa Arizaga,⁷⁷⁰ Martin Brauen,⁷⁷¹ Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther,⁷⁷² Toni Huber,⁷⁷³ Donald Lopez,⁷⁷⁴ Yeh,⁷⁷⁵ and Zablocki⁷⁷⁶ have rightly critiqued such overly simplistic descriptions of Tibetan monastics and Tibetans in general as dehumanizing and harmful. Such positions simplify Tibetans into a type of noble savage, embodiments of the values exalted by those who are themselves drawn to Tibetan Buddhism in search of spiritual fulfillment rather than seeing Tibetans as complex and agentic human beings. Nevertheless, the fact remains that neo-orientalist or otherwise, imaginations of Tibetan monastics as gentle, compassionate, simple, and patient contribute to the ideal image that Taiwanese pilgrims consider virtuous Tibetan monastics to embody. From the perspective of the pilgrims, performing these qualities contributes to monastics' spiritual capital, thereby making them suitable for even more financial support. Accordingly, along with ritual and educational services, blessings, and serving as fields of merit, hospitality and service is another important way for Gyütö's monastics to embody their spiritual capital.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the exchange of spiritual and financial capital was not only a driving force in the early transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan, but continues to

⁷⁷⁰ Mara Lisa Arizaga, *When Tibetan Meditation Goes Global: A Study of the Adaptation of Bon Religious Practices in the West* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), esp. 40–43.

⁷⁷¹ Brauen, *Traumwelt Tibet*.

⁷⁷² Dodin and Räther, *Mythos Tibet*.

⁷⁷³ Toni Huber, "Traditional Environmental Protectionism in Tibet Reconsidered," *The Tibet Journal* 16, no. 3 (1991): 36–77.

⁷⁷⁴ Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*.

⁷⁷⁵ Emily T. Yeh, "The Rise and Fall of the Green Tibetan: Contingent Collaborations and the Vicissitudes of Harmony," in *Mapping Shangri-La: Contested Landscapes in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands*, ed. Emily T. Yeh and Chris Coggins (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), esp. 261–268.

⁷⁷⁶ Zablocki, "The Global Mandala," 26–32.

serve as a key avenue through which the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist institutions and teachers and their Taiwanese disciples is actively navigated today. Taking King's dictum that "Buddhism happens economically"⁷⁷⁷ as a starting point, I argued that pilgrimage practices in particular play a critical role in this process by providing an environment for renegotiating the relationships between Taiwanese practitioners and their Tibetan Buddhist mother monasteries. In doing so, pilgrimages serve as an avenue to renew the rates of exchange between devotees' and Buddhist teachers' financial and spiritual capital.

Across this chapter, I have drawn heavily on Bourdieu's conceptualization of the plural forms of capital as well as furthered critiques of Bourdieu put forth by Verter and Urban regarding the agency of religious laity. While Bourdieu focuses on the ways religious institutions and professionals monopolize the production, accumulation, deployment, and conversion of spiritual resources, I have shown that the laity play a critical role in co-creating the value of spiritual capital and its conversion into other forms of capital. This is especially the case in contexts where a religion is in a nascent stage and the spiritual capital of its institutions, texts, practices, and professionals does not yet have a widely accepted valuation. The value of spiritual goods in such contexts depends upon finding converts who accept their value and are willing to convert other forms of capital to partake of them. In other words, the valuation of spiritual capital is a co-creation between religious institutions and their clergy as well as believers.

Various global currencies today are converted based upon fluctuating rates of exchange that depend, at least in part, on the relationship between the supply and demand there is in a given market for another currency. Similarly, the values of spiritual and financial capital are converted based upon varying rates negotiated through relationships between religious laity and

⁷⁷⁷ King, "Buddhist Economics: Scales of Value in Global Exchange," 4.

professionals. In the case of GTBA and Gyütö Monastery, the valuation of spiritual and financial capital is a co-product of the relationship between Gyütö's leaders and monks and Taiwanese patrons. From the Taiwanese side, there is demand for ritual performances that devotees believe to be efficacious, Buddhist education, empowerments, blessings by spiritual masters, and the possibility to witness spiritual exemplars. At the same time, the Taiwanese supply a tremendous amount of financial support which has and continues to be critical to the thriving of Tibetan Buddhist institutions across South Asia. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and teachers attempt to meet Taiwanese demand by providing a wide range of ritual performances, empowerments, organizing classes, bestowing blessings, and introducing Taiwanese to virtuous Buddhist monastics, whether by sending monastics to serve in Taiwan or bringing Taiwanese to their monastic institutions. Simultaneously, these institutions depend upon the supply of donations from Taiwanese patrons to support their monastic initiates, the maintenance and expansion of their institutions, and the religious activities of their monasteries.

While I have articulated one specific example of how this process of co-creating spiritual and financial capital occurs through the case of the GTBA community and their relationship with Gyütö Monastery, similar dynamics may also be found in the contexts of many other religious traditions around the globe. Particularly in situations where a religious tradition is being introduced, local faithful play a critical role in establishing the valuation of that tradition's spiritual goods in their local spiritual marketplace. If a religion's teachings, narratives, stories, rituals, practices, institutions, aesthetic traditions, and teachers are perceived as adding value, enriching, or filling a gap in the lives of newly converted faithful, these devotees will likely be more willing to offer other forms of capital at generous rates of exchange. On the other hand, if a newly introduced tradition fails to find a local audience convinced of the worth of its spiritual

goods, its teachers and institutions may have to adjust to a significantly lower valuation than they may have been accustomed to in heritage contexts. In some cases, the laity's valuation of their spiritual capital may be so low that a tradition may not even be able to garner the financial capital to sustain itself. In such cases, the prospects of a newly introduced tradition are grim.

However, the laity's valuation of a tradition's spiritual capital is not only important during the early years of a tradition being established in a new locale. Their continued support is vital even in contexts where a religious tradition is long-established. A drop in how the laity values a specific tradition's spiritual capital or, in contexts with a relatively open spiritual marketplace, the appearance of other religions which devotees may come to value even higher can lead to a decline in the financial capital they are willing to offer in exchange for a tradition's spiritual goods. It is for this reason that I have argued that the rates of exchange between spiritual and financial capital are not stable but are actively renegotiated and renewed and that the laity play a critical role in this process in addition to religious clergy and institutions.

Pilgrimage provides one important context for this negotiation and renewal. As I have described in the case of GTBA's annual pilgrimage to Gyütö, Taiwanese and Tibetans utilize pilgrimage to both demonstrate their valuation of the other's capital as well as to renew the rates at which to exchange this capital. In making significant offerings to the monastic assembly or renewing their sponsorship of young novices, Taiwanese pilgrims demonstrate their continued valuation of the spiritual capital embodied by Gyütö's monastic body. Simultaneously, in assigning monks to guide the pilgrims, treating them to an elaborate banquet, organizing teachings and an empowerment for them Gyütö's leadership and monastics are similarly demonstrating their valuation of the financial support provided by their Taiwanese patrons.

Beyond merely demonstrating how each side values different forms of capital, pilgrimage also provides a context in which the rates of exchange between spiritual and financial capital are renewed. For example, by specifying the costs of sponsoring a ritual or a novice monk, the construction of a new road and entry gate, donations to the monastic body, or even sugar and tea for the year, Gyütö sets out the financial capital it wishes or perhaps expects Taiwanese patrons to provide. At the same time, receiving an empowerment and blessings from Sharpa Chöjé, attending classes taught by Gyütö's abbot, and receiving a group audience with the Dalai Lama, for example, sets the level of access to Tibetan Buddhist lamas and teachings that GTBA pilgrims are given and hope to receive in the future. Similarly, the rituals performed at the pilgrims' request or the provision of "ritual apotropaics"⁷⁷⁸ and other services show the range of spiritual goods Gyütö monastics are expected to provide. Put quite simply, GTBA's annual pilgrimage provides the conditions for a reassessment of how and at what level Taiwanese financial capital and Tibetan spiritual capital are exchanged. While some of these elements likely play relatively minor roles in the overall dynamics of exchange, the absence of others, such as not being offered teachings by Gyütö's abbot or pilgrims not donating to the monastic body, would surely precipitate a re-evaluation of the relationship and rates of exchange.

Pilgrimage is, however, only one means by which religious leaders, institutions, and laity renegotiate and renew the rates at which they exchange spiritual and financial capital. Annual festivals, holidays, public prayer services and rituals, and even regularly held religious services or classes can also enact a similar function by re-connecting and recommitting laity, teachers, and institutions to one another. The extent that laity continue to participate in events organized

⁷⁷⁸ Pierce Salguero, "How Do Buddhists Handle Coronavirus? The Answer Is Not Just Meditation," *The Conversation*, May 15, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/how-do-buddhists-handle-coronavirus-the-answer-is-not-just-meditation-137966>.

by a particular religious community evidences their sustained valuation of the spiritual capital manifested by that community's traditions, institutions, and teachers. At the same time, the degree to which religious institutions and teachers continue to organize and offer a variety of services to a specific community manifests their continued assessment of the value of and, in many cases, their requirement for the financial and other types of capital that community offers.

The obvious question left at the close of this chapter is what would happen to the system of exchange I have been discussing if practices that provide the context for their renegotiation, such as pilgrimage, stop or are interrupted? Or to phrase it more generally, what would happen to the relationship between religious institutions and teachers and their patrons and disciples if the one side did not meet the demands or was not able to supply the spiritual or financial capital requested of it? What would happen if one party did not abide by the "rules of the game" of spiritual and financial capital exchange? While I cannot provide definitive answers to these questions, I close by offering a hypothesis by way of two examples from my research.

The first example concerns what occurs when spiritual capital decreases or is lost. Just before I journeyed to India with GTBA I visited Bodhi Monastery, described in chapter one. Although it was one of the first Tibetan Buddhist monasteries built in Taiwan, I discovered that this community was in the process of rebuilding after several years of decline. Following the passing of Mingyur Rinpoché in 2018 the monastery had been without a resident Buddhist leader. This leadership vacuum was exacerbated by entry restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without a resident teacher, the monastery had only hosted a limited number of events over the previous four years led by teachers invited from other centers. The monastery's beautifully adorned shrine rooms with their Buddha and bodhisattva statues, sand maṇḍala, and relic stūpa of Gelek Rinpoché remained impressive. But the hundreds of moldy Tibetan texts

drying in the sunlight, cracked and fallen tiles, and heaps of mildewing boxes covering half of the basement indicated that the monastery had fallen into less than pristine condition.

As my wife, who was visiting the monastery with me, and I sat down to lunch with two volunteers, one a Taiwanese senior student of Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché and the other a Tibetan who was Mingyür Rinpoché's sister-in-law, the women described how the monastery had been mostly "deserted" for nearly four years. Certain areas, like the kitchen and basement, had fallen into disrepair. There had only been occasional visits by rinpochés, geshés and other teachers but the situation "was not stable as no one lived [at the monastery] full-time as before." The Taiwanese woman further commented that especially because of the pandemic, there had been "very, very few visitors to the monastery" in recent years. Even the events they did organize attracted far fewer attendees than used to come while Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché were alive. With the recent arrival of four geshés, sent by Gelek Rinpoché's nephew, Gosok Rinpoché, they assured me, "we are getting a fresh start and hope to have more activities and attract more people to come to the monastery again in the near future and coming years."⁷⁷⁹

Although it had only been four years that Bodhi Monastery was without a resident teacher, its fortunes had slid considerably. Without resident teachers, the monastery could not provide most of the services that Taiwanese disciples requested. The monastery continued to embody objectified and institutional spiritual capital, it was open to the public, contained empowered Buddhist statues and other sacred objects, and was connected to a broader religious network centered around Gosok Rinpoché. However, it lost most of its embodied spiritual capital with the passing of its resident teachers. As a result, Bodhi Monastery experienced a loss in the number of attendees and patrons. The recent stationing of not one, but four geshés from Sera

⁷⁷⁹ Jangchub Chöling volunteers, personal communication with author, September 28, 2022.

Monastery and a significant rise in the number of public events, as I observed on their Facebook page in the several months after my visit,⁷⁸⁰ were clearly efforts to rebuild Bodhi Monastery's embodied spiritual capital and, in doing so, to also reassemble its base of disciples and patrons.

The second example concerns a potential outcome of the loss of financial capital. During an interview with Baatar C.H. Hai, he commented on the recent drop Taiwanese patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. He described a rinpoché who is a close acquaintance and who he regularly sees when the rinpoché visits Taiwan. Hai recalled how during the rinpoché's last trip, he asked why the rinpoché had not come to Taiwan much recently? The rinpoché replied that it was more or less to do with the state of the Taiwanese economy. As the Taiwanese economy had slowed in recent years, donations were not as plentiful as they had previously been. As Hai explained, "When the Taiwanese economy was good, people would give lots of money at ceremonies, empowerments, and so on. This brought a lot of Tibetan teachers to Taiwan. Now that the Taiwanese economy has stopped growing so much, the donations have also slowed down a lot. Now we see the 'Taiwan Fever' among Tibetan Buddhist teachers has also died down a bit."⁷⁸¹

In this case, there was no obvious decrease in spiritual capital. The rinpoché had not passed away nor had he sent lower ranking monastics in his stead. He was still willing to teach, lead rituals, and offer empowerments. However, these spiritual goods were not being met with the same level of financial support as they had previously garnered. Whether there was a drop in the amount of individual donations or a decrease in the overall number of patrons, or likely a combination of both, the rinpoché experienced an overall decrease in the financial capital being offered in exchange for the spiritual capital he had accumulated, manifested, and bestowed.

⁷⁸⁰ Puti fa zhou si 菩提法洲寺, "Puti fa zhou si 菩提法洲寺," Facebook, accessed May 24, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081299056708>.

⁷⁸¹ Baatar C.H. Hai, interview with author, Taipei, August 2, 2022.

Accordingly, he decided to devote more time to teaching in other locations where more favorable rates of exchange allowed him to more efficiently raise funds to support his home monastery.

From these examples, I would suggest that the rates of spiritual and financial capital are closely linked. The loss or significant drop of one form of capital, such as the spiritual vacuum at Bodhi Monastery after the deaths of its resident teachers or the decrease in donations from Taiwanese disciples during an economic downturn, will likely precipitate the erosion of the other. In other words, a decrease in either spiritual or financial capital in a particular relationship will likely engender a drop in the rate at which this capital can be exchanged. By extension, the complete cessation of one form of capital would likely end the exchange altogether.

It is for this reason that I have argued not only that Tibetan teachers and Taiwanese devotees are co-creators of the value of spiritual and financial capital, but that these valuations and the rates of exchange between these two types of capital are never fixed. As these rates can fluctuate, and potentially fall over even a short period of time, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, following the passing of a religious teacher, or during an economic downturn, they must be re-negotiated and renewed by both parties. Pilgrimage practices, such as embarked upon annually by GTBA, provide one important setting for the renewal of this exchange through reaffirming the flows of spiritual and financial capital between both religious institutions, teachers, and their community of supporters. By keeping these channels active and renewing the rates of exchange, the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism also continues to flow vigorously into Taiwan as New Taiwanese Dollars continue to provide for the sustenance of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and Tibetan Buddhist rituals, empowerments, and teachings continue to nourish the spiritual appetites of Taiwanese faithful.

Chapter 4

Masks and Mantras: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Spiritual Reterritorialization Among Tibetan Buddhist Communities in Taiwan

On a mild mid-afternoon in early December 2022, I sat in a café in Taipei's Da'an District, discussing practices devoted to the Tibetan Buddhist divinity Pārṇaśavarī with several members of the Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society. The community's teacher, Bhumang Rinpoché (བུ་མང་ལྷོ་ལོ་གློ་མོ།, 菩曼仁波切 b. 1983) and head of their lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, Kyabgön Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché, introduced Pārṇaśavarī at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic as a bodhisattva who has the power to protect against pandemic illnesses.

A few minutes into our conversation, one community member set her latte on the table, pointed at a printed copy of the prayer and mantra to Pārṇaśavarī that I had brought along, and said, “This had a pretty big impact after a while, you know?”⁷⁸² She continued, relating how at the beginning of the pandemic she had shared a Facebook post by Bhumang Nyiöling with Pārṇaśavarī's image, prayer, and a recording of Bhumang Rinpoché reciting Pārṇaśavarī's mantra. Shortly thereafter she received a phone call from a friend, who was a devout Buddhist but did not engage much with Tibetan Buddhism. Recalling their conversation, she said,

About that time, her mother was sick, so she called me to ask what that [post] was? Then I told her, that was for [the pandemic] and she asked ‘So, is that mantra effective for everyone who is sick?’ because her mom was sick at that time. I said, ‘Of course it is! But you can't just dedicate it to your mother, you have to dedicate it to all sentient beings.’ I tried to tell her like this, to teach her

⁷⁸² “後來這個影響蠻大的你知道嗎？” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

that all sentient beings possibly have been your mother or father in a past life, right? So, you have to dedicate [the merit] to all beings. Then she asked ‘Okay, but will doing this help my mother?’ And I said, ‘Of course it will! Isn’t your mother included in all sentient beings?’⁷⁸³

The community member continued, describing how her friend

recited and recited and recited [the prayer and mantra]. Then about three months later she sent me a message on Line⁷⁸⁴ to say thank you and that her mom had improved a lot this year. The [praying] had really helped and it was clear the power of her recitations was really strong. So, I think this was really, quite impactful. To my mind, this is one of the most special instances of [Parṇaśavarī] averting [harm].⁷⁸⁵

She picked up her latte, leaned back and took a sip. It was a good thing, she concluded, that Bhumang Rinpoché had recorded the Parṇaśavarī’s mantra and that she had shared it. That her friend’s mother’s health had improved, she believed, confirmed Parṇaśavarī’s healing power.

1. Introduction: Transmitting Tibetan Buddhism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The emergence of the Novel Coronavirus in late 2019 and its swift transformation into a global pandemic that came to touch every corner of the planet led to the radical transformation of our societies. As governments and organizations across the globe mobilized in attempts to respond to a public health disaster unprecedented in lived memory, religious leaders and organizations also promoted and engaged in a wide array of actions to respond to the virus and

⁷⁸³ “當時她的媽媽生病了，她就打電話問我說這個是什麼？然後我就說這個是因為那個[疫情]。然後她說那個咒語所有生病的都有用嗎？因為那個時候她媽媽生病了。然後我就是說當然有用啊！所有咒語都有用，但是妳不要只迴向給妳媽媽妳要迴向給眾生！我就是這樣教她所有的眾生有可能前都是你的父母親嘛，所以妳要迴向給眾生。那她說像這樣對我媽會有幫助嗎？我就說當然妳媽也是一切眾生的裡面啊！” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁷⁸⁴ Along with Facebook, Line is the primary medium Bhumang Nyiöling’s leadership uses for sharing information with the community.

⁷⁸⁵ “她念著念著念然後大概三個月多後吧，她就 Line 給我，她就說謝謝你！這樣念她說她媽媽今年好轉了。就是很有用這樣，可見得她在念的時候念力很強啊。所以我覺得就是真的是有去影響到這樣子。這個是我覺得在我覺得避免最特別的一件事情。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

its impacts on their communities. Some Buddhist leaders and communities recommended people ingest medicinal pills or don amulets and other purportedly protective substances.⁷⁸⁶ Others urged people to take advantage of the increased time at home to deepen their personal practice,⁷⁸⁷ to follow public health guidelines,⁷⁸⁸ to engage in charity,⁷⁸⁹ or to locate alternative means of support for Buddhist institutions.⁷⁹⁰ Still others called for using ritual methods or mantra recitation to pacify the pandemic,⁷⁹¹ led meditation retreats to promote mental peace,⁷⁹² or led prayers for the deceased.⁷⁹³ Contributing to the growing body of literature that considers COVID-19's impacts on Buddhist communities around the world, this chapter illuminates how Tibetan Buddhist teachers' and communities' responses to the pandemic have further facilitated the transmission of this tradition globally in non-heritage contexts, such as Taiwan. Specifically,

⁷⁸⁶ Barbara Gerke, "Sowa Rigpa in Lockdown: On the Potency and Politics of Prevention," Society for Cultural Anthropology, June 23, 2020, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/sowa-rigpa-in-lockdown-on-the-potency-and-politics-of-prevention>; Salguero, "How Do Buddhists Handle Coronavirus?"; Tawni Tidwell, "Covid-19 and Tibetan Medicine: An Awakening Tradition in a New Era of Global Health Crisis," Society for Cultural Anthropology, June 23, 2020, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/covid-19-and-tibetan-medicine-an-awakening-tradition-in-a-new-era-of-global-health-crisis>.

⁷⁸⁷ Lionel Obadia, "Buddhist 'Solutions' and Action in the Context of COVID-19, East and West: Complexity, Paradoxes, and Ambivalences," *Contemporary Buddhism* 21, no. 1–2 (July 2, 2020): 170–172, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2022.2029212>; Miguel Álvarez Ortega, "Global Virus, International Lamas: Tibetan Religious Leaders in the Face of the Covid-19 Crisis," in *Religious Fundamentalism in the Age of Pandemic*, ed. Nina Käsehage (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), 202–204, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839454855-007>.

⁷⁸⁸ Ortega, "Global Virus, International Lamas," 206–208.

⁷⁸⁹ Ampere A. Tseng, "Buddhist Meditation and Generosity to Chinese Buddhists during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 9, no. 2 (October 24, 2022): 211–214, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-12340006>; Zi-Hao Ye, "Love Endures: Tzu Chi's Anti-Coronavirus Efforts in 2020," trans. Hsiao-Ting Wu, *Tzu Chi Bimonthly*, January 2021, <https://www.tzuchiculture.org.tw/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/TCB-Jan-2021.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁰ Shmushko, "On Face Masks as Buddhist Merit."

⁷⁹¹ Ampere A. Tseng, "Chinese Buddhist Practice of Mantra-Dharani Chanting During Covid-19 Pandemic: Motivations, Activities, and Health Benefits," *Annals of Public Health & Epidemiology* 1, no. 5 (2022): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.33552/APHE.2022.01.000521>; Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia, "Cleansing the Sacred Habitat in the Time of Coronavirus: Buddhist Sang Rituals in Sikkim in Response to the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic," *Arcadia: Explorations in Environmental History* 1 (Spring 2021), <https://www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia/cleansing-sacred-habitat-time-coronavirus-buddhist-sang-rituals-sikkim-response-2020-covid>; Salguero, "How Do Buddhists Handle Coronavirus?"; Shmushko, "Between the Tibetan Plateau and Eastern China—Religious Tourism, Lay Practice and Ritual Economy during the Pandemic."

⁷⁹² Tseng, "Buddhist Meditation and Generosity to Chinese Buddhists during the COVID-19 Pandemic," 208–211.

⁷⁹³ Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, "Special Report: COVID-19 Impacts Chinese Buddhism, State Control, and Soft Power," *Religion & Diplomacy*, April 20, 2020, <https://religionanddiplomacy.org/2020/04/20/special-report-impact-of-covid-19-on-chinese-buddhism-and-soft-power/>.

I explore how Tibetan Buddhist leaders introduced practices associated with the deity Parṇaśavarī, a bodhisattva understood to possess the power to heal and dispel contagious and epidemic diseases, to a Tibetan Buddhist community in Taiwan, the Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society. Beginning in March 2020, prayers and mantra accumulations devoted to the pandemic-protectress Parṇaśavarī swiftly became a cornerstone of Bhumang Nyiöling members' individual and community practices and, as the anecdote above illustrates, were even recommended to acquaintances outside the community. More than simply new liturgies, however, Tibetan teachers' recommendations to propitiate Parṇaśavarī and community members' enthusiastic adoption of practices to her also facilitated processes of *detritorializing* this divinity from Tibetan communities and landscapes and *reterritorializing* her within the Taiwanese context.

Through my examination of the Bhumang Nyiöling community's Parṇaśavarī practice, I make two arguments about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the contemporary global transmission of Tibetan Buddhism. First, I argue that moments of acute communal crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can serve as catalysts for religious change while at the same time also spurring the reinvigoration of elements already extant within a religious tradition. While individual and community crises, such as caused by an unexpected death, illness, natural disaster, or extreme weather conditions, often lead to local ritual responses in Tibetan Buddhist contexts, they do not necessarily generate religious change on the same scale as collective global crises that involve an immense loss of life, such as through a world war or global pandemic.

In the case of the Taipei-based Bhumang Nyiöling community, the coronavirus pandemic led to the community's adoption of prayers and mantra recitation practices dedicated to Parṇaśavarī, a deity previously little known in Taiwan. Although these practices were novel in the Taiwanese setting, they were drawn nearly verbatim from texts dedicated to Parṇaśavarī

composed by a twelfth to thirteenth century Tibetan saint. Their (re)introduction and spread during the COVID-19 pandemic, I maintain, presents both a moment of revitalization and transformation of Tibetan Buddhist religious praxis induced by this major global crisis.

Second, I argue that the COVID-19 pandemic further precipitated a reterritorialization of elements within the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon. Contemporary teachers and communities not only carry over and create new homes for Buddhist material, scriptural, philosophical, and aesthetic traditions, but also Buddhist traditions' claims regarding non-human agency. Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's geophilosophy,⁷⁹⁴ I argue that the global transmission of Buddhism involves processes I call *spiritual deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*. *Spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* occur as the territories where deities, spirits, and other non-human forces are understood to possess intercessory powers expand alongside the human communities who revere them. The introduction of Parnaśavarī practices to the Bhumang Nyiöling community serves as a particularly vibrant example of the powerful role that *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* play in the global transmission of Buddhism.

2. Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari first coined the terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization in 1972. Beginning with their discussions of capitalism and psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari further expanded their application of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in analyses of state formation and power, geology, history, linguistics, biology, and more.⁷⁹⁵ Although distinct processes, deterritorialization, or the “disembeddedness

⁷⁹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

⁷⁹⁵ See especially Deleuze and Guattari; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*

of cultural phenomena from their ‘natural’ territories,”⁷⁹⁶ and reterritorialization, or the “process of reinscribing culture in new time-space contexts, of relocating it in specific cultural environments,”⁷⁹⁷ are deeply intertwined. Deleuze and Guattari note that “it may be all but impossible to distinguish deterritorialization from reterritorialization, since they are mutually enmeshed, or like opposite faces of one and the same process.”⁷⁹⁸ Elsewhere, they make a similar point, asking “How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another?”⁷⁹⁹

In other words, the deterritorialization of cultural phenomena leads almost inexorably⁸⁰⁰ to their reterritorialization in different time-space contexts, forming together what Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo call “a double movement.”⁸⁰¹ Deterritorialization does not lead to a total erasure or a complete severing of all ties that connect and bind a cultural phenomenon to an emplaced context. Nor does reterritorialization yield a perfect copy or reproduction of an “original.” Rather, the movement from deterritorialization toward reterritorialization involves the retethering, reinscribing, and re-localizing of cultural phenomena as they move into and take root within new locales. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari write that what societies “*deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other.*”⁸⁰²

The dual concepts of de- and reterritorialization have been applied in diverse fields, such as geography, political science, and post-colonial studies. Scholars, such as Elizabeth

⁷⁹⁶ Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization,” 428.

⁷⁹⁷ Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, “Introduction: A World in Motion,” in *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 12.

⁷⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 258.

⁷⁹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.

⁸⁰⁰ The primary exception to this process for Deleuze and Guattari occurs following an “absolute deterritorialization.” See: Deleuze and Guattari, 55–7.

⁸⁰¹ Inda and Rosaldo, “Introduction: A World in Motion,” 12.

⁸⁰² Italics in original. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 257.

Lunstrum⁸⁰³ and Philippe Cauvet⁸⁰⁴ utilize these terms to examine state formation and power, while Élise Féron and Sofiya Voytiv,⁸⁰⁵ as well as Tan Chee-Beng⁸⁰⁶ consider de- and reterritorialization in the context of migrant and diasporic populations. As anthropologists and scholars of religion have increasingly questioned the binding ties of culture to any one place and witnessed its dislodging and transversal of boundaries,⁸⁰⁷ the processes of de- and reterritorialization have proven analytically useful in these fields. Jiemin Bao's study of a Thai Theravāda temple and its supporting community in Silicon Valley⁸⁰⁸ and Stephan Feuchtwang's research on state intervention, power, and religious life in Meifa Village,⁸⁰⁹ for example, both consider religious change through the framework of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Analyses of the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization have also been central in several recent studies on the contemporary, global movement of Tibetan religions. Lionel Obadia⁸¹⁰ and Arizaga⁸¹¹ apply these concepts to think through the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism and Bön in the West. Advancing discussions of global Buddhism initiated by

⁸⁰³ Elizabeth Lunstrum, "Terror, Territory, and Deterritorialization: Landscapes of Terror and the Unmaking of State Power in the Mozambican 'Civil' War," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (2009): 884–92.

⁸⁰⁴ Philippe Cauvet, "Deterritorialisation, Reterritorialisation, Nations and States: Irish Nationalist Discourses on Nation and Territory before and after the Good Friday Agreement," *GeoJournal* 76, no. 1 (2011): 77–91, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-010-9403-5>.

⁸⁰⁵ Élise Féron and Sofiya Voytiv, "Towards a Theory of Diaspora Formation through Conflict Deterritorialization," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 21, no. 3 (2021): 210–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12354>.

⁸⁰⁶ Tan Chee-Beng, "Reterritorialization of a Balinese Chinese Community in Quanzhou, Fujian," *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2010): 547–66, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X0800382X>.

⁸⁰⁷ Inda and Rosaldo, "Introduction: A World in Motion," 11.

⁸⁰⁸ Jiemin Bao, "Merit-Making Capitalism: Re-Territorializing Thai Buddhism in Silicon Valley, California," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8, no. 2 (2005): 115–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2005.0035>.

⁸⁰⁹ Stephan Feuchtwang, "Tales of Territoriality: The Urbanisation of Meifa Village, China," *Études Rurales*, no. 163–164 (2002): 249–65, <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.7982>.

⁸¹⁰ Lionel Obadia, "Globalisation and New Geographies of Religion: New Regimes in the Movement, Circulation, and Territoriality of Cults and Beliefs," *International Social Science Journal* 63, no. 209–210 (2012): 147–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12034>; Lionel Obadia, "Localised Deterritorialisation? The Case of the Glocalisation of Tibetan Buddhism in France and Worldwide," *International Social Science Journal* 63, no. 209–210 (2012): 185–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12029>.

⁸¹¹ Arizaga, *When Tibetan Meditation Goes Global*.

Martin Baumann,⁸¹² Obadia and Arizaga’s analyses of the reterritorialization of Tibetan religions in France are important analyses on the role of territoriality in Buddhism and Buddhism in the West. They focus their work on Tibetan religions’ material manifestations, describing how Tibetan Buddhism and Bön have grown roots in France through the establishment of religious institutions, like temples and monasteries, infrastructure, such as stūpas (མཚོན་རྟེན།, 佛塔), and the re-localization of other material elements of Tibetan religions, such as scroll paintings or thangkas, prayer flags, and ritual musical instruments. However, deterritorialization and reterritorialization are far from limited to the material alone. I contend that we must also consider other spheres or “lines of flight,” to borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s phrase, through which religions are de- and reterritorialized as they move across temporal and geographical contexts.

While considering the current global transmission of Buddhist traditions, it is not enough to examine the founding of organizations and movement of religious material culture. To understand the ways Buddhist traditions move and root themselves within diverse contexts, we must also consider how agentic non-human forces in the Buddhist cosmos, and these beings’ spheres of intercessory influence are unbound from specific locales and expand into others. This is not necessarily a process that happens all at once. It may involve a cohort of divinities being reterritorialized together or only involve a single deity. Furthermore, spiritual reterritorialization may not include all the members of a pantheon. Indeed, many deities bound to particular geographies, including various local divinities in Tibetan Buddhism, such as *yül lha* (ཡུལ་ལྗན།), *sa dak* (ས་བདག), *zhi dak* (གཞི་བདག), *lu* (ལུ།) and so forth, and local earth gods in Chinese religions, such

⁸¹² Martin Baumann, “Global Buddhism: Developmental Periods, Regional Histories, and a New Analytical Perspective,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 2 (2001): 1–43, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1310640>.

as *tudi gong* (土地公) and *tudi po* (土地婆), may be left out of this transference altogether.

Examining Parnaśavarī’s deterritorialization from communities in the Tibetan and Himalayan landscape and her reterritorialization in Taiwan, this chapter illustrates how important *spiritual de- and reterritorializations* are to the global “transplantation”⁸¹³ of Buddhist traditions today.

3. Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society During the Pandemic

Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society is an urban dharma community of primarily lay Taiwanese Buddhists who belong to the Drikung Kagyü sub-school of Tibetan Buddhism. Their center is located on the ground floor of a residential building in Taipei’s Da’an District. It was founded in 2005 and has about fifty regular participants at community events and approximately 100 to 120 total active supporters.⁸¹⁴ When their teacher is in Taiwan, the community holds weekly group practices and dharma teachings, as well as organizes a variety of special events on auspicious days within the Tibetan lunar calendar and within the Drikung Kagyü sub-school of Tibetan Buddhism. Examples include the parinirvāṇa anniversary of Jigten Sumgön Rinchen Pel (འཛིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ་འཛིན་ཆེན་དཔལ་།, 教主吉天頌恭 1143–1217), the founder of the Drikung Kagyü, annual rituals for the primary Drikung protectress, Achi Chökyi Drölma (ཨ་ཉྱི་ཚོ་མ་གྱི་སྐྱེལ་མ།, 阿企佛母,) to remove old obstacles before the new year begins, and the birthdays of their major teachers. In Bhumang Rinpoché’s absence, communal practices are occasionally led by lay community leaders or other Drikung Kagyü monastics. Additionally, the community is an active financial

⁸¹³ Baumann, “The Transplantation of Buddhism to Germany”; Martin Baumann, “Methodological Smugness and the Transplantation of Symbolic Systems: A Reply to Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, no. 4 (1996): 367–368, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006896X00251>.

⁸¹⁴ Bhumang Nyiöling community leader, personal communication with author, December 15, 2022.

supporter of their mother monastery, Bhumang Jampelling, located in northern India's Himachal Pradesh.⁸¹⁵

The founder of Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society is the Fourth Bhumang Rinpoché, Könchok Trinlé Namgyel Tenpé Nyima (བྱུང་མང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དགོན་མཚོག་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་བརྟན་པའི་ཉི་མ།, 尊者的菩曼仁迫切 b. 1983). Historically his lineage is associated with Bhumang Monastery (བྱུང་མང་དགོན།, 菩曼寺) in Nangchen, located in contemporary Dzatö County, in the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province. Bhumang Rinpoché is the immediate reincarnation of Lo Könchok Tendzin Chökyi Nyima (ལོ་དགོན་མཚོག་བསྟན་འཛིན་ཚེས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ།, 洛昆秋滇真秋吉尼瑪 1967–1971), who died at the very tender age of four.⁸¹⁶ The second and most famous Bhumang Rinpoché was Lo Chömpel Rinpoché (ལོ་ཚེས་འཕེལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 洛吉佩仁波切 1891–1953), who was famous in Nangchen in the mid-twentieth century for sacrificing his life in the course of a ritual he performed to save the community from an epidemic disease ravaging the area.⁸¹⁷ As I will describe below, this close connection between the Bhumang Rinpoché lineage and the ability to heal during pandemics has very much extended through to the current incarnation.

The current Bhumang Rinpoché became well-known in Taiwan after a local media blitz in the late 1980s spotlighted his recognition as the first tulku or Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teacher born to Tibetan parents living in Taiwan in 1983. Bhumang Rinpoché was recognized by Lamchen Gyelpo Rinpoché (ལམ་ཆེན་རྒྱལ་པོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 朗欽加布仁波切 1939–2017) in 1987 and

⁸¹⁵ Bhumang Jampelling was built at the request of Tibetan exiles from Nangchen who had settled in Chauntra. Bhumang Rinpoché oversaw the construction of the monastery and, as he related to me in an interview in Taipei on May 24, 2022, fundraised heavily among his Taiwanese students. Bhumang Jampelling was inaugurated with the attendance of many of Bhumang Rinpoché's Taiwanese disciples in 2012.

⁸¹⁶ Lin Jiancheng 林建成, *Puman renboqi* 菩曼仁波切, 256–57.

⁸¹⁷ For information about Lo Chömpel Rinpoché and the story of his death see Lin Jiancheng 林建成, 40–47.

frequently livestreamed via their Facebook page⁸¹⁹ or held in online spaces via the platform Zoom. In this way, the Bhumang Nyiöling community were able to include many community members who were unable or unwilling to attend in-person events. Many of these members were individuals with elderly family members or young children at home, who stopped attending live events due to their apprehension about contracting and spreading the virus.

Among the numerous disruptions and changes to religious life caused by COVID-19, however, it is the introduction of new rituals and mantra recitation practices in response to the pandemic that makes the Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society stand out from among other Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan. Across Taiwan, numerous other Tibetan Buddhist centers adapted their schedules, introduced online practices and teachings, and even engaged in *sādhana* or mantra accumulation practices to commonly practiced deities such as Green Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, or Medicine Buddha for the sake of ending the pandemic. Bhumang Nyiöling is notable, however, in that its leader introduced community members to practices dedicated toward a new deity, Parṇaśavarī, who was virtually unknown in Taiwan prior to the pandemic.

Starting in March 2020, the prayers and mantra recitation practices to Parṇaśavarī that were introduced at the beginning of the pandemic grew to become a mainstay of individual and communal practice within this community. Although other Drikung Kagyü communities in Taiwan were also introduced to Parṇaśavarī at the onset of the pandemic, Bhumang Nyiöling is distinctive for their sustained and community-wide devotional practices to her. As I argue below, this community's adoption of these practices illustrates how the processes of *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* can play a powerful role in the broader transmission of Tibetan Buddhism globally, particularly when catalyzed by moments of communal crisis.

⁸¹⁹ Puman riguang lin foxuehui 菩曼日光林佛學會, "Puman Riguang Lin Foxuehui 菩曼日光林佛學會 Bhumang Nyihudling," Facebook, accessed March 28, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/BhumangNyihudling>.



Figure 31: Bhumang Rinpoché participating in an online religious practice from Bhumang Nyiöling's center in Da'an District, Taipei. Photo used with permission by Steven Zhao, 2021.

4. The Cult of Divinities in Tibetan Buddhism

Before discussing the Bhumang Nyiöling community's Parnaśavarī practices in greater detail, it is important to first say something about Tibetan Buddhism's rich traditions of divinity worship. The Tibetan Buddhist pantheon is replete with a diversity of deities, sometimes differentiated based on their soteriological status as either worldly (འཇིག་རྟེན་པའི་ལྷ།, 世間神), and thus not yet enlightened, or as transcendent (འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་འདས་པའི་ལྷ།, 出世天神), having already realized enlightenment. Other times deities are distinguished based on their dispositions as being either wrathful (ཁྲོ་བ།, 忿怒尊) or peaceful (ཞི་བ།, 寂靜尊). In general, the complex cults of

divinities are a central element of the cosmology of Tibetan Buddhist peoples and are central to Tibetan Buddhist meditative traditions and the daily religious lives of Tibetan Buddhists.

The worship of individual divinities in Tibetan Buddhism often involves a multisensory set of traditions. Whether universally revered divinities, such as Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, and Guru Rinpoché, divinities affiliated with particular sectarian traditions, such as Achi Chökyi Drölma and Palden Lhamo (པལ་ལྷ་མོ།, 吉祥天母), or even relatively minor divinities, such as

Paṇṣavārī, Tibetan Buddhist deity cults have their own sets of rich literary traditions. These can include narratives of the deity's origin, tales of their miraculous feats, hagiographies, poetry, operas, and more. Tibetan Buddhist divinities also have diverse artistic and iconographic traditions, with their divergent forms appearing on scroll paintings, murals, statues, and sculptures. Some divinities are affiliated with particular locales, such as temples, shrines, and mountains, which may be believed to be their primary abodes or the place where they attained spiritual realization. Individual Tibetan divinities also stand in a complex series of relations to each other, as well as to Tibetan Buddhist incarnation lineages which, in some cases, are considered their human manifestations. Some of the best-known examples are the lineages of Dalai Lamas and Karmapas who are both considered to be manifestations of the compassionate Avalokiteśvara, the Panchen Lamas who are believed to be manifestations of Amitābha, and the Tai Situ Rinpochés who are held to be manifestations of Maitreya (བཏེན་པ་མགོན་པོ།, 彌勒菩薩).

While many deities are venerated through acts of physical prostrations and the recitation of the mantras associated with them, they are also worshipped through the recitation of numerous prayers that have been composed for them. Indeed, each deity cult possesses a corpus replete with a range of liturgies of varying lengths. While short prayers, such as the “Praises to the Twenty-One Tārās” can be recited in a variety of settings, most formal liturgies to deities take

the form of *sādhana*s. Literally, a “means of attainment,” *sādhana*s are, in Daniel Cozort’s words, a “handbook that *deity yogīs* recite, in solitude or with others, as they vividly imagine the divine environment, its occupants, their speech, and their transformations.”⁸²⁰ At the core of *sādhana* practice is the visualization of the deity who is being worshipped in the particular ritual, often in the context of a broader ecosystem of attending figures, surrounding environmental features, and so on. Most practitioners are introduced to such practices by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the context of a tantric initiation, which often involves the teacher granting the student the empowerment to practice the liturgy, reading the text of the liturgy aloud to the disciple (མཛད་པ་), and offering oral guidance on how to engage in the practice of that liturgy (མཛད་པ་).

The ultimate soteriological aim of *sādhana* practice is for the practitioner to attain Buddhahood through a process of conjuring completely enlightened beings and the phenomenal world as an enlightened environment.⁸²¹ Practically speaking, however, many, if not nearly all, practitioners do not anticipate enlightenment as a realistic short-term goal. Instead, they may see their practice as planting karmic seeds so that the conditions for the achievement of buddhahood may manifest in a future rebirth.

Alternatively, and especially for lay Buddhists, *sādhana*s may be practiced in an effort to partake of the protective, enriching, healing, or auspicious power and blessings of the Tibetan Buddhist divinities conjured within them. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, it was the promise of Parṇaśavarī’s healing and protective abilities against epidemic diseases that inspired most practitioners at Bhumang Nyiöling to repeatedly engage in *sādhana* practices devoted to

⁸²⁰ Italics in original. Daniel Cozort, “Sādhana (sGrub thabs): Means of Achievement for Deity Yoga,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 332.

⁸²¹ Cozort, 334.

her. As I will describe below, the *sādhana* that the Bhumang Nyiöling community practiced involved explicitly visualizing Parnaśavarī's image with her protective capacities emanating forth from her and flowing into the practitioner and other beings.

Deity visualizations in the context of *sādhana* practice generally fall into one of two types. Practitioners either visualize a deity externally, often in front of them or above their heads, or they enact a self-visualization wherein they conjure themselves as the deity. Stephan Beyer argues that the main distinction between these two methods of visualizing the deity has to do with where the locus of the deity's power is imagined. In conjuring themselves as the deity, a practitioner "vividly visualizes himself [or herself] as the deity and grasps the divine pride or ego; [she or] he directs the power of the deity into himself [or herself] and becomes, in effect, the transformer through which the divine power can pass out of the realm of knowledge and into the world of events."⁸²² In contrast, Beyer notes that external visualizations of the deity involve the practitioner "placing the power [of the deity] in the sky or within an object... and finally directs it into a ritual function or magical employment; [she or] he consciously manipulates and conducts it into an activity, into a magical device, or even, as in the bestowing of initiations, into another person."⁸²³ In other words, self-visualization involves practitioners imagining themselves as imbued with the deity's spiritual power while external visualization entails imagining the deity wielding their power in the space in front or above the practitioner. As I will describe below, Bhumang Nyiöling's Parnaśavarī practices involved both types of visualization.

⁸²² Stephan V. Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2001 [1973]), 66.

⁸²³ Beyer, 66.

While there is no one single format, most sādhanā liturgies to Tibetan Buddhist deities follow a fairly standard sequence.⁸²⁴ First, practitioners take refuge in the Three Jewels (དགོན་མཚོ་ག་གསུམ།, 三寶) of the buddha (སངས་རྒྱལ།, 佛), the dharma (ཚོ།, 法), and the sangha (དགེ་འདུན།, 僧), as well as sometimes in the Three Roots (རྩ་བ་གསུམ།, 三尊/三根本) of tantric Buddhist practice, the tantric teacher (ལྷེ།, 喇嘛), yidam or tutelary deity (ཡི་དམ།, 本尊), and dākinī (མཁའ་འགྲོ།, 空行母) or dharma protector. Next, practitioners arouse the intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, before dissolving all appearances into emptiness through the recitation of a mantra.⁸²⁵ After this, practitioners evoke the deity, often as emerging from a particular seed syllable (སྣོ།, 种子) associated with that deity. Subsequently, sādhanas often involve paying homage and making offerings to the deity, a period of resting in the visualization of the deity, and reciting the deity's mantra. After the visualization is dissolved, most sādhanas conclude with a recitation of the Hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva (ཡིག་བརྒྱ, 百字明咒) to ameliorate any short-comings in the practice and a prayer to dedicate any merits accrued to all sentient beings.

Likely one of the most widespread worship practices of deities in Tibetan Buddhism is the recitation of a divinity's associated mantra. As mentioned above, mantras can be recited in the context of broader tantric liturgies and on their own. Indeed, perhaps the most ubiquitous Tibetan Buddhist practice is the recitation of the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara, *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*,⁸²⁶ which monastics and laity alike can be heard reciting across the Tibetan Plateau

⁸²⁴ My discussion of the sequence of sādhanā practices is drawn from Beyer, 30–31; Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 233–236.

⁸²⁵ This mantra is *Oṃ svabhāva śuddhāḥ sarva dharmāḥ svabhāva śuddho 'ham*, ཨོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་མ་ལྷོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་སྣོ་, 唵娑巴瓦修達薩瓦達瑪娑巴瓦修多杭。

⁸²⁶ ཨོ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ། 唵麼呢鉢訥銘吽

and the Himalayan region. While much more could be said about mantra recitations, in brief they serve to evoke the presence of the deity they are associated with. As Beyer explains, “in Tibet, the mantra is the audible simulacrum of the divine power, and, in the coalescence of image and object, it becomes the divine power itself, crystallized in a sonic form.”⁸²⁷ In other words, mantras both evoke deities and, as the enlightened speech of the deity, are the audible manifestations of their power. As such, many Buddhists consider mantras to be efficacious in bringing the blessings of a deity to the reciter, as well as those they may dedicate their recitations toward. In the context of *sādhanas*, mantras go hand in hand with visualization practices as “the magical tools of protection”⁸²⁸ afforded by the deity.

As I will describe below, both visualizations in the context of *sādhana* practices and mantra recitation were a central part of the Bhumang Nyiöling community’s worship of Parnaśavarī during the COVID-19 pandemic. While it would be impossible to fully explicate the subjective experiences of all community members’ engagement with Parnaśavarī, most recited mantras and engaged in prayers to Parnaśavarī for her protective powers against the coronavirus pandemic. In a time of intense social anxiety and fear, Parnaśavarī’s purported ability to “protect against dangerous diseases like epidemics, and against untimely death”⁸²⁹ was something Bhumang Nyiöling community members eagerly sought to harness through repeatedly reciting her mantra and visualizing her blessings streaming down like nectar upon themselves and others.

⁸²⁷ Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā*, 243.

⁸²⁸ Beyer, 242.

⁸²⁹ “ཡམས་ལ་སོགས་པ་ནད་གྱི་འཛིགས་པ་དང་། དུས་མིན་འཆི་ལས་སྐྱོབ་པར་བྱེད་པ་ཡི།”

“守護疫情病難及，驅除非時死畏懼” sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ སྐྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, *sKyob pa'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ལྷོ་པ་སྐྱོབ་པའི་གཞུང་འབྲུག་ལས་རིམ་འོད་མེ་མཁའ་གྲོན་མ་པའི་སྐྱབས་ཐབས་བརྒྱུགས་སོ། ། 怙主吉天颂恭法藏 - 觀修葉衣佛母儀軌 *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön* (Taipei: Drikung Kagyü Bhumang Nyihudling, 2020), 9.*

5. Parṇaśavarī Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first announcement introducing Parṇaśavarī to the Bhumang Nyiöling community came on February 9th, 2020. In light of the increasing severity of the coronavirus outbreak, Bhumang Rinpoché urged his disciples via multiple social media platforms to follow the advice of his own root teacher and co-head of the Drikung Kagyü lineage, Kyabgön Chetsang Rinpoché, and pray to the deity Parṇaśavarī. Bhumang Rinpoché shared a copy of a short prayer to Parṇaśavarī that Chetsang Rinpoché had recently published in Tibetan, English, and Chinese and urged his followers to commence a twenty-four hour period of reciting this prayer along with Parṇaśavarī’s mantra: *Om piśāci Parṇaśavarī sarva māri praśa maṇi hūm* (ཨོཾ་པི་ཤ་ཅི་པར་ཏཱ་ཤ་མ་རི་སངས་མ་རི་པོ་ལྷ་མོ།, 喻必夏字巴那夏瓦日表薩兒瓦瑪日表巴惹夏瑪尼吽).⁸³⁰ Chetsang Rinpoché’s announcement, which was published by his monastic seat in India and oriented towards all Drikung Kagyü followers around the world, introduced Parṇaśavarī as the “Tārā who protects from infectious diseases” described her as possessing the “great ability to control the rampant outbreak of infectious diseases.”⁸³¹

⁸³⁰ There are several variations of the mantra of Parṇaśavarī depending upon the school or lineage a particular practice has been transmitted through, as well as the specific type of disease she is being asked to quell. Even within Drikung communities there are numerous practice lineages with at least three different mantras. In addition to the above, these include: *Om Piśāci Parṇaśavarī Sarva Jvara Praśamani Svāhā* as well as *Om Piśāci Parṇaśavarī Sarva Jvara Praśamani Hūm Phaṭ*. The latter is especially well-known within Drikung as it is present in the more widely known *Jewel-Garland of Fifty Deities* (སྐུ་ཐབས་ནོར་གུའི་ཐོང་བའི་རྗེས་གནད་ལུ་བཅུ་པ།) penned by the first Drikung Chungtsang Rinpoché, Rigdzin Chökyi Drakpa (འབྲི་གུང་རྩུང་ཚང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་རིག་འཛིན་ཚོས་ཀྱི་གསལ་པ། 1595-1659). Chetsang Rinpoché addressed the issue of the different Parṇaśavarī mantra traditions publicly as early as February 23rd, 2020, noting that the mantra he was recommending came specifically from Jigten Sumgön’s *Collected Works*. Chetsang Rinpoché continued, saying that despite the slight differences in the mantras, they all similarly seek to pacify diseases. Chetsang Rinpoché repeated this assertion to me in an interview in Taipei on November 9th, 2022, noting that he recommended this mantra specifically because of its connection with Jigten Sumgön. Members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community told me that they were not very aware of these multiple mantras as from February 2020 onward they primarily followed the mantra that Chetsang Rinpoché had published and asked people to practice. For Chetsang Rinpoché’s public remarks, see: Drikung Kagyu Foundation – USA, ““#kyabgonspeaks #澈赞法语,” Facebook, April 4, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/DKFUSA/videos/264614751366769>.

⁸³¹ Drikung Kagyu Jangchubling Monastery, “#HHRequested #Save #Care #Protects #Coronavirus #Chant #TaraMantra,” Facebook, February 9, 2020,

While several teachers from other schools of Tibetan Buddhism also recommended prayers to Pārṇaśavarī at the onset of the pandemic,⁸³² Chetsang Rinpoché promoted prayers with a special connection to his own Drikung Kagyü lineage. The first prayer Chetsang Rinpoché recommended, entitled “Praise in Verses to the Goddess Who Eliminates All Diseases (Parnashavari),”⁸³³ was written in either the twelfth or thirteenth century by the founder of the Drikung Kagyü sub-school of Tibetan Buddhism, Jigten Sumgön.⁸³⁴ During an interview, Chetsang Rinpoché confirmed that he recommended this specific prayer and mantra because of their appearance in Jigten Sumgön’s *Collected Works*.⁸³⁵ It seems he saw COVID-19 as a global public health emergency requiring the divine assistance of a bodhisattva both uniquely capable of countering communicable diseases and who had a close affinity with the Drikung Kagyü. Accordingly, Chetsang Rinpoché made a universal recommendation, stressing the benefits of reciting prayers and mantras to Pārṇaśavarī to his disciples the world over.

Within the Bhumang Nyiöling community, this announcement marked the first time most community members had encountered Pārṇaśavarī or had any real explanation of her appearance, attributes, and abilities to protect against contagious diseases. One community member recalled that the announcements on social media by Chetsang Rinpoché and Bhumang Rinpoché in early 2020 were the first time she even heard the name of the deity Pārṇaśavarī.⁸³⁶ Another related that although most community members were familiar with the Twenty-One Tārās, this

<https://www.facebook.com/DrikungKagyüJangchubling/posts/pfbid02XDtFd813V87YdHXHvjByGRQsjfm2jXKrwNXiZPWtRnb92PTwi6eQovb1nrAERHRDI>.

⁸³² Ortega, “Global Virus, International Lamas,” 205, 208; Tseng, “Chinese Buddhist Practice of Mantra-Dharani Chanting During Covid-19 Pandemic: Motivations, Activities, and Health Benefits,” 34.

⁸³³ མཇུག་བཅུན་མི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྐྱོད་པ་ཚོགས་བཅད་མ། མཇུག་བཅུན་མི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྐྱོད་པ་ཚོགས་བཅད་མ། 息除病魔障一葉衣佛母讚頌文

⁸³⁴ sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོ་བ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun ri khrod lo gyon ma'i bstod pa tshigs bcad ma/ ཇུག་མི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྐྱོད་པ་ཚོགས་བཅད་མ།,” in *gSung 'bum/ 'jig rten mgon po/ གསུང་འབུམ། འཇིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ།*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Drikung Kagyü Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001), 120–21, http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW23743_E99EB2.

⁸³⁵ Chetsang Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, November 9, 2022.

⁸³⁶ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

announcement was the first time they were taught specifically about the twentieth Tārā, Parṇaśavarī, her power to protect against contagious illnesses, and had seen her image.⁸³⁷ Putting it in different terms during a later conversation, the same community member said that when the pandemic started “we can say our minds were a little bit like white paper, we knew nothing about Parṇaśavarī.” He continued, recalling that it was only through Chetsang Rinpoché and Bhumang Rinpoché’s announcements and explanations that members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community came to learn about Parṇaśavarī, her appearance and attributes, her abilities, and her mantra.⁸³⁸

Although 2020 was not the first time Drikung teachers in Taiwan had performed rituals to Parṇaśavarī, all of the Drikung Kagyü leaders I spoke with confirmed that the coronavirus pandemic provided the impetus for them to offer their first public teachings about Parṇaśavarī and promote her practice locally. Chetsang Rinpoché, for example, recalled during an interview that during the SARS outbreak in Taiwan nearly twenty years prior to COVID-19, he performed a ritual propitiating Parṇaśavarī at the request of a Taiwanese disciple who was a medical professional. At that time, however, the text he used was entirely in Tibetan without Chinese translation. Moreover, he did not give any public teachings or other explanations in Chinese about the ritual’s connection to the deity Parṇaśavarī. It was only after the spread of COVID-19 in early 2020 that Chetsang Rinpoché had prayers to Parṇaśavarī translated into English and Chinese for public dissemination and began to discuss Parṇaśavarī in greater detail.⁸³⁹

For his part, Bhumang Rinpoché recalled in an interview that his recommendation for his disciples to practice Parṇaśavarī was primarily motivated by his desire to accomplish the wishes of his root teacher, Chetsang Rinpoché. He noted, “Didn’t His Holiness [Chetsang Rinpoché]

⁸³⁷ Bhumang Nyiöling community member, interview with author, Taipei, July 29, 2022.

⁸³⁸ Bhumang Nyiöling community member, personal communication with author, December 12, 2022.

⁸³⁹ Chetsang Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, November 9, 2022.

advise that we should recite it? So that’s why I told them [my students] that they should recite it.”⁸⁴⁰ He continued, stressing that at the beginning of the pandemic, he immediately followed Chetsang Rinpoché’s advice in recommending that his followers recite prayers to Parṇaśavarī and her mantra “not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of all sentient beings.”⁸⁴¹

The leadership of many other Drikung centers in Taiwan and elsewhere around the world did not necessarily follow suit. For example, two other Drikung communities I visited in the Taipei region shared Chetsang Rinpoché’s request for Drikung followers to pray to Parṇaśavarī with their community members. However, neither of these communities organized or promoted communal practices. When I asked a lay Taiwanese leader in one of these communities if her center had engaged in practices dedicated to Parṇaśavarī, she replied that they had not gathered as a community to recite the prayer and mantra that Chetsang Rinpoché had shared. When I pressed further about how individuals in the community engaged with Parṇaśavarī, she replied that since it was not something they had practiced together, she was unsure and “didn’t dare to ask others” if they prayed to Parṇaśavarī on their own. It was completely up to individuals, she concluded, to choose whether to pray to Parṇaśavarī as part of their daily prayers.⁸⁴²

A Drikung khenpo teacher I interviewed noted that he was requested by lay Taiwanese disciples to give instructions on the prayer to Parṇaśavarī and share some about her background at a Drikung Kagyü center in Taizhong. Aside from one seminar, however, he did not lead any communal prayer ceremonies for Taiwanese disciples. Nor did he personally engage in sustained

⁸⁴⁰ “དེ་ཡི་ཤེས་ནོར་བུ་གྱིས་བཀའ་སློབ་དེ་དག་དོན་དགོས་ཤིང་གསུངས་ཡོད་ཅིང་ཡོད་པ་ཡོ། དེ་ཡིན་ཅིང་ངས་ཀྱིས་ཡིན་གཅིག་མིན་གཅིག་གདོན་དགོས་ཤིང་ཟེར་ལབ་སོང་།” Bhumang Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, July 26, 2022.

⁸⁴¹ “སོ་སོས་གཅིག་པོའི་ཆེད་དུ་མ་ཤིང་། ཡིན་གཅིག་མིན་གཅིག་འགོ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཆེད་དུ་ཤིང་བ།” Bhumang Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, July 26, 2022.

⁸⁴² “沒有敢問別人。” Member of Taiwan Palmé Monastery Buddhist Society, personal communication with author, December 4, 2022.

prayers to Parṇaśavarī during the pandemic.⁸⁴³ Even the Taiwan International Drikung Council (རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་འབྲི་གུང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ཐེ་མཚན་ལྷན་ཚོགས།, 國際直貢噶舉台灣總會), a local branch of the International Drikung Council (རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་འབྲི་གུང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་སྤྱི་ཁྱབ་ལྷན་ཁང་།, 國際直貢噶舉總會) that organizes collective practices and events for all Drikung communities in Taiwan, did not host any communal online or in-person prayer services to Parṇaśavarī during the pandemic. They only shared Chetsang Rinpoché’s general appeals for his followers to pray to Parṇaśavarī and recite her mantra.⁸⁴⁴

Outside of Taiwan, it appears that Chetsang Rinpoché’s exhortation to offer prayers to Parṇaśavarī was also interpreted in different ways. Some Drikung communities in the United States and Europe offered practice resources and instructions for their community members to engage in practices to Parṇaśavarī. Some, such as the Garchen Buddhist Institute, even hosted weekly online practices to Parṇaśavarī led by their resident monastics.⁸⁴⁵ In South Asia, Drikung monasteries do not appear to have interpreted Chetsang Rinpoché’s appeal as a clarion call for large-scale prayer ceremonies. The Drikung Kagyü khenpo mentioned above, for example, told me that he was unaware of any Drikung monastery in Nepal or India engaging in communal rituals to Parṇaśavarī. He recalled, “At that time, there were a lot of different sādhanas that

⁸⁴³ Drikung Kagyü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, July 28, 2022.

⁸⁴⁴ International Drikung Kagyu Council Taiwan, “Yinying dui quanqiu xinxing guanzhuang bingdu yiqing (COVID-19) chixu de ehua... 因應對全球新型冠狀病毒疫情(COVID-19)持續的惡化....” Facebook, March 22, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/IDKCT2015/posts/pfbid02WH1kAbymTDXZsozb1JAd4og5KaerVZGE4UzJAGojz42Y6gRuTUtbZo9t37uN1u991>.

⁸⁴⁵ The Garchen Buddhist Institute’s website posted several teachings by Chetsang Rinpoché and Garchen Rinpoché about the prayer and sādhana to Parṇaśavarī and other resources. Similar resources were offered, for example, in Germany by Drikung Kagyü Deutschland. Another Drikung follower affiliated with the Ratnashri Meditation Center in Sweden, Zabrina Leung, compiled a series of texts and teachings related to Parṇaśavarī and published them online. This text was later widely shared among Drikung communities in Europe and North America. If these communities organized group practices or what such practices looked like, however, is beyond the scope of my study. See: “Coronavirus Resource Page,” January 28, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210128022529/https://garchen.net/corono-virus-messages-teachings/>; Christian Licht, “Meditationspraxis gegen die Pandemie von S.H. Drikung Kyabgön (+Parnashavari-Text),” April 13, 2020, <https://drikung.de/parnashavari/>; “New Book: Commentary on Parnashavari Sadhana,” Drikung Kagyü Europe, December 1, 2020, <https://drikung-europe.org/new-book/>.

appeared online. However, there weren't any [Drikung] monasteries [practicing] Parṇaśavarī. There weren't great rituals or anything like that."⁸⁴⁶ He continued, confirming that even monks at Chetsang Rinpoché's monastic seat, Drikung Jangchubling, did not engage in extensive practices and large-scale rituals to Parṇaśavarī collectively.

The reasons why many other Drikung Kagyü centers in Taiwan and elsewhere did not interpret Chetsang Rinpoché's request to pray to Parṇaśavarī as a mandate to organize communal prayers and rituals to Parṇaśavarī in their dharma centers remain unclear. When I asked Bhumang Rinpoché about this, he responded to my question by instead stressing that that we should pay more attention to our own actions and less attention to what others are doing. He maintained that regardless of what was occurring in other dharma centers, for him it was of central importance that his disciples followed the wishes of Chetsang Rinpoché, which he took literally to be reciting prayers and mantras to Parṇaśavarī. "Since Kyabgön [Chetsang] Rinpoché said like that [we should engage in practices devoted to Parṇaśavarī], so then what should be each of our main tasks? Isn't it our duty to accomplish our lama's wishes?"⁸⁴⁷

Whether following Chetsang Rinpoché's wishes was the sole motivating factor behind Bhumang Rinpoché's exhortations to his students or there were other elements at play, I cannot say. Perhaps Bhumang Rinpoché's Taiwanese students' had particularly acute anxieties about the pandemic and the prayers to Parṇaśavarī provided a ready answer. Perhaps Bhumang Rinpoché saw this short prayer and mantra as a particularly suitable practice for Buddhist laity? Or perhaps

⁸⁴⁶ “དེ་དུས་ཇི་སྐོར་ལ་སྐྱབས་ཐབས་འདྲ་མི་འདྲ་མང་པོ་སྐྱབས་ཡོང་གི་འདུག་གཞི་ ཡིན་ན་དགོན་པ་གང་ཅིམ་ལ་ལོ་སྐྱོན་མ་འདྲ་པོ་མི་འདུག་ སྐྱབས་ཆེན་དེ་འདྲ་པོ་མི་འདུག་” Drikung Kagyü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, July 28, 2022.

I should note that I was unable to confirm this khenpo's claims on the ground in India or Nepal and so cannot comment on the ways Drikung Kagyü monastic and lay followers in South Asia, the Himalayas, or Tibet may have privately recited prayers to Parṇaśavarī or how members of these communities interpreted Chetsang Rinpoché's recommendation to pray to Parṇaśavarī.

⁸⁴⁷ “སྐྱབས་མགོན་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་ཆེས་དེ་འདྲ་གསུངས་ནས་ད་དུ་ཚོ་ཚོར་མ་སོ་སོས་གཙོ་བོ་ག་རེ་རེད་ལའང་ན་སྐྱབས་ཡི་བཀའ་དེ་བསྐྱབས་ཡིག་དེ་དུ་ཚོའི་ལས་འགན་རེད་ལ།” Bhumang Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, July 26, 2022.

Bhumang Rinpoché was looking for a way to maintain connection with his students despite their geographic separation? Whatever the exact reasons, Bhumang Rinpoché decided to direct the Bhumang Nyiöling community to engage in sustained, community-wide practices devoted to Parṇaśavarī over a period that ended up extending for several years. Their communal promotion of and dedication to Parṇaśavarī practices in response to the pandemic make the Bhumang Nyiöling community stand out among other Drikung communities in Taiwan and beyond.

On March 9th and 12th, 2020, Bhumang Nyiöling shared two further announcements by Chetsang Rinpoché. In a video message for the Tibetan New Year on March 9th, Chetsang Rinpoché urged his followers around the world to request and receive the Parṇaśavarī empowerment and to recite her mantra repeatedly during the period from the first through the fifteenth day of the first Tibetan month. As this was also the period when the historical Buddha Śākyamuni displayed numerous miracles in Śrāvastī, Chetsang Rinpoché explained, it is an auspicious time in the Tibetan calendar when virtues are multiplied innumerable times.⁸⁴⁸ A complete written transcript of this video with Tibetan, English, and Chinese text and translation was later posted on Bhumang Nyiöling’s Facebook page on March 11th.⁸⁴⁹

The following day, on March 12th, Bhumang Nyiöling shared a written statement issued by Chetsang Rinpoché’s office calling for “all Drikung Kagyü monasteries, centers, and disciples to practice the Dakini Parnashavari and recite her mantra on a daily basis.”⁸⁵⁰ The announcement also introduces a newer, full-length sādhana or tantric liturgical practice entitled *The*

⁸⁴⁸ Drikung Kagyu Foundation - USA, “Message from His Holiness,” Facebook, March 9, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1773116606159161>.

⁸⁴⁹ His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon, “བུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Tashi Delek! 扎西德勒! ,” Facebook, March 11, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/drikungkyabgon/photos/a.630932630322173/2841436062605141/>.

⁸⁵⁰ Puman riguang lin foxuehui 菩曼日光林佛學會 Bhumang Nyihudling, “Laizi zhigong chezan fawang de xin 來自直貢澈贊法王的信,” Facebook, March 12, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/BhumangNyihudling/posts/pfbid02ot4oJ89AmdqmcPHFTBjcLspjULrXfMvSkQaxdd4awJdhYbG2uQ1AineU3uMjJHyVl>.

Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön that Chetsang Rinpoché had recently compiled from several works also penned by Jigten Sumgön along with a request for “this sadhana to be translated into as many languages as possible so it can be spread far and wide.”⁸⁵¹ On March 23rd Bhumang Nyiöling shared a statement from the International Drikung Council of Taiwan with a Chinese translation of this sādhana, reiterating Chetsang Rinpoché’s exhortation to engage in this practice and recite Parnaśavarī’s mantra daily.⁸⁵² By the following week, Bhumang Nyiöling had designed, published both online and in-print, and distributed their own versions of the short prayer on a small card along with Parnaśavarī’s mantra in Tibetan, Chinese, and English,⁸⁵³ as well as a prayer booklet (法本) containing the longer sādhana in Tibetan, Chinese phonetic transliteration, Chinese translation, and English.⁸⁵⁴

6. Prayers to Parnaśavarī

The short prayer to Parnaśavarī entitled “Praise in Verses to the Goddess Who Eliminates All Diseases (Parnashavari)”⁸⁵⁵ (hereafter “Praise in Verses”) was first published on Chetsang Rinpoché’s Facebook page on February 9th, 2020. This brief text is only four stanzas long, each stanza containing four lines of nine-syllables in the Tibetan text and four lines of seven-syllables in the Chinese translation. The text was written by the founder of the Drikung Kagyü, Jigten

⁸⁵¹ Puman riguang lin foxuehui 菩曼日光林佛學會 Bhumang Nyihudling.

⁸⁵² International Drikung Kagyu Council Taiwan, “Yinying dui quanqiu xinxing guanzhuang bingdu yiqing (COVID-19) chixu de ehua... 因應對全球新型冠狀病毒疫情(COVID-19)持續的惡化...”

⁸⁵³ Bhumang Tulku, Facebook, April 1, 2020,

<https://www.facebook.com/bhumang.tulku/posts/pfbid036iWkxBE7KeMyf2SBVGLwpY4ygGGDuPLjoAxAaNvtNyjnJWJfLw12KxqyJBzMLo5l>.

⁸⁵⁴ sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་འབྲུམ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་གྲོན་མ་པའི་སྐབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་སོ། ། 怙主吉天頌恭法藏 - 觀修葉衣佛母儀軌 *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*.

⁸⁵⁵ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལོ་མ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྟོད་པ་རྩོགས་བཅད་མ།། 息除病魔障一葉衣佛母讚頌文

Sumgön, and appears in his *Collected Works*.⁸⁵⁶ The only alterations to the original text Chetsang Rinpoché made was the addition of Parṇaśavarī’s mantra and a one stanza dedication prayer.



Figure 32: Images of the “Praise in Verses” prayer card and *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* published by Bhumang Nyiöling. Photo by author, 2023.

The verses of the prayer pay homage to Parṇaśavarī as the mother of wish-fulfilling activities. She is described as emerging out of the maṇḍala of the dharmakāya of great bliss⁸⁵⁷ and possessing the ability to guard against dangerous diseases, such as epidemics, and untimely death. The “Praise in Verses” continues to describe Parṇaśavarī’s appearance and attributes,

⁸⁵⁶ sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོབ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun ri khrod lo gyon ma’i bstod pa tshigs bcad ma/ རེ་བཙུན་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྟོན་པ་ཚིགས་བཅད་མ།.”

⁸⁵⁷ །ཚོས་སྐུ་བདེ་པ་ཚེན་པོའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ནས།”

“法界大樂壇城中”

His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon, “Dear Drikung Dharma Centers around the World...,” Facebook, February 9, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/drikungkyabgon/posts/pfbid036chgjuH9L3ogx2jXAMzzqni5Rse5SnQsGNdSwkV6jyGJtAUPdBERPs9YEyFsmJhl>.

noting that her body is golden colored, she wears a robe of leaves and sits atop a lotus seat amidst masses of fire. She has three wrathful faces, which are white, yellow, and blue, and her six arms hold wrathful implements, a bow and arrow and a battle axe, a bunch of branches, a vajra and has one hand in the threatening mudrā (ཕྱིགས་མཚན།, 恐嚇印). She stands amidst masses of fire with her right leg bent and her left outstretched, similar to other forms of Tārā.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁸ The Tibetan text of the “Praise in Verses,” along with its Chinese and English translations reads: “ཚོས་སྐྱབ་དེ་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ནས། ། ཡམས་ལ་སོགས་པ་ནད་ཀྱི་འཛིགས་པ་དང་། ། འདུས་མིན་འཛི་ལས་སྐྱོབ་པར་བྱེད་པ་ཡི། ། རྟོན་འགྲུབ་ཕྱིན་ལས་ཡུམ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ། ། པདྨའི་གདན་ལ་གསེར་མདོག་རི་ཁྲོད་མ། ། ཟུ་བའི་ཞལ་སེར་གཡས་གཡོན་སྲོ་དང་དཀར། ། དབུ་སྐྱོ་ཐོར་ཚུགས་གཟི་བུ་ལྷན་པ་ཡི། ། དངོས་གྲུབ་ལྟ་མོའི་སྐྱེ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ། ། ཡེ་ཤེས་ཐུགས་རྗེའི་བདག་ཉིད་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས། ། དུས་མཐའི་མེ་དབུང་ལྟ་བུའི་སྐྱོང་དཀྱིལ་ན། ། ཞལ་གསུམ་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་འཛིགས་བྱེད་ཁོ་མོའི་ཞལ། ། ཞབས་གཉིས་བརྒྱུད་བསྐྱམ་མཛད་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ། ། རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་སྐྱེ་ལ་བསྐྱམས་པ་ཡི། ། མདའ་གཞུ་དབྱ་སྒྲ་ཤིང་ལོའི་བམ་པོ་འཛིན། ། སྤྱིག་མཚན་དོན་ཤེས་སྐྱེས་པའི་གམ་རི། ། ཡུམ་ཆེན་འགོ་བའི་མགོན་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ། ། ། མོ་མི་གཙོ་པར་ཤིང་འཕྲུལ་མ་རི་བྱ་གམ་ནི་རྩ། དག་བའི་ཡིས་སྐྱེ་དུ་བདག་ལོ་མ་གྲོན་པ་འགྲུབ་ལྱུང་ནས། ། འགོ་བ་གཅིག་ཀྱང་མ་ལུས་པ། ། དེ་ཡི་ས་ལ་འགོད་པར་ཤོག ། འགྲི་གུང་སྐྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་གྱི་མགོན་པོའི་བཀའ་འབུམ་ལས་བཤུས།”

“法界大樂壇城中，守護疫情病難及，驅除非時死畏懼，成事佛母前頂禮！
 金色葉衣蓮花墊，中面黃右藍左白，頭髻往上威武尊，事業佛母前頂禮！
 智悲總體如來尊，立於劫末熊火中，三面六臂忿怒尊，伸曲二足前頂禮！
 身以葉衣之莊嚴，手持箭斧和葉子，金剛杵威懾獵手，怙主佛母前頂禮！
 喻必夏字巴那夏瓦日 薩瓦瑪日 巴惹夏瑪尼吽
 以我所修此功德，成就葉衣佛母尊，一切眾生盡無餘，願皆度至彼淨土。
 此法摘自直貢覺巴吉天頌恭之法藏。”

“Out of the mandala of dharmakaya’s great bliss, you protect against dangerous diseases like epidemics and against untimely death—I pay homage to you, the mother of wish-fulfilling activities. You, golden colored Parnashavari, sit on a lotus seat, your main face is yellow, the right one is blue, and the left one white. Your hair is bound up in a topknot, and you are full of splendor—I pay homage to the divine body of the goddess granting accomplishments.

You, Illustrious One, are the embodiment of Wisdom and compassion, you stand in the midst of masses of fire, burning like at the end of time. With your three faces and six arms, you look terribly wrathful—I pay homage to you, whose one leg is outstretched and the other bend [sic].

You, who wears a robe of leaves, hold bow and arrow, battle ax, and a bunch of branches. Parnashavari, you show the threatening mudra and hold a vajra—I pay homage to you, great mother, protectress of beings.

OM PI SHA TSI PARNA SHA WA RI SARVA MA RI PRA SHA MA NI HUNG
 By this virtue, may I swiftly accomplish Parnashavari and establish all beings without exception in her state.
This was taken from the collected works of Drikung Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön” Puman renboqie riguang lin foxuehui
 菩曼日光林佛學會 Bhumang Nyihudling, “His Holiness Has Requested All Drikung Dharma Centers & Individuals to Chant the Mantra of the Tārā Who Protects from Infectious Diseases,” Facebook, February 9, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100068823050940/search/?q=His%20Holiness%20has%20requested%20all%20Drikung%20Dharma%20>.

The longer text published by Chetsang Rinpoché almost exactly one month later is a medium length sādhana entitled *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*⁸⁵⁹ (hereafter *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*). As one Drikung cleric-scholar described to me, unlike “Praise in Verses” that is only four stanzas, *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* is complete because it contains all the necessary elements of a sādhana.⁸⁶⁰ The text itself begins with taking refuge, generating bodhicitta (སེམས་བསྐྱེད།, 發心), and offering the seven limbs (ཡན་ལག་བདུན་པ་འབུལ་བ།, 七支供養). Departing from “Praise in Verses,” where Parṇaśavarī is prayed to as an external deity, *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* continues with a self-visualization of the practitioner as Parṇaśavarī emerging from the seed syllable pam (པཎྌ). Subsequently, envisioning themselves as Parṇaśavarī, the practitioner makes offerings to the Five Buddha before stabilizing the self-visualization and reciting Parṇaśavarī’s mantra. There are two periods of mantra recitation, which are accompanied by visualizations of nectar flowing down from Parṇaśavarī to protect oneself⁸⁶¹ and then to pacify all diseases and harms of others.⁸⁶² Finally, the visualizations are dissolved, and dedication prayers (བསྐྱོབ།, 迴向) as well as the Vajrasattva mantra are recited to

⁸⁵⁹ sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ལྷོ་པ་ལྷོ་པ་འདི་བཀའ་འབུམ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་གྱོན་མ་པའི་སྐབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་སོ། ། 怙主吉天頌恭法藏 - 觀修葉衣佛母儀軌 *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*.

⁸⁶⁰ Drikung Kagyü monastic, interview with author, Taipei, August 17, 2022.

⁸⁶¹ “བདག་བསྐྱེད་བཞོ།”, “保護自身” sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ལྷོ་པ་ལྷོ་པ་འདི་བཀའ་འབུམ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་གྱོན་མ་པའི་སྐབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་སོ། ། 怙主吉天頌恭法藏 - 觀修葉衣佛母儀軌 *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*, 7–8.

⁸⁶² “གཞན་སྐྱེད་བཞོ།”, “保護他者” sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, 8.

request forgiveness for any faults made during the ritual, to wish auspiciousness, and to pray that Parnaśavarī might protect all beings from all dangers and liberate them from harm.⁸⁶³

In the official announcement issued with the publication of *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* on March 9th, 2020 on Chetsang Rinpoché’s Facebook page, it states that in addition to the previously published “Praise in Verses,” *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* is a “newly composed medium-length sadhana” from Jigten Sumgön’s *Collected Works*. The statement continues, noting that “even the footnotes in this sadhana are citations from his writings.”⁸⁶⁴ In fact, *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* is not drawn verbatim from one text within Jigten Sumgön’s *Collected Works* but is rather a hybrid text composed of pieces from at least four separate texts dedicated to Parnaśavarī penned by Jigten Sumgön,⁸⁶⁵ along with the addition of several common Buddhist

⁸⁶³ The full verse reads: “རང་གཞན་འཛིགས་པ་ཚེན་པོས་ཉེན་པ་ལས། རྫོལ་བྱེད་དཔལ་ལྡན་རྗེ་བཙུན་རི་ཁྲོད་མ། །ལྷ་མོ་མཚོག་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་སོང་གྱུར་ནས། །འཛིགས་པ་ལུན་ལས་སྐྱབ་པར་མཛོད་དུ་གསོལ།”

“我等遇難疾病危機時，能度苦難吉祥業依拔，凡能有心皈依勝母者，願護佑並消除諸危難”
“Glorious goddess Parnashavari, you liberate all others and myself from the infliction of great harm. Having taken refuge in you, sublime goddess, please protect us from all dangers.” sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ རྫོལ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, 10.

⁸⁶⁴ The Tibetan and Chinese statements similarly state: “འདི་ལས་སྐར་འབྲི་གུང་པ་སྐྱབ་པའི་བཀའ་འབུམ་ནང་ནས་སྐྱབ་ཐབས་འབྲིང་པའི་རྫུལ་དུ་ལྷུང་ཐོག་མཚན་བུ་དང་བཅས་པ་གང་གི་གསུང་བྱིན་ཅན་ཉམས་མེད་ཕྱོགས་སྒྲིག་བགྲིས་སོང་”

“這次整理的葉衣佛母中等儀軌，包括註解都是直接引用祖師吉天頌恭的著作。” His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon, “All Drikung Kagyu Monasteries, Centers, Monastic and Lay Disciples, as Outbreaks of Coronaviruses (COVID-19) Are Spreading Worldwide...,” Facebook, March 12, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/drikungkyabgon/posts/pfbid02AHgpUL8wYvJeVkvq2z58x9C3ek1AgtZXDCUVvti8FLwF8PC7EJQb4TPDTb3AoWsnl>.

⁸⁶⁵ sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ རྫོལ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun par+Na sha wa ri’i gzungs chog gi phyag len/ རྗེ་བཙུན་པར་ཤ་ལ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།,” in *gSung ’bum/ ’jig rten mgon po/ གསུང་འབུམ། འཛིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ།*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001), 104–11, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW23743_EDB858; sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ རྫོལ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun par+Na sha wa ri’i gzungs kyi cho ga’i rim pa/ རྗེ་བཙུན་པར་ཤ་ལ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ།,” in *gSung ’bum/ ’jig rten mgon po/ གསུང་འབུམ། འཛིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ།*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001), 111–20, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW23743_82EAFA; sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ རྫོལ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun ri khrod lo gyon ma’i bstod pa tshigs bead ma/ རྗེ་བཙུན་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་གྲོན་མའི་བསྟོད་པ་ཚོགས་བཅད་མ།,” sKyob pa ’jig rten gsum mgon/ རྫོལ་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “Ri khrod lo ma gyon pa’i sgrub thabs dge bshes stod lung par gnang ba/ རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་གྲོན་མའི་སྐྱབ་ཐབས་དགོ་བཤེས་སྟོད་ལུང་པར་གནང་བ།,” in *gSung ’bum/ ’jig rten mgon po/ གསུང་འབུམ། འཛིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ།*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001), 102–4, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW23743_752CE6.

prayers and a secondary colophon by Chetsang Rinpoché. The texts by Jigten Sumgön vary in length from short prayers of one or two folios to five folio *sādhana*s. Moreover, Jigten Sumgön’s *sādhana* practices contain numerous abbreviations noting that additional prayers, such as a refuge prayer or the Vajrasattva mantra, should be included at different points. In this way, Chetsang Rinpoché’s additions while he was compiling *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* are insertions of prayers already indicated in Jigten Sumgön’s compositions rather than his own innovations.

The first colophon included at the end of *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* is drawn from the end of one of the four texts by Jigten Sumgön used in the compilation of this ritual, entitled “*Sādhana of the Dhāraṇī of Lady Parṇaśavarī*.”⁸⁶⁶ In this colophon, Jigten Sumgön describes how he engaged in the practice of Parṇaśavarī to overcome a severe illness. He writes how “in a situation of infliction [sic] of great harm, I was freed from dangers by doing this practice of the goddess of Parnashavarī, the mother who is the embodiment of love.” The colophon continues, with Jigten Sumgön noting that he composed this practice while recalling the kindness of Parṇaśavarī in aiding him overcome illness and wishing that all beings attain enlightenment.⁸⁶⁷

In addition to the colophon by Jigten Sumgön, Chetsang Rinpoché wrote a second colophon and added it to *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*. Writing more than 800 years after Jigten

⁸⁶⁶ sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོབ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, “rJe btsun par+Na sha wa ri'i gzungs chog gi phyag len/ ཇི་བཙུན་པར་ཤ་ཤ་མི་ལོ་གཞུངས་ཚོག་གི་ཕྱག་ལེན།,” 110–111.

⁸⁶⁷ The full verse reads: “བཅེ་བའི་བདག་ཉིད་ཡུམ་གྱི་བུ་རྩེ་བཙུན་མི་ཚོད་མའི། ཉམས་ལེན་རྩེ་བཟང་འཇིགས་པས་ཉེན་པར་བྱས་པ་ལས། གནོད་པ་དེ་ལས་ཐར་ཕྱིན་བཀའ་རིན་པོ་འཇིགས། ཉམས་ལེན་ཡི་གེར་བཀོད་པས་བྱང་རྒྱུ་མཚོག་ཐོབ་ཤོག །”

“慈愛本體之至尊葉衣佛母，念及僅藉少分實修便足以，解脫怖畏危害損惱之恩德，故立文字願此令證勝菩提。”

“In a situation of infliction of great harm, I was freed from dangers by doing the practice of the goddess Parnashavarī, the mother who is the embodiment of love. Therefore, recalling her kindness, I have composed this practice. By this means, may all achieve supreme awakening.” sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ ལྷོབ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན།, sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ལྷོབ་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལོ་མ་གྱི་རྩེ་བཟང་འཇིགས་པས་ཉེན་པར་བྱས་པ་ལས། གནོད་པ་དེ་ལས་ཐར་ཕྱིན་བཀའ་རིན་པོ་འཇིགས། ཉམས་ལེན་ཡི་གེར་བཀོད་པས་བྱང་རྒྱུ་མཚོག་ཐོབ་ཤོག ། | 怙主吉天頌恭法藏 - 觀修葉衣佛母儀軌 *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*, 11.

Sumgön, Chetsang Rinpoché notes that once again “all regions of the world are afflicted by a terrible epidemic.” He writes that he compiled the sādhanas from “the quintessences from the Parnashavarī sādhanas written by Drikung Kyoba Jigten Sumgön” so that the current pandemic might be pacified, along with sentient beings’ mental afflictions (ཉོན་མོངས།, 煩惱) and obscurations (སྨིབ་པ།, 業障) so that they may attain the “supreme state of complete enlightenment.”⁸⁶⁸ The colophon concludes noting that Chetsang Rinpoché compiled this text on March 9th, 2020 while staying at Drikung Kyobpa Chöling (འབྲི་གུང་སྦྱོབ་པ་ཚོས་སྦྱོར་།) in California.⁸⁶⁹ In his announcement of *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*, Chetsang Rinpoché expressed his wish that it be translated into “as many languages as possible so it can spread far and wide” and be practiced around the world.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁸ The full text reads: “ཞེས་པ་འདི་དེང་འཛམ་གླིང་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཀླན་ཏུ་ནད་ཡམས་མ་རུངས་པས་མནར་བའི་གནས་སྐབས་སུ། འབྲི་གུང་པ་སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན་ལ་ཕྱི་གཅིག་ཏུ་གསལ་བ་བཏབ་བཞིན། གང་གིས་མཛད་པའི་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་ཤྲོན་མའི་སྣུབ་ཐབས་ཉིང་ཁྱེ་འགུལ་ཤོགས་བསྐྱིགས་སུ་བསྒྲེབས་པ་འདིས། ཡམས་ནད་ཀྱིས་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་པའི་ལས་དང་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་ཤེས་བྱའི་སྦྱིབ་པ་མཐའ་དག་མེད་དུ་ཞི་ཞིང་ནམ་གུང་གོ་འཕང་མཚོག་ལ་བདེ་ལྷག་ཏུ་དཀྱི་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག་གུ”

“目前，世界各地疫情災難大流行之時，至心懇求怙主吉天頌恭，願彙整編輯怙主吉天頌恭所撰寫的觀修業衣佛母法之精華，能徹底平息此疫情災難，並消除業障、煩惱障和所知障，速成無上菩提之果。”

“At present, all regions of the world are affected by a terrible epidemic. May this compilation of the quintessences from the Parnashavarī sādhanas written by Drikung Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön, arranged accompanied by single-minded supplications to him, first of all pacify the epidemic, and furthermore, the karmic, afflictive, and cognitive obscurations, and joyfully lead us to the supreme state of complete awakening.” ཕྱེ་པ་སྦྱོབ་པའི་བཀའ་འབྲུལ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་ཤྲོན་མ་པའི་སྣུབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་མོ། ཤེ་ཐུ་ཞི་གུང་པ་ཚོས་སྦྱོར་བའི་སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན་། *sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན།, sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ཕྱེ་པ་སྦྱོབ་པའི་བཀའ་འབྲུལ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་ཤྲོན་མ་པའི་སྣུབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་མོ། ཤེ་ཐུ་ཞི་གུང་པ་ཚོས་སྦྱོར་བའི་སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན་།* *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*, 11.

⁸⁶⁹ The full text reads: “ཞེས་པ་འདི་འབྲི་གུང་པ་སྦྱོབ་པ་ཚོས་སྦྱོར་བའི་སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན་གྱི་2020 ལོར་ཚེ་འཕུལ་ལྷ་བའི་ཡར་ཚོས་ 7 ལ་པ་ལྷུལ་པ་འབྲི་གུང་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་ལས་ལྷན་གྱི་ལོགས་པར་བྱར་ཞིང་། རིག་མཛད་ནད་དཀོན་མཚོག་ཚོས་དབང་གིས་བཀྲིས་སོང་བས། དགོ། དགོ།”

“此儀軌乃直貢法王 赤列倫珠於2020鐵鼠年神變月十五吉祥日，居於美國直貢覺巴秋林時編整完成。藏文電腦輸入為昆秋卻旺。善哉！善哉！善哉！”

“This was well-arranged by Gyalwa Drikungpa Thrinle Lhundrup in the American Drikung Centre Kyobpa Chöling in the Iron Mouse Year 2020 on the fifteenth day of the month of miracles and entered into the computer by Könchog Chöwang. May it be virtuous!” sKyob pa 'jig rten gsum mgon/ སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན།, *sKyob pa 'i bka' 'bum las ri khrod lo ma rgyon ma pa 'i sgrub thabs zhugs so/ ཕྱེ་པ་སྦྱོབ་པའི་བཀའ་འབྲུལ་ལས་རི་ཁྲོད་ལོ་མ་ཤྲོན་མ་པའི་སྣུབ་ཐབས་བཞུགས་མོ། ཤེ་ཐུ་ཞི་གུང་པ་ཚོས་སྦྱོར་བའི་སྦྱོབ་པ་འཛིག་རྟོན་གསུམ་མགོན་།* *The Parnashavarī Sādhana from the Collected Works of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön*, 11.

⁸⁷⁰ His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon, “All Drikung Kagyu Monasteries, Centers, Monastic and Lay Disciples, as Outbreaks of Coronaviruses (COVID-19) Are Spreading Worldwide...”

Together, “Praise in Verses” and *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* formed the basis for Parṇaśavarī practices among Drikung institutions and practitioners worldwide and were utilized extensively by the Bhumang Nyiöling community during the pandemic. Within the Bhumang Nyiöling community, these two texts were disseminated to practitioners in several ways. A community member who works in graphic design created a card containing the Chinese translation of the “Praise in Verses,” along with Parṇaśavarī’s mantra phonetically transliterated into Chinese characters and a brief dedication prayer. At the top of the card, there is also a small image of Parṇaśavarī to use as an aid while reciting both the prayer and the mantra. As mentioned above, this card was disseminated via Bhumang Nyiöling’s social media page⁸⁷¹ and community Line group.⁸⁷² Additionally, printed versions were made available at the center. The same graphic designer also created a booklet of *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*, which was similarly distributed to community members digitally and printed copies were available at the center.

Over the coming months, the two texts were used in tandem, albeit in different ways by the Bhumang Nyiöling community. During community practices led by Bhumang Rinpoché both in person and online, the community collectively recited *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*. As with the community’s normal weekly practices, *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* was recited in Tibetan with community members following along with the Chinese phonetic transliteration of the Tibetan text. As community gatherings were rare during most of 2020, however, this sādhana was not practiced very often in the format of a group practice.⁸⁷³

⁸⁷¹ Bhumang Tulku, “🙏🙏🙏,” Facebook, March 31, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2457850231212079&set=pcb.2457850364545399>. Shared Facebook post of Bhumang Tulku.

⁸⁷² 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁷³ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

“Praise in Verses,” on the other hand, was recited by many community members as part of their daily dharma practice after it was distributed in February 2020, and especially after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11th. According to one community member, the primary reason for his diligent recitation of this short prayer was Chetsang Rinpoché’s statement urgently appealing to Drikung followers to recite it. He noted during a focus group that although as a community they primarily recite prayers in Tibetan, community members’ private practice is often conducted in Chinese. Speaking about his own practice, he reflected “I recite in Chinese most of the time because I can get a better understanding of the meaning in Chinese. If I were reciting in Tibetan, there are some... well, I wouldn’t understand reciting [a text] this long.” He continued pointing directly at lines on the “Praise in Verses,”

Here it says [her] body is a yellow color, [she has] three heads, the middle is yellow, the left side is white and the right side blue. I can visualize the appearance of her thangka. Because I’m not so familiar with the sounds of the Tibetan [words] of this practice, if I were to recite in Tibetan then I wouldn’t recite it smoothly. So, I generally will recite in Chinese and in Tibetan only on occasion.⁸⁷⁴

Another focus group participant nodded her head and concurred. The transliterated text, she noted “is only the pronunciation, but you don’t know what it means.”⁸⁷⁵ Accordingly, for most community members their engagement with Parṇaśavarī was primarily through reciting “Praise in Verses” in Chinese rather than *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* in Tibetan. This was similarly true for community members’ accumulations of Parṇaśavarī’s mantra, described further below.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷⁴ “我大部分是念中文因為中文比較能夠讓我知道它的意思。要不然念藏文就是一些... 怎麼長的講的我不知道。它這裡面有講身體是黃色，三個臉，中間黃左邊白右邊藍，我就可以去想到唐卡的樣子。如果是念藏文因為這個法我藏文的音我不熟所以念起來會不順。所以感覺我就都會念中文偶爾會念藏文。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁸⁷⁵ “只是發音，不知道它是什麼意思。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁸⁷⁶ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

It should be noted, however, that while *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* was most often practiced in community settings and community members recited the “Praise in Verses” during their personal practice, this division was far from absolute. As one community member shared, although she primarily included “Praise in Verses” in her daily dharma practice, at times she would also recite the longer *sādhana*. For example, she recalled practicing *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* when her father was sick and when there was a local spike in cases. “It depends on the situation. Sometimes this one is pretty long, you know? So sometimes I... [will practice it] because I think this is also beneficial for those who are sick.⁸⁷⁷ As there were no practice restrictions announced for this *sādhana*, it therefore became more of an individual choice as to whether community members wished to privately practice the longer *Parnashavarī Sādhana* or the shorter “Praise in Verses.” Through reciting both the “Praise in Verses” and *The Parṇaśavarī Sādhana*, Bhumang Nyiöling furthered Chetsang Rinpoché’s aspirations to respond to COVID-19 through propitiating Parṇaśavarī. At the same time, the community also furthered the *spiritual reterritorialization* of a uniquely Drikung Kagyü Parṇaśavarī, embodied in translated prayers from Jigten Sumgön’s works, and carried into a new linguistic, cultural, and geographic context.

7. Parṇaśavarī Mantra Accumulation Practice

Similar to other digitally adept Buddhist teachers’ use of smartphone technologies to communicate with their translocal students,⁸⁷⁸ Bhumang Rinpoché continued to share spiritual advice with his students in Taiwan during the first months of the pandemic while he remained in Nepal. Most of these messages were transmitted privately to his students via the Bhumang

⁸⁷⁷ “我就看狀況。有的時候這個蠻長的你知道嗎？所以有的時候我就... 因為我就覺得這個是生病的也是有用的這樣子。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁸⁷⁸ Francesca Tarocco, “Technologies of Salvation: (Re)Locating Chinese Buddhism in the Digital Age,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 18 (October 27, 2017): 162–168, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1284254>.

Nyiöling community’s Line group, although several public messages were also posted on social media pages associated with Bhumang Rinpoché, Bhumang Nyiöling, and Bhumang Jampelling Monastery. In addition to sharing spiritual advice, Bhumang Rinpoché also commenced what would become a focus of community practice over the coming months: a collective accumulation of ten million recitations of the mantra of Parṇaśavarī.

Around the time that Bhumang Nyiöling community in Taiwan published the “Praise in Verses” and the *Parṇaśavarī Sādhana*, Bhumang Rinpoché also shared an audio recording with his pronunciation of Parṇaśavarī’s mantra to aid his students in their own recitations. This audio recording was first published on the Bhumang Nyiöling community’s Line group on March 29th, 2020⁸⁷⁹ and later was shared on their public Facebook page on April 3rd.⁸⁸⁰ Before it was shared, one community member made a video combining the audio recording with an animated image of Parṇaśavarī. The animated image shows a wrathful three-faced Parṇaśavarī with her various implements, standing atop a moon disk, and engulfed in a sea of flames. Flames swirl around Parṇaśavarī, twisting and turning while Bhumang Rinpoché repeatedly intones her mantra. Several community members I interviewed said that they really started to pray to Parṇaśavarī after they watched this video and learned the correct pronunciation of Parṇaśavarī’s mantra. As I mentioned in the opening anecdote to this chapter, one woman even shared the recording with a friend of hers who was in search of a practice that would assist her sick mother.⁸⁸¹

In addition to the recording of the mantra, Bhumang Rinpoché sent a short audio message to his followers on March 29th, urging them to recite the short prayer to Parṇaśavarī and her

⁸⁷⁹ 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁸⁰ Puman renboqie riguang lin foxuehui 菩曼日光林佛學會 Bhumang Nyihudling, “Geweī da de jiari ping’an jiankang 各位大德 假日平安健康🙏🙏🙏,” April 3, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/BhumangNyihudling/videos/219291465814276>.

⁸⁸¹ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

mantra, as part of their daily dharma practice (功課). He exhorted his students to use whatever extra time they had while staying at home during the pandemic to further their Buddhist practice with the aspiration that “there might be a swift end to the pandemic”⁸⁸² and that “all sentient beings might be separated from suffering and obtain happiness.”⁸⁸³ He assured his students that he too was staying mostly in semi-isolation, almost as if he were on retreat, and was spending most of his time engaging in Buddhist practices and reciting prayers to Parṇaśavarī. Finally, Bhumang Rinpoché reminded his students how he had taught them that “in every negative circumstance there is something positive and in every positive circumstance there is something negative [that can be realized].”⁸⁸⁴ He hoped that they would turn the difficult circumstances of the pandemic into an opportunity to deepen their Buddhist practice and study.⁸⁸⁵

Members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community with whom I spoke recalled that in addition to this audio message, Bhumang Rinpoché gave only general instructions about how to engage with the Parṇaśavarī practices. For example, multiple community members recalled Bhumang Rinpoché’s advice to generate compassion (སྨོན་ལྡན།, 慈悲心) and bodhicitta (བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས།, 菩提心) or the intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, while thinking about the suffering endured by people across the world. Furthermore, they were instructed that they should generate the aspiration that others might be free from the suffering caused by COVID-19 and that the pandemic might swiftly end while reciting Parṇaśavarī’s mantra.⁸⁸⁶ None of the community members I spoke with, however, reported Bhumang Rinpoché

⁸⁸² “這個病毒快可以解決。” 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁸³ “離苦得樂” 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁸⁴ “每一個負面裡面有正面, 每一個正面裡面有負面” 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁸⁵ 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁸⁶ Bhumang Nyiöling community member, interview with author, Taipei, July 29, 2022.

giving detailed instructions on the “Praise in Verses” or *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*. Rather, it seems community members were left to interpret and practice these as best as they could.

Bhumang Rinpoché did, however, express a concrete goal for the community in the form of accumulating recitations of Parnaśavarī’s mantra. An announcement posted along with the audio recording from Bhumang Rinpoché on March 29th requested the community to commence an effort to collectively accumulate ten million recitations of Parnaśavarī’s mantra. The announcement explained that everyone should keep a tally of how many times they recited Parnaśavarī’s mantra and post this number in the community Line group each week. The total would then be reported to Bhumang Rinpoché.⁸⁸⁷ In this way, even though Bhumang Rinpoché was not present in Taiwan, he would still know about his students’ dharma practice and they could accumulate good karma by collectively praying that the pandemic might swiftly end and everyone suffering might recover.

Mantra accumulation practices, such as that which the Bhumang Nyiöling community engaged in, are fairly common across Tibetan Buddhist schools and are a way contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teachers connect geographically disparate groups in service of generating merit

⁸⁸⁷ The full text of the announcement reads: “各位師兄師姐們大家吉祥，尊貴的上師善曼仁波切今晚傳來對弟子們的訊息，由於現在全球新冠病毒疫情日趨嚴重，上師懇切的呼籲與開示，在此艱難的時刻共聚善業與上師一起修持極簡「息除病魔障-葉衣佛母讚頌文」，上師要求將此儀軌加入各位每日的功課中修持唸誦心咒，並每日計算次數，所累積的次數於每週一傍晚 8:00 回報於此(記事本)，再行回報給上師。敬請大家一起跟上師努力修持共造善業，使疫情早日結束，讓病患早日康復脫離病痛。阿彌陀佛。🙏🙏🙏”

“Dear Auspicious Dharma Brothers and Sisters, His Eminence Bhumang Rinpoché has sent a message to his disciples tonight. As the global coronavirus pandemic is becoming increasingly serious by the day, Rinpoché has earnestly appealed and instructed us to generate good karma collectively with him during these difficult times by practicing the brief “Praise in Verses to the Goddess who Eliminates All Diseases (Parnashavari)”. Rinpoché has requested that you add this practice to your daily dharma practice, along with the recitation of her mantra, and that you count the number of daily recitations. The number of [mantras] you accumulate should be reported each Monday evening at 8pm (in Notes), and then this will be reported to Rinpoché. Everyone is kindly invited to join Rinpoché in earnestly practicing and generating good karma, in order that the pandemic might end quickly and all beings afflicted by the coronavirus may recover from their illnesses swiftly. Amitābha! 🙏🙏🙏” (Author’s translation). 善曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

toward a collective aim.⁸⁸⁸ In Taiwan, such practices were also initiated at other Chinese Buddhist⁸⁸⁹ and Tibetan Buddhist centers in response to the pandemic.⁸⁹⁰ For the Bhumang Nyiöling community, however, Parṇaśavarī’s was the first mantra that they had practiced collectively accumulating.⁸⁹¹ As the accumulation efforts did not require physical proximity, community members could practice together even while they were staying at home, sharing their practice and progress towards their community goal with each other weekly. Additionally, the mantra accumulation practice connected the Bhumang Nyiöling community with other disciples across Bhumang Rinpoché’s “constellative network”⁸⁹² in Vietnam and Indonesia who were also invited to contribute their weekly recitation totals.⁸⁹³ As a result, the mantra accumulation effort became a collective undertaking across a geographically disparate but digitally connected “networked community”⁸⁹⁴ of Bhumang Rinpoché’s disciples. While mantra recitation spread and was organized via elements within contemporary “Buddhist technoculture,”⁸⁹⁵ such as Bhumang Nyiöling’s Line group and Facebook page, community members’ personal practices rooted Parṇaśavarī in specific locales.

⁸⁸⁸ At the start of the pandemic, a number of Tibetan Buddhist leaders recommended their disciples around the world accumulate different mantras for protection and healing during the pandemic. For a list of practices recommended for protection by various Tibetan Buddhist leaders during the pandemic, see: Lotsawa House, “Love in the Time of Covid-19 – Lotsawa House,” Lotsawa House, March 16, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201202070120/https://lotsawahouse.blog/2020/03/16/love-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>.

⁸⁸⁹ Tseng, “Chinese Buddhist Practice of Mantra-Dharani Chanting During Covid-19 Pandemic: Motivations, Activities, and Health Benefits,” 3–6.

⁸⁹⁰ The Source of True Dharma Center, for example, completed more than twenty-three million recitations of Green Tārā mantra in 2022 alone in order to quell the coronavirus pandemic (為平息新冠疫情). See: “正法源學佛會 Choskyi Jungne Buddhist Center རྫོང་སར་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འབྲུང་གནས་ཚོས་ཚོགས།,” December 26, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=211576491264006&set=a.194371892984466>.

⁸⁹¹ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁸⁹² Smyer Yü, “A Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Modernism,” 45.

⁸⁹³ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁸⁹⁴ Heidi Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

⁸⁹⁵ Tarocco, “Technologies of Salvation,” 156.



Figure 33: Screenshot of March 29, 2020 announcement on the Bhumang Nyiöling Line group commencing the Parṇaśavari mantra accumulation practice. Used with permission of Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society, 2020.

During the early months of the pandemic, mantra accumulation became a focus of daily practice for Bhumang Nyiöling’s members. Beginning April 6th, 2020, Bhumang Nyiöling commenced publishing weekly the number of individuals who participated and how many total recitations they had accumulated on their community Line group. The first week saw over thirty participants accumulate over 125,000 recitations,⁸⁹⁶ the second week more than thirty-five participants accumulated over 140,000 recitations,⁸⁹⁷ and during the third week over forty participants accumulated more than 165,000 mantra recitations.⁸⁹⁸ Weekly recitations continued

⁸⁹⁶ 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, March 29, 2020.

⁸⁹⁷ 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, April 13, 2020.

⁸⁹⁸ 菩曼日光林中心, Line Note, April 20, 2020.

over the course of 2020, averaging approximately 126,000 recitations and thirty participants through year's end. In 2021, the weekly recitations and participants dropped slightly, averaging 118,514 recitations and twenty-nine participants over the year. Perhaps not surprisingly, spikes in local case numbers tended to precipitate greater recitation totals, with the highest weekly count of over 192,000 recitations occurring during late May 2021's COVID-19 surge in Taiwan.

Occasionally Bhumang Rinpoché led the community in reciting *The Parṇaśavarī Sādhana* and mantra recitation. In September 2020, for example, in an effort to include more people in the Parṇaśavarī practice, Bhumang Rinpoché led an hour-long public practice of *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* and mantra recitation livestreamed on his Facebook and YouTube pages. At the beginning of this practice, Bhumang Rinpoché delivered a brief message in English and Chinese, asking everyone “to dedicate the merits of this practice especially for the well-being of those individuals suffering from the coronavirus and generate the aspiration that the pandemic might swiftly end.” He further encouraged all the participants to continue the Parṇaśavarī mantra recitation on their own and to continue to submit their totals each week toward the community goal.⁸⁹⁹ Large-scale communal practices like this were, however, the exception. For the most part, community members completed their mantra recitations as part of their personal daily practice. As discussed above, this occurred mostly while they recited the “Praise in Verses.”

While participation in the weekly accumulations waxed and waned, a core group of between twenty-eight to thirty individuals remained dedicated to the practice each week. After fourteen months, the community reached its goal of ten million recitations, with a handful of

⁸⁹⁹ “迴向給一切眾生，特別是現在這個痛苦當中我們希望他們一切都平安又這個病毒快離開。” *Yeyi fomu lianshu xianshang xiu song gongxiu 葉衣佛母臉書線上修誦共修 Mother Parnashavari FB Online prayer practice* (Taipei shi 臺北市, 2020), <https://www.facebook.com/bhumang.tulku/videos/2599408030389631>; *Zungui de puman renboqie ling zhong yeyi fomu lianshu xianshang xiu song gong xiu 尊貴的善曼仁波切領眾 葉衣佛母臉書線上修誦共修 Mother Parnashavari FB online prayer practice* (Taipei shi 臺北市, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnPfxGB18G4>.

individuals having personally completed several hundred thousand recitations. Rather than ending this practice, however, the community continued their accumulations. As one community member told me, “[Bhumang] Rinpoché didn’t say stop, so we just kept going. Because COVID is not finished, so why should we stop?”⁹⁰⁰ In essence, since Bhumang Rinpoché did not instruct them to stop reciting Parṇaśavarī’s mantra, the community continued with their accumulations. Another community member speculated that this may have been Bhumang Rinpoché’s way of encouraging his students to “engage in merit-generating actions”⁹⁰¹ and “develop a habit of reciting mantras for the benefit of all sentient beings.”⁹⁰² Whatever the reason, with no clear direction from Bhumang Rinpoché to stop their recitations, the Bhumang Nyiöling community continued their accumulations of Parṇaśavarī’s mantra.⁹⁰³ By October 2022, the community had surpassed twenty million recitations, more than doubling their original goal.

When I asked community members why they were so dedicated to the Parṇaśavarī practice, their answers were unequivocal: they recited prayers to Parṇaśavarī and her mantra because their teacher Bhumang Rinpoché and lineage head, Chetsang Rinpoché, encouraged this practice and stressed its benefits at this critical time for humanity. As one community member stated, “We just follow it, we don’t think too much...but we trust that the meaning [of the Parṇaśavarī practice] is positive and good for all sentient beings.” Bhumang Rinpoché, he continued laughing, is like our director and just like in a company “whatever the director says, we just do it.”⁹⁰⁴ Following their teachers’ advice is of prime importance to Bhumang Nyiöling community members, so when they were asked to engage in Parṇaśavarī practice, they did.

⁹⁰⁰ Bhumang Nyiöling community member, interview with author, Taipei, July 29, 2022.

⁹⁰¹ “正面的善業” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁹⁰² “養成這種習慣，要念咒語給眾生” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁹⁰³ Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁹⁰⁴ Bhumang Nyiöling community member, interview with author, Taipei, July 29, 2022.

Although some community members ceased to regularly recite Parṇaśavarī's mantra after a time or quickly returned to the practices that they did prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, for others Parṇaśavarī became an integral part of their daily life. One community member, for example, told me that after more than two and a half years, Parṇaśavarī's prayers and mantra had become a habitual part of her daily practice and she has even felt Parṇaśavarī responding to her supplications. This woman described how during an early spike in COVID-19 cases, many people at her company were testing positive and one of her co-workers even had to be intubated. Since she still had to work in-person she was subject to constant PCR tests, knowing that if she tested positive she would be whisked directly into a government quarantine facility without even being able to return home to pack a bag. As a result, she was under constant stress and experienced significant weight loss. Simultaneously, she was diligent in her Parṇaśavarī practice, hoping that Parṇaśavarī would “be able to aid all those who were sick.”⁹⁰⁵ She described being prone to dreaming during this period, noting that “Often when I would dream at that time, for example, I would dream of Parṇaśavarī. I would dream Parṇaśavarī was continuously pouring out nectar.”⁹⁰⁶ In this way, she came to feel that Parṇaśavarī was responding (有感應) to her prayers. As a result of feeling Parṇaśavarī's response to her supplications, the woman recalled that “my heart felt a bit calmer.”⁹⁰⁷

On May 1st, 2023, an announcement on Bhumang Nyiöling's community Line page stated that the mantra recitation totals would no longer be collected from community members “as the

⁹⁰⁵ “能夠對這個所有的生病的人有所幫助” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁹⁰⁶ “常常會做夢的時候會夢到那個比如說，那一段時間會夢到葉衣佛母。然後就夢葉衣佛母一直撒那個甘露水這樣。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

⁹⁰⁷ “我就覺得這心會稍微安定一點。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

global pandemic situation has been easing and is close to returning to normal.”⁹⁰⁸ The announcement continued, thanking community members for their collective participation in this practice and “for doing their part [to help] all sentient beings suffering due to the infectious diseases around the world.”⁹⁰⁹ While this announcement⁹¹⁰ marked an end to the Bhumang Nyiöling community’s organized mantra accumulations, it did not signal Parṇaśavarī’s complete disappearance. For many Bhumang Nyiöling community members, Parṇaśavarī had grown over the course of the pandemic from a virtually unknown figure to a divinity they propitiated daily and, in some cases, felt a special connection with. Regardless of whether members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community continue mantra accumulation practices or have personally experienced divine response, Parṇaśavarī has become part of their Tibetan Buddhist cosmological world and is a deity they can seek assistance from for themselves and their loved ones in times of ill health. In this way, through their more three years of private and communal practices, the Bhumang Nyiöling community has expanded Parṇaśavarī’s sphere of intercessory influence and precipitated her *spiritual reterritorialization* within Taiwan.

⁹⁰⁸ “由於全球新冠疫情已趨於和緩近恢復常態” 菩曼日光林中心, Line note, May 1, 2023.

⁹⁰⁹ “感恩大家共同參與修持，為全球受傳染疾病之苦的眾生盡一份心力。” 菩曼日光林中心, Line note, May 1, 2023.

⁹¹⁰ The full text of this announcement reads: “葉衣佛母持咒活動公告:

由於全球新冠疫情已趨於和緩近恢復常態，而國內也在5月1日將新冠肺炎從第五類傳染病階級至第四類，逐步逐步恢復正常，有鑒於此已實施三年多持咒與回報活動進入新的一個階段，紀錄回報將在4/30告一段落，各自仍可自行修持紀錄，自5月起無需再回報，自行紀錄即可。本次紀錄為最後一次的登記。感恩大家共同參與修持，為全球受傳染疾病之苦的眾生盡一份心力。🙏

2023-3/1(~)4/30 葉衣佛母持咒數數回報，請在記事本登記。”

“Announcement concerning the Parṇaśavarī mantra recitation activity:

As the global pandemic situation has been easing and is close to returning to normal and because within Taiwan the Novel Coronavirus has been downgraded from a Category 5 to a Category 4 infections disease starting on May 1st [conditions] are gradually returning to normal. In view of this, the [Parṇaśavarī] mantra recitation and reporting activity, which has been implemented for more than three years is entering a new phase. The log of reports will end on April 30th. [However,] everyone can still keep their own records. From May onward there is no need to report [totals], everyone can record [their recitations] for themselves. This is the final time to register [your mantra recitation total]. Thank you everyone for doing their part [to help] all sentient beings suffering due to the infectious diseases around the world. 🙏

March 1 to April 30, 2023 Parṇaśavarī mantra recitation report. Please register [your mantra recitation total] in the Note.” (Author’s translation). 菩曼日光林中心, Line note, May 1, 2023.

葉衣佛母
臉書線上修誦共修
Mother Parnashavari FB online prayer practice

持咒總目標 10,000,000 次
**Ten Million Parnashavari
mantra recitation**

**9月12日.星期六
Sep. 12(Sat.)**

Taiwan:	7:00PM
Indonesia:	6:00PM
Vietnam:	6:00PM
India:	4:30PM
Nepal:	4:45PM

H.E. Bhumang Rinpoche
尊貴的蒼曼仁波切

Online prayer practice 線上修誦共修 <https://reurl.cc/j5GMg2>

Scripture text download 法本下載 <https://reurl.cc/VX1pEb>

Mantra recitation counted submit weekly - Mon. 持咒數每週一提交 +886 937880584
WhatsApp

Drikung Kagyu Bhumang Jampaling Monastery (India)
Drikung Kagyu Bhumang Niyuhudling Center (Taiwan)
www.bhumang.org.tw bhumang@bhumang.org.tw

Figure 34: Announcement for September 12, 2020 online Parnāśavarī prayer practice. Used with permission of Bhumang Nyiöling Buddhist Society, 2020.

8. Conclusion: Religious Responses to Crisis and *Spiritual De- & Reterritorialization*

Having considered the role of Parnāśavarī in the Bhumang Nyiöling community’s response to COVID-19, I close this chapter by offering two conclusions about the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism and other religions more broadly that I believe can be drawn from this case. First, this example illustrates how collective crises can facilitate the continued transmission and transformation of religious traditions. Communal or even global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can provide unique junctures for rapid religious change as spiritual leaders and communities creatively respond to shifting circumstances and needs. Global crises of this scale

often require leaders to act swiftly, offering advice or practices to aide followers across diverse locales who share in their eagerness for a means to cope and find agency within difficult situations. Given the speed at which impacted individuals might demand action, however, it is perhaps not surprising that in responding to large-scale crises, religious leaders often delve deep into their own traditions for elements that might be re-enlivened and brought to bear to address the problem at hand. In this way, religious leaders can convey both their responsiveness to present difficulties as well as the capacious potential of their traditions to manage contemporary crises much as they have managed other crises in the past. At the same time religious teachers reinvigorate elements within their traditions, however, their responses to communal crises also involve a degree of innovation and change to lived religious praxis.

The spread of the coronavirus began an obvious global health crisis the scale of which the Bhumang Nyiöling community, like innumerable other communities around the world, had not previously encountered. As an unprecedented event in lived memory, the pandemic prompted a variety of creative responses, such as Kyabgön Chetsang Rinpoché's compilation of new ritual practices to Parṇaśavarī and his recommendation shared on a global scale online that his students engage in these practices. Bhumang Rinpoché interpreted these recommendations as instructions from his spiritual teacher and promoted these practices along with accumulations of Parṇaśavarī's mantra among his followers. As devotional practices to Parṇaśavarī became an important part of their personal religious lives, many Bhumang Nyiöling community members continued to propitiate Parṇaśavarī even after meeting their teacher's goal.

These prayers to Parṇaśavarī are not entirely novel, however, but repurpose elements already present within the Drikung tradition. As mentioned above, both the "Praise in Verses" and *The Parnashavarī Sādhana* that Chetsang Rinpoché recommended were drawn or adapted

from the *Collected Works* of the founder of the Drikung Kagyü, Jigten Sumgön, who wrote them nearly 800 years ago. Although these practices are from a source of great reverence within the Drikung Kagyü tradition, most Drikung monastic and lay followers I spoke with freely admitted to Parṇaśavarī's relative obscurity prior to the pandemic. Indeed, several Drikung cleric-scholars confirmed that before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Parṇaśavarī had not been regularly worshipped in their home monasteries. Moreover, none of these clergy could identify which texts in Jigten Sumgön's *Collected Works* were the basis for these new practices. Similarly, before the pandemic virtually no members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community had heard of Parṇaśavarī or seen her image, much less offered prayers or engaged in tantric liturgies dedicated to her.

And yet, starting in February 2020, several little-known texts devoted to a relatively obscure deity were elevated into new prominence by Chetsang Rinpoché and Bhumang Rinpoché. As the Bhumang Nyiöling community and other Drikung practitioners globally engaged in practices to Parṇaśavarī, this deity became part of their mantric and liturgical repertoires. When I asked Bhumang Nyiöling community members if they might revive Parṇaśavarī practices in the future, they answered strongly in the affirmative. One stated,

If in the future there is another communicable disease like this, such as Bird Flu or SARS, or some other illness that impacts the health [of people] across the whole world, then I think that since His Holiness [Chetsang Rinpoché] already promoted this dharma practice, we will automatically return to it. I think so, I think so, because now we already have a method here, so we will use it.⁹¹¹

In other words, Parṇaśavarī has become a deity that community members feel they can rely on not only during the coronavirus pandemic, but also should other communicable diseases arise in the future. Far from being of limited use, the “Praise in Verses” and *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*

⁹¹¹ “如果是未來再有類似這樣的傳染病，這樣 Bird flu, SARS,或者是會影響到全世界的健康，因為法王已經 promote 這個法門，我想我們自動會回到這個法上面。應該會，應該會，因為我們現在已經有一個方法在這邊，那我們會用。” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, December 3, 2022.

have now become, like prayers to Green Tārā or Medicine Buddha or even practices to the preeminent Taiwanese protectress Mazu,⁹¹² a familiar and cherished part of community members' practice repertoire that they can call on again in the future if the need arises. In this way, the coronavirus pandemic has engendered Parnāśavarī's reemergence within the Drikung Kagyü and helped her to expand and grow new roots within new territories and communities.

This brings me to my second point, namely that the transmission of Buddhist traditions, and perhaps even of religious traditions more broadly, is not only a process of conveying practices and teachings, erecting religious structures, and transferring aesthetic traditions. Religious transmission is also about “both the movement and the fixity of sacred geography, both the dissolution of territories and their reconstruction,”⁹¹³ dual movements I call *spiritual deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*. Like other Buddhist traditions, Tibetan Buddhism maintains that the “ritual cosmos”⁹¹⁴ is an active and inter-subjective universe⁹¹⁵ co-inhabited by myriad non-human agents who are understood to have the power to influence human well-being. Within this moral universe grounded in the “interrelationship between the land and the beings who live on it,”⁹¹⁶ humans are entangled in “binding relationships”⁹¹⁷ with non-human occupants of the same locale. Humans are both subject to the capriciousness of these sentient forces and

⁹¹² Mazu has been propitiated for protection by Chinese peoples for more than a millennium. She started to become especially associated with Taiwan starting in the mid-1600s. For stories of Mazu's intercessory protective powers, see Klaas Ruitenbeek, “Mazu, the Patroness of Sailors, in Chinese Pictorial Art,” *Artibus Asiae* 58, no. 3/4 (1999): esp. 283–290, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3250021>.

⁹¹³ Obadia, “Localised Deterritorialisation?,” 186.

⁹¹⁴ Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 157.

⁹¹⁵ Dan Smyer Yü, “Earthwork, Home-Making and Eco-Aesthetics among Amdo Tibetans,” in *Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China*, ed. James Miller, Dan Smyer Yü, and Peter Van Der Veer (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 232.

⁹¹⁶ Antonio Terrone, “The Earth as a Treasure in Tibetan Buddhism: Visionary Revelation and Its Interactions with the Environment,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 8, no. 4 (October 28, 2014): 470, <https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.v8i4.24415>.

⁹¹⁷ Toni Huber and Poul Pedersen, “Meteorological Knowledge and Environmental Ideas in Traditional and Modern Societies: The Case of Tibet,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3, no. 3 (September 1997): 585, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3034768>.

able to rouse them through ritual acts of making offerings, requesting that they clear obstacles, and supplicating them for blessings.

As Geoffrey Samuel noted thirty years ago, the Tibetan sacred geography is neither static nor fixed to land in the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau but has spread into new landscapes as they have been “gradually sacralized by exiled Tibetans.”⁹¹⁸ As Tibetans fled the Tibetan Plateau and established communities in exile starting in the early 1950s, they brought with them a cosmological world replete with numerous divinities and non-human agents. Many of these deities were reterritorialized in new monasteries, temples, sacred sites, and Tibetan communities across India and Nepal. This process occurred not only in South Asia, but as Sienna Craig’s work demonstrates, also as Tibetan and Himalayan peoples migrated across the globe.⁹¹⁹

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community were already active in this process of *spiritual reterritorialization*. In their community as well as their personal dharma practices, community members regularly propitiated divinities such as Guru Rinpoché, Tārā, Dzambhala, Mahākāla. While they did not, as far as I am aware, propitiate any regional deities associated with their teacher’s spiritual lineage at Bhumang Monastery or the Nangchen region, community members engaged in practices devoted to deities affiliated with their Drikung Kagyü lineage, such as the protectress Achi Chökyi Drölma. In this way, processes of deterritorializing agentive forces from the Land of Snows and reterritorializing them across new contexts have long been occurring alongside the global transmission of Tibetan Buddhism.

In addition to Tibetan Buddhism, I would maintain that similar processes of *spiritual de- and reterritorialization* have also been integral to the global transmission of other Buddhist

⁹¹⁸ Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 159.

⁹¹⁹ Sienna R. Craig, *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).

traditions. Whether at Morro da Vargem Zen Monastery in Espírito Santo, Brazil, Wat Buddhansorn in Silicon Valley, USA, or Fo Guang Shan London Temple in the United Kingdom, Buddhist teachers and community members from a variety of traditions have had to decouple their religious practices, rituals, narratives, philosophies, aesthetic traditions, and lifeways from geographies where they had deep roots and seek out ways to localize these traditions in new territories. In some cases, this has meant finding ways to adapt and make a new home for heritage Buddhist immigrant and immigrant-descendent communities who live far from the lands of their ancestors. In other cases, it has meant finding ways to introduce, explain, and transmit Buddhist traditions among non-heritage audiences. In both cases, Buddhist teachers and communities have not only carried over material, textual, and aesthetic traditions, but also Buddhist claims to the extramundane and superhuman. Whether these include claims of Guanyin's benevolent activity, the protective powers of guardian deities, the capriciousness of spirits, or even, at a fundamental level, assertions about Śākyamuni Buddha's spectacular spiritual epiphany and enlightenment, teachers and communities enact the *spiritual reterritorialization* of Buddhist traditions as they stake out and testify to the truth of their cosmological and soteriological claims in non-heritage locales.

Several works on Buddhist modernism(s) have emphasized twentieth and twenty-first century Buddhist teachers' presentations of divinities and the six realms of the Buddhist cosmos as being metaphoric. They describe the transformation of ontological realities, including a host of agentive non-humans, into symbols and metaphors through processes of demythologization and psychologization as hallmarks of Buddhist modernity and the transmission of Buddhist traditions among non-heritage (largely Western) populations.⁹²⁰ However, such descriptions of

⁹²⁰ Donald S. Jr. Lopez, "Introduction," in *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings From East and West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), ix–x; Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in Den Ländern des*

modern Buddhism as divested from the super-human do not encompass the full range of avenues contemporary Buddhist teachers take while disseminating their traditions among diverse global populations. As an urban, voluntary religious community without shared local ancestral ties, Bhumang Nyiöling exhibits many features of modernity identified by scholars of Chinese religions.⁹²¹ However, as the case of their Parṇaśavarī practice shows, the contemporary transmission of Buddhism among newly converted “modern” communities does not always involve demythologized or psychologized presentations. Rather, Chetsang Rinpoché, Bhumang Rinpoché, and many other Buddhist teachers today still instruct their followers to pray to, perform rituals for, and recite the mantras of deities understood to possess very tangible apotropaic powers that can benefit themselves and others. In the process of doing so, contemporary Buddhist teachers and their disciples are not only spreading demythologized interpretations of their traditions, but in many cases are working to open new territories to become part of the spheres of influence of agentive and responsive Buddhist divinities.

Today, I would argue that processes of *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* continue in new geographies wherever Buddhist teachers are encouraging their non-heritage followers to propitiate previously unfamiliar deities. As practitioners pray and seek these divinities’ superhuman assistance, they enact an expansion of the agentive Buddhist universe and localize these divinities’ intercessory potential in novel contexts. The example of Bhumang Nyiöling community’s Parṇaśavarī practice demonstrates how the transmission of Buddhism to non-heritage areas also involves *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* through the concomitant

Theravāda-Buddhismus (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), 37–42; Heinz Bechert, “Buddhistic Modernism: Present Situation and Current Trends,” in *Buddhism into the Year 2000: International Conference Proceedings* (Bangkok & Los Angeles: Dhammakaya Foundation, 1994), 254–255; McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 50–59.

⁹²¹ Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*, 304; Madsen, *Democracy’s Dharma*, 1–4; Nadeau and Chang, “Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors,” 293–294.

expansion of the agentive Buddhist universe. In the case of Parṇaśavarī, she was *detrterritorialized* as Chetsang Rinpoché and other teachers and monastics left the Tibetan Plateau and carried ritual practices and texts by Jigten Sumgön and other Buddhist masters into exile. Although Parṇaśavarī received little attention among global Tibetan Buddhist communities for most of the last fifty years, the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated her re-emergence and *reterritorialization* as teachers compiled and disseminated prayers to her across their global networks.

While Parṇaśavarī may not (yet?) be affiliated with specific temples or sites in the Taiwanese landscape, her worship in the Bhumang Nyiöling community’s dharma center, in the homes of community members across Taiwan, and by other followers of Bhumang Rinpoché across Southeast Asia, I would argue, has extended the sphere of her agentive power into new territories. Whether through reciting the “Praise in Verses,” *The Parnashavarī Sādhana*, or Parṇaśavarī’s mantra, Bhumang Nyiöling’s community have contributed to reterritorializing Parṇaśavarī by worshipping her and pleading for her divine assistance in their lives. In doing so, they have localized Parṇaśavarī’s intercessory potential in their environment and enrolled Taiwan as territory under her influence. This processes of *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* has moved Parṇaśavarī across mountains and oceans. Now her protection is being sought to help community members and other sentient beings in Taipei, New Taipei City, and beyond.

These processes of *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization* do not necessarily occur via a one-time movement where a new territory is wholly brought under the power of an entire Buddhist pantheon. *Spiritual reterritorialization* can occur unevenly as specific deities are introduced according to how they appear within a community’s liturgical or educational program. Alternatively, as in the case I have considered here illustrates, *spiritual reterritorialization* can occur when the felt need for a divinity’s propitiation arises. Chetsang

Rinpoché and Bhumang Rinpoché's introductions and exhortations along with Bhumang Nyiöling community members' enactment of practices devoted to Parṇaśavarī provide one example of how Buddhist teachers and communities transplant Buddhist deities to new locales, and in the process establish claims to their power within a new religious landscape. In this way, she is an example of the important role that *spiritual deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* play in the contemporary transmission of Buddhist traditions in non-heritage locales.

Chapter 5

Deepening Roots: The International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute and Localizing Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan

On an early December morning during the second week of my fieldwork, I stepped into a conference room at the Taipei Innovation City Convention Center (台北矽谷國際會議中心) bustling with a crowd of Tibetan Buddhist clerics, as well as a handful of Taiwanese volunteers. I had recently finished my post-arrival quarantine and was invited by a friend of a friend to attend the Tenth Forum for the Promotion of the Buddhadharma (ནང་བསྟན་དང་སྤེལ་བའོ་སྤྱི་སྐབས་བཅུ་པ། 第十屆弘法論壇) being hosted by the Taiwan International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute (ITBSI). That year's forum, subtitled "Prayers for World Peace and the Swift End to the Pandemic,"⁹²² brought together nearly eighty teachers from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Several of ITBSI's leaders who were unable to enter Taiwan due to COVID-19 related border restrictions joined online for a day of presentations, discussions, and debate about the current situation and future development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. As the only lay attendee not either volunteering or presenting, I tried vainly to remain inconspicuous amidst a crowd of shaved heads and maroon robes and found an empty seat at the back of the conference hall.

The presentations varied widely, but mostly dealt with the theme of propagating Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Nearly all presentations were given in Tibetan, evidence that the primary

⁹²² “འཛམ་གླིང་ལྗོངས་འོ་དང་ནད་ཡམས་ལྱུང་དུ་ཞི་བའི་སྨོན་ལམ།, 祈願世界和平! 全球疫情早日止息!” International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་སྤྱི་འོ་དང་བརྟུན་ནང་བསྟན།, “Gal che'i gsal brda/ གཤམ་ཆེན་གསལ་བད།,” Facebook, December 5, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid027E4gkLekEWypjDauonZsEs1Z2Q3K5kvzWua93P1nt3k3mHgUYz26ZUhaZN9RmanDl>.

target audience was Tibetan teachers and not their local disciples. After opening remarks by one of ITBSI's founders and its vice-chairman, there were ten minutes of prayers recited by all attendees, followed by more remarks from ITBSI's current chairman, the chair of ITBSI's lay board of supervisors, and the host of the Forum. After a tea break, a local staff member of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) introduced its new website and mobile application, and one of ITBSI's officers previewed ITBSI's new website. Other presentations summarized ITBSI's ongoing projects, such as the dissemination of the bilingual Tibetan and Chinese book *Responsibility* (འགན་ཁུན།, 責任), which was developed by a trans-sectarian team of ITBSI members, and the co-organizing of celebrations for the Buddha's birthday with representatives from Chinese and Theravāda Buddhist traditions in Taiwan on the International Day of Vesak (རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་ཕྱིན་པའི་འཁུངས་སྐུ་ཉིད།, 國際佛誕節). A Taiwanese businesswoman also gave a presentation on marketing, the day's only presentation given in Mandarin and translated into Tibetan, and ITBSI's vice-chairman shared take-aways from a multi-month course for Tibetan teachers on how to apply lessons from marketing to more successfully disseminate their religion in Taiwan.

Following most of the presentations, the audience of reincarnate teachers, khenpos, geshés, lamas, monks, and non-celibate teachers was given the opportunity to offer comments. I noted particularly heated discussions, for example, as several attendees objected to the term “Buddhist marketing” (ནང་པའི་ཚོམ་ར་རིག་པ།), which some of ITBSI's leaders had decided to use while researching strategies for spreading Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. At one point, a participant protested loudly into his microphone: “We aren't doing business or selling things!” Other attendees opposed ITBSI's decision to promote celebrating the birth of the Buddha Śākyamuni

on the International Day of Vesak (as established by the United Nations).⁹²³ These attendees did not object to the intra-Buddhist ceremonies ITBSI's leaders were co-organizing. Rather, they insisted that these celebrations should be held on Sagadawa when Tibetans commemorate the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvāṇa or enlightenment after death.⁹²⁴

At times, ITBSI's leaders or members of the audience responded to further explain or offer support for ITBSI's projects. For example, several of ITBSI's leaders spoke up to clarify that "Buddhist marketing" should be understood as a skillful means, a way to draw lessons from marketing professionals and apply them to better understand Tibetan Buddhism's target audience in Taiwan. Through these tools, they hoped Tibetan teachers might learn how to adapt their presentation of Buddhism to better address the life circumstances and spiritual needs of their Taiwanese disciples. It was not, they maintained, a strategy to better position the Buddha's teachings on a spiritual marketplace for the sake of profit. Later, other ITBSI leaders defended the joint celebrations on the International Day of Vesak by assuring attendees that their participation did not mean they were advocating abandoning Sagadawa. Rather, they hoped intra-Buddhist celebrations would contribute to a globally legible holiday for Buddhists, like how Christians around the world celebrate Christmas on December twenty-fifth.⁹²⁵

Having begun at seven thirty in the morning, the very full program of the Tenth Forum for the Promotion of the Buddhadharma ended shortly before five in the afternoon. As I listened to the presentations and discussions, recited the opening and closing prayers together with the

⁹²³ The International Day of Vesak was recognized by the United Nations resolution 54/115 in December 1999 as the full moon in the month of May. For additional information, see: United Nations, "Vesak Day," United Nations, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/vesak-day>.

⁹²⁴ Sagadawa is celebrated during the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, which typically falls during May or June. However, different Tibetan Buddhist communities' celebrations of Sagadawa vary in accordance with different calculations of the Tibetan lunar calendar. On various Tibetan Buddhist calendars, see: Svante Janson, "Tibetan Calendar Mathematics," January 24, 2014, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1401.6285>, especially pages 38–54.

⁹²⁵ That not all Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25 of the Gregorian Calendar (such as those who follow the Julian, Coptic, or Ethiopian calendars) was not mentioned and, perhaps, not known to the Forum participants.

assembly, and chatted with attendees over breaks, I was struck most by how truly trans-sectarian the occasion was, both in terms of its participants and organization. ITBSI's leaders were from all four of the largest schools of Tibetan Buddhism, with presentations on several projects co-led by monastics from different schools. Attendees also came from the Geluk, Kagyü, Nyingma, Sakya, and even the Jonang schools, although I did not see any teachers from the Bön tradition present.⁹²⁶ The opening and closing prayers were similarly trans-sectarian, including a selection of prayers and sūtras shared by all Tibetan Buddhists and concluding with the “Prayer for the Propagation of the Non-Sectarian Buddha’s Teachings” (ལུང་བསྐྱེད་རིས་མེད་རྒྱལ་པོའི་སློན་ལམ།, 佛教無派別弘揚願文) by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.⁹²⁷ Even the lunch featured randomized seating to avoid clusters of monks from the same sectarian tradition, monastery, or even region of Tibet.

As I bicycled home, it occurred to me that the projects which had been discussed, and indeed the very Forum itself, were quite distinct from the programs at any dharma center or Tibetan Buddhist organization I had heard about in Taiwan. While most dharma centers are affiliated with specific Tibetan Buddhist monasteries or individual teachers, ITBSI was an organization uniquely devoted to promoting the success of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism across Taiwan. While dharma centers hold events primarily for Taiwanese and are full of Mandarin and Taiwanese speakers, many of ITBSI's programs are oriented toward Tibetan Buddhist teachers and utilize far more Tibetan⁹²⁸ than Mandarin. Furthermore, while most

⁹²⁶ As noted above, the Jonang School is the smallest tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and has the fewest centers in the Taipei region. Regarding Tibet's Bön tradition, to the best of my knowledge there were no Bön-affiliated centers in Taiwan during my fieldwork. I heard that Bön teachers occasionally visited Taiwan and one Bönpo monastic attended the Eleventh Forum for the Promotion of the Buddhadharmā held in February 2023.

⁹²⁷ These prayers were contained in a bilingual Tibetan and Chinese volume created and published by ITBSI entitled *A Short Collection of Tibetan Buddhist Prayers* (ལྷོ། །བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྐྱེད་ཞལ་འདོན་ཅུང་བསྐྱེད་བཞུགས་མོ།, 《藏傳佛教念誦略集》).

⁹²⁸ Most presentations are given in Central Tibetan. As not all Tibetan and Himalayan monastics and Tibetan Buddhist teachers can speak this with the same degree of fluency, however, many presentations included words, phrases, and pronunciations from other Tibetan languages, such as Amdoké or Khamké.

dharma centers are focused on growing their own organizations and, as detailed in chapters one and three, financially supporting monasteries in South Asia, ITBSI's work has a distinctly local orientation. Their work is aimed at providing a platform for all Tibetan Buddhists to reach the Taiwanese public as well as resources for individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

As I peddled faster to try and reach home before dark, I thought about how ITBSI not only paid lip-service to non-sectarianism, but actively pursued projects across sectarian boundaries, with leadership and supporters from across all Tibetan Buddhist schools. I wondered how such an organization arose and how it had managed to gather so many Tibetan Buddhist teachers. How did ITBSI relate to the hundreds of individual Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan? What was ITBSI's relationship with non-Tibetan Buddhist communities in Taiwan? While I did not have answers to any of these questions, I tucked them away amidst my growing list of topics to investigate over the subsequent fifteen months of my fieldwork.

1. Introduction

In the first part of this dissertation, I traced the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan from its extremely isolated presence among a few individuals in the 1950s, through a period of slow and partially covert growth between the 1960s and the early 1980s. This slow growth rapidly expanded in the 1980s, culminating in a dramatic increase in the number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers coming to Taiwan and the commencement of heavy missionization efforts that continue to this day. Building upon this background, in chapter three I discussed the wider transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan as both originating and continuing to be driven by the exchange of spiritual and financial capital. This began during the period of Taiwan's liberalization and significant economic growth while Tibetan Buddhists were also

rebuilding the institutions both in exile and in Tibet following their flights into exile and the widespread destruction of religious life during the Cultural Revolution. In chapter four, I outlined how Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners have expanded the spheres of agentic influence of Tibetan Buddhist deities through enacting dual processes of *spiritual de-* and *reterritorialization*. The present and final chapter continues to follow the course of Tibetan Buddhism’s “trajectory” in Taiwan, arguing that in the past decade there have been significant efforts to both collectively organize and localize Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. As the first quarter of the twenty-first century closes, Tibetan Buddhism is no longer a novel religion in Taiwan. Having put down roots over the last seventy-five years, today Tibetan Buddhists have become an important and active part of Taiwan’s rich and kaleidoscopic religious landscape.

ITBSI has played a particularly important role in localizing Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan. Founded initially to gather Tibetan Buddhist teachers across sectarian divisions to respond to scathing public critiques of Tibetan Buddhism, ITBSI has grown significantly over the past fifteen years to become one of the primary public faces of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Today, ITBSI is regularly consulted as a representative of Tibetan Buddhism by other Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious groups, media outlets, civic organizations, and increasingly by the Taiwanese government. In addition, ITBSI is unique in the guidance and support it provides Tibetan Buddhist teachers active in Taiwan, as well as the educational and chaplaincy services it offers to Taiwan’s small ethnic Tibetan community. At the same time, ITBSI does not, generally speaking,⁹²⁹ impose doctrinal orthodoxy among those who participate in its projects and warmly

⁹²⁹ The primary exceptions to this are supporters of the controversial sectarian protector deity Dorjé Shugden (རྣམ་ཐུག་ལྷ་སྐྱོད་ལྷ་སྐྱོད་ལྷ་སྐྱོད་, 多杰雄登). For an overview of the controversy around Dorjé Shugden, see: Georges B. J. Dreyfus, “The Shuk-Den Affair: History and Nature of a Quarrel,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 227–70; Martin A. Mills, “This Turbulent Priest: Contesting Religious Rights and the State in the Tibetan Shugden Controversy,” in *Human Rights in Global Perspective: Anthropological Studies of*

supports religious activities and teachers from all Tibetan Buddhist schools. As a result, ITBSI has become an important leader among the more than four hundred otherwise disparate Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers and hundreds of religious teachers active across Taiwan today.

As I discussed in chapter one, scholars have periodized the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in several ways. In this chapter, I will neither debate the merits of these nor offer a novel comprehensive periodization scheme. I will, however, argue that Tibetan Buddhism has recently entered a distinctly new phase in its development in Taiwan. Through the efforts of ITBSI in particular, Tibetan Buddhism has become increasingly integrated within the broader Taiwanese religious milieu. Through their work, ITBSI has catalyzed the further localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan to the degree that Tibetan Buddhism is no longer a “new” or “exotic” tradition at the religious fringe. Rather, Tibetan Buddhism has taken its place as an active and important player within Taiwan’s contemporary religious landscape.

The concept of “localization” has been applied in numerous studies yet is often left rather vaguely defined. Perhaps this lack of clarity is out of necessity or conviction, an acknowledgement that the processes by which “foreign” phenomena become acculturated and adapted into novel settings are so tied to the specifics of what is being localized, along with where and how, that any definitional statement extrapolated from a particular case would inevitably prove inadequate. Additionally, in the context of a globalized and profoundly interconnected world, the very idea of what constitutes the “local” is up for debate. As Arjun Appadurai noted nearly thirty years ago, the production of locality today occurs in a world that is increasingly deterritorialized, diasporic, and transnational.⁹³⁰ Furthermore, “local” as a

Rights, Claims and Entitlements, ed. Richard Wilson and Jon P. Mitchell (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 51–70.

⁹³⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 188.

geographic referent has become complicated as the widespread use of modern communication technologies have caused us to enter “an altogether new condition of neighborliness, even with those most distant from ourselves.”⁹³¹

Although these trends have only intensified during the subsequent decades, Appadurai’s contention that “displaced, deterritorialized, and transient populations” continue to be “engaged in the construction of locality, as a structure of feeling, often in the face of the erosion, dispersal, and implosion of neighborhoods as coherent social formations”⁹³² still warrants attention.

Writing in the same period, Roland Robertson also cautioned against completely deconstructing the “local,” noting that while the realities of our world today require us to think in global terms, it does not follow that “all forms of locality are thus substantially homogenized.”⁹³³ In fact, he contends, globalization “has involved and increasingly involves the creation and the incorporation of locality.”⁹³⁴ Or, as Ludovic Lado summarizes succinctly, “there is no globalization without localization.”⁹³⁵

Accordingly, as critical as attending to universalizing trends within globalization remains,⁹³⁶ studying the continued creation of the “local” remains equally vital. Attending to the production of locality reveals pieces of the “dialogue” through which diverse voices contribute to the creation of globality.⁹³⁷ One way it does so is by sharing the stories of how peoples continue

⁹³¹ Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy,” 2.

⁹³² Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 199.

⁹³³ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 31.

⁹³⁴ Robertson, 40.

⁹³⁵ Ludovic Lado, *Catholic Pentecostalism and the Paradoxes of Africanization: Processes of Localization in a Catholic Charismatic Movement in Cameroon* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009), 93–94.

⁹³⁶ For one particularly influential study of universalization within globalization, now in its tenth edition, see: George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: Into the Digital Age*, 10th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA & London: SAGE Publications, 2021).

⁹³⁷ Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 57.

to craft senses of community and (re)locate lifeways, religions, languages, and intellectual traditions in new geographic, temporal, and, increasingly, digital homes. This chapter follows one such story of localization, examining how the global movement of Tibetan Buddhism has also yielded efforts to grow deeper roots in specific locales. Tracing ITBSI's work in Taiwan, I argue that ITBSI's intentional pursuit of avenues to localize Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwanese communities and spaces have been critical to the broader public acceptance and increased recognition of Tibetan Buddhism as an important agent within Taiwan's religious landscape.

Several scholars of Buddhism have applied localization in analyses of how Buddhist traditions have moved across and established roots within new geographies and communities. In doing so, they have identified an array of strategies involved in processes of religious localization. By far the broadest and most common strategy identified involves the adoption, either intentionally or unintentionally, of local religious, social, or cultural practices, beliefs, and norms to acculturate a religion to a new locale.⁹³⁸ This is often associated with religious hybridity or syncretism with local forms of religious praxis.⁹³⁹ These adaptations are frequently justified as strategic or superficial adjustments that do not alter the core teachings of a tradition.

⁹³⁸ Alexander Soucy, "The Buddha And The Birch Tree: The Great Pine Forest Monastery And The Localization Of Vietnamese Buddhism To Canada," *Contemporary Buddhism* 15, no. 2 (November 2014): 373–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2014.932494>; Aristotle Chan Dy, "Buddhist Modernism in the Philippines: Emerging Localization of Humanistic Buddhism," *Religions* 13, no. 220 (March 2022): 8, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030220>; Bianchi, "Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī," 119–127; Chee-Beng Tan, *Chinese Religion in Malaysia: Temples and Communities* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2018), 62–82; Duncan Ryūken Williams, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2019), 123–144; Jack Meng-Tat Chia, *Monks in Motion: Buddhism and Modernity Across the South China Sea* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 132–152; Joseph Loss, "Buddha-Dhamma in Israel: Explicit Non-Religious and Implicit Non-Secular Localization of Religion," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 13, no. 4 (2010): esp. 96–99, <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2010.13.4.84>; Yong Zhou, "Locality from Hybridization to Integration: Cultural Politics and Space Production of Taiwan Mazu Temples in Mainland China," *Religions* 13, no. 9 (September 2022): 14–15, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090836>.

⁹³⁹ Fabienne Jagou, "Introduction," in *The Hybridity of Buddhism: Contemporary Encounters Between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, ed. Fabienne Jagou, Études Thématiques (Paris: EFEO, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018), 14–20.

Beyond religious hybridity, scholars have identified other strategies for localizing Buddhism in new contexts. These include pursuing translation into local languages,⁹⁴⁰ localizing religious authority through the training of local leaders,⁹⁴¹ cooperating with the hierarchies of other religions,⁹⁴² pursuing relationships with local political elites,⁹⁴³ manifesting a charismatic presence in local communities,⁹⁴⁴ developing a local cult of saints and absorbing elements of the local pantheon,⁹⁴⁵ encouraging local innovations in religious practice and doctrine,⁹⁴⁶ grafting new meanings on elements in the local environment,⁹⁴⁷ utilizing local architectural styles,⁹⁴⁸ and engaging in social work.⁹⁴⁹ Some scholars have also pointed to organizations' efforts to serve as cultural bridges for diasporic populations as a tool to localize their tradition in a new context.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁰ Bianchi, "Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī," 119–127; Chia, *Monks in Motion*, 293–298; Dy, "Buddhist Modernism in the Philippines," 9–10; Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 71–77; Wang Bin, "Fo Guang Shan's 'Localization of Buddhism' within the Internationalization of Buddhism," *Studies on Humanistic Buddhism* 3: Globalization of Buddhism (2020): 144–145, <https://journal.nantien.edu.au/volume-3-globalization-of-buddhism/>.

⁹⁴¹ Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 293–298; Chia, *Monks in Motion*, 129–132; Dy, "Buddhist Modernism in the Philippines," 8–9; Loss, "Buddha-Dhamma in Israel"; Wang Bin, "Fo Guang Shan's 'Localization of Buddhism' within the Internationalization of Buddhism," 145–147.

⁹⁴² Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 115; Liu Guowei 劉國威, *Taiwan xianjin zangchuan fojiao fazhan yanjiu 台灣現今藏傳佛教發展研究*, 25; Yao, "The Development and Evolution of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," 587; Yao Lixiang 姚麗香, "Zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan fazhan de chubu yanjiu 藏傳佛教在台灣發展的初步研究," 327.

⁹⁴³ Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 276–285; Chia, *Monks in Motion*, 141–151; Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 56–65; Stuart Chandler, "Globalizing Chinese Culture, Localizing Buddhist Teachings: The Internationalization of Foguangshan," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 3 (2002): 61–65, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1310625>; Zhou, "Locality from Hybridization to Integration," 15–17.

⁹⁴⁴ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 213–246; Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 36–87.

⁹⁴⁵ Ari C. Dy, *Chinese Buddhism in Catholic Philippines: Syncretism as Identity* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2015), 158–160; Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*, 120–125; Jagou, "Tibetan Relics in Taiwan: A Link Between Past, Present, and Future," 88–89; Janet Gyatso, "Down With the Demoneess: Reflections on a Feminine Ground in Tibet," in *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*, ed. Janice Dean Willis (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1989), 45–48; Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 44–50.

⁹⁴⁶ Chia, *Monks in Motion*, 132–151.

⁹⁴⁷ Elizabeth Allison, "Deity Citadels: Sacred Sites of Bio-Cultural Resistance and Resilience in Bhutan," *Religions* 10, no. 4 (April 2019): 6–9, <https://doi.org/10.3390/re110040268>; Gyatso, "Down With the Demoneess: Reflections on a Feminine Ground in Tibet," 41–44; Soucy, "The Buddha And The Birch Tree."

⁹⁴⁸ Fraser, "Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Taiwan"; Zhou, "Locality from Hybridization to Integration," 12–14.

⁹⁴⁹ Chia, *Monks in Motion*, 106–114; Dy, "Buddhist Modernism in the Philippines," 10–13; Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 213–246.

⁹⁵⁰ Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 271–272; Chandler, "Globalizing Chinese Culture, Localizing Buddhist Teachings," 56–59; Zhou, "Locality from Hybridization to Integration," 15–17.

Certainly, this list of localization strategies is far from exhaustive. After all, the localization of religious traditions is a dynamic process that plays out in innumerable diverse ways as peoples carry their traditions and lifeways across environmental, cultural, linguistic, political, and even temporal contexts. As communities move and set down roots in new places and times, they also find ways to transplant their traditions in new soil. Sometimes this process of adapting a religion to the particular conditions of a new context proceeds through a gradual osmosis of cultural norms and practices following the large-scale movement of a people, such as through a mass migration or forced relocation of a community. Other times, it occurs through specific agents who intentionally seek the successful “transplantation”⁹⁵¹ of their tradition. This latter path is the avenue pursued by missionaries and propagators of religious traditions.

In the absence of a sizable heritage community, the localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan has primarily been catalyzed through the work of teachers who have acculturated how they present Tibetan Buddhism within the local religious, social, and linguistic environment. In addition to some of the strategies mentioned above, ITBSI’s members have also pursued other avenues of localization, including engaging with local critics, pursuing intra- and inter-religious dialogue, and seeking trans-sectarian cooperation. In this chapter, I will present examples of these strategies to illuminate how ITBSI has nourished the localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Through organizing a trans-sectarian body of teachers and collectively representing Tibetan Buddhism to the Taiwanese public, ITBSI’s work has helped move Tibetan Buddhism in from the periphery of Taiwanese religious life and grow deeper, local roots.

In the first section, I relate the story of ITBSI’s founding. Central to this were the founders’ intentions to bring representatives of diverse Tibetan Buddhist sectarian traditions

⁹⁵¹ Baumann, “The Transplantation of Buddhism to Germany,” 35.

together to offer a united response to vehement critiques of Tibetan Buddhism and further localize their tradition within Taiwan. After detailing some of the criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism, I discuss ITBSI's structure, growth, and active pursuit of non-sectarianism. Rather than discussing individual localization strategies, in the second half of this chapter I highlight the diverse audiences towards which ITBSI has oriented its work. These include Taiwanese Buddhists and the broader public, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, other non-Tibetan Buddhist communities and organizations, and ethnic Tibetans in Taiwan. While some of ITBSI's projects reach across these groups, other efforts have narrower audiences.

I conclude this chapter by returning to strategies of localization. By engaging with critics and curating their own space of representation, as well as increasing intra-religious dialogue with other Buddhist traditions, I maintain that ITBSI has facilitated Tibetan Buddhism's deeper "transplantation" within Taiwan. Moreover, ITBSI's commitment to a non-sectarian or rimé approach uniting teachers of diverse Tibetan Buddhist sectarian traditions across its work has been critical to the strength and public impact of its efforts. In the end, these strategies have helped ITBSI to create a home for Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan's diverse and rich religious landscape. As a result, I conclude that the founding of ITBSI has ushered in a new and distinctly localized phase in the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, one in which Tibetan Buddhism has become firmly rooted on Taiwanese soil.

2. The Founding of ITBSI

ITBSI was founded in Taipei in 2009 by four Tibetan Buddhist leaders: Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché (སྐུལ་སྐུ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འོ་རུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 圖登諾布仁波切 b. 1965), a Nyingma teacher from Amdo, Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché (ཀའ་ཐོག་རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་མོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 仁珍千寶仁波切 b. 1973), a

Nyingma teacher from Nepal, Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché (མཁན་པོ་ཚུལ་རྒྱལ་ལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 堪布慈囊仁波切 b. 1968), a Kagyü teacher from Kham, and Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché (མཁན་པོ་ཚོ་ལ་ཉིད་དོན་རྟོགས་ལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 堪布曲尼敦多仁波切 b. 1964), a Nyingma teacher also from Kham. These four teachers, who by 2009 were long-term residents of Taiwan,⁹⁵² met one afternoon during the lunar new year for a meal at a Japanese vegetarian restaurant. Tibetan Buddhism had been rocked in recent years with several scandals involving local teachers and there were groups actively protesting Tibetan Buddhism in public venues across Taiwan. The most prominent of the groups opposing Tibetan Buddhism was the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association (佛教正覺同修會, hereafter TEPA).⁹⁵³ During their conversation, the four teachers discussed the need to step out of their individual dharma centers and respond collectively in defense of their tradition.

In an interview, Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché recalled ITBSI's origins:

In 2009, the four of us dharma friends [Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché, Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché, Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché, and Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché] started ITBSI... We had all lived in Taiwan for some time. They had all lived in Taiwan for a long time, perhaps about as many years as I had.

Anyway, we knew that within the general state of Taiwanese society and religion in Taiwan, the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan was extremely acute. We knew this clearly. At that time, we were even a bit afraid. There were people publicly condemning the Outer, Inner, and Secret [Teachings]⁹⁵⁴ and those who said Tibetan Buddhism isn't pure. Even among Buddhists, there were those who didn't like [us] and wanted to stop [Tibetan Buddhism]. [Their opposition] here became very intense. [They were opposed] to the entirety of Tibetan Buddhism,

⁹⁵² Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché first arrived in Taiwan in 1993 and Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché in 1995. I do not know when Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché or Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché first came to Taiwan.

⁹⁵³ There are several organizations closely affiliated with TEPA that all consider Master Xiao Pingshi their spiritual leader. These include, the True Enlightenment Education Foundation (正覺教育基金會), the True Enlightenment Mission (正覺教團), True Wisdom Publishing Company Ltd. (正智出版社有限公司), and Wholesome Vision Publications. For ease of reading, I utilize TEPA in this chapter to refer to activities across these groups.

⁹⁵⁴ While this is a technical term for different levels of teachings, here Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché uses the phrase "Outer, Inner, and Secret" (ཉིད་དོན་གསལ་གསུམ་) in reference to the entirety of Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

not only to us Nyingma or the Kagyü or Sakya. They said the very existence of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan is undesirable.

There is one organization in Taiwan called the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association. From what I know, [they] published pieces in the press, in different newspapers, and in pamphlets [criticizing Tibetan Buddhism]. They also spoke to people all over the place [in Taiwan]. They did a lot of things like this. As a result, we were naturally hurt and strong feeling arose from the depths of our hearts. These [feelings] arose in everyone, but especially us. We're outsiders, right? We're not locals here but came from outside and don't have power. On the one hand, we're not people from this area. On the other hand, we didn't have any support. Unless Tibetan Buddhism flourished everywhere [in Taiwan], and there were many invitations from influential people, leaders, and organizations, Tibetan Buddhism wouldn't take root here.⁹⁵⁵

Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché explained how fragmented the hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan were at the time. Individual teachers may know former classmates and friends or relatives from the same region of Tibet or the Himalayas, and their Taiwanese disciples might attend events at multiple centers. However, individual centers rarely had contact with one another. Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché recalled thinking that without an organized network, individual teachers felt powerless to voices criticizing them in public. He continued,

Then one day, around Tibetan New Year, we got together one afternoon for tea and a meal. I can't remember which Rinpoché it was, probably Thupten Norbu, but I'm not sure. He offered us lunch. We're dharma friends and since we hadn't seen each other in a long time we chatted about our classes, and this and that.

955 “ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་དེ་ ༢༠༠༩ ལོ་ལོར་ངོ་ཚོ་གྲོགས་པོ་དང་ཚོས་གྲོགས་པ་ལག་ལེན་ཤིག་གིས་བཅུགས་པ་རེད།... དེ་ནས་ངོ་ཚོ་ཐའེ་ཕན་ལ་རྒྱན་རིང་པོ་བསྟན་པ་རེད། ཁོང་ཚོ་ཡང་དཔེ་རྒྱན་རིང་པོར་བསྟན་པ་རེད། ཕལ་ཆེར་དང་འདྲ་པོ་རེད། ཡིན་ན་ཡང་སྤྱིར་ཐའེ་ཕན་གྱི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་འགོ་སྟངས་དང་། རྒྱད་པར་དུ་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་འགོ་སྟངས། དེའི་ནང་ནས་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན། ཐའེ་ཕན་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་གནས་སྟངས་དེ་ཉ་ཅང་གི་ཚོད་གཅིག་ཡིན་པ་དང་ངོ་ཚོས་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། གསལ་པོ་ཞིག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། ངོ་ཚོ་ལ་དེའི་གནས་སྟངས་ན་སྤྱིར་གཏང་གི་ཞིག་ཞེད་སྟངས་ཞིག་ཡོད་པའི་ཡོད་རེད། ཕྱི་ནང་གསལ་གསལ་ནས་དམའ་འབེབ་བྱེད་མཁུན་དང་། བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་འདི་རྒྱས་དག་མ་ཞི་མ་འདྲེན་མཁུན་དང་། ནང་པ་རང་གི་ནང་ནས་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ལ་མི་དགའ་མཁུན་དང་། དགག་མཁུན་དེ་ནས་སྤྱོད་མ་ཡོད་པ་ཞིག་རེད། ཡོད་ན་ཡང་འདི་བར་དེ་ལ་དཔེ་ཚོད་གཅིག་ཆགས་པ་རེད། བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་སྤྱི་ཡོངས་ལ། ངོ་ཚོ་རྒྱུ་མ་གཅིག་པོ་མ་རེད། བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ལ་མ་རེད། ས་སྤྱི་ལ་མ་རེད། བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཟེར་ཡག་འདི་ཐའེ་ཕན་ལ་ཡོད་པ་ཡག་པོ་མ་འདྲེན་ཟེར་བ་རེད། ཐའེ་ཕན་གྱི་ཚོགས་པ་གཅིག་ཡོད་རེད་ལ། རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་ཟེར་གྱི་ཡོད་རེད། ཁོང་ཚོ་དཔེ་” ངས་གོ་ཚོད་ལ་བསྐྱབས་ནས་གསལ་རྟོག་འདྲེན་མི་འདྲེན་དང་། ཚོགས་པར་འདྲེན་མི་འདྲེན་དང་། འགྲེམས་ཤོག་འདྲེན་མི་འདྲེན་ལ་བཀའ་མཁུན། དེ་ནས་མི་གསལ་གསལ་སྟངས་ཆ་བཤད་ལ་སོགས་པའི་འདྲེན་པོ་བཟོ་ཡོད་རེད་ལ། དེ་འདྲེན་བྱས་ཡོད་དུས་ངོ་ཚོ་ལ་རང་ལྷགས་ཀྱིས་གཞོན་པ་ཞིག་དང་ལོ་མས་ཀྱི་གཏིང་ལ་ཚོར་བ་ཞིག་གཏན་གཏན་སྐྱབས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། མི་ཆ་ཚང་ལ་དེ་འདྲེན་སྐྱབས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། རྒྱད་པར་དུ་ངོ་ཚོ་ཕྱི་ལོགས་ཀྱི་མི་རེད་ལ། ས་ཆ་འདིའི་ས་སྤྱོས་དོ་སྤྱོས་ཀྱི་མི་མ་རེད། དེ་ཕྱི་ལོགས་ནས་ཐོན་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་དུས་རེད། ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ངོ་ཚོ་ལ་རུས་པ་མེད་པ་ཞིག་ལ་གཅིག་ནས་ངོ་ཚོས་ཁྱེད་འདི་མི་མ་རེད། གཉིས་ནས་ངོ་ཚོར་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་ཡོད་མ་རེད། བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ནང་ཡག་འདི་ས་རྒྱབ་དོ་རྒྱབ་བྱས་ནས་འབོར་དུ་ཐོན་པ་ཞིག་རེད་མ་གཏོགས། མི་མཐོ་པོ་དང་བྲག་པོ། མཐོ་འཁྲིད་མང་པོ། ཚོགས་པ་མང་པོ་ཞིག་གི་གདན་འདྲིན་ཞུས་ནས་ས་ཆ་འདི་ལ་རྒྱུགས་པ་ཞིག་མ་རེད།” Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, January 6, 2023.

Then we said, ‘We have some work to do,’ and we started to discuss. If that person [referencing Xiao Pingshi, the leader of TEPA] gathers a lot of people together, he’ll become pretty powerful. So, we talked back and forth about this and said we must do something. We discussed and [someone said] ‘Well then, what if we start an organization? If we are going to draw attention to [Tibetan] Buddhism, to spread it, and resist them, what do we need to do?’

We discussed that although we [as individuals] were utterly powerless, if we were to start an organization and if we were to put a lot of effort in this direction, it would be beneficial to growing, publicizing, and disseminating Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.⁹⁵⁶

Thus, ITBSI’s founders decided they could no longer leave TEPA’s criticisms and protests of public Tibetan Buddhist events unaddressed. Realizing their individual efforts would pale in comparison to what they might accomplish if united, the founders decided to form an organization to represent Tibetan Buddhism to the Taiwanese public. In presenting a more positive, and to their minds more accurate picture of Tibetan Buddhism, the founders hoped to overcome TEPA’s criticisms and further spread Tibetan Buddhism locally.

2.1. Local Opposition to Tibetan Buddhism

As mentioned above, TEPA has been the most vocal and organized critic of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. TEPA was founded in 1997 by the Chinese Buddhist teacher Master Xiao Pingshi (蕭平實 b. 1944)⁹⁵⁷ and is currently based in Taipei’s Datong District, with branches

⁹⁵⁶ “དེ་ནས་ལོ་གསར་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ་ཞིག་ཕྱི་ལོ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ལྟུང་བུ་བྱས་ནས་ཇ་ཞིག་འཐུང་བ་ཡིན། དེ་ནང་ནས་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་མཚན་དེ་ངས་ཉ་ལོ་མ་སོང་། གཅིག་བྱས་ན་ཐུབ་བསྟན་ནོར་བུ་ཡིན་འགོ་ཁོང་གིས་ང་ཚོ་ལ་ཇ་ཞིག་དང་ཞལ་ལག་ཞིག་དང་ས་པ་ཤིན། ང་ཚོ་ཚོས་གྲོགས་ཤིང་། དེ་ནས་རྒྱུན་རིང་པོ་མ་ཐུག་པ་ཡིན་ཅོང་སྐད་ཆ་འདྲ་མི་འདྲ་བཤད། ད་ང་ཚོས་ཤིག་འཛིན་གྱི་ཞིག་འདྲུག་མི་འདྲུག་སྐོར་ཡར་མར་བཤད། དེ་ནས་ང་ཚོས་ད་ང་ཚོ་ལ་ལས་རྒྱ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པ་ཤིན་པའི་ཕེས་ང་ཚོས་གྲོས་བསྟར་ཞིག་བྱས་པ་ཤིན་པ། མི་ཟེར་ཡག་དེ་ཁོ་རང་མང་པོ་ཞིག་མཉམ་དུ་འཛོམས་བཞག་ན་ཉོག་ཅོམ་རྣམས་པ་ཐོན་ཡོང་གི་ཡོད་ཤིང་། དེ་ནས་ཡར་མར་བཤད་དུས་ད་ང་ཚོས་གཅིག་བྱེད་དགོས་པ་ཤིན་ཟེར། དེ་འདྲུ་ཞིག་གྲོས་བསྟར་བྱུང་བ་ཤིན། ད་བྱས་ན་ད་ཚོ་གསར་པ་ཞིག་བཙུགས་ནས་ང་རང་ཚོའི་ནང་ཚོས་འདི་ལ་དེ་སྤང་བྱེད་ཡག་ཅིག་དང་། དར་སྤེལ་གཏོང་ཡག་ཅིག་དང་། ཡང་ན་ཁོང་ཚོ་ལ་གདོང་ལེན་བྱེད་དགོས་ན་གང་འདྲ་བྱེད་དགོས་ཟེར་སྐད་ཆ་བྱུང་བ་ཤིན། ད་ང་ཚོ་རྣམས་པ་གང་ཡང་མེད་པའི་ཐོག་ནས་ད་ང་ཚོ་ཚོས་པ་ཞིག་འཛུགས་ན་ང་རང་ཚོའི་མོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་རང་ཉིད་ས་ཁུལ་འདི་ལ་ཡར་འཕེལ་ཡག་ ལུབ་བསྐྱབས་དང་ལུབ་སྤེལ་གཏོང་ཡག་དང་དེའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་འབད་བཅོམ་ཞིག་བྱེད་ན་པོན་ཐོག་གི་ཤིན་པ་ནས་དེ་འདྲུ་གྲོས་བསྟར་ཞིག་བྱུང་།” Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, January 6, 2023.

⁹⁵⁷ A brief biography of Master Xiao Pingshi is available on TEPA’s website. See: Fojiao zhengjue tongxiu hui 佛教正覺同修會, “Women de daoshi 我們的導師,” Fojiao zhengjue tongxiu hui quanqiu zixun wang 佛教正覺同修會全球資訊網, accessed June 13, 2023, <https://www.enlighten.org.tw/master>.

across Taiwan's major cities as well as in Hong Kong and Los Angeles. TEPA became especially well known locally during the 2000s and early 2010s after hanging several provocative banners condemning Tibetan Buddhism outside of their headquarters that are clearly visible from Taipei's Yuanshan Metro Station (圓山站).⁹⁵⁸ Their members were also very active distributing leaflets and other literature outside metro, train, and bus stations, and organized protests outside major Tibetan Buddhist teachings, empowerments, and dharma assemblies. At these events, their supporters would often hold banners, chant slogans, distribute pamphlets, and try to dissuade passersby from engaging with Tibetan Buddhism.

Perhaps TEPA's most notable public appearance occurred on September 1, 2009 when they organized approximately 400 of their members to protest outside a prayer ceremony led by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama for the victims of Typhoon Morakot (颱風莫拉克). An estimated 15,000 people attended this ceremony held at the Kaohsiung Arena (高雄巨蛋).⁹⁵⁹ TEPA carefully planned this protest, dispatching multiple teams to the venue's different entrances. On cue, members donned identifying vests, un-scrolled banners, and started shouting chants such as "*Lamajiao bu shi fojiao!*" (喇嘛教不是佛教! , Lamaism is not Buddhism!), "*Xiu shuangshenfa de lama jiao bu shi fojiao!*" (修雙身法的喇嘛教不是佛教! , Lamaism, based on the Couple Practice Tantra, is not Buddhism!). After the police threatened to clear them, the protestors regrouped and continued to protest in a nearby park as the Dalai Lama's motorcade passed.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁸ Various banners have been in place since at least 2010 outside several floors of the Meiyuan Commander Corporate World Office Building (美源統帥企業天下辦公大樓). For details of early objections to these banners by TEPA's neighbors, see: Huang Zhongrong 黃忠榮 et al., "Zhengjue jiangtang gua zhengyi bu tiao bu ken che 正覺講堂掛爭議布條不肯撤," *Ziyou shibao 自由時報*, December 15, 2010, sec. Shenghuo 生活, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/life/paper/452058>.

⁹⁵⁹ Lin Nansen 林楠森, "Dalai lama zai gaoxiong wei zaimin qifu 达赖喇嘛在高雄为灾民祈福," BBC News 中文, September 2, 2009, https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinanews/2009/09/090902_dalai_kaohsiung.

⁹⁶⁰ TEPA has published an extensive retrospective of these events, including one participant's reflections and numerous photos of the protests. See: Bai Zhiwei 白志偉 et al., *Dalai zhenmian mu: wan jin tianxia nuren 達賴真*



Figure 35: TEPA's banners denouncing Tibetan Buddhism hang outside several floors of the Meiyuan Commander Corporate World Office Building in Datong District, Taipei and are clearly visible from the Taipei Metro's Yuanshan Station. The banners read: “避免宗教性侵害, 請遠離藏傳佛教喇嘛 To avoid religious sexual abuse, please stay away from the lamas of Tibetan Buddhism,” “喇嘛的無上瑜伽是男女交合的瘦身法 The Highest Yoga Tantra cultivated by Lamas is essentially a yab-yub practice of sex,” and “藏傳佛教非佛教, 喇嘛飛到們僧 Tibetan Buddhism is definitely not Buddhism, the lamas are not Buddhist monks or nuns.” Photo by author, 2022.

In January 2011, TEPA's protests were literally on the front page as the TEPA-linked True Enlightenment Educational Foundation paid for half-page advertisements that covered the opening pages of four of Taiwan's major newspapers: the *Liberty Times* (自由時報),⁹⁶¹ *United*

面目: 玩盡天下女人 *The True Face of the Dalai Lama: Enjoying All the Women in the World* (Taipei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she youxian gongsi 正智出版社有限公司, 2012), 100–170.

Reflections on TEPA's protests from the perspective of the Central Tibetan Administration's Representative to Taiwan and other supporters of Tibetan Buddhism can be found here: Dawa Cairan 達瓦才仁 and Su Jiahong 蘇嘉宏, *Rensheng wu chu bu qingshan (2008–2021): dawa cairan zhu tai shier nian de huiyi 人生無處不青山 (2008–2021): 達瓦才仁駐臺十二年的回憶* (Taipei shi 臺北市: Han lu tushu chuban youxian gongsi 翰蘆圖書出版有限公司, 2021), 238–241; Dawa Cairan 達瓦才仁 and Suolang Duoji 索朗多吉, “Taiwan hu jiao jishi 臺灣護教記實,” Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會, August 11, 2020, <https://www.tibet.org.tw/news/topic/18038>.

⁹⁶¹ Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, “Baohu taiwan nuxing, bixu liao zhi lamajiao de genben jiaoyi 保護台灣女性, 必須瞭知喇嘛教的根本教義,” *Ziyou shibao 自由時報*, January 19, 2011, A1..

Daily News (聯合報),⁹⁶² *China Times* (中國時報),⁹⁶³ and *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報).^{964, 965} The content of the articles was nearly identical and they bore titles reminiscent of TEPA's protest slogans, such as "The Lama's Unsurpassed Yoga Practice is to Have Intercourse with Their Female Disciples"⁹⁶⁶ and "To Protect Taiwanese Women, [We] Must Know the Fundamental Teachings of Lamaism."⁹⁶⁷ TEPA's claims in these articles were challenged in court by the Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (TRFDL), cascading into a series of lawsuits that ultimately landed in the Taiwanese Supreme Court.⁹⁶⁸ Other legal cases between TEPA and the TRFDL are still unresolved after more than a decade.⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶² Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, "Baohu taiwan nuxing, bixu liao zhi lamajiao de genben jiaoyi," *Lianhe bao* 聯合報, January 20, 2011, sec. Wenhua 文化, A16.

⁹⁶³ Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, "Lama de wushang yujia xiuxing, jiushi yu nu xintu xingjiao 喇嘛的無上瑜伽修行, 就是與女信徒性交," *Zhongguo shibao* 中國時報, January 24, 2011, A1.

⁹⁶⁴ Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, "Baohu taiwan nuxing, bixu liao zhi lamajiao de genben jiaoyi 保護台灣女性, 必須瞭知喇嘛教的根本教義," *Pingguo ribao* 蘋果日報, January 25, 2011, sec. Yule 娛樂, C1.

⁹⁶⁵ Several opinion letters objecting to TEPA's characterizations of Tibetan Buddhism in these advertisements were published over the following days. For an example, see: Taiwan tu bo zhi youhui 台灣圖博之友會, "Zhengzhi zongjiao guanggao 政治宗教廣告," *Ziyou shibao dianzibao* 自由時報電子報, January 21, 2011, <https://talk.ltn.com.tw/article/paper/461862>.

⁹⁶⁶ Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, "Lama de wushang yujia xiuxing, jiushi yu nu xintu xingjiao 喇嘛的無上瑜伽修行, 就是與女信徒性交," A1.

⁹⁶⁷ Caituan faren zhengjue jiaoyu jijin hui 財團法人正覺教育基金會, "Baohu taiwan nuxing, bixu liao zhi lamajiao de genben jiaoyi 保護台灣女性, 必須瞭知喇嘛教的根本教義," C1.

⁹⁶⁸ On October 10, 2018, the ROC Supreme Court issued a final decision, concurring with a previous ruling of the High Court in December 2017 that the True Enlightenment Educational Foundation must publish a clarification statement. The so-called clarification statements TEPA made in the *China Times* and *Apple Daily* ended up in a small box that took up a fraction of the page. The remainder of each page reiterated TEPA's critiques of Tibetan Buddhism. See: Chen Qinfu 陳琴富, "Xiao pingshi caishi waidao: shilun guangchang 蕭平實才是外道: 時論廣場," *Zhongshi xinwenwang* 中時新聞網, December 3, 2018, <https://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20181203000567-260109?chdtv>; "Zuigao fayuan 107 nian du tai shang zi di 1382 hao minshi caiding 最高法院 107 年度台上字第 1382 號民事裁定," Ke fayuan caipan shu xitong 可法院裁判書系統, October 11, 2018,

<https://judgment.judicial.gov.tw/FJUD/data.aspx?ty=JD&id=TPSV%2c107%2c%e5%8f%b0%e4%b8%8a%2c1382%2c20181011%2c1&ot=in>; "Zuigao fayuan 107 nian du tai shang zi di 1438 hao minshi caiding 最高法院 107 年度台上字第 1438 號民事裁定," Ke fayuan caipan shu xitong 可法院裁判書系統, October 10, 2018, <https://judgment.judicial.gov.tw/FJUD/data.aspx?ty=JD&id=TPSV%2c107%2c%e5%8f%b0%e4%b8%8a%2c1438%2c20181011%2c1&ot=in>.

⁹⁶⁹ For an account of these lawsuits as well as lawsuits filed by other groups in Taiwan opposed to the Dalai Lama from the perspective of individuals affiliated with the TRFDL, including its former director Dawa Tsering Bawa, see: Dawa Cairan 達瓦才仁 and Su Jiahong 蘇嘉宏, *Rensheng wu chu bu qingshan (2008–2021) 人生無處不青山*

The reasons for TEPA's opposition to Tibetan Buddhism are documented across more than twenty books⁹⁷⁰ written by Master Xiao Pingshi critiquing Tibetan Buddhism. For evidence, Xiao Pingshi draws upon a variety of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and works about Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese translation that he “decodes.”⁹⁷¹ Repeating critiques leveled against Tibetan religion by numerous Chinese Buddhists and literati since at least the Yuan Dynasty,⁹⁷² Xiao Pingshi condemns Tibetan Buddhism for “taking sexual practices between a man and

(2008–2021), 220–241; Dawa Cairan 達瓦才仁 and Suolang Duoji 索朗多吉, “Taiwan hu jiao jishi 臺灣護教記實.”

⁹⁷⁰ Among these, Master Xiao Pingshi's most thorough critiques of Tibetan Buddhism are made in the four volumes of *Crazy Wisdom and True Wisdom*, the first volume of which was translated into English in 2017.

Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Behind the Façade of Tibetan Tantra: Volume 1* (Diamond Bar, CA: Wholesome Vision LLC, 2017); Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di er ji 狂密與真密第二輯* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she 正智出版社, 2002); Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di san ji 狂密與真密第三輯* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she 正智出版社, 2002); Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di si ji 狂密與真密第四輯* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she 正智出版社, 2002); Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di yi ji 狂密與真密第一輯* (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she 正智出版社, 2002).

For a full list of Master Xiao Pingshi's publications, see: Zhengzhi shuxiang yuandi 正智書香園地, “Daoshi zhuzuo 導師著作,” Zhengzhi shuxiang yuandi 正智書香園地, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://books.enlighten.org.tw/zh-tw/b/b-1>.

A library of articles and videos that detail TEPA's critiques of Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese are found here: Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui quanhuì 正覺教育基金會全會, “Zangchuan fojiao zhenxiang 藏傳佛教真相,” Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui quanqiu zixun wang 正覺教育基金會全球資訊網, January 20, 2022, <https://foundation.enlighten.org.tw/fact>.

A list of critiques in English are listed here: True Enlightenment Education Foundation, “True Heart News,” Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui quanqiu zixun wang 正覺教育基金會全球資訊網, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://foundation.enlighten.org.tw/news/trueheart-eng>.

⁹⁷¹ A senior TEPA teacher told me that although Xiao Pingshi had not studied these texts with a teacher during this lifetime, he is reportedly able to “decode” their “true” meaning due to karmic seeds planted during a previous life as a reincarnate teacher in the Jonang school of Tibetan Buddhism. She said: “During meditation, in a state something like while we are sleeping, he [Xiao Pingshi] saw a vision. The vision was about fighting, battling. And he saw some dharma words coming up [in that vision]. So, he was curious. And then gradually, because my master is extremely practiced in meditative concentration, he was able to see his past [life] experiences. Past experiences came up. That's vijñāna. So, when he later read these [books], he knew the meaning. That's because of reincarnation. He didn't only study Buddhism in this present life. For him, past experiences automatically came up like déjà vu. The more he read, the more he understood. When he read these Tibetan books, he said “Oh, I know. That's this.” So he can decode it... In a previous life, he was in the Jonang school. During meditation, he was so concentrated—his whole life has been dedicated to the dharma—and during meditation he was so full of dedication and with so many years [of] practicing that it automatically came up. Gradually, gradually he was able to recognize and say ‘Oh, that's it! That's the meaning.’ In the dream [sic], the battle or the fight that was his experience. He was chased out of Tibet and his students were killed. All because they followed this vijñāna-only, the eighth vijñāna. It's not speculation but personal realization.” Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, October 24, 2022.

⁹⁷² Isabelle Charleux, “Les « lamas » vus de Chine : fascination et répulsion,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 24, no. 24 (2002): 139–145, <https://doi.org/10.3406/oroc.2002.1155>; Weirong Shen and Liping Wang, “Background Books and A Book's Background,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Monica Esposito (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2008), 269–287.

woman as orthodox Buddhist practice.”⁹⁷³ He maintains that Tibetan Buddhism promotes the practice of sexual yoga, elevates the guru above the Buddha, and employs violence, alcohol, and sexual fluids in its practices. Furthermore, Master Xiao Pingshi insists that Tibetan Buddhist teachers are primarily interested in financially and sexually exploiting their Taiwanese students.

TEPA further supports these critiques by amplifying media coverage of several cases of Taiwanese women who suffered and/or raised allegations of sexual assault by Tibetan Buddhist teachers, as well as instances of lamas who were involved in relationships with their female students in Taiwan.⁹⁷⁴ For example, TEPA highlights the case of “Dzokchen Lingla Rinpoché” (佐欽林喇仁波切) who led several Tibetan Buddhist communities across the island. In 2006, a Taiwanese nun and several other women came forward accusing to accuse Lingla Rinpoché of sexually assaulting at least ten of his female followers over an extended period starting in the late 1980s, as well as defrauding his disciples out of millions of NTD.⁹⁷⁵ TEPA also cites allegations of sexual assault that were made in 2007 against Dhondup Rinpoché (དོན་སྐྱེད་རྩོད་པོ་ཅཱ།, 敦都仁波切), as well as the arrest and conviction of Chinese Buddhist teacher Master Yang Sheng (聖輪法師) for sexually assaulting a female disciple.⁹⁷⁶ While Yang Sheng primarily taught within a Chinese

⁹⁷³ “密教以男女雙身淫合之法，作為佛法正修” Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di yi ji 狂密與真密第一輯*, 19.

⁹⁷⁴ Bai Zhiwei 白志偉 et al., 達賴真面目, 87–92; Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui quanhuì 正覺教育基金會全會, “Dalai lama xizang zongjiao jijinhui fayanren de lianpian huangyan 達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會發言人的連篇謊言,” Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui quanqiu zixun wang 正覺教育基金會全球資訊網, February 26, 2012, <https://foundation.enlighten.org.tw/fact/dm/dm07>.

⁹⁷⁵ Lingla Rinpoché’s return to the PRC prevented a complete investigation and trial. For local news stories on the accusations against “Lingla Rinpoché,” see: Hu Shoude 胡守得, “Xing qin nu ni linla renboqie bei su 性侵女尼林喇仁波切被訴,” *Ziyou shibao dianzibao 自由時報電子報*, July 24, 2007, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/paper/143204>; Liu Rong 劉榮, Liu Qinghou 劉慶侯, and Liu Tianbin 羅添斌, “E lama zha cai shang yi xing qin yu 10 ren 惡喇嘛詐財上億 性侵逾 10 人,” *Ziyou shibao dianzibao 自由時報電子報*, July 15, 2006, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/paper/81786>.

⁹⁷⁶ In 2013, Master Yang Sheng was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison. See: *Ziyou shibao dianzibao 自由時報電子報*, “Sheng de chan si chuanguan renxing qin nu xintu er shenpan 10 nian 聖德禪寺創辦人性侵女信徒

Buddhist idiom, TEPA highlighted his having received and promoted some Tibetan Buddhist teachings and practices as evidence of the defiling influence of Tibetan Buddhism.

TEPA also cites the 2008 case of Pema Chöphel Rinpoché (པཌ་ཚོས་འཕེལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 貝瑪千貝仁波切), who was caught having an apparently consensual affair with one of his Taiwanese students by the woman's husband,⁹⁷⁷ and the 2011 case of “Naimai Rinpoché” (耐邁仁波切), who was caught while Taiwanese police were investigating a prostitution ring in Taipei's Wanhua District,⁹⁷⁸ as evidence of Tibetan Buddhist teachers' debauched conduct. Taken together, TEPA claims these instances of Tibetan Buddhist teachers sexually assaulting female disciples, engaging in sexual relations with female disciples, and hiring prostitutes as evidence of the distinctly non-Buddhist nature of tantra. That these individual Tibetan (and Chinese) Buddhist teachers, all of whom outwardly dressed in monastic robes, engaged in sexual acts forbidden to monastics is proof for TEPA's leaders of the true face of Tibetan Buddhism.⁹⁷⁹

二審判 10 年,” Ziyou shibao dianzibao 自由時報電子報, June 17, 2013, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/breakingnews/823766>.

⁹⁷⁷ News articles describe the female disciple as a nun, although it is unclear whether or not she had legally divorced her husband and taken monastic vows. For a news report on this case, see: Zhu Jixian 朱繼先, Zhang Jiawen 張嘉文, and Lu Jianhao 呂健豪, “Huofu gao nu ni zhuojian zai chuang 活佛搞女尼 捉姦在床,” Pingguo ribao 蘋果日報, March 12, 2008,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160909024118/http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20080312/30345311>.

Incidentally, this case also precipitated a response from the well-known Tibetan Buddhist teacher Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoché, who has commented (and received significant criticism for his comments) on a variety of sexual abuse scandals involving Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their female students over the years. His original reply was published in the *Apple Daily* on May 6, 2008. An electronic version with excerpts from his remarks can be viewed here: Zongsa qinzhe renboqie 宗薩欽哲仁波切, “Lama wang ‘lama xing chouwen’ tan qi 喇嘛網「喇嘛性醜聞」談起,” Lama wang 喇嘛網, accessed April 2, 2024,

<https://www.lama.com.tw/content/meet/acto.aspx?id=1557>.

⁹⁷⁸ For local news reports of this case, see: Dai Juntian 戴君恬, “Zicheng renboqie bian zhuang maichun zao jing huo dai 自稱仁波切 變裝買春遭警活逮,” TVBS 新聞網, March 2, 2011, <https://news.tvbs.com.tw/local/47787>; Huashi xinwen wang 華視新聞網, “Amitufo... ‘reboqie’ bian zhuang maichun 阿彌陀佛... ‘仁波切’變裝買春,” Huashi xinwen wang 華視新聞網, March 2, 2011,

<https://news.cts.com.tw/cts/society/201103/201103020682205.html>.

⁹⁷⁹ TEPA publications that present accusations about sexual scandals involving Tibetan Buddhist teachers include: Zhang Shansi 張善思 and Lu Ailun 呂艾倫, *Lama xing shijie: jiekai zangchuan fojiao tan cui yujia de miansha 喇嘛性世界: 揭開藏傳佛教禪崔瑜伽的面紗* *The Sexual World of Lamas: Unveiling the Truth About Tantric Yoga in*

In addition to repeating many historical critiques of Tibetan Buddhism and weaponizing media coverage of scandals involving lamas in Taiwan, Xiao Pingshi also condemns Tibetan Buddhism for its promotion of Madhyamaka philosophy. He claims that Tibetan Buddhists “promote the theory of causelessness [of phenomena, which advocates] contemplating the empty nature of dependent arising and negates all the Consciousness-Only scriptures of the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.”⁹⁸⁰ Xiao Pingshi objects to Tibetan Buddhists’ denial of the permanence of the eighth consciousness (*ālāyavijñāna*, ཀུན་གཞིའི་རྣམ་ཤེས།, 藏識/阿賴耶識), a position which he maintains causes them to “fall into nihilism and causelessness.”⁹⁸¹ In doing so, Xiao Pingshi attacks Tibetan and even several prominent Chinese Buddhist teachers, such as Master Yinshun, for what he sees as their mistaken view of Buddhist theories of causality.

There is clearly an apocalyptic tone to how Master Xiao Pingshi describes the existential threats posed by Tibetan Buddhism. For example, he writes that:

It’s a fact that tantra flourished and Buddhism faded in ancient Indian history.⁹⁸² The thriving of tantra inevitably led to Buddhism’s decline. If it flourishes enough, [tantra] will undoubtedly replace Exoteric Buddhism⁹⁸³ and will destroy Buddhism [again]. This is because the dharma of tantra really isn’t the true

Tibetan Buddhism (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengzhi chuban she youxian gongsi 正智出版社有限公司, 2011); Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui 正覺教育基金會, *Bo'ai: ai jin tianxia nuren* 博愛: 愛盡天下女人 (Taibei shi 臺北市: Zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui 正覺教育基金會, 2010).

⁹⁸⁰ “推廣無因論之緣起性空觀, 否定第三轉法輪之唯識諸經” Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di yi ji* 狂密與真密第一輯, 18.

⁹⁸¹ “墮於斷滅論及無因論中” Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, 6 [38].

⁹⁸² A senior student of Master Xiao Pingshi explained that from their interpretation of historical events, TEPA maintains that Buddhism was destroyed in India because Muslim invaders explicitly objected to tantric practices. “你知道 in the history, 伊斯蘭教他們就進攻印度。以後印度就 crashed。可是他們基本上呢, 並沒有對婆羅門此劫教把它剷除。主要目標實際上是密教。我們現在知道的話就是在伊斯蘭教這麼樣攻擊印度的情況, 他們沒有辦法接受的是密教。原因呢就是因為那個 yab-yum 的關係。因為伊斯蘭教他們比較需要很 pure, 所以他們可以接受婆羅門教, 但不可以接受什麼樣什麼樣的[密教]”

“You know how historically Islam attacked India? But basically, they didn’t [attack India to] eradicate Brahmanism. Their main target was actually tantra. What we know now is that in the case of Islam attacking India in this way, what they could not accept was actually tantra. The reason for this is because of the yab-yum [practices]. Because in Islam they focus on purity. So while they could accept Brahmanism, they couldn’t accept anything like [tantra].” (Author’s translation). Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, October 24, 2022.

⁹⁸³ Xiao Pingshi contrasts exoteric Buddhism with esoteric Buddhism or tantra. Xiao Pingshi considers Exoteric Buddhism “true” Buddhism (佛教) and equates tantra with heresy (外道).

buddhadharma, but [only] the superficial appearance of Buddhism. Internally, [it holds to] eternalism, heresy, and the methods of carnal pleasure and worldly enjoyment. Moreover, its monastics practice the dharma of householders. If tantra completely replaces Exoteric Buddhism, then Buddhism will go extinct. Believers will have Buddhist monasteries and monastics, but their nature will be transformed into centers of ghost and spirit [worship] that depend on heresy.⁹⁸⁴

Master Xiao Pingshi and TEPA's members follow more than half a millennia of historical precedent among numerous Chinese critics whose use of the terms *mizong* (密教) or “tantra” and *lamajiao* (喇嘛教) or “Lamaism”⁹⁸⁵ aim at disaffiliating Tibetan religion from Buddhism.⁹⁸⁶

Xiao Pingshi objects to what he sees as Tibetans advocating “non-Buddhist” practices and worries that “Lamaism” may eclipse and ultimately replace other Buddhist traditions. If that occurs, he fears that “true” Buddhism (which presumably references the Buddhism he teaches) will be lost in a way similar to how it disappeared in India.⁹⁸⁷

TEPA vigorously disagrees with accusations that its protests of Tibetan Buddhism amount to attempts to restrict religious freedom.⁹⁸⁸ Rather, TEPA has attempted to clarify on several occasions that its objection is to Tibetan Buddhism calling itself “Buddhism” instead of

⁹⁸⁴ “密教興而佛教亡，是古印度之歷史事實。密教之興盛，必將導致佛法之衰落；興盛至極而完全取代顯教已，則必滅亡佛教；此因密教之法並非真正佛法，乃是外披佛教表相，內實常見外道及淫合享樂之世間法——乃出家人行在家法；是故密教完全取代顯教之後，佛教即告滅亡，徒有佛教寺院及僧侶，本質已轉變成鬼神為中心，為依止之外道。” Xiao Pingshi 蕭平實, *Kuangmi yu zhenmi di yi ji 狂密與真密第一輯*, 19.

⁹⁸⁵ Lopez suggests the term *Lamaism* and other European language equivalents (*Lamaismus*, *Lamaisme*, etc.), which also disconnected Tibetan religion from other Buddhist traditions, may have emerged in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries influenced by the Chinese term *lamajiao*. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 19–24.

⁹⁸⁶ Charleux, “Les « lamas » vus de Chine,” 134–135; Shen and Wang, “Background Books and A Book’s Background,” 288–297.

⁹⁸⁷ This type of statement does not, however, acknowledge the continuation of historical Indic Buddhist traditions, most notably among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley.

⁹⁸⁸ Such accusations have appeared most prominently in the United States State Department’s International Religious Freedom Reports in 2017, 2018, and 2019. See: Office of International Religious Freedom, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan” (Washington DC: United States Department of State, May 29, 2018), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/taiwan/>; Office of International Religious Freedom, “2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan” (Washington DC: United States Department of State, June 21, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/taiwan/>; Office of International Religious Freedom, “2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan” (Washington DC: United States Department of State, June 10, 2020), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/taiwan/>.

using another term, such as “Lamaism” or “Tantrism.” As one senior teacher described, TEPA feels that by utilizing the term “Buddhism,” Tibetan Buddhism actually damages other “true” Buddhist groups in Taiwan. She described TEPA’s position in the following way,

We always say that you can say you are Lamaism [sic], you are Catholic, or whatever. It’s okay. It’s religion and everyone has got their own religion. They’re free [to decide]. But they use Buddhism... Lamas they do these sexually abusive things and get embroiled into scandals and people think that Buddhist monks are doing that. [They think] our Buddhist monks are doing that. But that’s not correct. It’s like in your neighborhood. My family name is Lin⁹⁸⁹ and if someone went out and did something and then said ‘I’m from the Lin family and I’m doing this as a member of the Lin [family].’ I would say, ‘You are not [in] my family! How can you use my name to do something so disgraceful?’

Viewing “Lamaism” as an existential threat, TEPA continues to invest significant resources into campaigns to dissuade the Taiwanese public from engaging with Tibetan Buddhism.

The founders of ITBSI and many other Tibetan Buddhist teachers, practitioners, and supporters in Taiwan were gravely offended by TEPA’s targeted multi-media campaigns, accusing all Tibetan Buddhist teachers, including even the Dalai Lama, of trying to lure female disciples into sexual relationships and coming to Taiwan solely to take advantage of Taiwanese disciple’s generosity. When I asked Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché why he thought Master Xiao Pingshi and his followers were so opposed to Tibetan Buddhism, he replied that, “It is probably because they misunderstand [Tibetan Buddhism].” He continued, noting that, “For some, however, it might be about support... some other political support.”⁹⁹⁰ This later reason, an indirect way of accusing TEPA of accepting funding from the CCP, was a rumor repeated in many of my interviews,⁹⁹¹ as well as in numerous conversations I had with Tibetan Buddhist

⁹⁸⁹ A pseudonym has been applied here to protect the focus group participant’s identity.

⁹⁹⁰ “ཁོང་ཚོ་ རྒྱུ་མེད་ཀྱི་ འགའ་ཤམ་ཡིན་ན་དེའི་གསལ་ཡུལ་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་”ཆབ་སྲིད་ཀྱི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་གཞན་པ་ཡིན།” Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, November 11, 2022.

⁹⁹¹ Representative Kelsang Gyeltsen, interview with author, Taipei, August 2, 2022; Geshé of GTBA, interview with author, Taipei, September 11, 2022; Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23,

teachers and practitioners. TRFDL’s former director, Dawa Tsering (ལྷོ་བོ་ཚེ་རིང་། 達瓦才仁 b. 1963), also accused TEPA of accepting CCP money to fund its anti-Tibetan Buddhist activities.⁹⁹² From their side, TEPA completely denies that it accepts money from or has tie with the CCP and maintains that all donations it receives are freely given by disciples of Master Xiao Pingshi.⁹⁹³

By the late 2000s, TEPA was making so much noise claiming that Tibetan Buddhism was counterfeit Buddhism and that its monks were only interested in deceiving disciples that the founders of ITBSI decided they must try to present an alternative view to the Taiwanese public. In response to what they perceived as slander, the founders decided to step out of their individual dharma centers and come together to respond collectively to TEPA’s attacks and defend Tibetan Buddhism to the Taiwanese public. It was in this spirit that ITBSI was founded.

2.2. ITBSI’s Responses to Critics of Tibetan Buddhism

From the beginning, ITBSI’s leaders decided that direct confrontation with TEPA would not be in their best interest. Instead, they sought to collectively curate their own space from which Tibetan Buddhist teachers could represent their own traditions to a broader audience. As one of ITBSI’s early chairmen, Khenpo Tsering Tashi (མཁའན་པོ་ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།, 澤仁扎西堪布 b. 1976) noted, several Tibetan Buddhist leaders had already debated TEPA’s critiques to little effect. “There was no room to combat them, no room to debate. They wouldn’t listen to debates. There were debates already. Khenpo Södargye wrote a book and Alak Dorzhi Sang also wrote a book, but they [TEPA] don’t give any reasons...They just mostly continued with their aim of

2022; Focus group participant in discussion with author, Taipei, November 5, 2022; Khenpo Chönyi Döntok, interview with author, Taipei, January 6, 2023.

⁹⁹² Li Tong 李潼, “Tai ‘zhengjue jiaoyu jijinhui’ piping zangchuan fojiao shi ‘xiejiao’ 台‘正觉教育基金会’批评藏传佛教是‘邪教,’” Radio Free Asia 自由亚洲电台, 07 2011, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/tai-12072011101028.html>.

⁹⁹³ TEPA office, personal communication with author, October 29, 2022.

slandering the views of Tibetan Buddhism for the public.”⁹⁹⁴ Another early chairman of ITBSI, Geshé Lharampa Hashen Rinpoché (དགེ་བཤེས་ལྷ་རམ་པ་ཉལ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ།, 格西拉讓巴哈欣仁波切 b.1975), concurred, noting “ITBSI couldn’t go and pick a fight with Xiao Pingshi. If I were to write a lot of books saying, ‘what you [Xiao Pingshi] have said is not true,’ then [we would just] write back and forth and back and forth. There wouldn’t be any benefit to that.”⁹⁹⁵ Instead of debating with TEPA directly, ITBSI’s leaders sought to collectively build their own platform from which Tibetan Buddhist voices could represent their own religious tradition to the Taiwanese public.

To indirectly respond to TEPA’s critiques, ITBSI’s leaders started several initiatives to present what they viewed as more accurate information about Tibetan Buddhism. As Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché described,

We wouldn’t be able to go directly and stop them. That wasn’t the goal. However much they [TEPA] try to condemn [Tibetan Buddhism, we’ll] just ignore them. If we clarify the unique teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, the view, meditation, and conduct, and so forth, then people will understand, right? If he [Master Xiao Pingshi] says ‘[Tibetan Buddhism is] fake!’, [people] will be able to see for themselves whether our explanations are the same as his explanations or not and whether we are fakes or not. Then it will become clear for them.⁹⁹⁶

One avenue ITBSI pursued was sharing information on proper monastic decorum with the public. Hashen Rinpoché described, for example, how ITBSI emphasized that “we Tibetan Buddhist lamas and monks must have proper physical, verbal, and mental conduct. We must be

994 “དམག་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོད་མ་རེད། རྩོད་པ་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོད་མ་རེད། ཁོང་ཚོ་རྩོད་པ་རྒྱབ་ནས་ཉན་གྱི་མི་འདུག རྩོད་པ་རྒྱབ་ཡོད་རེད། མཁན་པོ་བསོད་དཔ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱིས་དེབ་བྲིས་ཡོད་རེད་དང་ཨ་ལག་རྩོད་ཞེས་ཐུག་གིས་དེབ་བྲིས་ཡོད་རེད། ཁོང་ཚོ་ཉེ་རྒྱ་མཚན་ཐོག་འགོ་གྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད་དེ།... ཐོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ལ་ལྷ་སྟངས་ཡག་པོ་མེད་པར་བཟོ་ཡག་རང་གི་དམིགས་ལུས་བྱེད་ནས་བཤད་བཞག་འདུག་ག།” Khenpo Tsering Tashi, interview with author, virtual, November 10, 2022.

995 “བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འདུག་ཚོགས་པ་གྱིས་ཐའེ་མན་ལ་ 蕭平實 ལ་རྩོམ་ 蕭平實 ལ་ཨ་འཛོལ་ཀ་འགོ་བྱུང་གི་ཡོད་མ་རེད་ལ། ངས་ཚོད་བཤད་པ་བཟེན་པ་མ་རེད་ཟེར་ཡག་དེབ་མང་པོ་འབྲི་ན། ཕར་ཞེག་འབྲི་རྒྱུ་ཞེག་འབྲི་ཕར་ཞེག་འབྲི་རྒྱུ་ཞེག་འབྲི་འབྲི་འབྲི། ཕར་ཐོག་སྐྱོད་མ་རེད།” Hashen Rinpoche, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

996 “རྩོམ་ལ་ཐུག་ཕར་ལ་དགག་པ་རྒྱབ་བྱས་དེ་འདྲ་བྱས་ན་ཐུབ་གྱི་མ་རེད། དེ་ལ་དགོས་དོན་མི་འདུག་ཟེ། ཁོ་རང་ཚོས་ག་ཚོད་དམའ་འབེབ་བྱེད་ན་འང་ག་ཡུག་ཤོག ང་རང་ཚོས་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་ཚོས་གྱི་ཁྱད་ཚོས། ལྷ་བ། སྐྱོད་པ་གང་ཡོད་པ་དེ་མི་ལ་གསལ་ལྟེད་བཏང་ན་དེ་ནས་མི་ཉ་ལོ་ཡག་ཅིག་ཡོད་རེད་ལ། ཁོས་རྩུམ་མ་རེད་ཟེར་ན་འང་རྩོ་རྒྱུ་མ་ཡིན་མིན་དེ་དཔྱད་བཤད་པ་དང་ཁོས་བཤད་པ་དེ་ཐུག་ཐུབ་གྱི་འདུག་དང་མི་འདུག དེ་ཁོ་གསལ་པོ་ཞིག་ཆགས་འགོ་གྱི་རེད་ཟེར།” Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, January 6, 2023.

careful in our physical conduct, our verbal conduct, and our mental conduct. What they [TEPA] say is not true. We should explain what they say to our students [and assure them that] we Tibetan Buddhist monks and lamas must have proper conduct towards you. [We] should cut our hair, walk, wear robes, and eat our food all very carefully.”⁹⁹⁷ In this way, Hashen Rinpoché clarified that one strategy ITBSI employed to address TEPA’s assertions about the immorality of Tibetan Buddhist teachers was to make statements about their correct comportment.

It is notable that none of the ITBSI leaders I spoke with in interviews directly mentioned any of the instances cited above of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan being accused, arrested, and, in some cases, imprisoned for sexually assaulting their female disciples, engaging in other sexual acts forbidden to Buddhist monastics, or using their dharma centers for personal financial gain. While at the time of our interviews I was unaware of these specific cases and did not raise them, the reason ITBSI leaders remained silent about them while narrating the history of their founding remains unclear to me. Surely, they were aware of these cases which, after all, received tremendous attention in the local media and were publicly leveraged by TEPA in the campaigns that precipitated ITBSI’s founding. Perhaps they found these instances an embarrassment that was best left unacknowledged or were uncomfortable discussing them with me as a researcher. Alternately, perhaps ITBSI’s leaders wished to draw my attention to Master Xiao Pingshi’s broadscale assault on Tibetan Buddhism, rather than on the criminal and improper (in the sense of breaking monastic vows) conduct of several individual teachers. After all, the actions of these individuals had already been condemned by their home monasteries as well as in numerous

⁹⁹⁷ “ང་རང་ཚོའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་སློབ་མ་གྲ་བ་དེ་གྱི་ལུས་དགས་ཡིད་གསུམ་གྱི་ཀུན་སྦྱོང་ཡག་པོ་བྱེད་དགོས་ཀྱི་འདུག ལུས་ཀྱི་ཀུན་སྦྱོང་དང་དགས་ཀྱི་ཀུན་སྦྱོང་དེ་ལ་ཟབ་ཟབ་བྱེད་དགོས་ཀྱི་འདུག ཁོང་ཚོས་བཤད་པ་དེ་དང་པོ་མ་རེད། ཁོང་ཚོས་བཤད་པ་དེ་སློབ་མ་ཚོ་ལ་འབྲེལ་བཤེས་རྒྱུ་ག ང་ཚོའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་སློབ་མ་ཚོ་ལ་ཁྱེད་རང་ཚོ་ལ་ཀུན་སྦྱོང་ཡག་པོ་བྱེད་དགོས་ཀྱི་འདུག སློབ་གནང་ཡག བོ་མ་པ་རྒྱུག་ཡག དུག་ལོག་གྱེན་ཡག ལ་ལག་ཟ་ཡག ཚང་མ་ཟབ་ཟབ་བྱེད་དགོས་ཀྱི་འདུག” Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

public statements issued by TRFDL in Taiwan. As Hashen Rinpoché's words above suggest, perhaps ITBSI's early leaders, in retrospect, are more focused their efforts to convey to the Taiwanese public that Tibetan Buddhism does indeed promote its ordained teachers abiding by monastic rules similar to Chinese Buddhist monastics and are less interested in directly discussing the ways in which a few individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers caused harm.

This is not to say that ITBSI's leaders were only concerned with public opinion and ignored the behavior of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. Indeed, they also began internal conversations among Tibetan monastics and non-celibate teachers in Taiwan about promoting what they saw as proper decorum for Tibetan Buddhist leaders. This included urging their members to uphold their vows, to mind the places they frequented and when they go out in public, to follow norms for monastic dress, to adopt a mostly or completely vegetarian diet, and to have responsible financial management of their centers. The most tangible manifestation of these efforts was the publication in 2021 of a bilingual Tibetan and Chinese book on proper monastic decorum entitled *Responsibility*, which a trans-sectarian group of ITBSI members developed over the course of six years.⁹⁹⁸ This book has since been distributed to most Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan and has been endorsed by many hierarchs of Tibetan Buddhism. However, the full extent to which ITBSI ever directly addressed the cases of sexual assault and misconduct by the teachers mentioned above among its members remains unclear to me.

ITBSI also responded to TEPA's criticisms through increasing public dialogue with other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. In large part, ITBSI's overtures were motivated by hopes to gain allies among Chinese Buddhists who had a rather uncertain relationship with Tibetan Buddhism. While some Chinese Buddhist teachers publicly expressed positive views of Tibetan Buddhism, I

⁹⁹⁸ A copy of this book can be downloaded here: <https://www.theitb.org/bo/library-bo>.

heard in several interviews and informal conversations that some Chinese Buddhist leaders were concerned about losing disciples to Tibetan Buddhism and even entertained TEPA’s critiques.

For these reasons, increasing outreach to other Buddhist groups was an early priority for ITBSI.

Hashen Rinpoché described ITBSI’s efforts to engage with Chinese Buddhism noting,

At large Taiwanese monasteries we participate jointly in dharma assemblies, [celebrations of] the Buddha’s birthday, and so forth. This is because Xiao Pingshi keeps criticizing Tibetan Buddhism, saying it’s not real Buddhism. We [go] and at the center of these renowned monasteries where [Chinese Buddhist] masters and their many monks are, we are wearing these [red] robes. We recite together, we eat together, and we perform rituals together. This sets an example. Why? Through these monasteries we [show] people that what Xiao Pingshi has been saying is not true. We [Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist monastics] are the same.⁹⁹⁹

By gathering with Chinese Buddhist monastics to pray for the public well-being and engage in dialogue, ITBSI’s leaders hoped to improve the perception of Tibetan Buddhism among both lay and ordained Chinese Buddhists and the public at large.¹⁰⁰⁰

3. ITBSI’s Organization and Early Years

ITBSI’s early projects fell generally into one of four areas. These were described in the first three issues of ITBSI’s periodical *Light of Enlightenment* (覺光, རྣམ་ཐུབ་འོད།)¹⁰⁰¹ and included:

1. Dharma Propagation Forum

⁹⁹⁹ “ཐའེ་མཚན་ནང་གི་དགོན་པ་ཚེན་པོ་ཚོ་གྱི་ཚོགས་འཚོགས་ཡག་ དེ་འདྲ་མཉམ་དུ་སྟོན་པའི་འཁྲུངས་སྐར་ལ་སོགས་པ། དེ་འདྲ་མཉམ་ཞུགས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་འདུག་ དེ་གྱི་ལན་ཞིག་ག་རེ་རེད་ཟེར་ན་ སྤོ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་གྱིས་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དེ་ནང་པ་མ་རེད་ཟེར་སྟོན་བརྗོད་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད་ཅེ། འཚོ་གྱིས་ཐའེ་མཚན་ནང་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་དགོན་པོ་སྟོན་གྲགས་ཚེན་པོ་ལ་སློམ་མ་མང་པོ་ལོ་རང་ཚོའི་གྲུབ་ཆ་ལྟ་བུ་མང་པོ་ཡོད་པ་དེ་གྱི་ལཱ། འཚོ་གྲུ་ཆས་འདི་གྱོན་ནས་མཉམ་དུ་འདོན་པ་འདོན། མཉམ་དུ་ཁ་ལག་ཟ། མཉམ་དུ་ཚོགས་པ་འཚོགས། དེ་དཔེ་མཚན་བྱེད་ཀྱི་འདུག་ དེ་ག་རེ་རེད་ཟེར་ན་ མི་མང་ནང་ལ་ སྤོ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ རྒྱུད་རང་ཚོ་ལ་ལག་ཡག་དེ་དགོན་པ་འདི་གྱི་ཐོག་ནས་དེ་རེད་མི་འདུག་ འཚོ་གཅིག་པ་རེད་འདུག།” Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Another strategy that Hashen Rinpoché highlighted was that ITBSI underscored to Chinese Buddhist monastics and followers in Taiwan that Master Xiao Pingshi not only criticized Tibetan Buddhism, but also criticized Chinese Buddhist Masters (“གཅིག་དེ་ སྤོ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ དེས་ལྟེད་རང་ཚོའི་སློམ་ཚང་མ་ལ་སྟོན་བརྗོད་བྱེད་ཀྱི་འདུག་ཟེར་ན་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གཅིག་པོ་མ་རེད།”). In several books, for example, Xiao Pingshi specifically attacks Master Yinshun, who is widely revered by Chinese Buddhists in Taiwan today. Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

¹⁰⁰¹ To date there have been four issues of *Light of Enlightenment* published on an irregular basis. These were published in December 2013, December 2014, June 2015, and January 2017.

To hold a Dharma Propagation Forum every six months to discuss the promotion of Buddhism and to interact across Tibetan, Southern, and Northern Buddhist traditions.

2. Disseminate Buddhism Online

To continually introduce Buddhism, transmission lineages, ancient temples, and the biographies of virtuous [masters], etc. online in Tibetan, Chinese, and English. The content will include methods, such as clarifying doubts, discussions, explanatory lectures, and so forth.

3. Produce Programming for Propagating the Dharma

To transmit via the appropriate media channels [programming which includes] biographies, teachings, discussions, as well as question and answer sessions about different Buddhist traditions with a focus on Tibetan Buddhism.

4. Buddhist Publications

To periodically publish collections of virtuous religious teachings of great monks and masters in print or multi-media format and to promote teachings and scriptural commentaries of all of the pure lineages of Tibet, regardless of school, in simple and understandable ways.¹⁰⁰²

The founders of ITBSI proposed several projects falling under these four areas. For example, as part of ITBSI's efforts to disseminate information online, several leaders started an internet-based "television" station called Taiwan Tibetan Buddhism Web TV or TTBTW (台灣藏傳佛教網路電視台/心動新媒體, བའེ་ཨན་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་པའི་བརྒྱུད་འཕྲིན་འཕྲིན།). Officially launched in 2013, TTBTW was founded to reach the Taiwanese public and "plant widely the correct knowledge and correct views of Buddhism in people's hearts, to allow each lama and virtuous teacher to collectively

¹⁰⁰² 1. 弘法論壇

每半年召開弘法論壇,討論佛法的弘揚與藏傳,南傳,北傳佛教之交流。

2. 網路弘法傳播

持續在網路上以藏漢英三種文字介紹教法,傳承,古刹,大德傳記等,內容包含釋疑,討論,解說教授等方式。

3. 弘法的節目製作

以藏傳佛教為主的佛教各宗派掌教的傳記,教言,討論,問答做為題材,經由審查適當媒體管道播放。

4. 佛法出版品

將高僧大德說法內容以平面或多媒體的方式集結成冊的出版,不定期地以深入淺出方式,不分教派,推廣西藏所有清淨傳承之教言與論典。” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會,“Zhongdian gongzuo jihua 重點工作計劃,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2013; Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會,“Zhongdian gongzuo jihua 重點工作計劃,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2014; Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會,“Zhongdian gongzuo jihua 重點工作計劃,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2015.

cooperate and spread the dharma through the unlimited world wide web, and share the time and resources of TTBTv so the world can see the dharma.”¹⁰⁰³ Or, as one of TTBTv’s monastic volunteers summarized, the purpose of TTBTv was so that people could “understand just what kind of a religion is Tibetan Buddhism anyway?”¹⁰⁰⁴ TTBTv produced diverse video content that included teachings by Tibetan Buddhist leaders, interviews, panel discussions, and public talks that were posted live onto its website and YouTube. Over the course of five years, TTBTv’s monastic and lay volunteers and a few paid staff produced more than 800 videos that painted a very different picture of Tibetan Buddhism from what TEPA had described.¹⁰⁰⁵

From its founding four members, ITBSI expanded swiftly among Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. While its founders were from the Nyingma and Kagyü schools, they eagerly recruited participants from other Tibetan sectarian traditions. Tashi Rinpoché (བཏཱ་ཤིས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 札西仁波切 b. 1958), was the first Sakya teacher to join ITBSI, followed by Hashen Rinpoché in 2012, ITBSI’s first Geluk member. In addition, ITBSI’s leaders continued to present their work and receive endorsements from numerous Tibetan Buddhist leaders. The earliest endorsement came from Jikdrel Dakchen Sakya Rinpoché and Dakyum Kuzhab Sakya (བདག་ཡུམ་སྐུ་འབམ་ས་སྐུ།, 佛母達嫫雅雍千嫫 b. 1936), with whom ITBSI’s four founders met in September 2009.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰³ “藏傳佛教網路電視台成立的宗旨是為了將佛法的正知正見更能夠廣植於大心，藉著網路電視的無遠弗屆，讓每一位上師和善知識們共同合作弘揚佛法，共同分享網路電視台的所有時段與資源，讓世界看見佛法。” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會，“TTBTv xindong xin meiti 心動新媒體,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2013, 7.

¹⁰⁰⁴ “藏傳佛教是什麼樣的宗教? རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལག་གི་ཆེད་དུ།” TTBTv monastic volunteer, interview with author, Taipei, December 13, 2022.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Although TTBTv’s website is no longer active, these videos are still freely available on their YouTube and Facebook pages. See: TTBTv xindong xin meiti TTBTv 心動新媒體, “TTBTv xindong xin meiti 心動新媒體,” Facebook, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100070192053497>; TTBTv xindong xin meiti TTBTv 心動新媒體, “TTBTv1203,” YouTube, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/@TTBTv1203buddha>.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Zhongdian gongzuo jihua 重點工作計劃,” 2013, 19.

By the time the first issue of *Light of Enlightenment* was published in 2013, ITBSI had collected letters of endorsement from an impressive range of teachers from the four largest schools of Tibetan Buddhism. These included the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the Forty-first Sakya Tridzin Gongma Trichen Rinpoché, Dakchen Sakya Rinpoché, the Seventeenth Karmapa Orgyen Trinlé Dorjé, Ganden Tripa Ridzong Rinpoché (དགའ་ལྡན་ཁྱིམ་པ་རིཚོང་སྐུ་ལྷན་པུ་བ་བསྟན་ཉི་མཱ།, 甘丹赤巴日宗圖登尼瑪 1928–2022), Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché, Khenpo Tsültrim Lodrö, Sera Jé Monastery’s abbot Geshé Lozang Delek (དགེ་བཤེས་ལྷོ་བཟང་བདེ་ལེགས།, 格西洛桑德賴 b. 1939), Drepung Monastery’s abbot Geshé Lozang Tenpa (དགེ་བཤེས་ལྷོ་བཟང་བསྟན་པ།, 格西洛桑丹巴 b. 1938), Alak Dorzhi Rinpoché, and Khokhyim Rinpoché (མཁོ་ཁྱིམ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 廓巧仁波切 b. 1937). Scans of these letters and their translations into Chinese were published in the first issue of *Light of Enlightenment*.¹⁰⁰⁷ ITBSI received further endorsements from other teachers who participated in interviews and gave teachings on TTBTv or at live events they organized.

While ITBSI has a board of supervisors (ལས་འཛིན་ལྷན་ཚོགས།, 理事會/理監事) and chairman (ཚོགས་གཙོ།, 理事長) who are all lay Taiwanese, from its founding ITBSI has primarily been led by a board of directors (འགན་འཛིན་ལྷན་ཚོགས།, 行政指導) of Tibetan Buddhist teachers. ITBSI’s board of directors has a chairperson (ཚོགས་གཙོ།, 主席) and vice-chairperson (ཚོགས་གཞོན་པ།, 副主席) who steer the direction of the organization in consultation with the board of supervisors.¹⁰⁰⁸ Although there

¹⁰⁰⁷ Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, 8–18.

¹⁰⁰⁸ For the complete list of ITBSI’s management policies in Tibetan, Chinese, and English, see: Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Xiehui zongzhi 協會宗旨,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed October 2, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/zh/mission-zh>; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Regulations of the Institute,” International Tibetan

is no firm rule, the position of chairman and vice-chairmen generally rotate among sectarian traditions. Individuals in these positions each serve two-year terms and the chairperson and vice-chairperson are also usually from different Tibetan Buddhist schools.¹⁰⁰⁹ After serving as vice-chairperson, that same individual will often serve a term as ITBSI’s chairperson.¹⁰¹⁰ With the exception of Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel whose chairmanship was extended due to the coronavirus pandemic, all offices have a one term limit. Below is a list of the ITBSI leadership to date.

Table 4: List of ITBSI’s Chair- and Vice-chairpersons 2009–2024

ལྷི་ལོ། Year	ཚོགས་གཙོ། Chairperson	འིང་ལུགས། School	ཚོགས་གཞོན། Vice-Chairperson	འིང་ལུགས། School
ལྷི་ལོ་༢༠༡༠ནས་༢༠༡༡བར། 2010–2011 ¹⁰¹¹	སྤུལ་སྤུལ་བུ་བསྟན་ནོར་བུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché མཁན་པོ་ཚུལ་ནམས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché	ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma བཀའ་བརྒྱུད། Kagyü	ཀ་ཐོག་རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་མོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché མཁན་པོ་ཚོས་ཉིད་དོན་རྟོགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché	ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma
ལྷི་ལོ་༢༠༡༢ནས་༢༠༡༣བར། 2012–2013	ཀ་ཐོག་རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་མོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché མཁན་པོ་ཚོས་ཉིད་དོན་རྟོགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Khenpo Chönyi Döntok Rinpoché	ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma	མཁན་པོ་ཚོ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས། Khenpo Tsering Tashi	ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma
ལྷི་ལོ་༢༠༡༤ནས་༢༠༡༥བར། 2014–2015	མཁན་པོ་ཚོ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས། Khenpo Tsering Tashi	ལྷིང་མ། Nyingma	ལྷ་རམས་པ་ཉ་ཤེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Hashen Rinpoché	དགེ་ལུགས། Geluk
ལྷི་ལོ་༢༠༡༦ནས་༢༠༡༧བར། 2016–2017	ལྷ་རམས་པ་ཉ་ཤེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Hashen Rinpoché	དགེ་ལུགས། Geluk	བཀྲ་ཤིས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Khenpo Tsering Tashi	ས་སྐུ། Sakya

Buddhism (ITB), accessed October 2, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/mission>; Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཤང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འཛིན་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འདུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Tshogs pa’i dmigs yul dang sgrig gzhil/ ཚོགས་པའི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་དང་སྤྱི་གཞི།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཤང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འཛིན་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འདུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/mission-bo>.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Druppön Sönam Nyima, interview with author, Taipei, September 13, 2022.

¹⁰¹⁰ I heard of at least four vice-chairpersons who did not continue to serve as chairpersons after their terms. In these cases, the main reason was that the monastics did not feel they had the time and energy it took to be serve as chairperson. Druppön Sönam Nyima, interview with author, Taipei, September 13, 2022.

¹⁰¹¹ During the first term there were two leaders who took turns as chairperson and vice-chairperson. In the second term, the joint leaders were further assisted by an additional vice-chairperson. Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché, personal communication with author, July 5, 2023.

2016–2017	Hashen Rinpoché	Geluk	Tashi Rinpoché	Sakya
སྤྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༡༤ ནས་ ༢༠༡༩ ལ་	སྐ་མ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱལ།	བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།	མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།	སྦིང་མ།
2018–2019	Lama Yeshé Rabgyé	Kagyü	Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel	Nyingma
སྤྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༠ ནས་ ༢༠༢༡ ལ་	མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།	སྦིང་མ།	སྐྱབ་དཔོན་བསོད་ནམས་ཉི་མ།	བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།
2020–2021	Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel	Nyingma	Druppön Sönam Nyima	Kagyü
སྤྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༢ ནས་ ༢༠༢༣ ལ་	མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།	སྦིང་མ།	དགེ་བཤེས་སྣང་སྣང་།	དགེ་ལུགས།
2022–2023	Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel	Nyingma	Geshé Nangnang མཁན་པོ་རག་དབང་མཁས་གྲུབ། Khenpo Ngawang Khedrup	Geluk ས་སྐྱ། Sakya
2024–2025	མཁན་པོ་ཚོ་དབང་རིག་འཛིན། Khenpo Tsewang Rigdzin	ས་སྐྱ། Sakya	དགེ་བཤེས་སྣང་སྣང་། Geshé Nangnang	དགེ་ལུགས། Geluk

In addition to the chair and vice-chairpersons, ITBSI’s board of directors guide the direction of the organization. The four founders continue to attend events and support projects but have mostly stepped back from active leadership in ITBSI. Some of the current officers on the board have served for more than ten years, while others have only joined during the last several years. While many of the current officers, the chairman, and vice-chairman are closely associated with their mother monasteries, none of ITBSI’s officers are teachers at monastery centers. Instead, they lead private centers of various sizes, primarily in the Taipei region. As a result, these individuals tend to have more autonomy, time, and often financial resources to devote to supporting ITBSI’s work. While ITBSI’s leadership is primarily from private centers, their broader membership attracts teachers from both private and monastery centers.

Table 5: ITBSI’s Board of Directors (as of 2024)

མཚན།	ཟིང་ལུགས།	མཚན།	ཟིང་ལུགས།
Name	School	Name	School
བཀྲ་ཤིས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།	ས་སྐྱ།	དགེ་བཤེས་སྐྱབ་བསྟན་ནོར་བུ།	དགེ་ལུགས།
Tashi Rinpoché	Sakya	Geshé Thupten Norbu	Geluk
སྐ་རམས་པ་ཉ་ཤེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།	དགེ་ལུགས།	མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།	སྦིང་མ།
Hashen Rinpoché	Geluk	Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel	Nyingma

མཁན་པོ་ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།	སྟིང་མ།	དགེ་བཤེས་སྣང་སྣང་ཡང་ན་	དགེ་ལུགས།
Khenpo Tsering Tashi	Nyingma	Geshé Nangnang	Geluk
སྐྱབ་དཔོན་བསོད་ནམས་ཉི་མ།	བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།	མཁན་པོ་དག་དབང་མཁས་གྲུབ།	ས་སྐྱ།
Druppön Sönam Nyima	Kagyü	Khenpo Ngawang Khedrup	Sakya
ཡོན་ཏན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།	སྟིང་མ།	མཁན་པོ་ཚེ་དབང་རིག་འཛིན།	ས་སྐྱ།
Yönten Rinpoché	Nyingma	Khenpo Tsewang Rigdzin	Sakya ¹⁰¹²
མཁན་པོ་ཨ་རྩ་རྡོ།	ས་སྐྱ།		
Khenpo Ananda Ratnam	Sakya		

As can be seen from the lists of chair- and vice-chairpersons and current officers, ITBSI’s leadership has maintained fairly equitable representation across the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁰¹³ Among ITBSI’s chairpersons, five have been from the Nyingma school, two from the Kagyü school, and one from both the Geluk and Sakya schools. Among the vice-chairpersons to-date, there have been four from the Nyingma school, three from the Geluk school, two from the Sakya school, and one from the Kagyü school. Among the eleven members of the current board of directors, four are from the Sakya school, three from the Nyingma school, three from the Geluk school, and one from the Kagyü school. While this sectarian diversity does not exactly mirror the sectarian composition of Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan, it does evidence the continued commitment among ITBSI’s leadership to maintain the organization as a non-political and open space for all Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, regardless of sectarian affiliation.

Generally speaking, with the appointment of each new chairperson of the board of directors, several new members are appointed to the board of supervisors from the chairperson’s

¹⁰¹² Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་མནན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan tshogs pa/ - ’gan ’dzin lhan tshogs/བའེ་མནན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཚོགས་པ། - འགན་འཛིན་ལྷན་ཚོགས།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་མནན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/administration-staff-bo>.

¹⁰¹³ As the Jonang tradition is limited to only a few centers in Taiwan, it is not surprising that no Jonang teacher has become a leader within ITBSI. Jonang teachers have, however, participated in several of ITBSI’s events.

dharma center. In the words of a former chairperson, this makes for a more efficient organization. Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel noted that,

ITBSI has its own official administration. There are officers, such as an accountant, treasurer, secretary and so on. These are primarily [appointed] from among the students of whoever is ITBSI's chairperson. The official chairperson, the official secretary, and so forth [all are appointed primarily from among the chairperson's students]. The reason for this is that we [the chairpersons] must be able to manage them. If someone else appointed, their students and those people did not listen to the [new] chairperson, they we wouldn't be able to do our work. This is one of ITBSI's internal policies.¹⁰¹⁴

Members of ITBSI's board of supervisors assist the chairperson of the board of directors by performing a significant amount of administrative work, such as keeping track of finances and reporting, conducting meetings, and ensuring that ITBSI functions in accordance with Taiwanese law. That many of these individuals are members of the chairperson's dharma center seems, according to Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, to increase the cohesion and efficiency of ITBSI's organization. Whether this practice has ever led to internal schisms or power grabs is not something that was mentioned in any of my interviews.

It is notable that ITBSI's religious leadership, as indeed its general membership, have and continue to be solely composed of male Tibetan Buddhist teachers. In many ways, the gendered power dynamics within ITBSI are reflective of most Tibetan Buddhist institutions in Taiwan and elsewhere around the globe where male leaders have access to resources and are predominantly in control. Female teachers and community members tend to either play supportive roles to male

¹⁰¹⁴ “ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་རང་གི་གཞུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ལས་བྱེད་པ། ཕྱིས་པ། དུམ་གཉེན། རྒྱུ་ཡིག་ལ་སོགས་པ་དེ་བཞི་གཞུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ལས་ཀྱི་བྱེད་མཁན་ཡོད་ཅེད། དེ་དེ་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་འཛིན་གཞི་སྲུང་ན་ལོ་རང་གི་སློབ་མ་རྣམས་ནས་གཙོ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅེད། གཞུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ཚོགས་པ་གཙོ་གཞུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་རྒྱུ་ཡིག་དེ་ཚོ་ཚོགས་པ་གཙོ་སྲུང་ན་དེ་འཛིན་སློབ་མ་རྣམས་གཙོ་བོ་ཡིན་པ་ཡོད་ཅེད། ག་ཅེ་ཅེད་ཟེར་ན། ང་ཚོས་ལོ་ཚེ་སྤངས་འཛིན་བྱེད་ཐུབ་དགོས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅེད། མི་གཞན་ཞིག་གི་དགོ་ཕྱག་བཞག་ནས་དེས་ཚོགས་པ་གཙོ་འཇུག་ལ་མ་ཉན་ན་ལས་ཀྱི་བྱེད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་མ་ཅེད་པ། དེ་དེ་ཚོ་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་ནང་ལོ་གསལ་གི་ཁྲིམས་ཅེད།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

teachers or lead communities with comparatively modest resources.¹⁰¹⁵ While all but one of ITBSI's board of supervisors are lay Taiwanese women, as are three of the five current members of ITBSI's Board of External Advisors (顧問團, སློབ་སྦྱོར་ལྷན་ཚོགས།),¹⁰¹⁶ the ultimate decision-making locus for ITBSI has remained with the all-male board of directors.



Figure 36: Two of ITBSI's current officers, a Sakya khenpo and a Drikung Kagyü druppön, consult about the shrine set-up while preparing for a large ritual organized by ITBSI. Photo by author, 2022.

¹⁰¹⁵ Contemporary female teachers such as Khadroma Mumé Yeshé Tsomo (མཁའ་འགོ་མ་ལུ་མེད་ཡེ་ཤེས་མཚོ་མོ།, 門梅益西措姆 空行母 b. 1966) and Jetsün Khandro Rinpoché (ལྷིན་གྲོལ་རྗེ་ཚེ་བཙུན་མཁའ་འགོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 康卓仁波切 b. 1967) stand as important exceptions. With the recent introduction of full ordination to Tibetan Buddhist nuns (དགེ་སློང་མ།), as well as the bestowal of Khenmo (མཁན་མོ།) and Geshema (དགེ་བཤེས་མ།) degrees on female cleric-scholars, the male near-monopoly on the role of Tibetan Buddhist teachers may swiftly be changing.

¹⁰¹⁶ Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Guwen tuan 顧問團,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed October 2, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/zh/supervisor-zh>; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Supervisors,” International Tibetan Buddhism (ITB), accessed October 2, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/supervisor>; Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འབྲུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “sLob ston lhan tshogs/sློབ་སྦྱོར་ལྷན་ཚོགས།,” Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འབྲུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed October 2, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/supervisor-bo>.

Starting from the organization’s four founders, ITBSI has expanded membership and participation in its work significantly among Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. By the end of 2013 then-chairperson Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo Rinpoché reported more than one hundred members.¹⁰¹⁷ Exact membership over the years is difficult to calculate as turnover is high especially in monastery dharma centers and most teachers must frequently leave Taiwan due to receiving visas of six months or less. Furthermore, many Tibetan Buddhist teachers participate in ITBSI’s events irregularly and informally. In 2020, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel formalized the membership process slightly. He started a new Line group titled “Taiwan International Tibetan [Buddhist] Sangha Assembly” (མཉེན་སྲུང་གླིང་གི་འདུན་ལྷན་ཚོགས།) and invited Tibetan Buddhist teachers individually to join it. “I called each and every monk and [explained] the background and aims of the ITBSI. Most of them knew this already. For those who didn’t know, I explained about our purpose. I started [the Line group] and aside from each person [I added] individually, no one could just be added by their friends like that.”¹⁰¹⁸ As of December 2022, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel had individually recruited more than 200 Tibetan teachers to the Line group.¹⁰¹⁹

For financial support, ITBSI has two primary sources: contributions from its members and donations from Taiwanese disciples. The first source is more regular, being made on a yearly basis through annual membership contributions. At the time ITBSI was founded, it was decided that each of the four founding rinpochés would donate 100,000 NTD, along with another 50,000 NTD donation from a Tibetan Buddhist teacher who was also present at the event.¹⁰²⁰ As

¹⁰¹⁷ Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Guanding san bao 頂禮三寶,” *Jue guang 覺光*, 2015, 1.

¹⁰¹⁸ “དེ་ནང་ལ་དགེ་འདུན་པ་མཉེན་སྲུང་གི་འདུན་ལྷན་ཚོགས་པ་དེ་གྱི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་རྒྱལ་ཕྱོད་པའི་འདུ་ཤེད་ཟེར། མང་ཆེ་ཤོས་ཤེས་ཀྱི་རེད། མ་ཤེས་མཁན་དེ་ཆོ་འགྲུལ་བཤད་རྒྱུ་ནས་དང་ཆོ་གྱི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་དེ་འདྲ་རེད། ང་རང་གིས་འགོ་འཇུག་ནས་དེ་ནང་ལ་ཡང་མི་མཉེན་པོ་མ་གཏོགས་ཐོག་མོ་ཞིག་གིས་རྒྱགས་བཞག་ཆོག་ཡག་དེ་འདྲ་ཡོད་མ་རེད།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

¹⁰¹⁹ Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

¹⁰²⁰ The founding charter states: “貳、基金

ITBSI's founders are not independently wealthy but are leaders of private dharma centers, the funds donated to ITBSI came from their dharma centers and, therefore, their Taiwanese disciples. During the first years, the annual contribution rate remained at 100,000 NTD per year. After a few years, this was dropped to 50,000 NTD per year. Currently the annual contribution rate is 30,000 NTD, although some members contribute more to support specific projects.¹⁰²¹ As ITBSI's membership has grown the individual contribution rates have decreased, lessening the financial burden on each individual member and their dharma centers.

ITBSI's second source of funding is donations from lay supporters of Tibetan Buddhism. Overall, these donations amount to a greater total than the annual contributions from ITBSI's members. However, this financial support occurs on a less regular basis than the annual membership dues, being given mostly as cash offerings either at ITBSI events or through bank transfers.¹⁰²² These donations are made to cover the costs of ITBSI organizing large-scale events, purchasing equipment, and so forth. For example, at the 2022 Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual, lay Tibetans in Taiwan and TRFDL donated approximately 100,000 NTD, which covered the majority of ITBSI's costs for organizing the event.

Thus, over the last fifteen years ITBSI has expanded from a small group of friends to a sizable organization with over two hundred Tibetan Buddhist teachers who support its activities.

每位上師都承擔著各自寺院、學校的開銷，眼前雖沒有很多資金可利用，但為了初期的活動費，四位仁波切各自發心新台幣十萬元整，噶旺喇嘛發心五萬元整。將來基金的成立將由所有成員開會後決定。”

“2. Funding

Each of the lamas is responsible for their own monasteries and school expenses. Although there are limited funds available at present, to cover the initial costs of activities the four rinpochés have each offered 100,000 NTD and Lama Garwang has offered 50,000 NTD. In the future, the [regular] establishment of funding will be decided by all members following a meeting.” (Author's translation). International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་ཨན་རྒྱལ་གླི་འི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཟུང།, “About International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་ཨན་རྒྱལ་གླི་འི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཟུང།,” Facebook, accessed June 16, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/about_details.

¹⁰²¹ Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

¹⁰²² Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

Of the projects ITBSI pursued during its early years, some have continued as a central part of its mission, while others were discontinued. Still other efforts important to ITBSI's work today are relatively recent projects. In the second half of this chapter, I will discuss several specific projects that ITBSI has pursued as its members have worked to combat criticism of Tibetan Buddhism, curate a public image of their own making, and help Tibetan Buddhism to grow deeper local roots in Taiwan. These projects are grouped according to their target audiences, which include other Buddhists and the broader public, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, ethnic Tibetans, and Chinese and Theravāda Buddhist organizations and monastics in Taiwan. While space does not permit me to go into detail on all of ITBSI's projects, I hope that describing several avenues of its work will convey a sense of the multi-faceted ways through which ITBSI has worked to localize Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan's religious landscape.



Figure 37: Clerics of different schools of Tibetan Buddhism and a Chinese Buddhist nun together during a tea break at an ITBSI event. Photo by author, 2022.

4. Localizing Tibetan Buddhism Through Diverse Audiences

4.1. Capturing the Public Eye

Foremost among the groups that ITBSI seeks to engage are the Taiwanese public, and especially Taiwanese lay Buddhists. As discussed above, the founding impetus for ITBSI was to respond to TEPA’s attacks against Tibetan Buddhism and other criticisms emerging through press coverage of several scandals and crimes involving Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Rather than engaging these critiques in a head-to-head fashion, ITBSI’s early leaders sought instead to open and claim an alternative public space where they could represent Tibetan Buddhism to the Taiwanese public. This, they hoped would eventually eclipse the negative caricatures of Tibetan Buddhism disseminated by groups like TEPA opposed to its spread in Taiwan.

ITBSI has directly engaged Taiwanese Buddhist laity and the broader public through organizing public teachings and dialogues with important visiting Tibetan Buddhist leaders, developing programming for TTBTv, hosting public celebrations of the Buddha’s birthday, engaging with local civic leaders, and even starting a prison ministry program. Through these programs, ITBSI’s leaders and members have presented a version of Tibetan Buddhism that they feel accurately represents their traditions. As Khenpo Tsering Tashi described, “from our side, [we] said that we should thoroughly present real information about Tibetan Buddhism, its truths, positive [aspects], and so on to more of the [Taiwanese] society. Then, having reformed whatever individual insufficiencies there might be, Tibetan Buddhism can gather together and establish positive relations with all [other religions]. If [we] gather all the Buddhist schools together, that is the best path forward.”¹⁰²³ In presenting what they see as “real information about

¹⁰²³ “ང་རང་ཚོ་འི་ངོས་ནས་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དངོས་ཡོད་གནས་ཚུལ་དང་ཁོ་རང་གི་བདེན་པ་དང་ཡག་པོ་དང་ག་རེ་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ཚོ་དེ་ཞིག་གྱི་ཚོགས་མང་དུ་ཞིག་ལ་ཡག་པོ་སྟོན། དེ་ནས་སོ་སོའི་དངོས་ནས་མ་འདངས་ས་ལ་དེ་འདྲ་ཡོད་ན་སྐྱེར་བཅོས་བཏང་ནས་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཚང་མ་རྒྱལ་བྱས་ནས་མཐུན་ལམ་བྱས་ནས། ཨ་ནས་ཚོས་བརྒྱད་ཚང་མ་མཉམ་དུ་རྒྱལ་བྱས་ནས་དེ་”

Tibetan Buddhism” and gathering “all the Buddhist schools together,” ITBSI has been working to overcome negative characterizations and lay the groundwork for Tibetan Buddhism to flourish in Taiwan. Accordingly, public engagement is not only part of ITBSI’s commitment to benefit all sentient beings, but specifically of its efforts to localize Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan.

Among the diverse avenues for engaging the Taiwanese public, one of ITBSI’s earliest and longest enduring projects has been offering prayers for the victims of disasters. Starting in 2010, ITBSI has organized prayer ceremonies for the victims of earthquakes, fires, and other calamities often in highly visible public venues led by a trans-sectarian group of its members. Offering condolences and praying for the victims of these disasters is a way for ITBSI to demonstrate to the Taiwanese public that compassion and care for sentient beings lies at the heart of Tibetan Buddhism. Furthermore, these prayers are also a way for ITBSI’s members to embody locally legible practices of Buddhist monastics praying for the dead. Through these prayers, ITBSI has sought to demonstrate Tibetan Buddhism’s benefits for Taiwanese society, thereby potentially increasing support for Tibetan Buddhism locally.

Some of the prayer ceremonies ITBSI has organized have been for victims of distant tragedies, such as the 2010 earthquake in Qinghai, the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, and the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks. Most, however, have been for the victims of disasters in Taiwan. As Hashen Rinpoché described, offering sympathy (གཞུང་སེམས་མཉམ་སྦྱོར།) to victims of calamities has been one of ITBSI’s core areas of work. He noted, quite simply, “Wherever the site of a disaster is, we will go [there] to offer prayers.”¹⁰²⁴ Since its founding, ITBSI has

འདྲ་ཞིག་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་དེ་ཐབས་ལམ་ཡག་ཤོས་འདི་རེད་ལ་དེ་ལག་འདུག།” Khenpo Tsering Tashi, interview with author, virtual, November 10, 2022.

¹⁰²⁴ “དཀའ་རེལ་སྦྱོར་ས་གང་ཡིན་ངའི་ཚེ་འདོན་པ་འདོན་ཡག་འགོ་ཡག།” Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

dispatched trans-sectarian delegations and organized dharma assemblies to pray for the victims of nearly a dozen tragedies across Taiwan.¹⁰²⁵ These include prayers for the victims of the 2014 Kaohsiung gas explosion (2014 年高雄氣爆事故), the 2014 mass killing in a New Taipei City metro station (2014 年台北捷運隨機殺人事件), the 2014 and 2015 TransAsia plane crashes (復興航空 222 號班機空難 & 復興航空 235 號班機空難), the 2016 Neihu Murder of “Little Lightbulb” (內湖隨機殺人事件), the 2017 earthquake in Tainan, the 2018 Puyuma train derailment (普悠瑪號列車出軌事故), the 2021 Hualien train derailment (太魯閣號列車出軌事故), and the 2021 Kaohsiung Chengzhongcheng Building fire (城中城大樓火災). Most recently, ITBSI participated in a five-day long prayer ceremony organized for victims of the April 2024 Hualien earthquake (花蓮 0403 震災罹難者二七功德法會).¹⁰²⁶

Some ceremonies have been relatively small scale, such as a candlelight vigil for the victims of a mass stabbing held outside an exit of the Jiangcizui Metro Station (江子翠站)¹⁰²⁷ or prayers said at a make-shift memorial in Neihu for the murdered “Little Lightbulb” (小燈泡).¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁵ Summaries of most of these events are available on ITBSI’s website in Tibetan, Chinese, and English. See: Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Nye lam gsar ’gyur/ ཉེ་ལམ་གསར་འགྲུས།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/news-bo>.

¹⁰²⁶ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པའི་ཤོ་སྤྲིག་འོག།, “De ring phyi lo 2024 phyi zla 4 tshes 15 nyin the wan rgyal phyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa’i go sgrig ’og དེ་རིང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༤ ཕྱི་ཟླ་ ༤ ཚེས་ ༡༥ ཉིན་ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པའི་ཤོ་སྤྲིག་འོག།,” Facebook, April 15, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid0iSj9HUDPY7o1ZSu1fZ7aF9n1Nybo9Q2EvGLR6UHscsfkxsmYonXLa73Hshi8Cthcl>.

¹⁰²⁷ Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Cang tsi tshu’u sa ’og me ’khor ’bab tshugs kyi tshabs che’i don rkyen skabs mchod ’bul smon lam/ ཅང་ཙི་ཚུ་འུ་སཱ་འོག་མེ་འཁོར་ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པའི་ཤོ་སྤྲིག་འོག།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, May 21, 2014, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-bo/offering-and-prayers-bo>.

¹⁰²⁸ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐཱ་ཇཱ་འུ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Xiao dengpao yu hai di 3 tian, minzhong zi fa xing qianwang shi fa didian xian shang ge shi wupin daonian... 小燈泡遇害第 3 天, 民眾自發性前往事發地點獻上各式物品悼念...,” Facebook, March 30, 2016,

Others were at venues ITBSI organized, such as in a large tent near the site of the 2014 Kaohsiung gas explosion¹⁰²⁹ or in ITBSI's Taipei office for the victims of the 2018 Puyuma train derailment.¹⁰³⁰ Still others were held at officially designated spaces, such as a prayer hall organized by Tzu Chi following the 2021 Hualien train crash,¹⁰³¹ a public memorial in the First Municipal Funeral Home (第一殯儀館) organized by the Kaohsiung city government for victims of the 2021 fire,¹⁰³² or a prayer ceremony at the Hualien Municipal Funeral Home (花蓮殯儀館) organized by the Hualien County government for the victims of the 2024 earthquake.¹⁰³³

ITBSI recruits participants for these events through its online messaging group. While ITBSI often mobilizes between twenty and forty of its members, sometimes they gather far more participants. For example, Khenpo Tsering Tashi recalled in 2014 “when we went to Kaohsiung, it was for the gas explosion. At that time, I was our leader and led something like 200 or 300

<https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid0WVLhfpdHcHe5uwzqqvMKivmRVih9r9PDWFcm5DKo4fSpDRXaFcb1uLoYEoGtJk2l>.

¹⁰²⁹ Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་འོ་འཇམ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Ga’o zhong rlangs rdzas gas ’thor gyi gnod ’tshe phog yul du bsngo smon/ གའོ་ཞོང་རྫངས་རྩམ་གས་འཛོལ་གྱི་གནོད་འཚོ་ཕོག་ཡུལ་དུ་བསྟོ་སྟོན།,” Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་འོ་འཇམ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, August 8, 2014, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-bo/prayers-bo>.

¹⁰³⁰ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐའེ་འོ་འཇམ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Jin shi pu you ma 6432 hao juxing tou qi fahui... 今為普悠瑪 6432 號舉行頭七法會...,” Facebook, October 27, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/videos/559717094486132>.

¹⁰³¹ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐའེ་འོ་འཇམ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Zuotian taiwan fasheng le feichan yanzhong de jiaotong yiwai... 昨天台灣發生了非常嚴重的交通意外...,” Facebook, August 3, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02dxMVXyHNF6F2UtUk39omhTxQUNL4AcLpZ7sAH7dheKZysR7JxzBt3ZoKFc2zuwzMI>.

¹⁰³² Basang 巴桑, “Xizang sengren wei taiwan gaixiong huozai canan lianzhe qifu 西藏僧人為台灣高雄火災慘案罹難者祈福,” *Zangren xingzheng zhongyang* 藏人行政中央 (blog), October 19, 2021, <https://xizang-zhiye.org/%E8%97%8F%E4%BA%BA%E5%83%A7%E4%BE%A3%E4%B8%BA%E5%8F%B0%E6%B9%BE%E7%81%AB%E7%81%BE%E6%83%A8%E5%89%A7%E7%9A%84%E5%8F%97%E5%AE%B3%E8%80%85%E7%A5%88%E7%A6%8F/>.

¹⁰³³ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐའེ་འོ་འཇམ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “De ring phyi lo 2024... དེ་རིང་གྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༤”.

monastics.”¹⁰³⁴ Returning to Kaohsiung in 2021, ITBSI organized more than sixty clerics to participate in prayer ceremonies for the victims of the Chengzhongcheng Building fire.¹⁰³⁵ Most recently, ITBSI organized a group of over forty of its members to take part in prayers for the victims of the 2024 Hualien earthquake.¹⁰³⁶ Although the prayer ceremonies and logistics are often planned by ITBSI, participation is voluntary as ITBSI’s members must bear the individual costs associated with attending, such as travel expenses, food, lodging, and so forth.

In most cases, ITBSI’s responses to tragedies have been rapid. Frequently ITBSI’s members have been mobilized and arrived on site to pray for the victims within twenty-four to thirty-six hours of a disaster. For example, following the train derailment in Hualien on the morning of April 2, 2021, ITBSI organized and dispatched a group of around twenty of its members primarily from Taipei who arrived to Hualien in time to lead prayers at eleven on the morning of April 3.¹⁰³⁷ Similarly, following an earthquake that struck in the early morning hours of February 6, 2016, a group of more than twenty ITBSI members departed from Taipei and arrived in Tainan that same evening where “the many rinpoché and masters sitting on ground strewn with rubble, and in the cold temperatures, recited sūtras and prayed [for the victims].”¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³⁴ “འཚོའི་འདི་སྐབས་སུ་དཔེར་ན་ 高雄 ‘ལ་འགོ་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་ཡིན་ན་ 氣爆 ཟེར་ཡག་དེ། དེ་སྐབས་སུ་ང་རང་འཚོའི་འགོ་མིང་བྱས་ནས་ང་ཚོ་དགེ་འདུན་པ་ཉི་བརྒྱ་གསུམ་བརྒྱ་མོང་ཡིན།” Khenpo Tsering Tashi, interview with author, virtual, November 10, 2022.

¹⁰³⁵ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Zuotian taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui shangshi men daling... 昨天台灣國際藏轉佛教研究會上師們帶領...,” Facebook, October 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid0k3m2dVnRZHFUEZgyvJT8kbvVVK1wWtG8qe4zPEcCqqCR7gv7P7oUksg9opCB8pW4l>.

¹⁰³⁶ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “De ring phyi lo 2024... དེ་རིང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༤...”

¹⁰³⁷ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Zuotian taiwan fasheng le feichan yanzhong de jiaotong yiwai... 昨天台灣發生了非常嚴重的交通意外...”

¹⁰³⁸ “多位仁波切、上師席地坐於散佈瓦礫的地上，在寒流低溫中以佛經唸誦，進行祈福。” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Fo yanjiu hui jinji dongyuan, wei tainan zhen zai shounan minzhong qifu 佛研究會緊急動員，為台南震災受難民眾祈福,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2017, 58.

Although ITBSI’s members offer prayers for all sentient beings in their daily prayers, their focus while praying for the victims of disasters and tragedies is distinctly more local. Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, for example, described the primary goal of these prayer ceremonies as a way for ITBSI to contribute to Taiwanese society. He noted,

For many years, ITBSI has [discussed] what we can do for Buddhism? What work can [we] do for Tibetan Buddhist monks in Taiwan? Similarly, [we have discussed] how can we serve Taiwanese society? For one thing, there are many earthquakes in Taiwan. Many disasters happen here. Whenever these occur, we go to offer sympathy. When a lot of buildings collapsed due to an earthquake, when a man killed a young girl, when there was a train crash, when there were plane crashes, or last year when a building burned down, and so on. Without exception, we go to offer sympathy. We’ve done this many times. Our work has been a success by offering people’s hearts some relief.¹⁰³⁹

Personally visiting the sites of these tragedies and praying for the victims is a way for ITBSI to “serve” (ཞབས་ཤི།) Taiwanese society. Although its members’ prayers cannot reverse the course of events, ITBSI’s demonstrations of solidarity offer a degree of comfort to those impacted.

ITBSI describes its prayers as “serving the community” (སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཞབས་ལུ།, 服務社會). For example, ITBSI’s website notes,

In general, [we] offer sincere prayers with the motivation to benefit all sentient beings. In particular, through whatever efforts we are capable of, ITBSI offers [solace] to the people of Taiwan who are the victims of all types of calamities and disasters, including earthquakes, floods, fires, traffic accidents, and so forth. [We offer] all that we can: dedication prayers to those who have passed away and the generosity of dharma to those who are alive.¹⁰⁴⁰

1039 “དེ་ནས་དང་ཚོ་གྱི་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་ཡོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པས་དང་ཚོ་འདས་པའི་ཆ་ལ་ལོ་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ལ་ནང་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་ཐོག་ལ་ག་རེ་བྱེད་ཐུབ་ཡག་གི་ཐུག་པོ་བཞུགས་པའི་ལས་ཀ་ལས་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་འདུག་དེ་ནང་བཞིན་ཐའེ་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ལ་ཉོག་ཅམ་ཞབས་ཀྱི་འདུ། ད་གཅིག་ཐའེ་ཐོག་ལ་ལོ་མང་པོ་རྒྱུག་ཡག་ཡོད་པེད། ཐོད་ཆག་མང་པོ་སྤྱིབས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པེད། དེ་ག་དུས་ཡིན་ན་དང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་གདུང་སེམས་མཉམ་སྦྲེ་འགྲོ་གྱི་ཡོད་པེད། དང་པོ་དེ་ལ་ཞིག་ད་ལ་ལོ་མང་པོ་རྒྱུག་ནས་ཁང་པ་མང་པོ་རིལ་སྦྱོར་ཡོད་པེད། ལུ་མོ་རྒྱུང་རྒྱུང་མི་གྱིས་བསད་ཤག་ཚོག་འདྲེ་ལོ་གནས་གྲུ་ཚོག་ཚོག་འདྲེ་ལོ། དེ་ནས་མེ་འཁོར་བརྒྱན་བྱུང་ཡག་ལ་སོགས་པ། དེ་ཚོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་དང་ཚོ་གྱི་ན་ཞིང་ཁང་པ་མེ་འབར་ཡག་ལ་སོགས་པ་དང་ཚོ་དེ་འདྲེ་གཅིག་མེད་ན་མ་གཉོགས་གདུང་སེམས་མཉམ་སྦྲེད་ཀྱི་ཆེད་དུ་དང་ཚོ་འགྲོ་གྱི་ཡོད་པེད། དེ་ཚོ་དཔེ་མང་པོ་འགྲོ་ནས། འགྲོ་ནས་མི་སེམས་ལུ་ཐེབས་ཡག་འདྲེ་པོ་གྱིས་ལས་ཀ་ཡག་པོ་ཐོན་ཡོད་པེད།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

1040 “སྤྱིར་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ལ་ཐོན་འདོད་ཀྱིས་ཀུན་ནས་བསྐྱུང་སྤྱོད་ལས་ཀ་ཞེ་གཉེས་མེད་ཀྱིས་སྤྱོད་ལས་འདེབས་ཞོར། སྤོས་སུ་ལག་ལེན་ཐད་ལ་གང་ཅུས་གང་ཅི་ཅུས་ཀྱིས། འདི་གའི་ས་གནས་ས་ཐོག་ཐའེ་ཐོག་ལུང་པའི་ཡུལ་མི་རྣམས་ལ་ས་གཡོམ། རྒྱ་ལོག་མེ་སྤོན་དང་རྒྱུང་སྤོན་ལེའོར་བརྒྱན་སོགས་ཀྱི་དང་ཐོད་ཆགས་བྱུང་རིགས་ལ། རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་ཐའེ་ཐོག་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་ནས་གདུང་སེམས་དང་ལྷག་བསམ་མཚོན་བྱེད། གཤམ་པོ་ལ་བསྤོ་སྤོན་དང་། གསོན་པོ་ལ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་སྤྱིན་པ་གང་ཅུས་ལུ་ཤིང་ལུ་སུ་སུ་མཚིས།” Tha’e wan gyael

Thus, while ITBSI's members pray as Mahāyāna Buddhists for all sentient beings to be freed from suffering and attain happiness, their prayers for the victims of these earthquakes, floods, and traffic accidents have a distinctly local audience. These are oriented specifically at tragedies that happen to Taiwanese people on Taiwanese soil. In doing so, as Khenpo Tsering Tashi notes, ITBSI demonstrates that “Tibetan Buddhism offers some care to the Taiwanese people.”¹⁰⁴¹

ITBSI's swift responses to disasters and mobilization of sizeable bodies of Tibetan Buddhist teachers have not gone unnoticed. ITBSI's prayers following the 2014 gas explosions in Kaohsiung were covered both by Taiwanese television¹⁰⁴² and online print media.¹⁰⁴³ Similar

spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “sPyi tshogs zhabs zhu/ སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཞབས་ཞུ།,” *Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།*, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/social-work-bo>.”

A similar statement is posted on the Chinese version of ITBSI's website: “首先為了利益整體一切眾生為發心動機，心口一致真誠地祈福之餘，特別所要盡力付出的實際行動，是為發生以上災禍的台灣人民，在台的國際藏傳佛教研究會為表示悲痛及善意，對於往生者唸經迴向，在世者則盡量給予法布施。” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會，“Shehui fuwu 社會服務,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/zh/social-work-zh>.

¹⁰⁴¹ “འོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཞིག་བའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།” Khenpo Tsering Tashi, interview with author, virtual, November 10, 2022.

¹⁰⁴² “Dao! gaoxiong qubao zangchuan fojiao zonghui wanren qifu 悼!高雄氣爆 藏傳佛教總會萬人祈福” (Zhongshi xinwen 中視新聞, August 8, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqPjIxzwb0>; “Wei gaoxiong qifu! renbojie juban fahui 為高雄祈福! 仁波切舉辦法會” (Huashi xinwen 華視新聞 CH52, August 9, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0AtYPIks44>.

¹⁰⁴³ You Hongqi 游宏琦, “Zangchuan fojiao gaosheng shu bai wei jijie gaoxiong 藏傳佛教高僧數百位集結高雄,” PeoPo Gongmin xinwen 公民新聞, August 8, 2014, <https://www.peopo.org/news/251199>.

media coverage was given to ITBSI's prayers for "Little Lightbulb,"¹⁰⁴⁴ the victims of the Hualien train derailment¹⁰⁴⁵ and the Chengzhongcheng Building fire.¹⁰⁴⁶

These reports reveal favorable feedback to ITBSI's activities from members of the Taiwanese public. For example, a Taiwanese disciple who accompanied ITBSI's members to Kaohsiung in 2014 recalled that "when we got out of the taxi, the driver knew that we had come there to hold a dharma assembly for the disaster zone and refused to accept our payment. He said, 'Thank you for coming to help. You are the first group who has held a transcendence prayer service here.'"¹⁰⁴⁷ Similarly, in 2021 a news anchor shared a photograph of more than a dozen of ITBSI's members on a train to Hualien and noted "many netizens were extremely touched by looking at this photograph" of monastics going to pray for the victims of the train derailment.¹⁰⁴⁸

ITBSI's prayers have been particularly well received, I would argue, because praying for the deceased is a widely legible, expected, and lauded activity for Buddhist monastics in Taiwan. One of the cornerstone activities of Chinese Buddhist monastics historically and today is the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Lin Jinsheng 林金聖, "30 renboqie song jing wen qi wei xiaodeng pao chao du 30 仁波切誦經文齊為小燈泡超渡," *Pingguo ribao* 蘋果日報, March 30, 2016, sec. Jishi xinwen 即時新聞, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160402200817/http://www.appledaily.com.tw/realtimenews/article/local/20160330/28361/30%E4%BB%81%E6%B3%A2%E5%88%87%E8%AA%A6%E7%B6%93%E6%96%87%E3%80%80%E9%BD%8A%E7%82%BA%E5%B0%8F%E7%87%88%E6%B3%A1%E8%B6%85%E6%B8%A1/>.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Liu Weizhen 劉維榛, "Ti 50 lian zhe chao du! Lama ben hualian xianchang yindu senglu ye ge kong jiachi... 替 50 罹難者超渡! 喇嘛奔花蓮現場「印度僧侶也隔空加持」...", ETtoday 新聞雲, April 3, 2021, <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20210403/1952493.htm>; "Ti 50 ming linan zhe chao du! 10 ming yishang senglu ji fu hualian shigu xianchang ti wangsheng zhe song jing yindu senglu ye ge kong jiachi 替 50 名罹難者超渡! 10 名以上僧侶急赴花蓮事故現場替往生者誦經 印度僧侶也隔空加持" (Sanli LIVE xinwen 三立 LIVE 新聞, March 4, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdZbUUwqU_U.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Zhong Zhipeng 鍾志鵬, "Chengzhongcheng dahuo touqi lama song jingzhuan 'dalai lama' chao du yuanli 城中城大火頭七 喇嘛誦經傳「達賴喇嘛」超渡願力," SETN 三立新聞網, October 20, 2021, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=1014774>.

¹⁰⁴⁷ "下車時,當計程車司機得知我們是來這裡為災區舉行法會,堅持不收車資。他說:「謝謝你們來幫忙,你們是第一一個在這裡辦超渡法會的團體。」" Li Zhenyan 李真延, "Yongxin shouhu yong bu beng huai de cibe 用心守護永不崩壞的慈悲," *Jue guang* 覺光, 2014, 61.

¹⁰⁴⁸ "讓部分網友認為這一張照片看起來的確很感人" "Ti 50 ming linan zhe chao du! 10 ming yishang senglu ji fu hualian shigu xianchang ti wangsheng zhe song jing yindu senglu ye ge kong jiachi 替 50 名罹難者超渡! 10 名以上僧侶急赴花蓮事故現場替往生者誦經 印度僧侶也隔空加持."

performance of funerary rituals.¹⁰⁴⁹ Indeed, for many Taiwanese who are not members of Buddhist organizations, perhaps their only interactions with Buddhist monastics occur in the context of rituals following the deaths of family and friends. Thus, by performing rituals for the victims of tragedies, ITBSI's members engage in activity that Taiwanese expect of virtuous Buddhist monastics. While performing funeral rituals is an important activity for monastics beyond Taiwan, ITBSI's prayer ceremonies are unique in their trans-sectarian participation and very public performance that often inspires local Taiwanese to join in.¹⁰⁵⁰ In this way, ITBSI's prayers for disaster victims have contributed to overcoming TEPA's caricatures of Tibetan Buddhism as non-virtuous and non-Buddhist by strategically positioning Tibetan Buddhist monastics engaging in activities that are publicly legible as both virtuous and evidently Buddhist.

ITBSI's prayer ceremonies are also legible to the public in a literal sense. In Taiwan, it is common to use the terms *chaodu* (超度/超渡) or *chaojian* (超薦) when referencing a genre of (mostly) Buddhist rituals that promise to help the deceased “transcend” (超) or “be ferried across” (渡) the sufferings of negative rebirths.¹⁰⁵¹ In Chinese Buddhist discourse, this term denotes prayers for a positive rebirth of the deceased.¹⁰⁵² In its publications, website, and social media posts, ITBSI often utilizes the term *chaodu* to describe its prayers for disaster victims. For example, a post on ITBSI's Facebook page describing prayers for victims of the 2021 Hualien train derailment noted that “we quickly arrived at the mourning hall established especially for the

¹⁰⁴⁹ Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*, 22; Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 30, 195, 200–205.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Lin Jinsheng 林金聖, “30 renboqie song jing wen qi wei xiaodeng pao chaodu 30 仁波切誦經文齊為小燈泡超渡.”

¹⁰⁵¹ For an overview of several Chinese Buddhist scriptural traditions of *chaodu* rituals, see: Shi Manxiang 釋滿祥 et al., “Chaojian foshi yu yishu fudao 超薦佛事與遺屬輔導,” *Zhexue yu wenhua 哲學與文化* 33, no. 4 (April 2006): 71–75.

¹⁰⁵² Cheng-Ying Lin, “Rituals for abortion and miscarriage in Taiwan: Spiritual and social representation of the fetus” (PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2020), 99–101.

victims and conducted a transcendence [ritual] [*chaodu*] for them. We chanted a precious Tibetan transcendence [*chaodu*] dharma for the deceased.”¹⁰⁵³ News media also describe ITBSI’s prayers using these terms. For example, an article entitled “Thirty Rinpoché’s Chant Scriptures for Little Lightbulb’s Transcendence [*chaodu*]” stated “At around five p.m., ITBSI mobilized more than thirty rinpoché’s to the site, where holding candles in their hands they recited ‘The Practices and Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra’ [普賢行願品] and ‘An Aspiration Prayer for the Western Paradise’ [極樂願文] so that Little Lightbulb may transcend [*chaodu*]. We hope she will soon be reborn in a Pure Land.”¹⁰⁵⁴ In this way, although ITBSI’s prayers are described in terms familiar to most Taiwanese as being beneficial for the deceased.

ITBSI’s prayer ceremonies publicly manifest the virtue of Tibetan Buddhist clergy and their care for the victims of these tragedies. That most victims are Taiwanese further manifests the commitment of ITBSI’s members to Taiwan and the spiritual well-being of Taiwanese people, both in this life and in future rebirths. Far from TEPA’s predatory image, the photos of twenty, forty, or more of ITBSI’s members gathering to pray consistently show Tibetan Buddhist monks doing what the Taiwanese public expects virtuous Buddhist monastics to do: “to wish the victims might be free from suffering and obtain happiness, be reborn in the Western Pure Land, obtain the blessings of the Three Jewels (the precious Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the three gifts in the Buddhist world) and to console the grief in the hearts of the victims’ families.”¹⁰⁵⁵

¹⁰⁵³ “很快到達了專門為罹難者設立的靈堂，為他們進行超度。為亡者念誦藏傳的殊勝超度法”

International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 རྗེ་ཕཌག་ཀླུ་ལྷི་འོད་བརློན་ནང་བཟུང་།, “Zuotian taiwan fasheng le feichan yanzhong de jiaotong yiwai... 昨天台灣發生了非常嚴重的交通意外...”

¹⁰⁵⁴ “下午5時許，國際藏傳佛教研究會動員超過30名仁波切到場，手持燭光唸誦《普賢行願品》及《極樂願文》，為小燈泡超渡，願她能快樂到達極樂世界。” Lin Jinsheng 林金聖, “30 renboqie song jing wen qi wei xiaodeng pao chaodu 30 仁波切誦經文齊為小燈泡超渡。”

¹⁰⁵⁵ “祝願罹難者離苦得樂，往生西方淨土，並期待借用三寶（佛教界珍貴佛、法、僧三種禮物）的加持，能撫平罹難者家屬心中的哀傷。” Zhong Zhipeng 鍾志鵬, “Chengzhongcheng dahuo touqi lama song jingzhuang ‘dalai lama’ chaodu yuanli 城中城大火頭七喇嘛誦經傳「達賴喇嘛」超渡願力。”

4.2. Unifying Tibetan Buddhist Teachers in Taiwan

In addition to the Taiwanese public, ITBSI also directs many of its projects at Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teachers, rinpochés, lamas, khenpos, geshés, and monastics active in Taiwan. As noted above, from the earliest days of the organization, ITBSI’s activities were avowedly trans-sectarian and welcomed teachers from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. While ITBSI’s leadership does not exercise power over individual members, the extensive list of endorsements from prominent Tibetan Buddhist teachers, its growing status and public presence within Taiwan, and the services that ITBSI freely offers its members have led to growing interest among Tibetan Buddhist teachers across Taiwan. Although other similar groups have attempted to organize local Tibetan Buddhist clergy, with one group even trying to siphon members away from ITBSI, these groups have either folded or remained limited in their membership.¹⁰⁵⁶ Today, ITBSI remains the largest trans-sectarian Tibetan Buddhist organization in Taiwan.

ITBSI’s former chairman, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, noted that while it is indeed ITBSI’s goal to benefit Taiwanese people and to promote Buddhism locally, ITBSI largely does not do so through offering teachings directly to Taiwanese disciples. Instead, he noted, “The relationship between ITBSI and Tibetan Buddhist monastics in Taiwan is B2B. It’s B2B because ITBSI does not have direct relationships with Taiwanese disciples of Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers. We deal with other Tibetan Buddhist monastics as B2B.”¹⁰⁵⁷ Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel is borrowing business terminology to describe ITBSI’s primary partners. B2B or business-to-business refers to

¹⁰⁵⁶ I was told in interview that at one point several members felt that ITBSI was insufficiently vocal in its public support for the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. As a result, these members attempted to form a parallel organization to ITBSI. Their efforts were apparently short lived, and the disgruntled members have continued to participate in ITBSI events. Supporter and consultant to ITBSI, interview with author, Taipei, February 2, 2022.

¹⁰⁵⁷ “ངའི་ཚོལ་ལུགས་ཚོགས་པ་དང་ཐའེ་མན་གྱི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་དགེ་ལུན་པའི་བར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་དེ་B2B་རེད། གའེ་བྱས་ནས་B2B་རེད་ཟེར་ན་ངའི་ཚོལ་ལུགས་ཚོགས་པ་ལ་ཐུག་ཐའེ་མན་གྱི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ཚོས་ཚོགས་པ་གྲོགས་པ་འདྲི་ལོ་ལ་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད། ངའི་ཚོལ་ལུགས་པ་དང་ཐའེ་མན་གྱི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ཚོས་ཚོགས་པ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་B2B་ཟེར།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

commercial relationships wherein a business primarily transacts with other businesses. By contrast, B2C or business-to-consumer refers to relationships in which businesses transact directly with consumers. In describing it as B2B, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel contrasts ITBSI with dharma centers that orient their “services” toward their “consumers,” lay Taiwanese disciples. ITBSI’s primary “consumers” are not lay Taiwanese, but Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

As I described in the preceding section, it is not strictly true that ITBSI only functions as B2B. Some of ITBSI’s projects, like the prayers for disaster victims or TTBTv, are oriented to broader audiences than Tibetan Buddhist teachers alone. Nevertheless, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel’s statement underscores the way ITBSI’s leadership sees the organization as standing above the hundreds of individual Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers. Instead of serving a congregation of Taiwanese faithful, ITBSI’s leadership envisions ITBSI as an umbrella organization, gathering and offering services for Tibetan Buddhist teachers of all sectarian traditions active across Taiwan. As this audience has rather different needs and interests than their Taiwanese disciples, ITBSI organizes a special set of programs specifically tailored to Tibetan Buddhist teachers.

ITBSI’s approach to uniting and offering services to Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan is grounded in its commitment to inclusivity and *rimé* or non-sectarianism. Historically in Tibet, the *rimé* project, what Gene Smith dubbed the “nonsectarian movement,”¹⁰⁵⁸ emerged in eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century especially through the remarkable work of the teachers Jamgön Kongtrül, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཚེན་འཕེའི་དབང་པོ།, 蔣揚欽哲旺波 1820–1892), and their circle of Bön, Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya associates. What Smith interprets as a cohort of teachers dedicated to “eclecticism and tolerance” of diverse sectarian and practice traditions,¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵⁸ Gene E. Smith, “’jam mgon Kong sprul and the Nonsectarian Movement,” in *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*, ed. Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 235.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Smith, 237.

other scholars, such as Holly Gayley, have argued was more of a “preservation project” spearheaded by members of minority traditions who were seeking to reinvigorate “lineages on the verge of extinction” and create “new mechanism for their transmissions” in the face of “the encroaching political power of the Ganden Phodrang government based in Lhasa.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Following Gayley’s argument, *rimé* in Tibet was less about active pluralism and celebrating difference than it was about a group of clerics who banded together to preserve their minority traditions in the face of the encroachment of the Geluk-dominated central Tibetan government.

For their part, ITBSI appears to share the collaborative ethos of *rimé* as banding together for mutual benefit. However, ITBSI’s members are facing different pressures than their predecessors in nineteenth century Tibet. There is no real danger from a dominant Geluk establishment looming over teachers in Taiwan. Indeed, ITBSI includes many Geluk members who actively collaborate with members from other schools. Rather, it seems that the hardships ITBSI’s leadership is encouraging its members to face collectively are those related to being a relatively new and minority religious tradition that has, as described above, faced intense public criticism. Accordingly, for ITBSI’s leaders *rimé* seems less of a preservation project than about uniting sectarian traditions to support the flourishing of Tibetan Buddhism within a religious environment of much larger, better resourced, and more established Buddhist traditions.

ITBSI frequently uses the term *rimé* in published materials primarily in the sense of including all Tibetan Buddhist teachings and lineages as well as teachers from Tibet’s diverse sectarian traditions. For example, in a published summary of the First Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forum (འདུ་ཚོམ་དང་སྐུལ་བསྐྱོད་སྐབས་དང་པོ།, 第一屆藏傳佛教弘法論壇), which ITBSI

¹⁰⁶⁰ Holly Gayley, “Introduction,” in *A Gathering of Brilliant Moons: Practice Advice from the Rimé Masters of Tibet*, ed. Holly Gayley and Joshua Schapiro (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2017), 5.

organized in 2011 and that I discuss in greater detail below, ITBSI uses the term non-sectarian to describes the event’s attendees. It notes that the assembly was composed of a “gathering of sangha members from non-sectarian Tibetan lineages.”¹⁰⁶¹ Later the text describes the range of topics as not being limited to a particular sectarian tradition, noting that the day included “non-sectarian discussions of the assembly of khenpos, tulkus, and geshés.”¹⁰⁶² ITBSI’s Facebook posts make similar use of the term *rimé* to describe the diverse body of teachers who participate in their events. Phrases such as “non-sectarian members of the sangha” (རིས་མེད་ཀྱི་དགེ་བཅུན་པ།), “non-sectarian khenpos, tulkus, geshés, and so forth,” (རིས་མེད་ཀྱི་མཁན་སྐུལ་དགེ་བཅུན་སོགས།), and “non-sectarian lamas, tulkus, khenpos, and spiritual friends” (རིས་མེད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་མཁན་པོ་དགེ་བཅུན་གཉེན་པ།) appear frequently across ITBSI’s posts. Although often less explicit, some of ITBSI’s Chinese language statements use similar phrasing, such as “non-sectarian sangha” (不分教派的僧眾).¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁶¹ “བོད་ཀྱི་ཚོས་བརྒྱན་རིས་མེད་ཀྱི་དགེ་བཅུན་པ་མཉམ་འཛུལ་” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Bod Brgyud Nang Bstan Dar Spel Bgro Gleng Skabs Dang Po/ བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་དང་སྤྱིལ་བཟོ་སྐྱབས་དང་པོ།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-bo/the-first-exchange-of-views-held-to-promote-tibetan-buddhism-bo>.

¹⁰⁶² “མཁན་སྐུལ་དགེ་བཅུན་མཉམ་འཛུལ་ཀྱི་རིས་མེད་བཟོ་སྐྱབས་འདི།” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།.

¹⁰⁶³ For several recent examples, see the following posts: International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན།, “bri gung 7 skyabs mgon rin po che dbu bzhugs thog tha’e wan du ma hA gu ru’i ’bum tshogs thengs gnyis pa ’tshogs pa/ འབྲི་གུང་པ་སྐུལ་མཁོན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དབུ་བཞུགས་ཐོག་ཐའེ་ཨན་དུ་མ་རྒྱ་རུའེ་འབུམ་ཚོགས་ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་འཛུལ་པ།,” Facebook, December 14, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02RCFCyqxft2zpMM2Up7kwE7wyJyCSkrEv8EXV6TSfSJxtZaVLJ3nGvU8rEQhp6gZl>; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན།, “De ring phyi lo 2023 zla 12 tshes 23 nyin rgyal sa tha’e pes dus... རེ་རིང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༣ ཟླ ༡༢ ཚེས་ ༢༣ ཉིན་རྒྱུལ་སུ་ཐའེ་འབུམ་དུ...,” Facebook, December 23, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02VGU3zDSmwaPJ58kWF6tCngnme6jkwXDbugWvV7c1LcXbKnd47BZ9sZWRmGm81gHYl>; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན།, “De ring phyi lo 2024... རེ་རིང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༤...”; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བའེ་ཨན་རྒྱུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱན་ནང་བསྟན།, “Tha’e bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng thengs bcu gcig pa’i tha’e wan

Similarly, in ITBSI’s mission statement and internal regulations, the term *rimé* is used in the sense of being inclusive of all Tibetan Buddhist schools and of participants from diverse sectarian backgrounds. The first sentence of ITBSI’s mission statement notes that “The purpose of this association is to uphold, preserve, and spread the non-sectarian teachings of the buddhadharma in general, and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in particular in Taiwanese society.”¹⁰⁶⁴ Here, non-sectarian is used to reference a universal corpus of Buddhist teachings that ITBSI hopes to promote. Later, under the regulations for ITBSI’s members, *rimé* is used in a similarly inclusive and pluralistic sense. The first condition for ITBSI’s members, for example, states that “First, [members should] not only have faith in the non-sectarian dharma lineages of the Land of Snows and have pure vision, but should [also] have the desire to work toward promoting harmony and cooperation among the non-sectarian buddhadharma in general.”¹⁰⁶⁵

Thus, for ITBSI non-sectarianism is about being inclusive and supportive of a diversity of lineages and Buddhist teachings in their work. The prominence of the term in the opening of ITBSI’s mission statement and widespread use across other statements testifies to their commitment to efforts that unite Tibetan Buddhist teachers across Taiwan for the collective benefit of all of their traditions. As ITBSI states on the Chinese language description of their

du 'tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བའོ་སྒྲེང་བེང་ས་བཅུ་གཅིག་པའི་ཐའེ་མན་དུ་འཛོགས་པ།,” Facebook, February 28, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid0242WJvgrzzPTs6YFuKZw3McsahfcyrKbii81XaE6mym53wd4yAaoWqUqd34GJ1pzAl>; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “2024 tai wan juenang shijie heping qi yuan dahui, suixi zantan! 2024 台灣覺囊世界和平祈願大會，隨喜讚嘆! ,” Facebook, February 25, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02RiiSnPXNtsNw1DWXf5BPYhPm8dtuytJnfnJ9gsrL5V1kuPQxMiQi2THWZjk5XRuel>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ “ཚོགས་པ་འདིའི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་ནི། རིས་མེད་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་སྤྱི་དང་ཁྱད་པར་ཐའེ་མན་གྱི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་སུ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་འཛོན་སྐྱོད་སྤེལ་གསུམ་” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Tshogs pa’i dmigs yul dang sgrig gzhi/ ཚོགས་པའི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་དང་སྤྲིག་གཞི། .”

¹⁰⁶⁵ “གཅིག་ཀྱི་གངས་ལྗོངས་རིས་མེད་གྱི་ཚོས་བརྒྱུད་དག་ལ་དད་པ་དང་དག་སྣང་ཡོད་པར་མ་ཟད། རིས་མེད་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་སྤྱིའི་མཐུན་ལམ་དང་མཉམ་འབྲེལ་སྐྱེལ་འདོད་ཐང་ཕྱག་ལས་གནང་རྒྱུ་ལྷག་པོ་ཡོད་པ།” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་མན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།.

Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forum, “so-called non-sectarianism is not a matter of words alone, but is transmitting the precious dharma, especially the Tibetan Buddhist educational systems, to the world through taking tangible actions, so they can accept it with heartfelt joy.”¹⁰⁶⁶

In terms of its programming for Tibetan Buddhist clerics in Taiwan, ITBSI regularly organizes a variety of classes, promotes best practice guidelines for teaching Buddhism and supervising dharma centers, offers resources for visa applications, and has even begun advocacy work among Taiwanese policy makers.¹⁰⁶⁷ Unlike other public Tibetan Buddhist teachings, empowerments, and rituals, these programs are attended primarily by Tibetan Buddhist teachers and are conducted mostly, if not exclusively, in Tibetan to make them as accessible as possible to the participants who have differing levels of fluency in Mandarin.

Additionally, ITBSI’s projects for Tibetan Buddhist teachers are oriented toward supporting the successful propagation of Buddhism in Taiwan. ITBSI offers electronic literacy and Chinese language¹⁰⁶⁸ classes so Tibetan Buddhist teachers can more successfully promote their centers and activities without the need to rely on translators or students.¹⁰⁶⁹ Moreover,

¹⁰⁶⁶ “所謂不分教派並不是言語說說，而是要通過實際的行動，把珍貴的佛法，尤其是藏傳佛法的教育體系，傳遞給世人，讓他們由衷的欣然接受。” International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇, “Taiwan zangchuan fojiao hongfa luntan 台灣藏傳佛教弘法論壇,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed April 15, 2024, <https://www.theitb.org/zh/dharma-conference-zh>.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Most recently, ITBSI was part of an effort in 2023 that successfully lobbied the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to increase the length of visas issued to Tibetan Buddhist teachers. See: Zangseng qianzheng tudong gaige lianmeng 藏僧簽證推動改革聯盟, “Women hen gaoxing gen dajia baogao, lianmeng de nuli you jieduan xing chengguo... 我們很高興跟大家報告，聯盟的努力有階段性成果...”

¹⁰⁶⁸ Currently, ITBSI organizes four levels of Chinese classes offered freely to Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. See: Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇, “Tha’i wan gnas bzhugs bstan pa’i rtsa ba dge ’dun pa rnam la bstan pa spel ba’i cha rkyen yul gru ’di nyid kyi skad yig rgya yig dang rgya skad ched sbyong ’dzin grwa/ 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇, “Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇 暨 佛光山 臺灣弘法中心 弘法論壇, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/chinese-class-bo>.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Electronic literacy classes, which taught participants basic computer skills such as how to add their dharma centers’ locations to Google Maps, how to manage a Facebook page and Line group, how to use BDRC’s online resources, were taught in a series of workshops offered by ITBSI for Tibetan Buddhist teachers in 2021 and 2022.

ITBSI promotes best practice guidelines to help Tibetan Buddhist teachers lead centers within Taiwanese cultural norms and legal landscape, and religious marketing courses to teach them how to better understand their audience.¹⁰⁷⁰ While space does not permit a discussion of all of these projects, in the remainder of this section I examine the longest running of ITBSI’s initiatives for Tibetan Buddhist teachers: a series of Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forums. In addition to serving as a venue for ITBSI’s leadership to summarize their work over the previous year, the Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forums promote the further localization of Tibetan Buddhism through highlighting the need for contextually specific pedagogies and promoting intra-religious unity among Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

ITBSI hosted the First Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forum in 2011 to an audience of about twenty-five teachers and a half-dozen local volunteers.¹⁰⁷¹ The Forum included a series of presentations, with time set aside for open discussion among the attendees. Khenpo Tsering Tashi summarized the day’s discussions in the following way:

There were discussions about nine points: How can Tibetan Buddhism meet the needs of society? Having investigated the causes of decline of many dharma centers, what efforts should be made so that in the future there are strategies for their stability? What methods of disseminating Buddhism are there that are in harmony with the order of the teachings? And so forth. The central point was the unity between Tibetan Buddhist lineages, especially in terms of intense discussions regarding how to strengthen more than before the conscientious conduct that accords with this place and time.¹⁰⁷²

¹⁰⁷⁰ For a summary of the origins of ITBSI’s Buddhist marketing initiatives, see: Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་འོ་འོ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོ་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Deng rabs dang mthun pa’i nang bstan ’chad spel gyi zab sbyong / དེང་རབས་དང་མཐུན་པའི་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་སྒྲེལ་གྱི་ཟབ་སྦྱོང་།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་འོ་འོ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོ་འོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/seminar-bo>.

¹⁰⁷¹ rDza tshe ring bkra shis/ རྩ་ཚེ་རིང་བཀ་ཤིས།, “Nang bstan dar spel gtong phyogs kyi bgro gleng/ ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྒྲེལ་གཏོང་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་བསོ་སྦྱོང་།,” *Bod kyi bang chen dra ba/ བོད་ཀྱི་བང་ཚེན་བླ་པ།* (blog), February 25, 2011, <https://bangchen.net/2011-02-25-11-51-05/>.

¹⁰⁷² “བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱིས་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་དཔེ་མཁོ་ལོ་ལྟར་བསྐྱེད་རྒྱ་དང་། ཚོས་ཚོགས་མང་པོ་ཞིག་ཉམས་སྐྱོད་དུ་འགྲོ་བཞིན་པའི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ལ་དཔུང་ནས་མ་འོངས་པར་སྲ་བརྟན་ཡོང་བའི་ཐབས་ལམ་ལ་ཇི་ལྟར་འབད་བརྟེན་བྱ་རྒྱ། བསྟན་པའི་གོ་རིམ་དང་མཐུན་པའི་ནང་ཚོས་ཇི་ལྟར་སྒྲེལ་ཚུལ་སོགས་བརྗོད་གཞི་དོན་ཚན་དགུའི་ཐོག་བསོ་སྦྱོང་གནང་མཐའ། གཙོ་བོ་ཚོས་བརྒྱུད་བར་གྱི་

Accordingly, ITBSI's primary aims for the Forum were to promote unity among the diverse body of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, better management of dharma centers, ethical conduct, and cooperation on contextually relevant strategies for teaching Buddhism. When ITBSI's leaders subtitled the Forum "How to strengthen the promotion of Tibetan Buddhism,"¹⁰⁷³ they were not taking a wide view of promoting Tibetan Buddhism globally but were focused on the contemporary (and largely urban) Taiwanese context that their members were teaching in. In this way, starting from its first gathering of teachers, ITBSI's leadership was acutely aware that further localizing Tibetan Buddhism was critical to its success in Taiwan.

This focus on finding methods of propagating Tibetan Buddhism that are both faithful to tradition and correspond with the context of modern Taiwan has remained a central organizing concern across all of the eleven Forums ITBSI has organized. Other topics discussed include differences in doctrine and practice between schools, difficulties faced by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, strategies for successfully managing dharma centers, navigating relationships with other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan, and how to contribute productively to Taiwanese society. For example, in addition to discussions about how to most effectively present Tibetan Buddhist teachings to a primarily lay audience in Taiwan, participants in the Third Forum also discussed the performance of rituals, engaging in social welfare projects, and monastic department. ITBSI's leadership presented these topics in the following way:

1. The actual honor for the teachings is when we spread the dharma to foreign lands. Because of this, [we] produce wealth by performing empowerments and so forth in that land, and carry [the teachings] from our own country to another place, making offerings to the [Three] Jewels and so forth. How

མཐུན་ལས། ལྷན་པར་ཡུལ་དུ་དང་མཐུན་པའི་ཀུན་སྲིད་གཟབ་ནན་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སྲར་ལས་ལྷག་པའི་ཤུགས་སྤོན་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱ་ཕྱོགས་བཅས་ཀྱི་སྐོར་ལ་བགོ་གླེང་ཤུགས་ཚེན་བྱས།” rDza tshering bkra shis/ རྩོམ་འདུག་གིས།

¹⁰⁷³ “「加強弘揚藏傳佛教」研討會。” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Di yi jie zangchuan fojiao hongfa luntan 第一屆藏傳佛教弘法論壇,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2013, 29.

- should [we] seriously consider [how] to give instructions on the methods of listening, reflecting, and meditating to the people of this land?
2. It is the case that the heart of spreading the holy dharma is communicating its true meaning. However, in terms of [our regular] dharma functions, we primarily perform empowerments, fire rituals, feast gatherings, obstacle clearing rituals, and so on. It is obvious that the crucial actions of teaching and listening are truly minimal. This being the case, how can we change this [situation]?
 3. Regarding contributing actions that benefit the local society, generally [this] is a part of the practice [of] the Mahāyāna dharma and is an especially important action at this time. However, we have not thoroughly engaged [in social welfare activities]. How do we amend these faults and deficiencies?
 4. As a result of not having the power to refrain and so on from some actions which people from this place consider as possessing tremendous faults, [such as] eating meat, and so forth, many obstacles or hindrances have arisen and may yet arise in the future with regard to benefitting beings and enlightened activity. How can we correct such distortions?¹⁰⁷⁴

The Ninth and Tenth Forums in 2020 and 2021 were guided by a similar set of questions:

- 1) How can Tibetan Buddhism promote and pass on the dharma while keeping up with developments in this society?
- 2) How can the education of Tibetans in Taiwan be improved in terms of religion and culture?
- 3) How should Tibetan Buddhist monastics uphold their dignified monastic discipline and incumbent responsibility while integrating with local Taiwanese culture, customs, and traditions?¹⁰⁷⁵

¹⁰⁷⁴ “བསྟན་པའི་སྲི་ལུ་དངོས་ཉི་མཐའ་འཁོར་བྱ་ཚེས་སྤེལ་བ་འདི་ལོན་ཡིན་ཕྱིར་རང་ཅག་གིས་ཡུལ་གཞན་དུ་ཚེས་སྤེལ་སྐབས་ས་ཆ་དེ་གནས་དབང་བསྐྱར་བ་སོགས་ཀྱིས་ཤོར་བསྐྱབས་ནས་པ་ཡུལ་ལས་གནས་གཞན་དུ་བྱུང་ཏེ་དཀོན་མཚོག་ལ་མཚོད་འབྲལ་སོགས་བྱེད་པ་ལས་ས་ཆ་དེ་གའི་མི་རྣམས་ལ་ཐོས་བསམ་བསྐྱོན་གསུམ་བྱེད་ཚུལ་གྱི་བསྐྱབ་སྟོན་གནང་བ་ཇི་ལྟར་གཅིགས་སུ་འཛིན་རྒྱུ། ༡ གྲུ་དམ་པའི་ཚེས་སྤེལ་བའི་སྤྱིར་གནད་ནི་ཚེས་ཀྱི་དོན་གོ་བདེ་སྤྱད་པ་འདི་རང་ཡིན་ཅོད་རང་ཅག་གིས་ཚེས་ཀྱི་མཚན་སྤོའི་ཐད་ལ་དབང་བསྐྱར་བ་དང་སྤྱིར་སྤེལ་དང་ཚོགས་འཁོར་དང་རིམ་གྱོ་སོགས་གཅིག་བྱེད་པ་ལས་འཆད་ཉན་ལ་གཅོད་མཚན་པ་ཤིན་དུ་ཉུང་བ་མཚན་གསལ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་ཐད་ལ་བསྐྱར་བཅོས་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱེད་རྒྱུ། ༢ གྲུ་དམ་གསལ་དེ་གའི་སྤྱི་ལོ་གྱི་བྱ་བའི་ནང་དུ་ལྷགས་པ་ནི་སྤྱིར་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་ཚེས་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱི་ཆ་ཤས་ཤིག་ཡིན་ཞིང་། ལྷན་པར་དུ་དུས་རབས་འདིར་གསལ་ཆེ་བའི་བྱ་བ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ན་ཡང་རང་ཅག་གིས་དེ་གཅིགས་སུ་བཟུང་མི་འདུག་པས་ཞན་ཆ་དང་ས་འདད་བའི་ཆ་དེ་རྣམས་ཇི་ལྟར་ལ་སྐྱོང་རྒྱུ། ༣ གྲུ་དམ་བཟའ་བ་སོགས་ཡུལ་དེའི་མི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཆེས་སྟོན་ཅན་དུ་བརྗིབ་པའི་བྱ་བ་འགའ་རེ་ལ་འཛུམ་མ་རྣམས་སོགས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་འགོ་དོན་དང་འཕྲིན་ལས་ལ་བར་ཆད་དམ་བཀག་འགོག་མང་པོ་བྱུང་དང་འབྲུང་བཞིན་པར་ཇི་ལྟར་ཡོ་བཅོས་བྱེད་རྒྱུ།” *Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/* ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “*Bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng thengs gsum pa/* བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བསྐྱོང་བྱེད་ཐབས་གསུམ་པ།,” *Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/* ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-bo/the-third-panel-discussion-about-promotion-of-tibetan-buddhism-bo>.

¹⁰⁷⁵ “藏傳佛教如何在當今社會與時俱進弘揚與傳承？”“如何提升在台藏人在宗教及文化上的素養？”“藏傳佛教僧眾應如何結合台灣當地文化及風俗習慣下，秉持僧眾威儀戒律及應盡之責任？” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “2020 nian di jiu jie hongfa luntan 2020 年 第九屆弘法論壇,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-zh/the-ninth-conference-on-flourishing-of-buddhism-zh>.

The Tenth Forum also included the question: How can marketing offer practical and applicable skills of promoting Buddhism? (“如何透過行銷知識來弘揚佛法的實務運用技巧。”) Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛

In each of these Forums, issues related to localizing Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan were at the core of discussions. In the guiding questions to the Third, Ninth, and Tenth Forums, for example, the organizers repeatedly draw a contrast between Tibetan Buddhist teachings, practices, and norms for monastics on the one side and the Taiwanese context on the other. The questions reveal ITBSI's members grappling with how they should convey the teachings of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist masters that flourished for more than a thousand years in Tibet to peoples with different histories, cultural backgrounds, and languages. How should they present rituals to Taiwanese practitioners within the broader system of Tibetan Buddhist study and practice? How should Tibetan Buddhist monastics contribute to Taiwanese public welfare? And how should Tibetan Buddhist teachers minister to ethnic Tibetans in Taiwan?

In addition to questions about adapting to the Taiwanese context, these questions also reveal real tensions that Tibetan Buddhist teachers actively navigate as religious professionals in Taiwan. For example, how can teachers balance providing instructions on Buddhist thought and practice, which they view as central to their religion, with performing the ritual services and empowerments that Taiwanese request of them? Or, how should they deal with different cultural expectations of Buddhist teachers' comportment, such as around the public consumption of meat or maintaining monastic vows? The Dharma Promotion Forums serve as venues devoted to dialogue and debate of these and other concerns Tibetan Buddhist teachers actively face in Taiwan. In doing so, they also serve as a space to consider what actions, practices, stories, and traditions can be brought to bear to benefit people within contemporary Taiwan and which should be adjusted to better accord with Taiwanese social and religious norms and expectations.

教研究會, "Taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui di shi jie hongfa luntan 台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會第十屆弘法論壇," Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-zh/the-10th-forum-for-promotion-of-buddha-dharma-zh>.

These discussions are not without controversy and do not necessarily yield universal agreement or praise. At the Tenth Forum discussed at the opening of this chapter, for example, some presentations were met with general approval, such as explaining how to use BDRC’s resources and introducing ITBSI’s new website. Presentations summarizing other projects, however, were subject to more intense debate. ITBSI’s leaders’ decisions to commemorate the Buddha’s birthday on a date traditional among Theravāda Buddhists as well as to adopt the term “Buddhist marketing” for a course on missionizing strategies for Tibetan Buddhist teachers, for example, were fiercely contested by some attendees and defended by others. Few seemed shy to share their views in front of nearly one hundred fellow attendees. Whatever their opinions, all who wished to speak were given time to share their critiques, praise, and offer suggestions for ITBSI’s work moving forward. Although these Dharma Promotion Forums do not serve as decision-making venues for ITBSI, they do offer ITBSI’s leadership insight into the opinions and interest of the wider membership, as well as the concerns and issues they may be facing.

While there has certainly been a degree of attrition in participation, with some attendees not returning to later Forums, overall there has not been decreased interest in discussing how to best teach Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In fact, attendance at ITBSI’s Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forums has been increasing, especially in recent years. Following the First Forum’s twenty-five participants, the Second through the Eighth Forums attracted between thirty and forty participants each. Following Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel’s personal outreach efforts described above, attendance increased dramatically at the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Forums, which each attracting between eighty and one hundred participants.¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷⁶ For detailed summaries of each of the Forums, see: Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Di er jie zangchuan fojiao hongfa luntan 第二屆藏傳佛教弘法論壇,” *Jue guang* 覺光, 2013; rDza tshe ring bkra shis/ ཇོ་མོ་རིང་འགྲུ་ཤིས།, “Bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel skor gyi bgro gleng tshogs ’du/ བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་པ་སྟེལ་སྟོར་གྱི་བསྟོན་ཐོན་

The burgeoning interest Tibetan Buddhist teachers have taken in discussing how to best teach Buddhism in Taiwan likely has three main reasons. First, for many attendees the conversations at the Forums are actually quite new. As discussed in chapter two, there is significant turnover at many centers, especially at monastery centers where monks are frequently in Taiwan only on short rotations. Accordingly, many Tibetan Buddhist teachers who have never been to Taiwan arrive each year. Even among ITBSI’s leadership, nearly one third of its eleven officers have been in Taiwan for fewer than five years. Accordingly, many attendees have not been part of the now more than one decade of conversations at ITBSI’s Forums. For participants who are new to Taiwan, the Forums provide an arena to meet and learn from others who have more experience teaching Tibetan Buddhism to Taiwanese disciples.

Second, the Forums serve as an important way for Tibetan Buddhist teachers to meet with fellow clerics and increase their personal connections across sectarian boundaries. As Khenpo

ཚོགས་འདུ།” *Bod kyi bang chen dra ba/ བོད་ཀྱི་བང་ཚེན་པ་* (blog), March 16, 2013, <https://bangchen.net/2013-03-16-10-14-15/>; rDza tshe ring bkra shis/ རྗེ་ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།, “Bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng tha’e wan du tshugs pa/ བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་ལྷན་ཁྲིམ་པའི་འཕུལ་ལུགས་སྐོར་ལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད།,” *Kha brda/ ལ་བད།* (blog), April 3, 2014, <https://www.khabdha.org/?p=59617>; rDza tshe ring bkra shis/ རྗེ་ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།; Chos nyid ’od zer/ ཚོས་ཉིད་འོད་ཟེང།, “Tha’e wan bod brgyud nang bstan gyi ma ’ongs pa’i kha phyogs skor la bgro gleng / ཐའེ་ཡན་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཁྲིམ་འོངས་པའི་འཕུལ་ལུགས་སྐོར་ལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད།,” *Bod kyi bang chen dra ba/ བོད་ཀྱི་བང་ཚེན་པ་* (blog), April 24, 2015, <https://bangchen.net/ཐའེ་ཡན་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཁྲིམ་པའི་འཕུལ་ལུགས་སྐོར་ལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད།>; Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng tshogs ’du thengs drug pa tha’e wan du ’tshogs pa/ ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཚོགས་འདུ་ཐེངས་ལྷན་ཁྲིམ་པའི་འཕུལ་ལུགས་སྐོར་ལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད།,” *Kha brda/ ལ་བད།* (blog), March 31, 2016, <https://www.khabdha.org/?p=81948>; Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng skabs brgyad pa/ བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་སྐབས་བརྒྱུད་པ།,” *Kha brda/ ལ་བད།* (blog), May 30, 2018, <https://www.khabdha.org/?p=94056>; “The wan du nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng thengs dgu pa dbu ’dzugs gngang ba/ ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་དགུ་པ་དབུ་འཕུལ་ལུགས་གནང་བ།,” *Nor we bod kyi rlung ’phrin khang / རོར་མེ་བོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུང་འཕྲིན་ཁང།* (blog), August 14, 2020, <https://vot.org/ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་དགུ་པ་དབུ་འཕུལ་ལུགས་གནང་བ།>; Chos nyid ’od zer/ ཚོས་ཉིད་འོད་ཟེང།, “Rgyal bstan dar spel bgro gleng thengs bcu pa tha’e wan du ’tshogs/ རྒྱལ་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་བརྒྱ་པ་ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་འཕུལ་ལུགས།,” *Bod kyi bang chen dra ba/ བོད་ཀྱི་བང་ཚེན་པ་* (blog), December 9, 2021, <https://bangchen.net/རྒྱལ་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་བརྒྱ་པ་ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་འཕུལ་ལུགས།>; Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “Tha’e bod brgyud nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng thengs bcu gcig pa’i gsar gngang/ ཐའེ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཟོ་སྐྱེད་ཐེངས་བརྒྱ་པ་ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་འཕུལ་ལུགས་འཕུལ་ལུགས།,” *Kha brda/ ལ་བད།* (blog), March 2, 2023, <https://www.khabdha.org/?p=106007>.

Jigmé Namgyel described, “One of the purposes of the Forums is to bring Tibetan Buddhist monastics in Taiwan closer together. If people speak having met face to face [it’s best.] If [people] stay at home and just speak on the phone, they won’t develop any connection. At the Forums, we drink tea and are together. I think these interactions are the most important thing.”¹⁰⁷⁷ He elaborated on the importance of social connections to attendees’ interest in the Forums, noting that “when we gather, everyone is equal without complaint. Why? All of the reincarnate teachers and monastics don’t get to sit with their friends and acquaintances. Earlier all the monks from one monastery or dharma center would say they wanted their seats all together. We don’t do this. When we eat, everyone is mixed. With everyone interacting together like this, they naturally get closer.”¹⁰⁷⁸ ITBSI promotes interactions among teachers by intentionally seating together individuals from different sectarian traditions, monasteries, and regions of Tibet and the Himalayas. This mixing is different from many other trans-sectarian gatherings, which are often overshadowed by regionalism or sectarian and monastic loyalties.

While it would be an overstatement to say that ITBSI’s mixed seating is universally cherished or leads to swift rapport across sectarian boundaries, it is nevertheless one element of the Forums many attendees review positively. One geshé who has been an attendee since the First Forum in 2011 noted, “The [Forums] are a positive event because wherever they have conferences and forums, they improve cooperation by bringing [monastics from] all different sectarian traditions together. [Monastics] grow closer together. The schools are in a bit of

¹⁰⁷⁷ “ད་དམིགས་ཡུལ་དེ་ག་རེ་རེ་དེ་ཟེར་ན་ད་ཚོགས་དུས་དེ་གི་ཞིག་ནི་ཐའེ་མཉམ་གྱི་མོད་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་དགེ་འདུན་པ་དང་རང་ཚོའི་བར་ལ་སེམས་ཐག་ཉེ་པོ་ཡོད་ཡིག། མི་ངོ་གདོད་པ་ལྷག་ནས་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་ན་ལ་པར་ནང་ལ་རང་སོ་སོ་སྐད་ན་འབྲེལ་བ་མེད་པ་ཆགས་ཀྱི་རེད་ལ། ད་ཚོ་སྐད་དུས་དེ་ཚོ་འབྲེལ་ཡིག་དང་མཉམ་དུ། ད་རང་འདི་གི་བར་ལ་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་ཡིག་འགའ་ཤམས་གཤམ་ཆེན་པོ་ཞིག་རྒྱུ་མོད།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

¹⁰⁷⁸ “དེ་ནས་ཚོགས་པ་ཚོགས་དུས་ན་ཡང་དཀའ་ལས་མེད་པ་ཚང་མ་འདྲ་མཉམ་ཡིན་པ། དེ་འདྲ་བྱེད་ཡིག་ག་རེ་རེ་དེ་ཟེར་ན་ཀླན་སྐྱུ་ཚང་མ་གྲོགས་པོ་གྲོགས་པོ་མཉམ་དུ་སྐྱོད་ཡིག་རྒྱུ་གི་མ་རེད་ལ། དེའོ་མ་ཡིན་ག་རེ་བྲས་ན་དགོན་པ་ཞིག་གི་ཚོས་ཚོགས་ཤིག་གི་སྐྱེ་ཚང་མ་གྱིས་ད་རང་ཚོ་རྒྱུ་བྱུག་ཚང་མ་མཉམ་དུ་སྐྱོད་ལ་བ་གྱི་ཡོད་རེད་ལ། ཡོད་མ་རེད། ལ་ལག་ཟུ་དུས་ཚང་མ་mixed། འདྲེས་འདྲེས་གཏང་ཞགས་ཡོད་རེད། དེ་བྲས་དུ་ད་འདྲ་མཉམ་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་ད་འདྲ་བྱེད་ན་ མཉམ་སེམས་ཐག་ཉེ་པོ་ཆགས་འགོ་གྱི་རེད་ལ།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

opposition to one another. [After all, we're] people, right? [We] act strangely. 'Them for them and us for us.' With all sides interacting with one another at the Forums, [I think] it's a good thing."¹⁰⁷⁹ Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel similarly noted how ITBSI promotes equality and diversity:

Whoever you are, a tulku, geshé, khenpo, lama, loppön, all teachers and virtuous friends put their names on a list. Whatever [seat] comes from that list, you must sit at the corresponding seat. It could be in the front, it could be in the back. This is in accordance with the special aim of ITBSI and it creates friendly relations. Wherever you set-up higher and lower seats,¹⁰⁸⁰ difficulties will naturally follow. So [in our case], everyone is happy. However your name is assigned, everyone laughs. If they're in the back, they're happy. Everyone is laughing. People who don't tend to sit in the front might [end up sitting in the front] and people who tend to sit in the front might [end up not sitting in the front]. However, there won't be any talk later about 'Oh, this group didn't do a good job organizing!' This is very unusual."¹⁰⁸¹

By intentionally promoting interactions among attendees of diverse backgrounds, ITBSI orchestrates informal opportunities for Forum participants to form new connections as they meet other Tibetan Buddhist teachers beyond their immediate circles. In this way, the Forums provide social opportunities many participants appreciate, while also furthering ITBSI's commitment to a unified and ecumenical Tibetan Buddhism as critical to localizing their tradition to Taiwan.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Dharma Promotion Forums' central topic of how to successfully teach Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan has continued to evolve. It is no surprise that as the Taiwanese social, economic, and political spheres have shifted over the last fifteen

1079 “དེ་ཡིག་པོ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ག་རེ་དང་ཟེར་ན་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཚང་མ་མཉམ་དུ་བྱས་ནས་དེ་ཐོག་ནས་ནས་ག་བར་ག་བར་ཚོགས་དུས་ཚོགས་བསྐྱོང་ཚོགས་དེ་བྱས་ན་དེ་ནས་ནང་པ་ན་ཚུན་ཉོག་ཅོམ་ཡིག་པོ་འདུག་གཞུང་ཆུང་ལུགས་ཡིག་པོ་དང་། དེ་ཡིང་ཚོས་བརྒྱུད་པ་ན་ཚུན་ཉོག་ཅོམ་ཉོག་ཅོམ་འགའ་ལྷོ་ཡོད་ཡིག་ མི་རེད་ཅེ། ལྷན་མཚར་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ལོང་ཚོ་ལོང་ཚོ་ ར་ཚོང་ཚོ་ དེ་བཞིན་གྱི་འདྲ་ལོ་བྱས་ནས་པར་ཚུར་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱས་ནས་དེ་ཡིག་པོ་འདུག་གཞུང་།” Geluk geshé, interview with author, Taipei, November 2, 2022.

1080 This refers to the Tibetan Buddhist custom of raking teachers based upon the height of their seat.

1081 “སྐུལ་སྐུལ་ཡིན་ན་དགེ་བཤེས་ཡིན་ན་མཁའ་པོ་ཡིན་ན་ག་རེ་ཡིན་ན་ལོང་གི་རྒྱ་ཆ་ཚང་གི་དགེ་བཤེས་གཉེན་གྱི་རིག་དེ་ཆ་ཚང་དེ་སློ་མ་སློབ་དཔོན་ག་རེ་ཡིན་ན་ཆང་མ་དེ་མིང་ཐོ་ཞིག་གི་ནང་ལ་རྒྱགས། ཡར་མིང་ཐོ་དེ་ག་རེ་ཐོན་ན་རང་རང་རྒྱུ་དེ་སྐྱོད་ལག་རེད། རྒྱུ་འཁེལ་ལ་རྒྱུ་མཉམ་ལ་མཉམ། དེ་མ་གཏོགས་ར་ཚོ་གྱིས་དེ་དཔེ་མི་སྲིད་པའི་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པའི་དམིགས་ལུ་དམིགས་བསལ་ཆགས་བསྐྱེད་གྱི་འདུག དེ་བྱས་ནས་མཐུན་འབྲེལ་དེ་སློབ་གྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། གས་རྒྱུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཐོག་སྐྱོན་ཞིག་བཟོ་ཚར་ན་དེ་ནས་རང་བཞིན་གྱི་དཀའ་ངལ་ཞིག་སྐྱེ་བ་བསྐྱེད་གྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། དེ་བྱས་ཡོང་དུས་དམི་ཚང་མ་དཔེ་སྐྱོད་པོ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། རང་རང་གིས་མིང་ཐོག་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡོང་དུས་གདམ་མོ་ཤོར། རྒྱུ་འཁེལ་སྐྱོད། གདམ་མོ་ཤོར། བདུན་ལ་བསྐྱེད་ཉན་མ་འགོ་མཁའ་དེ་ལ་གལ་སྲིད་གྱི་རེད། བདུན་ལ་བསྐྱེད་ཉན་འགོ་མཁའ་བདུན་ལ་མ་གལ་སྲིད་གྱི་རེད། གདམ་མོ་ཤོར་གྱི་རྒྱུ་མཚར་ལ་ཚོས་ཚོགས་བྱ་སྐྱིག་བྱས་མ་མོང་ན་སྐྱོད་ཆ་དེ་ཡོད་མ་རེད། དེ་དཔེ་དམིགས་བསལ་ཏེ།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

years, so too have the concerns and issues Tibetan Buddhist teachers face. During ITBSI's early years, for example, an important issue facing members was how to respond to TEPA's protests and criticism. As TEPA's protests quieted down and ITBSI strengthened its local partnerships, especially with Chinese Buddhist masters and with the ethnic Tibetan community in Taiwan, conversations have shifted to how Tibetan Buddhist teachers should engage in intra-religious dialogue as well as how best to minister to ethnic Tibetans in Taiwan.

Nevertheless, the overall need to continue to try to better understand the Taiwanese context has remained. As Kathok Rigdzin Chenmo summarized using an analogy during his closing remarks at the Tenth Forum, "if even parents and children are unable to really understand each other, then forget about [us] and our students... There must be a method. There has been a lot of talk today about what to name this [method] and I don't have the answer. But, in the future it would be good if more research was done [on this]."¹⁰⁸² Even after eleven meetings, discussions of how to successfully promote Tibetan Buddhism have continued to evolve and remain relevant to Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan today.

In short, ITBSI's Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forum have served as venues to discuss locally relevant methods of presenting Buddhism, to introduce newly arrived Tibetan Buddhist teachers to the work and projects of ITBSI, and as environments for intra-religious dialogue and discussion. The common denominator between the Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forums, educational classes, seminars, and other services that ITBSI offers Tibetan

¹⁰⁸² “དཔེར་ན་མ་མའ་དང་བུ་ཚ་གྱི་བར་ལ་སྐད་ཆ་ཞེ་དྲག་འཕྲོད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད། ང་རང་ཚོ་འོ་སློབ་མ་བར་ཞག... བཀའ་ལམ་ཞིག་དེས་པར་དུ་དགོས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཅེད། བཀའ་ལམ་དེ་ལ་མིང་གང་འདོག་ལ་སོགས་པ་དེ་རིང་མང་པོ་བཤད་མོང། ད་ངས་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད། དེ་གི་རྗེས་མར་མ་འོངས་པ་ལ་ཞིབ་འཇུག་བྱེད་ནས་འགྲོ་ཡག་དག་རང་རེད།” Ka thog rig 'dzin chen mo rin po che/ ཀ་ཐོག་རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་མོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, “Taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui de shi jie hongfa luntan: xiawu 台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會第十屆弘法論壇-下午” (Taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui di shi jie hongfa luntan 台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會第十屆弘法論壇/ Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa'i nang bstan dar spel bgro gleng skabs bcu pa/ བའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འཛོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པའི་ནང་བསྟན་དར་སྤེལ་བཀོ་སྐོང་སྐབས་བཅུ་པ།, Taipei, December 8, 2021), <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/videos/7737676773050>.

Buddhist teachers is the overall aim to assist Tibetan Buddhist teachers in developing and implementing contextually specific means of successfully spreading Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In this way, ITBSI has portrayed itself as a unifying body to Tibetan Buddhist teachers above the plethora of diverse and often insular dharma centers that characterize Tibetan Buddhism generally in Taiwan. While dharma centers mainly serve the needs of their members, ITBSI serves the needs of all Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.



Figure 38: Tibetan Buddhist teachers attending the Tenth Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Promotion Forum in 2021. Photo by author, 2021.

4.3. Intra-Buddhist Dialogue

Another avenue ITBSI has taken to localize Tibetan Buddhism within the Taiwanese religious landscape has been intra-religious engagement with other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. ITBSI has engaged primarily with Chinese Buddhist organizations and leaders, but has also dialogued with Theravāda teachers in Taiwan. By engaging with these leaders and partnering with their organizations, ITBSI has greatly increased the visibility of Tibetan

Buddhism among both leaders and followers of other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. In doing so, intra-religious dialogue and engagement has served as a critical means for ITBSI to claim a space alongside some of the leading Buddhist organizations in Taiwan and present Tibetan Buddhism as a local conversation partner and ally in efforts to propagate the buddhadharma.

Beyond passive engagement through opening its events to Chinese Buddhist nuns and monks, ITBSI has sought to actively engage with other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan through cooperation on projects and intra-religious dialogues. Foremost among its efforts have been a series of large-scale intra-Buddhist dialogues that ITBSI has either organized or co-organized with other Chinese Buddhist institutional partners. In 2011, for example, ITBSI organized the First International Forum on Southern, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism (第一屆國際南傳, 漢傳, 藏傳佛教論壇, ལྷོ་རྒྱ་བོད་གསུམ་ནང་བསྟན་འགྲུབ་ལུང་ལྷན་ཁྲིའི་བཞུགས་མོལ་ཚོགས་འདུ་ཐེངས་དང་པོ།), which was held at National Taiwan Normal University (國際台灣師範大學).¹⁰⁸³ The event brought together over twenty speakers from Tibetan, Chinese, and Theravāda organizations.

As a summary of this event reveals, ITBSI took a very conciliatory approach to other Buddhist traditions. In an article in ITBSI's periodical, for example, it states that "Buddhism has been transmitted for two and a half thousand years. Although there are geographical and cultural differences, if one traces the roots of the Southern [Theravāda], Chinese, and Tibetan branches, they all are Buddha's disciples who take refuge in the Three Jewels. They all are a part of the family of the Tathāgata."¹⁰⁸⁴ Having acknowledged the common roots of all Buddhist traditions

¹⁰⁸³ "Lho rgya bod gsum nang bstan rig gzhang brje len gyi bzhugs mol/ ལྷོ་རྒྱ་བོད་གསུམ་ནང་བསྟན་འགྲུབ་ལུང་ལྷན་ཁྲིའི་བཞུགས་མོལ།," Radio Free Asia, September 18, 2011, <https://www.rfa.org/tibetan/sargyur/tibet-09182011210254.html>.

¹⁰⁸⁴ "佛法歷經兩個半世紀的流傳, 雖地域文化等差異, 而有南傳、漢傳、藏傳之分, 追溯其根源, 舉凡皈依三寶的佛弟子, 皆是如來家族的一份子" Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, "Di yi jie guoji nanchuan, hanchuan, zangchuan fojiao luntan 第一屆國際南傳, 漢傳, 藏傳佛教論壇," *Jue guang* 覺光, 2013.

The Tathāgata or "Thus Come One" is one of the ten most common epithets for a buddha.

and their equal commitment to the buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, ITBSI’s statement continues in a unifying tone, describing the aspiration that through this Forum and future dialogues “[we] should increase our mutual understanding, establish channels for communication and dialogue, search for unity and common ground amidst [our] differences, and be in solidarity and cooperate to spread the buddhadharma around the world.”¹⁰⁸⁵ It is notable that in these statements, ITBSI avoids using the pejorative terms “Lesser Vehicle” or “Hīnayāna” (ཐེགས་པ་དམན་པ།/ཐེགས་པ་རྒྱུད་པ།) for Theravāda Buddhism, although these are still very commonly used by many Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Tibetan speakers today. The consistent use of the term “Southern Tradition” (ཕྱོད་བརྒྱུད།) for Theravāda Buddhism across ITBSI’s publications, statements, and posts further evidences their conciliatory attitude and interest in engaging other Buddhist traditions.

ITBSI hoped that this First International Forum on Southern, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism would extend its connections and local network among fellow Buddhist organizations. This was likely a part of ITBSI’s broader strategy to counter criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism through engaging with and gaining allies among other Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. Additionally, ITBSI may have been attempting to root Tibetan Buddhism deeper within the Taiwanese religious landscape by positioning Tibetan Buddhism as one of three major branches of Buddhism present in Taiwan. Whatever its intentions, ITBSI’s call for increased mutual understanding, further channels of communication, and greater cooperation at the first intra-Buddhist gathering was not an empty platitude. Rather, it served as the foundation for several subsequent intra-religious dialogues that ITBSI has organized over the ensuing decade.

¹⁰⁸⁵ “應增進彼此間認識，成就交流對話管道，在異中求同達到共識，團結合作推廣佛法到全世界。” Guojizangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會.

Building on the success of the first intra-Buddhist dialogue, ITBSI organized the Second and Third International Forums on Southern, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism in 2013 and 2015. Unlike the first Forum, however, ITBSI did not convene these gatherings alone, but rather in cooperation with other Taiwanese Buddhist organizations. ITBSI co-organized the 2013 Forum with the Department of Religious Studies at Xuanzang University (玄奘大學) and the Theravāda Samādhi Education Association (原始佛法三摩地學會), as well as ten other organizations.¹⁰⁸⁶ Held on a much larger scale than the first, the second Forum was attended by over 500 people and included a number of high-profile guests. These included the Taiwanese Minister of Culture, Li Hongyuan (李鴻源 b. 1956), the Mayor of Taipei, Hao Longbin (郝龍斌 b. 1952), Ganden Tripa Rinzong Rinpoché, Venerable Bodagama Chandima (b. 1957), Master Haitao (海濤法師 b. 1958), and Master Mingguang (明光法師 b. 1952) among others.¹⁰⁸⁷

For the 2015 Forum, ITBSI partnered with the Chinese Buddhist organizations LifeTV (生命電視台) and the Huafan Cultural and Educational Foundation (華梵文教基金會). In addition to speeches and panel discussions by thirty plus participants, this two-day dialogue also featured ritual dance by a group of Tibetan Buddhist monastics and was livestreamed online by

¹⁰⁸⁶ These were the Chinese Young Buddhist Association (中華佛教青年會), the Amala Association (中華維曼學會), the Chinese Lay Buddhist Association (中華佛教居士會), Shanxifang International Co. Ltd. (山喜房國際事業有限公司), NTU Sunrise (台大晨曦社), Lamrim World-Denshi Buddhist Center (四諦講修佛學會), the Buddha Educational Foundation (佛陀教育基金會), the New Taipei City Dharma Radiance Buddhist Association (新北市法明學佛會), Jia Nan Buddhist Goods Co. Ltd. (嘉南佛教文物有限公司), and the Zheng Zaichuan Memorial Association (鄭再傳紀念基金會). International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་གླིང་། རོ་འཕྲོ་ལོ་ལྷན་ཁང་།, “Ershiyi shiji de fo fa guoji nanchuan, hanchuan, zangchuan fojiao luntan 二十一世紀的佛法 國際南傳, 漢傳, 藏傳佛教論壇,” Facebook, March 30, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/112525925571438/posts/168496973307666>.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Zhonghua fojiao jushihui 中華佛教居士會, “Ershiyi shiji de fofa: guoji nanchuan, hanchuan, zangchuan fojiao luntan 二十一世紀的佛法:國際南傳、漢傳、藏傳佛教論壇,” Zhonghua fojiao jushihui 中華佛教居士會, April 3, 2013, http://www.lbaroc.org/subject_in.php?id=603.

LifeTV. ITBSI was not alone in its positive assessment of this dialogue.¹⁰⁸⁸ LifeTV also praised the event, ending their summary with the aspiration that the Third Forum would “promote the interaction and even integration among Buddhism’s different linguistic and geographic traditions, while still respecting and preserving their unique Buddhist cultures and practices. Embracing bodhicitta together, [we] walk toward contemporary times, benevolently guiding all sentient beings.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Accordingly, ITBSI’s efforts to cultivate ties with other Buddhist traditions were reciprocated by organizations like LifeTV, who also saw these dialogues as beneficial.

The most recent dialogue in 2019 was re-dubbed the International Forum on Tri-Tradition Buddhism (國際佛教三傳高峰論壇, hereafter IFTB). Significantly elevating the profile of ITBSI’s intra-Buddhist dialogues, this event was co-organized with the Buddhist Association of New Taipei City (新北市佛教會) and the Dhammakaya Center of Taiwan (台灣法身寺禪修協會) and held to a full house in the tenth floor auditorium of the impressive Taipei Grand Hotel (圓山大飯店). The IFTB featured a lineup of international guest speakers from Tibetan, Chinese, and Theravāda Buddhist traditions, including nuns, monks, lay teachers, and scholars from many well-known Taiwanese Buddhist organizations such as Buddha’s Light Mountain, Dharma Drum Mountain, and the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC). It also featured live translation of speeches given in English, Chinese, and Tibetan

¹⁰⁸⁸ Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརློང་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “brGyud gsum bgro gleng thengs gsum pa/ བརློང་གསུམ་བཟོ་སྒྲིང་ཟེངས་གསུམ་པ།,” Tha’e wan rgyal spyi’i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ ཐའེ་ཡན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརློང་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://www.theitb.org/news-and-events-bo/the-3rd-international-theravada-bo>.

¹⁰⁸⁹ “希冀促進各國語系佛教間的互動乃至融合，尊重且保存各自特有的佛教文化與修行方式，共同懷抱著菩提心走向現代，慈悲接引芸芸眾生。” Shengming dianshitai 生命電視台, “104-08-29、31 Zhongying ba de dalou 2015 di san jie nanchuan, hanchuan, zangchuan fojiao luntan 中影八德大樓 2015 第三屆南傳·漢傳·藏傳佛教論壇,” Shengming dianshitai 生命電視台 LIFETV, accessed October 3, 2023, http://www.lifetv.org.tw/a_news/1040831.html.

and a digital livestream.¹⁰⁹⁰ As with earlier Forums, the principle aim of this event was to discuss different aspects of the Buddhist teachings and Buddhism's development in the twenty-first century from the perspectives of diverse Buddhist traditions.

Through engaging with other Buddhist organizations in dialogue through these Forums, ITBSI significantly increased its local network of Buddhist partners, especially among Chinese Buddhism, and its public presence within Taiwan. As noted above, building relationships with local Buddhist organizations has been an important strategy ITBSI's leaders have pursued to counter critiques of Tibetan Buddhism through making personal connections with Chinese Buddhist leaders and demonstrating their equal commitment to following and disseminating the teachings of the Buddha. ITBSI's leaders sharing the stage with important Taiwanese Buddhist teachers, such as Master Jingyao (淨耀法師 b. 1954), Master Haitao, Master Shih Chao-hwei (釋昭慧法師 b. 1957), and Master Mingguang, also demonstrate these Chinese Buddhist leaders' endorsement of Tibetan Buddhism to their own monastic and lay followers.

The positive responses ITBSI has received from participants across Buddhist traditions testify to the success of these efforts. For example, Master Jingyao, Chairman of BAROC and the Buddhist Association of New Taipei City, stated during his closing remarks to the IFTB,

It's normal for everyone to each have different opinions. Because if you personally look deeply into the Buddhist scriptures, you'll know that [one of] the Buddha's skillful means said this and another skillful means said that. There are so many different Teachings according to the different karmic conditions of beings. [I] hope that our encounter today will be based on how the Truth can be revealed from the standpoint of different Teachings. This is the most important [outcome] for us who have come to participate in this forum today.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁹⁰ Recordings of the livestream can still be accessed on IFTB's Facebook page: International Forum on Tri-tradition Buddhism, "IFTB," Facebook, accessed August 29, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100070152318297>.

¹⁰⁹¹ “大家彼此有不同的意見就是很正常的因為你本身如果能夠深入經藏你就會知道說佛陀的方便說，那個方便說，誰的不同的因緣有太多不同的說法。我們今天希望我們的相處是從不同的說法當中裡面怎麼樣能夠讓真理，能夠這個展現，這才是我們今天來參與這個論壇最重要的。” International Forum on Tri-tradition Buddhism, “2019 fojiao san chuan gaofeng luntan yu 10/6 taibei yuan shanda fandian zhibo... 2019 佛教三傳高峰

Here, Master Jingyao praises the Forum for providing a venue to discuss the multiplicity of approaches to expounding the Buddha's teachings. He confirms that the teachings of Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhism are all ways to reveal the "Truth" of the Buddha's teachings. In doing so, Master Jingyao confirms the (at least relative) parity among diverse Buddhist traditions. Furthermore, by virtue of his position as leader of BAROC, an organization that even after 1989 continued to claim it represented all Buddhists in Taiwan,¹⁰⁹² Master Jingyao validates the co-existence of Chinese, Tibetan, and Theravāda Buddhist traditions in Taiwan. Such validation by the head of an important local Buddhist organization testifies to the success of ITBSI's efforts to support Tibetan Buddhism becoming a more active player in Taiwan's religious landscape.

In addition to increasing ITBSI's network of local partner organizations, the intra-Buddhist Forums have also helped ITBSI to position itself as a local representative of Tibetan Buddhism. As the only Tibetan Buddhist organization at these forums, ITBSI positions itself in as an umbrella organization, representing one of the tri-fold Buddhist traditions present at these forums. Not only was ITBSI representing all of Tibetan Buddhism at these dialogues, it was doing so as an organization based in Taiwan, with leaders who spoke in Chinese alongside Taiwanese-born Chinese Buddhist leaders, and representing communities of Taiwanese disciples. In this way, ITBSI's co-convening of these forums is not only a way of combating critiques of Tibetan Buddhism as not being "real Buddhism," but also of publicly claiming a place for Tibetan Buddhism within the broader Buddhist landscape of Taiwan.

ITBSI has pursued intra-Buddhist cooperation across several other fronts beyond these forums. One area has been intra-Buddhist celebrations of the Buddha's birthday (佛誕日/佛誕

論壇於 10/6 台北圓山大飯店直播...," Facebook, October 6, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/100070152318297/videos/2161605647473952>.

¹⁰⁹² Laliberté, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003*, 45-65.

節, ལྷོན་པའི་འཁྲུངས་སྐར།). For many years ITBSI sent members to participate in celebrations of the Buddha’s birthday held by Chinese Buddhist organizations, such as Tzu Chi,¹⁰⁹³ as well as an intra-Buddhist celebration organized by the Taipei City government in 2017.¹⁰⁹⁴ In 2021, ITBSI deepened its commitment to an annual intra-sectarian celebration of the Buddha’s birthday by co-founding the Unified Buddha’s Birthday Promotion Committee (統一佛誕日促進會, ལྷོན་པའི་འཁྲུངས་སྐར་གཅིག་གྱུར་འབོད་སྐྱེལ་ལྷན་ཚོགས།) with BAROC and the Taiwan Theravāda Buddhist Association (台灣南傳佛教協會).¹⁰⁹⁵ Since 2021, this group has co-organized intra-Buddhist celebrations with other local partners, such as Venerable Da Hui (大慧法師 b. 1971), chairperson of the Chinese Young Buddhist Association, and convened annual gatherings of devotees of Chinese, Tibetan, and Theravāda Buddhism. This ecumenical work has received support from numerous

¹⁰⁹³ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “(Gengxin tupian) yinwei tebie shou yao, fu yan huisuo dailing de sanshi duo wei shangshi... (更新圖片) 因為特別受邀, 佛研會所帶領的三十多位上師...,” Facebook, May 8, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid08KGsveW7pHHa5KJ5E4JwcpPkYJk2ne2dYx3bSe3XbMxJe9taCK8FNwRjSp5QCcq8l>.

¹⁰⁹⁴ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།, “Fodan ri zangchuan fojiao zai taiwan 佛誕日及藏傳佛教在台灣,” Facebook, May 15, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid06UaMVQVCxanqp5wkJRAs7E4rnG9f8jbQV6RaS6Hhn4hLokmyoFuLixutScdmMBJ4l>.

¹⁰⁹⁵ A copy of this committee’s founding charter can be found here: Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, “Fodan jie 佛誕節,” Guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui 國際藏傳佛教研究會, May 1, 2021, <https://www.theitb.org/zh/buddha-day-zh; Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/> བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “sTon pa'i dus chen/ ལྷོན་པའི་དུས་ཚེ།,” Tha'e wan rgyal spyi'i bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug tshogs pa/ བེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ།, May 10, 2021, <https://www.theitb.org/bo/buddha-day-bo>.

local Buddhist leaders, such as the abbot of Dharma Drum Mountain, Master Guohui (果暉法師 b. 1958),¹⁰⁹⁶ as well as global Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhist leaders.¹⁰⁹⁷

ITBSI has also engaged with other Buddhist communities by participating in funerary ceremonies for Chinese Buddhist teachers. Two recent examples followed the passing of Pure Land teacher Master Chin Kung in July 2022, and the founder of Buddha’s Light Mountain, Master Hsingyun in February 2023. In the first case, ITBSI organized eighteen of its members to attend services in Tainan,¹⁰⁹⁸ while in the second case ITBSI sent twenty-three monks to Kaohsiung for the funeral.¹⁰⁹⁹ Resembling the disaster responses described above, ITBSI’s mobilization of its members within a day of each master’s passing demonstrated its deep respect for these Chinese Buddhist masters. Even more than that, the presence of one and a half or two dozen Tibetan Buddhist monastics seated in the first rows of the mourning devotees of these Chinese Buddhist masters also manifested the important presence of Tibetan Buddhism within the broader Buddhist landscape of Taiwan.

¹⁰⁹⁶ International International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་གླིང་ཐོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཟུང་།, “Qiantian, taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui (qian zhuxi)... 前天, 台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會 (前主席) ...,” Facebook, April 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid0taoaE8gVwe1uAaDXR7FS7xuRKzmT5q7PGxhucrNtn8ZVJxa9VQ1ErFJjdUEAtefgl>.

¹⁰⁹⁷ For the complete statements of all the Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhist leaders who endorse this effort, see: *Theravada Venerables’ Appeal for the Unification of Vesak. Laizi nanchuan fojiao gaoseng zhi guoji tongyi fodaan huyu* 來自南傳佛教高僧之國際統一佛誕呼籲, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX_gsCloHow; *Tibetan Venerables’ Appeal for the Unification of Vesak. Laizi zangchuan fojiao gaoseng zhi guoji tongyi fodaan huyu* 來自藏傳佛教高僧之國際統一佛誕呼籲, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqpzmZsLM4o>.

¹⁰⁹⁸ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་གླིང་ཐོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཟུང་།, “Jin ri 2022/07/27 taiwan guoji zangchuan fojiao yanjiuhui... 今日 2022/07/27 台灣國際藏傳佛教研究會...,” Facebook, July 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid023J1M32cDhwtieKreuffTMphVKzbbsg4CnqcjZ8uHAgjcM5R4x9QaYhjRyRX8b8whl>.

¹⁰⁹⁹ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐེ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་གླིང་ཐོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བཟུང་།, “Foguang shan kaishan zongzhang. guoji foguang hui chuangan ren xingyun fashi yu er yue wu ri xiawu shiji... 佛光山開山宗長、國際佛光會創辦人星雲法師於二月五日下午示寂...,” Facebook, January 6, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid02eFGpbv7XBzAM9Tkfy2JSpUf7Wdg7vxXnpVuMYHB4b6fjETB5GzYwAkxWTqG2sYynl>.

Through all of these projects, ITBSI has engaged and deepened its relations with other Buddhist organizations and leaders across Taiwan. By demonstrating respect for as their eagerness to partner with other local Buddhist traditions and masters, ITBSI has also claimed a space for Tibetan Buddhism within the broader Taiwanese religious landscape as an important spiritual tradition with local communities of teachers and disciples. Through ITBSI's efforts, Tibetan Buddhist clerics have increasingly become critical dialogue partners, important ritual participants, and distinguished guests at Buddhist activities across Taiwan. Accordingly, intra-Buddhist engagement has elevated ITBSI's place within the broader Buddhist institutional landscape of Taiwan, marking it as both a Tibetan Buddhist and a Taiwanese organization.

4.4. Ministering to Tibetans in Taiwan

Finally, one of ITBSI's newest initiatives has involved increasing outreach among ethnic lay Tibetans in Taiwan. While the number of lay Tibetans in Taiwan has fluctuated significantly over the past seventy-five years, there are currently only several hundred ethnic Tibetans living in Taiwan. In its most recent demographic survey, TRFDL recorded 311 Tibetans resident in Taiwan in 2022/2023.¹¹⁰⁰ 2022 data from the MTCC, on the other hand, reports that there are 674 Tibetans in 347 households who are either permanent residents or citizens of Taiwan.¹¹⁰¹ Neither statistic differentiates between lay and monastic Tibetans. A plurality of Tibetans live in northern Taiwan, especially in and around Taoyuan where many of them work in Taiwanese factories.¹¹⁰² Although there is a concentration of Tibetans along Taoying Road in Taoyuan,¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰⁰ Secretary of Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, personal communication with author, December 14, 2023.

¹¹⁰¹ "Zai tai zang bao ji juliu zangren renkou shu 在臺藏胞及居留藏人人口數。"

¹¹⁰² Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, interview with author, Taipei, September 10, 2022.

¹¹⁰³ Yang Zhiqiang 楊智強, "Weishenme lai, wang nali qu: lai tai zangren de lisan zuji yu xuanze 為什麼來、往哪裡去: 來台藏人的離散足跡與選擇," Baodao zhe 報導者 The Reporter, May 20, 2021, <https://www.twreporter.org/a/exiled-tibetan-in-taiwan>.

Taiwan has no large Tibetan ethnic enclave such as in New Delhi, Kathmandu, New York City, or Toronto.

One of the primary facilitators of community among Tibetans in Taiwan today is the Tibetan Welfare Association in Taiwan (hereafter, TWAT). TWAT was founded under the auspices of TRFDL in 2004. According to their mission statement, TWAT places a strong emphasis on pursuing political activities to support the Tibetan cause and promoting Tibetan Buddhism. Among their core values, they note that “The continuity of the Tibetan faith and identity are paramount”¹¹⁰⁴ and that “It is incumbent upon all Tibetans to help one another and support the community, and its members must maintain the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with a particular emphasis on kindness and compassion.”¹¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, TWAT often invites Tibetan Buddhist leaders and includes religious practices, such as making offerings and reciting prayers, in their events. Although the few hundred lay Tibetans that TWAT represents pale in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists, this modest group has recently become an active partner with ITBSI in working to transmit Tibetan language, religion, and culture to the next generation of Tibetans born in Taiwan.

ITBSI first became involved with TWAT after Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel became ITBSI’s chairman in 2020. Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel explained that after he took office, one of his priorities was to do more to engage and serve the local lay Tibetan community. As a first step, he reached out and invited TWAT’s leadership to a meeting. Recalling this meeting, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel noted how his primary objective was to see which areas ITBSI could be of assistance to

¹¹⁰⁴ “西藏信仰和身份的連續性是最重要的。”

¹¹⁰⁵ “所有藏人都有責任互相幫助和支持社區，其成員必須遵守達賴喇嘛尊者的教義，特別強調仁慈和同情心。” TWAT’s full statement is published in both Chinese and English. Taiwan Tibetan Welfare Association 在台藏人福利協會, “About Taiwan Tibetan Welfare Association zai tai zangren fulu xiehui 在台藏人福利協會,” Facebook, accessed August 17, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/Tibetantaiwanassociation/about_details.

the Tibetan community. “I asked [them] what is your [TWAT’s] situation? How can we help you? Since we are an apolitical organization, what benefits can our Tibetan Buddhist dharma and culture bring [to TWAT]? From the side of the Buddhist teachings, what would be of benefit to you? Regarding culture, linguistic revitalization and so forth, what can we do [to assist you]?”¹¹⁰⁶

The then-president of TWAT recalled this meeting in similar terms, noting that Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel also expressed concern about the potential loss of Tibetan religion and language among ethnic Tibetans and especially among Tibetan children born in Taiwan. The former-TWAT president noted that “the teachers of ITBSI were very worried. Tibetans and Tibetan children in Taiwan don’t study Tibetan religion and culture, you know? They’ll [only] preserve these things for a short time. But after a while, they’ll just be totally forgotten.”¹¹⁰⁷ Having spread Tibetan Buddhism so widely among Taiwanese, ITBSI became concerned that Tibetan children born in Taiwan would lose touch with their religious and cultural heritage, as well as their language. Accordingly, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel wanted to find ways that ITBSI could help provide religious and linguistic education to the Taiwanese Tibetan community.

After the initial meeting between the leadership of ITBSI and TWAT, several different projects emerged. First, ITBSI supported TWAT in locating and opening a community center for Tibetans in Taiwan. Prior to this, TWAT’s events were held primarily in rented locations as they did not have a permanent space of their own. While they initially looked at locations in Taipei, eventually ITBSI and TWAT’s leaders located an older building in Taoyuan closer to where

1106 “ཁྱོད་ཚོ་དེ་གནས་སྐབས་ལ་འདྲ་རེད་ཟེར། ང་ཚོ་གྲིས་རོགས་པ་གཤམ་བྱེད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་རེད་ཟེར། ང་ཚོ་ཚབ་སྲིད་དང་མ་འབྲེལ་བའི་ཚོགས་པ་ཡིན་ཅང་ང་ཚོ་གྱི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཚོས་དང་རིག་གཞུང་གི་ག་རེ་ག་རེ་མེད་ཐོག་གི་རེད། ཚོས་ཀྱི་ཕྱོགས་ནས་ཁྱོད་ཚོ་ལ་ག་རེ་མེད་ཐོག་གི་རེད། རིག་གཞུང་གི་ཐོག་ནས་ད་སྐད་ཡིག་ཉམས་གསོ་དེ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ག་རེ་བྱེད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་འདུག་ཟེར།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

1107 “ཞེ་བ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་གྱི་སྐྱེ་མ་དང་དགེ་བཤེས་དེ་ཚོས་ཁོ་རང་ཚོ་དེ་སེམས་ཁྲུལ་དཔེ་འདུག། ཐའེ་ཕན་ནང་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་བོད་པའི་ཕྱ་གུ་དང་མི་དེ་ཚོ་བོད་པའི་ཚོས་དང་རིག་གཞུང་དེ་ཚོ་ལ་སློབ་སྟོན་ཞིག་མ་བྱེད་ན་མི་འདུག་གས། དུས་ཚོད་ཉོག་ཅམ་ཉར་འགོ་འདུག། ཡིན་ན་རྗེས་སུ་དངོས་གནས་འཇུག་ཤོར་ཞེ་པོ་བྱུང་ས་རེད།” Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, interview with author, Taipei, September 10, 2022.

many Tibetans lived.¹¹⁰⁸ ITBSI financed renovations of the building and agreed to pay the 10,000 NTD (approximately 325 USD) monthly rent.¹¹⁰⁹ Finally, on September 27, 2020 the Ka Kha Ga Nga Tibetan Community Hall (ཀཾཁཾགང་བོད་རིགས་ཚོགས་ཁང་།, 西藏之家) opened with a ceremony attended by more than a hundred Tibetan Buddhist clerics, laity, and the CTA’s Representative in Taiwan.¹¹¹⁰ Since this space was opened, TWAT regularly utilizes it for meetings, social gatherings, holiday celebrations, and classes for the Tibetan community.



Figure 39: Members of ITBSI and TWAT relaxing together following preparations for the Second Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual n Sanxia District, New Taipei City. Photo by author, 2022.

In addition to the Tibetan Community Hall, ITBSI has supported Taiwan’s Tibetan community through offering a variety of educational and religious services. After the Tibetan Community Hall was opened, ITBSI’s leaders organized a rotating schedule of teachers from

¹¹⁰⁸ Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, interview with author, Taipei, September 10, 2022.

¹¹⁰⁹ Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

¹¹¹⁰ Taiwan Tibetan Welfare Association 在台藏人福利協會, “2020 lo’i phyi zla 9 tshes 27 res gza’ nyi mar the sdod bod rigs ka kha ga nga tshogs khang rten ’brel sgo ’byed zhu ba... 2020 ལོའི་ལྷིང་ལོ་ཚེས་27 རེས་གཟའ་ཉི་མའ་ཐེངས་བཅུ་དྲུག་བོད་རིགས་ཀྱི་ཁ་གསལ་ཚོགས་ཁང་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་སློབ་བྱིན་ལུ་...,” Facebook, September 28, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Tibetantaiwanassociation/posts/pfbid02Ho2qi4uKZV28qZpS6y4g6DZmqTXycMgKgclqCKqWVuParnCT1XED4CA8fUwKnWuJl>.

different schools of Tibetan Buddhism who taught classes there twice a month.¹¹¹¹ While the initial classes focused Tibetan language, later ITBSI's members also started to teach introductory classes on Buddhism. These classes were offered mostly for the children of Tibetan immigrants, few of whom could read or write in Tibetan. According to the former president of TWAT, many Tibetan children born in Taiwan do not learn Tibetan from their parents or speak it at home. Accordingly, one of the goals of these classes has been to foster a Tibetan language environment to encourage youth to learn and use their parents' native language.¹¹¹² Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these classes were temporarily stopped between May 2021 and April 2022.¹¹¹³

ITBSI has also offered numerous religious services to TWAT. These include leading prayers at holiday gatherings, such as the Tibetan new year and the Dalai Lama's birthday. They also include organizing large scale events for the local Tibetan community, such as the Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual (མ་རྒྱ་གུ་འབྲུག་ཚོགས་ཆེན་མོ།, 蓮師十萬大薈供法會) or Guru Bum Tsok, which was first held in November 2021. The idea behind this ritual was to organize a special prayer ceremony primarily for Tibetans in Taiwan. The former president of TWAT explained that very few Tibetans visit local dharma centers due to language and cultural barriers and that attendees at public Tibetan Buddhist events are virtually all Taiwanese.¹¹¹⁴ As a result, ITBSI's former chairman Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel explained that ITBSI wanted an event especially for local Tibetans. To be truly non-sectarian, ITBSI decided this event should be

¹¹¹¹ Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, personal communication with author, November 12, 2022.

¹¹¹² Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, personal communication with author, November 12, 2022.

¹¹¹³ Taiwan Tibetan Welfare Association 在台藏人福利協會, "Resume Buddhist Teaching Programme at Taoyoun Tibetan Community Hall...," Facebook, March 28, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/Tibetantaiwanassociation/posts/pfbid02bpq1SpF9dGeXEfcTs98gUMS33xx45gJcNLWRHDnWfgGUw8PTEhCbCy1b4XPHucoWl>.

¹¹¹⁴ Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, interview with author, Taipei, September 10, 2022.

dedicated to Guru Rinpoché, a figure universally revered across all schools of Tibetan Buddhism.¹¹¹⁵

ITBSI explained their reasoning through posts in both Tibetan and Chinese, noting that,

Not only is the Precious Guru [Guru Rinpoché] the special destined deity of Tibet, the Snowy Land, but also at the time of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, the tradition was established that the Tibetan central government and large district [governments] regularly performed rituals [to Guru Rinpoché] on the tenth day of the Tibetan month especially to pacify the decline of the teachings and beings. At the present time, due to this being the unanimous wish of the lamas and deities, [they] have repeatedly taught that there is nothing greater than accumulating collective merit and offering supplications to Guru Rinpoché, who pacifies all outer and inner obstacles. Similarly, primarily in Dharamsala and many other places, [people] continue to celebrate an annual great accumulation ritual for Guru Rinpoché. As it is timely for the dharma and for all classes of beings, [we thought] if [we] could commence a similar accumulation ritual here in Taiwan [we would] see great benefit. Accordingly, [we] requested to organize it.¹¹¹⁶

In other words, the leadership of ITBSI and TWAT decided to organize a prayer ceremony to a figure universally revered by Buddhists across Tibet and the Himalayas. As rituals for Guru Rinpoché have been regularly held for centuries in Tibetan Buddhist communities, and more recently among Tibetan communities living in South Asia, ITBSI and TWAT’s leaders thought that it would be beneficial to organize a similar ritual for the Tibetan community in Taiwan.

The first Guru Bum Tsok was held on November 14, 2021, at a private temple deep in the hills of New Taipei City’s Sanxia District. According to a summary published by ITBSI, the full-

¹¹¹⁵ Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

¹¹¹⁶ “སྒྲོབ་དཔོན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ནི་བོད་ཁ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་སྐོན་མོང་མིན་པའི་ལྷ་སྐལ་ཡིན་པར་མ་ཟད་ཡ་རྒྱལ་དབང་ལྷ་མེད་པའི་དུས་ནས་བོད་ཀྱི་གཞུང་ས་དང་རྫོང་ཆེན་ལག་ཏུ་འདེད་པའི་དུས་ལ་བསམ་བློས་བྱས་ནས་མཚན་གཏན་འཇགས་ཀྱི་སྲོལ་གཏོད་པ་དང་། དུས་འདྲིར་ཡང་ལྷ་སྐལ་འདེད་པའི་གཅིག་མཐུན་གྱིས་སྐྱི་མཐུན་གྱི་བསོད་ནམས་གསོལ་པ་དང་། ཕྱི་ནང་གི་བར་ཆད་སེལ་བར་གྱུ་བྱ་རྒྱུ་ཡིན་པའི་ཆེད་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་པ་ལས་གཤམ་ཆེ་བ་མེད་པའི་བཀའ་ལུང་ཡང་ཡང་གནང་བའི་དགོངས་དོན་བཞིན། བཞུགས་སྐར་གཙོ་བོར་གྱུར་པའི་ས་གནས་དུ་མར་གྱུ་བྱའི་ཚོགས་འབུམ་ཆེན་མོ་ལོ་རེ་བཞིན་འཚོགས་ཀྱིན་ཡོད་པ་ལྟར་གྱི་དུས་སུ་བབས་པའི་བསྐྱེད་འགྲོ་སྤྱི་རིམ་ཞིག་ཡིན་པ་ལྟར། མཉམས་འདྲིར་ཡང་ཚོགས་འབུམ་འདི་འདྲ་ཞིག་ཚུགས་སུ་བཞུགས་ན་ཉ་ཅང་དགེ་མཚན་ཆེ་བར་མཐོང་ནས་གོ་སློབ་ཀྱིས་ཞིག་ཡིན་ལ།” International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བེ་མཚན་གྱིས་སྤྱི་ལོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྐྱེད། “Tha’e wan du ma hA gu ru’i ’bum tshogs thengs dang po/ མཉམས་འདྲིར་ཡང་ཚོགས་འབུམ་འདི་འདྲ་བེད་པར་བློ།” Facebook, November 16, 2021,

<https://www.facebook.com/itbsi/posts/pfbid025PfTS9uT2pRPJiwTrUxK5BHNnbFXdC993Tf7UQDm3WuE3D6gELhqKZ2qRhDmKtDrl>

day event was attended by nearly one hundred Tibetan Buddhist clerics with diverse sectarian affiliations as well as more than one hundred lay Tibetans. The event was positively received, causing “feelings of happiness and joy to arise unanimously in everyone” involved,¹¹¹⁷ and demonstrated effective collaboration between the leaderships of ITBSI and TWAT.

In 2022 for the second year of the Guru Bum Tsok, ITBSI and TWAT expanded the scale of their cooperation. Some of the leadership thought that since participants in the Guru Bum Tsok were engaging in esoteric tantric practices, it would be most appropriate if they first received an empowerment for these practices.¹¹¹⁸ As Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché had already been invited to preside over the second Guru Bum Tsok, leaders from ITBSI and TWAT requested that he first give a Guru Rinpoché empowerment for the Tibetan community. Instead of a small event only for Tibetans, the two organizations co-organized a public empowerment at the Taipei International Convention Center (臺北國際會議中心), which was attended by some seventy Tibetan Buddhist monastics, fifty Chinese Buddhist monastics, 190 Tibetans, and over 700 Taiwanese devotees.¹¹¹⁹ The second Guru Bum Tsok held on the following weekend was more strictly oriented at the Tibetan community, with over eighty lay Tibetan adults, several dozen children, and more than one hundred Tibetan Buddhist clerics in attendance.

The third Guru Bum Tsok was held on September 17th, 2023, and was attended by nearly two hundred Tibetan Buddhist clerics and lay Tibetans. Khokhyim Rinpoché from Mindröling Monastery (མེན་མོལ་གླིང་དགོན་པ།, 敏珠林寺) presided over the ceremony. In an article about the

¹¹¹⁷ “ལི་མང་ཚང་མ་ཉ་ཅང་དགའ་ཚོར་དང་སྤོ་སྤང་ཆེན་པོ་བྱུང་མགིན་དབང་ལ་གཅིག་གྱུར་བྱུང་འདུག” International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 ཐེ་མན་རྒུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན།.

¹¹¹⁸ Lama Yönten Rinpoché, personal communication with author, November 16, 2022.

¹¹¹⁹ ཐེ་མན་རྒུལ་སྤྱིའི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞེས་འབྲུག་ཚོགས་པ།, “འབྲི་གུང་ཡསྱུབས་མགོན་ཡིན་པོ་ཆེས་ཐེ་མན་དུ་དད་ལྷན་རྟོར་ཕྱག་ལྷག་ལ་མ་རྒྱ་གུ་འུའི་བཀའ་དབང་གནང་།,” བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ།, November 8, 2022, <https://tibettimes.net/2022/11/08/222852/>.

gathering, ITBSI stressed its benefits for connecting the lay and monastic Tibetan communities in Taiwan and for transmitting Tibetan Buddhism to the next generation of Tibetans born in Taiwan. Their post noted: “Through promoting this type of special movement specifically for Tibetans [living] in Taiwan, the connections for many attendees between monastics and local Tibetans are deepened. It was of special benefit for helping to create good religious and cultural habits for the children and the idea of establishing [it] arose harmoniously.”¹¹²⁰



Figure 40: Prayers offered by both lay Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhist monastics at the Second Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual in 2022. Photo by author, 2022.

1120 “ཚོགས་ཞུགས་པ་མང་པོ་ཞིག་གིས། ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་བོད་པ་རང་གི་ཆེད་དུ་གཙོ་བོར་དམིགས་པའི་ལས་འགུལ་འདི་འདྲ་ཞིག་གྲེལ་ཐུབ་པ་དེས་དགེ་འདུན་པ་དང་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་བོད་རིགས་བར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་ལམ་ཟབ་དུ་གཏོང་བ་དང་། ལྷན་པར་དུ་ཕྱུ་གུ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚོས་དང་རིག་གཞུང་གི་བག་ཆགས་ཡག་པོ་ཞིག་འཛོག་ཐུབ་པ་སོགས་ལ་དམིགས་བསལ་ཡན་ཐོགས་ཆེན་པོ་བྱུང་དང་འབྲུང་བཞིན་པ་ཡིན་པའི་བསམ་ཚུལ་གཅིག་མཐུན་བྱུང་ཡོད་པ་དང་།” Bod brgyud nang bstan zhib ’jug tshogs pa/ བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཛུགས་ཚོགས་པ།, “Tha’e wan du ma hA gu ru’i ’bum tshogs thengs gsum pa ’tshogs/ ཐའེ་ཡན་དུ་མ་རྟུ་གུ་རུ་འི་འབྲུམ་ཚོགས་ཐེངས་གསུམ་པ་འཛོགས།,” Bod kyi dus bab/ བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ།, September 19, 2023, <https://tibettimes.net/2023/09/19/227850/>.

In short, over the past several years ITBSI has developed a close relationship with members of the lay Tibetan community in Taiwan through their partnership with TWAT. ITBSI's support is greatly appreciated because, as the former president of TWAT stated, the mostly working-class Tibetan community would not be able raise sufficient funds to finance their own community center. Similarly, without the ministerial support of ITBSI, Tibetans and especially Tibetan children born in Taiwan would not have access to religious and cultural classes in a language and space of the own.¹¹²¹ Both the leadership of TWAT and ITBSI agreed that their partnership was a relationship they valued and hoped to deepen in the future.

Similar to its other avenues of work, ITBSI's relationship with the local lay Tibetan community serves as a path to further localize Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. ITBSI's communication with TWAT is based upon listening to the needs of the local Tibetan community and finding ways that ITBSI and its members can help to address these needs. Some of TWAT's concerns, such as about linguistic and cultural loss, are shared by many Tibetan communities globally. Others, however, such as financial support for a local community space or religious services for local Tibetans, are specific to the small and often isolated Tibetan community in Taiwan. By providing classes on Tibetan language and Buddhism, serving as religious officiants at Tibetan gatherings, and leading religious rituals, ITBSI provides critical religious services to members of Taiwan's Tibetan community. ITBSI's programming for Tibetan youth especially connect ethnic Tibetans born in Taiwan with their religious and linguistic heritage. Just as these youth are navigating what it means to be both Tibetan and Taiwanese, ITBSI too is negotiating its own identity as both a Tibetan Buddhist and a Taiwanese religious organization.

¹¹²¹ Former president of Tibetan Welfare Association of Taiwan, interview with author, Taipei, September 10, 2022.

5. Conclusion: A Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhism?

This chapter has traced the founding of ITBSI and its development over the past fifteen years into an important agent within Taiwan's religious landscape. I began by describing how ITBSI began as an effort to curate a trans-sectarian response to critics of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. I then discussed how ITBSI developed an organizational structure grounded in trans-sectarian cooperation, growing from its four founders to over two hundred active members. In the second half of the chapter, I explored efforts ITBSI has taken to localize Tibetan Buddhism within Taiwan through its engagement with Taiwanese Buddhists and the broader public, Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, monastics of other Buddhist traditions, and ethnic Tibetans in Taiwan. I conclude this chapter by returning to the diverse strategies of localization discussed in the introduction. While I have alluded to ITBSI's efforts to overcome local criticism of Tibetan Buddhism, develop partnerships with other local Buddhist organizations, and increase trans-sectarian harmony and cooperation within Tibetan Buddhism in the preceding pages, the fruits of these three localization strategies bear explicit consideration at the close of this chapter.

First, engaging with critics has been an important strategy through which ITBSI has further localized Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. As noted at the opening of this chapter, vehement public critiques of Tibetan Buddhism, especially from TEPA and its leader Master Xiao Pingshi, were the very impetus that brought ITBSI's four founders together and led them to establish the organization. It was these founders' determination that a collective response to TEPA's harsh and, in their eyes, unfounded criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism that led to ITBSI's coalescence and its early projects aimed at offering an alternative image of Tibetan Buddhism to the public. ITBSI's leaders did not counter TEPA's criticism directly, but responded through curating their own image of Tibetan Buddhism so anyone could learn about this tradition directly from its

teachers. Avenues for this included the creation of TTBTv to broadcast clerics teaching about Tibetan Buddhism either in Mandarin or with subtitles, public talks by visiting Tibetan Buddhist teachers, and footage of large-scale rituals and dharma assemblies. ITBSI’s members’ efforts to curate their own image of Tibetan Buddhism also included public prayer ceremonies, publishing a bilingual Chinese and Tibetan book on monastic deportment and management, as well as efforts to engage with other Buddhist monastics in Taiwan through ecumenical forums, prayer ceremonies, and co-officiating at Buddhist holidays. Through these efforts, ITBSI has sought to claim ownership of how Tibetan Buddhism is represented to the public and circulate alternative presentations of Tibetan Buddhism to people in Taiwan and beyond.

Summarizing these projects begs the question of whether ITBSI’s efforts to open an alternative space of representation have been successful in reaching other Buddhists in Taiwan and the general public? While it is certainly true that TEPA’s anti-Tibetan Buddhism stance remains unchanged, ITBSI’s efforts have led to some tangible changes. Some transformations have been noticed by ITBSI’s members. For example, Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché noted how the terms commonly used for Tibetan Buddhism have changed. “What are the accomplishments of our efforts? Earlier, among people in Taiwan, very few Chinese Buddhist masters would say ‘Tibetan Buddhism’ is [a form of] ‘Buddhism.’ They called [Tibetan Buddhism] ‘Lamaism’... Today there are very few people who say ‘Lamaism.’”¹¹²² Thupten Norbu Rinpoché concurred, noting “Now our relationship with Chinese Buddhists has really improved. For example, we have a great relationship with the BAROC’s chairman and director general... We also have a good relationship with Tzu Chi... [Chinese Buddhists’] view of Tibetan Buddhism has really

1122 “ངའོ་རྒྱལ་པ་ཞིག་གི་འདྲི་དོན་འདུག་ཟེར་ན། ལྷོན་མ་ལ་ཐའེ་མན་གྱི་མང་པོ་ནས་རྒྱ་སྐད་ལ་དེ་ཚོ་གྱིས་ ཚིག་ལུགས་ལྟར་ ཟེར་ཡག་དེ་ རྒྱ་ལྟར་ འདྲི་དོན་མཁན་དཔེ་ཉུང་ཉུང་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ལྷོན་མ་ལ་ ཟེར་ལང་ ལྷོན་མ་ལ་ ཟེར་མཁན་དཔེ་ཉུང་ཉུང་འདྲི་དོན་ཡོད་ཅིང་།” Khenpo Tsülnam Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, November 11, 2022.

improved.”¹¹²³ In this way, two of ITBSI’s founders noted changes in the ways Tibetan Buddhism is labelled and interacted with by Chinese Buddhist teachers and organizations. In their view, the decreased usage of “Lamaism” and increased use of “Tibetan Buddhism” evidences greater local acceptance of Tibetan Buddhism as a type of Buddhism.

External to ITBSI, there are other signs that the ways Taiwanese Buddhists and the public view Tibetan Buddhism have changed. For example, in recent years ITBSI has been invited by other prominent local Buddhist organizations, such as Tzu Chi, Dharma Drum Mountain, and Buddha’s Light Mountain, to participate in Buddhist prayer services. ITBSI has also been invited by government entities, such as the New Taipei City, Kaohsiung, and Hualien County governments, to send representatives to inter- and intra-religious events.¹¹²⁴ In 2021, ITBSI even received recognition from Taiwanese President Tsai Ying-wen (蔡英文 b. 1956), who exchanged bows with ITBSI’s then-chairman Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel and thanked ITBSI for its prayers for the victims of the Hualien train derailment.¹¹²⁵ These signs of Tibetan Buddhism’s improved standing in Taiwan testify to how ITBSI’s leaders and members have utilized countering local critiques as a strategy to further localize their traditions within a new context.

In addition to countering local criticism, ITBSI has facilitated the localization of Tibetan Buddhism through its engagement with other religious groups in Taiwan, especially other Buddhist organizations and teachers. For most of its history in Taiwan, Tibetan Buddhism has

¹¹²³ “དལ་ལྷན་གྱི་བརྒྱུད་ནང་མཉམ་འབྲེལ་དཔེ་ཡག་པོ་ཚགས་སོང་། དཔེར་ན་ 中國佛教會 དལ་ལྷན་གྱི་ 董事長 ནང་ 理事長 ། དེ་འདྲ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཚེན་པོ་ཡོད་པེད།...དེ་འདྲ་ 慈濟 ཡང་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡག་པོ་ཡོད་པེད།...དེ་བོད་ཀྱི་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཞིག་ལྟ་སྤངས་ཅི་ཡག་སོང་།” Tulku Thupten Norbu Rinpoché, interview with author, Taipei, November 11, 2022.

¹¹²⁴ Basang 巴桑, “Xizang sengren wei taiwan gaoxiong huozai canan lianzhe qifu 西藏僧人為台灣高雄火災慘案罹難者祈福”; International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་།, “De ring phyi lo 2024... དེ་རིང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ 2024.”

¹¹²⁵ International Tibetan Buddhism Study Institute 國際藏傳佛教研究會 བོ་ཕན་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་འོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་།, “Zuotian taiwan fasheng le feichan yanzhong de jiaotong yiwai... 昨天台灣發生了非常嚴重的交通意外...”

been the subject of ambiguous disregard or outright hostility, as seen in TEPA's efforts, by many Chinese Buddhist organizations. As late as 2012, former CTA Representative Dawa Tsering recalled being attacked by a monk and nun who were representing BAROC in a meeting of religious leaders in Taiwan's Control Yuan (監察院). "[I] couldn't believe it. As they began their speech, they said Tibetan Buddhism is not a true [form] of Buddhism. They also stated that regardless of whether or not you [Tibetan Buddhists] are a true [form] of Buddhism, it would be best if you stayed in your own place. Why do you have to come to Taiwan?" Dawa Tsering reported how these monastics presented the meetings' conveners with TEPA's brochures filled with accusations and criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism.¹¹²⁶ While these types of full-frontal attacks on Tibetan Buddhism are not common among other Chinese Buddhist organizations, I heard in private conversations that other organizations similarly wished that Tibetan Buddhism would not flourish and risk siphoning their members away.

Nevertheless, this situation has changed rather dramatically in recent years thanks largely to ITBSI's efforts to partner with Chinese Buddhist leaders and organizations. For example, the intra-Buddhist forums ITBSI organized have grown significantly, leading to organizations such as the Buddhist Association of New Taipei City and the Chinese Young Buddhist Association becoming co-organizers of later meetings and drawing participants from Buddhist organizations across Taiwan. Furthermore, ITBSI's commitment to a common intra-Buddhist celebration of the Buddha's birthday led to the co-founding of the Unified Buddha's Birthday Promotion Committee with Chinese and Theravāda Buddhist leaders. Across these projects, ITBSI's success was not instantaneous, but the result of continued slow progress and outreach efforts.

¹¹²⁶ “沒想到他們一開又就講西藏佛教並不是真正的佛教，期間還講不管你是不是真正的佛教，待在自己的地方就好了，為什麼要跑到我們臺灣來等” Dawa Cairan 達瓦才仁 and Suolang Duoqi 索朗多吉, “Taiwan hu jiao jishi 臺灣護教記實.”

Has intra-Buddhist engagement helped ITBSI to establish Tibetan Buddhism as an integral part of Taiwan's larger Buddhist community? While ITBSI's efforts have certainly not succeeded in winning over all Buddhists in Taiwan, they have made significant progress toward building relationships across the leadership of Theravāda and Chinese Buddhist organizations. As Hashen Rinpoché remarked, “Most of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries in Taiwan accept Tibetan Buddhism. They don't say ‘Tibetan Buddhism is not Buddhism.’ Tibetan Buddhist monastics and Chinese Buddhist monastics conduct rituals together, eat together, and recite [sūtras and prayers] together. This does a lot to clear away negative impressions in the public's mind.”¹¹²⁷ ITBSI's members are regularly invited as honored guests to celebrations by other Chinese Buddhist groups, participate in intra-religious prayer ceremonies, and are increasingly even being interviewed by Chinese Buddhist media.¹¹²⁸ In this way, ITBSI's efforts have greatly improved the relations with other Buddhist communities and traditions in Taiwan today.

This not only includes Chinese Buddhist teachers who have long been friendly towards Tibetan Buddhism, such as Master Haitao and Master Shih Chao-hwei, but even some former critics. While BAROC's representatives may have decried Tibetan Buddhism in 2012 to Dawa Tsering, this organization has completely turned around in recent years through its cooperation with ITBSI. Not only has BAROC started to partner with ITBSI on its intra-Buddhist forums and celebrations of the Buddha's birthday, but BAROC's Chairman, Master Jingyao, even accepted a position as head of ITBSI's Board of External Advisors and has been an honored guest and

¹¹²⁷ “བཤེན་འཇུག་ནང་ལ་དགོན་པོ་ཕྱིན་ཀྱི་ཚང་མ་གྱིས་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་ལ་འོ་ལོན་བྱེད་ཀྱི་འདུག། བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་དེ་ནང་ལ་མ་འདྲེན་ཟེར་གྱི་མི་འདུག། བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་གྲྭ་བ་དང་ལྷན་དུ་བསྟན་གྱི་གྲྭ་བ་ཚོགས་མཉམ་དུ་འཚོགས། ལ་ལག་མཉམ་དུ་ཟ། འདོན་པ་མཉམ་དུ་འདོན་གྱི་འདུག། མི་དམངས་ཀྱི་སེམས་ནང་ལ་དེ་བཞག་ཆགས་དེ་མང་པོ་འབྱུང་གྱི་ཡོད་རེད།” Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.

¹¹²⁸ For example, several of ITBSI's members were interviewed for an article about an environmental exhibit Tzu Chi organized in 2020. See: Lin Yingxing 林瑩欣 and Ke Linglan 柯玲蘭, “Fashi guan zhan pan hui xiang luoshi huanbao 法師觀展盼回鄉落實環保,” Ciji quanqiu shetuan wang 慈濟全球社團網, September 22, 2020, http://tw.tzuchi.org/community/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105190:DB7BAC70FC7511EA97C7009AD01B4D9A&catid=90:2009-12-21-02-51-46&Itemid=290.

speaker at ITBSI's Dharma Promotion Forums. In this way, ITBSI's intra-Buddhist outreach has facilitated new relationships with local Buddhist organizations, making Tibetan Buddhists into important dialogue partners even among some who were formerly opposed to Tibetan Buddhism.

Finally, promoting cooperation across Tibetan Buddhism's internal sectarian traditions has been an important localization for ITBSI. A commitment to non-sectarianism was at the core of ITBSI's founding ethos and has remained a commitment throughout its work. Amidst the hundreds of individual Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers and organizations of specific Tibetan Buddhist (sub-)schools in Taiwan,¹¹²⁹ ITBSI is unique for the scale of trans-sectarian activities it has facilitated. For ITBSI, calls for cooperation have not meant they are attempting to collapse sectarian boundaries or calling for all dharma centers in Taiwan to fall under its authority. Rather, ITBSI identified the need for a space to collectively respond to criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism, to represent Tibetan Buddhism to other local Buddhist communities and religious traditions, to provide resources for Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, and to promote the dharma activities of contemporary hierarchs from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. For ITBSI, non-sectarianism has not been a means for blurring differences or protecting minority Tibetan Buddhist lineages, but rather of finding greater strength through uniting all Tibetan Buddhist lineages. The more Tibetan Buddhist teachers have strengthened their ties with one another, the more effective ITBSI's projects that mobilize collective actions have become.

As discussed above, trans-sectarian participation is structured into ITBSI's organization with officers from diverse sectarian backgrounds and chair- and vice-chairperson seats that rotate among different schools. ITBSI's programming is also explicitly non-sectarian involving, for

¹¹²⁹ These include the Taiwan Nyingma Mönlam Association (台灣寧瑪總會, བའེ་མན་རྙིང་མ་སྲོན་ལམ་ཚོགས་པ།), the Taiwan Geluk Buddhist Association (臺灣格魯魯總會, བའེ་མན་དགེ་ལུགས་མཐུན་ཚོགས་པ།), and the International Drikung Council Taiwan (國際直貢噶舉台蛙總會, རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་འབྲི་གུང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ཐེ་མན་ལྷན་ཚོགས་པ།).

example, intentionally mixed seating at events, reciting trans-sectarian prayers, and supporting visiting hierarchs from all schools. Even the individual projects that ITBSI pursues are co-organized by monastics of diverse sectarian backgrounds. Among the activities I witnessed, for example, the Dharma Promotion Forums and Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual were organized collectively by most of ITBSI’s officers. Other projects, however, were led by smaller teams: the Buddha’s birthday celebrations were co-led by a duo of Geluk and Kagyü monastics, Buddhist marketing by a trio of Sakya, Kagyü, and Geluk monastics, and the educational classes for Tibetans by a team of Nyingma and Geluk monastics.

Despite the obstacles that arise when any group of people come together, ITBSI has created space for multiple voices within its organization. As one officer, who himself had serious misgivings about several of ITBSI’s projects, told me “ITBSI is good. Whatever [the topic] ITBSI will discuss it. The special quality of ITBSI’s officers is that whatever I say, others will say whether they approve or disapprove. Working like this is a good thing. [We] understand [each other] and each speak [our minds]. If I say one thing but someone says another thing and [they] have [good] reasons and say I’m wrong, then that’s fine.”¹¹³⁰ The strong objections of some members to the Buddhist marketing courses or celebrating the Buddha’s birthday on the International Day of Vesak, for example, testify to the room ITBSI holds for diverse opinions to be shared and ITBSI’s commitment to non-sectarianism as source of strength through difference.

As to whether ITBSI’s strategy of trans-sectarian cooperation has helped to facilitate the localization of Tibetan Buddhism, here too it seems ITBSI has seen some success. In terms of

¹¹³⁰ “ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་ཡག་པོ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་ས་ག་ཅེ་ཡིན་ནའང་བཤད་དགོས་ཅིང་། ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་དེ། འགན་འཛིན་ཚོ་ལ་དམིགས་བསལ་གྱི་ལྷན་ཚོགས་ཞིག་ག་ཅེ་ཡོད་ཅིང་ཟེར་ན། ངས་བཤད་ཡག་དེ་འགྲིག་གསུམ་འགྲིག་གི་མི་འདུག་ཚང་མ་བཤད་དགོས་ཅིང་། དེ་འདྲའི་ལས་ཀ་དེ་ཡག་པོ་འདུག་ ཉ་གོ་གི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། མོ་མོའི་དེ་བཤད་དགོས་ཅིང་། ངས་བཤད་པ་དེ་གཞན་པ་ཞིག་གིས་ཀྱང་བཤད་འདུག་ དེ་ལ་རྒྱ་མཚན་འདུག་ ངའི་དེ་ནོར་འདུག་ཟེར་ན་འགྲོ་བུ་གྱི་ཅིང་།” Druppön Sönam Nyima, interview with author, Taipei, September 13, 2022.

public facing activities, ITBSI's prayer ceremonies, the Great Mahāguru 100,000 Accumulation Ritual, and other dharma assemblies attract a range of forty to over one hundred Tibetan clerics. This large number of teachers gathering in one place in Taiwan is rare and something I only witnessed at ITBSI's events. Furthermore, ITBSI has secured endorsements from many hierarchs of Tibetan Buddhism and has hosted teachings given by leaders of all schools. Invited guests at ITBSI events have included the Forty-First, Forty-Second, and Forty-Third Sakya Tridzin, the 102nd and current Ganden Tripas, Jonang Gyaltsap Rinpoché, Drikung Chetsang Rinpoché, Khenpo Tsültrim Lodrö, Khenpo Södargyé, Sharpa Chöje, Gosok Rinpoché, Khokhyim Rinpoché, Dzongsar Khyentsé Rinpoché, Drukchen Rinpoché, Kirti Rinpoché, and many others. As a result of so many Tibetan Buddhist leaders endorsing and supporting ITBSI's work, Taiwanese disciples of these teachers have also been exposed to ITBSI.

I also witnessed first-hand the difference ITBSI has made in connecting often isolated Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. ITBSI's vice-chairman, for example, told me that one reason he increased his participation from a casual observer to an active participant and leader in ITBSI was because through attending ITBSI's events he had made many new friends from different monasteries and schools of Tibetan Buddhism that he otherwise would not have had the chance to meet.¹¹³¹ A similar sentiment was expressed by Hashen Rinpoché, who at the end of our interview said he would love to meet again for coffee with me and other ITBSI leaders. Druppön Sönam Nyima, Geshé Nangnang, and others, he told me, were all his "old friends."¹¹³² Facilitating interactions among clerics from different schools and monasteries, leading to the blossoming of these types of friendships has been one of the major successes of ITBSI's efforts in promoting greater cooperation among Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan.

¹¹³¹ Geshé Nangnang, interview with author, Taipei, September 12, 2023.

¹¹³² Hashen Rinpoché, interview with author, New Taipei City, September 23, 2022.



Figure 41: Clerics from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism eating together at an ITBSI event. Photo by author, 2022.

ITBSI’s former chairman, Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel reflected on how unique the scale of ITBSI’s engagement with clerics are in the scope of Tibetan Buddhism globally.

Regarding, ITBSI, as you’ve seen, across the world I don’t think [there is anything like it]. Not even in Tibet. Gathering Tibetans for a few days on an occasion or gathering members of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism for a week, for two or three days, or even for one day, you have things like this in most places around the world. In Dharamsala and also in Tibet, this happens from time to time all over the place. However, to have all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism gather like this in one country, such as Taiwan, for fifteen years... Now it’s [nearly] 2023, so it’s been fifteen years since ITBSI was established. Over the last fifteen years, sometimes it has prospered, and sometimes it has declined and there have been problems. However, it has continued without changing its essence for fifteen years. What should I say? If you think about that time that’s passed, fifteen years is not a small length of time, is it?¹¹³³

1133 “ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཚོགས་པ་ད་ལྟ་ཚུན་གྱི་མཐོང་བ་ནང་བཞིན་འཛེས་བསྐྱིད་ལ་དངོས་གནས་རང་རང་དེ་འཚོར་གྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། བོད་ལ་ཡང་ཡོད་མ་ཟེད། གཅིག་གནས་སྐབས་ཉི་མ་འགའ་ཤིས་ཤིག་མཉམ་དུ་བོད་པ་འཛོམས་ཡག་འདྲ་ལོ། དེ་འདྲ་འདྲ་པོ་ཞིག་བོད་བརྒྱུད་གྱི་ཚོས་བརྒྱུད་ཚང་མ་ཡོད་མཁན་ཞིག་བདུན་ཕྲག་གཅིག་འཛོམས་ཡག་འདྲ་ལོ། ཉི་མ་གཉིས་གསུམ་འཛོམས་ཡག་འདྲ་ལོ། ཉི་མ་གཅིག་འཛོམས་ཡག་འདྲ་ལོ། དེ་འཛོམས་བསྐྱིད་ས་ཆ་མང་ཆེ་ཤིས། རྩ་རམས་ས་ལ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། བོད་ལ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ག་ས་ག་བ་ལ་དེ་འདྲ་སློབ་གྱི་རེད། ཡིན་ན་ད་ལུང་པ་ཞིག་གི་ནང་ལ་ཐའེ་མཉམ་ལུང་པ་དེ་འདྲ་པོ་ཞིག་གི་ནང་ལ་ལུང་པ་ཞིག་གི་ནང་ལ་བོད་གྱི་ཚོས་བརྒྱུད་ཆེན་པོ་དེ་ཡང་དེ་ལོ་གྱི་ལོ་བཅུ་ལྔ་འཁོར་གྱི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ༡༩༨༢་ཀྱི་དུས་ཚིག་ཚོགས་པ་འབོ་འཇུག་ས་ནས་དེ་ལོ་བཅུ་ལྔ་ཆགས་འགྲོ་གི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ལོ་བཅུ་ལྔ་གྱི་རིང་ལ་ཉོག་ཅམ་ཡར་རྒྱས་འགྲོ་གི་ཡོད་ཅིང་། མར་རྒྱས་ཉོག་ཅམ་དཀའ་ལས་ལག་པོ་ཆགས་དེ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། གང་ལྟར་ཀྱང་པོ་ལོ་འབྱུང་བ་མ་ཐུབ་པའི་ཐོག་ནས་ལོ་བཅུ་ལྔ་བར་དུ་གནས་ཡོད་ཅིང་། དེ་ག་དེ་ལ་བ་དགོས་ཅིང་ལོ། ལོ་རང་གི་དུས་ཚིག་འདྲ་པོ་བསམ་སློབ་གཏང་ན་དེ་འདྲ་ཞིག་ཆགས་དེ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། དུས་ཚིག་ད་ལྟར་ལྷང་ལྷང་ཞིག་མ་ཟེད་ལོ་བཅུ་ལྔ་ཟེར་ན་རེད་བཤ།” Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel, interview with author, Taipei, December 16, 2022.

Khenpo Jigmé Namgyel sees ITBSI's efforts to bring together a diverse body of Tibetan Buddhist teachers as having succeeded on a scale and over a length of time unrivaled anywhere else in the world. Although ITBSI has faced obstacles, its mission of bringing together clerics together to propagate Tibetan Buddhism for the benefit of the Taiwanese people has remained.

Whether ITBSI's work over the past fifteen years has affected change among Tibetan Buddhist communities beyond Taiwan is an open question. How widely is news of ITBSI's activities published in Tibetan media read by clerics and laity outside of Taiwan? To what extent have the home monasteries of ITBSI's leaders openly supported or questioned aspects of ITBSI's work? Have these communities shown any reaction to ITBSI's interpretations of non-sectarian or *rimé*? Have Tibetan Buddhist clerics who participated in ITBSI's work before either returning to their home institutions in South Asia or moving elsewhere outside of Taiwan been inspired by or sought to replicate any of ITBSI's efforts? Only future research among Tibetan Buddhist communities outside of Taiwan will be able to assess how far ITBSI's projects and its efforts to create unity among teachers from diverse Tibetan Buddhist lineages have reached.

Inside Taiwan, there is no question that ITBSI's efforts have contributed toward moving Tibetan Buddhism increasingly into the mainstream of Taiwanese religious life. By unifying Tibetan Buddhist teachers, engaging in ecumenical dialogue with other Buddhist organizations and leaders, and working to overcome criticisms and create a positive public image of Tibetan Buddhism, ITBSI has facilitated Tibetan Buddhism growing wider and deeper roots across Taiwan. In this way, ITBSI's efforts mark a new phase in the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, one in which Tibetan Buddhism is no longer strictly seen as a foreign and newly introduced religion, but rather one in which a localized Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhism has found a new home within Taiwan's religious kaleidoscope.

Conclusion

Taken broadly, this dissertation has narrated a history of Tibetan Buddhism's growth in Taiwan over the past seventy years and traced some of the dominant flows in its contemporary manifestations. I began with the arrival of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan in 1949, tracking the uneven development of Tibetan Buddhism and the emergence of Taipei as a global hub among transnational Tibetan Buddhist networks. In the later three chapters, I documented how dual-directional flows of spiritual and financial capital have facilitated Tibetan Buddhism's transmission into Taiwan, a case of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic precipitating the further reterritorialization of elements within the Tibetan Buddhist cosmos, and efforts to build a trans-sectarian coalition of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and localize Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Across this wide-ranging discussion, I have described how Tibetan Buddhists have engaged in various forms of place-making to help their traditions take deeper root in Taiwanese soil. If we take Thomas Tweed's aquatic metaphor of religions as "a flowing together of currents – some institutionally enforced as 'orthodox' – traversing channels, where other religions, other transverse confluences, also cross, thereby creating new spiritual streams,"¹¹³⁴ then what I have described is the formation of a new stream of Tibetan Buddhism flowing into Taiwan.

Although its headwaters lie far away in the "Roof of the World," this stream has carved its own channel as it has coursed through Taiwan's political, economic, and social landscape. It has swelled through confluences with other local religious flows, wrapped its way around obstacles, and been bolstered by waves of charismatic Tibetan teachers and surges in public interest. As it continues to respond to the landscape and the influx of new flows, Tibetan

¹¹³⁴ Thomas A Tweed, "Flows and Dams: Rethinking Categories for the Study of Transnationalism," in *Transnational Religious Spaces: Religious Organizations and Interactions in Africa, East Asia, and Beyond*, ed. Philip Clart and Adam Jones (Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020), 13.

Buddhism in Taiwan has emerged as both a force contributing to the shape of the local religious landscape as well as a prominent stream amidst Tibetan Buddhism's myriad transnational flows.

Across this dissertation, I have highlighted several factors central to the stream of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. In terms of its historical development, Tibetan Buddhism grew slowly before experiencing a period of rapid popularization. This shift, I argued, largely corresponded with changes in Taiwan's political, social, and economic climates. During the strictest years of martial law, the scale of Tibetan Buddhist activity remained quite modest. With Taiwan's economic transformation, rapid urbanization, and political liberalization in the 1980s, Tibetan Buddhism expanded rapidly alongside many other religious groups. The Dalai Lama's 1997 visit and ameliorative steps taken by the ROC government cleared away many of the obstacles to Tibetan teachers traveling to Taiwan and further galvanized Taiwanese interest.

Furthermore, the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism into Taiwan has been marked both by degrees of novelty and historical continuity. As I highlighted in the introduction and chapter one, the earliest teachers in Taiwan were part of efforts to spread Tibetan Buddhism among Han disciples on the Chinese mainland during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period. While Tibetan Buddhism was novel to Taiwanese soil when it arrived in 1949, it was connected through early teachers like Changkya Qutuytu and Gongga Laoren to historical trends on the mainland. In following decades, these teachers did not experience a violent break in their work in the same ways that communities in the PRC endured during the Cultural Revolution. As a result, their dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan was a direct continuation of an earlier period of Sino-Tibetan religious contact that was broken off in the PRC.

I also underscored the magnanimity of Taiwanese financial support for Tibetan Buddhism as central to the tradition's transmission to Taiwan. In chapter one, I described the gravitational

pull that many Tibetan Buddhist teachers' felt toward Taiwan starting in the 1980s due to the patronage they could secure there. Taiwanese patronage was central to efforts to rebuild Tibetan Buddhist institutions and support the flourishing of monastic life in India and Nepal. In chapter three, I grounded the trend of Taiwanese patronage for Tibetan Buddhism in a community in contemporary Taipei. Though an account of the dynamics at work during GTBA's pilgrimage practice, I argued that the exchange of spiritual and financial capital is a central dynamic animating the relationship between Buddhist teachers and their communities of devotees.

As Buddhist traditions are transmitted globally, teachers have also had to find ways to introduce various Buddhist divinities, non-human agents, and soteriological truth claims to their disciples. In turn, Buddhist faithful expand these forces' spheres of agentive influence through their worship of them. In Taiwan, many Tibetan Buddhist deities are familiar to Taiwanese as they have direct correlates in Chinese Buddhism. Some, such as Tārā and Mahākāla, were introduced to China hundreds of years ago, although they never became major players in the Chinese Buddhist pantheon. Still others, such as Parṇaśavarī who I described in chapter four, continue to be introduced in novel ways such as in response to significant crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, both Tibetan Buddhist teachers and Taiwanese practitioners participate in the dual processes I described as *spiritual deterritorialization* and *spiritual reterritorialization* by transmitting and resettling the Tibetan Buddhist cosmos, replete with its multitude of agentive non-human being and divinities, within Taiwan. These processes are not limited to the case of Tibetan Buddhism's transmission alone, but occur globally as Buddhist teachers and communities transplant their diverse traditions and grow local roots in non-heritage locales.

A further factor contributing to the stream of Tibetan Buddhism that flows into and across Taiwan is the remarkable density of local Tibetan Buddhist institutions. Connected to Taiwan's

urbanization and the generosity of Taiwanese faithful, the greater Taipei region has attracted a tremendous amount of interest among Tibetan Buddhist teachers from myriad schools, sub-schools, practice lineages, and monasteries. As I described in chapter three, the more than 186 Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers, institutes, study centers, and other organizations in the greater Taipei area make it home to one of, if not the most densely concentrated area of Tibetan Buddhist institutions outside of the Tibetan Plateau and Himalayan region. As a result of this hyper-concentration of religious communities, several thousand Tibetan Buddhist teachers visit Taipei annually or reside there semi-permanently. Their public activities make Taipei the location of a prodigious number of Tibetan Buddhist empowerments, religious expositions, rituals, and other events. As a result, Taipei has become a global capital of Tibetan Buddhism.

Perhaps as an outflow of this exceptionally high concentration of Tibetan Buddhist institutions and teachers, a strong and well-organized intra-sectarian movement has also emerged in recent years among Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. As I described in chapter five, many Tibetan teachers in Taiwan today view intra- and inter-sectarian cooperation as a critical strategy to overcome criticisms of their tradition and secure a positive public reception in Taiwan. In the case I examined in chapter five, ITBSI's efforts to localize Tibetan Buddhism have included multi-media public outreach, as well as dialogue and collective participation in Buddhist ceremonies with Chinese Buddhist monastics and groups across Taiwan. ITBSI has also created a network of several hundred Tibetan Buddhist teachers who participate in conferences on the local state of Tibetan Buddhism, discuss ways to further its local dissemination, and organize prayer ceremonies for the Taiwanese public. This level of sustained cooperation among diverse sectarian traditions of Tibetan Buddhism is unusual in the global context and has led ITBSI to contribute to the broader non-sectarian movement in Tibetan Buddhism.

Finally, it is important to stress that the stream of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan is, in many ways, a braided channel interwoven through transnational flows with Tibetan Buddhist communities around the globe. As demonstrated by the organizations and teachers I discussed across this dissertation, virtually all of Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhist communities are connected to monasteries in South Asia as well to other branch centers of these monasteries in Taiwan and elsewhere. Taiwanese practitioners connect along these horizontal networks with fellow disciples of the same teacher or lineage attending teachings, empowerments, and retreats in different locales. In parallel, many teachers in Taiwan are also active across transnational networks of Tibetan Buddhist institutions. These include monasteries in South Asia and sometimes the PRC. They also include Tibetan Buddhist centers across Chinese diasporic communities in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and convert-Buddhists communities in Europe, North America, Australia, and beyond. As such, while Tibetan Buddhism courses along a distinct stream in Taiwan, it exists in constant interaction with other Tibetan Buddhist flows around the world.

The narrative I have offered in the preceding chapters is not the only story of Tibetan Buddhism's contemporary global transmission. Other scholars have attended to the ways Tibetan Buddhist teachers and practitioners have navigated and continue to make their way through "the swirl of transfluvial currents"¹¹³⁵ of religious life in North America,¹¹³⁶ Europe,¹¹³⁷ Australia,¹¹³⁸

¹¹³⁵ Tweed, 13.

¹¹³⁶ For example, see: Jackie Larm, "Making a Traditional Buddhist Monastery on Richmond's Highway to Heaven," in *Wild Geese: Buddhism in Canada*, ed. John S. Harding, Victor Sögen Hori, and Alexander Duncan Soucy (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 129–49; Sarah F. Haynes, "A Relationship of Reciprocity Globalization, Skillful Means, and Tibetan Buddhism in Canada," in *Flowers on the Rock: Global and Local Buddhisms in Canada*, ed. Victor Sögen (editor) Hori, John S. (editor) Harding, and Alexander (editor) Soucy (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 321–45; Seager, *Buddhism in America*, 113–135; Zablocki, "The Global Mandala," 256–298.

¹¹³⁷ For example, see: Arizaga, *When Tibetan Meditation Goes Global*; Lionel Obadia, "Tibetan Buddhism in France: A Missionary Religion?," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 2 (2001): 92–102, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1310670>; Obadia, "Localised Deterritorialisation?"

¹¹³⁸ For example, see: Ruth Fitzpatrick, "Avoiding the Stain of Religion: Attitudes toward Social Engagement amongst Australian Tibetan Buddhists" (PhD Dissertation, Penrith City, University of Western Sydney, 2014); Ruth Fitzpatrick, "Green Tara in Australia: Reassessing the Relationship between Gender, Religion and Power

and South America,¹¹³⁹ as well as the PRC¹¹⁴⁰ during a similar period. Each story is distinct, testifying to the confluences of Tibetan Buddhist traditions with diverse histories, cultures, and geographies, as well as the contemporary economic, social, and political forces in each locale. Each also attends to the pathfinding teachers and the devoted practitioners who all play central roles in propelling the development of Tibetan Buddhism along diverse channels.

In the case of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan, some of the facets I described are recognizable as part of the transmission of Buddhist traditions in other locales. Although Taiwanese have been particularly generous, many Tibetan Buddhist teachers also sought and continue to seek patronage from disciples in Hong Kong, New York City, Munich, Vancouver, São Paulo, and beyond. While the rate of exchange between spiritual capital and financial capital has remained particularly high in Taiwan, much to the benefit of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and institutions across South Asia, a similar dynamic of exchanging spiritual and financial capital is also present across many other Buddhist communities around the globe. Similarly, while individual practitioners around the world may have varying degrees of faith in the agentive capacities of Buddhist divinities to engender apotropaic benefit on their behalf, nevertheless the processes of *spiritual deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* occur everywhere the Buddhist cosmological order is unmoored from heritage contexts and carried into new landscapes.

Still, much of what I have described in the preceding five chapters remains unique to the particular ways Tibetan Buddhism has been introduced, developed, and manifested in Taiwan.

Relations,” in *Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change*, ed. Cristina Rocha and Michelle Barker (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), 49–59.

¹¹³⁹ For example, see: Frank Usarski, “Tibetan Buddhism in Latin America,” in *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions*, ed. Henri Gooren (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–5, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08956-0_94-1; Lopes, *Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora*.

¹¹⁴⁰ For example, see: Esler, *Tibetan Buddhism Among Han Chinese*; Jones, “Accidental Esoterics: Han Chinese Practicing Tibetan Buddhism”; Jones, “Contemporary Han Chinese Involvement in Tibetan Buddhism”; Smyer Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*.

Taiwan's political and religious history, its inheritance from an earlier period of Tibetan Buddhist dissemination on the Chinese mainland, the magnanimity of its devotees, the incredible density of Tibetan Buddhist communities, as well as the intra- and inter-sectarian movements that have emerged, for example, contribute to the unique series of confluent institutional, religious, economic, and cultural flows that have gathered into the stream of Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhism. These factors may not be as legible to those more familiar with the ways Tibetan Buddhism has been transmitted across Europe and North America. However, they remain equally important when considering the diversity of pathways that Tibetan Buddhist clergy have taken to ensure the survival of their traditions and the manifold strategies teachers and practitioners have taken to establish deeper roots for their traditions in locales the world over.

This dissertation contributes a new narrative to the extant body of literature documenting the global odysseys of contemporary Tibetan Buddhism. The story of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan that I have related here is, for the most, one that is still relatively unknown by most scholars of Tibetan Buddhism and contemporary Buddhist traditions and has, until now, not been included in most lexicons of contemporary global Buddhism(s). This is the case, even though Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhists have played and continue to play a critical role in supporting the successful rebuilding and maintenance of Tibetan Buddhist institutional life in exile, thousands of Tibetan Buddhist teachers travel to Taiwan each year, and that the Taipei region has emerged as a global hub within the transnational networks of numerous Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teachers. It is my hope that this dissertation will not only contribute to expanding the field of studies on religious life in Taiwan, but that it also demonstrates the relevance of Taiwan to any consideration of the modern history and contemporary global transmission of Buddhism.

Addendum: Roads not (Yet) Taken, or Opportunities for Future Research

No single study can examine all aspects of an issue or address every question related to a particular research area. This is especially true for subjects, such as the one I have engaged with in this dissertation, that are particularly vast and yet, have received only a modest degree of scholarly attention. In the end, I am acutely aware not only of the many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism's history, development, and current manifestations in Taiwan that my study illuminates, but also of the numerous roads not taken in my research. I have left these lacunae unexamined in the preceding pages not due to their lack of importance, but rather due to the limitations of my own time and resources in the field. One dissertation can only do so much. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning some of these potential pathways for further inquiry, both to clarify the limits of my discussion as well as to gesture towards avenues open for future research.

First, there is a tremendous amount to unearth about Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan in the period before 1980. As I argued in chapter one, the scale of Tibetan Buddhism and activities of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and communities in Taiwan during the strictest period of martial law remains poorly understood. Fabienne Jagou's recent study of Gongga Laoren illuminates how this remarkable female teacher transmitted Tibetan Buddhism, built institutions, and facilitated the early visits of many other Tibetan teachers during her nearly forty years in Taiwan.¹¹⁴¹ My discussion of Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché in chapter one makes a more modest contribution to understanding the activities of these two teachers before 1980. Still, there are many questions that have still received no fully satisfactory answer. What was the scale of

¹¹⁴¹ Jagou, *Gongga Laoren (1903-1997)*.

communities led by other Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan before 1980? How many Taiwanese engaged Tibetan Buddhism through these communities? How did Tibetan Buddhist teachers navigate the difficulties of Taiwan's political climate and social control during martial law? How did Tibetan Buddhist teachers transmit their traditions with limited access to texts and other materials? What was the extent of Tibetan Buddhist teachers' contact with other Tibetan teachers outside of Taiwan? How did Taiwanese become involved with these communities and how were their semi-clandestine activities organized? To address these questions, there is much more excavating in archives and among internal documents and publications of individual dharma centers that remains to be done. Additionally, there are still some Taiwanese who studied and practiced Tibetan Buddhism during this period whose recollections and oral histories of Tibetan Buddhist life in this poorly understood period could prove valuable.

Second, as I noted in the introduction, my dissertation has not addressed the place of Han Taiwanese, Chinese, and Hongkonger Tibetan Buddhist teachers and the communities they lead in contemporary Taiwan. Han teachers were not only active in the earliest period of Tibetan Buddhism's dissemination but also continue to be an important force today. Although they lead a much smaller number of communities, Han-led Tibetan Buddhist congregations are some of the largest and most well-developed in Taiwan today. For example, Bliss and Wisdom claims 60,000 members.¹¹⁴² With over 1,500 ordained monastics,¹¹⁴³ approximately 750 of whom live in a

¹¹⁴² "Renshi fuzhi tuanti 認識福智團體," Fuzhi quanqiu zixun wang 福智全球資訊網, September 21, 2015, <https://www.blisswisdom.org/about/bwgroup>.

¹¹⁴³ "Fuzhi biqiu seng tuan jianjie 福智比丘僧團簡介," Fuzhi seng tuan quanqiu zixun wang 福智僧團全球資訊網, February 28, 2015, <https://bwsangha.org/about/j/d>; "Fuzhi biqiuni sengtuan jianjie 福智比丘尼僧團簡介," Fuzhi seng tuan quanqiu zixun wang 福智僧團全球資訊網, June 21, 2016, <https://bwsangha.org/about/j/e>.

monastery and nunnery in Canada's Prince Edward Island,¹¹⁴⁴ Bliss and Wisdom has one of, if not the largest monastic body of any Buddhist organization in Taiwan today.

Some of these Han teachers, especially those who trained in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and speak Tibetan, are integrated with the broader community of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan. Others, however, function independently of other Tibetan Buddhist teachers and communities in Taiwan. Apart from a few studies, namely by Campergue,¹¹⁴⁵ Huang,¹¹⁴⁶ Schak and Hsiao,¹¹⁴⁷ however, contemporary Han teachers of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan have received little attention. As many of these groups are even more autonomous than Tibetan or Himalayan-led communities, I found them difficult to access and was, for the most part, unsuccessful in my attempts to reach out or conduct participant observation within them. As a result, I cannot say much regarding the religious background of contemporary Han teachers or their communities. What draws some Taiwanese to Han-led communities versus Tibetan-led communities? How, if at all, do the approaches that Han teachers take to presenting Tibetan Buddhism differ from the approaches of Tibetan, Himalayan, or Mongolian teachers and how do they overlap? What steps have Han teachers taken to integrate, harmonize, synthesize, or separate Tibetan Buddhist and Chinese religious teachings and practices in their communities?

Third, there has been very little written about the unique situation of Tibetan Buddhist teachers who come to Taiwan directly from the PRC. Although they make up a small percentage of the Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Taiwan, only about 2.3% of all the teachers who came to Taiwan in the last ten years, there are still some Tibetan teachers from the PRC who regularly

¹¹⁴⁴ Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society, "About Us," Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society (GEBIS), October 11, 2019, https://gebis.org/?page_id=25; Great Wisdom Buddhist Institute, "About Us," Great Wisdom Buddhist Institute (GWBI), accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.gwbi.org/>.

¹¹⁴⁵ Campergue, "Le Bouddhisme Tibétain à Taïwan."

¹¹⁴⁶ Huang, "Spirit-Possession: Identities of a Master and the Rise of a Karma Kagyü Monastery in Taiwan."

¹¹⁴⁷ Schak, "Community and the New Buddhism in Taiwan"; Schak, "Socially-Engaged Buddhism in Taiwan and Its Contributions to Civil Society"; Schak and Hsiao, "Taiwan's Socially Engaged Buddhist Groups."

travel to Taiwan and lead communities there. Indeed, some have been able to funnel financial support from their Taiwanese students back to support the development of their home institutions in the PRC. While I had very few opportunities to interact with teachers who came directly from the PRC, future research may shed light on their unique circumstances. How do these teachers navigate the delicate political situation between Taiwan and the PRC? How, if at all, do they interact with teachers coming from the Tibetan exile community? Are they able to lead communities in places other than Taiwan? How do their Taiwanese disciples interact with and relate to their disciples within the PRC? What does it look like for their Taiwanese disciples to go on pilgrimages in Tibetan areas of the PRC? How do they manage the public reverence and worship of the Dalai Lama that is widespread among Taiwan's Tibetan Buddhists in their centers? Why might Taiwanese practitioners be attracted to centers led by teachers from Tibetan areas of the PRC as opposed to Tibetans from the exile community or Han-led communities?

Fourth, much more work can be done to improve our understanding of the complex webs of global connections along which Taiwanese practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist teachers operate along. Although no two of these networks are the same, connections and movements across them are driven by a collective commitment to transmitting and living out a diversity of Tibetan Buddhist traditions. While I was able to examine the dynamics of pilgrimage along one such network in chapter three, I did not examine other transnational connections of GTBA's members or their teachers. Future research may help us to better understand, for example, how individual Tibetan Buddhist teachers navigate how they present Tibetan Buddhism across different locales. Do they engage in a type of religious code-switching depending on the context they are operating within? What remains consistent in how they present Buddhism across different locales? Additionally, more could be done to understand how Tibetan Buddhism is

manifesting as a shared religious identity across diasporic Chinese communities. To what degree does Tibetan Buddhism serve as a medium of connection between diasporic Chinese communities? What is distinct about a shared Tibetan Buddhist identity among Han diasporic populations vis-à-vis other shared Chinese religious traditions?

Finally, there remains very little written about the religious lives of lay Tibetans, Mongolians, and Himalayans in Taiwan. In chapter one, I mentioned briefly Gelek Rinpoché's connection with the local Tibetan community and in chapter five, I discussed the very recent partnership between Taiwan's lay and monastic Tibetan communities. However, my discussion of lay Tibetans in Taiwan today was limited to how they have engaged with ITBSI. I did not conduct extensive ethnographic research among the several hundred lay Tibetans who live in Taiwan and am unable to speak to the contours of their religious lives.

In a 2007 article, Kensaku Okawa provides a useful overview of the waves of Tibetans who came and lived in Taiwan. These included approximately one hundred Tibetans who came following the KMT's retreat in 1949 and several dozen more who came to Taiwan following the 1959 flight of the Dalai Lama into exile. A second wave of Tibetan children to come to Taiwan between 1978 and 1991 through the government-sponsored Taipei Tibetan Children's Home (西藏兒童之家) program that enrolled 102 students at its height.¹¹⁴⁸ Between 1983 and late 1999, several hundred Tibetans came to Taiwan mostly for limited-term vocational training.¹¹⁴⁹ Finally, since 2000 there have been a growing number of Tibetan businesspeople and students coming to Taiwan, many of whom came with the goal of long-term residency.

¹¹⁴⁸ Okawa, "Lessons from Tibetans in Taiwan," 605–589.

¹¹⁴⁹ Dolma Tsering gives the exact number as 600. See: Dolma Tsering, "Taiwan and the Exiled Tibetan Relations," 328.

Despite these several thousand Tibetans who have resided or continue to reside in Taiwan, very little has been written about their religious lives. Similarly, while there have been some recent works published about Taiwan's ethnic Mongolian population,¹¹⁵⁰ which also came to Taiwan starting in 1949, little is known about the way they continued their religious lifeways. Equally little has been written about the religious lives of Himalayan peoples who practice Tibetan Buddhism who have immigrated to Taiwan. Did/do they have contact with Tibetan Buddhist monastics and teachers? For those Tibetans who were educated as children and remain in Taiwan, what is their relationship with other Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan? If they have had relationships with specific teachers, how were these relationships built and what religious services do they seek out? Did any of them abandon Tibetan Buddhism for other religious traditions in Taiwan? Did/do they gather for celebrations that involve the participation of Tibetan Buddhist clergy? Did/do they have any contact with Taiwanese Tibetan Buddhist faithful? How have their religious practices changed as a result of living in Taiwan?

These five areas are some of the most significant lacunae, roads I did not take in my own field research studying the historical development, transmission, territorialization, and localization of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. However, they are certainly not the only avenues for further research. Taiwan is a highly dynamic country that seems to face a continuously uncertain future. As the saber rattling of the PRC grows ever louder and the number of politicians from Europe, North America, and Australia visiting Taiwan to express their stalwart support for this small democratic island grow to record numbers, it is not clear what the future global geopolitical situation will mean for Taiwan. The future of Tibetan Buddhism on the island

¹¹⁵⁰ See for example, the retrospective family history written by former MTAC and MTCC head Baatar C.H. Hai/Hai Zhongxiong. Hai Zhongxiong 海中雄, *Wenzhou jie de xinjiang da yuanzi 温州街的新疆大院子* (Taipei shi 臺北市: Shang zhou chuban 商周出版, 2022).

is equally a mystery. Will Tibetan Buddhist teachers continue to visit Taiwan in such high numbers? Will Taiwanese faithful be able to support the more than 450 Tibetan Buddhist communities across Taiwan today? Is Tibetan Buddhism still on an expanding trajectory in Taiwan or has it already reached its climax?

Even among the organizations that I described in this dissertation, the future of how they will continue to develop is uncertain. Will GTBA's members continue their pilgrimages to their mother monastery even after the current Dalai Lama passes away? What would halting these pilgrimages mean for the rates of exchange between Tibetan Buddhist teachers' spiritual capital and Taiwanese patron's financial capital? Will members of the Bhumang Nyiöling community and their teacher, Bhumang Rinpoché, revive their worship of Parṇasavarī in the future? Will the sphere of Parṇasavarī's intercessory influence continue to extend into other communities in Taiwan or will her influence be limited to the communities who engaged in practices dedicated to her during the COVID-19 pandemic? Will ITBSI continue to rally a large coalition of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in its future projects or will its influence wane? Will ITBSI's interpretation of non-sectarianism spread out and influence other Tibetan Buddhist communities outside of Taiwan? Or will ITBSI's commitment to non-sectarianism break down over time?

In these final pages I may have raised more questions than I provided answers to in this dissertation. There is indeed much still to learn about both the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan and the ways it continues to develop. It is my hope that my own future research as well as the projects of other scholars, Taiwanese, Tibetan, and otherwise, will continue to illuminate areas where we lack a clear picture and enrich and embellish those areas where we have gained some understanding of religious life in this global capital of diasporic Tibetan Buddhism.

Appendix 1: Brief Timeline of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan

- 1949** KMT retreats to Taiwan from mainland China. Changkya Qutuytu and Kangyurwa Qutuytu arrive in Taipei, marking the arrival of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan. Taiwan's nearly forty-year period of martial law begins.
- 1952–1959** Khampa (Gelek Rinpoché and Mingyür Rinpoché), Han (Ouyang Wuwei, Qu Yingguang, Wu Runjiang, Liu Rui, Han Tong, Zhang Chengji), and Manchu (Gongga Laoren) Tibetan Buddhist teachers arrive in Taiwan, mostly as refugees. The PLA invades eastern and then central Tibet. Tens of thousands of Tibetans flee into exile.
- 1966–1976** Cultural Revolution in the PRC. Broad scale destruction of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist institutions and virtual elimination of public religious life.
- 1980–1982** Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global Tibetan diaspora begin to travel to Taiwan. Virtually all teachers are from the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools and many come through invitations facilitated by Gongga Laoren.
- 1984** Dong Shufan becomes Chairman of MTCC and starts to actively support the visits to Taiwan of Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global diaspora.
- 1987** Martial law ends in Taiwan and the first reincarnate teacher born in Taiwan is recognized.
- 1988** Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui extends an olive branch to 14th Dalai Lama. There are 61 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers across the island, 30 of which are in the Taipei metro area.
- 1989** Major revisions are passed on Taiwan's Civil Associations Act allowing the official formation of Tibetan Buddhist organizations.
- 1995** MTCC strengthens the requirement for all Tibetan Buddhist centers to register with the government and specifies the process whereby registered centers can invite Tibetan Buddhist teachers to Taiwan. New policies allow Tibetan teachers to visit for longer than two weeks. 14th Dalai Lama starts annual teachings for Taiwanese in Dharamsala.
- 1997** The 14th Dalai Lama visits Taiwan for the first time, ending the boycott of Taiwan that he and Tibetan government in exile had advocated for since the 1960s. There are approximately 500,000 Tibetan Buddhist devotees in

Taiwan and 101 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taiwan. TRFDL, Bodhi Monastery, and Gongga Monastery are opened.

- 1998** There are 122 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan.
- 2000** There are 131 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan, 131 of which are in the Taipei metro area.
- 2001** The 14th Dalai Lama's second visit to Taiwan. He meets with numerous local political and religious leaders and hosts public teachings over a 10-day period.
- 2004** There are 229 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan.
- 2005–2006** There are 238 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taiwan and an estimated 600,000 local devotees.
- 2009** The 14th Dalai Lama's third visit to Taiwan. He leads prayer ceremonies for the victims of Typhoon Morakot, meets with local political and religious leaders, and offers public religious teachings over the course of five days. ITBSI is founded.
- 2010** 1,272 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global exile community and 11 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the PRC come to Taiwan.
- 2015** 1,967 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global exile community and 35 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the PRC come to Taiwan. There are 473 registered Tibetan Buddhist centers across Taiwan.
- 2018** Following a decades-long effort, MTAC is defunded and transitioned from a ministry-level commission to the MTCC under the Ministry of Culture. TRFDL celebrates its twentieth anniversary.
- 2019** 2,014 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global exile community and 66 from the PRC come to Taiwan.
- 2020–2022** Taiwan closes its borders following the global spread of the coronavirus, stopping nearly all Tibetan Buddhist teachers from entering the country. Many dharma centers switch to online programming, especially during local outbreaks.
- 2023** Total number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers visiting Taiwan rebounds to near pre-pandemic levels. 1,683 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the global exile community and 4 Tibetan Buddhist teachers from the PRC come to Taiwan. There are 186 Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Taipei metro area.

Glossary

Barom Kagyü འབའ་རོམ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 巴隆噶舉 – A sub-school of the Kagyü founded by Barompa Darma Wangchuk (འབའ་རོམ་པ་དར་མ་དབང་ཕྱུག, 跋絨達瑪旺秋 1127–1194?), a disciple of Gampopa. The name emerged from the monastery established by Darma Wangchuk in 1160, Barom Riwoché (འབའ་རོམ་རི་བོ་ཆེ་དགོན།, 跋絨寺).

Bön བོན།, 苯教 – Often referred to as the indigenous religion of Tibet or pre-Buddhist tradition. The Bön teachings are said to have first spoken by Tönpa Shenrab Miwo (རྟོན་པ་ཤེན་རབ་མི་བོ།, 敦巴辛饒米沃切) and flourished in the western Tibetan Zhangzhung (ཞང་ཞུང།, 象雄) kingdom. Although pushed to the margins for much of Tibetan history, Bön started to experience a revival in the nineteenth century.

Bum Tsok འབུམ་ཚོགས།, 十萬大蒼供法會 – Literally “the one hundred thousand offerings.” A Tibetan Buddhist liturgical practice involving prayers and offerings, usually for Guru Rinpoché.

Chan 禪 – A school of Mahāyāna Buddhism that developed in China from the sixth century onwards. Chan religious practice particularly emphasizes meditative practices, such a sitting meditation (坐禪) and meditations on short anecdotes intended to cut through conceptual thinking (公案).

Chaodu 超度/超渡 – A genre of ritual in Daoism and Chinese Buddhism performed on behalf of the deceased. In Buddhist contexts, these rituals are understood to bring merit to the dead and help to ferry them across into a positive rebirth.

Chaojian 超薦 – An alternative term for *chaodu*.

Dākinī མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ།, 空行母 – A female celestial being or an accomplished female Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. The term can be applied to a range of female deities who may appear as often-wrathful meditational deities and muses for spiritual accomplishment or for accomplished human female practitioners.

Drikung Kagyü འབྲི་གུང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 直貢噶舉派 – A sub-school of the Kagyü founded by Kyoba Jigten Sumgön, a disciple of Phakmodrupa (ཕག་མོ་བླ་པ་རྗེ་ཆུལ་པོ།, 帕摩竹巴 1110–1170). The name emerged following the founding of Drikung Til Monastery (འབྲི་གུང་མཐིལ་དགོན།, 直貢梯寺) in 1179.

Druppön ལྷུབ་དཔོན།, 竹奔 – A title awarded to a teacher on Tibetan Buddhist meditative retreats. It is especially common among practitioners within the Kagyü school.

Geluk དགེ་ལུགས།, 格魯派 – A school of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged in the fifteenth century following the teachings of Jé Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa. The tradition places particular

emphasis on monasticism and scholastic study. The Geluk became the dominant school of Buddhism in Tibet in the seventeenth century when the Fifth Dalai Lama (ཏལ་འཇི་སྲུ་མ་ འཇམ་དབང་ལྷོ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, 第五世達賴喇嘛阿旺羅桑嘉措 1617–1682) and his Mongol allies defeated their rivals and the Great Fifth became the political leader of Tibet.

Geshé དགེ་བཤེས།, 格西 – A Tibetan Buddhist academic degree awarded to monastics primarily in the Geluk and Bön schools. The title is awarded to those monastics who have completed a rigorous academic training program, particularly devoted to the study of Buddhist texts by Indian Buddhist masters. Generally, there are four classes of geshé degree awarded: *Dorampa* (རྡོ་རམས་པ།, 朵然巴), *Lingtse* (ལྷིང་བསྐེས།, 林賽), *Tsorampa* (ཚོགས་རམས་པ།, 磋然巴), and *Lharampa* (ལྷ་རམས་པ།, 拉然巴).

Geshé Lharampa དགེ་བཤེས་ལྷ་རམས་པ།, 拉然巴格西 – The highest class of geshé degree awarded.

Geshé Ngakrampa དགེ་བཤེས་སྔགས་རམས་པ།, 昂然巴格西 – A Tibetan Buddhist academic degree awarded primarily to monastics who complete the highest course of tantric studies at Gyütö and Gyümé Monasteries.

Guanding 灌頂 – Chinese translation of the Tibetan term *wangkur* (དབང་བསྐྱེད།). This is often translated into English as empowerment or initiation. This term refers to a ceremony in tantric Buddhism wherein a master introduces a disciple to a specific practice, often affiliated with a tantric deity, and empowers them to engage in this practice.

Jonang ཇོ་ནང།, 覺囊派 – A school of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Dölpopa Sherab Gyeltsen (དོལ་པོ་པ་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།, 篤補巴喜饒堅贊 1292–1361) in the fourteenth century. Dölpopa’s advocacy of *other emptiness* (གཞན་སྟོང།, 他空見) put his followers at odds with most other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Starting in the seventeenth century the tradition was suppressed and nearly pushed to extinction. It has experienced somewhat of a revival starting in the nineteenth century and especially in the second half of the twentieth century through the support of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

Kagyü བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 噶舉 – A school of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged in Tibet starting in the eleventh century with the translator Marpa (མར་པ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བཙུན་གྱི་སློབ་ལོ།, 瑪爾巴譯師 1012–1097) and his student Milarepa (ཇི་བཙུན་མི་ལ་རས་པ།, 密勒日巴 1040–1123). This school gave rise to a number of sub-schools, most of which trace their origins to different students of Milarepa’s disciple Gampopa.

Karma Kagyü ཀམ་པ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།, 噶瑪噶舉 – A sub-school of the Kagyü founded by Düsum Khyenpa (ཀམ་པ་ འག རུས་གསུམ་མཚུན་པ།, 第一世噶瑪巴杜松虔巴 1110–1193), a disciple of Gampopa who was posthumously recognized as the first Karmapa (ཀམ་པ།, 噶瑪巴). The Kagyü school is credited

with initiating the tradition of reincarnate teachers or *tulkus*, which later came to be shared across all schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Khapsey ཁམ་པེལ།, 餅乾 – A type of deep-fried pastry typically prepared on Tibetan lunar new year.

Khatak ཁ་ཐག་ལ།, 哈達 – A silken ceremonial scarf offered in Central Asia and the Himalayan region. Khatak are utilized in religious contexts, as well as offered as a respectful gesture to welcome someone or wish them well on their departure.

Khenpo མཁན་པོ།, 堪布 – A Tibetan Buddhist academic degree awarded to monastics primarily in the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools. Similar to the geshé degree among the Geluk and Bön, this title is awarded to those monastics who have completed a rigorous academic training program, particularly devoted to the study of Buddhist texts by Indian Buddhist masters. Khenpo is also used as a title for the abbot of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

Lama ལ་མ།, 喇嘛 – An honorific title for Tibetan Buddhist teachers. In the context of tantric Buddhist practice, this term refers to a practitioner’s primary spiritual guide and teacher.

Loppön ལོཔོན།, 教師 – A title for a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, especially in academic contexts.

Maṇḍala དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་མཚན།, 壇城/曼荼羅 – In Tibetan, literally “center and surroundings.” Often depicted in art as a series of concentric circles, maṇḍalas are two-dimensional representations of the divine palaces of tantric Buddhist deities surrounded by their retinues. Maṇḍalas are occasionally created in three dimensional forms, often from wood, cardboard, bronze, or other substances. They have a variety of usages in Tibetan Buddhist rituals, including in devotionals as symbolic offerings of the entire universe and in public rituals as a central basis for collective participation.

Mantra མཚན་མོ།, 咒語/真言 – A syllable or group of syllables, often transliterated Sanskrit, that may or may not have their own semantic meaning. The recitation of mantras is believed to be efficacious in bringing blessings to the reciter. Mantras are also used in meditation practices to invoke tantric deities and can be visualized in the body or as the single-syllable seed syllables of tantric deities.

Mudrā ཕྱག་རྒྱ།, 印章 -- A symbolic gesture commonly used in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. These are most frequently performed with the hands and fingers.

Nyingma ལྷིང་མ།, 寧瑪派 – Considered to be the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma school traces its origins to when Guru Rinpoché is said to have brought Buddhist teachings to Tibet in the eighth century. Since at least the twelfth century, the Nyingma school has developed a tradition of “treasure revealers” (གཏེར་སྟོན།, 伏藏師) who have produced new scriptures from “treasures” (གཏེར་མ།, 伏藏) believed to have been concealed by Guru Rinpoché for future generations.

Pecha རྟེན་ཆེ།, 書籍 – The traditional unbound format for publishing books utilized in Tibet. Loose pages printed on both sides are often placed between top and bottom cover plates and wrapped in cloth for protection.

Pūja མཚན་པ།, 法供 – A ritual at which offerings are made. Many pūjas are divided into a standard set of three or seven parts, which include paying homage, making offerings, offering a confession, expressing one’s admiration, supplicating the deities and buddhas to teach the dharma, entreating the deities and buddhas not to pass into final nirvāna, and dedicating the merit of the preceding ritual to the enlightenment of all sentient beings.

Qutuytu ཉོ་ཐོག་མ།, 呼圖克圖 – An honorific title used in Mongolian speaking areas for reincarnate Tibetan Buddhist teachers. During the Qing Dynasty, this title was awarded to Tibetan Buddhist reincarnate teachers recognized by the imperial court.

Rimé རིས་མེད།, 利美/無派別/不分教派 – A non-sectarian movement that emerged in eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century, particularly among the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools. Today, this term is utilized especially in contexts where Tibetan Buddhist teachers receive teachings and transmissions from different schools of Tibetan Buddhism or engage in intra-religious dialogue.

Rinpoché རིན་པོ་ཆེ།, 仁波切 – A Tibetan honorific title literally meaning “precious one.” It is often used following a name for Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated religious teachers.

Sādhana སྐབ་ཐབས།, 成就法/修法的儀軌 – A term for a genre of tantric rituals involving meditations on a tantric deity. Generally speaking, sādhanas can be divided into two types: those which involve paying homage to and requesting blessings from a deity visualized in front of the practitioner, and those which involve the practitioner visualizing themselves to be the deity, manifesting the deity’s enlightened body, speech, and mind.

Sakya ས་སྐྱ།, 薩迦派 – A school of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Khön Könchok Gyelpo (འཕོན་ལོ་གོ་མཚོ་གྲུལ་པོ།, 昆貢卻傑波 1034–1102) in the eleventh century. In 1073 Khön Könchok Gyelpo founded Sakya Monastery. The leadership of the Sakya school has been passed down through male members of the Khön (འཕོན་ལོ།, 昆) family until the present.

Sangha དགེ་འདུན།, 僧伽 – One of the Three Jewels, this term refers generally to the community of Buddhist nuns and monks. The term can be used only in reference to ordained Buddhist clergy, or it can be used in a wider sense that includes novice monastics and Buddhist laity.

Shangpa Kagyü ཤངས་པ་བཀའ་འབྲུག་པ། 香巴噶舉派 – An practice lineage within the Kagyü. The Shangpa Kagyü was initiated in Tibet by Khyungpo Neljor (ལྷུང་པོ་ནལ་འབྲུག་པ།, 琼波南交 1050–1127) who brought teachings he received from Niguma (ནི་གུ་མ།, 尼姑瑪 Tenth/Eleventh century), Naropa’s (འཇུ་ལོ་པ།, 那洛巴 Tenth/Eleventh century) sister, to Tibet. Khyungpo Neljor established Zhangzhung Dorjeden Monastery (མང་ལྷུང་རྗོན་པོ་གྲུག་པ།, 雄雄寺) in 1121. The Shangpa Kagyü was

largely absorbed institutionally into other Tibetan Buddhist schools, although it has been partially revived starting in the nineteenth century.

Stūpa མཚོད་རྟེན།, 佛塔 – A reliquary mound built to house the relics of the Buddha or a Buddhist saint.

Sūtra མདོ།, 佛經/契經 – Buddhist canonical texts. Many of these texts report to contain teachings attributed to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, while others are attributed to other Buddhist divinities.

Torma གཏོར་མ།, 朵瑪 – A type of ritual cake utilized as an offering of food to deities in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. They are generally made of barley flour and butter and painted red when offered to wrathful deities and white when offered to peaceful deities.

Tulku ལྷུ་སྐྱེ།, 活佛 – A title for a reincarnated Tibetan Buddhist teacher.

Vajra རྡོ།, 金剛 – A common symbol of power and indestructability in Tibetan Buddhism. A vajra is commonly paired with a bell (རྩིལ་ལྷ།, 鈴) in tantric rituals, symbolizing the union of skillful means and compassion, male and female.

Vinaya འབྲུལ་བ།, 律 – One of the three collections of Buddhist scriptures or Three Baskets (རྩི་སྡོད་གསུམ།, 三藏) concerned especially with monastic discipline.

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