

**THE FEMINIST BUDDHA: Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Chengdu and Their
Nuanced Approach to Progress, Agency, and Leadership**

by

Sarah Fink

B.A., Davidson College, 2018

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2020

© Sarah Fink, 2020

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

The Feminist Buddha: Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Chengdu and Their Nuanced Approach to Progress, Agency, and Leadership

submitted by Sarah Fink in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

in Asian Studies

Examining Committee:

Jinhua Chen, Asian Studies

Supervisor

Christina Laffin, Asian Studies

Supervisory Committee Member

Stefania Travagnin, Theology and Religious Studies (University of Groningen)

Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between gender and Buddhism as it applies to conceptions of feminist progress, agency and leadership in contemporary Chengdu. These ideas are investigated using analysis of ethnographic field research conducted at three Chengdu nunneries, Aidaotang 愛道堂, Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺, and Jinsha'an 金沙庵, from May to August 2019. During these months, surveys were distributed inquiring into various aspects of the female religious experience. By combining survey data with the broader context of religion in Chengdu, this research reflects on the experiences of women in a Buddhist monastic institution and the lasting impact of “charismatic” female leadership by the nun, Longlian 隆蓮 (1909–2006).

Furthermore, this thesis aims to bring attention to the lesser heard voices of ordinary Buddhist nuns. Through analysis of the views expressed in regard to the eight *gurudhammas*, education, and ordination procedures, this thesis demonstrates how these contemporary Chinese Buddhist women perceive of their relationship to Buddhism through a simultaneous combination of feminist notions and adherence to strict monastic discipline. By utilizing the lesser heard voices of these Buddhist nuns, this thesis highlights variations in the religious experiences of Buddhist women and presents a nuanced approach to feminist values in a monastic environment along the lines of progress, agency, and leadership.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores a new approach to considering the feminist principles of progress, agency, and leadership based on the responses to surveys distributed at three different nunneries in Chengdu from May to August 2019. This research has two goals: first, to introduce the lesser heard voices of ordinary Buddhist nuns into studies on women in Buddhism; and, second, to demonstrate a new way of combining feminist values (increasing opportunities and status for women) and traditional Buddhism, which are often viewed in opposition to one another. Lastly, this thesis evaluates the lasting impact of the Buddhist nun, Longlian 隆蓮 (1909–2006), who held leadership positions in two of the nunneries surveyed.

Preface

Sarah Fink was responsible for the identification, design, and implementation of the research utilized in this thesis. The following discussion and analysis were devised and written by Sarah, with guidance and advice provided by her thesis committee members: Dr. Jinhua Chen, Dr. Stefania Travagnin, and Dr. Christina Laffin.

Sarah also conducted all of the fieldwork, including survey distribution and observations, in Chengdu, China during the months of May through August of 2019. Initial approval for this project was granted on May 28, 2019 by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The Ethics Certificate ID number for the project is H19-00934. This research was listed as minimal risk and funded by a Mitacs Globalink Research Award. Dr. Jinhua Chen is listed as the Principal Investigator and Sarah Fink is listed as the Primary Contact and Co-Investigator.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Lay Summary.....	iv
Preface	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Images	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Dedication.....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Methodology.....	8
1.2 Overview of Chapters.....	14
Chapter 2: State of Scholarship on Women in Buddhism with a Focus on China.....	17
2.1 Women in Buddhism	17
2.2 The “Feminist” Debate	32
2.2.1 The Eight <i>Gurudhammas</i>	39
2.3 Women in Chinese Religions	42
2.4 Mainland Chinese Buddhist Nuns	48
2.4.1 Premodern China	48
2.4.2 Modern and Contemporary China	61
2.5 Concluding Thoughts	70
Chapter 3: Chengdu Nunneries	72
3.1 Longlian’s Life and Leadership.....	72

3.2	The Nunneries	75
3.3	Survey Demographics	83
3.3.1	Age Ranges and Family Buddhist History	84
3.3.2	Years Since Ordination and Years of Residence.....	87
3.3.3	Level of Ordination and Secular Education Completed.....	90
Chapter 4: Perspectives on “Feminist Progress” and “Agency”		94
4.1	Social Mobility, Status, and Education	96
4.2	Agency in the Choice to Become a Nun	100
4.3	The Eight <i>Gurudhammas</i>	114
4.3.1	Survey Responses to the Eight <i>Gurudhammas</i>	117
Chapter 5: Sources of Female Leadership and Inspiration.....		126
5.1	Attitudes Toward Female Leadership	126
5.2	“Charisma”	134
5.2.1	Renewal of Traditions: Dual Ordination	138
Chapter 6: Conclusion		143
Bibliography.....		148
Appendices		160
Appendix A : Open Answer Question Responses		160
A.1	Tiexiangsi Surveys (57–38).....	160
A.2	Jinsha’an Surveys (37–18)	176
A.3	Aidaotang Surveys (17–1).....	180
Appendix B : Nunnery Survey		187

List of Tables

Table 1 Age Ranges Total	84
Table 2 Age Ranges by Nunnery.....	85
Table 3 Family Buddhists Total	85
Table 4 Family Buddhists by Nunnery.....	86
Table 5 Number of Years Since Ordination	88
Table 6 Number of Years Since Ordination by Nunnery	88
Table 7 Years Since Ordained, Nuns Under 40 Years Old	89
Table 8 Years Since Ordained, Nuns Over 40 Years Old	89
Table 9 Years Since Ordained, Nuns 30 to 40 Years Old	90
Table 10 Level of Ordination Total.....	90
Table 11 Level of Ordination by Nunnery	91
Table 12 Secular Education Total	92
Table 13 Secular Education by Nunnery.....	92
Table 14 Secular Education by Age Range	93
Table 15 Buddhist Educational Opportunities by Temple	98
Table 16 General Education Opportunities by Temple	99
Table 17 Progress in Educational Opportunities	99
Table 18 Possibility of Enlightenment in the Female Form.....	109
Table 19 Years Ordained by Age Ranges	110
Table 20 The Eight <i>Gurudhammas</i> Discourage Women from Becoming Ordained	118
Table 21 Ordination Level by Temple	121

Table 22 Female Inspiration by Temple.....	131
Table 23 More Women in Leadership Roles.....	133

List of Images

Image 1 The entryway to Aidaotang, June 19, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.	77
Image 2 Nuns at Aidaotang filling out surveys, June 19, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author. .	78
Image 4 The entryway to Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.....	79
Image 5 Nun altar room at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.....	80
Image 6 A lay Buddhist praying before an altar at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.	80
Image 7 The plaque introducing Sakyamuni Hall at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.	81
Image 8 The entryway to Tiexiangsi, July 2, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.....	82
Image 9 The entryway to Tiexiangsi, July 2, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.....	83

Acknowledgements

I want to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jinhua Chen, for giving me the opportunity to complete a Master's degree at UBC as a Tianzhu Fellow in East Asian Buddhism. He not only allowed me the freedom to pursue research I am passionate about, but also was crucial in connecting me with the people and resources necessary to complete it. The funding and support I received from the international project, "From the Ground Up: Buddhism and East Asian Religions," and the Tianzhu Fellowship in East Asian Buddhism are the reason I was able to pursue a master's degree in the first place.

Thank you to Dr. Stefania Travagnin for aiding me in my conversation with the nuns from Aidaotang, which was incredibly useful for my data collection. Additionally, for providing valuable feedback on the direction and development of my thesis and constantly inspiring me to push myself, and my research, further. Her love of research and for the nuns in Sichuan is palpable and ignited an eagerness in me to make this thesis everything it could be.

Thank you to Dr. Christina Laffin for her useful input on women's issues more broadly and helping me to discover new routes in my data analysis, as well as acting as a resource for me to brainstorm and conceptualize my ideas.

Thank you to Dr. Ester Bianchi for taking the time to discuss my research and provide knowledgeable input into my discussion, as well as sending me gracious helpings of articles and documentary translations which greatly contributed to the accomplishment of my conclusions on the survey results. Her excitement about my research ideas provided an extra push of motivation during this long writing process.

I am especially grateful to Meng Zhang, Maggie Mitchell and Lin Weiyu, part of my cohort in Asian Studies at UBC, for their incredibly gracious patience and assistance throughout my

development of the survey and in my transcription and translation of the data when I returned from doing fieldwork in China.

Thank you to Mitacs for granting me a Mitacs Globalink Research Award. This award is what allowed me to go to conduct my fieldwork and was crucial to achieving my research goals in this project.

My fieldwork would not have been possible if not for the people in Chengdu who helped me to make connections and distribute the surveys. Thank you to Dr. Duan Yuming at Sichuan University for connecting me with the Sichuan chapter of the Buddhist Association of China who introduced me to the nuns and advocated on my behalf when asking them to fill out my survey. And, especially, thank you to the nuns from Aidaotang, Tiexiangsi, and Jinsha'an who took time out of their busy schedules to fill out those surveys, many of them going above and beyond with the depth of their responses to the open answer questions.

I especially want to thank all of the people back home in North Carolina who helped me get here. Thank you to my undergraduate advisor, Dr. Rachel Pang, who initially inspired me to apply for this fellowship and take on a Master's degree. Without her contagious passion for religious studies, I do not know where I would be today. A tremendous thank you to my family for their never-ending love and support for me morally, financially, and emotionally. Thank you for staying awake until odd hours to talk to me while abroad doing my fieldwork, for continually encouraging me to stay positive and reach my goals, for reading through countless drafts of this thesis during the editing process, and for always reminding me why I began this journey. Lastly, I want to thank my wonderful partner, Curtis, for helping me talk through my ideas when I felt stuck, for constantly providing me with reassurance, and for doing everything in his power to make my life easier during the long hours I spent writing, rewriting, and editing this thesis.

*To all of the amazing women who have inspired me throughout my
life: in academia, in religious studies, in Buddhism, and beyond.*

Chapter 1: Introduction

My interest in Sichuan province began while conducting ethnographic fieldwork about religious identity for my Senior thesis and Honors thesis during my undergraduate studies. While those projects focused primarily on Buddhism in Nepal and the United States, respectively, I was introduced to Sichuan's rich and complex religious diversity through one of my advisors. Not only is Sichuan where Buddhism first entered China, but it also has hosted a corpus of historically significant religious figures and continues to impact Chinese Buddhism as a whole. Based on my research interests, my advisor suggested I look into Sichuan as a future location of interest. With this in mind years later, I began to craft my Master's thesis topic with the intention that it would somehow be connected to Sichuan. Boasting a population of 16.33 million people and home to numerous important religious sites, Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, became the area on which I chose to focus.

Delving into potential topics to pursue, I was drawn to the debate between various scholars over the eight *gurudhammas* (*ba jingfa* 八敬法, eight rules that only pertain to female renunciants in Buddhism¹) and the growing literature on the unprecedented number of nuns in Taiwan. Learning more about the landscape of literature on women in Buddhism, I noticed a number of themes and encountered works that utilized the framework of feminist theory to “revalorize” Buddhism, such as Karma Lekshe Tsomo's *Buddhist Feminisms and Feminities* (2019) and Rita Gross' *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (1993). These works led me into the ensuing debate over whether such “feminist” reconstructions

¹ These rules are found in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, which was imposed on China by imperial order in the eighth century and is followed by Chinese *bhikṣunī* today (Anālayo, “The Legality of *Bhikkhunī* Ordination,” 323).

of religion were, in fact, prone to “intellectual imperialism.” While I will discuss these disputes in further detail in the following literature review (see chapter 2), it is important here to define the necessary terms of “woman,” “feminism,” and “agency.”

In her evaluation of such terms, Rajyashree Pandey explains that it “has become part of our common sense to assume that what distinguishes men from women is sexual difference and that this difference is biologically determined.”² However, conceptions of “man” and “woman” are not universal throughout different historical and cultural contexts.³ Judith Butler’s explanation of gender as a performative act helps to further elucidate my own use of the term in this thesis. Rather than suggesting the absolute binary of man/woman, “it is through the endless repetition of certain acts that we create the illusion of the stability of gender.”⁴ Therefore, within the context of this research, I constitute “women” as those who self-identify as such. As I will elaborate upon in discussing my methodology, my research consisted of ethnographic surveys distributed to nunneries in Chengdu. The second question of this survey asked participants to identify their gender (请问您的性别为). The options given were “female” (女), “male” (男), and “other” (其他), where they were given space to write in an answer. Every participant of this survey selected “female” (女). Thus, my conceptualizing of these participants as “women” is based on their self-identification.

² Pandey, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” 3.

³ In Pandey’s article, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” she exemplifies the fluidity of gender categories in premodern Japan through various textual sources, such as *waka* poetry and fictional tales, that highlight how “man” and “woman” are “marked by a certain indeterminacy, defying any consolidation of them as unchanging and essentialist categories, always fixed in the same way” (7).

⁴ Pandey, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” 5. Here, Pandey is summarizing Butler’s explanation of gender as performance.

In regard to the term “feminism” in general, I refer to the understanding and exposition of systematic practices that subordinate and oppress women. When applied as a framework for ideological critique, it has a “conscious emancipatory goal... directed to the complete liberation of women from all forms of subjugation and alienation; its existential judgment involved an uncompromising critique of the conditions that produce women as the subjugated.”⁵ Marsha Hewitt goes on to explain that feminist theory “untangles the cultural practices of domination and subordination of women in order to reveal how they function to privilege men over women in most dimensions of life.”⁶ Relating it to the study of religion, a feminist critique “both inquires and exposes the ways in which religious traditions harbor mechanisms of power that result in the subordination and oppression of women,” which she then notes should be done “without attempting to erect a new theological interest.”⁷ Just as Dorothy Ko called for a “more nuanced understanding of the relationship between women and the dominant social ideology of Confucianism,”⁸ this thesis aims to illuminate the complex relationship of Chinese Buddhist nuns to Buddhist doctrine and monastic discipline.

Lastly, the concept of “agency” is important to consider. “Agency” has been applied as one method in feminist studies where scholars attempt to “reveal the active role of Buddhist women, to emphasize female agency and thus counter the stereotype of women as passive cultural subjects.”⁹ This approach implies a number of problematic assumptions: first, it suggests the universal oppression of women, victimhood, and the innate desire to resist such oppression, and,

⁵ Hewitt, “Ideology Critique, Feminism, and the Study of Religion,” 51.

⁶ Hewitt, “Ideology Critique,” 51.

⁷ Hewitt, “Ideology Critique,” 51.

⁸ Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders*, 13. Citing from Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 8–9, 19.

⁹ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 3.

second, there is an underlying notion that human beings are autonomous individuals whose actions create their own destiny. These formations of agency, as the capacity for action undertaken by autonomous humans who are predisposed to seek freedom and resist oppression, generalizes both the understanding of free will and the universality of innate desires to defy power structures. This thesis examines notions of “agency” through the lens of survey data to propose variations in these conceptions by the Buddhist nuns surveyed.

Chengdu proved to be a perfect location for me to delve into research on Buddhist women. Not only has Chengdu received relatively little religious scholarly attention, in comparison to larger and coastal cities in China, but it also has a lack of information in regard to the women practicing Buddhism there, with the exception of work on Longlian 隆蓮 (1909–2006) by scholars like Ester Bianchi and Qiu Shanshan.¹⁰ Longlian was a fully ordained *bhikṣuṇī* who is often referred to as “the first *bhikṣuṇī* of the modern era” (第一比丘尼) for her impressive intellect and dedication to improving the role and status of Buddhist nuns in contemporary China through initiatives in education and ordination procedures. Longlian was a close disciple of Nenghai 能海 (1886–1967), who was among a generation of monks who traveled to Tibetan areas on pilgrimage and brought these teachings back to China with them, and she later became head abbess of both Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺 and Aidaotang 愛道堂.

¹⁰ Research on Buddhism in Chengdu come from scholars such as Duan Yuming, who primarily works on the premodern period, and Wu Hua, who works on the Republican period. Throughout these works there is very little mention about nuns, and it remains a male-focused perspective on Chengdu Buddhism. Also, Wang Di has published on the cultural history of Chengdu. However, it is again focused on the Republican period and does not include religion as a major topic. Lastly, while Stefania Travagnin is currently working on research concerning nuns in Chengdu, she is also focused on the Republican period. See Duan, et al, *Chengdu Fojiao shi*; Wu, “Zhengzhi, shehui, conglin de difang hudong: yi Sichuan foxueyuan wei li (1923-1939)”]; Wu, *Minguo Chengdu Fojiao yanjiu*; and Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu*.

Aside from this eminent nun, it is hard to find much detailed writing about the nunneries and other ordained women living in Chengdu, especially considering the growing body of work on Buddhist women in Taiwan. I am not the first to notice this gap in Buddhist studies research. A research project commenced in 2017¹¹ with the goal of accumulating more information on the religious environment of Sichuan. This project, *Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan: A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks*, is directed by Stefania Travagnin of University of Groningen and Elena Valussi of Loyola University Chicago. The project is primarily dedicated to understanding Sichuan province in the Qing (1644–1912) and Republican (1912–1949) periods, with some research extending into contemporary times. On the “Project Description” page of their website, they write that one of their goals is to “pay specific attention to gender relations” to counter the general disregard of scholars toward the “gendered dimension of religion, the centrality of women within and between religious traditions, and also how sex and gender differences might affect religious interactions, elements which we know from recent studies are essential to religious communities and networks.”¹² Valussi is currently researching Daoist women in Sichuan and Travagnin is working on Buddhist women in Chengdu, as well as other sites around Sichuan, during the late Qing and Republican periods.

It should be mentioned that there are extenuating circumstances contributing to this void in contemporary research on Chinese women in Buddhism. While scholars were able to publish several premodern studies on Chinese Buddhist women, which will be explored shortly, the shortcomings of contemporary ethnographic research are in part due to the limitations of

¹¹ This project was given funding for 2017–2020 by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

¹² “Project Description,” *Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan: A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks*, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://sichuanreligions.com/project-description/>.

conducting fieldwork in China, at least up to the 1990s. Even today, though the borders are open to foreigners, it remains difficult to conduct lengthy, detailed research, especially concerning religion.¹³ Additionally, gaining insights on *vinaya* or ordination procedures can be viewed as contentious by the Buddhist community because many believe these should only be studied and discussed by Buddhist monastics themselves. In the case of the eight *gurudhammas*, researchers are certainly faced with these challenges. Tzu-lung Chiu and Ann Heirman's recently published ethnographic-based article on the eight *gurudhammas* highlighted this issue:

During our fieldwork in Mainland China and Taiwan, various nuns were at first reluctant or cautious about discussing the issues of *vinaya* with us because we did not belong to their monastic community. Similarly, Master Sheng Yen disapproved of laypeople commenting on monastic affairs, believing that anything relating to Buddhist monastic members should be solved by the *sangha* alone.¹⁴

Research on living religious communities in China requires building a good, trusting relationship with the members of those communities before researchers are actually able to learn oral histories and personal perspectives, especially when looking at topics like this which some would consider unnecessary for outside observation. In short, there are numerous reasons why scholarly work on contemporary Chinese religion remains an area in need of more in-depth studies.

With these undertakings as a jumping off point, I eagerly began my own research on female Buddhists¹⁵ in Chengdu. I chose these three nunneries in particular because of their connection to

¹³ At the time of writing, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the borders in many countries across the world have been limited or closed to outsiders. This will surely create a new barrier for research in the next few years as the unpredictability and variation of response to this situation across the world continues.

¹⁴ Chiu and Heirman, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China," 263.

¹⁵ By "female Buddhists" I refer to those who identify themselves as female. As mentioned previously, all of the participants for the survey explicitly identified as "female."

the Buddhist nun Longlian. Longlian not only acted as the head abbess for two of the nunneries surveyed, but was also influential in the Buddhist climate in Sichuan province and created change that effected the broader scope of Chinese Buddhism in regard to female ordination practices. Therefore, in order to fully examine and contextualize the responses I received through these surveys, it is crucial that I devote space to the writing and perspectives of Longlian.

While there are a handful of scholars working on this area and a slowly growing number of people interested in women's religious experiences specifically, my research fills an important gap in these projects. For example, Stefania Travagnin is focusing on Buddhist nuns in Sichuan during the Republican period up to the time of Longlian, and Ester Bianchi works on Longlian, with a focus on Tiexiangsi and ordination practices up to the 1990s. The present research then looks at the period following these important contributions, centering on the legacy that succeeded Longlian in three nunneries in Chengdu today.

Although this discourse is directed toward those who self-identified as “women,” the subsequent analysis shows evidence that these participants identify first, as Buddhist practitioners and, second, as women in society. This hierarchy of identity formation undermines the “assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location” which “implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally.”¹⁶ Therefore, the goal of this thesis is twofold: first, to introduce the invisible voices¹⁷ of these female Buddhists

¹⁶ Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” 64.

¹⁷ Though these voices are “invisible” in the sense that they are often overlooked in scholarship, they are by no means invisible to the communities that surround these nunneries. It is evident by visiting each of these nunneries that they play a significant role in their surroundings and have numerous lay followers who rely on them. Therefore, these women are not “invisible” completely, but rather to the sensibilities of research in the academic world.

in contemporary Chengdu, and second, to present new reflections on the relationship between gender and religion for self-identified women in a Buddhist monastic institution.

1.1 Methodology

Ethnographic fieldwork allows researchers to collect new data and insights into contemporary communities as they occur on the ground. While my experience in ethnographic research predominantly relied on interviews in the past, I decided to change course for this project and concentrate my energy into survey development and distribution.¹⁸ This allowed me to gain a broader sampling of the views of these nuns on issues surrounding gender, rather than focusing in on a smaller number of women. It is important that I bring to light the voices of the women who are less often heard, the ones who are not recounted in hagiographies or considered “eminent.” This research aims to insert the women who remain on a grassroots level and introduce their perspectives into scholarly discourse on the female Buddhist experience. These anonymous surveys were collected from over sixty women in three Chengdu nunneries, Aidaotang 愛道堂, Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺, and Jinsha'an 金沙庵,¹⁹ during my fieldwork from May to August of 2019. I also had the opportunity to sit down with two nuns from Aidaotang and, with the help of Dr. Stefania Travagnin, was able to discuss the survey topics and my preliminary exploration of the data. Fifty-seven of those surveys were completed by nuns with some degree of ordination, with the remaining surveys filled out by prominent lay followers. For the purposes of this thesis, I will only be basing my analysis on the surveys completed by women at the nunneries who took, at

¹⁸ The full survey that I created and distributed at these nunneries can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁹ These three Buddhist nunneries all house resident renunciants and provide education and Buddhist practice for the women who live there. For more information about these nunneries, see chapter 3, part 2.

minimum, their novice vows. I refer to this group of women generally as “nuns” throughout the following thesis, rather than *bhikṣuṇīs*, since not all of the survey participants received complete ordination.²⁰ In terms of these survey participants, the English word “nun” refers to those who “left home, took vows, and lived in a religious community.”²¹ This group of women includes two who took the novice vows, three who took the *śikṣamānā* vows, and the remaining fifty-two who received the complete *upasampadā* ordination. I chose to exclude the surveys by female lay disciples because the topics explored in this thesis concern ordination and precepts, which would not apply to lay followers.

My ability to distribute surveys to these nuns was greatly helped by a representative from the Sichuan branch of the Buddhist Association of China. With his help, I met with a senior nun or head abbess from each nunnery to go through the survey and answer their questions. After gaining approval, I was able to distribute the surveys to the nuns. Due to the busy time schedule of these nunneries during the summer, I was only able to be present during the completion of the surveys at Aidaotang. As for Teixiangsi and Jinsha’an, after meeting with the nuns to gain their approval, they took a stack of unfilled surveys and found time to have the resident nuns complete them before returning the surveys to me. Because I was not able to be present for the completion of the surveys at Tiexiangsi and Jinsha’an, I cannot determine in what manner these were filled

²⁰ The novice ordination ritual is comprised of the renunciants reciting the Three Refuges formula and accepting the Ten Precepts. The *śikṣamānā* ‘probationary’ period are six additional rules that must be followed for two years during a training period. This period will be discussed later on in this thesis. “Complete ordination” (*juzujie* 具足戒, skt. *upasampadā*), which designates the nuns as full *bhikṣuṇīs* requires a more elaborate ceremony wherein the full precepts are accepted. See Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts in conformity with the dharma,” 154.

²¹ Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders*, 24. Meeks states that the term “nun” is the “English term that best approximates their social position” (24). I am adapting her explanation of this term for my purposes. However, this term generally refers to various types of Buddhist female practitioners. In Barbara Ruch’s explication on the use of the term “Kumano nun” in premodern Japan, she notes: “As multitudinous and varied as, say, the word *students* today, there seems to have been no pressing need for unifying definitions.” (Ruch, “Woman to Woman: *Kumano Bikuni* Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan,” 575).

out and if the senior nuns had any influence over the recorded responses. Furthermore, I approached more nunneries than just the three in which I was able to distribute them. The head abbess of Baimasi 白馬寺 claimed that the questions on the survey were not relevant to them. However, I never received clarification on what this meant. The questions provided on this survey were developed based on common themes in academic literature surrounding women in Buddhism, as well as by analyzing previous surveys on gender equality distributed in the United States. In future research, it would be helpful to also look at how questionnaires are created in China, to offer a more familiar formatting to Chinese participants.

As I will elaborate in the following chapter on the state of scholarship,²² a significant number of previous studies on Buddhist nuns utilize feminist critiques to reconstruct, or “revalorize,” Buddhism into a more egalitarian system, while insinuating the passive victimhood of Asian Buddhist women.²³ It is pointed out time and again that despite the egalitarian foundations of Buddhism, such as the concepts of emptiness and nonduality, there is an undeniable male-dominated power structure in place that explicitly subordinates nuns. Karma Lekshe Tsomo explains the tension of gender binaries in Buddhism in *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*: “If gender were a fixed concept, it would be immutable, but from a Buddhist perspective, no concept is immutable. All compounded phenomena are impermanent, contingent, and interdependent. Changing sex is not taboo in Buddhist texts; in fact, it is mentioned as a fact of life.” However,

²² The scholarship used throughout this thesis relies more heavily on English secondary sources than Chinese. Due to the extenuating circumstances of writing this thesis during the time of the COVID Pandemic and under tight time constraints for completion, I placed more emphasis on English secondary sources. This certainly creates a limit to this research and, in the future, would be well complemented by the addition of a greater number of Chinese secondary sources.

²³ See Tsomo, “Is the Bhikṣunī Vinaya Sexist?”; Tsomo, “Buddhist Feminist Reflections”; Tsomo, ed., *Buddhist Women and Social Justice*; Gross, “The dharma of gender”; Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*; McCarthy, “Embodying Change”; Mroziak, “A Robed Revolution”; Mroziak, “Materializations of Virtue.”

despite the immutable nature of gender, she writes, “gendered monastic restrictions designed to enforce celibacy reinscribe the male/female binary.”²⁴

The issue with applying feminist reconstructions of religion, as Chen pointed out in her article on the feminist debate in Taiwan, is that “Western Buddhist feminist scholars often presume superiority over Asian Buddhist women by stereotyping them as the patriarchy’s victims and by speaking for them.”²⁵ Such frameworks aimed at the goal of “revalorizing” Buddhism were also criticized by Marsha Hewitt and Sian Hawthorne for acting as a type of “intellectual imperialism.”²⁶ Not only are these uses of theoretical feminist framework unable to accurately depict the intricacies of a culture different from that in which it was established, the West, this work also rarely introduces the opinions and perspectives of Asian Buddhist women themselves. It is necessary, then, for scholars to develop new approaches to these ideas and integrate the voices of Asian Buddhist women in order to work towards a more complete understanding of the gender dynamics at play and the perspective of the women being discussed.

Marsha Hewitt describes the feminist critique of religion as an “attempt to expose the ways in which theological doctrines inscribe male domination in conceptualizations of divinity that interlock with the diverse forms of male hegemony that exist in the sociological sphere.”²⁷ In other words, it is a critical perspective of religions which points out the ways that religion functions to subordinate and oppress women systematically. While scholars like Tsomo and Gross attempted to develop feminist reconstructions of Buddhism, others like Hewitt and Hawthorne argue that reconstructions cannot be done by outside voices. Although scholars may bring attention to areas

²⁴ Tsomo, ed., *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*, 6.

²⁵ Chen, “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism,” 18.

²⁶ Hewitt, “Ideology Critique, Feminism, and the Study of Religion,” 54–55.

²⁷ Hewitt, “Ideology Critique,” 51.

in religion that are oppressive to women, Hewitt asserts, “it is illegitimate for scholars in religion to import an external, foreign, modern ideology *into* an ancient religious tradition in order to proclaim this ideology as the underlying center of authenticity of that religion.”²⁸ With this in mind, I decided to utilize a combination of methodology in my analysis of the Buddhist nuns surveyed in Chengdu.

While my research inherently features aspects of feminist theory in that I am exploring the relationship between self-identified female monastics and their particular religious institution, I also apply the overarching frameworks of microhistory and “lived religion” to achieve my goals. Microhistory, as defined by Jan de Vries, is reducing the focus of analysis to a particular “individual or small group, a place or locality and, usually, a brief time period.”²⁹ This methodology lends itself toward studies that “search for answers to large questions in small places.”³⁰ For this thesis, I will be looking at three particular nunneries in Chengdu city, Sichuan province and the Buddhist environment in this locale on the micro level in order to contribute towards macro level ideas on both Chinese Buddhism and the role of women in Buddhism. As for the aspect of a “lived religion” framework, this thesis, exemplified well in the words of Heinz Stiebert, shifts away from “institutionalized forms of beliefs and practices to a more precise focus of attention on the religiosity of the people, of individuals and groups as embedded in the *contexts* of life-worlds and biographies... [and] includes attention for beliefs and practices which may not

²⁸ Hewitt, “Ideology Critiques,” 54.

²⁹ de Vries, “Playing with Scales,” 23. For more on microhistory, see Ginzburg, “Microhistory and World History” and Magnússon and Szijsztó, ed., *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*.

³⁰ Charles Joyner is quoted by Crandall Shiflett in his 1995 book review of Gary W. Gallagher’s *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock*. (Chapelhill: The North Carolina Press, H-Net Book review. Online. Available at <https://networks.h-net.org/node/4113/reviews/4417/shiflett-gallagher-fredericksburg-campaign-decision-rappahannock>. Accessed 14 July 2020.)

be in accord with the official teachings of religious traditions.”³¹ By this, I mean to highlight the differences between the conception of Buddhist doctrine by the nuns represented in my surveys, for example their attitudes toward the eight *gurudhammas* and ordination practices, versus the actual practice and beliefs surrounding these regulations. Within these frameworks of analysis, I explore the surveys collected at three Chengdu nunneries through the lens of historical background and leadership of Chengdu Buddhism in order to come to a better understanding of the lived realities of these Mainland Chinese Buddhist nuns and their relationship to the monastic institution.

I must also acknowledge my own position within this research. Given that I am not part of these monastic communities, nor was I raised in this particular cultural context, I am cautious with my interpretations of the data as I myself may not fully comprehend the contexts in which these nuns are responding. No one except they themselves can truly conceptualize the full extent of their existence as Mainland Chinese Buddhist nuns in these specific nunneries in Chengdu. Even within this narrow scope, the range of socio-economic, ethnic, and class backgrounds of the nuns is also open to variation. Evidence of such variation can be seen in the secular education they received prior to joining the nunnery: there is a wide range, from those who completed middle school as their highest level of secular education, to a handful of nuns who received post-graduate Master or PhD degrees. Therefore, while this data set is narrow in that it focuses on the specific population of self-identified women who took monastic vows in Chengdu, it still represents a range of backgrounds.

³¹ Streib, “More Spiritual than Religious,” 53.

1.2 Overview of Chapters

The following chapters of this thesis revolve between the micro level and the macro level. Chapter 2 provides a thorough outline of the state of scholarship concerning women in Buddhism with a specific focus on Buddhist women in China. It begins with a broad overview of women in Buddhism throughout Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet. The next section then expands on scholarship concerning feminist theoretical critiques of Buddhism, as mentioned above. Following this, the last two sections look at women in Chinese religions more generally and then investigates women in Chinese Buddhism specifically, highlighting work done in Sichuan province.

Chapter 3 starts with the locale of Chengdu Buddhism and the group of nuns who were surveyed, offering a micro level background overview of Longlian and the nunneries where surveys were distributed, including a summary of the demographics gleaned from this data collection. This chapter commences with a short biography of Longlian, from her early life as a secular scholar and successful government worker to her decision to dedicate her life to Buddhism as a fully ordained nun. It also introduces how Longlian functioned as a role model for other nuns in Chengdu and her goal to reinstate dual ordination practices in Mainland China. This chapter then goes into the historical and geographical backdrop of the three nunneries included in this fieldwork. Lastly, I provide a summary of the demographic data garnered through the surveys to begin to draw a more complete picture of the women represented in this data set, from their age range to their level of education and ordination, years since ordination, and history of Buddhists in their family. Parts of this information will be elaborated upon during analysis in following chapters.

Chapter 4 delves into a wider discussion on various perspectives of “feminist progress” and “agency” as it pertains to women and monastic Buddhism. This chapter first examines aspects of institutional Buddhism that can be viewed as “feminist progress,” defined here as the increasing of opportunities and status for female members of the Buddhist clergy. This theme is investigated by highlighting various ways women historically gained social mobility, educational opportunities, and status through Buddhism, combined with survey data showing the participant nuns’ attitude towards educational opportunities available in their nunneries. Following this discussion, the subsequent section reflects on the concept of “agency” as it has been presented through liberal feminist research. By comparing the answers of participant nuns about why they chose to take a vow of monasticism, this section reveals diverse formations of personal “agency” that further complicates previous attempts in literature to locate female agency as a method to counter stereotypes of women as passive victims.

After this analysis, the third section of chapter 4 focuses on another particular area of Buddhism often cited in discussions of gender in Buddhism: the eight *gurudhammas* (*ba jingfa* 八敬法). These rules represent the pinnacle of a contentious debate as many Buddhist studies scholars believe them to be explicitly oppressive to Buddhist nuns, especially due to policies such as the following: A nun, however senior, must always bow down in front of a monk, however junior.³² This section features the attitudes of my participant nuns from Chengdu in relation to these rules, based on their responses to question 32 of the survey. This question was included in the section where participants were asked to rank statements on a five-mark scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” The statement read: “The Eight *Gurudhammas* discourage women

³² Chen, “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism,” 20.

from becoming ordained” (八敬法不支持女人受戒). The survey responses establish an innovative interpretation of these rules as a necessity to social harmony, protection for women, and opportunities for nuns to practice the essential Buddhist teaching of releasing their ego. Such an interpretation counters the argument that these policies are inherently oppressive to Buddhist nuns.

Chapter 5 contextualizes the positions expressed in chapter 4 through their parallels to Longlian’s views, which indicates a lasting legacy left behind by this prominent figure. This chapter explores her legacy through the survey responses regarding attitudes toward female leadership and inspiration, the concept of “charisma,” and Longlian’s achievement in reimplementing dual ordination practices in Mainland China.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I conclude with speculations on the future direction of research on Buddhist nuns and how scholars might be able to investigate the relationship between gender and religion without falling into “intellectual imperialism” through a more thorough examination of the cultural and social contexts within which a religious group is situated.

Chapter 2: State of Scholarship on Women in Buddhism with a Focus on China

Within the broader context of Buddhist Studies research, scholarship on the lives and realities of Buddhist women specifically is relatively slim and just began seeing a rise in interest over the past few decades. The existing literature relevant to the study at hand can be divided into four categories of descending specificity to my particular topic: women in Buddhism, “feminist” scholarship, women in Chinese religions, and women in Chinese Buddhism. Key scholars whose work will be explored within these categorizations include Paula Arai, Stephanie Balkwill, Ester Bianchi, Wei-yi Cheng, Tzu-Lung Chiu, Eun-su Cho, Elise DeVido, Bernard Faure, Beata Grant, Rita Gross, Ann Heirman, Xiaofei Kang, Miriam Levering, Erin McCarthy, Susanne Mrozik, Stefania Travagnin, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Elena Valussi, Chün-fang Yü, and Li Yu-chen.

2.1 Women in Buddhism

There is an abundance of scholarship on women in Buddhism generally, including the situations of women in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries in various time periods. In this section, I will briefly outline some key developments in this area of research and the information scholars currently know about women throughout the world of Buddhist studies, with a focus on East Asian Buddhism.

The most ancient records we have of Buddhist women come from the Pāli canon, where we have the *Therīgāthā*, “Verses of the [Female] Elders.”³³ This anthology provides a collection of poems by and about the first Buddhist women, with 522 verses in seventy-three poems. It was

³³ Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 905. For the full translation of the text, see Hallisey, trans., *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*.

composed by about one hundred female elders,³⁴ who were said to have been enlightened, during the lifetime of the Buddha and includes Mahāprajāpatī and many of the Buddha's other famous female disciples. This collection represents "the earliest record of women's religious experience."³⁵ Many of these poems are written from the point of view of a woman, including descriptions of the suffering of childbirth, marriage, the loss of a child, a husband, physical beauty, and other painful experiences that "lead the author to enter the Saṃgha."³⁶ These verses are often cited in literature on women in Buddhism and, Karma Lekshe Tsomo claims, "have inspired Buddhist women and men for generations."³⁷ Despite having a wonderful and ancient source such as this, the extent of texts written for and/or by Buddhist women is comparatively slim when we look at the large corpus of material that lends itself to male Buddhists.

When it comes to Korea, Eun-su Cho notes in her introduction to *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen: Hidden Histories, Enduring Vitality* that there is a notable lack of historic material on Korean Buddhist nuns, despite the growing popularity of Buddhism amongst Korean women today. This edited volume examines historical records and biographical excerpts from Buddhist nuns in Korea to uncover their lost realities. Cho asserts that the "health of the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* followed that of the religion in general" in Korea and, in particular, the last thirty years saw a significant increase in the number of Buddhist nuns.³⁸ However, she notes that Korean Buddhist nuns are difficult to study due to the "almost nonexistent" writing by nuns themselves and the forced invisibility of nuns who were pushed out of city-centers and into isolation in the mountains.

³⁴ Buswell and Lopez note that "one poem is said to have been uttered by thirty therīs (elders), another by five hundred." See Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 905.

³⁵ Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

³⁶ Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

³⁷ Tsomo, ed., *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*, 9.

³⁸ Cho, ed., *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen*, 3.

Furthermore, “literate males, especially monks, could not write about nuns, for to do so might invite accusations of violating the rules of gender separation and hierarchy.”³⁹ Therefore, this volume is creative in the various authors attempts to locate the reality of Korean Buddhist nuns through other sources.

Using such methods described by Cho, in chapter seven, Ji-Young Jung provides a telling analysis of Buddhist nuns during the Choson dynasty and how Buddhism was used by Korean women to escape the Confucian ideology which restricted them. The implementing of strict Confucian ideals during this dynasty “stressed the regulation of women’s bodies as a focus for moral cultivation.”⁴⁰ As many literati women turned to Buddhism, debates spurred about whether to ban the practice outright. Korean Buddhist nuns were criticized by Confucian officials for “disturbing the harmonious energy” by not participating in marriage and were viewed with “incessant suspicions” for their interaction with monks.⁴¹ Despite such criticism, the writing of these officials shows not only that there were ample amounts of women becoming nuns during this time, but also that many appear to have utilized Buddhism as a way to evade the restrictive Confucian culture imposed on them. Jung writes in her conclusion:

The thought system of Buddhism, along with the spatial presence of its monasteries, created a crack within the edifice of Confucian ruling discourse and control, and to women dreaming of a place “outside” this social order, it provided an alternative space for those who were unable to adapt to the strictures this order placed on their lives.⁴²

³⁹ Cho, ed., *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen*, 11.

⁴⁰ Jung, “Buddhist Nuns and Alternative Space,” 153.

⁴¹ See Jung, “Buddhist Nuns and Alternative Space,” 149–152.

⁴² Jung, “Buddhist Nuns and Alternative Space,” 160.

Through the research done by scholars such as Cho and Jung in this volume, we are able to see that Korean nuns indeed have a “long history of some 1,600 years, a rare and remarkable feat that stands out in the history of world religion.”⁴³ Despite the variation in visibility of Buddhist nuns in Korea, it is clear that Buddhism maintained a significant hold for many Korean women throughout history, both monastic and lay.

While scholars focused on Korean Buddhist women appear to have limited sources, when it comes to Buddhist women and nuns in Japan and Taiwan there is a relatively greater body of records from which to draw. For example, Christina Laffin notes the unusualness of the well-documented life and work of the thirteenth-century woman known as Nun Abutsu in her book, *Rewriting Medieval Japanese Women: Politics, Personality, and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu*. Despite containing some fictional elements, the extant sources for eminent women such as this allow contemporary scholars to attempt to understand what life might have been for Buddhist nuns in Japan in other time periods.

This was not always the case for research on Japanese Buddhist women, as Barbara Ruch pointed out in her introduction to the book, *Engendering Faith*. Ruch dedicated this book to “the spirit of the thirteenth-century female Zen master, Abbess Mugai Nyodai.”⁴⁴ In this introduction, Ruch recounts her humble beginnings in delving into research on Japanese Buddhist women and the challenges faced by scholars up until then, including research methods which “were fated to carve out a history devoid of women except insofar as they were perceived as troubling

⁴³ Cho, ed., *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen*, 1.

⁴⁴ Ruch, “Obstructions and Obligations,” xliii.

preoccupations interfering with the contemplative lives of monks and male thinkers.”⁴⁵ Her discovery of Abbess Mugai Nyodai was in a book on Japanese sculptures called *chinsō chōkoku*⁴⁶ where she noticed a “matronly” essence from this particular sculpture. The inclusion of this eminent female Zen master, which she initially thought to be an anomaly, led Ruch into her current research on religious women in Japanese history. Ruch notes, “[Abbess Mugai Nyodai] became the first woman in Japan fully qualified as a Rinzai Zen master, and yet her name cannot be found in standard Zen histories.”⁴⁷ This systematic ignorance of women’s history ignited an urgency in Ruch to discover the religious experiences, practices, views, and lives of women in Japanese history.

Meanwhile, as Ruch was investigating this gap, two scholars in Tokyo and Kyoto, respectively, Ōsumi Kazuo and Nishiguchi Junko, came together to form the Research Group on Women and Buddhism (*Kenkyūkai—josei to Bukkyō*), which was primarily made up of young historians. The pioneering research of this group and the subsequent conferences and workshops held specifically on women and Buddhism in premodern Japan became a “watershed” moment for this area of studies and drew interest from both male and female academics. These events stimulated research on Japanese Buddhist women and led to the publishing of the lengthy book, *Engendering Faith*, which recounts various aspects of women’s religious experiences in premodern Japan.

⁴⁵ Ruch, “Obstructions and Obligations,” xliii. Ruch also notes that academics who initially may have been inclined to study women in Buddhism were warned against doing so because it was not considered an already recognized and highly regarded area of research.

⁴⁶ *Chinsō chōkoku* are a genre of Japanese sculptures depicting life-size seated figures of Zen masters “made as stand-ins to convey the essence of the master to his disciples after his death.” (Ruch, “Obstructions and Obligations,” xlv). These statues are incredibly realistic and made of wood, lacquer and clay.

⁴⁷ Ruch, “Obstructions and Obligations,” xlv–xlvii.

In 1999, Paula Arai pointed out the incredible determination of Buddhist women in Japan and the great influence they held throughout history. In her book chapter, “Japanese Buddhist Nuns: Innovators for the Sake of Tradition,” Arai remarks:

Although their vital contributions have been obscured in the mire of androcentric historiography, women were a significant force in the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. Indeed it is no quirk of historical circumstance that the first ordained Buddhists in Japan were women, because women were central figures in the religious sphere of ancient Japanese culture.⁴⁸

A prime example of this is found in Zenshin-ni, who was the very first ordained Buddhist in Japan in 584 CE and inspired two more women to become ordained shortly after. In the mid-Heian period (794–1185), Buddhist women again demonstrated impressive acumen when the Tendai and Shingon sects prohibited women from their temples and practices, and later banned them from ordination all together as well. In response, these women created their own form of Buddhist monasticism, called Bosatsukui-ni, “*bodhisattva* nuns.” The commitment revealed through their innovative actions was later rewarded in the Kamakura period with the endorsement of the eminent thirteen-century Zen master, Eihei Dōgen 永平道元 (1200–1253), who founded Sōtō Zen.⁴⁹

Dōgen has been cited as an example of early Buddhist feminism by not only Paula Arai, but also scholars such as Miriam Levering and Erin McCarthy. In both Arai’s *Women Living Zen: Japanese Sōtō Buddhist Nuns* and Levering’s “‘Raihaitokuzui’ and Dōgen’s Views of Gender and Women: A Reconsideration,” these scholars highlight two texts written by Dōgen, *Bendōwa*

⁴⁸ Arai, “Japanese Buddhist Nuns,” 106.

⁴⁹ See Arai, “Japanese Buddhist Nuns,” 106–108.

(1231) and *Raihaitokuzui* (1240), for showing his unambiguous advocacy of equality between male and female practitioners, a philosophical orientation which was not the norm at that time. Arai applauds Dōgen for being “one of the lucid voices that sounded the philosophical and practical truth of the equality of female and male practitioners amid the cacophony of doubters.”⁵⁰

While *Bendōwa* is primarily written as Dōgen’s reasons for promoting seated meditation (*zazen*) practice, he notably remarks that “the requirements for practice and awakening are great determination, great faith, and an awakened teacher. No one is excluded from possessing either faith or determination.”⁵¹ We can see explicit support of women in places such as the question/answer portion of this text. For example, his response to Question 13, Can lay men and women engage in this practice, or is it limited to priests alone?:

The patriarchs teach that when it comes to grasping the Buddha Dharma, no distinction must be drawn between man and woman, high and low.⁵²

Years later, in his *Raihaitokuzui*, Dōgen again pushes for such advocacy. In this “impassioned text,” Dōgen discusses the concept of nonduality “in order to extinguish the errors of those he thought harbored incorrect thoughts about women and Buddhist truth.”⁵³ As well as expressing these views through his writing, Dōgen also had a number of female monastic disciples and his male disciples continued to take on female disciples after his death. This legacy was continued by his successor, Keizan Jōkin Zenji (1268–1325), who actively implemented these teachings for Sōtō nuns. Arai points out that these practices continue to give contemporary Sōtō nuns “a solid sense that women have been a continuous presence in Sōtō Zen. When they look at the history of their

⁵⁰ Arai, *Women Living Zen*, 42.

⁵¹ Levering, “‘Raihaitokuzui’ and Dōgen’s Views of Gender and Women,” 49.

⁵² Waddell and Abe, trans., *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shobogenzo*, 23.

⁵³ Arai, *Women Living Zen*, 37.

sect, they see women seriously engaged with Buddhist practice. When they read Dōgen’s writings, they see women being affirmed. That is all they need to know to conclude that regulations that treat women unfairly are wrong.”⁵⁴

Interestingly, Dōgen’s urging of the Japanese to afford equality to women, “especially in regard to recognizing the true Dharma in female form,” was inspired by his travels to China.⁵⁵ His interactions with Chinese Chan nuns from Song dynasty China allowed him to see that the true key criterion for enlightenment is wisdom, and that any woman who possesses such wisdom is deserving of respect.⁵⁶ Another dimension of Dōgen, which will become increasingly relevant in the following section, is found in Erin McCarthy’s “Embodying Change: Buddhism and Feminist Philosophy.” She emphasizes Dōgen’s view that “anyone who clings blindly to rules and regulations—even those attributed to the Buddha—does not, according to Dōgen, truly understand the Buddha way.”⁵⁷ This goes against the eight *gurudhammas* which have been hotly contested in recent scholarship and play a major role in the “feminist” debate featured later in this literature review.

Around the time of Dōgen’s activity, in the middle of the Kamakura period (1186–1336), Lori Meeks points out that there was a noticeable shift in monastic attitudes towards women. The “most visible manifestation of this shift” was the establishment of a “formally recognized nuns’ ordination platform at Hokkeji,”⁵⁸ commencing with twelve women who received the complete nuns’ monastic precepts of the *Four-Part Vinaya* in 1249. While the Hokkeji temple itself only

⁵⁴ Arai, *Women Living Zen*, 43.

⁵⁵ Arai, *Women Living Zen*, 38.

⁵⁶ Levering, “‘Raihaitokuzui’ and Dōgen’s Views of Gender and Women,” 59. See also Levering, “Dōgen’s *Raihaitokuzui* and Women Teaching in Sung Ch’an.”

⁵⁷ McCarthy, “Embodying Change,” 194.

⁵⁸ Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders*, 2.

extended to “several hundred women and a handful of monastic institutions,” the symbolic significance of this revival and the diminished state control over ordination procedures spurred a larger trend in thirteenth century Japan.⁵⁹ Meeks also asserts that, contrary to the assumptions of some scholars that the decline of female monastic institutions was due to Buddhist doctrinal rhetoric on women’s salvation and androcentric teachings, it instead reflected a shift in institutional structure inspired by “imported protocols from China.” These protocols emphasized esoteric mountain asceticism training, which “viewed the presence of women as ritually defiling.”⁶⁰ Therefore, the increased dominance of such institutional structures inherently led to the deterioration of monastic centers for women until the revival in the mid-1200s.

Bernard Faure is also notable in research on Japanese Buddhist women as one of the few male scholars who have focused on gender dynamics in religion. In his book, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*, he points out that “despite the Buddhist advocacy of nonduality, it seems practically impossible for them to transcend sexual difference.”⁶¹ He suggests that some of the fundamental views on the female body, based on stories in Buddhist doctrine, such as those highlighting the deformation of the female body, provide cause for the inferior status of women. For example, the impurity of the female body is evident in places where, “because its outflow threatens the self-enclosure of the body, menstruation became a convenient emblem of defilement, and its cyclical nature served as a reminder of change and decline.”⁶²

Faure’s subsequent book, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*, offers a closer look at the conceptualization surrounding women and gender constructions in Japan. He

⁵⁹ Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders*, 2–3.

⁶⁰ Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders*, 5.

⁶¹ Faure, *The Red Thread*, 57.

⁶² Faure, *The Red Thread*, 57.

argues that “Buddhism is paradoxically neither as sexist nor as egalitarian as is usually thought.”⁶³ In the first chapter of his book, Faure examines “the evolution of the female monastic order in Asia, and the constraints imposed on nuns.”⁶⁴ He looks at the story of Mahāprajāpatī, the Eight “Heavy” Rules, the motivations of nuns to become ordained, and offers a brief overview of the history of female sanghas in China. In regard to female ordination, he posits the following:

Even if one grants the importance of the lineage, the emphasis of feminist struggle should be on Dharma transmission rather than on ordination... After all, if everyone, in Mahāyāna at least, can become a buddha, one should not forget that the Buddha himself reached awakening without ever having been regularly ordained. The same is true of Huineng, the sixth patriarch of Zen, and of many other male figures. Why should it be different for women?⁶⁵

Furthermore, Faure presents arguments that complicate the position of particular scholars he believes are too idealistic. For example, in contrast to Paula Arai’s description of Sōtō Zen nuns having more “authentic motivation” than monks which “reflect their search for the Dharma,” Faure asserts that there are in fact a variety of reasons that lead women to Buddhist ordination, both selfish and altruistic.

When it comes to Taiwanese Buddhism, there is also a large portion of scholarship lending itself to the study of Buddhist women and nuns, and for good reason. The development of Taiwanese nuns’ orders has not only been exponential in Taiwan, it also created ripples in other

⁶³ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 1.

⁶⁴ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 19.

⁶⁵ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 54.

Buddhist countries. For example, Foguangshan 佛光山, established by Xingyun 星雲 (b. 1927) in 1967, “has been at the forefront in developing the *bhikkunī* order by sponsoring ordinations in Taiwan for Tibetan, Theravada, and Japanese nuns, as well as a particularly historic one in Bodhgaya India, 1998, which spurred the restoration of the *bhikkunī* order in Sri Lanka after a gap of nine hundred years.”⁶⁶ The “dramatic upward trend” in Buddhist believers and organizations in Taiwan is considered by some a “Buddhist renaissance,” which will continue to “transform and stimulate world Buddhism.”⁶⁷

In the introduction to Chün-fang Yü’s book, *Passing the Light: The Incense Light Community and Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Taiwan*, she points out that Taiwan has received increased focus by scholars studying Buddhist women because they are “impressed by the quality and size of the nuns’ orders: Taiwanese nuns today are highly educated and greatly outnumber monks, characteristics unprecedented in the history of Chinese Buddhism.”⁶⁸ This book goes on to use ethnographic fieldwork to provide detail on a particular community of nuns in Taiwan, Xiangguang, or Incense Light, which was founded in the 1980s. Yü explains that she was fascinated by the phenomena in modern Taiwan where many young, educated women were opting to become nuns. Unlike nuns in Tibet and Sri Lanka, Taiwanese nuns were fortunate because they inherited a sixteen-hundred-year tradition and a lineage unbroken since the fifth century boasted by Chinese Buddhist nuns, which allowed Taiwanese nuns to maintain full ordination practices which were lost in many other contemporary Buddhist countries.⁶⁹ However, regardless of Taiwan’s strong ties to religion in Mainland China, Buddhism evolved separately in Taiwan.

⁶⁶ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 90.

⁶⁷ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 2.

⁶⁸ Yü, *Passing the Light*, 1.

⁶⁹ Yü, *Passing the Light*, 2.

Despite various interactions and connections between monks and nuns in Taiwan and Mainland China, the economic, social and political environment of Taiwan varies greatly from that of the Mainland, therefore Buddhism developed in differing ways. As Elise DeVido observes, “with the combination of economic takeoff in the 1970s, universal education for young women and men, and the lifting of martial law in 1987, a this-worldly and socially engaged Buddhism had the resources and freedom to develop to its full potential in Taiwan.”⁷⁰

While the population and status of nuns has declined in many Buddhist countries, Taiwan represents an “infinite world” for Buddhist nuns.⁷¹ DeVido reflects in her book, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, “since the 1980s, Taiwan has experienced a religious revival, not only within the popular religious sphere, but also within institutionalized Buddhism. In particular, it intrigued me that Taiwan has the highest number of Buddhist nuns in the world and also a greater proportion relative to monks, a situation in monastic Buddhism unlike any other on earth.”⁷² Through the work done by scholars like Yü, DeVido, Kang Xiaofei, Stefania Travagnin, Julia C. Huang, and others, we can get a glimpse into why Taiwanese Buddhism is so popular for the female demographic. Kang points out in her article, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” that most of these Taiwanese women decide to become nuns “not because of their unhappy experience with the real world, but because they want to better pursue spiritual development, educational opportunities, and engagement and leadership in public life.”⁷³ She believes that the “immense success” of institutions such as the Ciji Buddhist Compassion Relief Society is in part due to the charisma of their leader, Zhengyan 證嚴 (b. 1937), as well as the “emphasis on action rather than on the

⁷⁰ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 91.

⁷¹ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 538.

⁷² DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 1.

⁷³ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 538.

historically male-dominated realm of doctrines, rituals, and meditation” which provides a “built-in gender advantage for women.”⁷⁴

The charismatic leadership of Zhengyan, a notable figure in the Taiwanese Buddhist landscape, was explored in length by C. Julia Huang in her book, *Charisma and Compassion*. This discussion of “charisma” becomes important again in chapter five of this thesis when considering the influential aspects of Longlian in Chengdu and is also important for understanding the globalization of Taiwanese Buddhism instigated by this eminent Taiwanese Buddhist nun. As Huang explains in her book, “It has been generally accepted that charisma can be a source of unconventional and creative power, a reservoir of possibilities of change.”⁷⁵ It is this inherent magnetism of Zhengyan that allowed her to build a global force of Buddhist missionaries as well as to implement her uniquely feminine views of Buddhism. When it comes to discussions of gender, however, Zhengyan has somewhat mixed views, as we can see through her book, *Still Thoughts*. While she harbors “traditional ideas about the feminine and the ideal Chinese wife, mother, and daughter-in-law,”⁷⁶ at the same time, she does not necessarily believe that women have more karmic hindrances than men because “a woman’s strength will become great if she is truly determined.” Zhengyan then cites Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva as an example as he often “came into the world in the female form of the Goddess of Mercy.”⁷⁷

While Taiwan’s nuns do not typically identify themselves as feminists, their rhetoric of the value of femininity is distinct from the propagation of negative feminine stereotypes in Theravādin and Tibetan societies, which have struggled to regain full ordination for women. As DeVido

⁷⁴ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 539.

⁷⁵ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 3.

⁷⁶ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 75.

⁷⁷ Zhengyan, *Still Thoughts*, 259. Quoted in DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 75.

remarks in her discussion, the male Buddhist establishments in Theravadā and Tibetan Buddhism think of women as “spiritually and intellectually weaker, prey to the waxing and waning of emotions, more polluted, more bound than men are to material *samsara* world due to women’s reproductive role and ‘natural’ inclinations to care for others.”⁷⁸

Stefania Travagnin’s retelling of Elder Gongga’s life in her article, “Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903–1997) between China, Tibet, and Taiwan,” highlights both the limitations women face in Tibetan Buddhism, as well as the Buddhist connection between China and Taiwan. Elder Gongga, despite having nearly one hundred thousand followers and having opened the first Tibetan Buddhist center in Taiwan, among other accomplishments, was never fully ordained. As Travagnin puts it, “At that time, full monastic ordination was not (and still is not) allowed for women in the Vajrayāna tradition,”⁷⁹ which leads these women to either become ordained in the Mahayāna tradition and follow both practices (although Travagnin notes this is not recognized by the Vajrayāna community) or remain a lay or novice practitioner. Elder Gongga received tonsure but remained a novice for her entire life because of this. Regardless of her novice status, Elder Gongga was able to reach great lengths in her practice and was mummified after her death in 1997, a sign that she achieved Buddhahood (*chengfo* 成佛). Therefore, while women in Tibetan Buddhism are still unable to achieve full ordination in this tradition, Elder Gongga’s relic body illustrates the female potential for enlightenment and counters the “belief that female practitioners must turn into a male body to attain Buddhahood.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 76. For more on the status of Buddhist nuns in the Theravada tradition, see Senarat Wijayasundara, “Restoring the Order of Nuns to the Theravādin Tradition,” in *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, 79–90.

⁷⁹ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga,” 256.

⁸⁰ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga,” 259.

Elder Gongga also represents an example of the relationship and network spanning between Mainland China and Taiwan. During the turmoil of the 1940s, many monastics from the mainland left for Taiwan, which was “conceived as the ideal destination,” to continue practicing and preserving their tradition with the hope to one day reignite a Buddhist revival at home. However, as Travagnin highlights, “history tells that, eventually, those monastics did not go back to the mainland and created the roots of today Taiwanese Buddhism.”⁸¹ Consequently, Taiwan itself has been the source of such a Buddhist revival. The strong presence of nuns in particular in Taiwan made them unique in the world and led them to fulfill training and full ordinations for female Buddhist novitiates of all traditions (Theravādin, Tibetan, Zen).⁸² Even the Dalai Lama began calling for full ordination for nuns over the past fifteen years and sent special teams to Taiwan, in 1997 and 2001, to learn about their system.⁸³ With all the great strides in improving the status of nuns already achieved in Taiwan, it is not surprising that numerous scholars devoted attention to this religious landscape, especially in regard to female Buddhist practitioners.

Nevertheless, the strength of the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage in Taiwan has not come about without its own challenges. In Li Yu-chen’s Ph.D. dissertation, she recounts an interaction between Xiaoyun, a well-known Chinese Chan painter, and a Japanese priest prior to a conference in Japan in 1981. Xiaoyun was forced to defend her right to monasticism when the Japanese priest approached her, accusing the existence of *bhikṣuṇī* as an indicator for the coming of *mappo* (*mofa* 末法, the decline of the Dharma).⁸⁴ There are also examples of other nuns, such as Yifa, a well-educated Taiwanese nun who holds a Ph.D. from Yale University and was the former school

⁸¹ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga,” 256.

⁸² DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 112.

⁸³ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 112.

⁸⁴ Li, “Crafting Women’s Religious Experience in a Patrilineal Society,” 8.

director of Xilai Univeristy 西來大學 (University of the West) in Los Angeles, who had a Theravadin monk challenge her after she gave a speech in Spain in 1996. In both instances, these nuns confidently stood up for themselves and their right to be ordained. Li notes, however, that this general confidence portrayed by Taiwanese nuns when challenged by outside monks is not necessarily representative of “feminist consciousness in a modern sense,” but rather “indicates that Taiwanese nuns generally feel secure about their monastic identity and expect to be treated equally.”⁸⁵

2.2 The “Feminist” Debate

Although Zhengyan helped create a more feminized Buddhism in Taiwan, it is important to note that this feminization differs from the liberal feminist discourse I further expand on throughout this section. DeVido explains, “Ciji promotes and reproduces an essentialist notion of feminine nature, of the Bodhisattva Guanyin synonymous with Mother, as a self-sacrificing, infinitely forbearing, compassionate nurturer of others....” She compares Ciji’s feminine values to those in “relational feminism” which “championed women’s function in procreation and nurturing capacities... It insisted on women’s discursive contributions in these roles to the broader society....”⁸⁶ DeVido notes that while Ciji supports feminine values in Buddhism, they are “certainly not promoting liberal feminism nor women’s issues per se.”⁸⁷ Liberal feminism, in contrast, “de-emphasizes sexual differences and gender roles and works to attain human rights and equal opportunities for women as individuals and citizens.”⁸⁸ The following section focuses on

⁸⁵ Li, “Crafting Women’s Religious Experience,” 11–12.

⁸⁶ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 77.

⁸⁷ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 77.

⁸⁸ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 77.

Buddhist studies scholars who align with the latter of these and primarily implement the methodology of feminist reconstructions.

In Marsha Hewitt's article, "Ideological Critique, Feminism, and the Study of Religion," she offers a thorough, detailed explanation of feminist critical theory, especially as it relates to the study of religion. A feminist theory is a critique of perspectives with a "conscious emancipatory goal... directed to the complete liberation of women from all forms of subjugation and alienation; its existential judgment involved an uncompromising critique of the conditions that produce women as the subjugated."⁸⁹ She goes on to explain that feminist theory "untangles the cultural practices of domination and subordination of women in order to reveal how they function to privilege men over women in most dimensions of life."⁹⁰ Relating it to the study of religion, a feminist critique of religion "both inquires and exposes the ways in which religious traditions harbor mechanisms of power that result in the subordination and oppression of women," which she then notes should be done "without attempting to erect a new theological interest."⁹¹

The latter half of this description of feminist theory is directed at particular feminist scholars, such as Rita Gross, who Hewitt believes apply feminism in a way that detracts from the work other feminists have done. Hewitt is one of many scholars participating in a debate about how to handle feminist issues in religious studies. This debate is important to understand in order to highlight my use of "feminism" in this thesis, which I attempt to situate through the perspective of the nuns I surveyed in Chengdu.

⁸⁹ Hewitt, "Ideology Critique," 51.

⁹⁰ Hewitt, "Ideology Critique," 51.

⁹¹ Hewitt, "Ideology Critique," 51.

Many of the Buddhist studies scholars on one side of this debate over the use of feminist theory to critique religion are connected to the Śākyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, which was founded by Karma Lekshe Tsomo in 1987 following a conference centered on gender in religion. The front page of their website states: “The aim was to work together to benefit Buddhist women, to reduce gender injustice, and awaken women to their potential for awakening the world.” This association coordinates bi-annual conferences to encourage and disseminate recent work done on women in Buddhism and has over two thousand international members.

Śākyadhita has been met with mixed reviews from scholars. On the one hand, it is celebrated for elevating “the revival of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination to an international level” and bringing together nuns from various backgrounds.⁹² On the other hand, there is the perception that it is a “white washed organization.”⁹³ This is a result of the large population of upper-middle-class intellectuals and the advantages of English language hegemony and training in feminist theory in the organization, pointed out by Chiung Hwang Chen. It remains to be seen, Chen concludes, whether organizations such as this will be able to address the greatly varying issues for women across the multi-cultural Buddhist spectrum. These issues also come into play in Hewitt’s arguments against feminist scholars who attempted to create feminist reconstructs of religion.

Of those associated with this organization come two prominent names on one side of the feminist debate: Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Rita Gross, who both published prolifically on issues surrounding gender equality in Buddhism. In Rita Gross’ book, *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A*

⁹² Li, “Crafting Women’s Religious Experience,” 31.

⁹³ Chen, “Feminist Debate”, 28.

Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism, her goal is to “revalorize” Buddhism, which means “doing that work of repairing the tradition, often bringing it much more into line with its own fundamental values and visions than was its patriarchal form.”⁹⁴ She specifically aims to accomplish this by employing the framework of feminism that Christian feminist theologians used to critique gender inequality. Karma Lekshe Tsomo also hopes to bring “Buddhist social realities more closely in tune with Buddhist ideology,” and claims that women in Buddhism have “little, if any, voice in Buddhist institutions.”⁹⁵

Other scholars who also took on the mission to “revalorize” Buddhism include Susanne Mrozik and Erin McCarthy. Both center their work on the contradiction between the fundamental egalitarianism of Buddhist doctrine and the patriarchal reality for monastics. McCarthy, inspired by the prior reconstructionist work by Gross, brings Buddhist philosophy into conversation with contemporary feminist philosophy to “revalorize” women’s bodies to become “worthy of our esteem rather than disgust.”⁹⁶ She asserts that “viewing Buddhism from the standpoint of feminism can help free it from its patriarchal past and allow it to face up to the harmful things that have been said or done in the Buddha’s name, and recover the openness which the Buddha expressed.”⁹⁷ Mrozik employs similar doctrinal support and methodology to argue, “sex, like gender, is socially constructed,”⁹⁸ to prove the contradiction of gender inequality with the concept of emptiness. These scholars each use the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form* in conjunction with feminist

⁹⁴ Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, 3. For more on Rita Gross’ perspective, see Gross, *Buddhism Beyond Gender*; Gross, *A Garland of Feminist Reflections*.

⁹⁵ Tsomo, “Family, Monastery, and Gender Justice,” 1–2. For more on Karma Lekshe Tsomo’s perspective, see Tsomo, *Buddhist Women and Social Justice*; Tsomo, “Is The Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya Sexist?”; Tsomo, “Buddhist Feminist Reflections.”

⁹⁶ McCarthy, “Embodying Change,” 202.

⁹⁷ McCarthy, “Embodying Change,” 190.

⁹⁸ Mrozik, “Materializations of Virtue,” 34. See also, Mrozik, “A Robed Revolution.”

theory in their discourse. However, as highlighted by Stephanie Balkwill's article discussed later in this chapter, this sutra can also be read to show the presence and influence of female Buddhists during the medieval period when this text was produced.

Overall, because the political, social and economic environment of nuns in Asia differs greatly from religious institutions in the Western countries, considering gender in Asian religious communities "in light of feminist values,"⁹⁹ which were developed and dependent upon a completely different atmosphere, has been pointed out by scholars as problematic. In a more recently published edited volume, *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*, Tsomo addresses the common critique against scholars like her for forcing their "feminist agenda" by "talking Asian nuns into seeking higher status."¹⁰⁰ Tsomo argues that feminism is beyond Western construction and attitudes toward gender are not stagnant. This edited volume is a step in a new direction and includes work by scholars on women in various Buddhist contexts.

The critiques that Tsomo refers to above are included in work by scholars such as Wei-yi Cheng, Chün-fang Yü and Marsha Hewitt. Both Cheng and Yü utilize ethnographic fieldwork to demonstrate the complexities underlying many assumptions made about gender inequality in Asian Buddhist institutions. These scholars tended to develop their work along the lines of debate over feminist issues, which admittedly can become quite politically charged in some cases. Moreover, a majority of research on Buddhist women concerns the areas of Taiwan, where there is a large population of nuns, or Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, where there are efforts to re-establish *bhikṣuṇī* lineages in Theravada Buddhism.

⁹⁹ Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Tsomo, *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*, 18.

Marsha Hewitt's previously mentioned article is outwardly aggressive toward the kind of work Rita Gross did in her book, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*. Hewitt assess this reconstruction of Buddhism to be a form of "intellectual imperialism." Hewitt writes:

It is illegitimate for scholars in religion to import an external, foreign, modern ideology *into* an ancient religious tradition in order to proclaim this ideology as the underlying center of authenticity of that religion. By interjecting external ideologies into religions, scholars render them unrecognizable. As well, the scholar sets up a new orthodoxy for that religion, establishes a new authoritative voice, in other words, engages in forms of intellectual imperialism that feminist theory has painstakingly worked to identify and overcome. When Gross asserts that Buddhism must be feminist in order to be true to its vision, she engages in imperialist practices of scholarship that many feminist theorists would reject.¹⁰¹

Hewitt is essentially accusing Gross of "attempting to transform Buddhism into a modern Western feminist philosophy."¹⁰² Hewitt's discontent with scholars who assert feminist reconstructions lies within the primacy of feminism over tradition. This condemning perspective of certain feminists taking on a sense of imperialism is also held by Sîan Hawthorne in her book chapter, "Entangled Subjects: Feminism, Religion and the Obligation to Alterity." She points out Hewitt's objections and continues in a similar step, stating:

Of course, there are many good reasons for elevating feminist insights above those that are inimical to women's interests, but this should not be done by playing fast and loose with the historical record; to impose feminist values retrospectively on material wholly different

¹⁰¹ Hewitt, "Ideology Critique," 54–55.

¹⁰² Hewitt, "Ideology Critique," 57.

historically, philosophically or geographically is to indulge in a form of discursive imperialism that weakens the intellectual credibility and political force of feminist work.¹⁰³ Another scholar within the debate over the application of feminist theory to Buddhist studies is Bernard Faure. In his books, *The Red Thread* and *The Power of Denial*, he asserts that his goal is to delineate the common rhetoric of the “black-and-white world of gender ideology,” and instead argue that Buddhism is “paradoxically neither as sexist nor as egalitarian as is usually thought.”¹⁰⁴ He is critical of a majority of feminist work on Buddhism which is “increasingly criticized as being blind to cultural and historical contexts and inequalities other than those related to gender, and so as being complicit in perpetuating the image of women as passive victims.”¹⁰⁵

In Wei-yi Cheng’s book, *Buddhist Nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka: A critique of the feminist perspective*, she is also openly critical of Western feminist scholars and proclaims that this research “arises from a sense of alienation that I often feel towards Western feminist discourse on Buddhism.”¹⁰⁶ She further explains that while she draws inspiration from many of these scholars, she believes they do not do justice to the actual experiences of an Asian Buddhist woman. Therefore, Cheng conducted surveys and interviews with women in Sri Lanka and Taiwan with the goal to “provide a bridge between feminist agitation and the reality of Buddhist women.”¹⁰⁷

In reflecting on her research presented throughout this book, Cheng noted that she “often felt foolish for asking the hermetical questions (about women’s karma and the ultimate goals)” because “it soon became apparent to [her] that these issues are trivial to the nuns.”¹⁰⁸ In regard to

¹⁰³ Hawthorne, “Entangled Subjects,” 124.

¹⁰⁴ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 6, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 6

¹⁰⁶ Cheng, *Buddhist Nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Cheng, *Buddhist Nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Cheng, *Buddhist Nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka*, 80.

the eight rules, she did mention that the greatest agitation surrounds the first rule: that regardless of the age and spiritual attainment of a nun, she must worship a young monk. Some nuns, however, actually commented that the eight rules instead benefit nuns, rather than monks, because it gives them more opportunities to erase their ego. Her findings in this research complicate our understanding of perceived gender equality or inequality in Buddhist monasticism, which are evident in my own findings explained in later chapters of this thesis.

2.2.1 The Eight *Gurudhammas*

The eight *gurudhammas*¹⁰⁹ in particular are an ongoing area of heated debate amongst scholars concerned with gender issues in Buddhism and will come into play in my own analysis in chapter four. For now, I will explain the current debate concerning these rules, which became increasingly public after a demonstration by the nun Zhaohui 昭慧 during a conference in Taiwan in 2001.

In Chiung Hwang Chen's article, "Feminist Debate in Taiwan's Buddhism: The Issue of the Eight *Gurudhammas*," she looks at this outspoken Buddhist reformer and nun, Zhaohui, in Taiwan. Zhaohui is a controversial figure amongst Buddhist circles for her forthright views on the precepts as a reflection of gender hierarchy and inequality which "have functioned as a 'tyrant,' enabling monks' male chauvinism and dampening nuns' self-esteem."¹¹⁰ Chen goes on to discuss the many arguments already presented by scholars such as I.B. Horner, Diana Paul, Rita Gross, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, and so on, about the inconsistencies within Buddhist doctrine and practices.

¹⁰⁹ The eight *gurudhammas* are translated in a variety of ways: eight "heavy" rules, eight "fundamental" views, eight "special" rules, eight "weighty" rules, and so on. Throughout this thesis I will primarily refer to them with their Sanskrit name, *gurudhamma*, to maintain neutrality in regard to these rules by not using an English translation with negative or positive connotations. The Sanskrit for this term can also be spelled *garudharma*, as will be evident in some quotations.

¹¹⁰ Chen, "Feminist Debate," 16.

Her main goal of this article, however, is to layout the two sides of debate following the push, primarily by figures such as Zhaohui, to remove the *gurudhammas* from Buddhist *vinaya* due to the questionable authenticity and inherent sexist quality of them. She concludes the article by explaining the resistance to recent debates due to the reliance on traditional practices and the lack of awareness about such issues. She also takes space to address the intercultural implications of this debate because of the inclusion of Buddhists from around the world and the perceptions of Śākyadhita as being a “white washed organization.”¹¹¹ This is a result of the large population of upper-middle-class intellectuals and the advantages of English language hegemony and training in feminist theory in the organization. It remains to be seen, Chen concludes, whether organizations such as this will be able to address the greatly varying issues for women across the multi-cultural Buddhist spectrum.

Interestingly, a number of scholars pointed out that despite the egalitarian viewpoint of many Taiwanese nuns, almost none of them identified themselves as “feminist,” with the exception of the previously mentioned Zhaohui. In DeVido’s book, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, she writes:

In fact, the flourishing of the nuns’ order in Taiwan developed parallel to, not in coordination with, feminist movements in Taiwan and abroad. Nuns see themselves as working for the good of Taiwanese society as a whole, not especially for women’s rights. Nuns say that they built the nuns’ order through hard work and sacrifice, without the aid of feminist theory or praxis. Many women interviewed for this book believe that women’s progress in Taiwan over recent decades is the “natural result” of Taiwan’s overall “progressive development,” rather than acknowledge the feminist movement’s

¹¹¹ Chen, “Feminist Debate,” 28.

contributions. Similarly, one theme that Li Yu-chen stresses in her dissertation is that the priority of Taiwan's nuns' struggle over the years has been to legitimize their monastic identity without openly challenging patriarchal society.¹¹²

Furthermore, when interviewing nuns for her dissertation, Li Yu-chen, who is mentioned above in the quote from DeVido's book, asked a number of women whether they would call themselves feminists. Most responded that they did not see themselves as feminist, but rather as "Humanist Buddhists." When asked if they could identify any "feminist" nuns, Li claims the typical answer she received was, "Probably only Zhaohui will admit that she is a feminist."¹¹³ Chün-fang Yü also explored this during research for her book, *Passing the Light*. She writes, "Yet paradoxically, these independent nuns, with the rare exception such as Zhaohui, do not consider themselves feminists, nor do they identify with feminism in Taiwan."¹¹⁴ Therefore, we can see that while there is a great deal of work being done in Taiwan to improve the opportunities and status available to Buddhist nuns, these women, with the exception of Zhaohui, do not align themselves with the feminist vision represented by organizations such as Śākyadhita and various scholars.

Of course, there are also articles on these rules that do not conjecture with the feminist debate described here. Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedroen and Bhikku Anālayo consider the validity and legal implications in terms of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in their article, "The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Tradition." Bhikku Anālayo also discusses these rules in another article of the same journal volume, "The Legality of *Bhikkhūnī* Ordination." They focus their attention on the aspects of the *gurudhammas* that impact the possibilities of ordination for

¹¹² DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*, 27.

¹¹³ Li, "Crafting Women's Religious Experience," 12.

¹¹⁴ Yü, *Passing the Light*, 211.

women in the Theravada and Vajrayāna traditions where the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage did not exist or had died out. These detailed doctrinal explanations will come into play in chapter four as context for the survey data I collected concerning these rules. Most notably, Bhikkhu Anālayo's distinction of the term *gurudhamma* as a "principle to be respected," rather than as a "heavy" rule, through his examination of the *vinaya* demonstrates his view that, "the eight *garudhammas* are not rules whose breaking entails a punishment, they are instead recommendations."¹¹⁵

2.3 Women in Chinese Religions

While these overarching discussions on gender and *vinaya* are important to the purposes of this thesis, we must now consider the particularities of women's religious experiences in China and the scholarly attention which has been paid to Chinese religious women thus far. This section will first discuss Chinese women's religious experience generally, with a concentration on modern times, followed by the subsequent section which delves more precisely into Chinese Buddhist women.

Religious women faced mixed realities throughout Chinese history, at once finding empowerment and opportunities through religion, while also being condemned by patriarchal society. Against the backdrop of Confucian moral ethics, which "confined women's role within the domestic sphere," participation in religious activities offered an outlet for women.¹¹⁶ In Jia Jinhua's book, *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China*, she explores how Daoist priestesses distinguished themselves as a gendered religio-social group during

¹¹⁵ Anālayo, "The Legality of *Bhikkhunī* Ordination," 320.

¹¹⁶ Kang, "Women and the Religious Question in Modern China," 492.

the Tang dynasty (618–907), taking up these roles “as their career and realiz[ing] their individual worth with meaningful presentations.”¹¹⁷ From a more modern viewpoint, Kang Xiaofei’s article, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” illustrates the crucial role that religious women held in maintaining beliefs throughout the turbulent twentieth century in China. On the importance of studying women and religion in China together, Kang asserts, “Bringing women into this picture is not just to prove that ‘women were there too’. Rather, it should yield an understanding that, without women, this picture is impossible to draw.”¹¹⁸ This article highlights the ways that religious women maneuvered through this tough political landscape, despite accusations that religions were “instruments enslaving women in China’s evil past,”¹¹⁹ to play a vital role in creating the Chinese religious reality that we see today.

Kang explicitly expresses the role exhibited by older women during this time, who fell through the cracks of the new market economy. The older women who received religious training prior to the Maoist period were quick to “reclaim temple/church properties, to resume religious practices, to reassert leadership of their communities, and most of all, to provide religious training for the young generation of nuns and lay women.”¹²⁰ Religious practice offered overlooked elderly women “a meaningful late life on several accounts” and they acted as the spiritual caregivers of the family.¹²¹ Furthermore, the next generations of Buddhist and Daoist nuns, who have now become monastic leaders in their own right, are owing to the tutelage of these elder nuns.

¹¹⁷ Jia, *Gender, Power, and Talent*, xvii. See also Jia, Kang and Yao, eds., *Gendering Chinese Religion*.

¹¹⁸ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 558.

¹¹⁹ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 504.

¹²⁰ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 545.

¹²¹ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 550.

As for scholarship on Sichuan province, the ongoing research project, *Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan: A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks*, directed by Stefania Travagnin and Elena Valussi, is bringing together scholars from North America, Europe, and Asia and across various disciplines to focus specific attention on religious diversity in Sichuan province during the Qing and Republican periods, with some projects extending into contemporary times as well. This undertaking is relevant to my particular research for two reasons. First, because of its aim to reveal Sichuan as an “active centre of religious knowledge production in itself,” as opposed to the larger cities and coastal areas. On the “Project Description” page of their website, they note that the province of Sichuan, “which counts a population of more than 81 million, remains, however, largely unexplored, with the exception of few Buddhist and Daoist sites.” Secondly, they also assert that one of their goals is to “pay specific attention to gender relations” in the exchanges between religious groups.¹²² They continue that these efforts are particularly important to counter the general disregard of scholars toward the “gendered dimension of religion, the centrality of women within and between religious traditions, and also how sex and gender differences might affect religious interactions, elements which we know from recent studies are essential to religious communities and networks.”¹²³

In May 2019, Elena Valussi, one of the project directors, published her article, “Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis in Chinese Religions—With Two Case Studies from the Republican Period.” In this article, Valussi provides the background and framework for feminist thought in Chinese religions and shows the influence of feminist thought and terminology which came from

¹²² “Project Description,” Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan: A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://sichuanreligions.com/project-description/>.

¹²³ “Project Description,” Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan.

both Japan and Western countries, especially during the French revolution and enlightenment periods. Valussi analyzes Buddhist magazines, letters, social commentaries and opinion pieces to outline the debate on gender and religion in the public sphere and show how gender issues in religion are related to broader societal concerns.

Through this analysis, Valussi shows that although many religious leaders “championed women’s spiritual equality and their right to participate in religious organizations,” much of the emancipation evident in early twentieth century China was “closely tied up with China’s own emancipation and the wider nationalist agenda.”¹²⁴ She uses this context to indicate the shifting view of women in Buddhism and show how the close ties between feminism and modernism pushed China to progress socially so that they would not appear backward and could compete with Western countries.

In her more recent article published in May 2020, “Men Built Religion, and Women Made it Superstitious,” Valussi expands on a number of her ideas presented in the previous article by showing how the dichotomy of religion/superstition fell along the lines of male/female. She argues that “the intersection between the secularist and Westernized ideology of the May Fourth movement and the attempts at reforming religion can and should all also be seen from a gender perspective.”¹²⁵ The pervasive rhetoric of women’s superstitious beliefs and the need to educate them, masked under the guise of creating gender equality, essentially blamed women for the perceived backwardness of China and inability for them to modernize.

¹²⁴ Valussi, “Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis,” 134.

¹²⁵ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 89.

An example of this rhetoric is found in Jin Tianhe's (1874–1947) "A Woman's Bell" (*Nüjie zhong* 女界鐘), published in 1903. He "makes clear that superstition was a particular problem for women; it grew from their excessive emotional nature and was to be overcome by education."¹²⁶ This book, which has been described as a "Feminist Manifesto," singles out superstitious female behaviors, such as fortune telling, chanting spells, and revering ancestors, "as responsible for keeping China in a deplorable state"¹²⁷ and charges women as accountable for re-building Chinese citizenship. Valussi lends a telling quote from this manifesto:

How does superstition develop? It starts from human feelings and hopes, and women are factories of feelings and hopes.

迷信何以起？起於人之感情希望也。而女子者，感情希望之出產地也。¹²⁸

Indeed, the intrinsic nature of women was often viewed as "inherently superstitious,"¹²⁹ therefore depictions of female religiosity were steeped in negativity due to the newly formed connotations of the religion/superstition dichotomy. This dichotomy put pressure on religious organizations too, whose leaders were attempting to distinguish their practices as decidedly religious and not superstitious, "an important move for the very survival of all religious communities."¹³⁰

On top of the stress that religious organizations were already under, several intellectuals believed that "all religions treat women as inferior, thus the practice of religion was particularly detrimental to women and to their position in society."¹³¹ A 1934 article claimed that women were

¹²⁶ Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 92.

¹²⁷ Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 95.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 95. Originally cited from Jin Tianhe, *Nüjie zhong* 女界鐘. Shanghai: Datong shuju, 1903. Repr. Jin Tianhe, *Nüjie zhong*, ed. Chen Yan 陳雁 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 18.

¹²⁹ Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 90.

¹³⁰ Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 98.

¹³¹ Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 98.

more easily swindled into oppressive traditional customs or religious conversion because of their religious nature and lack of education.¹³² This rhetoric was not only employed by male scholars, but also educated female writers who urged uneducated, rural women to revolt against these practices and “achieve freedom from the constraints of a superstitious society.”¹³³

The title of her article was inspired by a study on religion and women by Xu Dishan in 1947, which “describes how the lower status of women in society is connected to the lower status of women in religion.”¹³⁴ In this study, Xu uses the “well-known” expression, “men created religion, women made it superstitious,” to exemplify the negativity associated with female religiosity, as opposed to the male concept of religion as a “positive element of society.”¹³⁵ Xu’s discussion, as well as the use of this expression as late as 1947, shows that society continued to view female religiosity derogatively and, importantly, “that intellectuals were well aware of the existing gender inequality in the religious realm.”¹³⁶

Valussi concludes her discussion on the gendered dichotomy of religion/superstition in the Chinese Republican period by asking: “are we actually talking about women here? Or rather, are women’s religious practices used, in popular newspapers, as a foil that stands in for the inability of the government and of intellectuals to eradicate practices deemed backwards?”¹³⁷ She posits that these discussions of gender are not necessarily aimed at female empowerment, but rather they utilize gender distinctions to indicate possible societal change. Lastly, the pervasiveness of female

¹³² Hua, “Fengjian shili yapo xia de Sichuan funü,” 2167–2169.

¹³³ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 104. For an example of a female writer urging her fellow “female compatriots,” see Zhao, “Xiang mixin fojiao de nü tongbao jin yi yan,” 5–6.

¹³⁴ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 115.

¹³⁵ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 116.

¹³⁶ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 116.

¹³⁷ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 118.

religiosity, despite being faced with heavy criticism from intellectuals and newspapers, is evidence of the “enduring power, variety, and resourcefulness” of religious women in Republic China.¹³⁸

2.4 Mainland Chinese Buddhist Nuns

Finally, we will look at the views in regard to Chinese Buddhist Nuns more precisely, through the lens of research by important scholars such as Miriam Levering, Tzu-Lung Chiu, Ann Heirman, Beata Grant, Ester Bianchi, Stephanie Balkwill, Elise DeVido, and Stefania Travagnin.

In Chün-fang Yü’s book, *Passing the Light*, she remarks that it is impossible to reconstruct a continuous history of Chinese nuns. While biographies of monks “have been assiduously collected by generations of monk-scholars,” there exist only two “modest collections” of nuns’ lives: *The Lives of Nuns* (*Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳) and *Continued Lives of Nuns* (*Xu Biqiuni zhuan* 續比丘尼傳).¹³⁹ Therefore, scholars have become increasingly creative in their excavation for knowledge on the lives of nuns throughout Chinese history. The ensuing scholarship will be outlined beginning with premodern China, followed by modern and contemporary studies.

2.4.1 Premodern China

The perception and lives of nuns appear to have fluctuated throughout Chinese history. Works by three particular scholars, Beata Grant, Miriam Levering, and Stephanie Balkwill, demonstrate a brief look at nuns from the seventeenth century, Song dynasty (960–1279), and medieval China

¹³⁸ Valussi, “Men Built Religion,” 119.

¹³⁹ Yü, *Passing the Light*, 2.

(fourth to sixth centuries), respectively.¹⁴⁰ Grant and Balkwill are also notable for their innovative methodology in locating the voices of Buddhist nuns from these time periods by looking outside of the most often studied large Buddhist canons, such as the Taisho canon. In her book, *Eminent Nuns*, Grant used *yulu*, collected discourse records, of women Chan masters that are part of the “privately printed edition of the (expanded) Buddhist canon known as the *Jiaxing dazing jing*.”¹⁴¹ She uses the discourse of these seventeenth-century women to “redress the one-sidedness of the popular perception of nuns in premodern Chinese culture” through the “far more multidimensional perspective” reflected in their writing.¹⁴²

In setting the stage for her following discussion of the collected discourses of these women Chan masters, Grant explains the evolving political and social context of late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1912) China that led to the relatively extensive writing of these nuns. The historical context for the works at hand provides an example of the varying perceptions of Buddhist

¹⁴⁰ For more on premodern Chinese Buddhist nuns, see Chen, Jinhua, “Family Ties and Buddhist Nuns in Tang China: Two Studies,” *Asia Major* 15, no. 2 (2002): 51–85 and Chikusa, Masaaki, “The Formation and Growth of Buddhist Nun Communities in China,” in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, edited by Barbara Ruch, 3–20. Ann Arbor: The Center for Japanese studies at the University of Michigan, 2002. Anna Andreeva and Hsin-yi Lin have also written about Buddhist perspectives of gender through analysis of discourse on reproductive rituals and practices in medieval China. Lin’s dissertation on Buddhist reproductive practices in medieval China demonstrates that, although the idea of reproductive pollution appears before the introduction of Buddhism in China, the greater emphasis on revulsion of the female reproductive body and “the fetuses’ suffering and defilements in the womb” came through Buddhist discourse (Lin, “Dealing with Childbirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” 314). Therefore, Buddhist discourse on reproduction furthered the gender hierarchal order by strengthening the “dualistic perspectives toward birth, namely viewing it either as the root of suffering or the prophecy of achieving sanctity” (Lin, “Dealing with Childbirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” 312). This research highlights an aspect of the negative attitudes toward female gender apparent through the introduction of Buddhism into China at the beginning of the medieval period. Considering the influence of medical discourse on perceptions of gender in medieval China is especially important because many of the medical specialists of the time were ordained Buddhist or Taoist priests (Andreeva and Steavu, “Introduction,” 2). See also Andreeva, “Lost in the Womb.”

¹⁴¹ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 12. Grant explains that they began carving the blocks for this collection in 1579 on Mount Wutai, but it was later moved to Śūrangama Monastery in Jiaxing, which is where it gets the name from. The first complete edition was printed in 1677 in Hangzhou. It was reprinted up until 1719 and contains over five hundred titles not found in previous editions of the Buddhist canon. She notes that, due to the vast amount of texts that can only be found in this particular edition of the canon, scholar Lan Jifu equated its significance to the discoveries at Dunhuang. See Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 12–13.

¹⁴² Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 4.

nuns throughout Chinese history. She begins with the depictions of nuns as licentious prostitutes by male literati in the popular market as a jumping off point for her desire to “redress” the narrative on Buddhist nuns in China. Her overview then expounds on the greater level of acceptance for women, especially educated elite women, leaving home to devote themselves to religious efforts, which was even seen as “an expression of heroic resolve,”¹⁴³ due to the chaotic political and social situation during the fall of the Ming dynasty. Prior to this dynastic changeover, after a period of rapid growth for Buddhism at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, with the reign of Ming emperor Jiajing (r. 1522–1566) came the halting of such progress. Confucian officials took advantage of Jiajing’s anti-Buddhist feelings to dismantle much of the Buddhism that spread under previous rulers. These Confucian officials were also particularly offended by the presence of female monastics. Grant gives the example of the official Huo Tao who, in 1536, “took it as his personal mission to clean his home city of Nanjing of its nuns and nunneries.”¹⁴⁴ The following year, he made the announcement:

Now all of the nuns fifty and below have been returned to their natal families; their pernicious influence has been mitigated, and there are no longer any cloisters or temples into which people’s wives and daughters can secretly repair.¹⁴⁵

The contempt that men like this held for Buddhist nuns is obvious; however, their control ceased with the reign of the emperor and was followed by a revival of Linji Chan by Miyun Yuanwu (1566–1642). His emphasis on legitimate Dharma transmissions led to a “small but significant”

¹⁴³ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 9.

number of Dharma heirs that were women, in fact, the very women whose recorded discourse collections are the basis of this book.

Thanks to the resurgence of these practices by Miyun Yuanwu, women were “not only able but expected to travel and study with eminent Chan masters and then take on disciples of their own, as well as to engage in active fund-raising and convent building, to deliver public religious discourses, and especially to have these discourses, as well as other writings, compiled, printed, and circulated.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as for the Jiaxing canon, Grant notes that nuns and laywomen made up a significant number of the sponsors for the canon and even outnumbered the male sponsors in some cases. However, what Grant expresses to be “extremely noteworthy” about this particular edition of the Buddhist canon is the inclusion of seven discourse record collections, each collection from one to five fascicles in length and ascribed to a different female Chan master of the Linji lineage, as well as a compilation of poems and other writing following the discourse collection of one of these nuns.¹⁴⁷ Grant’s work shows that these seventeenth-century women Chan masters took advantage of “the Chan master’s prerogative to have his or her words preserved in collections of discourse records.”¹⁴⁸ The influence and inclusion of these women Chan masters is especially important when we consider that a vast majority of Buddhist texts are authored or translated by male Buddhist masters.

The lack of female voices in the widespread editions of the Buddhist canon was also an inspiration for Balkwill’s recent research, which utilizes a creative approach to locating the voices of women in medieval Chinese Buddhism and highlights the subtle influence that women held. In

¹⁴⁶ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 13.

¹⁴⁸ Grant, *Eminent Nuns*, 12.

Balkwill's article, "Why does a woman need to become a man in order to become a Buddha?" she uses textual analysis of stories containing female-to-male sex transformation to deduce potential reinterpretations of what it means to be a woman in Buddhism. She argues that while these texts appear to contradict themselves, exalting emptiness of form and then continuing to change into a male body regardless, they can actually be read as consonant when taken to show the true potential of a woman's enlightenment. The transformation into a male form is simply an expedient means to help others understand the Buddha's teachings.

Balkwill's textual analysis primarily centers on the story of the Daughter of the Dragon King from the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form*. Although the Daughter of the Dragon King must first transform into a man and then into a Buddha, Balkwill points out that the Buddha was already able to witness her enlightenment before she went through transformation because "the Buddha has the enlightened mind necessary to understand her puzzling existence."¹⁴⁹ Therefore, her sex change primarily functioned as a demonstration of her attainment of Buddhahood to the disciples and Arhats who were unable to understand her enlightened state due to their own deluded minds. As Balkwill puts it, "it seems that her transformation is not, then, a precondition to her own awakening but a result of her awakened ability."¹⁵⁰ Therefore showing that, in the eyes of the Buddha himself, her physical sexuality did not encumber her from achieving enlightenment.

Mrozik's argument about the social context of gender, as noted earlier, comes into play during Balkwill's analysis of the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form*, which presents an

¹⁴⁹ Balkwill, "Why does a woman need to become a man," 5.

¹⁵⁰ Balkwill, "Why does a woman need to become a man," 5.

explanation for why the female body is an obstacle due to social considerations surrounding women. Balkwill believes this text was likely written as an explanation to court women who were questioning the same gender inequalities perceived by feminist scholars today. The assertion of social context in this sūtra is important because it takes into consideration the ultimate emptiness of physical gender, but points out that, despite this ultimate insignificance, gender maintains a specific role in our current realities which makes life harder on women. In her reading of the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form*, Balkwill discusses the uncommon approach to explaining sex transformation that is employed. The story in the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form* includes a debate between Śāriputra and a woman who showed up to a Buddhist assembly about the eligibility of achieving Buddhahood in a female form. The female protagonist lectures Śāriputra on the emptiness of physical form and eventually magically transforms herself into a man in order to prove her ability. Balkwill's reading of this story changes the way they shed light on the concept of sex transformation in Buddhism. Rather than focusing on the physical elements of the female form which hinder her, such as menstruation, the Buddha instead points to social gender as a reason for changing sex. By rearticulating this issue in regard to the social aspects of gender, the Buddha rationalizes that because a woman's life is difficult, "subject to abuse and objectification, a woman must seek a male body in order to be at peace."¹⁵¹ The focus on social gender removes this argument from the physical embodiment of the female form and further demonstrates the potential for female enlightenment.

Through this reading of the texts, Balkwill claims that while the texts appear to contradict themselves, exalting emptiness of form and then continuing to change into a male body regardless

¹⁵¹ Balkwill, "Why does a woman need to become a man," 3.

of that emptiness, they can actually be seen as consonant when read to show the true potential of a woman's enlightenment. Her transformation into a male form is an expedient means to allow others to understand the Buddha's teachings and indicates her outstanding comprehension of "one of the Mahāyāna's most difficult doctrines to understand, the emptiness of physical forms."¹⁵² On the other hand, this unique explanation for the evidential discrepancies between gender also counters such arguments by scholars like Mrozik and Gross who indicate the contradictions between doctrine and practice. Regardless of the realities of our enlightened states, we remain subject to the world we reside in previous to enlightenment, which happens to be shrouded in patriarchal structures, both during the time of the Buddha and persisting to contemporary times (though to a lesser extent today). Balkwill's reading of this sūtra exemplifies how Buddhists were aware of these contradictions and, in fact, addressed them specifically.

In conversation with Dr. Stephanie Balkwill in January 2020, she explained her approach to research on Buddhist women, which has the potential to impact the way Buddhist women are studied. Until recently, women were mostly silent throughout historical Buddhist research due to a lack of female authors and translators (as well as a lack of interest in women by scholars of Buddhism). However, by focusing on sources external from the Buddhist Canon, Balkwill was able to locate the voices of Buddhist women and demonstrate the potential influence of these female figures. She explained to me that although they did not typically translate or author texts, many women were involved in textual production in other ways, such as sponsoring the creation or translation of particular texts. Furthermore, when it comes to inscriptions and donors, men and women are represented quite equally. Therefore, although they are not visible in high-level

¹⁵² Balkwill, "Why does a woman need to become a man," 8.

positions, such as translators and authors, women were greatly involved on the grass roots level. Women are often seen as being absent from a majority of discourse on Buddhism, but what it really comes down to is being more creative in our search to understand the histories of Buddhist women.

Balkwill also discussed the *Sūtra on Transforming the Female Form* during her lecture at UBC in January 2020, titled “Did Women Produce Buddhist Texts in Medieval China? And Does it Matter if They Did?” She revisited this “strikingly new” approach to explaining sex transformation through social gender and provided her own translation of this text:

When asked specifically why... [the Buddha] says, “the female body is like that of a maid servant and cannot obtain self-sovereignty... she’s constantly troubled by sons, daughters, clothing, food, and drink and other necessities related to family matters.” And [the Buddha] also says that the legal system, or the dharma system, for women does not allow a woman to have her own freedom. She must constantly be at the side of someone else, receiving “drink, clothing, perfumes, all type of adornments, elephant and horse carts,” so she gets a lot of stuff. I think this is a shout out to the objectification of women or the sort of special treatment of women. “And this is why she must give rise to the thought of abhorring and getting rid of her female body.”¹⁵³

The implication here is that it is not necessarily true that the female form is karmically inferior, but because the female form is perceived lower on the social hierarchy, women, therefore, face a greater amount of suffering. This explanation counters the defenses of

¹⁵³ Balkwill, “Did Women Produce Buddhist Texts in Medieval China?”

Mrozik and McCarthy, who both point to this sutra as an example of how Buddhism contradicts itself. Balkwill demonstrates that the explanation provided in this sūtra is the first time social gender is featured prominently as a reason for sex transformation and expresses the recognition by Buddhists that women do, in fact, suffer because of the patriarchal culture.

More importantly, this particular text was most likely written for a female audience. This leads us to Balkwill's approach to finding female agency and influence outside of the doctrine. In her lecture, Dr. Balkwill presented five ways that women exerted influence over Buddhist textual production during medieval China,¹⁵⁴ outside of the typical roles of author or translator: First, the elite court women's interest in becoming nuns forced translators to translate the texts necessary for their ordination ceremonies. During this period, many court women from the Liu Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479 CE) turned to monasticism after their master's passed away. However, previous to this time period, female ordinations were not done officially and legally because there were no translations of the formal legal code. The first official legal ordination was done in 432 CE. Balkwill pointed out that this renewal of female ordination procedures indicates that women could not only read and knew the *vinaya*, but also had significant influence.

Second, simply by being a critical mass of women who were eager to read texts relevant to themselves, translators were pressured to work on texts that fulfilled these desires. Third, the women who delved into developing Buddhist careers during this period

¹⁵⁴ Dr. Balkwill's talk was focused on medieval China between the fourth to sixth century in China, with special attention paid to the Liu Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479 CE).

consequently created an “elite Buddhist womanhood” through their devotion to training their elite. Fourth, these nuns created a space for particular texts to gain influence by choosing which sutras were read, memorized, and chanted. Fifth, the nuns influenced the creation of new texts being written at this time by giving authors an audience to write for and inciting textual innovation.

One of the most poignant aspects of this lecture was Balkwill’s explication on Dharma Master Shi Sengzhi 釋僧芝 (d. 516 CE), the superintendent of *bhikṣuṇīs* and an eminent nun known for her ability to recite sutras. As Balkwill expressed in her conclusion of this presentation, “the very fact that we are talking about [this nun] today is what matters.” Ven. Sengzhi was ordained in 458 CE and became a highly respected Buddhist practitioner who gained enough power in court that she not only worked as a private teacher to the emperor but was also able to appoint her very own niece to the court in 515 CE. The level of social status and power that Ven. Sengzhi held is remarkable due to her lack of ties to the court prior to her life as a nun. Although she did not come from an elite family, Buddhism gave her the opportunity to develop influence and fame. Her relationship to Buddhist texts is the reason that she is studied in contemporary times. Balkwill’s work in this area is also important to women’s studies in general because it shows that women had more agency, social mobility and social fluidity than previously thought.¹⁵⁵

It is evident that many of the arguments that feminist scholars depict in recent scholarship were likely brought to attention by Buddhist women themselves. As Balkwill

¹⁵⁵ For a more detailed account of the information delivered during this lecture, see the lecture report on CJBS by Sarah Fink, ““Did Women Produce Buddhist Texts in Medieval China? And Does It Matter If They Did?” Lecture by Stephanie Balkwill,” 8 April 2020, <https://cjbuddhist.wordpress.com/2020/04/08/blog-did-women-produce-buddhist-texts-in-medieval-china-and-does-it-matter-if-they-did-lecture-by-stephanie-balkwill/>.

states, “it would be a mistake to assume that Buddhist women never questioned these assumptions about their bodies and their salvation.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, her re-reading of these historical texts “broadens our understanding of the role of women as teachers and saviors in Buddhist texts,”¹⁵⁷ which can be applied to contemporary Buddhist women as well and allow scholars to see past the rhetoric of Buddhist women as passive victims of gender inequality.

Similar to what Eun-su Cho and Ji-Young Jung pointed out for Buddhist nuns struggling against Confucian ideals in Korea, late-imperial women wanting to practice Buddhism in China, too, were subject to criticism because it lured them “from their proper and ‘natural’ place as mothers and wives to a life of cloistered celibacy.”¹⁵⁸ In terms of gendered rhetoric in premodern Chan, we can again find Grant’s work of use. In her article, “Da Zhangfu: The Gendered Rhetoric of Heroism and Equality in Seventeenth-Century Chan Buddhist Discourse Records,” she explicates that female Buddhists were placed in a “double bind.” As a necessary requirement to realizing the emptiness of “male” and “female,” they first had to “abandon their femaleness, and all that this traditionally implied, and assume the traditional characteristics of a man, or rather, of a *great* man, a *da zhangfu* 大丈夫.”¹⁵⁹ In opposition to the esteemed aspects of femininity we see happening in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, seventeenth-century China instead held emphasis on the relinquishing of feminine characteristics in preference for the qualities found in “great men.”

¹⁵⁶ Balkwill, “Why does a woman need to become a man,” 3.

¹⁵⁷ Balkwill, “Why does a woman need to become a man,” 8.

¹⁵⁸ Grant, “The Red Cord Untied,” 92.

¹⁵⁹ Grant, “Da Zhangfu,” 179.

A particular area of this article that stands out (due to the inherent parallel with Dōgen's views) is Grant's example of the Linji Chan Master Yinyin Faxin 音印法璽 (dates unknown). When asked by Lady Gu's son to write an inscription for a portrait of Lady Gu 顧, Yinyin Faxin responds with a lesson on nonduality centered around the accomplishments of Lady Gu. He writes that although she never left her inner chambers, her actions were pure and "completely accomplished" and she was famous for her virtue and chastity. He asks, "Tell me, is she a man? Or is she a woman?" (你道他是男耶女耶?)¹⁶⁰ His primary purpose, Grant clarifies, is not just to exemplify the ability of a woman to attain religious transcendence from within the home, but rather to teach his male followers a lesson about nonduality. In her concluding remarks, Grant asserts that the Buddhist monks and nuns of the past "would have found by no means revolutionary the claim by the contemporary feminist critic Judith Butler that gender is ultimately performative."¹⁶¹ Her analysis of *da zhangfu* in the writings of Chinese Buddhists from the seventeenth century show that for many of these Buddhists, the "fundamental Mahayana Buddhist notion of an absent doer, a performative and fluid gender, presented both a challenge to those who felt the necessity of retaining and reinforcing the traditional gendered social order, and an opportunity to those who felt confined and limited by that very order."¹⁶²

Finally, Miriam Levering's work on gendered rhetoric in Chan Buddhism from the Song dynasty features the egalitarian writing of two prominent Song dynasty teachers, Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089–1163) and Hung-chih cheng-chüeh (1091–1157), which indicates the existence of a

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Grant, "Da Zhangfu," 195. Cited from Yinyin Faxi, "Xu Xiru jushi wei mu Gushi ruren qing zan" 徐熙如居士為母顧氏孺人請贊, *Lengyan Faxi Yin chanshi yulu* 楞嚴法璽印禪師語錄, *Jiaying jing*, vol. 28, 834.

¹⁶¹ Grant, "Da Zhangfu," 210.

¹⁶² Grant, "Da Zhangfu," 211.

female audience “who elicited from these masters an affirmation of their equal potential for enlightenment.”¹⁶³

Levering cites numerous examples of these teachers explicitly addressing concerns of gender. For example, in response to the Yung-ning Commandery Mistress, Ta-hui said:

This matter [that is, enlightenment] does not depend on being a man or a woman, a monk or a nun or a lay person. If on hearing one word from a teacher one suddenly breaks off [the chain of deluded thought], that is complete realization.¹⁶⁴

Despite what seems to be an “unambiguous message” about women’s potential for enlightenment, Levering complicates this with the other underlying rhetoric of “Heroism” as seen through the term *da zhangfu*. This rhetoric parallels what we saw in Grant’s article mentioned above and leads Levering to contemplate whether this “unambiguous message” harbors a second message: “that only an exceptional woman can expect to attain enlightenment.”¹⁶⁵ Through sermons which exemplify the combination of these two interwoven views, Levering concludes that gender distinctions on the phenomenal level of existence, based on gendered metaphors like *da zhangfu*, inevitably color the understanding of the ultimate, regardless of its transcendence of such distinctions. Therefore, although some Chan teachers embraced egalitarianism, “Chinese Buddhism remained shaped by men as the primary participants, by their imagination and their language.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Levering, “Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch’an and Gender,” 138.

¹⁶⁴ Levering, “Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch’an and Gender,” 139.

¹⁶⁵ Levering, “Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch’an and Gender,” 140.

¹⁶⁶ Levering, “Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch’an and Gender,” 151.

2.4.2 Modern and Contemporary China

Although there are a handful of publications that explore the contemporary lives of Mainland Chinese Buddhist women, this literature remains sparse and primarily focuses on female leaders and eminent nuns. There are also a number of works on the late Imperial and Republican periods. While these resources allow us to contextualize the Buddhist environment as it continues today, there is a noticeable gap when it comes to understanding the Buddhist nuns residing in these nunneries who are not considered eminent. The voices of these disciples are rendered invisible in this context, despite the large role they play in maintaining the nunneries and interacting with the surrounding community. The following outline of literature by scholars such as Elise DeVido, Li Yu-chen, Stefania Travagnin, Tzu-lung Chiu, Ann Heirman, and Ester Bianchi, highlights aspects of Mainland Chinese Buddhism that have been explored through the lens of women in Buddhism.

Elise DeVido's recent publication, "Networks and Bridges," shows how Buddhist discourse entered into topics of modern gender and human rights in the early twentieth century, as seen through the work of Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), Buddhist journals, and Zhenhua 震華 (1908–1947). Zhenhua, at the insistence of Taixu, composed works on eminent Chinese Buddhist nuns, including the *Xu biqiuni zhuan* 續比丘尼傳 (Lives of the Nuns, Continued), "a work that is part traditional hagiography and part modern biography. Zhenhua's purpose was to continue in the spirit of Baochang's *Biqiuni zhuan*."¹⁶⁷ This book includes the biographies of 245 nuns from the Liao Dynasty (907–1125) to Republican times, eighty-six of which are from the Qing and twenty-seven from the Republican period with a majority coming from the Jiang-Zhe region.¹⁶⁸ In the

¹⁶⁷ DeVido, "Networks and Bridges," 78.

¹⁶⁸ DeVido, "Networks and Bridges," 78.

preface of this book, Zhenhua's master, Ven. Shoupei 守培 (1884–1955) argues that “traditional prejudices against women are socially constructed; that Buddhism promotes equal rights of the sexes as well as for all sentient beings; and that modern nuns should be active in society.”¹⁶⁹ He also praises the accomplishments of Republican-era women and urges nuns to put the same effort towards this cause:

Currently there have been outstanding secular women who are active in society and enjoy the same rights as men. Alas, our nuns, on the contrary, are silent, like cold rocks and dead trees, lifeless, with an empty reputation of standing above the mundane world, lacking the ambition of secular women; it's so regrettable!¹⁷⁰

Similar to what Buddhist teachers were doing before his time, Zhenhua used teachings in the sutras that emphasize equality such as the story of the Dragon Girl in the *Lotus Sūtra*. He explicitly argued that the lack of work by nuns throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism is “due to traditions of discrimination against women in the sutras and in Chinese society” and held out hope that women would take the eminent nuns in the *Xu biqiuni zhuan* as models for themselves.¹⁷¹

Taixu, one of the most prominent Buddhist reformers/modernizers, was also a proponent of gender equality, in particular of women's education, and even regularly lectured at girls' schools on the importance of education. However, his views when it came to the status and education of Buddhist nuns were decidedly more complex. DeVido's retelling of Taixu's response to a layperson's question in 1935 elucidates well this two-sided understanding of gender equality when it comes to monasticism:

¹⁶⁹ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 78.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 78.

¹⁷¹ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 79.

Taixu consistently encouraged women to remain lay practitioners rather than become nuns. In 1935 a layperson asked Taixu why nuns in Chinese Buddhism did not yet enjoy equality with monks, in contrast to Christianity where women can become ministers. Taixu answered sternly that in the sutras there are many examples of women with great knowledge and wisdom, and women becoming Bodhisattvas; Buddhism does not discriminate against women. But in the *sangha*, Taixu argued, there is a vast difference between monks' and nuns' status because it was not the Buddha's intention to have nun disciples, only that Buddha could not refuse his stepmother Mahāprajāpatī's repeated requests. Buddha then proclaimed the Eight Heavy Rules (*bajing fa*) that all nuns must follow. In Taixu's opinion, China's illness is caused by the fact that the nuns do not uphold the *vinaya*, and thus corrupted the *sangha*. As long as they uphold the *vinaya*, Taixu concluded, well-educated laywomen and nuns can teach laywomen and nuns. If women do not become nuns because they cannot accept inequality in the *sangha*, Taixu claimed that this would be in accordance with the Buddha's wishes and would be to the benefit of the *sangha*.¹⁷²

Despite these outwardly sexist views toward nuns and the *sangha*, which DeVido points out are “doctrinally debatable,” his “concrete actions” toward the mission of propagating the dharma and developing the *sangha* “seemed to have taken precedence over his prejudices against nuns.”¹⁷³ These concrete actions included founding the first modern educational institute for female Buddhists in Chinese history, the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (Wuchang shijie foxue yuan 武昌

¹⁷² DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 76–77.

¹⁷³ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 77. Cf. Shi Taixu, “Biqiuni de zeren” (The responsibilities of nuns), speech at Dizang Nunnery Institute, Winter 1930. Shi Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu* (Collected works of Master Taixu), 26 (1970), “Speeches,” ch. 18: 323–24.

世界佛學院) in 1924, which was later renamed the World Institute for Female Buddhists in 1931.¹⁷⁴ Although Taixu had biases against Buddhist nuns, he remained a leader in the effort to grant education to nuns and laywomen and inspired the founding of schools for Buddhist women in other places around China and Hong Kong, which produced “a group of nun pioneers whose successors revived Buddhism and Buddhist institutes after the Maoist era.”¹⁷⁵

The efforts of reformists such as Taixu led to the writings of Buddhist nuns in the 1930s and 1940s on topics discussing equality of gender, nation, and ethnicity. Many of these articles included thoughts on the *Dharmaguptaka vinaya* and ordination lineage for nuns.¹⁷⁶ In 1937, the first Buddhist Journal “by and for Buddhist nuns in China” was published, the *Fojiao nüzhong zhuankan* 佛教女眾專刊 (The Dedicated Journal for Female Buddhists). This journal portrayed themselves outside of the traditional ideal of “good wives, wise mothers” or the early Republican “mothers of citizens,” and instead focused on their dedication to “serve as model dharma teachers and educators of the people” in order to bring enlightenment to the world.¹⁷⁷ The views of these women conveyed that “not only do both women and men possess Buddha nature and can become enlightened, but that females should enjoy equality with males whether in the monastic community or in society at large, and women should be liberated from their constraints.”¹⁷⁸ This is a prime example of how Chinese Buddhist nuns were already working towards gender equality within the *sangha* during the pre-Maoist era.

¹⁷⁴ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 77. Cf. Yuan Yuan, “Chinese Buddhist Nuns in the Twentieth Century: A Case Study of Wuhan,” *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 10 (2009), 383–84.

¹⁷⁵ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 77.

¹⁷⁶ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 77–78.

¹⁷⁷ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 78.

¹⁷⁸ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 78. See also Yuan, “Chinese Buddhist Nuns in the Twentieth Century,” 391.

At the same time, the Buddhist reformers Ven. Cizhou 慈舟 (1877–1957) and Ven. Tanxu 倓虛 (1875–1963) were promulgating the importance of the *jielü* 戒律 (the monastic rules), insisting on correct ordination procedures, and emphasizing the *vinaya* in their teachings. These reformers believed that the continuation and flourishing of the Triple Gem was contingent on well-disciplined communities of nuns and monks. It was in this setting that other reformer monks, including Taixu, stressed nuns’ adherence to the eight *gurudhammas*, while simultaneously establishing schools for female Buddhists, promoting the ordination of nuns, and “appoint[ing] their nun disciples to lead nunneries across the country.”¹⁷⁹

Stefania Travagnin’s research on Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903–1997) not only illustrates a case of an influential female teacher who melded Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism, but also exemplifies a particular situation where the potential for female enlightenment is confirmed in a nun who was never fully ordained due to gendered restrictions in Vajrayāna Buddhism. Despite maintaining her status as a tonsured novice throughout her life, Elder Gongga gained nearly one hundred thousand followers, founded the very first Tibetan Buddhist center in Taiwan after leaving China, and achieved a successful mummification. This mummification is highly significant because it confirms her ability to accomplish reaching Buddhahood (*chengfo* 成佛) in a female body.¹⁸⁰ Elder Gongga is important to consider here because of her overlap and parallel with Longlian, who plays an essential role to this thesis. Both of these figures successfully maneuvered through gendered restrictions to become eminent Buddhists themselves and create precedents for future Mainland Chinese Buddhist women.

¹⁷⁹ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 80.

¹⁸⁰ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga,” 260.

Longlian 隆蓮 (1909–2006) and Tongyuan 通愿 (1913–1991) were key contributors to the current state of Buddhism in China, especially in regard to nuns’ education and ordination procedures. The restoration of dual ordination practices was a goal of Longlian’s from before the Maoist era, but it was not until 1981 that she was able to achieve this goal through the efforts of her and her colleague Tongyuan. In Taiwan, dual ordination procedures were restored in the 1970s, with ceremonies successfully completed in 1970 and 1976, and became the standard for ordaining Taiwanese Buddhist women. However, due to the political climate of Mainland China during that time, Longlian and Tongyuan were not able to fulfill this desire until a decade later. The first dual ordination ceremony in Mainland China during the post-Mao era was held at the Wenshuyuan 文殊院 in Chengdu from December 9, 1981 to January 18, 1982.¹⁸¹ The restoration of these practices will be expounded upon in greater detail later in this thesis, as it plays a large role in understanding the lives of the contemporary nuns surveyed at three nunneries in the city of Chengdu. For now, it is important to note the presence of such eminent nuns in modern Chinese Buddhism and their influence on the education and practices of nuns in Mainland China.

These women also contributed to the educational opportunities available to nuns. Longlian established the Sichuan *Bhikṣuṇī* Buddhist Studies Institute (*Sichuan nizhong foxueyuan* 四川尼眾佛學院) at the Tiexiang nunnery in 1983 and worked on developing a twelve-year program for the nuns there. Although Tongyuan was not able to establish it during her lifetime, her disciple, Rurui 如瑞, carried out Tongyuan’s plans and established the Wutai *Bhikkunī* Vinaya Institute at

¹⁸¹ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 84. For more on these ordination ceremonies in Chengdu, see Chen Xiuhui, “Chengdu Wenshuyuan juxing erbuseng shoujie fahui” (Ordination ceremonies held in Wenshuyuan of Chengdu), Fayin, vol. 2 (1982), 21.

Pushou Temple 普壽寺 on Wutaishan 五台山 in 1992. It is said that this Institute is now the largest nunnery in China, having gone from five hundred nuns in 1992 to one thousand today.¹⁸² Tongyuan and Longlian's efforts in developing educational opportunities for nuns extends beyond them to their disciples and led to the establishment of other institutes, such as the Taiping Buddhist Institute, which trains nuns from all over China and even offers courses in Chinese Language and Chinese Buddhism for Tibetan nuns. This Institute is housed in the Taiping Temple 太平寺, in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, which dates back to the tenth century and was restored by the nuns Rurui and Rufa 如法, a student of both Tongyuan and Longlian, in 2003–2006 and now houses about one hundred nuns.¹⁸³

The importance of Longlian and Tongyuan to contemporary Chinese Buddhism cannot be understated. As DeVido praises in her article: “Tongyuan and Longlian’s strenuous life-long efforts helped Buddhism survive through war, the Maoist period and after, and their many achievements set the firm foundation for the development of the next generation of nuns in China.”¹⁸⁴ Longlian is especially essential to this thesis given her influence in two of the nunneries where field research was conducted for this thesis. Longlian appears often in various works and received dedicated attention by the scholars Ester Bianchi and Qiu Shanshan. Qiu wrote a detailed biography of Longlian’s life¹⁸⁵ and Bianchi committed various articles to Longlian’s leadership and influence on ordination procedures.¹⁸⁶ Longlian was commended for helping spark the new

¹⁸² DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 85.

¹⁸³ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 85–86.

¹⁸⁴ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 85.

¹⁸⁵ See Qiu, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni*.

¹⁸⁶ See Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion”; “*Yi jie wei shi*”; *The Iron Statue Monastery*; “Transmitting the precepts in conformity with the dharma.”

generation of Buddhist nuns, some of which are now monastic leaders themselves, through her tutelage.¹⁸⁷ Her determination and dedication to Buddhism earned Longlian the honor of being referred to as “the first *bhikṣuṇī* of the modern era” (第一比丘尼). In writing about meeting Longlian in the introduction to her dissertation on the role of Buddhist nuns in the post-Mao Buddhist revival, Wenjie Qin wrote: “In her eighties, Long Lian was still active as a major promoter and patron of women’s monastic movement.”¹⁸⁸

In Ester Bianchi’s most recent publication, “Transmitting the Precepts in Conformity with the Dharma,” she delves into the evolution of ordination procedure following the restoration of Buddhism in Mainland China during the post-Mao era. In this chapter, Bianchi hypothesizes that the resurgence of *vinaya* in Mainland China could be seen as an “effort to guarantee ‘purity’ and ‘orthodoxy’ for the monastic community on a moral-disciplinary basis, considering that Vinaya is traditionally understood as the very foundation of Buddhist Dharma.”¹⁸⁹ The trends in the revival of the monastic community over the past few decades can be linked to a historical trend in Buddhism to maintain “proper” procedure in order to ensure the reestablishment of the order during a precarious time for the religious institution. As Bianchi points out, “the reaffirmation of a disciplinary strictness seems to be deemed necessary for the subsequent regeneration of the monastic community and of Chinese Buddhism as a whole.”¹⁹⁰ She also points out the move towards uniformity and standardization amongst Mainland Chinese Buddhist institutions in order to both comply with the governmental regulations and to overcome the perceived fears of Buddhist moral decline and monastic discipline.

¹⁸⁷ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” 550–51.

¹⁸⁸ Qin, *The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China*, 6.

¹⁸⁹ Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts,” 158.

¹⁹⁰ Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts,” 159.

Lastly, we will look at the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Mainland China by Wenjie Qin, Tzu-lung Chiu and Ann Heirman. Qin's fieldwork was done at Mount Emei in Sichuan province from 1997 to 1999 and explored the role of Buddhist nuns and laywomen in the revival of Buddhism. In her conversations with the head nun at Fuhu si, Qin was told that this community "was struggling to survive in a space dominated by monks, some of whom looked down on nuns."¹⁹¹ An important area of Qin's research was underlining the dearth of influence these nuns held in policy decisions and their assertion of marginalization and the secondary status placed on nuns. Furthermore, in Qin's research, she received a variety of opinions on the eight *gurudhammas*, from maintaining them as rules established by the Buddha, to some wanting to abolish them as outmoded. However, as Chiu and Heirman assert in their subsequent research, "Qin's study of the application of the *gurudharmas* seems rather generalized... and it is unclear how many nuns she consulted."¹⁹²

Tzu-Lung Chiu and Ann Heirman's research affords a broader look at how Chinese Buddhist nuns across the Mainland view the eight *gurudhammas*. In their article, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China," they espouse a similar goal to the thesis at hand: they were driven by the "scant scholarly attention" paid to contemporary Mainland Chinese nuns' religious life and sought to reintroduce the voices and perspectives of the nuns themselves through interviews with nuns from seven nunneries across the country. The interviews conducted for this research centered on the attitudes of nuns toward the eight *gurudhammas*, since these are a hotly debated topic amongst scholars writing about Buddhist women. Their data

¹⁹¹ Qin, *The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China*, 8.

¹⁹² Chiu and Heirman, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries," 244.

highlights the views of their informant nuns and concludes that a majority of those interviewed “stress the authenticity of the *gurudharmas* and express how crucial they are for the protection of the *Dharma*,” and, furthermore, that hierarchical differences were generally accepted by the nuns “for the sake of cooperation and harmony in Buddhist communities.”¹⁹³

Their article goes through each rule and discusses the reactions and explanations given to them by their informants, which will weave into later discussions of these rules in chapter four. Notably, Longlian was mentioned often throughout their interviews, as she was heavily influential in the implementation of strict Buddhist tradition and *vinaya* practices that are evident in the Chengdu nunneries I surveyed. Overall, they found that in comparison to research on the eight *gurudhammas* in Taiwan, “the variety of viewpoints is less diverse and exhibits a stronger emphasis on Buddhist tradition.”¹⁹⁴

2.5 Concluding Thoughts

Studies on women in Buddhism are steadily growing as an increasing number of scholars become interested in discovering this comparatively neglected aspect of Buddhist studies, which also reflects a trend among religious studies more broadly. This chapter sought to provide an overview of that literature, primarily concerning work on Asian women in Buddhism. This area of the field has some distinct subsections: from revealing women’s role in Buddhist history, to feminist critiques and debates, and, more recently, to ethnographic field research to uncover contemporary voices. Regardless of the initial motivation or theme, it is evident throughout these works that they

¹⁹³ Chiu and Heirman, “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries,” 266.

¹⁹⁴ Chiu and Heirman, “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries,” 267.

primarily rely on either men writing about women or nuns and laywomen who are considered “eminent” or outstanding in some respect. In contrast, there is a striking gap in research on the ordinary Buddhist nuns that shape these communities as well, rendering their voices invisible to the landscape of scholarly work on Buddhist women. As Stefania Travagnin asserted in relation to Republican period studies, “The contribution of nuns and less eminent monks who do not belong to Taixu’s legacy should also be documented in order to have a more reliable spectrum of the situation of Buddhism in China.”¹⁹⁵ Similarly, the eminent nun, Longlian, already received ample attention by dedicated scholars. Therefore, this thesis takes on the legacy of her accomplishments (the revitalization of dual ordination procedures and implementation of educational programs) and turns our attention to the nuns who are living out this legacy in Chengdu today. The subsequent investigation in this thesis aims to fulfill this scholarly gap by utilizing the data collected through fieldwork in Chengdu to implement the attitudes and opinions expressed by my participant nuns to further complicate the landscape of Buddhist literature on women. This work brings into question the tension between progress and tradition when it comes to improving the status of nuns in monastic communities informed through survey data and the legacy of Longlian.

¹⁹⁵ Travagnin, “Elder Gongga,” 258.

Chapter 3: Chengdu Nunneries

This chapter provides an overview of the nunneries I surveyed in Chengdu, China during the summer of 2019. I will begin with a short biographical overview of Longlian, who was hugely influential in the development of two nunneries included in my survey, Aidao and Tiexiang nunneries, and on female ordination practices in China. The following section then presents historical and background information about the nunneries themselves. Finally, the last section presents the demographic information for the nuns that participated in these surveys. The demographic information breakdowns each relevant question by total number of responses and then between the individual nunneries to show overall trends and differences among the population represented in this data set.

3.1 Longlian's Life and Leadership

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of these particular nunneries, it is important to first delve into the life and leadership of Longlian (1909–2006). She is often referred to as “the first *bhikṣuṇī* of the modern era” (*dangdai diyi biqiuni* 當代第一比丘尼) and played a major role in elevating the status of Buddhist nuns in contemporary China through her initiatives in providing higher education for nuns and reimplementing dual ordination practices. Longlian was a close disciple of Nenghai 能海 (1886–1967), who was among a generation of monks who traveled to Tibetan areas on pilgrimage and brought these teachings back to China with them, and she later became head abbess of both Tiexiangsi and Aidaotang.

Longlian was born in Leshan town, Sichuan province, with the lay name You Yongkang, on the thirteenth day of the third month in the year 1909 of the Chinese traditional calendar.¹⁹⁶ She was brought up with Buddhism as an important part of her family dynamic and received a religious education throughout childhood. She was raised by her maternal grandmother who was herself a devout Buddhist, and her maternal grandfather who acted as the President of the local Buddhist Association. She learned Pure Land Buddhist texts and practices from a young age and even accompanied her grandmother to temples and on pilgrimages.

Before taking her monastic vows, Longlian already established herself as a notable female figure in Sichuan. Having come from an elite family of scholars, she was given the opportunity to receive “a privileged education for a woman of her time.”¹⁹⁷ She later became the first woman ever to pass the Sichuan civil service examinations and went to work for the Sichuan provincial government.¹⁹⁸ At the age of twenty-nine, Longlian formally became a lay Buddhist after receiving the Bodhisattva precepts from her teacher, Changyuan 昌圓, at Aidaotang 愛道堂. In 1941, after years of trying to balance secular work life and her strong devotion to studying Buddhism, Longlian decided to enter the sangha and received her complete ordination at Wenshuyuan 文殊院.

It was at the Buddhist Studies Society that “Longlian gradually gravitated toward Tibetan Buddhism, which was very popular in Sichuan at the time.”¹⁹⁹ Being in Sichuan province allowed her the opportunity to meet many Tibetan *lamas* who were either on their way to China or returning

¹⁹⁶ Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery*, 25.

¹⁹⁷ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 277.

¹⁹⁸ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 274.

¹⁹⁹ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 281.

from pilgrimage. It was under the influence of these *lamas* that she later devoted herself to Tibetan Buddhism and established Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺 as a Sino-Tibetan Buddhist nunnery in 1945 at the recommendation of Nenghai. It was at Tiexiangsi in 1949 that Longlian encountered an idea that shifted the direction of her work. The *vinaya* master Guanyi 貫一 gave a lecture to the nuns of Tiexiangsi about monastic discipline. He spoke in particular about the rules of “dual ordination”²⁰⁰ (*erbuseng jie* 二部僧戒), which was introduced to China by Sri Lankan nuns in 433–434, but was “discarded in China, where precepts were usually conferred to nuns only by ten *bhikṣu*-masters.”²⁰¹ After attending this lecture, and with the encouragement of Nenghai, Longlian made it her goal to “resurrect what she believed to be the ‘correct’ procedures for nuns’ ordination,” a goal which was pursued with the help of her colleague, Tongyuan 通愿 (1913–1991), and eventually achieved in 1982.²⁰²

Longlian was praised in articles by scholars such as Elise DeVido and Ester Bianchi for the impressive network she helped create, her contributions toward the globalization of Buddhism, and her accomplishments in increasing that status of nuns through educational opportunities and ordination practices.²⁰³ Bianchi wrote: “there is no doubt that Longlian deserves to be counted among the most popular and widely worshipped religious personalities in contemporary mainland China.”²⁰⁴ She was tireless in her commitment to Buddhism. She was the “first and only woman to play an active role at the leadership level in the Buddhist Association of China”²⁰⁵ and made

²⁰⁰ Literally “ordination conferred by the two *samgha*-orders” (Bianchi, *Subtle Erudition*, 287).

²⁰¹ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 287.

²⁰² Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 288.

²⁰³ See DeVido, “Networks and Bridges”; Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition”; Bianchi, *The Iron Status Monastery*; and Qiu, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni*.

²⁰⁴ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 273

²⁰⁵ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 275.

ripples in 1979 when she was “the only nun who dared to shave [her head] and dress in monastic robes” at the fourth meeting of the newly restored Buddhist Association of China.²⁰⁶ She also later established a nun’s college at Tiexiangsi in 1983, The Sichuan *Bhikṣuṇī* Institute for Buddhist Studies (Sichuan nizhong foxueyuan 四川尼眾佛學院).

This brief biographical overview of Longlian shows the remarkable role she embodied as a mark of the emancipation and power that a woman in Buddhism can hold. Longlian’s influence on the Buddhist world throughout her lifetime continues to impact the lives of nuns in Mainland China and is crucial to understanding the perspectives of nuns in Chengdu today, especially for the nunneries Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi. Further expansion of these principles and her role as a “charismatic” leader are studied more thoroughly in chapter five.

3.2 The Nunneries

The three nunneries where I collected surveys are all located in the metro-Chengdu area. I chose these nunneries because they each have a connection to Longlian in varying degrees. Longlian was the head abbess of both Aidaotang 愛道堂 and Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺 up until she passed away in 2006. Although she did not play such a significant role at Jinsha’an 金沙庵, Longlian held one of her first teaching positions at this nunnery. Therefore, my selection of these three locations allowed me to highlight diverse degrees of connection to this eminent nun. Further analysis in chapter five shows the potential impact of this differing amount of Longlian’s influence and leadership. In this

²⁰⁶ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 292.

section I will provide a quick summary on the individual nunneries, including their geographic locations and background information.

Aidao nunnery is located in the heart of metro-Chengdu, right around the corner from the famous Wenshu Monastery 文殊院. Aidaotang has existed as a nunnery since before Longlian took over as the head abbess. The temple site was first built during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and originally had the name Yuanjue'an 圓覺庵. The temple was changed into a nunnery in 1928 and renamed Aidao Pure Land Temple of the Ten Directions 十方爱道念佛堂, the first nunnery where ordinations could be conferred in Sichuan Province. However, it was stripped of its function as a Buddhist nunnery during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and, after this period, it was Longlian who restored the nunnery to teach both monastic and lay Buddhist women. This nunnery remains a “typical Chinese nunnery, known as the most prominent women’s venue for Pure Land rituals and ceremonies in the Chengdu area.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 296.



Image 1 The entryway to Aidaotang, June 19, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.

When distributing the surveys, I came to Aidaotang during their lunch period accompanied by a member from the Sichuan Buddhist Association, who aided me in explaining the survey to the nuns and distributing the physical papers and pens to each woman. While the nuns filled these out, we went around answering any questions that came up. Overall, the women appeared excited about the prospect of the surveys.



Image 2 Nuns at Aidaotang filling out surveys, June 19, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.

Jinsha'an is located near Aidaotang, but it is tucked into a side street away from the primary touristy area where Aidaotang and Wenshuyuan are situated. Though less touristy, there were a number of lay Buddhists giving incense offerings and praying before altars around the temple grounds when I visited, suggesting that this temple remains an important part of the surrounding community. This nunnery has a room dedicated to prominent female leaders and abbesses. It also notes on a plaque outside of Śākyamuni Hall, "The nunnery used to house a lot of cultural relics, but regrettably most of them were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution," (see Image 1–6) but there still remained pieces from emperors during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Although Jinsha'an is primarily a Chan nunnery, they also do a number of Pure Land practices, though it is not considered a Pure Land temple. The current abbess, Weixian, was heavily influenced by her master who was interested in Pure Land Buddhism. In regard to Longlian,

although she served as a reference point for the nuns' education in Jinsha'an, she held little other influence than that. This difference is evident in the following survey analyses.

It should be noted that there is a significant deficiency in information pertaining to Jinsha'an, as is the case with many smaller nunneries in China. However, this thesis, as well as Stefania Travagnin's ongoing research on small nunneries (including Jinsha'an) in Sichuan during the Republican period, will hopefully help to fill this gap and inform future scholarship on nuns in China.



Image 3 The entryway to Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.



Image 4 Nun altar room at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.



Image 5 A lay Buddhist praying before an altar at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.



Image 6 The plaque introducing Śākyamuni Hall at Jinsha'an, August 1, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.

Tiexiangsi is located much farther south, sitting near the southern outskirts of Chengdu. The original structure was built during the Ming Dynasty when, “in the 18th year Wanli (1590) a statue of Śākyamuni Buddha was dug up in the place now occupied by the nunnery.”²⁰⁸ The resulting temple was built to worship the statue, which is where it gets the name “Iron Statue Monastery.” The Tiexiangsi was converted into a Sino-Tibetan nunnery in 1945 by Venerable Nenghai as a place for his female followers who wished to be near Jincisi 近慈寺, the monastery where he primarily taught during this time. It is the “only Tibetan nunnery in Han territory” and was originally conceived to be a place for Gelukpa practices when Longlian and Nenghai

²⁰⁸ Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery*, 18.

established it as a nunnery.²⁰⁹ Despite the focus on Tibetan Buddhism, various traditions are evident within the walls of the nunnery, such as the construction of the Hall of Jade Buddha in Theravadin traditional style. Longlian established The Sichuan *Bhikṣuṇī* Institute for Buddhist Studies (四川尼眾佛學院) inside of the Tiexiangsi in 1984, however in 2008 it was moved to a larger quarters at Qifu Temple 祈福寺 in the city of Pengzhou 彭州 near Chengdu.²¹⁰



Image 7 The entryway to Tiexiangsi, July 2, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.

²⁰⁹ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 296.

²¹⁰ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 85.



Image 8 The entryway to Tiexiangsi, July 2, 2019. Photograph courtesy of author.

3.3 Survey Demographics

In order to contextualize the data collected during my fieldwork in Chengdu, this section presents the demographic information of the nuns who participated in this survey. In total, I collected sixty-five surveys, however I will only be utilizing fifty-seven of those. The remaining eight surveys that I decided to exclude from this data were completed by Buddhist laywomen working at Tiexiangsi. Because this thesis is primarily concerned with women who have received, at minimum, their novice monastic vows, I will not include the responses of the laywomen in the following demographic analysis.²¹¹ Of the fifty-seven nuns who participated in my survey, fifteen

²¹¹ The graphs and tables included in this section were created using Tableau software. I want to thank the wonderful librarians at the University of British Columbia for teaching me how to use this software.

of them were from Aidaotang, twenty were from Jinsha'an, twenty were from Tiexiangsi, and two of them were visiting Aidaotang from other temples. The following figures break down the surveys into further demographic information including age ranges, family Buddhist history, time spent in residence and as a monastic, secular education level, and ordination level.

3.3.1 Age Ranges and Family Buddhist History

The following tables illustrate the breakdown of age ranges of the total survey participants and then between the individual nunneries. In Table 1, we can see that a majority of the participants from these nunneries were between the ages of thirty to sixty years old. All participants who were under thirty years old came from Tiexiangsi, whereas participants falling above the majority age ranges were split between the three nunneries. Further, Aidaotang and Jinsha'an both have a larger concentration of nuns over forty years old, while Tiexiangsi has a larger concentration of nuns between twenty to forty years old.

Q3: Age	
Less than 20	1
20 to 30	7
30 to 40	10
40 to 50	20
50 to 60	15
More than 60	4

Table 1 Age Ranges Total

Q3: Age	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Less than 20			1	
20 to 30			7	
30 to 40	1	2	6	1
40 to 50	9	9	1	1
50 to 60	4	8	3	
More than 60	1	1	2	

Table 2 Age Ranges by Nunnery

After asking for their age range, the survey also included a question about whether other people in their family practiced Buddhism. The question read, “Are other people in your family Buddhist?” (您的家人是否也为佛教徒/信佛), and they were given the option of selecting “yes” or “no.” Table 3 indicates that about eighty percent of the nuns surveyed *do* have other family members who identify as Buddhists.

Q4: Family	
Yes	46
No	11

Table 3 Family Buddhists Total

In Table 4, where the numbers are broken down between each nunnery, the number of nuns who recorded that they do not have other Buddhist family members is relatively evenly split, with a slightly greater percentage from Jinsha’an. Overall, all of the nunneries reported at least seventy percent of the participant nuns had other family members who identified with Buddhism to some extent. I should mention here that after distributing these surveys and beginning analysis, I realized a potential flaw in the question inquiring about their family’s involvement with Buddhism. The

concept of religious diversity is considered differently in Chinese culture than in the West, “since Chinese people identify religions not as fixed and impermeable systems of belief but as situation-based practices.”²¹² Although a nun’s family may visit a Buddhist temple regularly, this does not necessarily mean they identify themselves as Buddhist. Therefore, while this question gives a glimpse into the potential familial associations of these nuns with Buddhism, it does not take into account the particular complexities of religious identification in the Chinese context and leaves space for greater study in the future.

Q4: Family	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Yes	12	14	18	2
No	3	6	2	

Table 4 Family Buddhists by Nunnery

These tables demonstrate that a large majority of the nuns who participated in my survey were between the ages of thirty to sixty years old and claimed to have other family members that identify as Buddhist. With thirty-nine participants, approximately sixty-eight percent, over the age of forty years old, this means that a majority of the nuns surveyed were born during or toward the end of the Maoist era. Whereas, the remaining eighteen participants were born sometime during the first couple decades of the post-Mao reform era.

²¹² “Project Description,” Mapping Religious Diversity in Sichuan A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://sichuanreligions.com/project-description/>.

3.3.2 Years Since Ordination and Years of Residence

Questions 9 and 10a asked participants about the length of time since taking a vow of monasticism and spent in residence at the nunnery, respectively. All of the nuns surveyed were currently in residence at their respective nunneries.

Question 9 read, “How long ago did you take a vow of monasticism?” (请问您出家多长时间了). The answer choices provided a range of years from “0 to 5 years” to “50 or more years.” As we can see in Table 5, none of the participants selected the option “50 or more years.” Considering that it has only been forty-six years since the end of the Maoist era and the reinstitution of ordination, this is unsurprising. On the other hand, the fifteen nuns who reported they were ordained between thirty to fifty years ago represent the first waves of Buddhist ordination following the Cultural Revolution and it is likely some of them were part of the initial ordination ceremony held by Longlian in 1982. These numbers are echoed in Xiaofei Kang’s article on women in modern Chinese religion: “Under the tutelage of elder nuns such as Long Lian, new generations of Buddhist and Daoist nuns have become a vital presence in Chinese monastic life. Many of the new initiates in the late 1970s and early 1980s have become monastic leaders now.”²¹³ Of the fifty-seven nuns who took part in my survey, at least thirty-five of them were ordained during Longlian’s leadership that emanated throughout all three of these Sichuan nunneries.

The range of years since ordination is distributed widely amongst these nuns, however there is a slightly higher concentration of participants who were ordained between twenty to forty years with twenty-seven participants split between “20 to 30” and “30 to 40.” Most other

²¹³ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 550–551.

participants were ordained more recently than this majority, with only one participant recording that she was ordained more than forty years before this survey.

Q9: Years since ordained	
0 to 5	8
5 to 10	4
10 to 15	10
15 to 20	7
20 to 30	13
30 to 40	14
40 to 50	1

Table 5 Number of Years Since Ordination

Q9: Years since ordained	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
0 to 5		1	6	1
5 to 10		2	2	
10 to 15	3	2	4	1
15 to 20	4	1	2	
20 to 30	4	6	3	
30 to 40	4	8	2	
40 to 50			1	

Table 6 Number of Years Since Ordination by Nunnery

Breaking these numbers down by nunnery shows we see that a majority of those who were ordained more recently, within the past ten years, primarily came from Tiexiangsi, with a few from Jinsha'an and none from Aidaotang. Given the previous break down of age ranges in Table 2 that indicated a largely younger population in Tiexiangsi, it is not surprising that Tiexiangsi would also have a higher number of nuns who were ordained more recently. The following tables also show the number of years since ordination, but I have filtered these tables by age range. Table 7

represents the responses of participants under forty years old and Table 8 represents the responses of participants over forty years old.

Q9: Years since ordained	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
0 to 5			6	
5 to 10		1	2	
10 to 15			4	1
15 to 20			1	
20 to 30	1	1	1	

Table 7 Years Since Ordained, Nuns Under 40 Years Old

Q9: Years since ordained	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
0 to 5		1		1
5 to 10		1		
10 to 15	3	2		
15 to 20	4	1	1	
20 to 30	3	5	2	
30 to 40	4	8	2	
40 to 50			1	

Table 8 Years Since Ordained, Nuns Over 40 Years Old

In Table 7, we see that all twelve of the participants from Tiexiangsi who indicated they were ordained less than fifteen years ago are, in fact, under the age of forty years old. However, there are only two participants from the remaining nunneries who were both under forty years old and ordained in the last fifteen years, whereas the other eight nuns who received ordination in the last fifteen years are over the age of forty years old. Of the nuns who indicated they were over the age of forty years old, two were ordained within the past five years.

Q9: Years since ordained	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
0 to 5			2	
5 to 10		1		
10 to 15			2	1
15 to 20			1	
20 to 30	1	1	1	

Table 9 Years Since Ordained, Nuns 30 to 40 Years Old

Furthermore, all three nunneries had one nun under the age of forty who indicated they were ordained between twenty to thirty years ago. As shown previously in Table 2, Tiexiangsi is the only nunnery with nuns under the age of thirty years old. Therefore, as evidenced in Table 9, all three of the participants under forty years old who were ordained twenty to thirty years ago fell within the thirty to forty years old age range.

3.3.3 Level of Ordination and Secular Education Completed

Question 7 asked participants, “Which level of ordination have you received?” (您的受戒情况 [受了哪种戒]?). Nearly all of the participants from these nunneries received their full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination, with only three at the Shiksamana level and two at the Novice level of ordination.

Q7: Level of ordination	
Novice	2
Shiksamana	3
Bhiksuni	52

Table 10 Level of Ordination Total

As seen in Table 11, all five of the participants who had not yet received their full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination came from Tiexiangsi. As previously displayed in the tables analyzing age ranges and number of years since ordination, Tiexiangsi has both the youngest population and the most nuns ordained within the past fifteen years. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the five nuns who had only taken their Novice or Shiksamana vows all resided at Tiexiangsi.

Q7: Level of ordination	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Novice			2	
Shiksamana			3	
Bhiksuni	15	20	15	2

Table 11 Level of Ordination by Nunnery

Question 13 asked participants about the level of secular education they completed outside of the nunnery. The question read, “Do you have any education outside of the nunnery?” (您的受教育程度). They were given the following choices in response: “Yes- middle school”, “Yes- high school degree”, “Yes- bachelor’s degree”, “Yes- master’s degree”, “Yes- Ph.D.”, “No”, and “Other.” As seen in Table 12, a majority of participants completed secular education between the levels of Middle School and bachelor’s Degree. However, there were also four participants who completed post-graduate secular education, either a master’s degree or Ph.D.

Q13: Secular Education	
Middle School	16
High School	16
Bachelor's Degree	15
Master's Degree	3
Ph.D.	1
Other	5
No response	1

Table 12 Secular Education Total

Q13: Secular Edu..	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Middle School	6	7	3	
High School	1	10	5	
Bachelor's Degree	4	1	10	
Master's Degree	1		2	
Ph.D.	1			
Other	1	2		2
No response	1			

Table 13 Secular Education by Nunnery

Table 13 illustrates the division of secular education completed between the nunneries. Based on these divisions, we can see that Tiexiangsi has a higher number of nuns with a post-secondary education; however, both Jinsha'an and Aidaotang also have some nuns who completed post-secondary education. Further, the one nun who completed the highest level of secular education with a Ph.D. came from Aidaotang.

Lastly, in Table 14, I provided a highlight table to demonstrate the division of secular education by age ranges. From this visual, we can see that all of the nuns below thirty years old completed at least a high school degree; a majority of nuns who completed middle school as the highest level of secular education are above forty years old; a majority of participants who

completed at most a high school degree are between thirty to sixty years old; the ages of those who completed a bachelor's degree are widely distributed between every age range of participant from under twenty years old to over sixty years old; of the three nuns who completed a master's degree, one is between twenty to thirty years old and two are between thirty to forty years old; and the nun who completed a Ph.D. is in the age range between forty to fifty years old.

Q13: Secular Education

Q3: Age	Middle School	High School	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	Other	No response
Less than 20			1				
20 to 30		1	5	1			
30 to 40	1	5	1	2		1	
40 to 50	6	7	3		1	2	1
50 to 60	6	3	4			2	
More than 60	3		1				

Table 14 Secular Education by Age Range

Chapter 4: Perspectives on “Feminist Progress” and “Agency”

This chapter approaches the topics of “feminist progress” and “agency” in regard to the relationship between women and Buddhist monastic institutions. “Feminist progress” refers to the increasing of opportunities and status for female members of the Buddhist clergy. In liberal feminist discourse, religion is often presented as having an inimical relationship with their goals: “‘religion’ and religious allegiance are attributed the status of cause of oppression rather than source of emancipatory insight.”²¹⁴ Emma Teng pointed out that while “religion has indeed been a source of oppression... women have [also] found ways to use religious beliefs to obtain independence that was denied to them in secular society.”²¹⁵ My goal here is to further complicate this binary by reassessing what constitutes “feminist progress” in a Buddhist monastic environment. This analysis commences by considering the ways that Buddhism, from its establishment in ancient India to contemporary times in Mainland China, created more opportunities and status for women through education, social mobility and leadership roles.

In part two, the concept of “agency” is explored through the responses of survey participants to the question of why they chose to take Buddhist precepts and join the monastic clergy. The idea of female agency has been utilized by some feminist scholars as a methodology to uncover the lost history of women in Buddhism. However, this methodology tends to “project current normative conceptions and ideologies,”²¹⁶ not just onto past cultures, as Bernard Faure argues, but also onto current populations from diverse circumstances. Through the expressions of choice evident in this survey data, I demonstrate variations in contemporary notions of agency

²¹⁴ Hawthorne, “Entangled Subjects,” 114.

²¹⁵ Teng, “Religion as a Source of Oppression and Creativity,” 166.

²¹⁶ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 5.

within this group of Buddhist women: from the guidance of karmic forces to an active searching for a religious path. These discrepancies reemphasize the need for feminist scholars to take into account the differences apparent not only between themselves and the group they are studying, but also within the group itself.

The third part of this chapter reimagines the eight *gurudhammas* (*ba jingfa* 八敬法), which many scholars consider a hindrance to feminist progress due to their explicitly oppressive regulations that only apply to female members of the Buddhist clergy. My analysis presents an opposing view of these rules expressed by the Buddhist nuns who partook in my survey. Rather than interpreting the *gurudhammas* as oppressive, the nuns articulated these rules as a more complex matter of social harmony, protection for women, and as further practice in releasing their egos.

This chapter also addresses the underlying question “that haunts feminist thought: why do women persist in perpetuating and cooperating with traditions and systems that are allegedly detrimental to their well being? Put differently, why do so many women remain committed to their religious identities when virtually all religious traditions either deny them coeval status with men, limit their access to authority or circumscribe their opportunities to forge lives as individuals in their own right?”²¹⁷ The extent of survey responses conveying sincere faith and devotion suggests the answer to these underlying questions. In her article, “Under Western Eyes,” Chandra Mohanty declared, “The assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied

²¹⁷ Hawthorne, “Entangled Subjects,” 114.

universally and cross-culturally.”²¹⁸ The reevaluation of “feminist progress” in this chapter makes evident the possibility that the concerns of these Buddhist women are on a hierarchy where religious piety persists above the desire to resist power structures and perceived gendered oppression. In other words, perhaps these women approach issues first, as Buddhists, and second, as women.

4.1 Social Mobility, Status, and Education

Although institutionalized Buddhism is often criticized by feminist scholars for not reaching the standards of gender egalitarianism evident in some of the doctrine (i.e., the concept of emptiness), Buddhist monasteries provided one of the first opportunities for women to gain social mobility, status and education outside of the home. When Buddhist institutions welcomed women, it gave them a place where they could gain social status and worth that was not tied to their ability to bear children or support a husband. Regardless of their position within the monastic hierarchy in relation to their male counterparts, the fact that they now had an option outside of the home was hugely significant given the heavily patriarchal cultural context of ancient India. Joining a Buddhist monastery became a source of mobility outside of family ideals and a source of power outside of social ideals, a significant feat. Buddhism has acted as an important outlet for women to “resist marriage, pursue economic independence, and assume leadership roles in public life.”²¹⁹

In modern China, women continued to utilize Buddhism to find independence. As exemplified by Kang Xiaofei, “Since Republican times, women have participated in public

²¹⁸ Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” 64.

²¹⁹ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 537.

religious life and have assumed leadership in different religious organizations. At times they also used religion to defy officially-prescribed gender roles, to negotiate with state authorities, and to create social spaces of their own.”²²⁰ Especially due to the more recent emphasis on the inclusion of secular education within Chinese monasteries, Buddhism also provides women with greater educational opportunities. Although today secular education is considered customary for both genders, this surely was not always the case, even as recently as the early twentieth century.

A number of questions on my survey inquired about whether the nuns felt they had sufficient educational opportunities, both Buddhist and secular, as well as whether they believed there were more educational opportunities now than in the past (in other words, whether there was progress in terms of educational opportunities). Question 28, 29 and 31 appeared in the section of the survey where participants were presented with a statement and asked to rank how strongly they agreed or disagreed with that statement. Question 28 read, “My nunnery has sufficient Buddhist educational opportunities available to me” (我所在的尼寺提供了充分的佛教的受教育机会). The majority of participants that strongly agreed with this statement came from Tiexiangsi, while those from Jinsha’an and Aidaotang were split between “strongly agree” and “agree.” Two participants, one from each Tiexiangsi and Aidaotang, remained neutral. Finally, half of the nuns from Jinsha’an did not respond to this question at all (see Table 15).

²²⁰ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 493.

Q28: Budd Edu ..	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Strongly Agree	6	5	18	1
Agree	8	5	1	1
Neutral	1		1	
No response		10		

Table 15 Buddhist Educational Opportunities by Temple

The subsequent question asked about more general educational opportunities. It read, “My nunnery has sufficient general educational opportunities available to me” (我所在的尼寺提供了充分的受教育机会). While the responses from Aidaotang are identical to the above question, there is variation from those at Jinsha’an and Tiexiangsi (see Table 16). When it came to general education, three of the nuns from Tiexiangsi went from “strongly agree” to “agree.” While they do still agree to some extent that there are sufficient general education opportunities, it is notable that they weakened their response as opposed to what they recorded for the previous question, which asked about Buddhist education more specifically.

Even more diverse were the responses from Jinsha’an. While ten of them strongly agreed to the previous question about Buddhist education, none of nuns from this nunnery responded at all to Question 29 about general education. This could possibly indicate that Jinsha’an does not put as much emphasis on general education outside of Buddhism, as compared to Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi. We could also consider the possibility that these nuns were not entirely pleased with their educational opportunities and, thus, chose not to respond instead of selecting an answer that would indicate criticism of their nunnery. Of course, without further research this is simply speculation.

Q29: Gen. Ed. ..	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Strongly Agree	6		15	2
Agree	8		4	
Neutral	1		1	
No response		20		

Table 16 General Education Opportunities by Temple

Lastly, Question 31 asked participants whether there are more educational opportunities available to them now than in the past (相较于以前，现在我所能获得的受教育机会更多). Thirty-two of the fifty-seven participants indicated that they “strongly agree” with this statement, with twenty-one other participants indicating that they “agree.” Only one nun responded that she disagreed with this statement and another remained neutral, both of whom came from Aidaotang. Regardless, the overwhelming majority of participants signified that they felt there was some amount of progress when it came to the availability of educational opportunities for them.

Q31: Progress..	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Strongly Agree	5	9	17	1
Agree	7	10	3	1
Neutral	1			
Disagree	1			
No response	1	1		

Table 17 Progress in Educational Opportunities

The attitudes revealed through these questions suggest that nuns at these nunneries are overall content with the level of education available to them and agree that there are more opportunities for them to pursue education at their nunneries now than there were in the past. These

increases in educational opportunities can certainly be viewed as a form of “feminist progress” for these Buddhist nuns in Chengdu.

4.2 Agency in the Choice to Become a Nun

In assessing the lives of contemporary Buddhist women and notions of “agency,” it is necessary to consider why these women chose to take a vow of monasticism in the first place. Not only has female monasticism historically held negative connotations in Chinese culture, but women also faced a variety of obstacles to becoming ordained, even in modern and contemporary times. As stated by Julia Huang in *Charisma and Compassion*, “Until recently, people often believed that only poor families would leave their daughters in a monastery. Buddhist priesthood had a connotation of begging for a living.”²²¹ Wenjie Qin elaborates that “Chinese culture in general strongly discourages taking up the Buddhist monastic path, which is seen as escapist and unhealthy by nature... Without an enormous amount of self-assertiveness and self-determination, one is not likely to succeed in embarking on this unconventional path.”²²² Therefore, the motivations of my informant nuns to become ordained in the first place was an important aspect of this survey.

Moreover, the concept of “agency” has been applied as one method in feminist studies which attempts to “reveal the active role of Buddhist women, to emphasize female agency and thus counter the stereotype of women as passive cultural subjects.”²²³ However, this approach implies a number of problematic assumptions. For one, the unveiling of women’s agency suggests the universal oppression of women and that women who are not actively fighting this oppression

²²¹ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 26.

²²² Qin, “The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China,” 18.

²²³ Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 3.

are in “collusion with patriarchal values.”²²⁴ Second, there is an underlying notion that “behind every act there is the presence of an autonomous individual, who has the innate desire to strike out against the norms of her society.”²²⁵ These formations of agency, as the capacity for action undertaken by autonomous humans who are predisposed to seek freedom and resist oppression, generalizes both the understanding of free will and the universality of an innate desire to defy power structures.

Rajyashree Pandey asserts that this “anthropocentric view of agency would have been unrecognizable to our forebears, both in the West and non-West, for they inhabited worlds where humans were not the sole actors and makers of meaning....”²²⁶ While Pandey’s assertion references historical ideas of autonomy, it is evident that in contemporary times these assumptions about autonomy and free will are not universal either. Through the responses of survey participants about why they chose to join the Buddhist monastic order, we can glimpse a variation of these nuns’ personal notions of agency: from karmic connections, to sincere devotion and faith, to an active search for a religious path.

In order to allow the nuns to reflect on this choice however they wished, I left this as an open response question towards the beginning of the survey. Question 11 asked participants, “Why did you choose to take a vow of monasticism?” (为什么您选择出家). While responses varied, a few central themes emerged: karmic connection, the desire to become enlightened/become a Buddha, to understand and face life and death, to bring benefit to other sentient beings, sincere devotion and faith to Buddhism, to eliminate afflictions and to live a peaceful life. It is notable

²²⁴ Pandey, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair*, 26.

²²⁵ Pandey, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair*, 27.

²²⁶ Pandey, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” 10.

that, aside from two vague responses which I will address further on, I did not receive anything indicating that these women explicitly sought out Buddhism as an escape from the customs of family and marriage. It is highly possible that the method of data collection (i.e. survey) played a role in this. Despite the anonymity of these surveys, it is likely women were reluctant to reflect on these other issues without some prompting. This inquiry could perhaps be more comprehensively studied through detailed interview techniques instead. Regardless, the following analysis will explore these responses based on their face value as they were received.

Three nuns, two from Jinsha'an and one from Aidaotang, cited an aspect of karma in their responses:

Have karmic connection with Buddhism

与佛家有缘份

Have karmic connection with Buddhism

与佛有缘

Change karma and natural disposition by devoting oneself to practicing Buddhism

通过修行改变命运，性格

Such explanations indicate that these three nuns consider karmic forces as a feature of their own personal agency, in this case when making a significant lifestyle decision. Given the importance of karma in many Buddhist teachings, these beliefs did not immediately strike me as surprising. However, when viewed as a factor in “agency,” the answers become more significant. These indications of karmic connection demonstrate a notion of “agency” that differs from normative conceptions wherein humans are makers of their own destiny. As mentioned before, in the worlds inhabited by our premodern forebears, “humans were not the sole actors and makers of meaning: gods, beasts, and even material objects worked together with humans as active agents in a shared

cosmological and worldly order.”²²⁷ In this instance, the Buddhist nuns credit a cosmological force (karma) as a key factor in their choice to leave home and devote themselves to Buddhism. Therefore, this evidence highlights an important variation in the idea of personal agency and autonomy by women in a Buddhist monastic setting, which should be considered throughout future discussions of feminism in Buddhism.

The next answers exemplify a notion of “agency” contingent upon a human actor; however, they cite influence from other humans as part of those choices. There were two nuns who said their decision to join the monastic clergy was influenced by people in their lives. A nun from Jinsha’an simply stated that she was “influenced by the people around [her]” (受身边人影响). However, a nun from Aidaotang was more explicit in her lengthier explanation to this question:

[I] have two reasons; first because of the influence of my mother’s Buddhist study and practice; second, from a young age I reflected on life outside secular activity and work. I know by practicing and through devoting myself to Buddhism, I can become a virtuous person and become a sage, as a result I tend to live with devotion to Buddhism and follow the Buddhist path.

有二原因；其一受母亲学佛影响；其二从小思考除了世俗生活，工作之外；知到透过修行可以成贤成圣，于是向住修行（者）的这条道路。

Here we can see that her mother’s devotion to Buddhism contributed to her own decision to become a nun. This early introduction to Buddhist devotion may have contributed to her young reflections on life in the secular world. Since familial permission has been cited as an obstacle to

²²⁷ Pandey, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” 10.

women wanting to engage in this life, it is notable to find that family connections were, in contrast, an inspiration for some nuns.²²⁸

One impassioned nun from Tiexiangsi wrote an exceptionally elaborate response to this question, which appears to have a mixed notion of agency throughout:

Buddha is the teacher of all the wise men, humans and gods; and the loving father of the three realms. He has shown the truth which is universally applicable. In this life, I had the fortune to hear the true dharma that is explained by the Buddha, and seriously think about the teachings said, and arouse the hope to seek liberation from intense desires, thus I renounced the secular life (to become a nun). After becoming a nun, I repented the past unwholesome activities, at the same time according to the teaching and guidance of many masters I dropped the wrong thoughts of self and wrong practices and studied the ten kinds of wholesome behavior. Upon these foundations I strived to take refuge in the Buddhist teachings of the three disciplines morality, meditation and wisdom, in order for the guiding principle to always unceasingly encourage oneself, to pray oneself becomes a person of wisdom and compassion, as well as improving oneself to benefit others, to follow after the brightness of the Buddha's burning lamp.

佛是世间一切智人，人天的导师三界的慈父。他所宣说的真理放之四海而皆准。由于我今生有幸听闻佛（？）所说的正法，且认真思维了教言而生起希求解脱的强烈愿望，因此出家修行。出家以后我忏悔往昔以来所造恶业，同时依众位师父的教导改掉自己的坏思想坏习气而修习十善业。在此基础上我努力依佛教的戒定慧三学为总纲不断策励自己，祈愿自己成为智慧和慈悲心圆满的人而自利利他，继佛灯明。

Although she writes from the first-person narrative about striving and repenting, the first part of her response suggests a more ambiguous agency. Her explanation that she was fortunate to hear

²²⁸ In Wenjie Qin's dissertation, "The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China," she elucidates that many parents strongly object to their daughters leaving the family to join a monastery. Qin writes, "many of them had to beg permission from their parents to let them leave their families... Parental permission is the first of the many obstacles a woman would likely encounter" (18–19).

the dharma in this life, which then aroused in her the desire to follow the Buddhist path, could potentially be read in the light of karma as well. Based on the Buddhist context, it could be conceived that karma from a past life impacted her fortunate karma in her current life, leading her to a place where the arousal of desire to help all sentient beings was possible. This reading of her answer could be seen as a blend of agency, coming both individually as well as from the cosmological force of karma. While this is only conjecture on my part and I cannot confirm that this is what she intended, I do not think it is entirely off base to consider such a reading of this.

A sense of individual, anthropocentric agency, which is considered the normative conception, was also apparent in the survey data. A couple of responses from nuns at Aidaotang might be read as a reactive agency against the afflictions of secular life:

I like to live a peaceful life, live a nun life that is liberated from everything.

喜欢过清净无为。解脱道的僧团生活。

Rejoice in purity, harmonize confusion, seek purity, take delight in one's independence

乐其净，元纷杂，求其净，悦自意

The parts of these responses that interest me are where the first nun asserted that the life of a nun was “liberated from everything,” and the second nun included taking “delight in one's independence.” While I want to avoid placing any presumptions on these responses, it is possible that we could read these to mean liberation or independence from the restrictions associated with life as a secular woman. As noted in the introduction to this section, many women have sought monastic life as an escape from the expectations of children, marriage, and other familial duties. Therefore, it is not too much of a stretch to consider the possibility of such implications in these responses, especially since the phrasing employed here differs from the way most of the other nuns wrote about liberation in a Buddhist enlightenment sense.

A more common theme that conveyed a normative, anthropocentric notion of agency was sincere devotion and faith. A nun from Tiexiangsi wrote, “From the bottom of my heart to benefit the sentient beings and become a Buddha, I will devote my whole life to Buddhism” (本人发心为利众生愿成佛。将终身奉献于佛教). Others simply wrote that they “individually like” (个人喜欢) Buddhism, or stated it was due to “my faith” (本人信仰). A nun from Aidaotang elaborated more fully in her response, stating:

Because I like it. Buddhism’s doctrine and the practice are incorporated into life. Buddhism has a clear and deep understanding of the problems people encounter in life and Buddhism can guide people. It enables people to make the most intelligent choice in the chaotic situation.

因为喜欢。佛教的教义与实修。是与生活成为一体的。对生活中遇到的问题。有着透彻的观点与指导。使人能在纷乱的事情当中，做出最智慧的选择。

Another nun from Aidaotang also exemplified this individualized deep sense of devotion toward learning and practicing Buddhism. She wrote:

Genuinely want to understand the truth of the universe

了解宇宙人生真相

For those on the Bodhisattva path to enlightenment, the goal is not simply to reach nirvana, but to learn from the Dharma and actively choose to remain in the world to help other beings out of compassion for all life. A number of nuns included the desire to “benefit all sentient beings” in their responses. For some, this was the sole reason they wrote down, as was the case with a nun from Tiexiangsi who wrote, “For the hope that all sentient beings could reach the other shore together” (为□众生同登彼岸). Two other nuns from Tiexiangsi wrote:

In order that the true Dharma could remain in the world enduringly, I shall shoulder the responsibility of Buddha by benefiting myself and others.

为正法得以长久住世，荷如来家业自利利他.

Become enlightened, save sentient beings, lifelong dedication to the cause of Buddhism...

成佛度众生，终身奉献于佛教事业...

Eliminating afflictions and the hope to understand and face life and death was another recurring theme throughout the responses from all three nunneries. A nun from Tiexiangsi wrote:

To understand and face life and death, learn and transmit the Buddha's wisdom, enlighten oneself and others through Buddhism, and cut all worries through practicing Buddhism

了生脱死，续佛慧命，自觉觉他，觉行圆满...

Similar syntax was employed in two other surveys from Tiexiangsi where nuns wrote:

To understand and face life and death, to cultivate oneself, to perfect personalities and character, to benefit the country and the people, etc.

了生脱死，修证自己，完美人格，为利益国家人民等.

To end (the cycle of) life and death, (I wish to) become enlightened and save the sentient beings; to practice with joy, devoting my life to it.

为了生死，成佛度众生；欢喜修行，生活奉献终身.

This desire to understand life and death also showed up in a response by a nun from Aidao, who wrote, "In order to pursue the truth of the universe, to understand and face life and death, and to give benefit to all sentient beings" (为了追求宇宙人生向真理，了生脱死，弘法利生).

Other nuns from Tiexiangsi and Jinsha'an revealed similar sentiments, however they focused on the elimination of afflictions. A nun from Tiexiangsi wrote:

Eliminate affliction, seek liberation, listen to and hear about the Buddhist doctrine, help other people eliminate afflictions. Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the masses. For the hope that all sentient beings could reach the other shore together.

断烦恼，求解脱，听闻佛法，帮助别人断烦恼。上求佛道，下代众生，愿众生同登彼岸

The responses from two nuns at Jinsha'an were more succinct, stating, "To distance oneself far away from afflictions" (远离烦恼) and "To distance oneself far away from afflictions, to free oneself from restrictions" (远离烦恼，摆脱束缚).

A number of nuns also wrote that seeking enlightenment was a cause for their choice to take a vow of monasticism. Here are the responses from two nuns at Tiexiangsi:

For liberation from birth, aging, sickness and death, save myself and others, selfless devotion.

为解脱生老病死，自度度他，无私奉献.

For liberation from the suffering of birth, age, sickness, death, in order to improve oneself and bring benefit to others following the path of a bodhisattva.

为解脱生老病死苦，为自利利他行菩萨道.

Lastly, in my conversation with two nuns from Aidaotang towards the end of my field research, I asked each of them why they made this decision. The younger nun explained that she was drawn to Buddhism because of the "compassion" aspect. The other nun answered in more detail, expounding that she studied other religions as well before deciding to become ordained and that none of her family members are Buddhist. She stated that it is important to understand other religions in order to strengthen the faith in Buddhism and believes it allowed her to feel closer to the practice. This final sentiment indicates a high level of anthropocentric agency through her active search and well-researched final decision.

A recurring sentiment throughout these responses that stood out was the desire to not only become enlightened, but, more specifically, to become a Buddha (*chengfo* 成佛). As we saw previously in the discussion of Balkwill's recent study (see Chapter two), this aspect of

enlightenment is contentious given the precedent of sex transformation in order to become a Buddha. Despite this, there were a number of nuns who stated their reason for taking the monastic vow was to “become a Buddha” (成佛), and/or to “separate oneself from the three realms and no longer reincarnate” (想脱离三界不再轮回). The reoccurrence of the specific sentiment to “become a Buddha,” rather than just to become enlightened, might point to these nuns’ perspective on female enlightenment. Although there is not enough information to confidently confirm such a conclusion, it is plausible to conjecture that perhaps these nuns do not believe their potential to become a Buddha maintains the prerequisite of first being reborn as a male. This possibility is strengthened when looked at in connection to Question 40 of the survey inquiring about whether the nuns believed enlightenment in the female body is possible. Nearly everyone who responded to this question strongly agreed, with the remaining still agreeing. None of the survey participants marked disagreement towards this question.

Q40: Female body

Q1: Temple Affiliation	Strongly Agree	Agree
Aidao	10	5
Jinshaan	19	1
Tiexiangsi	20	
Other	2	

Table 18 Possibility of Enlightenment in the Female Form

In Elise DeVido’s analysis on Taiwanese Buddhist nuns, she portrayed a number of motives that drive women to choose the monastic life, in contrast to “Confucian moralists’

generalization of nunneries as ‘refuges of last resort’ and nuns as social outcasts.”²²⁹ DeVido’s report shows a great diversity of motivations, as well as a diverse range of ages in which women join. A variety among age ranges is also apparent in my survey data. When comparing the age ranges of the nuns to the amount of time passed since they were ordained, it is evident that among the nuns surveyed across these three nunneries, a number of them joined at different parts of their lives (see Table 19). For example, eight of the nuns above forty years old received ordination less than fifteen years ago, which would mean they were, at the very least, twenty-five years old at the time. At least six of these nuns were over the age of thirty when they joined the Buddhist clergy. Of these six, three were at least thirty-five, one was at least forty, and one was at least fifty-five. These women chose to become nuns at a comparatively later age than the majority who were most likely in their early twenties when they joined, meaning they had at least three decades of experience in secular life before making this significant life decision.

Q3: Age	Q9: Years since ordained					
	0 to 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 to 30	30 to 40
Less than 20	1					
20 to 30	3	2	2			
30 to 40	2	1	3	1	3	
40 to 50	1	1	3	6	5	4
50 to 60			2		4	9
More than 60	1				1	1

Table 19 Years Ordained by Age Ranges

The responses of these nuns also indicate a potential answer to why women remain dedicated to their religious identities and continue to perpetuate allegedly oppressive religious

²²⁹ DeVido, *Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns*, 24.

systems. DeVido's conclusions about the motivation for women to seek Buddhist ordination are congruent with the survey data, which portrayed a strong devotion to Buddhism as their reason for joining the monastic institution. DeVido wrote:

... no matter what form their secular mission may take, the central responsibility of every monastic is to propagate the *dharma*. Without sincere motivation and unusual strength of character, it would be very difficult to uphold the precepts and remain one's entire life in the sangha.²³⁰

She also cited Li Yu-chen's study²³¹ from 2000 which investigated cases of women between twenty to thirty years of age who became nuns before the 1980s. Li discovered a number of instances that went against the "popular stereotype of these women as being unfilial, selfish, and 'fleeing marriage,'" and instead evidenced young women sacrificing opportunities for education or marriage in order to care for their family members, especially those with widowed mothers or younger siblings. It was after years of "carrying out arduous familial duties" that they decided to become nuns.²³²

The choice to become a nun is not taken lightly. These women are devoting their lives to practicing Buddhism and helping others to discover enlightenment as well, which is not an easy task. Question 19 of the survey asked participants to briefly describe their daily routine on an average day (请简述您的每日流程/日常生活). I received an abundance of detailed accounts of their rigidly prescribed schedules. Here is a sampling of the feedback I received from the three nunneries, beginning with a meticulous report from a nun at Tiexiangsi:

²³⁰ DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*, 26.

²³¹ Li, "Fojiao lianshe yu nuxing zhi shehui canyu."

²³² DeVido, *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*, 24. Citing Li, "Fojiao lianshe yu nuxing zhi shehui canyu," 266, 287–89.

4:30 wake up, morning rituals 起床，早课
6:45 morning meal 早斋
8:00 handle temple affairs 寺内事物（事务）
9:00 study the knowledge of Buddhism 佛教知识学习
10:00 study Tibetan language and English language 藏文，英文等学习
12:00 lunch 午斋
14:00 noon break/rest 午休
15:00 study Buddhist knowledge 佛教知识学习
16:30 evening class (as a group) 晚课（集体）
18:15 handle temple affairs 寺院事（务）处理
19:30 listen to the temple master's lecture 听寺院法师讲课
21:00 study Buddhist knowledge 佛法知识学习
22:00 study Tibetan language 藏文学习
23:00 go to sleep 睡眠

Other nuns from Tiexiangsi chose to respond with more of a summary of their day:

Morning devotions together, morning meal in the temple hall, participate in managing relevant affairs, etc.

Noon meal and rest break, manage temple affairs, communal labour, etc.

Participate in recitations and study on Buddhist knowledge, evening class in the temple hall, in the evening [we] collectively study and attend lecture, at 22:00 quiet down and go to sleep.

早课共修，早斋过堂，参与处理的相关事务等

中午过堂午休，寺院事务出坡等，

下午参加功课学习佛教知识，晚课上殿，晚上参加集体学习听课，22:00 止静睡眠。

Our monastery is very rigorous, we all train together under a master to complete ritual devotions in the palace hall and have meals together. Communal labour, sit in meditation.

Instruction and reception of lectures and discussion of lessons are all done together under the training of a master.

本寺严谨仪，一切随众完成功课上殿过堂。出坡坐禅。授课受课学习讨论一切随众。

Here is an example from a nun at Jinsha'an:

Every day at 3 in the morning sit in meditation. 5am rise from sitting. 5:30am morning devotions. 6:30am morning meal. 7am to 8am hygienic cleaning. 8am work a shift in guest department and also chant sutras. 11:30am lunch. 12pm to 2pm rest oneself. 2 to 4:30pm on duty chanting sutras, 5pm afternoon devotions. 6pm to 9pm self-study, practice meditation and venerate the Buddha.

每天清晨 3 点打坐。5 点起坐。5 点半上早殿。6 点半早餐。7 至 8 点打扫卫生。8 点客堂值班并诵经。11 点半午餐。12 点至下午 2 点休息或自。2 点至 4 点半值班诵经下午 5 点上晚殿。6 点至 9 点自修禅坐或会佛。

Lastly, here are a few examples from Aidaotang:

It is a routine life, morning and evening devotions and two times have a meal together in the temple hall as the lifestyle of people who denounce secular life.

就是三点一线的生活方式，早晚上殿与两次过堂正式的出家生活。

At 4:30am get out of bed. 5 to 7am morning devotions. After devotions, have morning meal. After morning meal, we clean up, etc. After the morning, we engage in everyday affairs and study. After 11:30am is lunch. After lunch is a little rest/break. After break we train/study. 4:30pm evening devotions. To conclude we perform walking meditation.

早上 4 点半起床。5 - 7 点上殿。下殿后用早斋。早斋后清理等。后上午做日常事务及修。11 点半后午斋。斋后小息。息后修学。四点半晚殿。结束后经。

Morning devotions 5:30-7:00am. Work a shift at guest department. Have a meal together in the dining hall at noon. Afternoon devotions from 4:30-6:00pm. Clean up. Evening self-study.

早殿 5:30 - 7:00。客堂值班。中午过堂。过堂。晚课下午 4:30 - 6:00。作卫生。晚上自修。

In the morning at 4:00am get out of bed. 5:00am morning devotions. 7:00 breakfast. 9:00am study together. 11:30am lunch. 13:00 noon break. 14:30 study. 16:30 evening devotions. 19:00-20:00 study. 21:30 rest.

早 4:00 起床。5:00 早课。7:00 早斋。9:00 共修。11:30 午斋。13:00 午休。14:30 学习。16:30 晚课。19:00-20:00 学习。21:30 休息。

It is clear just by glancing through these outlines of their average day that nuns maintain a busy, structured life full of rigorous study and administrative work. Regardless of what the initial motivation was to become a Buddhist nun, maintaining this lifestyle would certainly require a large degree of sincere devotion to Buddhism, as was obvious throughout many of the explanations provided in the surveys. Female piety tends to be undervalued or neglected in studies of female agency in religious systems. However, this data clearly demonstrates the importance of pious devotion both to notions of agency and to their dedication to the religious system.

4.3 The Eight *Gurudhammas*

Discussion on the eight *gurudhammas* (*ba jingfa* 八敬法) has been circulating in scholarly work on women in Buddhism for the past few decades. These eight rules in the *vinaya* only apply to female monastics. Although they vary in different Buddhist texts, these rules generally include the following summarization, provided in Chiung Hwang Chen's 2011 article, "Feminist Debate in Taiwan's Buddhism":²³³

1. A nun, however senior, must always bow down in front of a monk, however junior.
2. A nun is not to spend the rainy season in a district in which there are no monks.

²³³ Chen, "Feminist Debate in Taiwan's Buddhism," 20.

3. After keeping the rainy season, the nun must hold the ceremony of repentance of their offences before monk nun sanghas.
4. A nun who has committed a serious offence must be disciplined by both sanghas.
5. A nun must not admonish a monk, whereas a monk can admonish a nun.
6. A nun must receive the upasampada ordination from both monk and nun sanghas after two years of studying the Precepts.
7. Every half month the nun must ask the monk sangha to give exhortation.
8. A nun must not in any way abuse or revile a monk.

The debate over these rules is lengthy and ongoing. Back in the 1960s, Venerable Shi Yinshun [印順 (1906–2005)] was the first in Mahāyāna Buddhism to question the eight *gurudhammas* and pointed out inconsistencies in the conception and treatment of gender in Buddhist scripture.²³⁴ In 1992, the nun Zhaohui 昭慧, a well-known nun and Buddhist reformer, wrote two consecutive articles concerning this issue in *Sangha Magazine*. Almost a decade later, having written numerous other articles on the issue, Zhaohui acted upon her disagreement with these rules at the opening remarks for the conference, “*Buddhism for the Human World: The Great Heritage Being Handed Down*,” on March 31, 2001. She invited eight people “from the four sectors of Buddhist disciples (male and female monastics and male and female lay followers) to make an unprecedented world-historical act altogether” by collectively tearing apart the eight *gurudhammas*.²³⁵ Zhaohui explained that this demonstration signified the eight *gurudhammas* “was abolished collaboratively by all sectors of Buddhist disciples, who were open-minded and progressive.”²³⁶ Zhaohui, known as being a very outspoken social activist, “claimed the precepts reflect gender hierarchy and

²³⁴ Chen, “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism,” 17.

²³⁵ Shih, “Theory and Practice of Buddhist Feminist Movement in Taiwan,” 140.

²³⁶ Shih, “Theory and Practice of Buddhist Feminist Movement in Taiwan,” 140.

inequality within the Buddhist *sangha* (monk/nun community) and have functioned as a ‘tyrant,’ enabling monks’ male chauvinism and dampening nuns’ self-esteem.”²³⁷ She also asserted that the rules are not the original word of the Buddha, but rather were created later on in an effort to discourage the development of the *bhikṣuṇī* monastic order.

In a book edited by Zhaohui in the same year as the demonstration, she writes that the Buddhist scripture stating all beings are equal is a noble concept when it comes to class differences. However, because it originated in ancient India, which was extremely discriminatory against women, male monastic groups inevitably reject the opposite sex under the guise of Buddhist philosophy and convey the classical literature against women.²³⁸ She goes on to declare that if feminists want to launch a women’s movement, the Taiwanese *bhikṣuṇī sangha* should not be missed because it is full of strong women. In a different section of this book, Zhaohui explicitly states her belief that the eight *gurudhammas* can and should be abolished. In elucidating her position, she relates it to laws of the world that maintain social order. Taking into account historical factors, she argues, if we found the laws to be a persecution of human rights based on contemporary understandings of rights and social order, we would not hesitate to abolish such rules. Likewise, the eight *gurudhammas* were conceived of during a different historical period with distinctive social and cultural norms. Based on our current grasp on the world, she asserts that these rules can now be seen as discriminatory against women and it is plausible to seek their abolition.²³⁹

Zhaohui is among a number of scholars, both monastic and not, who debate the “authenticity” of these rules. However, this debate is not one-sided, and many Buddhists do not

²³⁷ Chen, “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism,” 16.

²³⁸ See Zhaohui and Xingguang, eds., *Xin shiji de fojiao nuxing siwei*, 93.

²³⁹ See Zhaohui and Xingguang, eds., *Xin shiji de fojiao nuxing siwei*, 207.

entirely agree with Zhaohui's somewhat aggressive method of resistance. As Chen points out in her article, "Many in the Buddhist community questioned the need to formally abolish the Eight Heavy Rules, reasoning that the rules were typically not followed anyway."²⁴⁰ For example, Venerable Xingyun 星雲 from Foguangshan 佛光山 spoke out saying the rules "had long been 'frozen' in his monastery. He claimed that time would eventually eliminate the rules; there was no need for a dramatic ending."²⁴¹ Although no conclusions are yet to be drawn within monastic communities, this controversy sparked greater attention to issues of gender equality in academic discourse on Buddhism more broadly, as was evident in the literature review at the beginning of this thesis.

One of the arguments for maintaining the eight *gurudhammas* is that they protect Buddhist monasteries from criticism due to the outside perception of mingling between monks and nuns and the negative rhetoric seen throughout historical records of nuns as litigious. For example, in Ji-Young Jung's analysis of Korean Buddhist nuns from the Choson dynasty, she wrote that nuns were faced with "incessant suspicions" about their behavior.²⁴² Several of the nuns who participated in my survey directly expressed their opinions in favor of preserving these rules. This section will now turn to focus on these reactions.

4.3.1 Survey Responses to the Eight *Gurudhammas*

Due to the active debate over the eight *gurudhammas*, it was imperative to include a question about these rules in the survey distributed at nunneries in Chengdu. Including a question on these rules

²⁴⁰ Chen, "Feminist Debate in Taiwan's Buddhism," 24.

²⁴¹ Chen, "Feminist Debate in Taiwan's Buddhism," 24.

²⁴² See Jung, "Buddhist Nuns and Alternative Space," 152.

was also necessary due to the notable absence of information about the perspective of Mainland Chinese nuns, especially those who are not in leadership positions, since a majority of scholarship instead focuses on the outspoken voices emerging from Taiwanese nunneries.

The survey question concerning the eight *gurudhammas* appeared in the section where participants were asked to rank statements on a five-mark scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.”²⁴³ The statement they were asked to respond to read, “The eight *gurudhammas* discourage women from becoming ordained” (八敬法不支持女人受戒). Of the participants surveyed, seventeen responded “Strongly Disagree,” thirty-nine responded “Disagree” and one did not respond. When divided between the different nunneries, the majority of nuns who selected “Strongly Disagree” came from Aidaotang, whereas a majority from Jinsha’an and Tiexiangsi selected “Disagree.”

Q33: 8 Garudham..	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Strongly Disagree	12	1	2	2
Disagree	2	19	18	
Did not respond	1			

Table 20 The Eight *Gurudhammas* Discourage Women from Becoming Ordained

It was clear this question struck a chord with many of the nuns who participated in my survey. During distribution of these surveys at Aidao nunnery, one of the nuns got up and brought

²⁴³ To see how this question appeared in the survey, see Appendix A. Please note that the question is coded as “Q 33” for data analysis, as seen in Table 20, but it does not appear with a number in the actual survey. The possible responses that participants could have chosen in this section of the survey are: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.” Their responses were coded from 1 to 5 for data analysis, 1 being “Strongly Agree” and 5 being “Strongly Disagree.”

her survey over to me to point out this particular question. She held the paper before me and shook her head, ensuring that I understood her strong disagreement with the statement. I acknowledged her disagreement and thanked her for responding, letting her know that it was completely alright to disagree with the statement and how to mark that accordingly on the survey.

Furthermore, although the section where this question appeared was only intended for participants to mark on a scale how strongly they either agreed or disagreed, many nuns from Tiexiangsi also took the time to write in their own commentary below the question, despite the limited space available on the paper. These additional commentaries primarily recounted the longevity of these rules and the protection they provide to women. One nun wrote:

The eight precepts and the true *Dharma* have lived in the world for a long time, the eight rules are the policy instituted and ordered by the Buddha, very protective of the women, the nuns take the corresponding ordinations.

八敬法住世正法住世，八敬法是佛制定的，很保护女性，为尼众授相应的戒。

The commentary by other nuns paralleled this and went on that the rules are there “to care for the nuns” (爱护比丘尼) and that “they support many nuns in receiving full *upasampada* ordination” (支持尼众受具足戒). Three more samples from the Tiexiang nunnery surveys further emphasize these points:

Buddha instituted the *bhikṣuṇī* precepts in order that the true Dharma can remain enduringly. Support nuns in receiving the precepts

佛定敬法令正法久住。支持尼众受戒

The eight *gurudhamma* are rules of Buddha that ensures true *Dharma* could remain enduringly are taken as policies instituted by the Buddha, establish the long abiding of the true teaching, to protect the nuns, to devote to becoming a Buddha.

八敬法为佛制，令正法久住，保持尼众修行成佛。

The eight precepts instituted by the Buddha have been the correct practice for a long time; protect women to become enlightened soon (nuns first) nuns received/accept the nun's vinaya after the Buddhist monks received full ordination, Buddhist monks support nuns in receiving ordination.

佛制八敬法会正修久往，保护女性早日成佛（尼众先）□尼中受□法尼戒后在比丘僧中受具足戒，比丘支持比丘尼受戒

The most recurring feature of these notes was the assertion that the eight *gurudhammas* are taken as policies instituted by the Buddha himself and have been in the world for a long time. It is clear that the nuns from Tiexiang nunnery regard these rules as the Buddha's direct wisdom, which varies greatly from the suspicion amongst some scholars that these rules were forged by a later generation of monk scholars, rather than the decree of Śākyamuni Buddha.

The sixth *gurudhamma* pertains to the śiksāmānā “training” period (also called the “probationary” period). In the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, it states that “a girl (*tongnü* 童女) of eighteen has to study the precepts for two years” as part of the eight *gurudhammas*.²⁴⁴ This probationary period is also referenced in No. 119 of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*: “If a *bhikṣuṇī* admits a pregnant woman and confers on her the higher ordination, this is a *pātayantika*.”²⁴⁵ In their study, Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedrean and Bhikṣu Anālayo note that the narration preceding the rule “reports that the *bhikṣuṇīs* had indeed ordained a pregnant woman. The repercussion that her condition caused among the laity occasioned the laying down of a regulation to prevent this from happening again in the future.”²⁴⁶ Their work emphasizes an important reason for implementing a probationary period for prospective *bhikṣuṇīs*: to avoid the inevitable criticism and suspicion

²⁴⁴ T no. 1428: 924a16–17. Cited in Heirman, “Becoming a Nun in the Dharmaguptaka Tradition,” 180.

²⁴⁵ T no. 1428 at T. XXII 754b26: 若比丘尼度他妊娠女人，授具足戒者，波逸提。Cited in Tsedroen and Anālayo, “The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination,” 749. Translation from Heirman, ‘*The Discipline in Four Parts*’, 763.

²⁴⁶ Tsedrean and Anālayo, “The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination,” 749.

against Buddhist monasticism that would be caused by the presence of a pregnant nun. Based on the analysis by Tsedrean and Anālayo, we can see how this rule offers a type of protection for female monastics against outside suspicion or criticism, which corresponds with the rhetoric expressed by the participant nuns about these rules serving as protection for them.

There is evidence that this probationary period is employed at Tiexiangsi. Question 7 of the survey asked participants what level of ordination they received: *novice*, *śikāmānā*, or *bhikṣuṇī*. There were at least three nuns in the probationary period residing at Tiexiangsi in the summer of 2019 (see Table 21). Therefore, we can conclude that this aspect of the eight *gurudhammas* is indeed being followed in this nunnery.

Q7: Level of ordination	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Bhiksuni	15	20	15	2
Shiksamana			3	
Novice			2	

Table 21 Ordination Level by Temple

On August 1, 2019, towards the end of my fieldwork period in Chengdu, I sat down at a local teahouse with a couple of nuns from Aidao nunnery and, with the help of Dr. Stefania Travagnin, discussed my initial analysis of the surveys collected. The exchange of dialogue occurred informally between the four parties present, which is why I refer to this as a “conversation” rather than an “interview.” I asked them questions about what they thought of the eight *gurudhammas*, whether they had heard of Zhaohui and her opinions toward these rules, and why they personally decided to devote themselves to Buddhism. They also asked me a number of

questions about my own beliefs and why I chose to work on this particular project. The following discussion is provided in a paraphrased English translation, based on my notes, of the conversation which occurred in mandarin Chinese.²⁴⁷

When I asked these nuns about the survey question pertaining to the eight *gurudhammas* and Zhaohui's views on them, it was clear they were against the actions taken by Zhaohui. One nun remarked frankly that Zhaohui thinks she knows more than the Buddha. They also questioned why Zhaohui places so much emphasis on the eight *gurudhammas* yet does not say anything about the other hundred plus precepts that only apply to nuns.

Later in our conversation, the nuns commented that men are more rational, whereas women are controlled by their hearts and their emotions. In regard to the presence of monks during nuns' ordination, it was argued that men were present when women were first ordained thousands of years ago and it is tradition to have them there now. More broadly, they intimated to me that hierarchy is a natural part of humanity and there are hierarchies everywhere you look. They continued that the rules should not necessarily be seen as restrictive because they are there to help shape the nuns as Buddhist practitioners. For example, one of the nuns went on, it is said that you should not eat meat, but you still could if you wanted to. However, by not doing this you are able to realize the positive impact that maintaining a vegetarian diet has on you. Following this line of thought, just as the eight *gurudhammas* do not necessarily *have* to be followed, they were put in place to help nuns on the Buddhist path to enlightenment. When nuns bow to the monks during formal ceremonies, it gives them yet another chance to practice releasing their ego. Whereas this

²⁴⁷ Special thanks again to Dr. Travagnin for her assistance in maneuvering this conversation and helping translate my questions to the nuns where I fell short.

act actually makes it harder for monks because they must overcome their ego while having nuns bow to them.

Lastly, the nuns agreed that although these rules are hotly contested, they do not truly impact their daily lives. Many of the rules are dubbed unnecessary in the contemporary world, such as the rule to bow down in front of monks. While this rule remains in formal ceremonies, it does not apply for the vast majority of their time. One nun joked that it would be silly to expect a nun to bow to a monk every time she passed one on the street, especially given the close proximity to Wenshuyuan 文殊院, a large and bustling monastery just around the corner from Aidaotang.

The ethnographic fieldwork results in Tzu-Lung Chiu and Ann Heirman's article, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China," corresponds with what I found in my own fieldwork. In discussing the perception of the rules, they note, "Our informant nuns all stressed that the *gurudharmas* were established by the Buddha himself, and emphasized the importance of observing them."²⁴⁸ Furthermore, Chiu and Heirman highlight that their informant nuns saw the rules as a necessary component of maintaining "cooperation and harmony in Buddhist communities."²⁴⁹ Moreover, they clarified that although there was a general sense that women were weaker, this does not prevent women from practicing Buddhism. "On the contrary, as expressed by the Pushou Si nun, it is an incentive to work hard, and to strive for promotion on the Buddhist path."²⁵⁰

These responses also parallel the personal views of Longlian, who was opposed to any kind of "interference which discredits Buddhism." By this, Longlian meant things "such as the

²⁴⁸ Chiu and Heirman, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries," 246.

²⁴⁹ Chiu and Heirman, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries," 247.

²⁵⁰ Chiu and Heirman, "The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries," 250.

transformation of Buddhist places of worship into tourist spots, or the abandonment of the *vinaya* rules by monks and nuns.”²⁵¹ Moreover, her traditional considerations included the view that women were inherently weaker than men.²⁵² Longlian was also greatly influenced by her master, Nenghai 能海 (1886–1967), who was an advocate for monastic discipline and considered *vinaya* “as the basis of the Buddhist path.”²⁵³ Among her views, Longlian “vigorously promoted the necessity of (re)introducing *śikṣamānās* in Chinese Buddhism.”²⁵⁴ In her biography by Qiu Shanshan, it is recorded that “student nuns in her institute [were] expected to observe the *śikṣamānā* precepts within the two-year probation period.”²⁵⁵ These probationary precepts are the fourth rule of the *gurudhammas*, thus it is evident that Longlian upheld these regulations. As the head abbess for both Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi, it is clear to see how these strict, traditional views passed down to her disciples.

In considering the responses of these nuns, it is important to also point out the political sensitivity of Chinese Buddhism in Mainland China in regard to relationships between male and female monastics following the accusations of sexual abuse by a former top-ranking Buddhist monk, Xuecheng 學誠 (b. 1966), the former head abbot of Beijing’s Longquan Temple 龍泉寺. He was accused in 2018 and subsequently resigned as chairman of the Buddhist Association of China.²⁵⁶ With such allegations run by countless news sources in Mainland China and abroad, the

²⁵¹ Longlian being quoted in Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery*, 24.

²⁵² See Chiu and Heirman, “The Gurudharmas in Buddhist Nunneries,” 249.

²⁵³ Bianchi, “*Yi jie wei shi*,” 116.

²⁵⁴ Bianchi, “*Yi jie wei shi*,” 122.

²⁵⁵ Chiu and Heirman, “The Gurudharmas in Buddhist Nunneries,” 260, citing Qiu, *Dandai diyi biqiuni*.

²⁵⁶ See Yan, Alice, “China’s sex scandal monk resigns from key political advisory body,” *South China Morning Post*, 30 November 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2175880/chinas-sex-scandal-monk-resigns-key-political-advisory-body>.

strong hold on traditional boundaries between male and female Buddhist monastics may partially be a reaction to this news.

In reference to the *gurudhammas*, Wenjie Qin wrote in her dissertation, “In Chinese society rules are always situational and subject to personal interpretations.”²⁵⁷ At the beginning of my discussion with the nuns from Aidaotang, they commented that they could tell I was a Westerner just by looking at the questions on the survey because these were things they did not often think about. Although these rules have been challenged as an explicit source of oppression towards monastic women, it is important that we consider the other implications contained in these rules. Throughout the analysis above, it is obvious that these nuns do not directly perceive the eight *gurudhammas* to be a hindrance to their potential as Buddhists. Rather, these rules appear to be important for the more complex matters of social harmony in the monastic community, protection for the nuns, and as practice of Buddhist teachings such as releasing the ego. These interpretations not only suggest new ways of thinking about the purpose of these regulations, but also indicate the significance of pious devotion to the identity of these women. The data presented through these surveys gives the impression that these particular nuns who participated in my fieldwork might identify first, as Buddhists and, second, as women. Such a hierarchy of identity would certainly impact their outlook on what constitutes “feminist progress” and how to approach improving the status of Buddhist nuns within the confines of this framework.

²⁵⁷ Qin, “The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China,” 185.

Chapter 5: Sources of Female Leadership and Inspiration

The nuns who participated in this survey conveyed a clear sense of where they fit and what they want from their monastic lives. Despite the renunciation of their secular life, these nuns, and the nunneries, do not reside in isolation. They are individual constituents of a larger community and their views are inevitably shaped by the people and environment around them. Many of the perspectives portrayed through the surveys echoed the views of the active Buddhist nun, Longlian 隆蓮 (1909–2006), who held the position of head abbess at two of the nunneries. Longlian held a keen interest in *vinaya* and sought to maintain traditional practices and strict monastic discipline. However, within the constraints of these beliefs, she was still able to implement initiatives that achieved a sense of higher status for nuns through her insistence on education and traditional ordination procedures. The parallels between Longlian’s views and the responses of the survey indicate a lasting legacy left behind by this prominent figure. This chapter explores this legacy through survey data conveying attitudes toward female leadership, the concept of “charisma” and Longlian’s achievement in reimplementing dual ordination practices.

5.1 Attitudes Toward Female Leadership

In combing through the answers to survey questions surrounding attitudes toward female leadership, it became immediately obvious that Longlian continued to play a major role in the lives of the nuns from Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi. Though Longlian was the head abbess for both of these nunneries prior to passing away, it was illuminating to see that nearly fifteen years later, her legacy continues to leave an impression on these nuns. There was much stronger evidence of Longlian’s influence in Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi than in Jinsha’an. This is not surprising due to her significantly larger role at the two former nunneries. Though it is possible her education

initiatives impacted the nuns at Jinsha'an, she never acted as abbess or held any leadership positions at this nunnery. Because of this, the analysis provided in this chapter primarily relates to Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi, with some aspects of Jinsha'an interwoven as well.

The survey included a number of questions which aimed to gauge attitudes toward female Buddhist leaders. In particular, this section will focus on the responses to Questions 25, 26, and 32. I am focusing on these three questions for two reasons: one, they are neutral questions²⁵⁸ and therefore more likely to have received honest responses, and two, they focus most specifically on aspects of femininity in Buddhism. Question 25 asked participants about female figures or images prominent in their practice, Question 26 asked how the presence of female figures or images affects them as female practitioners, and Question 32 sought their attitude toward women in leadership roles.

Question 25 read: Which prominent female figures or images do you use in your practice? (您的修行涉及到哪位重要的女性人物或形象). Participants were given five choices: “Yeshe Tsogyal,” “White Tara,” “Guanyin,” “There are no female figures or images in my practice,” and “Other.” Space was provided after the fifth choice, “other,” where participants could write in an option for themselves.

In response to this question, all of the participants selected “Guanyin” and/or “Other.” Of the fifty-seven participants, fifty-three selected “Guanyin” as one of the female figures used in their practice. It is unsurprising that Guanyin is a notable figure for a majority of these women. As Xiaofei Kang discusses in her article on religious women in modern China, Guanyin often plays a

²⁵⁸ I consider these survey questions to be “neutral” as opposed to questions that are more likely to trigger a defensive response, such as the one about the eight *gurudhammas*.

role in supporting or inspiring Buddhist women. In Taiwan, where nuns and laywomen have “used religion to empower themselves in public life” and “to define their own versions of modern Buddhism, womanhood, and female leadership,” they do not link their social activism or choice to become nuns to the modern feminist movement. Rather, they “draw inspiration from female Buddhist symbols, such as Miaoshan and thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Guanyin.”²⁵⁹ Guanyin was also utilized as a figure who “served as divine support of women’s leadership”²⁶⁰ during mass movements by rural women protesting the Qing government’s New Policy reforms.

In Chün-fang Yü’s book, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, she discusses the female transformation of this figure in China and looks more broadly at the use of feminine symbols in Chinese religion, drawing on work by Cabezón and P. Steven Sangren in conjunction with her own findings.²⁶¹ Yü shows that, “as mothers, female deities serve as unifying symbols,” with Guanyin in particular representing the “mother figure par excellence, who loves all people as her children without discrimination.”²⁶² Furthermore, Yü employs the work of Cabezón and Sangren to highlight the positive spiritual qualities attributed to female Buddhist figures, including the identification of wisdom with motherhood.

Yü, Cabezón and Sangren all seem to coalesce on the point that the presence of feminine symbols does not guarantee a positive attitude towards women. As Yü elaborates, “The presence of goddesses or feminine symbols in a religion does not translate into a respect of real women in that culture. There is no necessary correlation between the veneration of goddesses and the status

²⁵⁹ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 540.

²⁶⁰ Kang, “Women and the Religious Question,” 513.

²⁶¹ Cf. Cabezón, “Mother Wisdom, Father Love”; Sangren, “Female Gender in Chinese Religious Symbols.”

²⁶² Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 414

of women in societies that venerate goddesses.”²⁶³ Therefore, any empowerment that “an outsider to the Buddhist tradition” perceives “to be an exaltation of women as symbols of wisdom, turns out, upon analysis, both a downgrading of wisdom as well as a denigration of real women.”²⁶⁴ While these scholars touch on an important distinction between doctrine and practice and the perception of scholars outside of these cultural, religious environments, the results of my survey provide another angle in which to see this from.

As mentioned, many of the participants also selected “other” in response to Question 25 on the presence of female figures.²⁶⁵ Following this choice, participants were given the option to write in an answer and several nuns took this opportunity. Four of the nuns from Aidaotang who chose “other” filled it in simply with the name, “Venerable Longlian” (隆莲法师). More detailed answers to this question were provided by some of the nuns from Tiexiangsi:

Ven. Longlian, Ven. Guofang, Ven. Changyi, etc., all of our monastery’s Buddhist nun masters.

隆莲老法师果芳法师常仪法师等，所有本寺尼众师父们。

Ven. Longlian was a person of virtue and prestige. Our monastery’s abbess Ven. Guofang succeeded Longlian and is maintained as a greatly respected teacher. [I] respect them very much.

隆莲法师德高望重。本寺住持果芳法师继承恩师一切保持。为末（？）学内心无比敬仰...

[I am] grateful for the greatly respected teacher Ven. Longlian’s instructions and her disciple Ven. Guofang’s instructions, [I have] benefitted greatly.

感恩隆莲恩师教诲及其弟子果芳法师的教诫，受益匪浅。

²⁶³ Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 415.

²⁶⁴ Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 416.

²⁶⁵ A total of twenty-five nuns selected “other.” Of those who chose “other” in response to this question, eight were from Aidaotang and seventeen were from Tiexiangsi.

[I am] inspired by the most prominent *bhikṣuṇī* of our age, Ven. Longlian and others.
深受当代第一比丘尼隆莲法师等启发。

I received influences from Ven. Longlian and the current monastery abbess Ven. Guofang and other masters, whom I held intimate relationship with since I was young.
在很小时亲近隆莲法师及现任住持果芳法师及本寺尼众师父们的影响等。

Ven. Longlian and Ven. Guofang, etc.

隆莲法师果芳法师等

Instruction from Ven. Longlian, the first *bhikṣuṇī* of the present era, and her disciple Ven. Guofang

当代第一比丘尼隆莲法师，及其弟子果芳师父的教授

Ven. Longlian, Ven. Guofang

隆莲法师，果芳师父

The common thread evident throughout are the references to Longlian as a prominent female figure in these nuns' lives. Those from Tiexiangsi also noted Guofang 果芳, a disciple of Longlian and the current head abbess of Tiexiangsi. It is notable that many of these nuns identified a prominent female figure in their practice to be an actual person from their lives, rather than only identifying mythical female deities. These teachers act as real-life role models for contemporary nuns to emulate and derive empowerment. Furthermore, the frequent acknowledgement of Longlian, despite the fact that she passed away nearly fifteen years prior, is suggestive of her lasting impact on these nunneries.

Question 26 then asked participants to designate how inspired, if at all, the presence of such female figures made them feel. The responses recorded for Question 26 were more varied than the previous question. The possible responses to this question were “Very inspired,” “Somewhat inspired,” “It does not affect me,” “There are no female figures or images in my practice,” or “Other.” Some of these participants selected *both* “Very Inspired” and “Somewhat

Inspired,” therefore I have placed their responses in a new category that I will call “Very/Somewhat Inspired.” Of the fifty-seven participants, twenty-seven selected “Very inspired,” eight selected “Very/Somewhat Inspired,” seventeen selected “Somewhat Inspired,” and five selected “Other.”

In breaking down these numbers by temple, we can see a distinct split (see Table 22). There are more participants from Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi who selected “Very Inspired” than those from Jinsha’an, with eleven coming from Aidaotang and ten from Tiexiangsi compared to only five from Jinsha’an. Further, the eight participants that selected “Very/Somewhat Inspired” also came from Tiexiangsi. Of those who selected “Somewhat Inspired,” fifteen were from Jinsha’an, whereas only one was from Aidaotang and one from Tiexiangsi. Overall, it is notable that not a single participant chose the third or fourth options on this survey: “It does not affect me” and “There are no female figures or images in my practice.”

Q26: Female inspiration	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Very Inspired	11	5	10	1
Very/Somewhat Inspired			8	
Somewhat Inspired	1	15		1
Other	3		2	

Table 22 Female Inspiration by Temple

Like the question before it, Question 26 also allowed space for participants to write in an answer after the choice, “Other.” Fourteen of the nuns wrote in responses in addition to their selection. Many of these responses spoke to the benefits gained from the teachings of Longlian, as

well as Guofang from those in Tiexiangsi. For example, nuns from Tiexiangsi wrote in the following:

I have gained great benefits by listening to the audio discourses given by Venerable Longlian and by attending the courses given by the monastery Abbess Venerable Guofang. 得以隆老法师音频教育及本寺住持果芳法师，的教育授课等，受益匪浅。

Every teacher is taken as a role model, like Ven. Longlian and her disciple Ven. Guofang, etc.

诸师皆为楷模，崇敬隆莲法师及其弟子果芳法师等。

Ven. Longlian had sublime devotion to enlightenment and boosting morale. Our monastery's venerable educates me and inspires me very much.

隆莲法师崇高修行启发和鼓舞。本寺住持对我教育受益盛多形象启发很深。

I had the fortune to receive the teaching from our abbess Ven. Guofang and gained great inspirations.

蒙受本寺住持果芳法师教育授课等深受启发。

Lastly, we will look at Question 32 of the survey. This question was included in the section where participants were asked to provide a ranking on a five-point scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” Question 32 asked about whether they agreed or disagreed that there should be more women in leadership positions in Buddhism (佛教中，应有更多女性出任领导职位). Of the fifty-seven participants, twenty-nine selected “Strongly Agree,” sixteen selected “Agree,” one selected “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” ten selected “Disagree,” and one did not respond. When divided between the nunneries, a majority of those who selected “Strongly Agree” came from Tiexiangsi, whereas a majority of those who selected “Agree” came from Aidaotang, and there is an even split of nine each between “Strongly Agree” and “Disagree” from the participants coming from Jinsha'an (see Table 23).

Q32: More Women Leaders	Q1: Temple Affiliation			
	Aidao	Jinshaan	Tiexiangsi	Other
Strongly Agree	2	9	18	
Agree	12	2	2	
Neither Agree nor Disagree				1
Disagree		9		1
Did not respond	1			

Table 23 More Women in Leadership Roles

Aside from the recorded responses in the checked boxes, there was a nun from Aidaotang who wrote further commentary alongside her answer to this question as well. She recorded, “Agree,” with the written in caveat, “as long as it is good for the masses” (只要是为大众好的). The discrepancy between the responses for this question echo the differences evident in Question 26 as well. Nuns from Jinsha’an felt less strongly towards the inspirational effect of female figures or images than did nuns from Tiexiangsi and Aidaotang. Here, again, almost half of the nuns from Jinsha’an disagreed that there should be more women in leadership positions in Buddhism. It is important to reiterate that Jinsha’an had a different relationship with Longlian than the other two nunneries surveyed. Although Longlian held one of her first teaching positions at Jinsha’an, she never acted as head abbess of this nunnery and is less likely to have made a lasting impact on the nuns residing there currently. The variation of responses between the nunneries where Longlian held a leadership position versus the one where she had comparatively little influence further emphasizes the extent to which she impacted the nuns at Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi. Based on these discrepancies, it is possible to conclude that Longlian’s success as a leader in these two nunneries greatly impacted their views on female leadership more broadly.

5.2 “Charisma”

It is no accident that Longlian’s legacy outlasted her by nearly fifteen years, nor that she is often tangentially mentioned throughout various works concerning Buddhism in China.²⁶⁶ Longlian earned her designation as the “first *bhikṣuṇī* of the modern era” (第一比丘尼) through her impressive intelligence and dedication to Buddhism. Even before beginning her successful Buddhist career, she was considered a child prodigy due to her great intellect at a young age and became the first woman in Sichuan’s history to ever pass the civil service examinations and work for the Sichuan provincial government.²⁶⁷ However, being an outstanding intellectual or Buddhist practitioner is not the essential element of a great leader who can affect real change.

The concept of “charisma” was first proposed by German sociologist Max Weber as an analytical category for the study of modernity describing a type of political authority “that could bring about political renewal—ways out of the new servitude of capitalist interests, their states, and institutions.”²⁶⁸ In Weber’s words:

“[C]harisma” shall be understood to refer to an extraordinary quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed. “Charismatic authority,” hence, shall refer to a rule over men, whether predominantly external or predominantly internal, to which the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Longlian is mentioned in the following works: Travagnin, “Elder Gongga”; Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts”; Chiu and Heirman, “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China”; Long, “Buddhist Education in Sichuan.”

²⁶⁷ For more on her accomplishments, see Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion”; Qiu, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni*; DeVido, “Networks and Bridges.”

²⁶⁸ Feuchtwang, “Suggestions for a Redefinition of Charisma,” 90.

²⁶⁹ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 295.

Although this concept was developed for studies of secularity and modernity, Feuchtwang's redefinition of "charisma" for the sociology of religion becomes applicable for the purposes of this analysis. He defines religious charisma as a "type of authority that brings about renewal of *religious* traditions or simply religious innovation."²⁷⁰ This charisma is embodied in a leader, in this case Longlian, and a following, the Chengdu nunneries Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi.

In Julia Huang's use of this analytical category for evaluating the Taiwanese nun Zhengyan 證嚴 (b. 1937), the founder of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Foundation (Ciji), she describes charisma as an "inborn personal magnetism that arises in interaction and may serve as the basis of leadership when it is regarded as a manifestation of power that is embedded in a broader symbolic framework, such as divinity."²⁷¹ There is an aspect of personality and ability of such a leader that allows their followers to distinguish them as extraordinary.²⁷²

Despite Longlian's firm opposition to being regarded as a saint and her rejection of "any form of spiritual devotion directed toward her person,"²⁷³ it is clear she was viewed in this light. The very fact that she insisted against these things is evidence in itself of how highly she was regarded by her Buddhist community. Now, nearly fifteen years after her passing, Longlian continues to be a source of inspiration for the nuns at Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi. In one survey from Tiexiangsi, the participant nun wrote warmly, "Venerable Longlian was a person of virtue and prestige" (隆莲法师德高望重). Another wrote that Longlian "had sublime devotion to enlightenment and boosting morale" (隆莲法师崇高修行启发和鼓舞). She is a leader not just in

²⁷⁰ Feuchtwang, "Suggestions for a Redefinition of Charisma," 91.

²⁷¹ Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 17.

²⁷² Feuchtwang, "Suggestions for a Redefinition of Charisma," 93.

²⁷³ Bianchi, "Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion," 275.

her structurally authoritative position as head abbess of these nunneries, but also in her ability to create change and influence other's views through dedication to what she believes is right, as exemplified through her initiatives in education and ordination procedure.

A further exemplar of Longlian's charismatic authority in the Mainland Chinese Buddhist community at large is illustrated by the recounting of a story by the Secretary of the provincial Buddhist Association of Sichuan, Yang Boming, wherein Longlian was enabled to avoid the first *gurudhamma* in a formal reception due to her high status:

Long Lian is the most revered nun in China. It has always been a problem for us men to treat her properly in public. The 'Eight Rules of Respect' require that a nun must bow to a monk in public regardless of their age difference. In Chinese culture this rule is not practical because of our emphasis on seniority of age over gender difference. There is no way this eighty-year old prominent nun is going to bow to a nineteen year old monk. But as a strong advocate of the *vinaya* rules, Long Lian cannot openly violate the rules that she teaches. We know her dilemma and the reason why she is reluctant to attend our meetings where monks from other monasteries are present. When she does attend a meeting, we wait at the door for her arrival. As soon as she comes in, we rush over to escort her to her seat so she will not even have a chance to say hello to the monks in the room first! This way we save face for her and for the monks sitting here. This is how we deal with social embarrassment.²⁷⁴

While Qin notes that this is a "typical Chinese way of handling doctrinal problems,"²⁷⁵ this anecdote is an exceptional case extended to Longlian because of her exceptional status. The magnetic personality and perception of Longlian as extraordinary can also be seen through her actions at the first congress of the newly restored Buddhist Association of China following the

²⁷⁴ Qin, "The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China," 184–185.

²⁷⁵ Qin, "The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China," 185.

Mao era. Longlian was the only woman to show up with a fully shaved head and dressed in Buddhist robes. Meanwhile, none of the other monastic women showed up as such, instead deferring to their grown-out hair and secular attire. When they asked Longlian whether she was afraid (你不拍嗎?), she replied, “What are you worried about?” (你們擔心什麼呢).²⁷⁶ Her choice to boldly embrace her monastic appearance made a significant impact on those in attendance and it was at this meeting that Longlian was permitted to restore Tiexiangsi and establish the Sichuan *Bhikṣuṇī* Institute for Buddhist Studies (*Sichuan nizhong foxueyuan* 四川尼眾佛學院).²⁷⁷

Another important aspect of “charisma” lays in the ability of the leader to either renew religious traditions or implement religious innovations, both of which Longlian achieved through her initiatives in education and ordination procedures. As Elise DeVido commended, “the mission of these nuns (Longlian and her colleague Tongyuan) past and present is Buddhist education, which has been the key to the development of the nuns’ order and the flourishing of Chinese Buddhism today.”²⁷⁸ Her establishment of the Sichuan *Bhikṣuṇī* Institute for Buddhist Studies in 1983, originally located in Tiexiangsi and later moved to Qifusi 祈福寺, inaugurated the first institution of higher education for nuns in Mainland China.²⁷⁹ She continued to advance educational opportunities for Buddhist nuns in Aidaotang as well by setting up a three year training school to prepare students to attend the more extensive Institute. As we saw in the previous chapter, the nuns at Aidaotang and Tiexiangsi expressed strong satisfaction when asked about whether their educational opportunities were sufficient. This is very likely a result of her contributions to the

²⁷⁶ See Huitao, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi*.

²⁷⁷ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion,” 292.

²⁷⁸ DeVido, “Networks and Bridges,” 74.

²⁷⁹ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion,” 292–293.

establishment of higher education for nuns. Longlian's other major contribution was the reimplementation of dual ordination procedures, which will be examined in more detail below.

5.2.1 Renewal of Traditions: Dual Ordination

In 1982, Longlian organized a dual ordination ceremony (*erbusengjie* 二部僧戒)²⁸⁰ to impart full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination on twenty-one nuns in Aidaotang and Wenshuyuan, the first *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ceremony held in Mainland China since the 1950s.²⁸¹ This gathering was in fact the culmination of multiple decades of work by both Longlian and Tongyuan 通愿 (1913–1991), who were dedicated to resurrecting what they considered the correct procedure for nuns to receive complete ordination. While Tongyuan was also a key figure in achieving dual ordination in Mainland China, this section will focus on Longlian's role and views as she was vital to the accomplishing of this practice in Sichuan province.

Longlian first learned about dual ordination in 1949 when she and Nenghai invited the *vinaya* Master Guanyi 貫一 to come to the Tiexiangsi and provide lessons on monastic discipline for the nuns living there. During these lessons, Master Guanyi explicated on the “correct” ritual for receiving ordination “as it had first been introduced into China from Sri Lanka in 434 AD.”²⁸² According to the rules of dual ordination,

nuns should receive the precepts of complete ordination first from ten *bhikṣuṇīs* acting as nun-masters, and then from ten ordained monks, representing the *bhikṣus* community.

²⁸⁰ This literally means “ordination conferred by the two sangha orders.” Previous to this development, ordination for *bhikṣuṇī* in Mainland China was conferred by the *bhikṣus* only.

²⁸¹ Long, “Buddhist Education in Sichuan,” 196.

²⁸² Bianchi, *The Iron Statue Monastery*, 32.

Guanyi explained that these procedures had been introduced into China from Sri Lanka in the years 433–434; nevertheless, they had been discarded in China, where precepts were usually conferred to nuns only by ten *bhikṣu*-masters.²⁸³

Although this version of the ordination ritual is included in Indian *vinaya* texts and was introduced to China during the fifth century, “it had been long disregarded and had never been the standard criterion for admission into the line of nuns.”²⁸⁴ Neither Longlian nor any of the other nuns residing in Chengdu received ordination in this way and from that day Longlian took it upon herself to resurrect the practice of dual ordination. Her work in this regard set a precedent for the rest of Chinese Buddhism. Ever since her implementation of dual ordination in Chengdu, these rules became the standard procedure for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination throughout Mainland China. In fact, the mandatory use of dual ordination procedures in nuns’ ordinations is stated explicitly in contemporary official regulations by the state.²⁸⁵

The influence that Longlian held in the development of Chinese Buddhism is palpable and her devotion to reinstating dual ordination practices in Mainland China is a prime example of why she is regarded as both “a modern example of female empowerment and independence and as a typically traditional nun strictly adhering to monastic rules and regulations.”²⁸⁶ While these two aspects of Longlian may seem contradictory, dual ordination practices exemplify a method of attaining higher status for nuns without having to forgo traditional practices. Ester Bianchi pointed out that while dual ordination can be seen as “a restoration of tradition,” the personal perspective of Longlian confirms the other side of this goal. Bianchi writes, “as Longlian herself suggested to

²⁸³ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion,” 287.

²⁸⁴ Bianchi, “*Yi jie wei shi*,” 121.

²⁸⁵ See Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts,” 157.

²⁸⁶ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 309.

me during an interview in 1996, she also believed that the restoration resulted in an improvement in the status of Buddhist nuns from an egalitarian perspective, thanks to the important role played by the nun-masters.”²⁸⁷ Therefore, by enforcing tradition and monastic discipline, Longlian was also strengthening the role of women in an important ceremony and creating space for them to actuate authority in the institution of Buddhism.

This combination of improving the status of nuns in the Buddhist monastic community while maintaining tradition are a common theme throughout Longlian’s achievements. In fact, in her view, these challenges could *only* be carried out within the Buddhist tradition.²⁸⁸ Her insistence on bringing back these particular ordination practices from Indian *vinaya* texts is a perfect exemplar of her dedication to both of these principles. She also used this tactic when advocating the need for well-educated female Buddhist teachers. Longlian is quoted in a documentary about her life stating:

Buddhism emphasizes that there are differences between men and women. Therefore, a nun after ordination cannot have a male master of the precepts. She needs to follow a nun master of the precepts; only in this way would she be duly instructed. A newly ordained nun, immediately after ordination, needs to be guided by a female master, and study with her the three Buddhist teachings. A male master of the precepts, no matter how knowledgeable and virtuous, will not be able to fully instruct her because he cannot be with her day and night.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 302.

²⁸⁸ Bianchi, “Subtle Erudition,” 305.

²⁸⁹ Huitao, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi*. Translation provided by Ester Bianchi.

Here, Longlian is utilizing the fact that there *are* gender differences and rules separating men and women in Buddhist doctrine to enforce the need for and involvement of good female teachers. By insisting that monks would not be able to teach them as well, Longlian is advocating for a more effective education through female teachers, thereby providing the foundation for more opportunities for women. She also notes that receiving ordination at one place by only ten *bhikṣu* masters is “illegal” and does not count as ordination, “since the part of the procedure involving the *bhikṣuṇī* masters is lacking.”²⁹⁰ Furthermore, Longlian stresses that the very existence of Buddhist nuns is imperative for the continuation of “complete” Buddhism in Mainland China. She reminds us that the “only place where all four categories of disciples [male and female monastic Buddhists, and male and female lay Buddhists] are complete is China,” which is called the “middle kingdom” (中国), referring to the center of Buddhism.²⁹¹ Therefore, she continues, “if we want to meet this standard, we need all four groups of disciples.”²⁹² This tactful argumentation for the necessity of female monastics and reestablishing dual ordination practice is a perfect example of exercising strict tradition to simultaneously enact progress in the way of improving the status of women in monastic institutions. The establishment of standardized dual ordination practices not only ensures China as the center of the Buddhist world, but also places greater value on the inclusion of Buddhist women.

The greater inclusion of women in ordination practices in particular can be seen as evoking original Buddhism. After the decades-long destruction of religion throughout the Maoist era, “a regeneration of the monastic community from its very basis and beginning (i.e., the entrance into

²⁹⁰ Huitao, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi*. Translation provided by Ester Bianchi.

²⁹¹ Huitao, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi*. Translation provided by Ester Bianchi.

²⁹² Huitao, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi*. Translation provided by Ester Bianchi.

the monastic order) has been often deemed indispensable to cope with an alleged moral decline of Buddhism. This seems also to be the case for the ordination reforms carried out in the PRC.”²⁹³ The standardization of dual ordination practices not only serves as an effort to reignite “orthodox” Buddhism in China, but also ensures the involvement of *bhikṣuṇīs* in the process, generating a higher sense of status for monastic women. These instances provide further evidence of Longlian’s “charismatic” leadership through her ability to craft innovative arguments, as well as her extraordinary success in achieving these initiatives that went on to impact women throughout Mainland China.

²⁹³ Bianchi, “Transmitting the precepts,” 153.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research set out to understand the perspective of ordinary Buddhist nuns in small nunneries that so often get overlooked and to introduce their hidden voices to the newly growing field of women in Buddhism. Inspired by the ongoing debate in scholarship over feminist issues in Buddhist monastic communities, such as the proposed abolition of the eight *gurudhammas* (*ba jingfa* 八敬法), my fieldwork in Chengdu sought to discover the views of nuns at three small nunneries (Aidaotang 愛道堂, Tiexiangsi 鐵像寺, and Jinsha'an 金沙庵) in relation to their position as women in Buddhism. Using analyses of survey data collected at these nunneries, this thesis reevaluated conceptions of “feminist progress,” “agency,” and leadership from the viewpoint of these Buddhist nuns.

Buddhism does not have a clean, linear evolution throughout history. Its doctrine and practices, as well as the way practitioners relate to the religion, branched out and developed within different temporal and cultural contexts. Because of this wide-ranging variation of Buddhism, it is necessary to combine feminist theory with methods such as microhistory and lived religion in order to construe a more precise depiction of how women in specific monastic communities relate to Buddhism. While liberal feminist scholars call for a “revalorization” of Buddhism for the betterment of women’s position in the religion or the abolition of the eight *gurudhammas*, the nuns surveyed for this thesis did not appear to have as open concerns about alleged oppression in the monastic communities. These nuns chose to join the monastic order out of their belief in Buddhism and the opportunity to study the dharma without the distractions of secular life. As pointed out by one of the nuns I spoke to, having to maintain a lower status in the hierarchy actually benefits them more than it hinders them in terms of their Buddhist practice. The nuns have the chance to remain

humble and release their ego when confronted with patriarchal regulations, whereas men face a greater challenge to their ego by holding a higher position in the hierarchy. Moreover, these gendered issues do not appear to be at the forefront of their minds. As one nun commented, she could tell I was a Westerner just by looking at the survey because many of the questions pertained to issues they did not often consider.

Despite the overwhelming rhetoric that the eight *gurudhammas* were the word of the Buddha and meant to be respected, this strict adherence to monastic discipline does not necessitate compliance with patriarchal structures. On the contrary, Longlian's success in improving the position of nuns through her initiatives in education and ordination procedures exemplifies a method for achieving "feminist progress" within a traditional monastic structure. Longlian achieved increased status and opportunities for Buddhist nuns in Mainland China without abolishing rules or receiving backlash from the monastic community. We can learn from her tactful handling of the situation in order to conceive of how "feminist progress" might be enacted in the future.

Furthermore, it is evident that Longlian's strict views on traditional Buddhism have sustained into the generation of nuns that succeeded her. Perhaps these nuns are not as concerned with their gender roles in the monastic institution as they are with the success and continuation of the religion as a whole and with their potential for saving all sentient beings. They seem to approach these issues first, as Buddhists and, second, as women in society. Their desire to save all sentient beings and maintain social harmony within the monastic institution is more distinguished than specific gender issues in Buddhist doctrine and regulations. These views can also be seen reflected in Tzu-lung Chiu and Ann Heirman's recent ethnographic study in Mainland China. They wrote:

Taken as a whole, our informants' stories represent a plea for a respectful and harmonious relationship between the two orders, and a definite attempt to not problematize the issue of the eight *gurudharmas* unless circumstances force one to do so.²⁹⁴

Although we cannot draw overly generalized conclusions from the limited ethnographic information currently available, it is notable that in both of these studies the Chinese nuns were found to be in favor of a more traditional outlook. These topics would greatly benefit from further research on the perspectives of individual monastic communities in Mainland China.

As a comparatively new field of study, research on women in Buddhism still has a long way to go in order to accomplish comprehensive understandings of the role of gender in monastic communities. The primary goal of this research was to incorporate the voices of Buddhist nuns from the three nunneries surveyed in Chengdu in order to reevaluate conceptions of “feminist progress,” “agency” and leadership in this complex religious environment. The ethnographic methodology served to reveal the perspective of ordinary Buddhist nuns whose voices are consistently absent from scholarly attention. However, the circumstances of my fieldwork are an important consideration to my conclusions. During Chiu and Heirman's fieldwork in Mainland China and Taiwan, they were challenged due to the nature of their topic: the *vinaya*. They write:

...various nuns were at first reluctant or cautious about discussing the issues of *vinaya* with us because we did not belong to their monastic community. Similarly, Master Sheng Yen disapproved of laypeople commenting on monastic affairs, believing that anything relating to Buddhist monastic members should be solved by the *sangha* alone.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Chiu and Heirman, “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China,” 267.

²⁹⁵ Chiu and Heirman, “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China,” 263.

Resistance to researchers was a potential problem for my own fieldwork as well and might have affected the way the nuns' responded to the survey. It is possible that the nuns who participated in my survey provided easy to digest answers, drawing from their education at the nunneries and tailoring it to a non-Chinese audience. Additionally, I was given access to these nuns through connections in the Sichuan branch of the Buddhist Association of China. When I met with the nuns to distribute these surveys, I was accompanied by a representative from the Association. The presence of this representative also might have impacted the answers that were given. Therefore, while I approach this survey data as an authentic source, it is important to note the possible drawbacks of this technique and of studying topics related to *vinaya* studies as a non-monastic scholar.

Despite these drawbacks, my hope is that this research can be utilized as a reference point for successive work on women in Buddhism and will encourage scholars to approach the idea of feminism in new ways when considering diverse populations. This research will also hopefully inspire other scholars to take on the ethnographic objective of obtaining first-hand accounts from lesser heard nuns at small nunneries to embolden our broader knowledge about women in Buddhism in contemporary Mainland China. Having completed this research, there are several areas that would be of interest in future surveys or interviews with nuns: detailed family religious backgrounds, including their family's reaction to them joining a nunnery; contemporary female perspectives on what it means to be a *da zhangfu* ("a great man" 大丈夫) and who can qualify as one; a general inquiry into the adjustment from secular to monastic life (e.g. what were the most difficult adjustments to make when joining the monastic community?); opinions on whether female monastics should be able to teach male monastics; and more thorough accounts of the

backgrounds of these nuns (geographical, socio-economic, etc.). These are topics that would help to further our understanding of how Chinese Buddhist women relate to their monastic community.

Academic scholarship addressing women in Buddhism specifically is a comparatively recent undertaking. Perhaps as scholars it would be fruitful to approach such topics with a general goal of discovering the relationship between women and religion. From there, we may be able to decipher more accurately what issues these women are facing in their day to day lives. Just as Rajyashree Pandey suggested that “we need to remain open to the otherness of the world of the distant texts we encounter rather than trying to domesticate it to become a mirror of our own,”²⁹⁶ we also need to take on this perspective when it comes to our analysis of diverse cultural and religious populations in contemporary times.

²⁹⁶ Pandey, “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency,” 19.

Bibliography

- Arai, Paula. *Women Living Zen, Japanese Sōtō Buddhist Nuns*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . “Japanese Buddhist Nuns: Innovators for the Sake of Tradition.” In *Buddhist Women Across Cultures*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, 105–122. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Andreeva, Anna and Dominic Steavu. “Introduction: Backdrops and Parallels to Embryological Discourse and Reproductive Imagery in East Asian Religions.” In *Transforming the Void: Embryological Discourse and Reproductive Imagery in East Asian Religions*, edited by Anna Andreeva and Dominic Steavu, 1–51. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- . “Lost in the Womb: Conception, Reproductive Imagery, and Gender in the Writings and Rituals of Japan’s Medieval Holy Men.” In *Transforming the Void: Embryological Discourse and Reproductive Imagery in East Asian Religions*, edited by Anna Andreeva and Dominic Steavu, 420–478. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Balkwill, Stephanie. “Why does a woman need to become a man in order to become a Buddha?: Past investigations, new leads.” *Religion Compass* 12, no. 8 (2018): e12270. Accessed Online at <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12270>.
- . “Did Women Produce Buddhist Texts in Medieval China? And Does It Matter If They Did?” Lecture presented at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, January 30, 2020.
- Bianchi, Ester. *The Iron Statue Monastery: “Tiexiangsi” A Buddhist Nunnery of Tibetan Tradition in Contemporary China*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2001.

- . “Subtle Erudition and Compassionate Devotion: Longlian, ‘The Most Outstanding *Bhikṣunī*’ in Modern China.” In *Making Saints in Modern China*, edited by David Ownby, Vincent Goossaert, and Ji Zhe, 272–311. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- . “Transmitting the Precepts in Conformity with the Dharma: Restoration, Adaptation, and Standardization of Ordination Procedures.” In *Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions*, edited by Ji Zhe, Gareth Fisher, and André Laliberté, 152–170. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019.
- . “*Yi jie wei shi*: theory and practice of monastic discipline in modern and contemporary Chinese Buddhism.” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 3, no. 2 (2017): 111–141.
- Bhikṣunī Jampa Tsedroen and Bhikku Anālayo. “The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣunī* Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Tradition.” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 (2013): 743–774.
- Bhikkhu Anālayo. “The Legality of *Bhikkhunī* Ordination.” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 (2013): 310–333.
- Chen, Chiung Hwang. “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism: The Issue of the Eight Garudhammas.” *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 16–32.
- Chen, Jinhua. “Family Ties and Buddhist Nuns in Tang China: Two Studies.” *Asia Major* 15, no. 2 (2002): 51–85.
- Cheng, Wei-Yi. *Buddhist Nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka: A critique of the feminist perspective*. London/New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Chiu, Tzu-Lung and Ann Heirman. “The *Gurudharmas* in Buddhist Nunneries in Mainland China.” *Buddhist Studies Review* 31, no. 2 (2014): 241–272.

- Chu, William. "Zhao Hui (1957–): An Innovative and Reforming Taiwanese Bhikkhuni." *The Voices and Activities of Theravada Buddhist Women* (Winter 2012): 11–14.
- Cho, Eun-su, ed. *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen: Hidden Histories, Enduring Vitality*. With a foreword by Robert E. Buswell. New York: SUNY Press, 2011.
- de Vries, Jan. "Playing with Scales: The Global and the Micro, the Macro and the Nano." *Past & Present* 242, no. 14 (November 2019): 23–36.
- DeVido, Elise. *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- . "Networks and Bridges: Nuns in the Making of Modern China." *The Chinese Historical Review* 22, no. 1 (May 2015): 72–93.
- Duan Yuming 段玉明 et al. *Chengdu Fojiao shi* 成都佛教史. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2017.
- Faure, Bernard. *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- . *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. Accessed Online at <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/31079>.
- Feuchtwang, Stephan. "Suggestions for a Redefinition of Charisma." *Nova Religio* 12, no. 2 (November 2008): 90–105.
- Fincher, Leta Hong. *Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China*. London: Verso, 2018.
- Fink, Sarah. "'Did Women Produce Buddhist Texts in Medieval China? And Does It Matter If They Did?'" Lecture by Stephanie Balkwill." *CJBS* (News Blog). *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, April 8, 2020. <https://cjbuddhist.wordpress.com/2020/04/08/blog-did->

women-produce-buddhist-texts-in-medieval-china-and-does-it-matter-if-they-did-lecture-
by-stephanie-balkwill/.

Goossaert, Vincent and David A. Palmer. *The Religious Question in Modern China*. Chicago,
London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "Microhistory and World History." In *The Cambridge World History*, Vol. VI,
The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part 2, Patterns of Change, edited
by J. Bentley, S. Subrahmanyam and M. Weisner-Hanks, 446–473. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Grant, Beata. *Eminent Nuns: Women Chan Masters of Seventeenth Century China*. Honolulu:
University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.

———. "Da Zhangfu: The Gendered Rhetoric of Heroism and Equality in Seventeenth-Century
Chan Buddhist Discourse Records." *Nan Nü* 10 (2008): 177–211.

Griffiths, Caitilin. "Tracing the Itinerant Path: Jishū Nuns of Medieval Japan." Ph.D.
Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2010.

Gross, Rita. *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of
Buddhism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.

———. *Buddhism Beyond Gender: Liberation from Attachment to Identity*. With an introduction
by Judith Simmer-Brown. Boulder: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2018.

———. *A Garland of Feminist Reflections: Forty Years of Religious Explorations*. Berkeley:
University of California Press, 2009.

———. "The dharma of gender." *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 1 (2004): 3–13.

Hallisey, Charles, trans. *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*. Murty Classical
Library of India 3. [Publishing info]

- Hawthorne, Sîan. "Entangled Subjects: Feminism, Religion and the Obligation to Alterity." In *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, edited by Mary Evans, et al., 114–130. SAGE Publications Ltd., 2014. Accessed Online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473909502>.
- Heirman, Ann. "Becoming a Nun in the Dharmaguptaka Tradition." *Buddhist Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (2008): 174–93.
- . *'The Discipline in Four Parts,' Rules for Nuns According to the Dharmaguptakavinaya*. Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2002.
- Hewitt, Marsha A. "Ideology Critique, Feminism, and the Study of Religion." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 11, no. 1 (1999): 47–63.
- Hsieh, Evelyn Ding-hwa. "Images of Women in Ch'an Buddhist Literature of the Sung Period." In *Buddhism in the Sung*, edited by Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, 148–187. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991.
- Hua 華. "Fengjian shili yapo xia de Sichuan funü" 封建勢力壓迫下的四川婦女 [The Oppression of Feudal Power on the Women of Sichuan]. *Linglong* 玲瓏 [Exquisite] 4, no. 34 (1934): 2167–2169.
- Huang, C. Julia. *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Huitao 慧叟. *Dangdai diyi biqiuni Longlian fashi* 當代第一比丘尼隆蓮法師 [Venerable Longlian: The Most Outstanding Bhikṣunī of the Modern Era]. *Fojiao jilupian* 佛教紀錄片 [Buddhism Documentary Series]. *YouTube*, Published September 18, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOn3qrnwJ9s> (accessed August 24, 2020).

- Jia, Jinhua. *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Jia, Jinhua, Xiaofei Kang and Ping Yao, eds. *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2014.
- Levering, Miriam. "Dōgen's *Raihaitokuzui* and Women Teaching in Sung Ch'an." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 77–110.
- . "The Dragon Girl and the Abbess of Mo-Shan: Gender and Status in the Ch'an Buddhist Tradition." *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1982): 19–36.
- . "Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch'an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism." In *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón, 137–158. Albany: State University of New York, 1992.
- . "'Raihaitokuzui' and Dōgen's Views on Gender: A Reconsideration." In *Dōgen and Sōtō Zen*, edited by Stephen Heine. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Li, Yu-chen 李玉珍. "Crafting Women's Religious Experience in a Patrilineal Society: Taiwanese Buddhist Nuns in Action (1945–1999)." Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 2000.
- . "Fojiao lianshe yu nüxing zhi shehui canyu: 1930 niandai Shanghai lianshe yu 1960 niandai Taiwan lianshe zhi bijiao" 佛教蓮社與女性之社會參與: 1930年代上海蓮社與1960年代台灣蓮社之比較 [The Buddhist Lotus Society and women's social engagement: A comparison of the 1930s Shanghai Lotus Society with the 1960s Taiwan Lotus Society]. In *Gong yu si: jindai Zhong'guo geti yu qunti zhi chongjian* 公與私: 近

- 代中國個體與群體之重建 [Public and private: the remaking of the individual and the group in modern China], edited by Huang Kewu 黃克武, Zhang Zhejia 張哲嘉, 255–312. Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2000.
- Lin, Hsin-yi. “Dealing with Childbirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism: Discourses and Practices.” PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2017.
- Long, Darui. “Buddhist Education in Sichuan.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 34, no. 2 (2002): 185–206.
- Magnússon, Sigurour Gylfi and István M. Szióártó. *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan, A Spatial and Social Study of Communities and Networks. “Project Description.” Accessed August 6, 2020.
<https://sichuanreligions.com/project-description/>.
- McCarthy, Erin A. “Embodying Change: Buddhism and Feminist Philosophy.” In *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach*, edited by Steven M. Emmanuel, 189–204. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018.
- Meeks, Lori. *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010.
- Mohanty, Chandra. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse.” *Feminist Review* 30, no. 1 (1988): 61–88.
- Mrozik, Susanne. “A Robed Revolution: The Contemporary Buddhist Nun’s (*Bhikṣunī*) Movement.” *Religion Compass* 3, no. 3 (2009): 360–378.

- . “Materializations of Virtue: Buddhist Discourses on Bodies.” In *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, edited by Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, 15–47. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Owen, Lisa Battaglia. “Toward a Buddhist Feminism: Mahayana *Sutras*, Feminist Theory, and the Transformation of Sex.” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 3, no. 4 (2016): 8–51. Accessed Online at DOI: 10.1080/12259276.1997.11665807.
- Pandey, Rajyashree. *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in Medieval Japanese Narratives*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016.
- . “Rethinking the Politics of Gender and Agency: An Encounter with the ‘Otherness’ of Medieval Japan.” *Japan Forum* (2018): 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2018.1497676>
- Prebish, Charles S. “Varying the Vinaya: Creative Responses to Modernity.” In *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition*, edited by Steven Heine and Charles S Prebish, 45–73. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Qin, Wenjie. “The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China: Women Reconstruct Buddhism on Mt Emei.” PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2000.
- Qiu, Shanshan 裘山山. *Dangdai diyi biqiuni: Longlian fashi zhuan* 當代第一比丘尼：隆蓮法師傳 [The Most Outstanding *Bhikṣunī* of the Modern Era: Biography of Venerable Longlian]. Fuzhou: Fujian mei shu chubanshe 福建美术出版社, 1997.
- Ruch, Barbara, ed. *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*. Ann Arbor: The Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan, 2002.

- . “Woman to Woman: *Kumano Bikuni* Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan.” In *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, edited by Barbara Ruch, 537–580. Ann Arbor: The Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan, 2002.
- Shi Zhengyan. *Still Thoughts*. Translated by Liu King-pong. Vol. II. Taipei: Tzu Chi Cultural Publishing, 1996.
- Shih Chao-Hwei 釋昭慧. “Taiwan Fomen nüquan yundong zhi lilun yu shijian: Cong tichang dongwuquan dao tichang Fomen nüquan” 台灣佛門女權運動之理論與實踐——從提倡動物權到提倡佛門女權 [Theory and Practice of Buddhist Feminist Movement in Taiwan: From Advocating Animal Rights to Female Rights]. *Xuanzang Buddhist Studies Research* 玄奘佛學研究, no. 9 (2008): 121–143. doi:10.29955/H CJBS.200803.0001.
- Shih Zhaohui 釋昭慧 and Xingguang 性廣, eds. *Xin shiji de Fojiao nüxing siwei* 新世紀的佛教女性思維 [Thinking of Buddhist women in the New Era]. Taipei: Fajie chubanshe 法界出版社, 2001.
- Spakowski, Nicola. “‘Gender’ Trouble: Feminism in China under the Impact of Western Theory and the Spatialization of Identity.” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 31–54.
- Sponberg, Alan. “Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism,” (pg 3-36) In *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón, 3–36. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

- Streib, Heinz, Astrid Dinter and Kerstin Söderblom, eds. *Lived Religion: Conceptual, Empirical and Practical-Theological Approaches: Essays in Honor of Hans-Günter Heimbrock*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Talbot, Mary. “Bhikkhuni Ordination: Buddhism’s Glass Ceiling” *Tricycle*, Fall 2016. Accessed Online at <https://tricycle.org/magazine/bhikkhuni-ordination-modern-buddhism/>.
- Teng, Jinhua Emma. “Religion as a Source of Oppression and Creativity for Chinese Women.” *Journal of Women and Gender Studies*, no. 1 (1990): 165–194.
- Tsomo, Karma Lekshe, ed. *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- . *Buddhist Feminisms and Feminities*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019.
- . “Is The Bhikṣunī Vinaya Sexist?” In *Buddhist Women and Social Justice*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, 45–72. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- . “Buddhist Feminist Reflections.” In *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*, edited by William Edelgass and Jay Garfield, 437–448. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- , ed. *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*. Feminist Philosophy Series. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Travagnin, Stefania. “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): 250–272.
- . “Master Yinshun and Buddhist Nuns in/for the Human Realm. Shift and Continuation from Theory to Practice of *renjian fojiao* in Contemporary Taiwan.” In *The Margins of Becoming: Identity and Culture in Taiwan*, edited by Carsten Storm and Mark Harrison, 83–100. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007.

- Valussi, Elena. “Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis in Chinese Religions—With Two Case Studies from the Republican Period.” In *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions, Volume 3: Key Concepts in Practice, Religion and Society* 79, edited by Paul R. Katz and Stefania Travagnin, 133–178. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019.
- . “Men Built Religion, and Women Made it Superstitious: Gender and Superstition in Republican China.” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 48, no. 1 (May 2020): 87–125.
- Waddell, Norman and Abe Masao. *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shobogenzo*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Wang, Di. *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870–1930*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- Wu Hua 吳華. “Zhengzhi, shehui, conglin de difang hudong: Yi Sichuan foxueyuan weili (1923–1939)” 政治、社會、叢林的地方互動: 以四川佛學院為例 (1923—1939) [Interactions between Politics, Society, and Temples: Taking the Sichuan Buddhist Academy as an Example]. *Putuo xuekan 普陀學刊* [Putuo Journal], no. 1 (2016): 88–101.
- . *Minguo Chengdu Fojiao yanjiu (1912–1949)* 民國成都佛教研究 (1912–1949) [A Study on Buddhism of the Republican China (1912–1949)]. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社, 2017.
- Yü, Chün-fang. *Passing The Light: The Incense Light Community and Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Taiwan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2013.

Yuan, Yuan. “Chinese Buddhist Nuns in the Twentieth Century: A Case Study in Wuhan.”

Journal of Global Buddhism 10 (2009): 375–412.

Zhao, Tianle 趙天樂, “Xiang mixin fojiao de nü tongbao jin yi yan” 向迷信佛教的女同胞進一

言 [A Word to Female Buddhist Compatriots]. *Nüzi yuekan* 女子月刊 [Women’s

Monthly Journal] 4, no. 6 (1936): 5–6.

Appendices

Appendix A : Open Answer Question Responses²⁹⁷

Each survey was designated with a number in order to maintain anonymity of participants. The following surveys were numbered in the order that I received them from the nuns.

A.1 Tiexiangsi Surveys (57–38)

Survey 57

11) 为□众生同登彼岸

For the hope that all sentient beings could reach the other shore together.

19) 早晚功课。本寺管理等事务，学习，听课等等

出坡处理事务等。时间抓得很紧。不懈怠。精进努力。求解脱。。

上殿过堂等。

Do morning and evening rituals. Manage our monastery's administrative affairs, study, listen to lecture, etc.

Communal labor, handle affairs, etc. Time is very tight. Not slack. Work hard to make progress. Seek liberation.

Go to the temple hall, have meals together, etc.

21a) 本寺举办各种法会活动祈福。讲授传播佛教教义等仪式。。

Our temple conducts various kinds of Buddhist assemblies and activities to pray for blessings.

Lecture is used to propagate/teach Buddhist teachings and ceremonies.

26) 得以隆老法师音频教育及本寺住持果芳法师，的教育授课等，受益匪浅。。

I have gained great benefits by listening to the audio discourses given by Venerable Longliao and by attending the courses given by the monastery Abbess Venerable Guofang.

A/D) 八敬法住世，今正法久住。。

The Eight *bhikṣunī* precepts for living in the world, True Dharma will be established enduringly in our age.

²⁹⁷ The Chinese transcriptions and English translations for these open answer survey responses were done by me. My greatest thanks to Mengzhang for her assistance and patience in making sense of messy handwriting and to Lin Weiyu (Will) and Li Yongzheng (Parker) for their insightful corrections to my original translations.

Changes?

以戒为师，传统传承不动摇。。。。

与世俱进中不违背佛教本色。。。。

Take the *vinaya* as one's master, traditions are passed on to future generations and those traditions are unshakable.

Keep pace with the world without violating the inherent qualities of Buddhism...

Comments?

以网络弘法，学习，研讨。。。。

Use the Internet to propagate Buddhist teachings, to study, and to conduct discussion...

Survey 56

11) 了生脱死，续佛慧命，自觉觉他，觉行圆满。。。。

Understand and face life and death wisely, learn and transmit the Buddha's wisdom, enlighten oneself and others, and attain perfect enlightenment

19) 早殿，早斋参加寺院处理事务，作工等

共修，午斋过堂等，处理事务等，午休功课，晚殿共修，学习佛法（？）三藏处（？）理等，晚上□□学习，听课，讨论，晚 22:00 止静，晚眠。

Take morning classes and read scriptures/perform morning rituals, have breakfast and then go to handle temple affairs, do work, etc.

Study together, have lunch, handle affairs etc., noon break then study, do evening classes and read scriptures together, study the dharma (?) and the Tripitaka, evening studying, take lectures and do discussions, be quiet and go to sleep at 22:00

21) 举办本寺规定的法会祈福，学习，讲授，佛教仪式及三藏妙理等

Host Buddhist assemblies, as stipulated by our monastery, to pray for blessings, to study, to teach Buddhist rituals and the wonderful meaning of Tripitaka.

26) 亲（親）近当代第一比丘尼隆莲法师学理等。

To be close to and learn from the best *bhiksuni* of the contemporary era, Ven. Longlian.

A/D) 佛制八敬法会正修久往，保护女性早日成佛（尼众先）□尼中受□法尼戒后在比丘僧中受具足戒，比丘支持比丘尼受戒

The eight precepts instituted by the Buddha have been the correct practice for a long time; protect women to become enlightened soon (nuns first) nuns received/accept the nun's vinaya after the Buddhist monks received full ordination, Buddhist monks support nuns in receiving ordination.

Changes ?

为续佛慧命，应保持佛教的□□美德及传承本（？）色，随着□会的发展与进步，佛教法（？）应在保持传统，传承，本（？）色的基础上与□会相适应作一定的调整，慧灯相传以戒为师。

In order to continue the Buddha's wisdom, we should maintain Buddhist virtue and the tradition's inherent qualities. To keep pace with the society development and progress, the Buddhism should keep its tradition and inherent qualities and adjust certain practices to better fit the society. We should pass the wisdom lamp (which is able to light everywhere) and take the *vinaya* as the master.

Comments ?

通过网络传播佛法。续佛慧命

Propagate the Buddhist doctrine through the use of the internet. Transmit the Buddha's wisdom.

Survey 55

11) 了生脱死，修证自己，完美人格，为利益国家人民等

To understand and face life and death, to cultivate oneself, to perfect personalities and character, to benefit the country and the people, etc.

19) 遵守本寺规定，上殿过堂，禅修诵经，背戒三学教理，听课学习，讨论等。。。

To abide by the regulations of our monastery, have meal together in the temple hall, practice meditation and chant *sūtras*, to memorize and obey the teaching of the three monastic disciplines doctrine (discipline, meditation, and wisdom), attend lecture and study, discuss [doctrine], etc.

21) 上供会供，超亡祈福等仪式

Have ceremonies that make sacrificial offerings, pray for the deceased, etc.

26) 修行中受启发于（上）隆（下）莲老法师及其学生果芳法师等

While practicing, get inspirations from Her Holiness Longlian and her student Ven. Guofang and others

Changes ?

以戒为师，谨遵传统，保持本色，积极为祖国社会和谐等添砖瓦不添乱。。。

To take the *vinaya* as the master, cautiously follow the tradition, maintain the inherent qualities (true nature), actively contribute to the motherland society's harmony and don't cause any troubles

Comments ?

网络信息很好，能通过它传播佛法

Internet is very good, we can propagate the Buddhist Dharma through it

Survey 54

11) 上求佛道，下代众生。。。。

Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the mass.

19) 上殿过堂，诵经背戒三学妙理，参禅打坐，学习讨论，听课等

Morning meal together in temple hall, chant the sutras to exhort the wondrous principles of the three disciplines, practice and sit in Chan meditation, study and discuss, attend lecture

21) 上供，会供，超亡，祈福等仪式。。。。

To make offerings upward (to the image of Buddha or eminent monks); to make offerings in ceremonies; to pray for the deceased, to pray for blessings...

Changes ?

在与世俱进的同时，要以戒为师。。。佛教的传统本色应保留。。。。

While keeping pace with the world, we should take the vinaya as our master... The tradition and true nature of Buddhist should be maintained.

Comments ?

通过网络平台传播佛法。。。。

Disseminate Buddhist doctrine through the platform of the internet...

Survey 53

11) 为正法得以长久住世，荷如来家业自利利他。

In order that the true Dharma could remain in the world enduringly, I shall shoulder the responsibility of Buddha by benefiting myself and others.

19)

4:30 起床，早课 wake up, morning rituals

6:45 早斋 morning meal

8:00 寺内事物（事务）handle temple affairs

9:00 佛教知识学习 study the knowledge of Buddhism

10:00 藏文，英文等学习 study Tibetan language and English language

12:00 午斋 lunch

14:00 午休 noon break/rest

15:00 佛教知识学习 study Buddhist knowledge

16:30 晚课（集体）evening class (as a group)

18:15 寺院事（务）处理 handle temple affairs

19:30 听寺院法师讲课 listen to the temple master's lecture

21:00 佛法知识学习 study Buddhist knowledge

22:00 藏文学习 study Tibetan language

23:00 睡眠 go to sleep

21) 本寺会供，祈福等法会。。。

Our monastery provides religious assemblies for sacrificial offerings, for praying for blessings, etc.

A/D) 八敬法为佛制，爱护比丘尼，支持尼众受具足戒

The eight precepts (for nuns) are taken as policies instituted by the Buddha, to care for the nuns, they support many nuns in receiving full *upasampada* ordination

Changes ?

希望内外条件具足时可引进先进佛教研究及以理立（？）崇的辩论方式的佛教人才交流学习，坚持传统佛陀本色，以戒为师。

I wish when internal and external situations are proper, we can import more developed Buddhist research and theories while doing *upasampada*. Implement reasonable debating format and talents exchange and communication. Preserve the tradition and true nature of the buddha, to take the vinaya as the master.

Comments ?

网络平台，信息畅通，便于弘法利生

Information can circulate freely on the Internet. It is conducive to propounding *Dharma* and benefiting sentient beings

Survey 52

11) 为了生死，成佛度众生；欢喜修行，生活奉献终身。

To end (the cycle of) life and death, (I wish to) become enlightened and save the sentient beings; to practice with joy, devoting my life to it.

19) 上殿过堂、诵经诵戒、处理寺事务，闻思修慧，听课学习讨论，坐禅出坡等

Have meal together in temple hall, chant the sutras and recite the precepts, manage administrative affairs, learn, think and practice wisdom, sit in meditation, communal labour, etc.

21) 本寺法会很多，上供等活动祈福。。。

Our monastery has many religious assemblies, like making spiritual offerings and other activities to pray for blessings...

26) 隆莲法师及本寺现任住持果芳法师教授等

Ven. Longlian and our monastery's current abbess Ven. Guofang, etc.

Changes ?

修行持之以恒，传统传承重要，与世俱进以戒为师。。。

To devote oneself to spiritual development and practice; preserving the tradition and passing it down is important, and go forward to take the vinaya as the master

Comments ?

网络时代，信息畅通

In the era of internet, the information flows more easily.

Survey 51

11) 断烦恼，求解脱，听闻佛法，帮助别人断烦恼。上求佛道，下代众生，愿众生同登彼岸。

Eliminate affliction, seek liberation, listen to and hear about the Buddhist doctrine, help other people eliminate afflictions.

Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the mass. For the hope that all sentient beings could reach the other shore together.

19) 上早殿，早斋，学习，参加寺院处理事务，午斋，午休，晚殿，学习，打坐，听课，讨论等

Morning devotions, morning meal in temple hall, study, participate in handling temple affairs, lunch, afternoon rest, evening devotions, study, sit in meditation, listen to lecture, discuss, etc.

21) 上供，会供，祈福及庆典多种活动。。。

To make offerings upward (to the image of Buddha or eminent monks); to make offerings in ceremonies; pray for blessings and celebrations, and many other activities, etc.

26) 诸师皆为楷模，崇敬隆莲法师及其弟子果芳法师等

Every teacher is taken as a role model, like Venerable Longlian and her disciple Ven. Guofang, etc.

Changes ?

坚持传承本色不变，随应时代要以戒为师。。。

Persevere in transmission (of *Dharma*) without altering its original nature; Adjust it to fit society's development. Take the vinaya as the master.

Comments ?

感恩通过网络平台传递信息，弘扬佛法

Grateful for the platform of the internet, through which to transmit information, to promote the Buddhist doctrine

Survey 50

11) 佛是世间一切智人，人天的导师，三界的慈父。他所宣说的真理放之四海而皆准。由于我今生有幸听闻佛（？）所说的正法，且认真思维了教言而生起希求解脱的强烈愿望，因此出家修行。出家以后我忏悔往昔以来所造恶业，同时依众位师父的教导改掉自己的坏思想坏习气而修习十善业。在此基础上我努力依佛教的戒定慧三学为总纲不断策励自己，祈愿自己成为智慧和慈悲心圆满的人而自利利他，继佛灯明！

Buddha is the teacher of all the wise men, humans and gods; and the loving father of the three realms. He has shown the truth which is universally applicable. In this life, I have the fortune to to hear the true dharma that is explained by the Buddha, and seriously think about the teachings said, and arouse the hope to seek liberation from intense desires, thus I renounced the secular life (to become a nun). After becoming a nun, I repented the past unwholesome activities, at the same time according to the teaching and guidance of many masters I dropped the wrong thoughts of self and wrong practices and studied the ten kinds of wholesome behavior. Upon these foundations I strived to take refuge in the Buddhist teachings of the three disciplines morality, meditation and wisdom, in order for the guiding principle to always unceasingly encourage oneself, to pray oneself becomes a person of wisdom and compassion, as well as improving oneself to benefit others, to follow after the brightness of the Buddha's burning lamp.

19)

1. 随大众师父们做早晚功课 to follow the group of masters to do morning and evening rituals
2. 随大众师父们过堂 to follow the group of masters to have a meal together in temple hall
3. 随大众师父们出坡劳动 to follow the group of masters to do communal labour
4. 随大众师父们听闻佛法，静坐等 to follow the group of masters to listen to the Buddhist doctrine, to meditate, etc.
5. 帮助寺院处理事务等 help the temple manage affairs, etc.

21)

按本寺传统规定的佛教仪式办法会及祈福等

Organize *dharma*-assemblies and praying events according to the traditional rules of our monastery.

25)

隆莲老法师果芳法师常仪法师等，所有本寺尼众师父们。

Ven. Longlian, Ven. Guofang, Ven. Tangyi, etc., all of our monastery's Buddhist nun masters

A/D)

八敬法保护女众及按佛制与尼众受相应的戒条

The eight precepts (for nuns) protect many women, and according to the policies instituted by the Buddha, many nuns accepted the corresponding precepts.

Changes ?

为了保持佛教传统本色，续佛慧命，此项宗旨是不能改变的。随着社会的发展，在不违背佛制传承的基础上作相应的调整与补充。

The objective of maintaining Buddhist traditions and true nature and transmitting the Buddha's wisdom should not be changed. In the wake of the development of society, when not violating the foundations of the traditional policies instituted by the Buddha, (we can) conduct appropriate adjustments and additions.

Comments ?

通过网络平台传播佛的正法

Through the internet platform we can disseminate the true dharma of Buddhism

Survey 49

11) 成佛度众生，终身奉献于佛教事业。。。

Become enlightened, save sentient beings, lifelong dedication to the cause of Buddhism...

19) 本寺规定的一切课程全部执行，学习讨论听课等，积极参与不缺席。阿弥陀佛

Follow and do all the courses and rules regulated by the monastery, study, discuss, attend lecture, etc., actively participate and do not take absence. Amitabha Buddha

21) 上供，会供，祈福，回向等佛教仪式

To make offerings upward (to the image of Buddha or eminent monks), make confession, pray for blessings, transfer one's merit to another, etc.

25) 隆莲法师德高望重。本寺住持果芳法师继承恩师一切保持。为末（？）学内心无比敬仰。。。

Ven. Longlian was a person of virtue and prestige. Our monastery's abbess Ven. Guofang succeeded Longlian and is maintained as a greatly respected teacher. Respect them very much

A/D

八敬法为佛制，令正法久住，比丘支持关心尼众支持受戒

The eight precepts (for nuns) are taken as policy instituted by the Buddha, to establish the long abiding of the true teachings, Buddhist monks support and care about many Buddhist nuns in favor of receiving ordination

Change ?

顺应时代。要以戒为师。。。

To keep pace with the current age/era. Important to take the vinaya as the master...

Comments ?

通过网络平台□（？）修佛法，弘宗圣教

Promote dharma and the religion through Internet.

Survey 48

11) 续佛明灯自他二别

Transmit the Buddha's bright lamp and distinguish between self and other

19) 早上上殿共修早斋 early devotions in temple hall and morning vegetarian meal

上午参加寺院事务管理 morning, participate in managing temple affairs

中午过堂午休学习 noon, meal in temple hall, rest, study

下午学习佛法知识晚殿 afternoon, study Buddhist wisdom, rituals

晚上寺院集体学习上课 22:00 睡眠 evening, collective study and lecture in the temple, 22:00 go to sleep

21) 按本寺传统规定的佛教仪式办法会活动及祈福等

Organize *dharma*-assemblies and praying events according to the traditional rules of our monastery.

26) 隆莲法师崇高修行启发和鼓舞。本寺住持对我教育受益盛多形象启发很深。。。

Ven. Longlian had sublime devotion to enlightenment and boosting morale. Our monastery's venerable educates me and inspires me very much.

A/D

佛制八敬法令正法久住。保护女性。按佛制为尼众传戒法等

The eight precepts instituted by the Buddha allows the true *Dharma* to remain enduringly. To protect women., transmit the *vinaya* precepts to nuns according to the rules of Buddha nuns have been initiated into the *vinaya* teachings, etc.

Changes ?

传统本色不变顺应时代应在佛法以戒为师的基础上只能作一定的补充等

Maintain the tradition and inherent qualities. Only keep pace with the time and do certain adjustments on the foundation of the *dharma* of taking the *vinaya* as the master.

Comments ?

通过网络信息弘扬佛法等

Disseminate the *dharma* and others through Internet

Survey 47

11) 为解脱生老病死，自度度他，无私奉献

For liberation from birth, aging, sickness and death, save myself and others, selfless devotion

19) 本寺的一切功课全部遵守不违，听课学习，讨论等都参加。

Follow all rituals and rules in the monastery. Attend lectures and study, participate in discussions, and all events.

21) 上供会供超亡祈福听闻三藏教理等

Make offerings, confessions, pray for blessings for the deceased, listen to the Tripitaka teachings, etc.

25) 感恩隆莲恩师教诲及其弟子果芳法师的教诫，受益匪浅。

Grateful for the greatly respected teacher Ven. Longlian's instructions and her disciple Ven. Guofang's instructions, benefitting greatly.

Changes ?

我觉得在顺应时代发展的同时。更重要的是要保持佛教的传统。传承本色以戒为师。

I believe we comply to the development of the times simultaneously. However, at the same time, it is more important to maintain the Buddhist tradition. To pass on the inherent qualities of dharma, take the vinaya as the master.

Comments ?

通过网络平台。可传播弘扬佛法

Through an internet platform, [we are] able to disseminate and promote the Dharma

Survey 46

11) 为解脱生老病死苦，为自利利他行菩萨道

For liberation from the suffering of birth, age, sickness, death, in order to improve oneself and bring benefit to others following the path of a bodhisattva.

19) 与全寺尼众做功课上殿过堂听课学习等

All of the nuns in the temple take part in doing rituals, having meals in the temple hall, attend lectures, study, etc.

21) 本寺院规定所有法会，活动，佛教教育等

All the monastic religious assemblies, activities, Buddhist teachings, etc. required by the monastery

25) 深受当代第一比丘尼隆莲法师等启发

Inspired by the most prominent *bhikṣuṇī* of our age, Ven. Longlian and others.

A/D)

八敬法住世正法住世

The eight precepts for nuns to live in the world abide in the true Dharma

Changes ?

我们坚定不移坚持传承，保持佛教本色。要爱国爱教。不违背佛制戒规。

We unswervingly persevere the tradition and to pass it on to future generations, maintain the true nature of the dharma. Important to love the country and love the religion. Do not violate the religious precepts instituted by the Buddha.

Survey 45

11) 修行成佛，度尽有情而发愿出家

To devote oneself to becoming enlightened, to liberate all sentient beings and take a vow to become a nun

19) 起床洗漱做早课。过早堂，出坡自修诵经

午斋有时午休有时做□住，临时安排的事

下午诵经背戒随众晚课，听法师讲课等

Get up, wash my face/clean up and do morning devotions. Morning rituals, communal labour, self-study and chant the sutras.

Lunch, then sometimes noon rest, sometimes handle affairs temporarily arranged

In the afternoon we recite sutras on monastic discipline from memory followed by evening class, listen to the teacher give a lecture, etc.

21) 按寺院安排很多佛教法会，活动提供与周边信众。。。净化众生的心灵。

Our monastery arranges many dharma-assemblies, activities to offer sacrifices for surrounding believers... to purify the thoughts of sentient beings

25) 隆莲法师果芳法师等

Ven. Longlian and Ven. Guofang, etc.

Changes ?

保持传统以戒为师，爱国爱教，为社会和谐而努力

Preserve the tradition of taking the vinaya as the master, love the country and love the religion, work hard for a harmonious society

Comments ?

通过网络平台弘扬佛法，处理相关事务等

Use internet to propagate the Buddhist teachings, to manage related affairs, etc.

Survey 44

11) 上求佛道，下化众生，自度度他，觉悟众生续佛明灯，以戒为师

Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the mass.

self-salvation to save others, realize that all living things continue the Buddha's bright lamp, to take the vinaya as the master

19) 早课共修，早斋过堂，参与处理的相关事务等

中午过堂午休，寺院事务出坡等，

下午参加功课学习佛教知识，晚课上殿，晚上参加集体学习听课，22:00 止静睡眠

Morning devotions together, morning meal in the temple hall, participate in managing relevant affairs, etc.

Noon meal and rest break, manage temple affairs, communal labour, etc.

Participate in recitations and study on Buddhist knowledge, evening class in the temple hall, in the evening [we] collectively study and attend lecture, at 22:00 quiet down and go to sleep

21) 举办本寺相关规定的法会，祈福等。定期或不定期学习佛教仪式等

Our monastery conducts the required relevant religious assembly to pray for blessings, etc. At set dates and sometimes non-scheduled dates, we have ceremonies for Buddhist study, etc.

25) 在很小时亲近隆莲法师及现任住持果芳法师及本寺尼众师父们的影响等

I received influences from Ven. Longlian and the current monastery abbess Ven. Guofang and another masters, whom I held intimate relationship with since I was young.

A/D) 八敬法住世正法住世，八敬法是佛制定的，很保护女性，为尼众授相应的戒。

The eight precepts and the true Dharma have lived in the world for a long time, the eight rules are the policy instituted and ordered by the Buddha, very protective of the women, the nuns take the corresponding ordinations.

Changes ?

为续佛慧命，要如理如法保护佛教的传统及传承本色，随着社会的发展。一定要在保持佛教本色的基础上与社会相适应作一定的调整慧灯相传，以戒为师。。。

To transmit the Buddha's wisdom, it is important to protect the tradition and true nature according to the traditional Buddhist teachings, and pass the inherent qualities to future generations. To keep pace with the development of society, we should adjust and adapt while preserving the inherent qualities of the foundational Buddhist teachings to pass the wisdom lamp. We should take the vinaya as the master...

Comments ?

可以通过网络学习传播佛法。。。

Can study and propagate the Dharma by means of the internet...

Survey 43

11) 为了解脱，奉献众生，爱国爱教，令娑婆世界众生离苦得乐

In order to free oneself of worldly worries, to devote self to all living beings, to love the nation and Buddhism, in order to liberate all sentient beings from the suffering and let them obtain happiness.

19) 早 4:30 上殿诵经，中午过堂，下午休息，自学，做供，晚课，晚上听课，学习讨论，持咒等。22:00 晚安入睡。

Go to the assembly hall at 4:30am to chant sutras, have lunch at noon, afternoon rest, make sacrificial offerings, afternoon devotions, attend evening lecture, discuss our studies, chant mantras, etc. Go to sleep for the night at 22:00.

21a) 按寺院安排的法会等活动提供

Make provisions for the *dharma* assemblies and other activities organised by the monastery

25) 当代第一比丘尼隆莲法师，及其弟子果芳师父的教授

Instruction from Ven. Longlian, the best *bhiksuni* of the present era, and her disciple Ven. Guofang

Changes ?

僧团把佛学知识多学多修，保持传统本色不变爱国爱教，顺应时代的同时要以戒为师。。。

The Buddhist community should learn and practice more. Maintain the traditional inherent qualities, love the country and love the religion, it is important to adapt to the times and at the same time to take the vinaya as the master...

Comments ?

通过网络的平台传播学习佛法

To propagate the study of the Dharma by means of the internet

Survey 42

11) 本人发心为利众生愿成佛。将终身奉献于佛教。。。

From the bottom of my heart to benefit the sentient beings and become a Buddha, I will devote my whole life to Buddhism.

19) 本寺严谨仪，一切随众完成功课上殿过堂。出坡坐禅。授课受课学习讨论一切随众。。。

Our monastery is very rigorous, we all train together under a master to complete ritual devotions in the palace hall and have meals together. Communal labour, sit in meditation. Instruction and reception of lectures and discussion of lessons are all done together under the training of a master.

21a) 一切按本寺规定的法会。活动。

Follow all the monastery-regulated *dharma*-assemblies. Activities.

26) 隆莲法师，果芳法师等

Ven. Longlian, Ven. Guofang, etc.

A/D) 佛定敬法令正法久住。支持尼众受戒

Buddha instituted the *bhikṣuṇī* precepts in order that the true Dharma can remain enduringly.
Support nuns in receiving the precepts

Changes ?

本寺严谨毗尼，保持传统顺应时代以戒作指南

Our monastery follows the vinaya strictly, maintaining tradition and conforming to the times using monastic discipline as a guide

Other Comments

网络信息有利弘法

The internet is beneficial for propagating Buddhist teachings

Survey 41

11) 续佛慧命，自利利他

To transmit the Buddha's wisdom, improving oneself and bringing benefit to others

19) 早上上殿共修，早斋，寺？杂务等

中午，过堂午休，寺院事务。

下午功课，学习佛法？？？等

晚上寺院集体学习，听课。22:00 睡眠

Early morning get up and have ritual devotions together in the palace hall, morning meal, do various temple jobs, etc.

Noon, have a meal together in the temple hall and lunch break, manage temple affairs.

Afternoon rituals, study the Dharma ??, etc.

In the evening we study together in the temple, go to lectures. 22:00 go to sleep.

21a) 举办本寺相关规定法会，祈福，学习，定期或不定期组织信徒学习等

Our monastery organizes dharma-assemblies, prayers for good fortune, study, organize periodically or sometimes non-scheduled study sessions for believers, etc.

26) 亲近过本寺尼众法师学修，常受本寺住持果芳法师教育授课

I have approached the *bhikṣuṇī* masters of our monastery, frequently receive teachings and lessons from our monastery's abbess Ven. Guofang

A/D) 八敬法住世，正法住世，保护女性

The Eight precepts for nuns to live in the world [Eight Garudhammas], the true Dharma abides in the world, to protect women

Changes ?

为续传慧灯，保持佛教的传统本色

To transmit the lamp of wisdom, [we should] maintain the tradition and inherent qualities of Buddhism

Other Comments ?

通过网络传播佛法，续佛慧命。

Use the internet to propagate the Dharma, transmit the Buddha's wisdom

Survey 40

11) 为了究竟的解脱利益有情度化众生

In order to ultimately free oneself from worldly worries for the benefit of saving all sentient beings

19) 早课，早斋，参加寺院事务，出坡等

中午过堂，午休，学习，上晚殿等

晚上学习听课等，22:00 止静晚修

Morning service, morning meal, participate in managing temple affairs, run errands/communal labour, etc.

Have a meal together in the temple hall at noon, noon break, study, afternoon devotions, etc.

Evening study, attend lecture, etc. 22:00 quieting down and evening study

21a) 上供，会供，超亡，祈福等仪式活动

Ceremonies and activities to make offerings, sacrificial offerings, offerings to the deceased, to pray for good fortune, etc.

25) 隆莲法师，果芳师父

Ven. Longlian, Ven. Guofang

A/D) 八敬法住世，正法住世，保护尼众修行成佛。

The Eight precepts for nuns to live in the world [Eight Garudhammas], the true Dharma abides in the world, to protect nuns, devote themselves to becoming a Buddha

Changes ?

为续佛慧命，保持佛教的传统，传承。在保持传承本色的同时

为适应社会发展。相应做一些调整。续佛明灯，以戒为师。。。

In order to transmit the Buddha's wisdom, [we should] maintain the tradition of Buddhism and pass it to future generations. Preserve the continued tradition's inherent qualities, while at the same time to adapt to the development of society, [we should] make small revisions accordingly. Transmit the Buddha's bright lamp, take the vinaya as the master...

Other Comments ?

通过网络平台传播佛法等。

Propagate the Dharma, etc. by means of the internet.

Survey 39

11)因为出家最利于修正自己的内心。上求佛道，下化众生。。。

Because renouncing secular life (leaving the home) is the most beneficial way to purify one's own inner heart. Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the mass...

19) 早殿共修。早斋。参加寺院管理事务。中斋。午休。寺院事务处理。下午功课共修。参加学习佛学知识。晚课共修。晚上寺院集体学习，听课，讨论等。晚 22:00 止静寝息。

Morning devotions together in the palace hall. Morning meal. Participate in managing temple affairs. Noon meal. Noon break. Manage our monastery's affairs. Afternoon rituals and practice together. Participate in studying Buddhist knowledge. Evening devotions and practice together. In the evening, collectively study together in the temple, attend lecture, discuss, etc. 22:00 quiet down and sleep.

21a) 上供，会供，超亡，祈福等仪式。

Ceremonies to make offerings, sacrificial offerings, honor the deceased, pray for good fortune, etc.

26) 受隆莲法师音频教育。及本寺住持果芳法师授课教育，本寺尼众法师垂教等。

Listen to Ven. Longlian's recorded teachings. And our monastery's abbess Ven. Guofang teaches lessons, our monastery's nun masters transmit the teachings, etc.

A/D) 八敬法为佛制，令正法久住，保持尼众修行成佛。

The eight *garudhamma* are rules of Buddha that ensures true *Dharma* could remain enduringly are taken as policies instituted by the Buddha, establish the long abiding of the true teaching, to protect the nuns, to devote to becoming a Buddha

Changes ?

为续佛慧命，保持佛教的传统，传承，在保持传承本色的同时，为适应社会发展，相应做一些调整，续佛明灯，以戒为师。。。

In order to transmit Buddha's bright wisdom, [we should] maintain the tradition of Buddhism and pass it on to future generations. Preserve the continued tradition's inherent qualities, while at the same time to adapt to the development of society, we should make small revisions accordingly. Transmit the Buddha's bright lamp, take the vinaya as the master...

Other Comments ?

通过网络平台传播佛法等。

Propagate the Dharma, etc. by means of the internet.

Survey 38

11) 上求佛道，下代众生

Upward, I seek the way of Buddha; downward, I guide the mass.

19) 每日上殿过堂，随众学习，禅修讲课听课，精勤研修 □ □ □。

Every day go to the dining hall and have meals together, train and study together under a master, practice Chan meditation, teachings and attend lectures, study and practice diligently

21a) 本寺？有法会等各种活动为信众提供。

Our monastery has dharma-assemblies and many other kinds of activities for believers.

26) 蒙受本寺住持果芳法师教育授课等深受启发

I had the fortune to receive the teaching from our abbess Ven. Guofang and gained great inspirations.

A/D) 佛制八敬法保护尼众、支持尼众受戒、二部僧俎法

The Eight Garudhammas are policies instituted by the Buddha aiming to protect nuns, to support *bhikṣuṇī* in receiving precepts, from the two divisions of the sangha (Dual Ordination)

Changes ?

慧灯相传以戒为师与世俱进本色传统不变

Pass on the lamp of wisdom by taking the vinaya as the master and use entire lifetime to advance the immutable inherent qualities and tradition while adapting to the new era

Other Comments ?

网络信息方便学佛修感恩

Internet facilitates the study of Buddhism and makes people grateful

A.2 Jinsha'an Surveys (37-18)

Survey 37

11) 远离烦恼

To distance oneself far away from afflictions

Survey 36

11) 为成佛

In order to become a Buddha/become enlightened

21a) 念佛，烧香

To chant the names of the Buddha, to burn incense

Survey 35

11) 渡众生
To save all living beings

Changes ?
住宿环境有待提高
Accommodation environment could be improved

Survey 34

11) 看破红尘
Disillusioned with human society, “to see through the world of mortals” (idiom)

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Survey 33

11) 与佛家有缘份
Have karmic connection with Buddhism

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Survey 32

11) 与佛有缘
Have karmic connection with Buddhism.

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Changes ?
丰富更多的藏书量
to have more books

Survey 31

11) 远离烦恼，摆脱束缚
To distance oneself far away from afflictions, to free oneself from restrictions

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Survey 30

11) 释放
To liberate

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Changes ?
多提供外出学习的机会
To provide more external study opportunities

Survey 29

11) 净化心灵
To purify the mind

Survey 28

11) 成佛
Become a Buddha

Survey 27

11) 成佛
Become a Buddha

Survey 26

11) 受身边人影响
Influenced by the people around.

Survey 25

11) 成道
Enlightenment

Survey 24

11) 喜欢
Like it

21a) 诵经
Chant sutras

Survey 23

11) 信仰
Buddhist faith

21a) 祈祷
To pray

Survey 22

11) 渡众生，解脱
To save all sentient beings, to free oneself of worldly worries

21a) 念佛
Chant the names of the Buddha

Changes ?
生活环境条件
Living conditions

Survey 21

11) 想脱离三界不再轮回
Want to separate oneself from the three realms and no longer reincarnate

19) 每天清晨 3 点打坐。5 点起坐。5 点半上早殿。6 点半早餐。7 至 8 点打扫卫生。8 点客堂值班并诵经。11 点半午餐。12 点至下午 2 点休息或自。2 点至 4 点半值班诵经下午 5 点上晚殿。6 点至 9 点自修禅坐或会佛

Every day at 3 in the morning sit in meditation. 5am rise from sitting. 5:30am morning devotions. 6:30am morning meal. 7am to 8am hygienic cleaning. 8am work a shift in guest department and also chant sutras. 11:30am lunch. 12pm to 2pm rest oneself. 2 to 4:30pm on duty chanting sutras, 5pm afternoon devotions. 6pm to 9pm self-study, practice meditation and venerate the Buddha

21a) 诵经，念佛
Chant sutras, chant names of the Buddha

Changes ?

1. 尼众寺庙仿住宿有待改进
2. 提倡各尼寺修“六和敬”。
1. Nuns temple accommodations conditions need to be improved
2. To promote/advocate for every nunnery to cultivate the “Six Harmonies”.

Survey 20

11) 求解脱

Seeking liberation

19) 3 点打坐。5 点起床。5 点半上早殿。7 点 - 7 点半早餐。8 点 - 8 点半出坡。9 点 - 10 点半诵经。11 点 - 2 点半午餐午休。2 点 - 3 点诵经。3 点 - 4 点自修。5 点晚课。

3:00am sit in meditation. 5:00am get out of bed. 5:30am morning devotions. 7 to 7:30am breakfast. 8 to 8:30am communal labour. 9 to 10:30am chant sutras. 11am to 2:30pm lunch and noon break. 2 to 3pm chant sutras. 3 to 4pm self-study. 5pm evening devotions.

21a) 诵经。念佛。

Chant sutras. Chant the names of the Buddha.

Survey 19

11) 成佛

Become a Buddha

Survey 18

11) 愿成佛

Hope to become a Buddha

21a) 诵经。念佛。

Chant sutras. Chant the names of the Buddha.

A.3 Aidaotang Surveys (17-1)

Survey 17

11) 为了生□□。为绍隆佛种。为利众生愿成佛故来寺中出家。

In order to end (the cycle of) life (and death). In order to perpetuate the seed of Buddhahood. To improve the spiritual condition of sentient beings in hopes of becoming a Buddha, therefore I came to the temple and renounced secular life.

21a) 施粥等

Provide free porridge for the poor, etc.

Survey 16

11) 个人喜欢
Personal preference

15) 参加过一次
Participated one time

19) 上殿。过堂上殿。看书。写字。琴。拜佛。诵经。打坐。背行(?) 戒
Go to dining hall. Have meal together in the dining hall. Read books/study. Writing/Calligraphy.
Guqin (Chinese ancient zither). Worship Buddha. Chant sutras. Sit in meditation. Hold the
precepts on one's back. ?

A/D) 只要是为大众好的
As long as it is good for the masses

Survey 15

11) 个人喜欢
Personal preference

15) 参加过一次
Participated one time

19) 上殿。过堂。诵经。打坐。看书。学习。
Go to assembly hall. Have meal together in temple hall. Chant sutras. Sit in meditation. Read
books. Study.

Survey 14

11) 出家人的责任是弘法为家务，利生为事业，去弘化一方，报答三宝的护佑之思！
Responsibility of people who denounced secular life is to propagate the Buddhist teachings as
duties, giving benefit to sentient beings as the basis of actions, to go spread the Buddhist
teaching in one region, to think of repaying the blessing and protection of the Three Precious
Treasures of Buddhism!

19) 就是三点一线的生活方式，早晚上殿与两次过堂正式的出家生活。
It is a routine life, morning and evening devotions and two times have a meal together in the
temple hall as the lifestyle of people who denounce secular life

21a) 腊八施粥
Give free porridge on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month.

Survey 13

11) 信仰

Faith

19) 五堂功课，坐禅，诵经

Five lessons , sit in meditation, chant sutras

21a) 腊八施粥

Give free porridge on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month

25) 隆莲法师

Longlian fashi

26) 隆莲法师

Longlian fashi

Survey 12

11) 本人信仰

My faith

19) 早上 4 点半起床。5 - 7 点上殿。下殿后用早斋。早斋后清理等。后上午做日常事务及修？。11 点半后午斋。斋后小息。息后修学。四点半晚殿。结束后经行。

At 4:30am get out of bed. 5 to 7am morning devotions. After devotions, have morning meal. After morning meal, we clean up, etc. After the morning, we engage in everyday affairs and study. After 11:30am is lunch. After lunch is a little rest/break. After break we train/study. 4:30pm evening devotions. To conclude we perform walking meditation.

25) 隆莲法师

Ven. Longlian

26) 隆莲法师

Ven. Longlian

Survey 11

11) 了解宇宙人生真相

Genuinely want to understand the truth of the universe

19) 五堂功课

Five temple study and lessons

21a) 诵经

Chant sutras

Changes ?
与时俱进
keep pace with time

Survey 10

11) 欢喜
Happy/ joy / to make other people happy

19) 早 4:00 起床。5:00 早课。7:00 早斋。9:00 ? ?。11:30 午斋。13:00 午休。14:30 学习。6:30 晚课。7:00 学习。10:00 ? 息。
4:00am get out of bed. 5:00am morning ritual. 7:00am morning meal. 9:00am [?]. 11:30am lunch. 13:00 noon rest. 14:30 study. 6:30pm evening devotions. 7:00pm study. 10:00pm rest.

Survey 9

11) 出家是最智慧的选择。是究竟解脱之道。
To renounce secular life is the wisest choice. It is the way to be free from everything.

19) 随众
do things collectively

21a) 腊八施粥
Give free porridge on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month

Survey 8

26) 隆莲法师
Ven. Longlian

Survey 7

11) 因为喜欢。佛教的教义与实修。是与生活成为一体的。对生活中遇到的问题。有着透彻的观点与指导。使人能在纷乱的事情当中，做出最智慧的选择。
Because I like it. Buddhism's doctrine and the practice is incorporated in life. Buddhism has a clear and deep understanding of the problems people encounter in life and Buddhism can guide people. It enables people to make the most intelligent choice in the chaotic situation.

16) 事师法菩提道次第略论

菩提道次第略论: The Abbreviated Version of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* by Tsongkapa.

17) 都在做事情。 “专注所做的事情即为修定”

All are doing things. “To give full attention to the things you are doing is considered a practice of meditation”

19) 早上 5:00 上早殿。吃早饭。做本职工作。诵经。吃午饭。做本职工作。上晚殿。药食。做点事情。休息。

Early morning 5:00am morning devotions. Eat breakfast. Do one's job. Chant sutras. Eat lunch. Do one's job. Evening devotions. Take dinner. Do some things. Handle further affairs/ Do some things. Rest.

21a) 诵经。及其他与节日有关的法事。（清明追思。盂兰盆会）

Chant sutras and do other festival-related religious ceremony things (memorial activities for the deceased ones on the Qingming festival and Zhongyuan festival)

25) 隆莲法师

Longlian fashi

Survey 6

6) 信仰是个漫长的走□□□。不可能一步到位。

Religious faith is a long journey. It is impossible to get to the destination in one step.

11) 通过修行改变命运，性格。

Change karma and natural disposition by devoting oneself to practicing Buddhism.

19) 早上早课。上午诵经。下午处理职位上工作。晚上自由学习。

Morning: morning classes. Afternoon: chat sutras. Afternoon: do job-related work. Evening: study freely.

21a) 念佛

Chant the names of the Buddha

Survey 5

11) 喜欢过清净无为。解脱道的僧团生活。

I like to live a peaceful life, live a nun life that is liberated from everything.

19) 早殿 5:30 – 7:00。客堂值班。中午过堂。过堂。晚课下午 4:30 – 6:00。作卫生。晚上自修。

Morning devotions 5:30-7:00am. Work a shift at guest department. Have a meal together in the dining hall at noon. Afternoon devotions from 4:30-6:00pm. Clean up. Evening self-study.

25) 隆莲法师

Ven. Longlian

Changes ?

尽力提外出参学。善知识的机会与时间。

Endeavour to visit masters elsewhere and to have opportunities and time to meet Dharma friends

Other Comments ?

愿佛法光明普照十方。众生悲智圆满。

Hope the illumination of the Dharma teachings reaches everywhere in the ten direction. To have complete compassion and wisdom for all sentient beings.

Survey 4

11) 为了明白生死真实意义。出离并了脱生死的同时。利益众生。

In order to realize the true meaning of life and death (cyclical rebirth). To combine renunciation with cognitive apprehension to escape life and death at the same time. To bring benefit to all sentient beings.

19) 每天除了日常学习任务之外，参加寺院的早晚殿及佛事，以及寺院的日常事务，和自定修行功课。

Every day beside daily study assignments, participate in the nunnery's morning and evening devotions and Buddha-work, as well as manage daily nunnery affairs, and self-cultivation of Buddhist devotion and rituals.

21a) 举经她们共修。诵经。并定时为其开示□。

To initiate collective sutra chanting and practice. Chant sutras. Preach a formal public sermon.

Changes ?

暂时无意见改进或改变

Don't have ideas and opinions to improve or change.

Survey 3

11) 有二原因；其一受母亲学佛影响；其二从小思考除了世俗生活，工作之外；3 知到透过修行可以成贤成圣，于是向住修行（者）的这条道路

Have two reasons; first because of the influence of my mother's Buddhist study and practice; second, from a young age I reflected on life outside secular activity and work. I know by practicing and through devoting myself to Buddhism I can become a virtuous person and become a sage, as a result I tend to live with devotion to Buddhism and follow the Buddhist path.

19) 清早 5:00 参加早课共修；接下来早餐。早餐后做个人及佛堂卫生；9:00 随从通《华严经》一小时；之后安排个人自修功课。午餐（11:30~12:00）；下午 2:00 读佛教相关的书籍。（16:30~18:00）晚课。晚上（19:00~21:00）自修。22:00 休息。

First thing in the morning 5:00am participate in morning devotion and prayers; following that have breakfast. After breakfast, clean myself and Buddha hall; 9:00 accompany going through “Huayan jing” (Flower Garland Sutra) for one hour; afterwards arrange personal recitations and rituals. Lunch (11:30~12:00); At 2:00 in the afternoon study Buddhism related books. (16:30~18:00) evening devotions. Evening (19:00~21:00) self-study. 22:00 rest.

Changes ?

“改变他人，或改变环境”。我认为最重要的是改变自己的一言一行一举一动；生活中断地要求完善自身修养。

“change others or the environment.”

I believe it is the most important to change one’s own words and actions. It is important to constantly perfect oneself in life.

Survey 2

11) 为了追求宇宙人生向真理，了生脱死，弘法利生

In order to pursue the truth of the universe, to understand and face life and death, and to benefit all sentient beings

Survey 1

11) 乐其净，元纷杂，求其净，悦自意

Rejoice in purity, harmonize confusion, seek purity, take delight in one’s independence

19) 早 4:00 起床。5:00 早课。7:00 早斋。9:00 共修。11:30 午斋。13:00 午休。14:30 学习。16:30 晚课。19:00-20:00 学习。21:30 休息。

In the morning at 4:00am get out of bed. 5:00am morning devotions. 7:00 breakfast. 9:00am study together. 11:30am lunch. 13:00 noon break. 14:30 study. 16:30 evening devotions. 19:00-20:00 study. 21:30 rest.

Appendix B : Nunnery Survey

The Feminist Buddha Survey

1) Which temple/nunnery are you affiliated with?

您所属的寺庙为以下哪一座？

- ☐ Aidao Hall 爱道堂
- ☐ Tiexiangsi 铁像寺
- ☐ Jinsha'an 金沙庵
- ☐ Other 其他:

2) What is your gender?

请问您的性别为？

- ☐ Female 女
- ☐ Male 男
- ☐ Other 其他:

3) How old are you?

请问您的年龄在以下哪一区间中？

- ☐ 二十岁以下
- ☐ 二十到三十岁
- ☐ 三十到四十岁
- ☐ 四十到五十岁
- ☐ 五十到六十岁
- ☐ 六十岁以上

4) Are other people in your family Buddhist?

您的家人是否也为佛教徒/信佛？

- ☐ 是
- ☐ 否

5) What school of Buddhism do you practice?

您是否有明确皈依的佛教宗派？

- ☐ Theravada 南傳佛教
- ☐ Chan 禅宗
- ☐ Huayan 华严宗
- ☐ Tiantai 天台宗
- ☐ Pure Land 净土宗
- ☐ Tibetan/ Vajrayana Buddhism 藏传佛教
 - ☐ Geluk 格鲁派
 - ☐ Kagyu 噶举派
 - ☐ Nyingma 宁玛派
 - ☐ Sakya 萨迦派
- ☐ Other not listed 以上未列出的其他宗派:

6) Have you always practiced this school of Buddhism?

您是否一直信仰这一宗派？

- ☐ Yes 是
- ☐ No 否

6a) If not, what did you practice before?

如果不是，请写出您以前的信仰以及信仰转变的原因。

- ☐ Theravada 南傳佛教
- ☐ Chan 禅宗
- ☐ Huayan 华严宗
- ☐ Tiantai 天台宗
- ☐ Pure Land 净土宗
- ☐ Tibetan/ Vajrayana Buddhism 藏传佛教
 - ☐ Geluk 格鲁派
 - ☐ Kagyu 噶举派
 - ☐ Nyingma 宁玛派
 - ☐ Sakya 萨迦派
- ☐ Other not listed 以上未列出的其他宗派:

7) Which level of ordination have you received?

您的受戒情况（受了哪种戒？）

- ☐ Novice vows 沙弥尼戒
- ☐ Shikshamana 'training' vows 式叉摩那（六法）
- ☐ Full Bhikshuni vows 比丘尼戒

8) Who conducts the ordination ritual at your nunnery? (Check all that apply)

在您所在的尼寺中，谁负责授戒？（请勾选所有适用的选项）

- ☐ The head female Abbott from this nunnery 此寺的女性住持
- ☐ A female Abbott from another monastery 其他寺的女性住持
- ☐ A male Abbott from another monastery 其他寺的男性住持
- ☐ Both the head female Abbott from this nunnery and a male Abbott from another monastery 此寺的女性住持和其他寺的男性住持
- ☐ Both a male and female Abbott from another monastery/nunnery 其他寺的
男性和女性住持
- ☐ Other 其他:

9) How long ago did you take a vow of monasticism?

请问您出家多长时间了？

- ☐ 零到五年
- ☐ 五到十年
- ☐ 十到十五年
- ☐ 十五到二十年
- ☐ 二十到三十年
- ☐ 三十到四十年
- ☐ 四十到五十年
- ☐ 五十年以上

10) Do you live at the monastery/nunnery?

您是否住在寺庙里？

☐ 是

☐ 否

10a) If yes, how long have you lived there?

如果是，您在寺庙中住了多久？

☐ 零到五年

☐ 五到十年

☐ 十到十五年

☐ 十五到二十年

☐ 二十到三十年

☐ 三十到四十年

☐ 四十到五十年

☐ 五十年以上

11) Why did you choose to take a vow of monasticism?

为什么您选择出家？

12) Who makes decisions about discipline if someone does something wrong at the nunnery?

在您所在的尼寺中，谁负责决定寺院的相关守则？

- ☐ The head female Abbott at this nunnery 此寺的女性住持
- ☐ A committee of nuns from this nunnery 此寺的比丘尼“委员会”
- ☐ A female Abbott from another nunnery 其他寺的女性住持
- ☐ A male Abbott from another monastery 其他寺的男性住持
- ☐ Other 其他:

13) Do you have any education outside of the nunnery?

您的受教育程度？

- ☐ Yes- middle school 中学
- ☐ Yes- high school degree 高中
- ☐ Yes- bachelor's degree 本科
- ☐ Yes- master's degree 硕士
- ☐ Yes- Ph.D. 博士
- ☐ No 无
- ☐ Other 其他:

14) How many hours do you spend practicing or studying Buddhism each week?

您每周学佛多长时间？

- ☐ Less than 10 hours 少于 10 小时
- ☐ 10 to 20 hours 10 到 20 小时
- ☐ 20 to 30 hours 20 到 30 小时
- ☐ 30 to 40 hours 30 到 40 小时
- ☐ More than 40 hours 大于 40 小时

15) How often do you practice Buddhist debate?

您每多久一次参加佛教辩论？

- ☐ Daily 每天
- ☐ Weekly 每周
- ☐ Monthly 每月
- ☐ Semi-Annually 每半年
- ☐ Annually 每年
- ☐ I do not practice Buddhist debate 我没参加佛教辩论

16) Which sutras do you study the most? (check all that apply)

哪部经文您修习的最多？（请勾选所有适用的选项）

- ☐ Diamond sutra 金刚经
- ☐ Heart sutra 心经
- ☐ Awakening of Faith 大乘起信论
- ☐ Lotus Sutra 法华经
- ☐ Flower Ornament Sutra 华严经
- ☐ Vimalakirti Sutra 维摩经
- ☐ Other 其他:

17) On average, how much time do you spend doing meditation each day?

您平均每天坐禅/禅修/打坐多久？

- ☐ Less than 1 hour 少于 1 小时
- ☐ 1 to 2 hours 1 到 2 小时
- ☐ 2 to 3 hours 2 到 3 小时
- ☐ 3 to 4 hours 3 到 4 小时
- ☐ More than 4 hours 大于 4 小时
- ☐ I do not practice meditation 我没坐禅/禅修/打坐

18) What other subjects do you learn at this monastery? (Check all that apply)

您在寺中是否学习其他科目？（请勾选所有适用的选项）

- ☐ Mathematics 数学
- ☐ History 历史
- ☐ Language 语言:
 - ☐ Tibetan 藏语
 - ☐ Sanskrit 梵文
 - ☐ English 英语
 - ☐ Japanese 日本语
- ☐ Culture 文化
- ☐ Science 科学
- ☐ Calligraphy 书法
- ☐ Politics 政治
- ☐ Other 其他:

19) Please briefly describe your daily routine on an average day:

请简述您的每日流程/日常生活:

20) How involved is your nunnery with the surrounding community?

您所在尼寺与周边社区的融入程度？

- ☐ Very involved 非常融入
- ☐ Somewhat involved 融入
- ☐ Not involved 不融入

21) How often does the nunnery provide public rituals for the surrounding community?

您所在尼寺为周边社区提供相关佛教仪式的频率？

- ☐ Daily 每天
- ☐ Weekly 每周
- ☐ Monthly 每月
- ☐ Semi-annually 每半年
- ☐ Annually 每年
- ☐ This nunnery does not provide public rituals 并未提供任何佛教仪式

21a) If your nunnery provides public rituals, what type of rituals does it provide?

您所在尼寺为周边社区提供相关佛教仪式的什么种？

22) How respected do you feel by your surrounding community?

周边社区（对您/对您所在尼寺）的态度？

- ☐ Very respected 十分尊重
- ☐ Somewhat respected 有一定程度的尊重
- ☐ Not respected 不受尊重

23) What is your nunnery's primary source of funding?

您所在尼寺的主要资金来源？

- ☐ Donations from Laity 信众捐赠
- ☐ Jobs outside of the nunnery 通过（尼寺外）工作所得
- ☐ Funding from the government 政府资金
- ☐ Other 其他:

24) Do any of the nuns at this nunnery work outside of the nunnery?

您所在尼寺是否有比丘尼在寺外工作？

- ☐ Yes, many 是的，有许多
- ☐ Yes, just a few 是的，但仅有一些
- ☐ No 无

25) Which prominent female figures or images do you use in your practice?

您的修行涉及到哪位重要的女性人物或形象？（请勾选所有适用的选项）

- ☐ Yeshe Tsogyal 益西措嘉
- ☐ White Tara 多罗菩萨
- ☐ Guan Yin 观音
- ☐ There are no female figures or images in my practice 我的修行中不涉及女性人物或形象
- ☐ Other: 其他:

26) How does the presence of female figures or images in your practice make you feel as a female practitioner?

作为一位女性修行者，女性人物或形象如何对您的修行产生影响？

- ☐ Very inspired 使我深受鼓舞/启发
- ☐ Somewhat inspired 在一定程度上使我受到鼓舞/启发
- ☐ It does not affect me 并不会影响到我
- ☐ There are no female figures or images in my practice 我的修行中不涉及女性人物或形象
- ☐ Other: 其他:

	Strongly Agree 完全认同	Agree 认同	Neither Agree nor Disagree 不置可否	Disagree 不认同	Strongly Disagree 完全不认同
My nunnery has sufficient resources available to me 我所在的尼寺提供了充分的资源	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My nunnery has sufficient Buddhist educational opportunities available to me 我所在的尼寺提供了充分的佛教的受教育机会	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My nunnery has sufficient general educational opportunities available to me 我所在的尼寺提供了充分的受教育机会	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are more resources available to me now than in the past 相较于以前，现在我所能获得的资源更多	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are more educational opportunities available to me now than in the past 相较于以前，现在我所能获得的受教育机会更多	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There should be more women in leadership positions in Buddhism 佛教中，应有更多女性出任领导职位	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Eight Garudhammas discourage women from becoming ordained 八敬法不支持女人受戒	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree 完全认同	Agree 认同	Neither Agree nor disagree 不置可否	Disagree 不认同	Strongly Disagree 完全不认同
I feel valued and respected as a woman in Buddhism by other Buddhists 作为一名出家女众，我认为很有价值并且受到尊重	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel the school of Buddhism I practice values women practitioners 我认为我所归属的修行传统是支持女性修行者的	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The surrounding community of lay and non-Buddhists has respect for my nunnery 周围的居士或者非佛教徒尊重我的尼姑庵	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The surrounding community has respect for me personally as a nun 周围的俗众尊重我个人的尼姑的身份	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am treated with respect by other nuns in my nunnery 在我所在的尼寺中，我受到其他比丘尼的尊重	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am treated with respect by monks from other monasteries 我受到其他寺中比丘的尊重	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enlightenment can be achieved in the female body 女性也可以证悟	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The mind is genderless 是无关性别的	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Open Answer Questions

If you could change one thing about your nunnery, what would it be?
如果您可以对您所在尼寺进行一处改变或改进，此改变/改进会是？

Any other comments you would like to add
如有任何相關信息或評論請在此處列出