

The Chinese Buddhist Ritual Field: Common Public Rituals in PRC Monasteries Today*

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Abstract

For centuries the performance of rituals has been one of the most common, complex, remunerative, and controversial activities in Chinese Buddhism. This article lays out the contours of the contemporary Chinese Buddhist “ritual field,” focusing on rituals called “Dharma assemblies” (*fahui* 法会) in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Based on a selection of announcements and ritual schedules posted in monasteries during 2009-2013, I show which rituals are performed and how they are marketed. I also show when and how frequently certain rituals linked to the annual cycle of festivals are performed, and analyze and suggest categorization schemas for the rituals. Finally, I discuss the relationships between ritual activities on the one hand and commercial activity, monastic revenue, and seminary studies on the other. Annotated translations of six announcements and ritual schedules, followed by transcriptions of the source Chinese texts for these translations, are included in the appendixes.

Keywords:

Buddhist ritual, Dharma assembly, PRC Buddhism, ritual field, Buddhist ritual schedule

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中國的佛事場域

——中華人民共和國佛寺常見的大眾儀式

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摘要

幾個世紀以來，在中國佛教中儀式的舉行是最普遍、最複雜、最具爭議和經濟效益的活動之一。本文聚焦在中華人民共和國的「法會」，來描述當代中國佛教「儀式場域」的輪廓。從 2009 至 2013 年間一些寺院的公告與行事曆，可知舉行了哪些法會與其行銷方式。本文分析其中的一些法會舉行的時間、頻率和與年度節慶的特定關係，並且將這些法會做了進一步的歸類。最後，本文探討儀式活動與商業活動、寺院收入與佛學院的關係。本文所使用的六篇公告與行事曆，含註解的譯文與中文原稿皆放在附錄中。

關鍵詞：

佛教儀式、法會、中華人民共和國的佛教、儀式場域、年度佛事安排

The fact that ritual continues to be of central importance to most Buddhists everywhere has been stated frequently for more than two decades. Yet compared to our understanding of doctrine and narratives, we still know comparatively little about Chinese Buddhist rituals. Most textbook accounts still foreground how doctrinal systems, institutions, or narratives have been shaped over time. In contrast, the precise development of ritual traditions is underexplored; we still do not understand very well how formulaic actions instantiate doctrines, reproduce institutions, and express narratives in abbreviated form. Even more scarce are general accounts of how, for example, ritual complexes are incorporated into new settings and evolve over time, or how individual rites (taken here to mean the smallest unit of meaningful ritual action) are extracted from source texts or newly created, combined and ordered into larger sets, expanded and pruned, imported and exported, reshuffled and reinterpreted.¹ In short, we lack clear understanding of the Chinese Buddhist “ritual field” or cultus, the totality of all the rites and larger-scale ritual configurations performed in a given time period and its

¹ Recent academic publications in English on Chinese Buddhist rituals related to those discussed in this article include Stevenson (2001), Chan (2008), Chen (1999), Günzel (1994), Lye (2003), Teiser (1988), Welch (1967), Chappell (2005), Heise (2012), and Xue (2013). Yifa (2002) and Ichimura (2006) include translations of normative texts describing rituals to be held in Chinese Buddhist monasteries; the text translated in Ichimura (2006), the *Pure Rules of Baizhang* 百丈清規 (T 2025) is more influential for contemporary practice and includes a schedule of rituals to be held annually (356-59) that partially overlaps with ritual calendars today. Even more reflective of contemporary practice is a Qing dynasty commentary on this text, the *Notes on the Verified Meaning of the Pure Rules of Baizhang* 百丈清規證義記 (X 1244), which details many of the rituals and festivals performed today. Hou (2012) offers an overview of the sources of revenue and the expenses of post-war Taiwanese monasteries, and also provides lists of important rituals, particularly in the sections of his article titled “sponsoring Dharma assemblies” 办法会 and “hustling [to perform] scripture-penances” 赶经忏. Shengkai (2001) provides an overview of commonly performed rituals in China today, whereas Shengkai (2004) examines repentance rituals in more detail and also includes a chapter overviewing critique of Buddhist rituals in modern history (365-85). Kamata (1986) includes descriptions of several rituals mentioned below, namely the Great Compassion Penance 大悲忏, Flaming Mouths 焰口, Water and Land Dharma assembly 水陆法会, and Avalambana Basin assembly 盂兰盆会, as well as a reproduction of the *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate* liturgical text, which is cited below. Finally, for overviews of Buddhist festivals and rituals in medieval China, see Hureau (2009) and Ch'en (1973, 256-76).

geographical variations.² We also lack a clear set of pictures (much less enough “frames” to be combined into a “film”) of how the cultus has changed over time.

One important goal of the academic study of Chinese Buddhism is to capture, however imperfectly, the worldviews and religious sentiments of Buddhists. Ritual performances may reflect, reinforce, and transform socially constructed religious worlds, and ritual texts often serve more or less as scripts for the performances. Since ritual texts underdetermine ritual performances and ritual performances underdetermine the meanings people extract from and project into them, the study of texts per se should ideally be supplemented with an examination of broader contexts surrounding rituals.³

Charting the range, development, meanings, and effects of the Chinese Buddhist cultus falls beyond the scope of this article. Here, my intent is to sketch a significant subset of the contemporary cultus and to describe the meanings that Buddhist monasteries—the sites for high profile, Buddhist rituals—publicly attribute to such rituals. For this purpose I have translated six short texts that outline much of the contemporary monastic ritual repertoire and frame, or “market,” the items in the repertoire to the laity. It is hoped that, through the translations, the reader will gain a rough overall sense, from an analytical perspective as well as from an insider perspective, of the contemporary Chinese Buddhist ritual field, and that through the annotations, the reader will know where to turn for more specific information on particular rituals. Henceforth these texts are referred to by the number by which they are labeled in the translations in Appendix 1, e.g., Text 1, Text 2, etc.

I have also analyzed the listed rituals from several angles—including insider and outsider methods of categorizing them—and in the broader contexts of similar rituals, related ritualized services, and their contested role in contemporary monasticism. It is these several frames of analysis that

² I roughly follow Melford Spiro’s terminology in using *ritual* for a domain of social action and to label sets of action within that domain, *rite* for the “minimum significant unit of ritual behavior,” and *cultus* for the totality of rites and larger ritual configurations in a given time and place (1982, 199).

³ For a persuasive study of how factors such as the broader political climate and historical change on the one hand and individual doctrinal training and social position on the other influence the meanings of Chinese rituals, see Weller (1987). Rituals also involve the construction of a temporary “world” through multi-sensory experiences, including imagery, sounds, smells, and even tastes (if they involve eating). For a detailed study of the central role of music in the daily Chinese Buddhist liturgy, see Chen (1999).

constitute the article proper. I begin with a brief introduction, discussion of the categorization of the rituals, and a listing of the range of rituals included. Then, based on two larger sets of data, I address the representativeness of the kinds and frequency of the rituals in the translated texts. Next, I outline a related subset of ritual, namely ritual goods and services that are also publicly marketed to laity through announcements or advertisements posted in monasteries. I conclude with a summary of findings and broader discussion on the contemporary relevance of ritual, focusing on the economic role and controversial nature of such rituals within Chinese monasticism today. The translations (Appendix 1) and transcriptions of the Chinese source texts (Appendix 2) are followed by the References.

Introduction to the Translated Texts

The six texts translated below were printed as signboards and prominently displayed within monasteries during spring 2013. Within the translated texts, parentheses are in the original but square brackets and their contents are added by the translator. All dates written with a backslash refer to the month/day on the traditional Chinese calendar, e.g., 12/8 refers to the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month.

We could classify these six texts as ephemera—objects to be used for a few weeks' to a few years' time before being discarded. As such, they offer us snapshots of Buddhist ritual life in specific times and places. They structure time according to the lunisolar calendar and punctuate that time with events transplanted from Indian lunisolar calendars as well as from Chinese Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. At the same time, they exclude virtually any reference to the modern Western calendar or Communist holidays that dominate the ordinary world structured by work and public holidays. The texts announce, explain, and advertise ritual services, for which textual and historical precedents are invoked, thereby legitimizing these services both as authentically Buddhist and as consonant with mainstream Chinese values such as filial piety.

From Yongfu Monastery 永福寺, Hangzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province

Text 1. Origins: General introduction to the monastery.

Text 2. Common Buddhist Services: A list and description of nine types of ritual activities held throughout the year.

Text 3. Buddhist Services Held at Fixed Intervals: A list of nine ritual activities held only on specific dates, and sometimes no more than once per year.

These first three texts were posted together on one large signboard, from left to right in the order they are listed here.

Text 4. Dharma Announcement: For the Bathing of the Buddha 浴佛 ritual, a yearly activity that was drawing near when I visited Yongfu Monastery. This text was printed and separately posted on a flier. I have seen similar announcements, often for the same range of rituals outlined in Texts 2 and 3, in monasteries throughout China. Such announcements may also be printed on signboards or written in calligraphy on large sheets of colored rice paper that are affixed to walls.

From Jingci Monastery 净慈寺, Hangzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province

Text 5. Schedule of Buddhist Activities in Jingci Monastery for the Year 2013: A list of major ritual events at the monastery over the course of one year, with notes about what is done at some rituals and how laity may participate. This monastery is probably best known as the former residence of the semi-legendary monk Daoji 道济 (d. 1209), better known today by his epithet Sire Ji the Living Buddha 济公活佛 (Shahar 1998). The famous monk Yongming Yanshou 永明延寿 (904-978) was once abbot of the monastery. Also, the monastery contains the tomb of the monk Rujing 如淨 (1163-1228), a teacher of the Japanese monk Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253), which has brought the monastery Japanese pilgrims and donations. For more on its recent history and conditions during the early 1980s, see Hengqing (2007, 48-53).

From Nanputuo Monastery 南普陀寺, Xiamen Municipality, Fujian Province

Text 6. Schedule of Major Events during the *Guisi* 癸巳 Year [10 Feb. 2013–30 Jan. 2014]: A list similar to Text 5, but including monastic-centered rituals. For more on the recent history of the monastery, see Ashiwa and Wank (2006), particularly their sections on control of monastery finances (349-51) and rituals (352-53).

Rituals Listed in the Translated Texts

The following chart displays most of the events contained in the six translated texts. Excluded are a few events of local relevance, such as death-day

commemorations of a particular monk. The normative dates for certain events listed on this chart do not always correspond exactly with the actual dates on which the events are celebrated, as explained in Appendix 1. On the chart below, the names of the rituals are sometimes translated in a manner more abbreviated and less literal than in the appendixes, where more detailed information and the corresponding Chinese terms are available. This chart displays many, if not most, of the rituals and festivals regularly performed in Chinese Buddhist monasteries today.

Table 1: Ritual events from the six texts translated in Appendix 1

Rituals associated with a particular date on the traditional calendar ⁴	Rituals not associated with a single date (listed in alphabetical order)
Maitreya's birthday (1/1)	auspicious offering
various events around traditional New Year (first lunar month)	<i>Dharma Flower</i> -Seven [day] retreat
Yuanxiao festival (1/15)	Dizang Penance
Guanyin's birthday (2/19)	feasting of divinities
Puxian's birthday (2/21)	granting the three refuges
Qingming festival (2/24 in 2013)	Great Compassion Penance
Mañjuśrī's birthday (4/4)	Great Mt. Meng ritual
Bathing the Buddha	installation of memorial tablets
[=Śākyamuni's birthday] (4/8)	lecturing on scriptures
Duanwu festival (5/5)	Liang Emperor Penance
Samghārāma's birthday (5/13, sometimes)	offerings to the four sages
Skanda's birthday (6/3)	opening the radiance [consecration]
Guanyin's enlightenment (6/19)	<i>poṣadha</i> (twice per month, on new and full moon)
Dashizhi's birthday (7/13)	prayers for fortune
Avalambana Basin assembly (7/15)	presentation of offerings
Dizang's birthday (7/30)	purification by sprinkling
Mid-Autumn festival (8/15)	recitation of the <i>Flower Adornment</i> scripture
Guanyin becomes a renunciant (9/19)	Releasing Life ritual
Yaoshi Buddha's birthday (9/29)	Samādhi Water Penance
Amitābha's birthday (11/17)	scripture chanting
Winter solstice (11/20 in 2013)	sending off prosperity tablets

⁴ The substantial overlap between this list and that given in *Chanmen risong* (1900, 376) shows continuity in the monastic ritual repertoire.

La-eighth porridge assembly [=Śākyamuni's enlightenment] (12/8)	Ten Thousand Buddhas Penance
Sending off the stove deity (12/23 or 12/24)	Three Thousand Buddhas Penance
Welcoming back the stove deity (12/30 or so)	Universal Buddhas (<i>pufo</i> 普佛) ritual
New Year's Eve celebration (12/30)	universal offering
	universal tea
	Water and Land Dharma assembly
	Yaoshi Penance
	(Yoga) Flaming Mouth ritual

Categorization of the Rituals

Many of the rituals are, in the translated texts, called "Dharma assemblies" 法会, ritual events typically performed or led by monastics, often inside monasteries, which the laity attend, pay for, and participate in to varying degrees. Prototypical Dharma assemblies comprise a large, roughly defined subset within the larger category of rituals or services, which in Chinese are called "Buddhist services" 佛事, "Dharma services" 法事, or just "services" 行事.⁵ Dharma assemblies are believed to generate merit for their donors and participants, which can then be directed to specified others. They are typically advertised on schedules and fliers posted in monasteries.⁶ Scholars such as

⁵ Note that despite the theoretically broad meaning of the term "Buddhist services" as described in Text 1, in ordinary use, terms such as "doing Buddhist services" 做佛事 often mean "performing [commissioned] rituals [for pay]" and have negative associations with commercialism, as I discuss in the section "Summary and Discussion of the Broader Relevance of Buddhist Ritual Life to Monasticism," below. Other related terms include "scripture-penance Buddhist services" 经忏佛事 and "hustling to perform scripture-penance [rituals]" 赶经忏, which clearly have negative connotations. In many monasteries today, one can see signs for offices called the "office for registration for Buddhist services" 佛事登记处 or "office for registration for Dharma services" 法事登记处. Heise (2012) provides a study focused on the Ghost/Yulanpen festival in contemporary Fujian Province, and claims that the term "Dharma assembly" has more positive connotations than does "universal deliverance" (*pu du* 普度), a term used to refer to the main ritual in the festival.

⁶ Today some monasteries post ritual schedules online as well. But many of these websites are not regularly maintained. For this article I decided to limit data from websites since I suspect that what is online differs in a systematic way (i.e., non-random, related to different target audiences and the types of monasteries that can sponsor websites or have connections with news websites). Bearing this in mind, for large-scale compilations of Buddhist rituals held during entire calendar

Shengkai (2001, 1-3) and Xue (2013, 352) separate penance rituals (variously called “penance methods” 忏法, “scripture-penances” 经忏, “performing penances [with prostrations]” 拜忏, or “veneration and penance” 礼忏)—which are labeled “veneration and penance Dharma assemblies” in Text 2 below—into a separate category from Dharma assemblies.⁷ However, as can be seen in the texts below, the distinction between these various categories is blurry. A ritual held in a monastery and open to the public is more often called a “Dharma assembly,” and a ritual held in a private residence is called a “Buddhist service” or “scripture-penance.”⁸ Rituals with the character “penance” 忏 in the title are usually called penances, although they also incorporate rites of worship, praise, and vow-making. Yet an event which is basically the performance of a penance ritual in a monastery might be labeled with both terms, as a “scripture-penance Dharma assembly” 经忏法会. And the Water and Land Dharma assembly can be commissioned for performance at a private residence and includes the performance of multiple Liang Emperor penances 梁皇忏 as part of its ritual program.⁹

years see, for example, the “Chinese Buddhist Services and Activities” 中国佛教佛事活动 for the calendar years 2011 and 2012, available on the large “Chinese Buddhism” 华人佛教 website (fo.ifeng.com), sponsored by the Phoenix Television and Phoenix New Media conglomerate. These are available at the following URLs: <http://fo.ifeng.com/special/foshinianjian/> and <http://fo.ifeng.com/special/2012fojiaonj/> (accessed 22 January 2014).

- ⁷ Xue translates the term *jingchan* 经忏, “scripture-penance,” as “penance through the recitation of sūtras” (2013, 352), whereas Welch analyzes the term as a combination of “chanting scriptures” 诵经 and “performing penances” 拜忏, and indicates that usually it is just a generic term referring to Buddhist services (1967, 491 n. 13). Yü follows the same logic as Welch, translating it as “chanting sūtras and performing penances” (2013, 61).
- ⁸ In the PRC today, regulations stating that religious rituals are permitted only in registered “religious activity venues” 宗教活动场所 reduce the number of rituals held in private homes and, as Heise argues for Fujian Province, reduces rituals held in other public spaces as well (2012).
- ⁹ More examples of overlap and distinctions, sometimes mutually contradictory, can be cited. For example, Hou lists the “Great Compassion Penance” 大悲忏 and the “Water Penance” 水忏 as common Dharma assemblies in Taiwan (2012, 62). Xue proposes that penances are mainly for the sake of the dead whereas Dharma assemblies are for both the living and the dead (2013, 352). Both “Dharma assemblies” and “penances” are called “Buddhist services” 佛事 in some formulations, but Shengkai (2001, 63) identifies “Buddhist services” with “Dharma assemblies” and by implication (in his system) not with penances. In contrast, Zhaoyuan uses both the term “Buddhist services [and] scripture-

In actual practice, an even broader range of activities—including lectures on scriptures, meditation activities, and monastic-only ordinations—are also labeled “Dharma assemblies” (讲经法会, 禅修法会, and 传戒法会, respectively). In this broadest sense, perhaps the only generalization we can make about events labeled “Dharma assemblies” is that they are Buddhist assemblies designated for relatively large groups of people rather than for a single individual or family.

We have discussed that many of the rituals examined below are “Dharma assemblies,” but what ritual activities comprising the Chinese Buddhist cultus are excluded from this category? The translated texts tend to omit rituals from the following analytic (non-native) categories:

- (1) Individual devotions and interactions with deities, such as those involving offerings of incense or food, bowing, prostrations, making wishes or requests (*xuyuan* 许愿), and recompense for fulfilled wishes (*huanyuan* 还愿) in front of an image of a deity.
- (2) Regular communal rituals for monastics, including the daily morning and evening liturgical services (*zaowanke* 早晚课) and the bimonthly recitation of precepts (*busa* 布萨; S. *posadha*).
- (3) Occasional events marking the entry or exit of a person or thing from the monastic community, including tonsure (*tidu* 剃度), ordination (*shoujie* 受戒), investiture of an abbot (*shengzuo* 升座), funerals for monastics, installation and consecration of new images of deities, and the construction of Buddhist buildings (such as beam-raising [*shangliang* 上梁] and sealings [*helong* 合拢 or *fengding* 封顶]). These construction-related rituals in monasteries are Buddhist variants of essentially non-Buddhist rituals.
- (4) Services specially commissioned by lay individuals or groups, including funerary and apotropaic rituals. Although some of these rituals are listed in Text 2, they do not appear in the annual schedules in Texts 3, 5, or 6. However, many of the rituals listed in Texts 3, 5, and 6 can also be specially commissioned by individuals or groups. A brief overview of other rituals from this category, including ritually “framed” goods and services publicly advertised in Buddhist monasteries, are discussed in the section “Other Common Ritual Goods and Services.”

penances” 佛事经忏 and “scripture-penances [and/as] Buddhist services” 经忏佛事 to refer to the category of ritual practices that monastics perform for fees (2012, 109).

One complex category of ritual described below warrants explanation here. This is the *pufo* 普佛, translated below in accord with intratextual glosses as “Universal Buddhas,” but also understood to mean simply a communal Buddhist ritual that everyone may or should attend. Here I will outline major sub-categories of the *pufo*, and then I will offer a tentative explanation for differing views. According to informants, there are two broad classes of *pufo*. One is called “*pufo* for celebration for a sage” 祝圣普佛, also called a “great *pufo*” 大普佛, held on various commemorative days for Buddhas, bodhisattvas, emperors, etc. The other category is “*pufo* following [morning or evening] services” 随课普佛, also called a “small *pufo*” 小普佛 or a “*pufo* following the hall [service]” 随堂普佛; these are divided into those for the living and those for the dead. This second kind of *pufo* is among the most commonly performed rituals in China today. Small *pufo* for the living are most commonly called “*pufo* for prolonging life” 延生普佛, but can also be called “auspicious *pufo*” 吉祥普佛, “*pufo* for dissolving calamity” 消灾普佛, or “*pufo* for long life” 长生普佛. Small *pufo* for the dead are usually called “*pufo* for rebirth” 往生普佛, but are also called “*pufo* for deliverance” 超度普佛. When monastics say they “do *pufo*” 打普佛, unless this is further qualified, it means they do small *pufo* rituals.¹⁰

¹⁰ We can see that the term *pufo* today commonly refers to a specific set of rituals, rather than to a broader category of rituals, from the fact that exact prices are listed for their performance. For example, on the website of the famous Baohuashan Monastery 宝华山寺 in Jiangsu Province, the following prices for Buddhist rituals are listed: *Diamond Scripture* 金刚经 [recitation]: 1500 yuan; *Dizang Scripture* 地藏经 [recitation]: 1600 yuan; Compassion [Samādhi] Water Penance 慈悲水忏: 1600 yuan; Dizang Penance 地藏忏: 1600 yuan; *pufo* 普佛: 1200 yuan; Affixed Mindfulness in Three Times 三时系念: 1500 yuan; Presentation of Offerings 上供 [formal ritual]: 600 yuan (<http://www.longchangsi.com/futian/foshi/2011/1109/1541.html>; accessed 14 March 2104). In contrast, while at Shuxiang Monastery 殊像寺 in Shanxi Province in September 2012, a tour guide whom I trusted (after having chatted with her on previous occasions elsewhere) told me that the cost for a *pufo* would normally be 3000 to 4000 yuan for 30 to 45 minutes of performance, but that this would be specially performed outside of the regular morning or evening liturgy. Probably the *pufo* at Baohuashan is cheaper in part because most of the constituent rites would be performed during the course of regular morning or evening services, with only fifteen minutes or so extra beyond what the sangha would normally be performing anyway. During the time of my fieldwork (summer 2009-summer 2013), the exchange rate was roughly 6.5 yuan to one US dollar, ranging from slightly over 6.8:1 in 2009 to slightly below 6.2:1 by mid- to late 2013.

Shengyan 聖嚴 understands the term *pufo* to refer to a more general category of ritual, rather than to a specific ritual with several variants. He writes that such rituals began no earlier than the Ming dynasty, and that the term *pu* 普 or “universal” in the name refers to the fact that the ritual is open for everyone to participate in and is not restricted to a certain site: “It is [called ‘universal’] because it is a Buddhist service which the general congregation performs together, unlike other penance ceremonies for which a penance ritual site must be established and for which there is a limited number of participants. In contrast, in a *pufo*, the entire community participates and it is unnecessary to specially establish a ritual site. 是由大眾共同修行的佛事，不像其他的懺儀須設懺壇，限人數，普佛則是全體參加，不必特設壇場” (Shengyan 1999, 8). This explanation accounts for the fact that many rituals are called *pufo*. It appears that, depending on context, *pufo* refers either to a general category or to a specific ritual, namely either one of two small *pufo* rituals, just as the term “pure land” 淨土 can refer to either a broader class of places or to the specific pure land of the Buddha Amitābha.¹¹

However, it also happens that the content of the small *pufo* is connected to that of the great *pufo*; this similarity might account for their having the same name, especially if the small *pufo* was a later derivation from the great *pufo*. Specifically, the small *pufo* includes an important section taken from the great *pufo* birthday celebrations for either Yaoshi [“medicine master”] Buddha or Amitābha Buddha, depending on whether it is for the living or dead, respectively. We can see these in the *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate* 禪門日誦—in the section titled, in the table of contents, “celebration for the sage *pufo* ceremony” 祝聖普佛儀—for birthdays of the Yaoshi Buddha and Amitābha Buddha (*Chanmen risong* 1900, 110-114).¹²

Shengkai and Text 2 adduce historical and semantic explanations for the term *pufo* that differ from the analysis above. Shengkai attributes the roots of this ritual and the meaning of the term “universal 普” to the Sui dynasty (581-618) monk Xinxing’s 信行 (540-594) particular typology of the Dharma and

¹¹ Welch does not discuss *pufo* in detail, but mentions it in passing, describing it as the recitation of a Buddha’s name, and translating it as “plenary recitation of the Buddha’s name” (1967, 74, 190, 198, 438, and 487 n. 4). None of the *pufo* I discuss in this article are as simple as the recitation of a Buddha’s name.

¹² See Shengkai (2001, 60-63) on the content of the two small *pufo*. For more on the various collections and editions of ritual texts used from late imperial times to the present, such as the *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate*, see Chen (1999) and Günzel (1994).

Buddhas (2001, 59-63).¹³ However, he does not actually demonstrate structural or historical continuities between texts compiled by Xinxing and later *pufo* rituals. Yongfu Monastery may very well have consulted Shengkai's book in composing Text 2.

Text 2 also implies that such rituals are called "Universal Buddhas" because they involve the worship of all Buddhas. Yet other than the specific worship given to Yaoshi or Amitābha Buddha, both of the small *pufo* are comprised of rites that are common in other rituals, such as the "ten minor spells" 十小咒, recitation of the *Heart Scripture* 心經, and a hymn on incense 香讚. I found no particular emphasis on the worship of many Buddhas or all Buddhas in these rituals beyond rites that appear in many other rituals. These include the recitation of the names of eighty-eight Buddhas in *pufo* for the deceased, and prostrations in ten directions (*shifang li* 十方禮) in both varieties of small *pufo*, which might be interpreted as worship of all Buddhas (i.e., the Buddhas of the ten directions).¹⁴

More research is necessary to clarify the meanings, range, and historical evolution of the term *pufo*. It is possible that most performers of *pufo* would state they are unclear about its meaning and that those who do attribute specific meanings to it retroject contemporary understandings that diverge from the term's actual history.¹⁵

From the diary entries of the monk Mingshan 茗山 (1914-2001), an influential monastic leader in China in the post-Cultural Revolution era (1977-), we can see that in some monastic circles there was an intentional effort to replace other rituals with *pufo* rituals. This decision, which such monastics saw as a policy to improve Buddhist practice, may account for some of the popularity of *pufo* today. For example, in his diary entry for 27 November 1993, Mingshan writes that "[it was discussed at a meeting to] strengthen [monastic] internal construction, especially construction [in terms of] Buddhist ethos."¹⁶ Our monastery, besides intending to persist in [morning and

¹³ For more on Xinxing and his concept of the "Universal Buddha(s)" (*pufo* 普佛), see Hubbard (2001) and Zhang (2013).

¹⁴ I asked monks from other monasteries who performed small *pufo* what the name of the ritual meant. They did not seem certain, but thought it might be related to the fact that these rituals involve the worship of many Buddhas.

¹⁵ Thanks are due to Ven. Changzhi and Ven. Ti Heng for discussion of the term *pufo*. Changzhi also pointed out the source Shengyan (1999) to me.

¹⁶ I am grateful to Jiyan Qiao for suggesting "the ethos of the Buddhists" as a translation for the difficult term *daofeng* 道風, which in this context I suggest

evening] services in the hall and procession through the hall [=formal Buddhist method of conducting breakfast and lunch meals], in addition will restore the [bimonthly] chanting of precepts, recitation of the Buddha's name, study of the teachings and other old regulations, and has also decided to change from doing Buddhist rituals and to instead conduct *pufo* following [services in the main] hall. 加强自身建设，特别是道风建设。本寺准备继续坚持上殿、过堂外，恢复诵戒、念佛、学教等旧规，并决定改佛事为随堂普佛” (2003, 59-60). Mingshan's diary entry for 19 February 1994 discusses the rationale for this change in greater detail, the main points being that rituals other than *pufo*, which are often held at night, are more disruptive to other monastic duties such as morning services and study, and also lead monastics to ruin themselves, and laity to misunderstand or disrespect Buddhism (2003, 80-81).

Analysis of Broader Contexts

In the remainder of this article I will address the broader relevance and contexts of the rituals and schedules translated in Appendix 1. First, I discuss how representative these texts are relative to texts of the same genre. Drawing on a larger sample of texts, I identify the most prominent Buddhist festivals and rituals in the annual cycle and introduce rituals not listed above as well as possible regional variations. Next, I introduce a related category of ritual goods and services offered in monasteries and compare these to the Dharma assembly type of events. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the broader relevance of rituals to the institution of Chinese Buddhist monasticism.

Selection and Representativeness of the Translated Texts

During the summers of 2009 and 2010, and from August 2012 to September 2013, I visited several dozen Buddhist monasteries in the PRC. In twenty-two monasteries I photographed announcements or schedules for Dharma assembly 法会 rituals and/or actually observed such rituals being held. In seven of the twenty-two monasteries, schedules for the most important public rituals during the current calendar year or for a typical calendar year were posted. The six translated texts come from three monasteries out of that latter set of seven. I

might also be translated as “cultivated ethos,” “refined ethos,” or “ethos of/from being in accord with the Way.”

chose to translate the schedules from Yongfu Monastery (Text 3, and Text 2 to the extent that dates are given) because they offered the most detailed descriptions of a broad range of rituals. Two additional texts from Yongfu Monastery—the first (Text 1) posted together with Texts 2 and 3, and the second (Text 4) posted separately—were translated as examples of common kinds of texts found in monasteries, the general introduction to the monastery, and announcements for upcoming Dharma assemblies. Text 5, the schedule for Jingci Monastery, was chosen to show a relatively short schedule focused specifically on public Dharma assemblies. Text 6, the schedule for Nanputuo Monastery, was chosen to show a longer schedule which incorporates not only public Dharma assemblies, but also important events for monastics and non-Buddhist, traditional Chinese festivals.

My data from twenty-two monasteries are drawn from nine of the fifteen provincial-level political units that I visited: namely, sites in Fujian, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Anhui, and Beijing. While the data were not acquired by random sampling, they at least suggest that Han Chinese Buddhist monasteries throughout China perform a relatively fixed set of rituals held according to set dates on the traditional Chinese calendar.

Based on the schedules of annual rituals and festivals from the seven monasteries,¹⁷ and limited only to those for which specific dates were explicitly given, tentative conclusions based on the relative frequency (without factoring in attendance, intensity, etc.) show that:

- (1) The bodhisattva Guanyin is the most popular for cultic worship, with fourteen events (rituals/festivals) held in commemoration of her on or immediately before three dates: her birthday, 2/19 (5 events); day of enlightenment, 6/19 (5 events); and day of renunciation, 9/19 (4 events). Anecdotal evidence suggests that these three events are also among the best attended each year.
- (2) Śākyamuni Buddha is the second most popular, with twelve events: his day of renunciation, 2/8 (1 event); birthday, 4/8 (6 events); and day of enlightenment, 12/8 (5 events). On another schedule, an undated Buddha-bathing ritual was held, almost certainly on 4/8; if

¹⁷ These monasteries were the following, listed in the order from which I acquired relevant data from them: Jimingsi 鸡鸣寺, Nanjing (Jiangsu); Chenxiangge 沉香阁, Shanghai; Guanghuasi 广化寺, Putian (Fujian); Dacisi 大慈寺, Chengdu (Sichuan); Yongfusi 永福寺, Hangzhou (Zhejiang); Jingcisi 净慈寺, Hangzhou (Zhejiang); and Nanputuosi 南普陀寺, Xiamen (Fujian).

that event were included, there would be thirteen events total for Śākyamuni.

- (3) In numbers of events dedicated to a single deity, none of the other Buddhist deities came close to Guanyin or Śākyamuni. Amitābha Buddha had two events for his birthday (11/17), as did the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī for his (4/4). However, two Pure Land practice-related events were held around or through the dates of Amitābha Buddha's birthday; if these were included, it would be four events for Amitābha.
- (4) The Avalambana Basin Dharma assembly, held on 7/15, was tied with the Bathing the Buddha ritual for most common (6 events). While not focused exclusively on Dizang Bodhisattva, Dizang is very important in narratives associated with that event.
- (5) A large number of rituals and festivities are held in monasteries from New Year's Eve through 1/15, but these generally have weak connections to Buddhism or no specifically Buddhist reasons to be held during this period. The exception is Maitreya Bodhisattva's birthday (1/1), mentioned on only one calendar. Also, a Buddhist ceremony for making offerings to divinities takes place on 1/9 (4 events), in lieu of Daoist and other popular religious offerings to the Jade Emperor 玉皇大帝 (also known as the Sire of Heaven 天公), which are performed that day outside of Buddhist monasteries.
- (6) Several other traditional Chinese festival dates were the occasion for celebrations and rituals, particularly the Qingming festival (4 events) and the winter solstice (3 events). However, not a single Communist state holiday, including the important National Day (October 1) or May Day (May 1) was included on any of the schedules. The only impact I detected of these holidays was at Guanghua Monastery, where the six-day Dharma Assembly for the Transmission of Lay Bodhisattva Precepts 传授在家菩萨戒法会 was scheduled to coincide with the May 1 holiday. This is in striking contrast with Chinese Buddhism during imperial times, when commemorative rituals for emperors and other members of the imperial household, living and dead, were common.¹⁸

¹⁸ The current emphasis on premodern Chinese tradition contrasts sharply with state policies to eliminate or shift the focus of traditional holidays during and prior to the Cultural Revolution period (1966-76). A proposal drafted by Red Guards found by a Swedish diplomat in Beijing in late August 1966 preserves an

- (7) Table 1, above, includes most of the ritual events seen on other schedules as well. No event for which a date was given on the four untranslated annual schedules occurred more than one time, *unless* it was included on Table 1. Those events not on Table 1 included, among others, a Dharma assembly to worship the God of Wealth 拜财神法会, a Dharma assembly for guided readings of the *Scripture on the Buddha of Infinite Life*¹⁹ 《无量寿经》导读法会, several events combining religious with cultural events (calligraphy, tea tasting), and commemoration of various historical figures of local significance to the particular monastery.²⁰

extreme form of such Communist fervor. Most traditional holidays were to be eliminated, but Qingming was to be maintained—with a new, politicized content: “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution aims at destroying on a massive scale all old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits; it aims at reforming all superstructures not suited to the socialist economic base... We think that a number of our present ‘holidays’ such as the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, etc., have a very strong feudal flavor, a widespread baneful influence, and a bad impact. In our new socialist China, we must absolutely not allow this remnant poison... We propose observing only holidays that have a political content... All those filthy feudal ‘holidays’ are to be abolished. We will continue to observe the ‘Qing Ming’ Festival by sweeping the graves of revolutionary martyrs—not by visiting the graves of our ancestors” (Schoenhals 1996, 227-28). For comparison with state policies today, see note 91, below.

- ¹⁹ This scripture is the Chinese translation (T 360) of the *Sukhāvati-vyūha*. The Buddha of Infinite Life is understood to be Amitābha.
- ²⁰ Bianchi’s list of Chinese festival dates celebrated in Tiexiang Monastery 铁像寺 in Chengdu are similar to those presented in Texts 5 and 6 (2001, 96-97). Sun, in her study over eighteen months of religion in her home county of Lanxi 兰溪 in Zhejiang Province, also does not mention other festivals. She found that the following festivals involved large-scale Buddhist events: the New Year (1/1), the Buddha’s birthday (4/8), and the three commemoration days of Guanyin (2/19, 6/19, 9/19) (2010, 82-83). Nichols, based on fieldwork at Kaiyuan Monastery 开元寺 in Quanzhou, Fujian province, mentions the most important festivals as the three commemorative days of Guanyin, the Ghost [=Avalambana Basin] festival (7/15), Chinese New Year (1/1 to 1/15), and the Qingming festival (said to have been held on 4/4 of the Chinese traditional calendar, but I suspect he really means April 4 on the Western calendar) (2011, 240-46). Qin, in her fieldwork at Fuhu Monastery 伏虎寺, Emeishan, mentions in passing that important annual festivals included the birthdays of Śākyamuni, Guanyin, Dizang, and Puxian (2000, 164). Finally, Welch claims that the most important annual festivals in the first half of the twentieth century, at the relatively elite monasteries in central-east China that were his focus, were 2/19, 4/8, 6/19, 7/15, and 9/19: namely, the

The types and frequency of events held in the larger set of twenty-two monasteries were basically consistent with those held in the smaller set of seven. Not a single large-scale, public Dharma assembly was held more than once that was not already included in the translated texts. The most common rituals, not including those in the regular morning and evening services, were Universal Buddha 普佛 rituals and Releasing Life 放生 rituals. The Precious Penance of the Liang Emperor 梁皇宝忏 ritual was also quite common.²¹ The yearly cycle of festivals structured dates for rituals, with multiple rituals often clustered on or around the same date. For instance, transmission of precepts (including monastic ordinations) was held concurrent with standard commemorative rituals for Śākyamuni on 4/8 and 12/8; Pure Land meditation retreats coincided with the commemorative days for Amitābha or Guanyin; and Flaming Mouth, Water and Land, or Great Mt. Meng 大蒙山 rituals coincided with rituals specific to the Avalambana Basin Dharma assembly on 7/15. Other listed public events not already discussed included the following:

- ♦ group cultivation 共修
- ♦ eight precepts of confinement and fasting 八关斋戒 retreats²²
- ♦ Chan-seven [meditation] 禅七 retreats
- ♦ recitation of various scriptures
- ♦ a “Dharma assembly for offering lights, worship, and repentance” 供灯拜忏法会 in a monastery actively promoting the offering of lights
- ♦ recollection of a Buddha 念佛 practices

three commemorative dates of Guanyin, Śākyamuni’s birthday, and the Avalambana Basin festival. In the PRC during 1959-1962, Welch mentions reports that 2/19, 4/8, 7/15, 12/8, and birthdays of “other divinities” were the most important Buddhist festival days (1972, 307).

- ²¹ Wang Zhiyuan, in his book on Buddhist rituals as performance art, states that the penances are the most important Buddhist “performance art,” and that the Liang Emperor penance 梁皇忏 is the most important penance, and is even called the “lord of the penances” 忏王 in Buddhist circles (2006, 198).
- ²² Yü describes such retreats in Taiwan during the 1960s, and explains that according to the understanding then, one of the precepts other than the precept not to eat after noon was divided in two and counted as two precepts, and the rule for the after-noon fast was not counted as one of the eight precepts (2013, 93). According to this understanding, the term *baguanzhaijie* 八關齋戒 would then be translated “the eight precepts and the [afternoon] fast of confinement [=retreat].” In contrast, Foguangshan (2000, s.v. “八關齋戒”) interprets the fast 齋 to be one of the eight precepts.

- ♦ Affixed Mindfulness in Three Times 三时系念 rituals²³
- ♦ regularly scheduled and occasional lectures
- ♦ two long-term, weekly lecture series on particular scriptures, namely on the *Lotus Scripture* (at Wenshuyuan, Chengdu, 4/15 to 7/15, 2010) and on the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (at Guanghua Monastery, Putian, every Sunday, during 2010)

More frequent, regular events at monasteries were scheduled according to two calendars, with regular meditation and lecture-related events tending to be scheduled according the Western calendar (for example, Sunday mornings, Thursday evenings, etc.), and with relatively ritualized or devotional events such as Universal Buddha, Releasing Life, and penance rituals sometimes clustered on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month.

The influence of modern Theravada Buddhism was evident in one monastery, and I was aware of the practice of Theravada style meditation in several other monasteries I visited outside the sample of twenty-two monasteries discussed here. Daci Monastery was unique in offering regular meetings for “meditation while moving” 动中禅, a form of meditation developed by the Thai monk Luangpor Teean (1911-1989) and often called “dynamic meditation” in English. Daci Monastery showed other evidence of influence from Theravada Buddhism. For instance, an inscribed stele dated to 2008 indicated that it had received donations of 480,000 yuan from the Thai Wat Phra Dhammakāya monastery 法身寺,²⁴ and one of the halls in the monastery was called the “Inner Contemplation Hall” 内观堂. The term “inner contemplation” in contemporary Chinese Buddhism is usually a translation for the Pali term *vipassanā*.

My sample is biased toward southern China. An informant I met in 2009 in Jiuhuashan 九华山 from the Northeast (Liaoning Province), a region I did not visit, told me that whereas in the south, the Water and Land and Flaming Mouth rituals were more popular, in the Northeast, the Mt. Meng 蒙山 and Affixed Mindfulness in Three Times 三时系念 rituals were more common. More research might reveal a north-south division in the Buddhist ritual structure and repertoire, as Jones has argued for contemporary folk Daoism

²³ See Kamata (1986, 873-87) for a text used in the performance of this ritual. Also see X 1464 and X 1465 for longer, canonical versions.

²⁴ Other monetary donations acknowledged on the stele ranged from 150,000 to 500,000 yuan; the only non-monetary donation consisted of 3000 *jin* 斤 (1500 kilograms) of tea, from a tea-selling enterprise. For a recent work describing the Dhammakāya movement, see Scott (2009).

(2010; esp. p. 212), but given institutions of standardization such as ordinations and the trans-regional circulation of personnel, I doubt it would be very pronounced for monastic Buddhism.

My sample also misses rituals that some Chinese may consider more or less “Buddhist” but that many ordained monastics in major monasteries today are likely to regard as non-Buddhist. For instance, Sun mentions rituals performed in contemporary rural Zhejiang such as “paying the debt for the next life” 还来生债 and “repenting the bloody pond” 忏血湖, which can be conducted by Buddhist monastics, Daoist ritual specialists, or local specialists called repentance ritual masters 忏生 (2013, 16). Some of the rituals my sample misses have a limited, regional distribution. For instance, Tam describes the ritual for the deceased in one specific area of Guangdong Province, called the “incense and flower Buddhist service” 香花佛事, which happens to include a “blood basin” 血盆 rite if the deceased is a woman.²⁵ Such rituals are performed by specialists who call themselves and are addressed locally as “monks” 和尚 and “*zhai* aunties” (*zhai*gu 斋姑). But these “monks” typically marry and eat meat (2012, 241). Similarly, Formoso, based on fieldwork from 1993 to 2005 among ethnic Teochiu (Chaozhou 潮州) Chinese in Guangdong Province, Thailand, and Malaysia, describes the “refining of the orphaned bones” 修孤骨 ritual, which informants believe was created by a (now deified) Buddhist monk and which has a “Buddhist dimension” (2012). None of these—and doubtlessly many other rituals, which may be locally confined, associated with a specific sub-ethnic group, or widely distributed across China—appeared in the posted materials I observed.²⁶

²⁵ Seaman, during fieldwork in central Taiwan from 1970 to 1976, also observed numerous “bloody pond” rituals for deceased women (1981). Yü mentions that the Taiwanese nun Wuyin (1940-) particularly disliked such rituals while growing up and suggests that the prevalence of such rituals has recently declined (2013, 52-54).

²⁶ Jones (2010), while focusing on lay Daoists, includes an excellent sketch of the overall field of ritual specialists in China, including both temple-based and household-based Daoists and Buddhists, as well as ritual specialists affiliated with other lay associations and sectarian societies. On the roles of (largely non-monastic) Buddhism within this broader ritual field, see in particular pages 3-9 and 13 (the overall ritual field), 135-41 (Buddhist involvement in funerals in a Beijing suburb), and 219-31 (Buddhist presence in ritual practice in Beijing and Tianjin).

Compared with large-scale public ritual events held in Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries, I noticed two major differences.²⁷ First, the (Samādhī) Water Penance (三昧) 水忏 ritual seems to be more frequent in Taiwan, but this requires more evidence to establish. Second, major Taiwanese monasteries are generally more flexible about shifting the dates on which to celebrate various events so as to fall on weekends or public holidays and probably as a result, the average age of lay participants in Taiwan seems younger than those in the PRC, who are often retirees.²⁸ For one example, on the schedule of rituals for 2013 (seen posted at the monastery in March 2013), the Taiwanese Lingyanshan Monastery 靈巖山寺 or its affiliate center in Taichung City celebrated Śākyamuni's birthday on 4/2 (rather than 4/8)²⁹ and Amitābha's birthday on 11/12 (rather than 11/17). In both cases these are on the last Saturdays before the actual traditional birthdays. Rituals marking the close of the summer monastic retreat were held on 7/17 (rather than 7/15), also a Saturday. Other Taiwanese monasteries have even rescheduled elements

²⁷ Hou (2012) lists common rituals performed in Taiwanese monasteries, and Yü (2013, 62) includes a schedule of the seven main Dharma assemblies held in a monastery in southern Taiwan during the 1960s. Two rituals they mention that we have not seen above include "Benevolent King National Protection Dharma Assemblies" 仁王护国法会 and "Audience with Mountain Dharma Assemblies" 朝山法会 [a pilgrimage and extended set of prostrations on a journey to a monastery, with the word "mountain" meaning monastery, which in fact is often on a mountain] (Hou 2012, 62), and a lamp-lighting and merit transfer ritual held on 12/1 (Yü 2013, 62).

²⁸ On the other hand, the causal logic could be reversed: that so many of the participants in rituals in the PRC are retired, based on my observations, might be the reason that the traditional dates are more closely adhered to there. Unfortunately we lack demographic data on the participants in Buddhist rituals and festivals. Welch (1967, 388) found that in eleven lay ordination yearbooks published from 1914 to 1947, women constituted 81% (679 of 838) of those ordained. Closer to the present, Sun also notes the predominance of the elderly, particularly women, at Buddhist activities and festivals in Lanxi County, Zhejiang (2010, 85-87). Similar to monasteries in Taiwan, a major nunnery in Hong Kong prefers to hold its annual Water and Land Dharma assembly over the Christmas vacation, when lay participants are free, instead of during a relatively auspicious late summer period (Chan 2008, 100).

²⁹ The fact that the monastery held the birthday event on 4/2 is probably not related to the fact that since 1999, the Taiwanese government has officially recognized the Buddha's birthday on the second Sunday in May, coinciding with Mother's Day, which in 2013 fell on 4/3 (Ko 2011). But the government action underscores the fact that Taiwanese are willing to transplant festival dates from the traditional Chinese calendar to the modern calendar.

of the Water and Land ritual so that it will extend over more than seven days but be more amenable to lay participation. In contrast, in the PRC, large-scale public rituals appear to be more closely wedded to specific dates on the traditional lunisolar calendar. This tendency exemplifies a more general difference I observed between monastics in the PRC and Taiwan: the Sangha in the PRC emphasizes recovering and preserving tradition, while monks and nuns in Taiwan, relative to their counterparts in the PRC, emphasize innovation.

Other Common Ritual Goods and Services

My discussion up to this point has largely ignored an important, related sphere of Chinese Buddhist ritual activities—those advertised for individual purchase in or around monasteries. Understanding such activities is important because they are significantly more common, although smaller-scale and less complex, than Dharma assemblies. This helps fill out our picture of the Buddhist ritual field and part of the territory along or beyond the fuzzy boundaries of what is “Buddhist” and “ritual.”

Up to this point it has been unnecessary to define either term. I have assumed that things and activities are Buddhist to the degree that contemporary Chinese attribute descriptors such as “Buddhist” 佛教的 to them. “Buddhist” is more frequently attributed to things or activities that, all else being equal, are found within monasteries or provided by ordained monastics, and which, furthermore, are not found outside monasteries or provided by non-monastics. In these contexts, when the label “Buddhist” is applied to activities it carries more cachet than other labels such as “folk” 民间的, “Daoist” 道教的, or “custom” 风俗, not to mention “commercial” 商业的 or “superstitious” 迷信的.³⁰ The greater relative prestige of Buddhism and Buddhist monastics in part drives Buddhist expansion into or

³⁰ Jones gives concrete examples, from greater Beijing, of how Buddhist ritualists may be more popular or at least of higher ritual status than Daoists in local communities as well. (1) Based on data mainly from the 1940s, he found that Buddhists were more numerous and were the ritualists of first choice for holding rituals (2010, 219-20). (2) Based on his fieldwork in the 1990s, he found Buddhists had greater prestige but were not more popular than Daoists for funerals, and so in mixed ritual events involving both Buddhists and Daoists, Buddhists began the ritual sequences before the Daoists, a rule exemplified by the expression “first Buddhist monks, then Daoists priests” 先僧后道 (2010, 137-38).

superscription of popular religion, or what Sun calls “Buddhification” (2010, 51-54, 67-71; 2013, 11-14). Given that to be Buddhist is to be legitimate, signs for services often make claims that they are legitimately Buddhist by indicating that what they advertise has scriptural precedents.³¹

Thus far I have, for the most part, taken Buddhist “rituals” to be those labeled by Chinese terms such as Dharma assembly (*fahui* 法会) and Buddhist service (*foshi* 佛事). However, I had a prior, implicit concept for the English term “ritual” before I could pair it with Chinese terms. Specifically, I have assumed that activities are rituals by degree and that rituals are, among other things, activities that are believed to (1) produce effects on the material world via the intervention of deities or mysterious forces, that (2) involve technical procedures whose correct structures and sequences are essential to (3) produce specific effects correlated to their ritual form.³² With these assumptions clarified, it is clear that whether or not activities are rituals can be a matter of degree. The same activity could be ritual to some but not to others, for whom it might be symbolic and/or entertainment.

Within Han Buddhist monasteries and other than Dharma assemblies, ritualized activities and products commonly advertised in my sample included the following:

³¹ Monasteries are not necessarily run by monastics. In some cases monasteries are controlled by government agencies or for-profit corporate firms, and there are no monastics living in them, or the monastics are in effect hired employees, or the “monastics” are in fact ordinary people dressed in robe-uniforms who commute to and from their homes. Tanzhe Monastery 潭柘寺, discussed below, is an example of a monastery run by a corporate firm (Zhou 2013). Based primarily on fieldwork conducted in Guangdong Province and focusing on who has effective control of their management, Ji and He (2014) suggest the following seven-category typology for contemporary Chinese Buddhist monasteries, namely those monasteries that are or are characterized by: (1) autonomous control by monastics according to traditional Buddhist precedents, (2) government dominated, (3) investor dominated, (4) government and monastic collaboration, (5) monastic and business collaboration, (6) family run, and (7) government, business, and monastic collaboration (2014). Recently, to protect the interests and image of Buddhism, prominent monastics have begun to push for the right for “religious activity venues” 宗教活动场所, which include monastic-led monasteries, to incorporate as juridical persons 法人, with economic and legal rights formally independent from those of their officers. Thanks are due to Ji Zhe for sending me the article by Ji and He (2014).

³² For more analysis of the category “ritual” within the context of Chinese Buddhism, much of which accords with my understanding of the category but unnecessary to elaborate here, see Sharf (2005).

- ♦ offering of lights to Buddhas 供灯
- ♦ sponsoring images of deities in the monastery 供养佛像
- ♦ donating for the construction of deity images, stupas, and monastery edifices
- ♦ ringing of auspicious monastery bells 鸣钟
- ♦ sponsoring a meal for all monastery residents 供斋, acknowledged with a long red strip of paper hung next to those from other recent donors
- ♦ purchasing a wish-making ribbon 许愿带, tied to railings near a deity or sacred tree³³
- ♦ purchasing of other protective and auspicious items including amulets 符 and placards 挂牌
- ♦ acquiring tablets, ribbons, or amulets to counteract (安, 谢, or 化) one of a given set of sixty astral deities (*taisui* 太岁), one of whom is inauspicious to a person during up to three years of every twelve year cycle, depending on one's year of birth
- ♦ purchasing various items, ranging from cultic items such as incense and deity images to prosaic objects such as key chains, many of which are advertised as having been "pre-consecrated" 已经开光
- ♦ installing and offering to memorial tablets 供养牌位 for oneself, relatives, friends, or ancestors [this and larger-scale variations of the following two items were mentioned previously]
- ♦ ransoming captured birds, turtles, and fish for "releasing of life" 放生 rituals
- ♦ consecrating one's personal deity images or other possessions in an "opening the radiance" 开光 ritual

All of these ritual-commercial activities were found inside monasteries that were clearly considered Buddhist, although some activities, such as purchase of wish-making ribbons, protective amulets, and counteracting astral deities, may be more typical of Daoist and other local temples. Some ritual-

³³ Similar to such prayer ribbons are the prayer cards in contemporary Chinese Confucius temples. For analysis of such cards, called *xuyuan qian* 许愿签, see Anna Sun (2013, 160-66). Sun found evidence that such prayer cards were actually invented as late as the year 2002 and were modeled after the prayer plaques (Jap. *ema* 絵馬) found in Japanese Shinto temples. More research is needed to clarify the extent and direction of influence between similar Shinto, Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist ritual objects.

commercial activities, notably the purchase of incense and animals for release, were also often provided by peddlers in small stands located near monasteries or along pathways for pilgrims and tourists in “religious tourism” 宗教旅游 sites such as the “four great famous [Buddhist] mountains” 四大名山 of Wutaishan 五台山, Emeishan 峨眉山, Putuoshan 普陀山, and Jiuhuashan 九华山, all four of which I visited.

Perhaps beyond the boundaries of “ritual” as defined above were other goods and services offered only by peddlers in stands outside monasteries. Some of these services had parallels to ritual services offered inside monasteries. For example, peddlers in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious tourism areas offered locks 锁 to be affixed to the railings along steep trails. Often one was to write one’s name and wishes on the lock, or a couple would write their names on the lock to symbolize the endurance of their love for one another.³⁴ Or, the locks could be functionally distinguished from one another, as I saw at one stand in the Wutaishan area in September 2012, with locks for love-relationship stability 同心锁, good luck for wealth 财运锁, peace and protection 平安锁, or general wishes 心愿锁. This functional differentiation for locks parallels the products and services offered within monasteries by monastics, including different kinds of tablets and lights. For instance, ritual tablets 牌位 throughout China usually come in two basic varieties: red “prolonging of life prosperity tablets” 延生禄位 and yellow “rebirth [in the Pure Land] lotus tablets” 往生莲位. Similarly, lights (called Buddha lights 佛灯, bright lights 明灯, radiance lights 光明灯, or merit lights 功德灯) may be sponsored. I have seen at least four ways of marketing such lights within Buddhist monasteries: (1) selling generic lights, each with multiple auspicious functions, all for the same price; (2) selling generic lights, but priced differentially depending on how high they are placed relative to other lights; (3) selling special-function lights, all for the same price; and (4) selling special-function lights priced according to their location on a vertical (often stupa-shaped) structure, relative to other lights. For a single example of case (4), at Tanzhe Monastery, Beijing, in March 2013, in one hall (another hall offered a slight variation) the following was on offer:

³⁴ Such locks are apparently Chinese versions of the “love locks” seen around the world since the early twenty-first century and which may have originated at the Bridge of Love in the Serbian village of Vrnjacka Banja during or shortly after World War One (Rubin 2014). As such the locks are elements in the world-wide tourist/ritual field, a network whose connections have probably on the whole increased in strength, length, and speed over the past several decades.

Kinds of lights: peace and protection lights 平安灯, shining career lights 光明事业灯, prosperity and wealth lights 旺财灯, and make-request-will-get-response lights 有求必应灯.³⁵

Term: Name(s) of patrons will be affixed to the light for exactly one year from the date of purchase.

Price: Ranging from 500 yuan for placement on the lowest level (level 13) to 6000 yuan for the highest level (level 1), with a gradually increasing spectrum of prices from top to bottom. The two middle levels, seven and six, were 1500 yuan and 2000 yuan, respectively.

Here we can see that there are parallels between the services offered within monasteries and those offered by peddlers around monasteries.³⁶ There is probably mutual influence in both directions. Within the monasteries, however, it is more common to see such services, such as the offering of lights, justified via explicit reference to particular Buddhist scriptures. In my observations, the most common text cited for such legitimation was the *Scripture on the Merit of Offering Lights* 施灯功德经 (T 702).

Summary and Discussion of the Broader Relevance of Buddhist Ritual Life to Monasticism

I have discussed how monasteries introduce and market certain rituals, sketched the overall range of certain kinds of rituals, and shown evidence on the relative frequency of rituals tied to specific calendar dates. My data suggest that the overall range of Han Buddhist rituals performed by ordained monastics in China is basically uniform. Other evidence suggests that the

³⁵ An advertisement on the main peak of Emeishan surpassed the selection here, offering eleven kinds of lights, including ones for marriage, family happiness, and the protection of the seven stars.

³⁶ Chandler mentions similarly differentiated recognitions for donations in the Taiwanese Foguangshan organization (2004, 224-34), including, for example, certificates whose "placement, wording, size, and coloring" (227) vary according to the amount donated. However, in the case of Foguangshan, at least during Chandler's research over fifteen years ago (1996 to 1998), he indicates that donations were most important, which implies that sale of ritual goods and services was secondary (226). On the other hand, the boundary between donations and sales is not always clear. In fact, Taiwanese monasteries have major incentives to frame what are in effect sales of goods and services at fixed prices (the prices for which are not written down) as gifts in exchange for donations, because this allows them to avoid paying taxes on the revenue from such transactions.

relative frequency of rituals varies by geographic region. In the PRC, dates for rituals and other Buddhist activities tend to be more closely tied to traditional dates on the Chinese calendar than in Taiwan, where events are more likely to be shifted to convenient dates on the Gregorian calendar.

Despite strong criticism from Buddhist reformers over the past century and cycles of state-sponsored suppression under the Communist Party, especially from 1949 until the late 1970s, the performance of rituals is today a central activity for the Sangha throughout China. This has not always been the case in the PRC. Official attitudes toward rituals and cycles of suppression in the early years of the PRC are detailed throughout Welch's work (1972), which also suggests that the relative importance of rituals for monastic revenue declined dramatically during this time period, particularly in certain geographic regions and in phases during the waxing of state suppression. Mingshan's diary provides us with a window into the revival of Buddhist ritual in the immediate post-Mao era, when it was still up for debate whether public performance of Buddhist rituals would be permitted. A preface to Mingshan's diary, written by his nephew and lay disciple, claims that the period from 1978 to 1992 involved the "revival of Buddhist rituals" 中兴佛事 (2002, 2). Mingshan's diary entries also indicate a shift in policies toward allowing rituals, but along a circuitous route in which they were sometimes performed before having received state authorization. Summaries of a few of the earlier entries from Mingshan (2002) follow.

- ♦ September 20, 1979: Formal ritual offerings and Flaming Mouth rituals were held; Mingshan surmises that the lay audience had not seen monastics perform Buddhist rituals in many years (47).
- ♦ September 25, 1979: Mingshan mentions three alternative opinions of authorities on whether to allow rituals at a certain monastery—to permit them only for foreigners, or for both foreigners and citizens, or for neither foreigners nor citizens (47).
- ♦ October 17, 1979: A decision was made by local authorities to allow Buddhist rituals to be performed inside monasteries (52).
- ♦ November 1, 1979: Provincial authorities conclude that the decision to allow Buddhist rituals still requires more research (53).
- ♦ September 28, 1981: Mingshan reports that the revenue for the Qita ["seven stupa"] Monastery 七塔寺 in Zhejiang is derived from

three sources—rents, Buddhist rituals, and production (in a factory producing cardboard boxes) (204).

- ♦ September 30, 1981: Mingshan reports that monks and nuns at a monastery in Putuoshan, Zhejiang are generally busy performing Buddhist rituals (206).
- ♦ December 25, 1983: Mingshan's review of the top ten Buddhist stories of 1983 includes "Buddhist rituals are prospering at each of the great famous mountains" 各大名山佛事兴隆 (probably referring to Wutaishan, Emeishan, Putuoshan, and Jiuhuashan) (343).

Today, rituals occupy much of the Sangha's time and constitute an important source of its revenue. Important questions remaining to be answered with more precision include how central rituals are today, whether their centrality is increasing or decreasing, and how the overall cultus is changing. For example, how has the cultus or the individual rituals comprising it shifted in terms of composition, frequency of performance, intensity, attendance, framing, imputed significance, and social effects? Answering these questions convincingly would require more investigation. For now I will close with a few tentative conclusions that reach beyond the data presented above and that highlight the centrality of rituals to monasticism in China now. These conclusions should be taken as working hypotheses awaiting verification or falsification.

First, performing rituals is today probably the largest single source of revenue for Chinese monastics, as it appears to have been during the Republican period (1912-1949).³⁷ Many of my informants, including the most senior teacher at a major seminary, agree with this hypothesis. One recent source, which released the annual revenue for Yufu Monastery 玉佛寺 in Shanghai, supports this claim. During the year 2003, it reported that 40% of income was derived from "religious ritual and ceremonial services" 宗教礼仪

³⁷ Welch discusses the finances of Republican era monasteries and provides estimates of the sources of revenue at four major monasteries, which were atypical for possessing large endowments and/or being linked to overseas networks of donors. Estimates for the percentage of revenue from ritual services during typical years prior to 1937 were as follows: 27.5% (Jinshan 金山), 25% (Qixiashan 棲霞山), 16.7% (Tianningsi 天寧寺), and 40% (Nanputuosi 難普陀寺, not including during summers for this last monastery, when income from crops provided all revenue) (1967, 207-43).

服务. Despite its being a major tourist site in Shanghai, income from entrance tickets was only the second largest (28%) source of income (Yang 2007, 38). Sun, in her recent dissertation on religions in one county of Zhejiang province, reports that performance of Buddhist rituals at a temple to a local deity was the second-largest source of annual revenue during 2005 to 2009, ranging from 16.4% to 38.3% of total revenue depending on the year. She reports that inviting monks to perform Buddhist rituals for devotees offered this non-Buddhist temple more substantial and reliable income than other rituals. The largest source of revenue during that period was from donations for a construction project, so it is possible that Buddhist rituals will even replace donations to become the largest source of income once the construction is completed (2010, 68).

Second, as in the Republican period, the performance of rituals continues to exist in tension with other Buddhist practices favored by reformers, such as study and meditation.³⁸ It is not that *Buddhist* rituals per se are considered ineffective or superstitious. Very few monastics, even radical reformers, have claimed that rituals, properly performed with the right intentions, should never be performed or simply do not work. Rather, common critiques are that rituals are too frequent, taking away time from more valuable activities; too focused on the dead; and too profitable, corrupting monastics into mercenary performers.³⁹ Here I will briefly show examples of tensions between ritual performance and seminary studies.

³⁸ The memoirs of the Taiwanese monk Ruwu 如悟 (1938-), a leader in monastic education, show how this tension between performing rituals and seminary education played out in his own life—both taking time away from his studies but also allowing for his tuition money to be paid (2008, 30-32, 41-42, 61-62). They also indicate that some monastics draw correlations between excessive ritual performance and two other phenomena they regard as negative, namely loose adherence to monastic vinaya and, particularly in Hong Kong and Taiwan but also in Guangdong and Fujian today, monastics living in private apartments rather than in monasteries, with the result that many large monasteries are seriously understaffed (2008, 65-67, 328-29, 439-441, 509-11, and 513-14).

³⁹ For more evidence that Chinese monastics from the Republican era onwards are rarely skeptical of the efficacy of rituals, almost never voice these doubts publicly, and focus their criticism on the ritual's commercialization, see Welch (1967, 197-99; 1968, 208-16); Xue (2013, 354-55); Bingenheimer (2004, 78); and Heise (2012, 228-32). Direct condemnations of rites for the dead were also published in the journal *Modern Buddhist Studies* 現代佛學, the official journal from 1950 to 1964 of the Buddhist establishment that was selected by and allied with the Chinese Communist Party. For example, see references in Welch (1972, 493 n. 72 and 520 n. 18). Yet even many of these criticisms were framed as

The Chinese monk Jingyin 淨因 mentions one facet of this tension, stating that “[t]he most serious problem [for Buddhism today] has to do with monks whose aim is to perform rituals in order to make money... some young monks consider going into Buddhist [i.e., seminary] studies to be a waste of time. They consider learning the business of rituals, however, to be far more practical” (Jing Yin 2006, 92). Perhaps the most important Chinese nun for seminary education in the second half of the twentieth century, Longlian 隆蓮 (1909-2006), forbade the nun students at her seminary from going out to perform “scripture-penance Buddhist services” 经忏佛事 (Qiu 2007, 168). Sun also reports on this phenomenon, noting that because performing rituals is so profitable, monastics in Lanxi County do little else. Not a single sermon on scriptures, for example, had been given in the county during the thirty years of Buddhist restoration. She found that nine of the ten “network complexes” of Buddhist monasteries were centered on the “ritual economy,” and that the Buddhism there was primarily a “provider of liturgical services based on the principle of economic transaction and a propitiatory religion that provides magical blessings” (2010, 93). The county government’s Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) enjoyed a share of the monasteries’ revenue (an arrangement common throughout China—through, for example, taking shares of ritual fees, entrance ticket fees, or registration fees), which may explain in part why it had a less cordial relationship with the one Buddhist network that was not centered on the ritual economy. Sun (2013) also includes concrete data on fees for temple registration in the same county. Twenty-one temples to popular deities had registered as “Buddhist sites” since 1997, at an initial cost of about 5000 yuan each (given to the RAB) and then for a 500 yuan yearly membership fee to the local Buddhist Association, one-third of which was transferred to the RAB.⁴⁰

Despite the misgivings of some monastics in seminaries, student-monastics 学僧 and seminary graduates also participate in many rituals that generate income. This is true even for those who graduate from the top

efforts to stop monastics from *abusing* the rites or to encourage them to engage in *more productive* occupations (usually farming or light industry), rather than critiquing the efficacy and underlying logic of the rituals per se.

⁴⁰ Also see Sun (2010, 111-12), for more details on these financial issues. During my fieldwork, I have heard accounts of other RABs taking or making offers such as the following: (1) in southwestern China, taking fifty percent of the income derived from Buddhist rituals performed at a certain monastery, and (2) in northern China, offering a Buddhist organization control of a restored historical Buddhist site, with future income from admission tickets to be split 70:30 by the RAB and Buddhist organization, respectively.

seminaries in the country, whose instructors and students often take a relatively negative view of such rituals. Zhaoyuan 照愿, an instructor at the prestigious Minnan Buddhist Seminary 闽南佛学院 (MBS), conducted a survey of 2009 graduates of the basic course 本科 at MBS (equivalent to a university undergraduate degree). Of these 69 recent graduates (31 male, 38 female), 81.2% reported participation in such rituals after graduation, with 36.2% reporting frequent participation (2012, 109). In his book on Buddhist culture and education, Lijing 理净, a seminary instructor at the Chinese Buddhist Seminary 中国佛学院 in Beijing, addresses this issue in his chapter on Buddhist education and explores ways to integrate traditional rituals with Buddhist theory in another chapter (2007, 297-320, 335-48). At seminaries I visited, classes would be suspended for a week when the monastery in which the seminary was located held large rituals such as the Water and Land Dharma assembly.

An online blog for alumni of the MBS reveals in greater detail some of the living situations and critiques that monastics affiliated or formerly affiliated with seminaries voice among themselves about Buddhist rituals. Under a discussion thread with the heading "It would be fine if there just weren't any scripture-penance [ritual] monasteries 经忏道场不要也罢," with entries dated from October to November 2005, participants (limited to alumni registered by the blog administrators) made statements such as the following:

Nun: "I made a vow not to do scripture-penances. It turned out that by relying [only] on donations from preaching, I almost starved to death... renunciants rely on the offerings of the people, but among Chinese people there are really not many who truly believe in Buddhism... I will persist: I would rather starve to death deep in the mountains than serve as a scripture-penance monastic among people 本人发愿不做经忏，结果靠讲经布教差一点饿死..... 中国佛教出家众是靠民众供养，而中国民众真信佛的人并不多..... 我坚持：宁在深山饥饿死，不做人间经忏僧" (18 November).

Another nun stated: "When did things change so that [rituals] are labeled with prices, a certain amount of money for one session of a Buddhist ritual? This fundamentally contradicts the Buddha's stipulations... A result of this explicit listing of prices is that it attracts a gang of people who come for the money. The like of such people shave their heads and put on robes, and rely exclusively on hustling around performing scripture-penance [rituals] for their livelihood... then when they've earned enough, they go back home to take wives

and have children 几时变成明码标价，多少钱一堂佛事来的？这根本就就有违佛制……明码标价的后果，倒是吸引一帮为钱而来的人，此辈剃发著袈裟，专以赶经忏为生……赚够了钱，回家娶妻生子去了” (1 November).⁴¹

Third, returning to tentative conclusions on the relationships between rituals and monasticism more broadly, the ritual economy produces diversified cohorts of ritual providers—of which ordained Buddhist monastics are but one group—which the ritual economy enables to be stratified further into sub-categories. Besides ordained Buddhist monastics, various other types of ritualists also provide such services, sometimes in open competition with one another, sometimes with one group or the other having a monopoly in certain regions.⁴² Even among those people identified as monastics, as the paragraph above and other accounts I have heard during fieldwork indicate, some become monastics in order to earn money for a few years before disrobing. Other apparent monastics, sometimes called “fake monks” 假和尚 in the national media, may have wives and children, and/or have never been formally tonsured or ordained.⁴³ In China there are thus in fact, in terms of their social identities, married Buddhist clerics (as in Japan), short-term clerics (as in Southeast Asia), and longer-term clerics (the Chinese ideal). It is difficult to

⁴¹ See the following URL for this thread on the MBS blog: <http://web.nanputuo.com:81/nptcls/ViewThread.asp?TopicID=73>.

⁴² Recall, for example, the ritual specialists 忏生 that Sun mentions (2013, 16) or the unordained lay ritualists who call themselves monks 和尚 that Tam mentions (2012), discussed above. Also see Jones (2010). For Taiwan, I discuss this issue briefly and include film clips of married ritualists who call themselves Buddhist monastics 僧 (see <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~dmgildow/1.2.html>). As an example of a region (northern Shaanxi Province) where funeral services may be provided by clergy (Buddhist or Daoist) or by hired lay villagers, but mainly by the latter during 1995-1998, see Chau (2003, 60). Similarly, for Taiwan, where Thompson conducted research in Yunlin County during 1981-82, fourteen of sixteen funerals were performed by Daoists and two by Buddhists (1988, 72). The structure of the market for funeral providers in these cases is unclear, however. For example, to what extent are services by different ritualists seen by consumers as interchangeable? In some areas, are ordained Buddhist monastics the highest in the local hierarchy but also too few and/or too expensive to dominate the market (like psychiatrists in the market for mental health services), or are they instead less trusted?

⁴³ For one in a series of notorious stories nationwide during 2011-2012 about “fake monks” earning money from pilgrims/tourists, often through ritual services, in Yanquan Monastery 岩泉寺 in Kunming, see <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2012-01-09/163623771125.shtml> (last accessed 12 March 2014).

assess the relative numbers of these different types of clerics, and there are of course innumerable intermediate cases of monastics between such categories. If the ritual economy were not so lucrative, there would be fewer people willing to live double lives in order to partake in it.

Rituals are thus monastic Buddhism's most important financial resource, yet are conceived by many Buddhists as the greatest obstacle to the further ethical, intellectual, and spiritual development of its Sangha. Solutions to this predicament would be to find equally lucrative but more acceptable sources of revenue or to reformulate ritual performances such that they are more acceptable.⁴⁴ Greater integration into the tourist economy, a means of generating substantial revenue today that is not always linked to rituals, is even more anathema to such leaders (Zhou 2013). Ongoing negotiations to allow monastic institutions to incorporate and thereby legally possess collective property and other assets are more promising in the long term, although much of the revenue to establish such endowments is likely to be generated by rituals. Since misgivings about rituals center more on their frequency and the motivations for their performance than on their content, ritual reform also does not offer a promising solution. Barring major changes in the structure of the market for rituals and monastic recruitment, rituals will probably long remain both an institutional cornerstone and aggravating millstone for reformers in the Chinese Sangha.

⁴⁴ Xue (2013) claims that the monk Xingyun 星雲 of the Taiwan-based Foguangshan 佛光山 organization is promoting what, in effect, are new ways to frame Buddhist rituals, such that they involve the laity more and emphasize benefits to the living as well as to the dead. His analysis is partially convincing and yet sometimes it is still hard to distinguish modern expressions and the rhetoric of reform from substantial breaks with past practices. For instance, Buddhist rituals for centuries have claimed to bring "dual benefits" 兩利 to both the living and the dead (with phrases that practices benefit the "living and dead" 存亡, "invisible and visible" 幽明, or "netherworld and *yang*" 冥陽). Also see related discussion in Heise (2012) and Chan (2008), but note in particular the very traditional motivations of thirty-three of forty lay sponsors of Water and Land Dharma assemblies interviewed by Chan in "modern" Hong Kong: "for their deceased family members, with the primary intention of saving or providing a better second rebirth for them" (102). For a study of what clearly are ritual innovations within Buddhism, collective weddings held in Taiwan, see Learman (2005, esp. 284-325).

Appendix 1: Translated Texts

Text 1

Yongfu Chan Monastery Origins

The Buddha said: "All beings possess the wisdom and meritorious characteristics of the Thus-come One; all beings can become Buddhas," and "When people have scattered minds and enter a stupa-temple complex, with [just] one invocation of homage to a Buddha, they will all have already attained the Way of the Buddhas."⁴⁵

Whether it's chanting scriptures and upholding precepts, giving donations and releasing life, dissolving calamity and performing veneration and penance, praying for [good] fortune and the extension of life, or even delivering the deceased and diligently performing funerary and memorial rites,⁴⁶ cultivating all good dharmas 法, or delivering all beings, each and every method 法 [of practice] can be the Dharma [or: methods] of the Buddhas 佛法. For this reason, among Buddhist services and ceremonials, whether they are services involving faith in the Buddhas, making requests to the Buddhas, or becoming a Buddha, all are without exception named "Buddhist services."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The first part of this quotation, "All beings possess the wisdom and meritorious characteristics of the Thus-come One," does not appear in this exact form in any scripture attributed to the Buddha. Based on searches on the CBETA website (www.cbeta.org), elements of this traditional saying appear in several scriptures (see, for example, the *Flower Adornment Scripture* 華嚴經, T 278, 624a13-20) and in more or less similar form in dozens of Chinese commentaries, and it appears in exactly this form in the primary ordination manual used by Chinese monastics today, the *Correct Model for Transmitting the Precepts* 傳戒正範, at X 1128, 644b18-19. The second part of the first quotation, "all beings can become Buddhas," does not appear in exactly this form anywhere in canonical scriptures or commentaries, but very similar phrases (including "all humans can become Buddhas") occur in about a dozen commentaries. The second quotation comes directly from a verse section in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* 法華經, at T 262, 9a24-25; in the original context of the sūtra, all the verbs in this passage could be translated in the past tense.

⁴⁶ The expression "diligently performing funerary and memorial rites" comes from the *Analects of Confucius* 論語, chapter 1, article 9, in the first half of a statement by Master Zeng.

⁴⁷ The term "Buddhist services" (*foshi* 佛事) most commonly means Buddhist rituals, especially those for the dead, which in many circles have negative

Yongfu Chan Monastery, long known as the most blessed place in Qiantang,⁴⁸ was founded over 1600 years ago in the Eastern Jin [317-420] by the venerated monk Huili [fl. 4th c.]. Since the Song dynasty relocated to the south [1127], it has frequently been a place of practice for the imperial family to pray for fortune and merit. Today, the Buddhist architectural structures of Yongfu Monastery are majestic and its Dharma banners are hung high. So as to expound the Buddhas' virtue and promulgate their intent, to remunerate the Four Kindnesses⁴⁹ and to succor [those experiencing] the Three Sufferings,⁵⁰ in accordance with the [proper/traditional] regulations⁵¹ we have specially adorned and purified this place of practice and made dignified the ritual proceedings. So as to accord with the sentiments of devotees, we [here, to the right on this signboard] show and explain for the general public⁵² the names, merits, and significance of the Buddhist services and Dharma assemblies that are conducted in this monastery throughout the course of an entire year. We wish that all *dānapatis* [=patrons] of good faith, upon seeing or hearing [of these services], will generate the bodhi mind, rejoice in the merit [being made], and support [these services] as conditions permit.

connotations. However, the term can be understood to mean Buddhist activities or things in general. The phrasing on this poster pushes the reader to understand the term in a broader sense with more positive connotations. For an example of Buddhists making exactly the same efforts with virtually the same term (in this case with "doing Buddhist services or things" 做佛事), see Welch (1972, 260).

48 Qiantang: a former name for Hangzhou.

49 Four Kindnesses: many lists of four sources of kindness to be requited exist; one commonly mentioned set today includes (1) parents, (2) sentient beings, (3) rulers, and (4) the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).

50 Three Sufferings: several lists of three kinds of suffering exist; one common list is the set of (1) suffering as physical pain, (2) suffering as change and decay, and (3) suffering inherent in the nature of conditioned states.

51 A sign hung in another part of this monastery, namely in the courtyard in front of the Star of Fortune Pavilion 福星阁, specifies that a certain image was re-fashioned "according to the old regulations" 依舊制, and probably something similar is implied here. "Old" or "traditional" tends to have a positive valence within Chinese Buddhism today. The second character, *zhi* 制, could also be interpreted to mean "system" 制度 or "ceremonial" 仪制 rather than "regulations" 制法. (The character 舊 on that particular sign was in traditional Chinese characters—I'm replicating the exact characters, i.e., traditional or simplified, in the original texts, throughout this article.)

52 "General public" translates 大众, which in other contexts can be translated "great assembly," "audience," or "congregation."

Note: If advice regarding Buddhist services is required, please contact [our] monastery's Guest Hall or [one of our] Dharma masters.

Telephone, Guest Hall: 0571-87965671

Telephone, Dharma masters: 13588772603 18657159117

Text 2

Overview of Buddhist Services at Yongfu Chan Monastery: Common Buddhist Services

Scripture Chanting Dharma Assemblies	Reading and chanting Buddhist sacred scriptures can bring forth wisdom, dissolve karma, and foster correct knowledge and views. Scripture chanting Dharma assemblies enable the living to dissolve calamities, cultivate fortune and plant virtue, and, in addition, transfer merit to all ancestors, both aggrieved and intimate, leading them to attain the good [karmic] fruit of rebirth in a pure land.
Universal Buddhas Dharma Assemblies	The "Universal Buddhas" [ritual] originated in the Sui period with the Great Master Xinxing, who combined [the practices] of universal veneration of the Buddhas and repentance for sinful karma and connected these with the power of all devotees under heaven, for a universal offering to each and every Buddha. ⁵³ The Universal Buddhas Dharma assemblies at Yongfu Monastery are generally divided into [two types,] the "Universal Buddhas for Prolonging Life" and the "Universal Buddhas for Rebirth [in the pure land of Amitābha]." The Universal Buddhas for Prolonging Life [ritual] shines the radiance of the Buddhas into the [recipient's] Fundamental Destiny and Primordial stars [<i>benming yuanchen</i>], enabling the living to dissolve calamity and petition for fortune, praying that in this life, one will always maintain good fortune, long life, health, and peace, and keep all disasters at a distance. ⁵⁴ The Universal Buddhas for Rebirth [ritual], in contrast,

⁵³ As noted in the section "Categorization of the Rituals," above, there are other understandings of the meaning and history of *pūfo* 普佛, here translated "Universal Buddhas."

⁵⁴ My translation of *benming yuanchen* 本命元辰 largely follows the definitions given in Foguangshan 2000 (s.v. "本命元辰" and "元辰星"). A more literal, fuller translation would be "[star(s)] of fundamental [personal] destiny and primordial celestial body or bodies," with the celestial bodies identified with or paired with astral deities, but which in some Chan usages are demythologized and understood as equivalent to one's fundamental nature 本性. As Shengkai explains, recipients of blessings produced by the ritual have their names written on red papers or tablets and the primary deity invoked is the Buddha Yaoshi

	involves diligently performing funerary and memorial rites through the power of the majestic vows of the Buddha Amitābha and to absolve and lift up the deceased to bring them toward the Pure Land, for rebirth in the Western Land of Utmost Bliss and attaining ultimate liberation. ⁵⁵
Prayer for Fortune Dharma Assemblies	Prayer for fortune involves, as the term implies, the seeking of happiness and the stating of one's wishes. The Prayer for Fortune Dharma Assemblies at Yongfu Monastery utilize particular scriptures, hymns, <i>gāthas</i> , and other ritual procedures and, through the empowerment from Buddhas and bodhisattvas, extirpate karmic obstacles; summon forth the augmenting of good conditions; lead to success in one's career; and make things go satisfactorily according to one's wishes. Depending on who is making the wishes, there are prayers for fortune for individuals, families, and institutions. In addition, devotees can also make an offering and hang up a "fortune-prosperity" [strip of red paper] in the Star of Fortune Pavilion of Yongfu Monastery ⁵⁶ and write one's wishes on it, with prayers for longevity or fortune or prosperity, for oneself or one's elders. One will quickly be able to succeed in various affairs, and

["master of medicine"] 药师佛 (2001, 60). For more on related Buddhist astrology, see Sørensen (2011); Orzech and Sanford (2000); Mollier (2008, 134-73); and Birnbaum (1983, 92-102).

- 55 Shengkai clarifies that the "rebirth" subtype involves making yellow (as opposed to red) paper tablets for the deceased, which are called "lotus tablets" 蓮位 (2001, 59-63). The term "lotus" is an allusion to rebirth on a lotus flower in Amitābha's pure land. Red is well known as an auspicious color in China; yellow can be related to the dead, as in the terms "Yellow Springs" 黃泉 for the underworld and "yellow earth" 黃土 for soil from a grave. Visitors to Chinese Buddhist monasteries can decipher many rituals and implements they see if they realize that many rituals are divided into those for the living and those for the dead. Those for the living often occur to the ritual "east" (i.e., stage-left of the main altar), and involve the color red and the deities Yaoshi Buddha and Guanyin ["observing sounds"] Bodhisattva. Those for the deceased often occur to the ritual "west" (stage-right), and involve the color yellow and the deities Amitābha Buddha and Dizang ["earth storehouse"] Bodhisattva.
- 56 The Star of Fortune Pavilion 福星閣, one of many halls in Yongfu Monastery, enshrines a statue of the Star of Fortune god, wielding a *ruyi* 如意 [as-you-wish] scepter, at the center-rear. To the rear and side are racks with hooks, on which long red strips of paper are hung. Each strip of paper includes printed, auspicious, gold-colored words and spaces to write one's name, the date of hanging the paper, and one's wishes. As an example, one strip of paper I saw, with writing indicating it was posted on 29 March 2013, had the words "[We] wish that the whole family be safe and healthy, and that [our] daughter's work goes smoothly" 愿全家平安健康女儿工作如意.

	fulfill one's wishes.
Making Offerings of Memorial Tablets	Making offerings of [i.e., having installed] memorial tablets is also called installing "lotus tablets for rebirth [in a pure land]." These are [set up] in order to make sacrifices to and deliver deceased elders. On each tablet, the full name of the deceased is inscribed, along with the dates of their birth and death. This [method] is often used in Buddhism to guide beings toward rebirth in a pure land, with the living making such offerings so as to diligently perform funerary and memorial rites and to fulfill obligations of filiality. Yongfu Chan Monastery, respecting Buddhist ceremonial, has lotus tablets installed in the Lotus Hall of the monastery's Hall of the Three Sages, and so throughout the year they are perfumed by the sounds of scriptures and Buddhas' names, so as to satisfy the wishes of the many devotees for remembrance and deliverance of the deceased and for increasing the fortune of younger generations.
Purification by Sprinkling and Opening the Radiance	Purification by Sprinkling is a frequently performed sacred Buddhist ritual, namely a sacred ritual in which mantras and spells from scriptures are employed to empower sweet dew [=holy water] so as to purify and make sublime the site purified by sprinkling. ⁵⁷ Prior to each of the various Dharma assemblies at Yongfu Monastery, purification by sprinkling must be performed so as to drive away contamination and purify the ritual site. This method can also be used for the empowerment of large objects [and places or events] such as residences, cars, at groundbreaking ceremonies, at opening-for-business ceremonies, etc., so as to ensure everyone in the family, young or old, comes and goes safely, and for auspiciousness and success. Opening the Radiance is the empowerment of Buddhist images or [other] objects by means of particular Buddhist ritual procedures involving scriptures and spells. Because beings are all tainted by ignorance and unable to fully see the principle of the true characteristic underlying phenomena, this Opening the Radiance ritual is employed and a physical object is used to manifest the true. Relying on the compassion and wisdom of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, this allows us to be able to introspect and contemplate, to perfect our fortune and wisdom, and to develop the inherent radiance of our self-nature.

⁵⁷ As Changzhi pointed out to me, the English term "ablution" could be an acceptable, less literal translation for the Chinese *sajing*, "purification by sprinkling." However, unlike ablutions in many traditions, a *sajing* is usually only a light sprinkling of water around a physical location, not a thorough cleansing of one's body or part of one's body.

Veneration and Penance Dharma Assemblies	Veneration and penance is an abbreviation for “seeking forgiveness and feeling regret,” or repentance, ⁵⁸ and is also called worship and penance. It is the repentance, through veneration and worship of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, of the bad karma one has created, as in the expression to correct faults and cultivate the good, and to forever disavow bad karma. Of the worldly multitudinous beings dwelling in the world, who could be without blame? [Yet] there are the wise and the awakened who, on the borderless sea of suffering, have turned back their heads and seen the shore, and who have then broadly cultivated goodness and accumulated measureless merits. Yongfu Monastery, responding fully to the requests of devotees, frequently holds the following worship-penance Dharma assemblies throughout the year: the Great Compassion Penance, Dizang Penance, Yaoshi Penance, and Samādhī Water Penance. ⁵⁹ Furthermore, every year on the memorial days of Guanyin Bodhisattva (2/19, 6/19, and 9/19), a Great Compassion Penance is held, by which through Guanyin Bodhisattva’s power of compassion the congregation is empowered and repents bad karma created in the past and broadly cultivates good, sacred merit.
Yoga Flaming Mouth Dharma Assemblies, and Great Mt. Meng Dharma Assemblies	The “Yoga Flaming Mouth” and “Great Mt. Meng” both rely on the power of the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha and, with a mind of great compassion toward all beings in extreme suffering in evil paths of existence, make extensive, ultimate donations. ⁶⁰ The Dharma assemblies make use of yogic esoteric ritual procedures, chanting mantras and divine spells to beckon beings from the six paths. With the inconceivable, omnipresent power of the Buddha’s vows as support, nourishment is extensively bestowed and the truth of the Buddhadharmā is proclaimed for their benefit. Then, with

⁵⁸ Here I follow Shengkai’s interpretation of the monk Yijing’s 义淨 (635-713) analysis of the term *chanhui*, comprised of a Sanskrit element, *chan* 忏, which is a clipped transliteration of the Sanskrit term *kṣamā* 忏摩, plus the indigenous Chinese term *hui* 悔, to regret or repent (see Shengkai 2004, 12-18). For more on repentance rituals and the term *chanhui*, see Kuo (1989).

⁵⁹ For a description of these penances, including their historical development, root (source) scriptures, ritual manuals, and commentaries, see Shengkai (2001, 10-13 [Samādhī Water Penance], 16-19 [Great Compassion Penance], 19-22 [Yaoshi Penance], and 22-24 [Dizang Penance]). For more on the Great Compassion Penance, also see Kamata (1986, 20-44) and Reis-Habito (1991).

⁶⁰ For a detailed study of the flaming-mouth ghost feeding rituals along with analysis of the history of the Mt. Meng ritual, see Lye (2003). For explanation of the shorter version of the Mt. Meng ritual as integrated into the regular evening services held in Chinese monasteries, as well as its relation to the newer “Great Mt. Meng” ritual, see Chen (1999, esp. 13-14, 149, and 163-176).

	bodhi mind, they are granted refuge [in the Three Treasures] and have transmitted to them the <i>samaya</i> precepts. ⁶¹ These [rituals] cause beings in extremely painful states of existence to be able to hear the Dharma, repent, and turn away from thoughts of evil karma, so they leave far behind the suffering in evil paths, grow in their good faculties, and rapidly attain the Way of the Buddhas. Thus, among the various donations and offerings, the “Yoga Flaming Mouth” and the “Great Mt. Meng” are among those [generating] the most immense, inconceivable quantities of merit.
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Text 3

Overview of Buddhist Services at Yongfu Chan Monastery: Buddhist Services Held at Fixed Intervals

Lecturing on Scriptures	Lecturing on scriptures is lecturing so as to explain classical scriptures and to promote the Dharma of the Buddhas. ⁶² At regular intervals, Yongfu Monastery holds scripture lectures in the Brahmā Flute Hall of the Kalaviṅka Teaching Cloister. ⁶³ Dharma masters
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⁶¹ *Samaya* in this context means “pledge,” “commitment,” or “vow.” For more on *samaya* precepts in the context of Chinese Buddhist ghost feeding rituals, see Lye (2003, 207-8, 255, 268, 275-80, 329-30, and 340).

⁶² For the ritual frameworks into which lectures were integrated during medieval China, see Ch’en (1973, 240-55) and Mair (2013, 93-119); for the same on early twentieth century China as well as emerging tensions with modern styles of giving lectures, see Welch (1967, 310-14).

⁶³ At least one international Buddhist Studies conference, which I attended, has been held in the Brahmā Flute Hall as well. Some two dozen participants from many countries presented papers at the *Vinaya Texts and Transmission History: New Perspectives and Methods* conference, held 21-22 August 2013 (photographs available online at <http://www.pusa123.com/pusa/tuji/huodong/2013/56228.html>). As Yongfu Monastery funded many of the costs of the conference, this example illustrates how the funding of the academic study of Buddhism is interwoven with the funding of contemporary monastic Buddhism, which is of course to a large extent funded by the performance of rituals such as those listed in the texts translated in this article.

Brahmā is an ancient Indian deity and this name in Chinese is often understood to mean “pure.” A *kalaviṅka* is a mythological bird in ancient India, sometimes depicted with a human head, which is said to produce a beautiful sound. In Buddhist scriptures, the speaking of the Buddha and other deities is compared to the sound of this bird. For instance, in the *Great Adornment Treatise* 大莊嚴論經, a section begins with the following passage: “At that time, the World-honored One, like a clear, cloudless sky bringing forth the deep, distant sound of thunder; or, like the sound of a great dragon king, king of bulls, and *kalaviṅka*...

	from this monastery who are proficient in their understanding of Buddhist principles give explanations and guidance on basic Buddhist scriptures or on the congregation's points of confusion. In addition, other well-known Dharma masters and scholars of Buddhism are invited to this monastery to deliver special-topic lectures. Lectures on scriptures open wisdom and order confusion, dissolve doubts and obstacles, and give everyone a platform for learning about Buddhism and propagating correct faith. These lectures have from the beginning been received with great support by general devotees.
Releasing Life	In form, releasing life is accomplished through saving living creatures that have been trapped, captured, are about to be butchered, or whose life is [otherwise] in danger. ⁶⁴ Its essence is to manifest and promote the compassionate spirit of Great Vehicle Buddhism. To release life one abstains from killing, which is to protect life. During the process of releasing life, as money is spent to ransom the lives of creatures, it is a donation of wealth. As the released creatures are all given the [Three] Refuges, repent, recollect the Buddha(s), and transfer merit, it is a donation of Dharma. As releasing living creatures releases them from entrapment and from the fear and suffering produced by the struggle before death, it is a donation of fearlessness. So the three forms of donation are made complete through one responsive action of releasing life; truly the merit of releasing life is inconceivable! Yongfu Monastery's Protecting Life Merit Society organizes releasing life [rituals] for the general devotees throughout the year, facilitating the congregation's limitless merit and good fortune!
Granting the Three Refuges	Taking refuge is the sign that an ordinary person has entered the gate of Buddhism and has formally become a devotee. It is also called taking refuge in the Three Treasures, which are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Buddha is the awakened one, the Dharma is [his] doctrine, and the Sangha are those who perpetuate the Buddha's legacy of wisdom. To take refuge means to turn to or rely on, and it signifies that one hopes that by relying on the power of the Three Treasures through the course of one's life journey, one will gain support and liberation. Only those who have sincerely taken refuge in the Three Treasures are able to tread the path of cultivation that severs afflictions, and thereby acquire the real benefits of the Buddhadharma. Yongfu Monastery broadly opens ways of guidance and expedient doors, and has fixed for every year the eighth day of

with a pure [=Brahmā] sound, asked Upāli...爾時世尊猶如晴天無諸雲翳，出深遠聲猶如雷音，如大龍王，亦如牛王，如迦陵頻伽聲.....出梵音聲告優波離.....” (T 201, 300b11).

⁶⁴ For more on such rituals in late imperial China, see Smith (1999).

	the fourth month, [our] Buddha-ancestor's sacred birthday, and the eighth day of the <i>La</i> [=twelfth] month, ⁶⁵ the Buddha's day of attaining the Way, as dates to hold a Taking Refuge Dharma assembly.
Water and Land Dharma Assemblies	A Water and Land Dharma assembly is held in order to deliver beings in the three realms of water, land, and air. ⁶⁶ Its full title is "Sublime Assembly for the Great Feast and Universal Deliverance of the Sagely and Worldly in the Waters and Lands of the Dharma Realm," and it is the most dignified and grand of the Han Buddhist scripture-penance [class] of Dharma assemblies. The full course of a Water and Land Dharma assembly requires seven days and nights, and includes universal offerings to Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout worlds in the ten directions and deliverance of beings cycling within the six paths of birth and death. Universally delivering [those in] the three states of existence and jointly requiting [those responsible for] the Four Kindnesses, making Buddhas sigh in praise and delighting dragons and divinities, the Water and Land Dharma assembly brings about limitless, inconceivable merit. One [then] vows to transfer the fortune and merit in a universal bestowal to all the sentient [beings] in the Dharma Realm, so that all attain the unsurpassed <i>anuttara-samyak-sambodhi</i> [=supreme enlightenment].
Dharma-Flower Seven	The "Dharma-Flower Seven" comes from the Tiantai school's <i>Dharma-Flower Samādhi Practice Methods</i> , ⁶⁷ and "seven" means seven days; [the ritual] involves continuous chanting of the "Wondrous Dharma Lotus Flower Scripture" ⁶⁸ for seven full days. By means of a series of cultivation activities including chanting scripture; following the text as a wondrous contemplation; and

⁶⁵ *La* 臘 refers to a festival originally held during the twelfth lunar month on a day whose position on the agricultural calendar varied year to year based on a duodenary cycle of days (specifically, it was held on the third *xu* 戌 day following the winter solstice). A plausible translation for *La* would be "festival for the sacrifice from the hunt." For more on the *La*, see Bodde (1975).

⁶⁶ For a study of the structure and history of this ritual, see Stevenson (2001).

⁶⁷ On the signboard, the title of this text was printed incorrectly twice, as 法华三昧行法, meaning the "Dharma flower three flavor practice methods" (an understandable slip, given that the next entry deals with feasts). I have translated as if the title read 法华三昧行法, meaning *Dharma-Flower Samādhi Practice Methods*, which is an alternative title for the *Dharma-Flower Samādhi Penance Ceremony* (T 1941), a text attributed to the Sui dynasty monk Zhiyi (538-597). For more on various forms of repentance and meditation developed by Zhiyi, see Stevenson (1986).

⁶⁸ That is, the *Lotus Sūtra* as translated by Kumārajīva (T 262). The quotation marks around the title are also in the Chinese source text.

	[ritual acts of] veneration, praise, and repentance; and through seeking realization within a specified period of time, one experiences the principle of reality. For the convenience of the fourfold congregation's cultivation of fortune and wisdom, Yongfu Chan Monastery has compiled a "Dharma Flower Seven" ritual manual that is based on the <i>Dharma-Flower Samādhi Practice Methods</i> . [This ritual] is held at fixed time(s) each year, and general devotees are welcomed to enthusiastically rejoice together [in it].
Feasting of Divinities Dharma Assembly	The feasting of divinities is also called making offerings to divinities; this Buddhist service is held in Mahayana Buddhist monasteries on the first day of the year. The ritual procedures for Yongfu Monastery's feasting of divinities are based on carrying out those in Ming dynasty Vinaya Master Hongzan's text, the <i>Ritual Protocol for Feasting Divinities</i> , ⁶⁹ which involves chanting scriptures; veneration and penance; laying out pure foods as offerings; offerings to the Three Treasures of the ten directions; and pious veneration of the divinities that protect the orthodox Dharma, accumulate fortune, and dissolve calamity. As feasting divinities is a wondrous method for cultivating fortune by donations, it is deeply welcomed by general devotees. Every year on the ninth day of the first month, everyone gathers in front of the Star of Fortune Pavilion to participate in a Feasting of Divinities Dharma assembly, so as to petition for happiness and peace for the whole family throughout the new year.
Bathing the Buddha Dharma Assembly	The eighth day of the fourth month on the agricultural calendar is the Buddha's birthday, which is also called the Bathing the Buddha festival, an important day on which Buddhists around the world commemorate the founder Śākyamuni Buddha's birthday. ⁷⁰ [Our] Buddha-ancestor was born in northern India, and it is said that on the

⁶⁹ This title appears to be an alternative title for Hongzan's 弘贊 (1611-1685) *Ritual Protocol for Making Offerings to Divinities* 供諸天科儀 (X 1493). This and other ritual texts for making offerings to (heavenly) divinities refer to the *Golden Radiance Scripture* 金光明經 (T 663), which describes how various divinities generate the bodhi mind and so in effect become bodhisattvas, vow to uphold the Dharma, protect Buddhists, etc., as the canonical justification for making offerings to such benevolent divinities.

⁷⁰ For a translation of a canonical Buddhist scripture on bathing the Buddha's image, see Boucher (1995). While Buddhists around the world do celebrate the birthday of Śākyamuni Buddha, they do so on different dates. Whereas 4/8 on the traditional Chinese calendar is never a full moon day, in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Tibet, the Buddha's birthday is always on a full moon, normally in May. For a substantial but still incomplete listing of the various discrepant, alleged dates for significant events in Śākyamuni's life, see Foguangshan (2000, s.v. "釋迦牟尼").

	<p>day of his birth, nine dragons spit out water onto the Crown Prince as a bath of anointing the crown of his head [S. <i>abhiṣeka</i>]. Therefore, there is a scriptural basis for [the custom of] bathing [an image of] the Buddha with scented water. Every year on the Bathing the Buddha Festival, Yongfu Monastery is adorned and offerings are presented to an image of the Crown Prince within scented water, with the fourfold congregation of monastics and laity alternating in bathing the Buddha. Besides expressing remembrance for the Buddha, through the merit from bathing the Buddha, one can also deliver seven generations of parents and multiple kalpas of both aggrieved and intimate family dependents, leading them to rebirth in a pure land, and beings in the six paths of the Dharma Realm, leading them to leave behind the bitter sea [of birth and death]. Even more, we can cleanse the filth from our minds, cause to shine forth the radiance of our self-nature, and attain the pure Dharma body of a Thus-come One.</p>
<p><i>La</i>-Eighth Porridge Assembly</p>	<p>The eighth day of the twelfth month on the agricultural calendar is the <i>La</i>-Eighth Festival, when [our] Buddha-ancestor Śākyamuni saw that the myriad beings undergo the torturous suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death, and so made a vow to become a Buddha to deliver beings, and accordingly renounced his right to the throne, left his family, and cultivated the Way.⁷¹ After performing six years of austerities in the Snowy Mountains [=Himalaya] but still not achieving liberation, he then ate milk porridge presented by a shepherdess, sat upright and entered proper concentration, and on the eighth of the <i>La</i>-month, under the bodhi tree realized the Way and became a Buddha. For several thousand years now, people have eaten porridge every year on the eighth day of the <i>La</i>-month in commemoration of our Buddha-ancestor achieving the Way. Every year on the eighth day of the twelfth month, Yongfu Monastery holds a <i>La</i>-Eighth Porridge Assembly, during which porridge is presented as an offering to the Buddha, and extensively donates <i>La</i>-eighth porridge to devotees and elderly, decrepit, orphaned, and suffering people coming from the four quarters so as to establish</p>

⁷¹ De Groot argues that 12/8 was originally the day on which homage was given to the god of the stove or hearth (*zaoshen* 灶神), in the form of pork and alcohol offerings (1981, 2: 580); in Text 6, a ritual for the stove god takes place on 12/23, a date also cited in reports from the nineteenth century in Fujian province but in some cases with a one day discrepancy (i.e., held 12/24) in works by Doolittle (2002 [1865], 81-85) and de Groot (1981 [1886], 577-81). In the first half of the twentieth century, 12/8 was also celebrated in northern China by non-Buddhists in a secularized manner, mainly involving eating a special kind of porridge, as informants have attested to me, a custom also recorded in Beijing in the 1920s and 1930s in Bogan (1994 [1928], 1-2) and Tun (1994 [1936], 93-94), respectively.

	karmic connections with them. Enveloped by the thick fragrance of <i>La</i> -eighth porridge, we express our gratitude for the Buddha's compassion and experience the human warmth between people.
Avalambana Basin Assembly	"Avalambana" means "freeing [those] hanging upside down," meaning [freeing those in] extreme suffering. ⁷² According to the <i>Avalambana Basin Scripture Spoken by the Buddha</i> [T 685] translated by the Western Jin [monk] Zhu Fahu [=Dharmarakṣa, ca. 265-313], beings in the path of hungry ghosts have abdomens as large as drums and throats as thin as needles, and their hunger is difficult for them to endure, as if they were hung upside down—[so] they are in extreme suffering. ⁷³ In his compassionate rescue, the

⁷² For an overview of scholarship on the origins of the term *yulanpen*, here translated as *avalambana*, see Teiser (1988, 21-23), but also note recent scholarship that casts doubt on purported links between *yulanpen* and the Sanskrit term *avalambana* (Kapstein 2007, 227-28). In translating Chinese Buddhist terms into English, as a rule of thumb I try to replicate how such terms would appear to a Chinese Buddhist. Thus, terms that in the Chinese are or appear to be transliterations (i.e., even if they are fabricated inventions) from foreign languages are represented in English as foreign words as well. It is an established convention to translate Chinese Buddhist terms into classical Sanskrit rather than into Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, even if the hybrid Sanskrit terms were more commonly used in ancient India or were the terms that Chinese Buddhists would have heard from foreign missionaries. Thus, I follow that general convention here, using the classical Sanskrit term *avalambana* rather than the hypothetically reconstructed, hybrid Sanskrit term *ullambana*. Finally, my translation here captures the mainstream traditional Chinese view that *yulan* is a foreign term and *pen* refers to a receptacle for presenting offerings, which in contemporary understanding (often reflected in ritual practice as well) is something like a portable wash basin (rather than a bowl or tray). Thus, my translation uses *informative redundancy* in translating the Chinese *pen* as both the syllable *bana* in *avalambana* and as "basin." Such redundancy, in which a transliterated word is followed by a translation of the word (or a translation of the broader class to which the word pertains) is a commonly used technique in many contexts. For translations into Chinese, for example, consider the term *Yanluowang* 閻羅王 ("King Ya[ma] rā[ja]": see Teiser 1994, 2-3), in which the term *rā[ja]* means "king." Another example into Chinese is the term *chanhui* 忏悔, described in footnote 58 of this article. A more prosaic example is the Chinese term for beer, *pījiu* 啤酒, or "be[er]-alcohol." An example of this method for translations into English is the useful and informative redundancy in academic translations in archeological journals of terms such as "*ding*-tripod," where the Chinese word in the source text is simply *ding* 鼎, i.e., a certain kind of tripod.

⁷³ For a translation and analysis of this scripture, see Teiser (1988, 49-56), which casts some doubt on the identity of the translator of the scripture. Also see the translation of this scripture in Bandō (2005).

	<p>Buddha gave a discourse on a method to liberate [such beings], namely to respectfully present basins full of all kinds of exquisite, flavorful foods to the Buddha and Sangha on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the agricultural calendar, and to take the power of the inconceivable field of fortune of the Three Treasures to liberate their suffering of “hanging upside down.” Thus, [this festival] is called the “Avalambana Basin assembly.” On the traditional day of the Avalambana Basin Dharma assembly of 7/15 of the agricultural calendar, the <i>Avalambana Basin Scripture</i> is chanted so as to absolve multiple generations of ancestors. The sangha of Yongfu Monastery chants this scripture, using the merit from chanting to universally succor myriad beings in the six paths, and to absolve multiple generations of both aggrieved and intimate [karmic] creditors.</p>
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Text 4

Dharma Announcement

On the eighth day of the fourth month of the agricultural calendar (May 17 of the public calendar), as we are honored to come upon the sacred and auspicious birthday of our original teacher Śākyamuni, Yongfu Monastery will hold a Bathing the Buddha Dharma assembly in the Precious Hall of the Great Hero. All monastics from the monastery and devotees of the ten directions, harboring pious minds, will perform veneration and worship with utmost sincerity and will respectfully bathe with top quality fragrant waters the sacred image of the Crown Prince, which will be surrounded by clusters of fresh flowers. Incense will be burned and flowers scattered as offerings to the Buddhas, with prayers to increase [our] fortune and wisdom, and through this ritual of bathing the Buddha, the [members of the] congregation will reflect on their sins and on reforming and moving toward the good, so as to wash away the karmic obstacles on one's⁷⁴ body, so that it becomes like the pure, unstained mind of the Buddha. Through the sublime functioning of the Buddhadharma [we] adorn the human mind, purify the soul, activate wisdom, and make society harmonious and stable. After inviting in the sacred image of the Crown Prince at 5:30am on the eighth, we will then bathe the Buddha. There will also be a Taking Refuge Dharma assembly, and virtuous, devout lay disciples will be able to have tablets for prolonging life installed. Let us all bathe in the Buddha's kindness, and together be immersed in the joy of the Dharma!

⁷⁴ Amending 已 to 己.

Note: If you have registered a memorial tablet, please come to the Guanyin Hall or to the Guest Hall.

Telephone for Advice: 0571-87965671
13588772603 18657159117

Website: www.yongfusi.com.cn

Guest Hall, Yongfu Monastery
4 April 2013

Text 5

Schedule of Buddhist Activities in Jingci Monastery for the Year 2013 (Agricultural Calendar)

Title of Buddhist Activity	Scheduled Date	Content of the Activity	Method of Participation
New Year's Eve Auspicious Universal Buddhas ⁷⁵	New Year's Eve	Dharma Assembly for Welcoming Spring and Praying for Fortune	register for memorial tablet(s) ⁷⁶
New Year's Auspicious Universal Buddhas	1/8	Auspicious Universal Buddhas	register for memorial tablet(s)
Offering to Divinities	1/9	Feasting of Divinities	participate as conditions permit
Sacred Birthday of Guanyin Bodhisattva ⁷⁷	2/16-2/18	Chanting Guanyin Bodhisattva's "Universal Gate Chapter" ⁷⁸	register for memorial tablet(s)

⁷⁵ An "Auspicious Universal Buddhas" 吉祥普佛 is alternative name for what is more commonly called the Universal Buddhas for Prolonging Life, a form of the Universal Buddhas ritual whose karmic benefits accrue to the living. See the analysis of the term *pufo*, here translated "Universal Buddhas," in the section titled "Categorization of the Rituals."

⁷⁶ To "register for memorial tablet(s)" normally means to pay a fee to have memorial tablets installed at the ritual site. One has inscribed on the tablets the name or names of the designated recipients of the merit and ritual effects that the performance generates.

⁷⁷ This date, normally 2/19, and the other two dates for commemorating Guanyin, typically 6/19 and 9/19, are based on the dates when Princess Miaoshan 妙善公主, a legendary figure believed to have been a manifestation of Guanyin, was born, achieved enlightenment, and left her family, respectively. This monastery

Dharma Assembly of the Liang Emperor	3/2-3/8	Worshipping [following the] <i>Precious Penance of the Liang Emperor</i> ⁷⁹	register for memorial tablet(s)
Dharma Assembly for Mañjuśrī	4/2-4/4	<i>Prajñā Scripture of Mañjuśrī</i> ⁸⁰	register for memorial tablet(s)
Bathing the Buddha Dharma Assembly	4/8	Bathing the Buddha in the Precious Hall of the Great Hero	participate as conditions permit
Guanyin Bodhisattva Achieving the Way	6/18	Universal Buddhas [ritual] in the Precious Hall of the Great Hero	register for memorial tablet(s)
Avalambana Basin Assembly	7/15	Chanting the <i>Avalambana Basin Scripture</i>	register for memorial tablet(s)
Sacred Birthday of Dizang Bodhisattva	7/23-7/29	Chanting the <i>Scripture on the Fundamental Vows of Dizang Bodhisattva</i> ⁸¹	register for memorial tablet(s)
Guanyin Bodhisattva Leaving Her Family	9/16-9/18	Worshipping [following the] <i>Precious Penance of Guanyin</i> ⁸²	register for memorial tablet(s)

has arranged for these rituals to Guanyin to conclude one day prior to the actual normative days of commemoration. Yü traces the earliest appearance of this date listed as the birthday of Guanyin, to be celebrated in monastic communities, to the year 1317 (2001, 295). For more on the formation of the legend of Princess Miaoshan as Guanyin, see Dudbridge (2004).

⁷⁸ This is the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, as translated by Kumārajīva (T 262).

⁷⁹ For a study of this repentance ritual, highlighting its similarities and differences to a parallel Daoist ritual text and its distinctly Chinese characteristics, see Chappell (2005). Also cf. Shengkai (2001, 8-10).

⁸⁰ The full title of this scripture is the *Mahā Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra Spoken by Mañjuśrī* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若波羅蜜經 (T 232; alt. T 233).

⁸¹ For analysis of this scripture (T 412), see Ng (2007, 107-15).

⁸² Based on my research, and in agreement with Shengkai's analysis (personal correspondence, 20 January 2014), this ritual text is not one of the more mainstream Guanyin ritual manuals discussed by Shengkai (2001, 13-19). Rather, it is probably the same as or related to the text whose full name is the "Compassionate Numinous Precious Penance of Guanyin" 慈悲靈感觀音寶懺, of which a manuscript reprinted in 1927 by a press evidently in the "Western Lake" area (i.e., in Hangzhou, the same location as Jingci Monastery) is available online. It appears to be, relative to other Guanyin penances, short and simple. See *Cibei linggan guanyin baochan* (1927).

Flower Adornment Dharma Assembly	10/6-10/26	Chanting the <i>Flower Adornment Sūtra</i>	register for memorial tablet(s)
Amitābha Dharma Assembly	11/11-11/17	Intensive Buddha-seven ⁸³	no tablets set up
Śākyamuni Buddha Achieving the Way	12/8	Universal Buddhas [ritual] for Celebration for the Sage ⁸⁴	participate as conditions permit

Regular Activities: Recollection of the Buddha in the Stupa Cloister; on mornings of the first and fifteenth of each lunar month in the Precious Hall of the Great Hero, the presentation of offerings; all devotees may participate as conditions permit

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Contact phone numbers: 0571-87995600; 87975255

Jingci Monastery Guest Hall

Text 6

Nanputuo Monastery

Schedule of Major Events During the *Guisi* Year [10 Feb. 2013-30 Jan. 2014]

Month	Days	Major Event	Notes
First Month	1 st	Maitreya Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday; ⁸⁵ Universal Offering ⁸⁶	Festive Period of the New Spring Auspicious and lucky [times]

⁸³ This is normally a meditation retreat focusing on the recitation of Amitābha Buddha's name. The dates of this particular retreat are coordinated with the traditional dates for the birthday of Amitābha Buddha in China, which is on the seventeenth day of the eleventh month. This was the date of the birthday of the monk Yongming Yanshou, who is believed to have been a manifestation of Amitābha (Feng 1995, 208). For the basic structure and history of such retreats, reformulated in the early twentieth century to be more like Chan meditation retreats, see Welch (1967, 89-102). For a description of the practices that may be considered Tang and Song dynasty predecessors of the Buddha-seven, see Stevenson (1995).

⁸⁴ See the description of "large *pūfo*" in the section titled "Categorization of the Rituals" for more on this ritual.

	2 nd	Universal Offering	Pilgrims gather like clouds Duties to be assigned
	3 rd	Offering to the Four [sets of] Sages ⁸⁷	
	8 th	All officers resign their positions ⁸⁸	

85 This “birthday” is actually that of the monk Budai 布袋, who lived in the late ninth and early tenth centuries; this date was taken as the birthday of Maitreya since Budai was identified as a manifestation (*huashen* 化身) of Maitreya (Feng 1995, 208).

86 For the “Universal Offering,” groups of monks go to each of the many halls in monastery and make offerings to all the deities therein. Given the dates this is performed, it resembles the traditional Chinese custom of paying short visits to give greetings to friends, neighbors, and relatives during the New Year period. The *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate* includes formulas to be chanted in various halls and for various deities in a monastery during a universal offering (*Chanmen risong* 1900, 118-29).

87 A standard set of the “four sages” for this ritual in many monasteries are as follows: (1) Skanda Bodhisattva 韋馱菩薩; (2) Saṃghārāma Bodhisattva(s) 伽藍菩薩, a term understood as either (a) a collective term for all the protector deities of a monastery, or (b) the Buddhist name for the deity popularly known as Sire Guan 關公; (3) ancestral masters or “patriarchs” 祖師; and (4) the Meal Supervisor Bodhisattva 監齋菩薩, a deity whose image can often be found around dining halls or kitchens, who informants tell me watches out for people who steal or waste food. This deity is identified in ritual guides and commentaries as an emanation body 化身 of a king of the *kimnaras* 緊那羅王. Ritual formulas and eulogies for these four deities can be found, listed in this order, in many late imperial liturgical texts, including in the *Daily Chanting from the Scriptures*, compiled by Zhuhong in the year 1600 (Zhuhong 1600, 177c-178c). In the *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate*, formulas for worship of these sets of deities are listed together under the heading “lesser prayer ceremonies” 小祈禱儀 (*Chanmen risong* 1900, 102-7), and they are collectively referred to as the “four sages” 四聖 (1900, 104). Yet according to an informant who lived at Nanputuo Monastery prior to and during most of 2013, the “four sages” in this specific context are slightly different; in the order of the various rites performed for their worship, they are (1) Saṃghārāma Bodhisattva, (2) Skanda Bodhisattva, (3) Ancestral Master Bodhidharma 達摩祖師, and (4) the Meal Supervisor Bodhisattva. Another set of “four sages” frequently encountered in contemporary Chinese Buddhist ritual appears in the phrase “four sages and six worldlings” 四聖六凡, which appears in the rituals texts and posted schedules of the Water and Land ritual. In this latter context, the “four sages” refers to four kinds of enlightened beings: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *arhats*. See Stevenson (2001).

	15 th	Newly assigned positions hung on placards; Yuanxiao ["primordial night"] Festival	
		Three Thousand Buddhas; ⁸⁹ Feasting of Divinities; Auspicious Offering ⁹⁰	Three days total; feasting of divinities on the 18 th
Second Month	8 th	Anniversary of Śākyamuni Buddha Leaving His Family	
	19 th	Guanyin Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday	From 7am of the 18 th until 10pm of the 19 th , pilgrims gather like clouds; duties to be assigned
	21 st	Puxian ["universal worthy"] Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday	
	24 th	Sweeping of tombs for the Qingming ["clear and bright"] Festival ⁹¹	Ancestral master stupas (inside Xiamen University and on rear hill: Zhuanfeng, Guangqia,

⁸⁸ The custom of monastic resignations and appointments to offices during the first half of the first lunar month corresponds to the customs Welch described in early twentieth century monasteries (1967, 38-43).

⁸⁹ The full name of the "Three Thousand Buddhas" ritual is the "Precious Penance of the Renowned Names of the Three Thousand Buddhas" 三千佛洪名宝忏; it is based on three scriptures, namely T 449, T 450, and T 451, which list the names of one thousand Buddhas who appear in the past, present, and future *kalpas* [eons], respectively. A full translation of the name of this ritual could thus include glosses as follows: "the three [sets of] [one] thousand Buddhas [of the past, present, and future, respectively]."

⁹⁰ A former resident of this monastery tells me that at Nanputuo Monastery, the auspicious offering is the same as the feasting of divinities 斋天, which is the same as "offerings to deities" 供天. Yet they are listed separately here. My guess is that on this particular entry on the calendar, "feasting of divinities" refers only to offerings to divinities, whereas the "auspicious offering" refers to those for the Three Treasures, which are normally worshipped in the course of a standard feasting of divinities ritual (Shengkai 2001, 91-92). Another possibility is that the auspicious offering is simply an elaborate version of the standard "presentation of offerings" 上供 performed to enshrined images of deities every month on the first and fifteenth day of the month (Shengkai 2001, 57-58), and it is called "auspicious" because it takes place during the New Year period.

⁹¹ The Qingming festival, Duanwu festival (5/5), and Mid-Autumn festival (8/15) have been official public holidays since 2008, when the Labor Day holiday was also shortened. This shift in public holidays seems to reflect the intention of the

			Taixu, Huiquan, Miaozhan, the double stupa, Jianlao), the universal stupa ⁹²
Fourth Month	4 th	Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday	
	8 th	Śākyamuni Buddha's Sacred Birthday	Bathing the Buddha Festival
Fifth Month	5 th	Duanwu ["upright middle"] Festival	
	13 th	Samghārāma Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday ⁹³	
Sixth Month	3 rd	Skanda Bodhisattva's Sacred Birthday	
	19 th	Day of Guanyin Bodhisattva's Achieving the Way	Pilgrims gather like clouds: as per 2/19

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to distance itself from its former claims to specifically represent the proletarian class and to shift some of the basis of its legitimacy from Communist ideology to the traditional cultural forms of imperial China. For the current schedule of official holidays in China, see State Council (2013).

⁹² For descriptions of the universal or "common" stupa, which is often a columbarium, see Prip-Møller (1967, 171-78) and Welch (1967, 203-4 and 340-41). The edifice on the grounds of Nanputuo Monastery (near the hotel that the monastery operates) that I saw, inscribed with the characters "universal stupa," looked more like an ordinary—albeit large—tomb, rather than a columbarium with separate niches for bone ash for each deceased (May 2013). Structures I have seen in China that are labeled with the Chinese character *ta* 塔, excluding modern structures such as pylons or towers that are also 塔, include walk-in columbaria; tower-shaped tombs; free-standing, uncovered columbarium walls; or ordinary-looking tombs. For a biography and notes on the monk Zhuanfeng (1879-1952), founder of the Minnan Buddhist Seminary and former abbot of Nanputuo Monastery, see Yu (2000, 193-99) and Nichols (2011, 152-56), respectively.

⁹³ As this date corresponds exactly with one of the several days claimed as the birthday of the popular god Sire Guan, it is probable that here the term "Samghārāma Bodhisattva" is used as a proper noun for that popular deity. See http://www.hkbuddhist.org/magazine/483/483_05.html for a contemporary critique of the conflation of Sire Guan with the collectivity of monastery guardians. The *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate*, in a chart of twenty-six memorial days for Buddhist deities, mentions that Samghārāma Bodhisattva's birthday is said to be on either 5/13 or 6/24 (*Chanmen risong* 1900, 376).

Seventh Month	1 st	Precious Kindness and Compassion Penance of the Liang Emperor ⁹⁴	Six days total
	13 th	Dashizhi [“attainment of great power”] Bodhisattva’s Sacred Birthday	
	15 th	Monastic Release of Self from Restraint Day ([also known as] Buddha’s Day of Rejoicing, Avalambana Basin Assembly, or Middle Primordial Festival) ⁹⁵	Morning, Avalambana Basin Assembly; Evening, Public Flaming-Mouth [ritual] ⁹⁶
	29 th	Dizang Bodhisattva’s Sacred Birthday ⁹⁷	
Eighth Month	15 th	Mid-Autumn Festive Period	
Ninth Month	19 th	Day of Guanyin Bodhisattva’s Leaving Her Family	Pilgrims gather like clouds: as per 2/19
	29 th	Yaoshi Buddha’s Sacred Birthday	
Tenth Month	15 th	Water and Land Dharma Assembly	Seven days and nights total
	18 th	Anniversary of the perfect quiescence [i.e., death or “final	Time of [his] perfect quiescence: 19 December 1995

⁹⁴ This ritual is the same as that mentioned in notes 21 and 79, but with a slightly more complex title given.

⁹⁵ For more on this festival in medieval China, see Teiser (1988).

⁹⁶ Anyone is free to register to have merit transferred to their ancestors for a Flaming-Mouth ritual that is “public” or “for the congregation,” and anyone may watch the performance.

⁹⁷ Dizang’s birthday is traditionally 7/30 rather than 7/29 (Ng 2007, 3; *Chanmen risong* 1900, 376). Probably this monastery is simply celebrating Dizang’s birthday one day early; traditionally, celebrating birthdays early is acceptable but late is not. For a brief overview of how Dizang became associated with Mt. Jiuhua 九華山 and with the Korean prince Kim Chijang 金地藏, see Ng (2007, 216-22) and Wang-Toutain (1998, 247-58). Both of these books focus on the origins and medieval cult of Dizang, and indicate that contemporary Chinese conceptions of Dizang were largely formulated as late as the Ming dynasty.

		nirvana"] of Old Monk Miao-zhan ⁹⁸	
Eleventh Month	17 th	Amitābha Buddha's Sacred Birthday	
	20 th	Winter Solstice Universal Offering	Ancestral master stupas (inside Xiamen University and on rear hill: Zhuanfeng, Guangqia, Taixu, Huiquan, Miao-zhan, the double stupa, Jianlao), the universal stupa
Twelfth Month	8 th	Day of Śākyamuni Buddha's Achieving the Way; Ten Thousand Buddhas Dharma Assembly ⁹⁹	Ten Thousand Buddhas Dharma Assembly, ten days
	18 th	Feasting of divinities; presentation of offerings; sending off prosperity tablets ¹⁰⁰	

⁹⁸ Miao-zhan (1910-1995) was the former abbot of Nanputuo Monastery and played a central role in reviving the monastery and its affiliated seminary during the 1980s and 1990s. His role is briefly described in Ashiwa's description of Nanputuo Monastery (2009, 60-67), and his biography is available in Yu (2001, 83-90).

⁹⁹ An informant from Nanputuo Monastery tells me that the Ten Thousand Buddhas Dharma Assembly involves reciting the names of the Buddhas given in scrolls five through twelve of the *Scripture on the Names of the Buddhas as Spoken by the Buddha* 佛說佛名經 (T 440), with a prostration performed after the recitation of each name or title of a Buddha.

¹⁰⁰ "Sending off prosperity tablets" is a ritual involving the transfer of merit to living people whose names are written on red "prosperity tablets" 祿位 through the incineration or "sending off" 送 of those tablets. The fact that this ritual is held toward the end of the year, near the time that the stove god makes his visit to heaven, may be related to the belief that the spirits of the deceased leave their memorial tablets (called "lotus tablets" 蓮位 or, often in less Buddhist contexts, "spirit tablets" 神位) on or around that time of year for their visit to heaven of about two weeks. See for instance Ahern (1973, 119), Doolittle (2002, 83-87), and de Groot (1981, 2).

	23rd	Sending off the stove [deity] ¹⁰¹	Preparations for welcoming the new spring!
	30th	Universal Offering; welcoming back the stove [deity]; Universal Tea (New Year's Eve party) ¹⁰²	
Note: <i>Poṣadha</i> is held every month on the 15 th and 30 th of the agricultural calendar (15 th for [reciting] <i>bhikṣu</i> precepts, 30 th for [reciting] bodhisattva precepts)			

¹⁰¹ For a description of the custom of sending off, welcoming back, and making offerings to the stove or “kitchen” god in popular religion from the mid-nineteenth century, which also occurred on 12/23 or on 12/24, see the works by Doolittle and de Groot in the note above. For a note on the position of the stove god within the broader context of family ritual and social and religious hierarchy, see Wolf (1974, 133-34, 178). The *Daily Chanting of the Chan Gate* includes a hymn for the stove god and refers to his visit to heaven; thus we can see that monasteries have long appropriated this popular belief (*Chanmen risong* 1900, 128).

¹⁰² An informant at Nanputuo Monastery tells me that the “universal tea” there is basically an open party for the residents of the monastery and which monastery donors and worshippers are also free to attend. Foguangshan (2000, s.v. “普茶”) indicates that the term contrasts with the term “special tea” 特為茶, which is for a select group of people. Other monastic informants tell me that such “universal tea” parties are held at other celebratory events, including for the succession ritual for a new abbot or, in the past, upon receiving an award from the emperor. The *Notes on the Verified Meaning of the Pure Rules of Baizhang* (X 1244) commentary from the Qing dynasty states that a “universal tea” involves eating food as well as drinking tea, and is to be held on various occasions, including on four specific days of each lunar month, on 8/15, and upon the investiture of a new abbot. Mingshan’s published diary shows that he often “ate universal teas” 吃普茶, which could include bags of candies and cakes for everyone present, and that such events were often held on festivals days, especially New Year’s Eve (2002, 68, 137, 470, 800; 2003, 189, 290, 696).

Appendix 2: Chinese Source Texts

Most formatting from the original posted signboards has been preserved, including punctuation, boldface type, simplified versus traditional characters (which are sometimes both present within a single sign), etc. Original typefaces and relative size of characters are not replicated.

Text 1

永福禅寺 缘起

佛言：“一切众生皆具如来智慧德相，一切众生皆可成佛”……“若人散乱心，入于塔庙中，一称南无佛，皆已成佛道”。

诵经持戒、布施放生、消灾礼忏、祈福延生，乃至超度先人慎终追远，修一切善法，度一切众生，凡一切法皆可为佛法。是故佛门事仪之中，信佛之事、求佛之事、成佛之事，尽一切事总称为佛事。

永福禅寺，素称钱塘第一福地，肇自东晋慧理尊者而为开山，迄今已1600余年，自宋室南迁以来，常为皇家祈福功德道场。今永福寺梵宇庄严，法幢高悬，为阐扬佛德、宣唱佛怀，感酬四恩、慈济三苦，特依制严净道场，庄肃轨仪，应信众之情，将本寺全年施行之佛事法会的名目及其功德意义等开示大众，愿诸善信檀越、见者闻者，发菩提心、随喜功德、随缘护持。

备注：如需佛事咨询，请与寺院客堂或法师联系

客堂电话：0571-87965671

法师电话：13588772603 18657159117

Text 2

永福禅寺佛事一览：日常佛事

诵经法会	读诵佛经经典，能开慧消业，树立正知正见。诵经法会，能使现在者消灾、培福植德，并将功德回向一切冤亲先祖，令得往生净土之善果。
普佛法会	“普佛”，源于隋代信行大师，其将普礼诸佛与忏悔罪业联系起来，结合普天信众之力，普供养一切诸佛。永福寺普佛法会，一般分为“延生普佛”和“往生普佛”。延生普佛，以佛光注照本命元辰，能为现在者消灾祈福，祈祷现生今世永保福寿康宁、远离一切灾厄；往生普佛，则是慎终追远，以阿弥陀佛宏誓愿力荐拔先人回向净土，往生西方极乐世界，而获得究竟解脱。
祈福法会	祈福，顾名思义祈求幸福，诉说心愿。永福寺祈福法会，以特定的经文、赞偈等仪轨，以佛菩萨之加持力消除业障，感召增上善缘，成就事业，如意圆满。因祈愿人不同，可分为个人祈福、家庭祈福、集团祈福。此外，信众还可以在永福寺福星阁，悬挂供养“福祿”，把心愿写在上面为自己或尊长祈祷福祿，速能成就诸事、圆满心愿。
供奉牌位	供奉牌位，又称安奉“往生莲位”。是为了祭祀超度先辈亡者，在牌位上刻其先人姓名和生卒年月，佛教常用此以接引众生往生净土，世人供奉以慎终追远，圆满孝道。永福禅寺尊佛仪制，安奉往生莲位在寺院三圣殿莲堂，长年熏修经声佛号，以满足广大信众追思超度先人，并为晚辈增福的心愿。
洒净 开光	洒净，是佛门常行仪制，即用真言经咒加持甘露，使洒净处净化升华之神圣仪式。永福寺各种法会之前必先洒净以驱除污秽，净化坛场。此法亦可用于住宅、汽车、动土建设、场所开业等大型物品的洒净加持上，以确保合家大小出入平安、吉祥如意。 开光，即是以佛教特定经咒儀轨加持佛像或者器物。因众生皆受到不明垢染，不能彻见诸法实相之理，所以用开光仪式，借物显真，依佛菩萨之慈悲和智慧，让我们能反省观照，圆满福慧，开发本具的自性光明。
礼忏法会	礼忏即忏悔的略称，又称拜忏。即通过礼拜诸佛、菩萨，忏悔所造恶业。所谓改过修善，恶业永弃。众生凡夫居世，谁能无过，有智者先觉，苦海无边回头是岸，进而广修诸善，增长无量功德。永福寺普应信众之请，全年常行之拜忏法会有：大悲忏、地藏忏、药师忏、三昧水忏等。并且在每年的观音菩萨纪念日（二月十九、六月十九、九月十九）礼拜大悲忏，以观音菩萨大慈悲力加持大众，忏悔往昔所造诸恶业，广修诸善聖功德。
瑜珈焰口 法会 大蒙山法 会	“瑜珈焰口”、“大蒙山”都是藉佛、法、僧三宝的力量，以大慈悲心向一切极苦的恶道众生做广大究竟的布施。整个法会运用瑜珈密部仪轨，诵持真言神咒召请六道众生等，仗佛不可思议圆通愿力，为其广行施食并宣扬佛法真谛。然后以菩提心为其授皈依、传三昧耶戒。能使极苦道的众生都可以闻法、忏悔，各使其转恶业之心并永远脱离恶道之苦，增长善根、速成佛道。所以“瑜珈焰口”和“大蒙山”，于诸布施供养中，功德甚巨，不可思议。

Text 3

永福禅寺佛事一览：定期佛事

讲经	讲经即讲解经典，宣扬佛法。永福寺于迦陵讲院的梵籁堂中定期举行讲经活动，由本寺精通佛理之法师对佛教基本经典或大众疑惑进行讲解和指导，还邀请寺外知名法师和佛教学者到本寺作专题讲座。讲经开慧理惑、解疑消障，给大家提供一个认知佛教，弘扬正信的平台，自开讲以来深受广大信众的支持。
放生	放生是以救护那些被擒、被抓、将被宰杀、命在垂危的众生物命为形式，彰显和发扬大乘佛教慈悲精神是其本质。放生就要戒杀，就是护生，在放生过程中，因为放生花钱买物赎命，是财布施；因为放生与物类众生一起皈依，一起忏悔，一起念佛，一起回向，是法布施；解除物命被擒被抓，死亡前挣扎怨恨的痛苦恐惧，是无畏布施；三种布施，放生一应俱全，放生功德真的是不可思议！永福寺护法功德会为广大信众常年组织放生，成就大众功德，福德无量！
授三皈依	皈依是普通人进入佛门，成为正式信徒的标志，亦称皈依三宝。三宝指佛、法、僧，佛为觉悟者，法为教义，僧为延续佛的慧命者。皈依为皈依或依靠之意，也就是希望依靠三宝的力量在生命旅程中得到依怙与解脱。诚心皈依三宝的人，才可能踏上断除烦恼的修行道路，从而获得佛法的真实利益。永福寺广开接引之路，方便之门，定于每年的四月初八佛祖圣诞日和腊月初八佛陀成道日举行皈依法会。
水陆法会	水陆法会，是为了超度水陆空三界众生而举行的法会，全称为“法界圣凡水陆普度大斋胜会”，是汉传佛教经忏佛事中最庄严和最隆重的法会。整个水陆法会全程历时七个昼夜，普供养十方世界诸佛菩萨，救度六道生死轮回中的众生，水陆胜会三有普度、四恩齐酬，令诸佛赞叹、龙天欢喜，具有不可思议无边功德。愿将福德普施回向一切法界有情，共证无上阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。
法华七	“法华七”出于天台宗《法华三昧行法》，“七”为七天的意思，就是连续持诵《妙法莲华经》七永日、并藉由诵经，随文妙观，礼敬、赞叹、忏悔等，如是一系列修行活动，以克期取证，体悟实相之理。为方便四众培福修慧，永福禅寺依《法华三昧行法》制“法华七”仪轨，每年定期举行，欢迎广大信众踊跃随喜。
斋天法会	斋天又名供天，是大乘佛教寺院中新年岁朝佛事。永福寺斋天仪轨，依明代弘赞律师所撰《斋天科仪》施行：诵经礼忏，奉设净食，供养十方三宝，虔礼诸天护佑正法、积福消灾。斋天为布施培福之妙法，故深受广大信众的欢迎，每年正月初九齐聚永福寺福星阁前参加斋天法会，以祈求新的一年全家幸福平安。
浴佛法会	农历四月初八是佛诞日，又名浴佛节，是全世界佛教徒纪念教主释迦牟尼佛诞辰的一个重要节日。佛祖诞生在北印度，相传佛诞日当天，有九龙吐水为太子灌顶沐浴。因此，便有了以香水沐浴佛身的典故。每年浴佛节，永福寺庄严道场，供奉太子像于香花之中，僧俗四众轮流进行浴佛。除了缅怀佛陀之外，还能以浴佛的功德，度脱七世父母及累劫怨亲眷属超生净土，法界六道众生出离苦海，更能涤荡我们的心垢，显发自性光明，得证如来的清净法身。
腊八粥会	农历十二月初八，即是腊八节，佛祖释迦牟尼见众生受生老病死痛苦折磨，发愿成佛度生，遂舍弃王位出家修道。经雪山六年苦行却不得解脱，后食牧羊女所献之乳糜，端坐正定，于腊月初八，在菩提树下悟道成佛。几千年来，后人每年在腊月初八日吃粥以纪念佛祖成道，永福寺每年十二月初八都举行腊八粥会，献粥供佛，并广施腊八粥予四方信众及老弱孤苦者结缘，在浓浓的腊八粥

	香气中，感恩佛陀的慈悲，体会人与人之间的温暖。
盂兰盆会	“盂兰”翻译为“解倒悬”是极苦的意思，根据西晋竺法护译的《佛说盂兰盆经》，饿鬼道中的众生，腹大如鼓，喉细如针，饥饿难堪，如被倒悬着一样，极为痛苦。佛陀慈悲救拔，宣讲解脱之法，于农历七月十五用盆器盛着各种珍贵百味美食，恭敬奉献佛僧，承仗三宝不可思议福田之力以解救其“倒悬”之痛苦。所以称为“盂兰盆会”。农历七月十五是传统的盂兰盆法会，在这一天读诵盂兰盆经可以超荐历代祖先。永福寺僧众诵盂兰盆经，以诵经功德普济六道众生，超荐历代冤亲债主。

Text 4

法讯

农历四月初八（公历5月17日），恭逢本师释迦牟尼圣诞吉日，永福寺将于大雄宝殿举行浴佛法会，全寺僧众及十方信众怀着虔敬之心，至诚礼拜，以上好香汤恭敬沐浴鲜花簇拥的太子圣像，燃香散花供诸佛，祈增福慧，藉由浴佛仪式让大众反省罪过，进而改过向善，以洗去已[=己]身的业障，如同佛心的清静无染一般。以佛法的殊胜功用来庄严人心，净化心灵，后迪智慧，使社会祥和安定。初八日早5：30分迎请太子圣像后浴佛，并有皈依法会，众善信居士可安立延生牌位，共浴佛恩、同沾法喜！

注：如有登記牌位請至觀音殿或客堂。

諮詢電話：0571-87965671

13588772603 18657159117

網址：www.yongfusi.com.cn

永福寺客堂启

2013年4月4日

Text 5

淨慈寺 2013 年度（農曆）佛事安排

佛事项目	日程安排	活动内容	参与方法
除夕吉祥普佛	除夕	迎春祈福法会	登記牌位
新年吉祥普佛	正月初八	吉祥普佛	登記牌位

供天	正月初九	齋天	隨緣參與
觀音菩薩聖誕	二月十六至十八	誦觀音菩薩《普門品》	登記牌位
梁皇法會	三月初二之初八	拜《梁皇寶懺》	登記牌位
文殊法會	四月初二至初四	文殊師利般若經	登記牌位
浴佛法會	四月初八	大雄寶殿浴佛	隨緣參與
觀音菩薩成道	六月十八	大雄寶殿普佛	登記牌位
盂蘭盆會	七月十五	誦《盂蘭盆經》	登記牌位
地藏菩薩聖誕	七月二十三至二十九	誦《地藏菩薩本願經》	登記牌位
觀音菩薩出家	九月十六至十八	拜《觀音寶懺》	登記牌位
華嚴法會	十月初六至二十六	誦《華嚴經》	登記牌位
彌陀法會	十一月十一至十七	精進佛七	不設牌位
釋迦牟尼佛成道	十二月初八	祝聖普佛	隨緣參與

日常活動：塔院念佛；每月初一、十五上午大雄寶殿上供；廣大信眾隨緣參與

聯繫地址：杭州市南山路56號淨慈寺客堂 聯繫電話0571-87995600 87975255

淨慈寺課堂

Text 6

南普陀寺

癸巳年大事記

月份	日期	大事記	備註
正月	初一	彌勒菩薩聖誕日、普供	新春佳節 吉祥如意 香客雲集 安排值班
	初二	普供	
	初三	四聖供	
	初八	諸執事退職	
	十五	請職掛牌、 元宵節	總共三天、十八日齋天
	三千佛、 齋天、吉祥供		

二月	初八	释迦牟尼佛出家日	
	十九	观音菩萨圣诞日	十八日上午七时起至十九日晚十时止香客云集、安排值班
	二十一	普贤菩萨圣诞日	
	二十四	清明节扫墓	祖师塔（厦大内、后山：转逢、广洽、太虚、会泉、妙湛、双塔、见老）、普同塔
四月	初四	文殊菩萨圣诞日	
	初八	释迦牟尼佛圣诞日	浴佛节
五月	初五	端午节	
	十三	伽蓝菩萨圣诞日	
六月	初三	韦驮菩萨圣诞日	
	十九	观音菩萨成道日	香客云集：同二月十九
七月	初一	慈悲梁皇宝忏	共六天
	十三	大势至菩萨圣诞日	
	十五	僧自恣日（佛欢喜日、盂兰盆会、中元节）	上午盂兰盆会 晚大众焰口
	二十九	地藏菩萨圣诞日	
八月	十五	中秋佳节	
九月	十九	观音菩萨出家日	香客云集：同二月十九
	二十九	药师佛圣诞日	
十月	十五	水陆法会	共七昼夜
	十八日	妙湛老和尚圆寂纪念日	圆寂时间：1995年12月19日
十一月	十七	阿弥陀佛圣诞日	
	二十	冬至普供	祖师塔（厦大内、后山：转逢、广洽、太虚、会泉、妙湛、双塔、见老）、普同塔
十二月	初八	释迦牟尼佛成道日、万佛法会	万佛法会十天
	十八	斋天、上供、送禄位	
	二十三	送灶	预备迎新春！
	三十	普供、迎灶、普茶（除夕晚会）	
注：每月农历十五、三十晚布萨（十五比丘戒；三十菩萨戒）			

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