UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Situating Themselves in the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism on Earth: A Study of Chinese American Religiosity at Hsi Lai Temple in Southern California

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Religious Studies

by

Shou-Jen Kuo

September 2018

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Michael Alexander, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Amanda Lucia, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Matthew King
Dr. Jonathan H. X. Lee

Copyright by
Shou-Jen Kuo
2018

The Dissertation of Shou-Jen Kuo is approved:

_____

_____

_____

Committee Co-Chairperson

_____

Committee Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the period that I worked as a lay staff and later as a graduate student, I am most indebted to the community at Hsi Lai Temple, which through nineteen years, hundreds of religious ritual programs and service activities, countless hours of formal and informal interviews, and much homelike courtesy has facilitated me with the intellectual inspiration and the field data that form the core of this dissertation. For those whose anonymity I maintain, you all have my deepest thanks. For Abbess Tzu Jung, Abbot Hui Chuan, Abbot Hui Chi and current Abbot Hui Dong and all monastic members of Hsi Lai Temple, I thank you for your gracious tolerance to allow my scholarly-trained mind to understand and interpret the temple's people and their activities. I hope you will find this work an interesting and insightful representation of what Humanistic Buddhism is within the life-long vision of our spiritual mentor Master Hsing Yun in common, founder of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, my spiritual home in this life.

Before and after enrolling in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), I have been the fortunate recipient of intellectual inspiration and guidance from a large number of mentors. At the earliest stage of my back-to-school adventure, it was shepherded by Cristina Bodinger-deUriarte of the Department of Sociology at California State University, Los Angeles, who opened my sociological eye into Hsi Lai Temple and the broader Buddhist world. Cristina also taught me the basic fieldwork methods that I have practiced ever since. In my UCR years, I would like to first thank Vivian Nyitray's intellectual vision that guided me in revisiting the Chinese religio-cultural world and fostered confidence in studying my own religious

tradition within American academia. I also thank Ivan Strenski who taught me what a critical thinker would be and could be. Moreover, it was Amanda Lucia who exercised endless patience and expertise in helping me to embrace and refine my growing intellect in the discipline of religious studies. Michael Alexander, who compassionately agreed to co-chair my dissertation committee with Amanda, gave me the first advice of deploying my dissertation project immediately after I passed comprehensive exams, and promoted the progress of my research toward a stronger final product without any hesitation. Without the shield of Michael and Amanda's intellectual excellence, this dissertation could have been merely a personal fantasy. I also have gratefully accepted intellectual support from Matthew King on topics of Asian Buddhism and Pashaura Singh on the methodology of textual analysis. In addition, I benefited immensely from discussions with Jonathan H. X. Lee of the Department of Asian-American Studies at San Francisco State University to assist me in developing the thoughts on contemporary Chinese American religious experience. In the end, I thank the excellent staffing support provided by Iselda Salgado, Trina B. Elerts and Diana Marroquin, whose timely efforts moved my research to meet UCR's institutional requirements without any miscellaneous error.

I want to express my great appreciation to Ashley Beene, who saw both potential and many weaknesses in my writing, and whose editing effort to push me have resulted in a readable and understandable product.

Finally, I thank my family who accompanied me during many phases of this work. My mother weakly said "it's great" when learning of my admission to UCR one month before she passed away. My father used to walk to my messy work zone at home

to glimpse what I was doing, until an Alzheimer-related disease took his life as I was concluding my field work and starting to write the first draft of my dissertation. Over the long duration of writing process my brother David constantly told me how wonderful I was to be the first Ph.D. within our extended Kuo family in China and Taiwan. Above all, I am mostly indebted to my wife Ling Ling, who has had to sacrifice in many aspects of work and family life in order for her husband to pursue his “absurd” dream of being a religious studies scholar in midlife. I cannot fully express how much I have received from her compassionate support.

In memory of

郭家駿 *Chia Chun Kuo (1928 – 2017)*

劉建慧 *Chine Hui Kuo (1925 – 2011)*

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Situating Themselves in the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism on Earth:
A Study of Chinese American Religiosity at Hsi Lai Temple
in Southern California

by

Shou-Jen Kuo

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Religious Studies
University of California, Riverside, September 2018
Dr. Michael Alexander, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Amanda Lucia, Co-Chairperson

This dissertation aims to isolate some of the basic study frameworks of describing and understanding how 'religion' is currently practiced by many Chinese Americans in the United States. I rely on insights into Chinese American religiosity gained through ethnographic field research and participant observation at Hsi Lai Temple (HLT) in Southern California, a Chinese Buddhist monastery established in late 1980s by the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order headquartered in Taiwan. The resulting work provides a variety of practical frameworks for scholars to examine how religion is woven into the fabric of the Chinese American community at large, and how Humanistic Buddhism, which has been highlighted as a modern formation of Chinese Buddhism to serve and benefit the living in this world here and now, shapes and structures individuals' daily lives.

This dissertation concludes that HLT offers a themed "hyperreality" environment for raising followers of Humanistic Buddhism among the Chinese American community

in Southern California. In the process of making people believe in Humanistic Buddhism, HLT fabricates its own world of credibility by utilizing a broad and deep reservoir of Chinese religio-cultural matters as the source to facilitate the construction of a ritualized mechanism deployed on HLT ground with the blueprint of the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism in the present. By bodily situating themselves in the HLT world, Chinese American visitors become religious in the traditional sense of Chinese Buddhism. The evidence from studying traditional Chinese religio-cultural frameworks of the HLT spatial organization and ritualized activity programs and the psychological state of lay visitors at HLT in this research demonstrates that the Chinese spiritual elements of their inherited religious traditions in symbolic forms and meanings are explicitly displayed to, rather than purposefully withheld from, the general public in reinventing people's religiousness in American society. Studying these religious experiences and mentalities provides an insightful opportunity for understanding how Chinese Americans in the twentieth-first century are developing identities and moral guidance in their daily lives in the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iv

Abstract vii

List of Tables xii

List of Figures xiii

Chapter One: Introduction 1

- Scope of research
- Chinese American religiosity
- Chinese religio-cultural framework
- Death and post-death salvation in Chinese American religious experience
- Ritual practice and Chinese religion
- Action and response
- HLT and Fo Guang Shan
- Chinese immigrant and Chinese American
- Reflexivity and position shifting
- Organization of the chapters

Chapter Two: Chinese Religio-cultural Framework of Humanistic Buddhism 35

- Vernacularized worldview
- Anti-superstition movement in twentieth-century-China
- Revival and refinement of Humanistic Buddhism
- Conclusion

Chapter Three: Spatial Organization of Hsi Lai Temple 75

- Inventing new things out of the integration of the tradition
- A popular ethno-cultural landscape in Southern California
- HLT – a Buddhist landscape in a humanistic perspective

Chapter Four: Ritualized Activity Program of Hsi Lai Temple 109

Ritual calendar in HLT
Ritual package for serving the living and the deceased
Specific purpose and structure of HLT ritual program
The Ullambana Dharma Function – a showcase of HLT ritual program
Buddhist etiquette embedded with the HLT ritual program
Conclusion

Chapter Five: "Moral Luck":
The Psychological Satisfaction from Coming to Hsi Lai Temple 161

Chinese American religiosity
Typology of lay visitors at HLT
Personal narratives at HLT
Good omen – practical indicator of incoming this-worldly benefit
Conclusion

Chapter Six: Conclusion 211

Ritualized mechanism – theme place for making followers of Humanist Buddhism
Making Chinese America believe in Humanistic Buddhism
From Chinese immigrant religion to Chinese America religion
Sense of Buddhist modernity

Epilogue 246

Bibliography 248

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Contents of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang 135

Table 2: *Fahui* schedule of the Ullambana Dharma Function in 2017 146

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Hsi Lai Temple 75

Figure 2: Hsi Lai Temple on the Puente Hills 76

Figure 3: Hsi Lai Temple on a Bodhi leaf 82

Figure 4: The Gate 83

Figure 5: Bodhisattva Hall 84

Figure 6: Five Bodhisattvas in Bodhisattva Hall 85

Figure 7: Bodhisattva image panel 85

Figure 8: Dharma Words 86

Figure 9: Central Courtyard 86

Figure 10: Auditorium 87

Figure 11: Conference Hall 87

Figure 12: Buddha statues in the covered cloister 87

Figure 13: Information Center 88

Figure 14: Arhat Garden 88

Figure 15: Avalokitesvara Garden 88

Figure 16: Main Shrine 89

Figure 17: The Bell 89

Figure 18: The Drum 89

Figure 19: Three Buddhas in Main Shrine 90

Figure 20: Main incense burner 91

Figure 21: Light offering prepared by Hsi Lai Temple 92

Figure 22: The Plaza in front of the Main Shrine 92

Figure 23: Memorial Pagoda 93

Figure 24: On-site parking lot #1 in weekend 95

Figure 25: Dining Hall 97

Figure 26: Book Store 98

Figure 27: “Red-bean cake” vendor outside the Book Store 98

Figure 28: Guest House 99

Figure 29: Ritual manual of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang 133

Figure 30: Paper tablets in *fahui* 143

Figure 31: Altar of rebirth in *fahui* 143

Figure 32: Procession to altar of rebirth 145

Figure 33: Invocation of the deceased 145

Figure 34: Participation in the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang 148

Figure 35: Participation in the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang 149

Figure 36: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: performing sacred mantras and mudras 150

Figure 37: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: presenting memorial 151

Figure 38: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: transporting the paper tablets 152

Figure 39: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: burning the paper tablets 152

Figure 40: Signboard in English outside the Main Shrine 153

Figure 41: Sightseer tour guided by volunteer docent at HLT 171

Figure 42: Dressing in ritual program 180

Figure 43: Performing gestures in Conference Center during ritual moment 182

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This research explores a collective experience of how Chinese Americans perform religion within a Buddhist monastery called Hsi Lai Temple (西來寺, literally meaning "coming west"; a.k.a. HLT) at Hacienda Heights, an unincorporated community located in suburban Los Angeles, Southern California. The development of the research scope for this field study started several years ago when I occasionally worked with a group of young volunteers at HLT. One of them was named Yi Ling Cheng,[1] a post-80s [2] young girl from mainland China [3] who came to America during the first decade of twentieth-first century. Her personal narrative presents a typical account from which the main themes in this research have emerged.[4]

---

[1] I give pseudonyms to protect the identity of the individuals who participated and are mentioned in this research.

[2] The 'post-80s' Chinese generation refers to an affluent group of the population who was born after 1980 in People's Republic of China. This particular generation of the Chinese population is raised well by their parents who have accumulated material wealth due to the economic boom since the 1970s, but are allowed to have only one child because of the enforcement of national birth-control policies. Typically, this 'post-80s' generation has no clear idea about what Buddhism or religion really is, thanks to the long-term antireligious agenda in the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong's legacy.

[3] The country-of-origin of Chinese American population encompasses People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong and Macau), Republic of China, and countries in Southeast Asia. For the Chinese identification related to country of origin in this research, I name "mainland China/Chinese" for people from People's Republic of China, "Taiwan/Taiwanese" for Republic of China, and "overseas Chinese" for all other countries. Otherwise, I adopt "China/Chinese" to generally refer the people from the similar Chinese cultural regions around the world.

[4] Yi Ling's story is in fact a composite I put together from a number of similar accounts gathered from the interviews conducted for this research and the informal chatting occasions throughout my 18-year living experience in Hsi Lai Temple. The thematic narratives in this composite story, including the contexts, reasons and efficacious results of coming to Hsi Lai Temple, are common to those narrative experiences I learned from people who were willing to share their reflection on their own HLT experience with me.

Yi Ling was an international student attending a university located in Los Angeles. On the first night of her American adventure, Yi Ling began to feel an inexplicable uneasiness that quickly enveloped her heart. "What is going on here?" Yi Ling murmured against the harsh clamor of the passing ambulance and barking dogs coming from the darkness outside. Yi Ling never felt this kind of uneasiness in mainland China. In an attempt to combat her feelings, she followed the example of other Chinese students, which was to spend most of her free time wandering around Chinatown, Monterey Park and Rowland Heights.[5] These places in the Los Angeles area are surrounded by Chinese markets, Chinese restaurants, and people who looked Chinese. Being in Chinese places and hearing the 'noises' uttered there helped Yi Ling feel like she understood what was going on around her in both good and bad situations. However, Yi Ling's 'right' feeling of knowing what's going on often faded away when she was alone in her own bedroom, a place haunted by the inexplicable uneasiness that visited her on her first night in America. "*Where should I go?*" Yi Ling began to express her concerns about this uneasiness to her friends. One of her friends invited Yi Ling to stay with her overnight at a Chinese Buddhist monastery called Hsi Lai Temple.

Buddhist monasteries are not unfamiliar to Yi Ling. When Yi Ling was little, her mom regularly sent her to a remote mountain in summer to visit her grandma who lived in an old Buddhist monastery there, which was also where Yi Ling's grandpa's cremation urn lived. When staying there Yi Ling often played in the kitchen with her grandma and other aunties who prepared daily meals for monastics and temple visitors. Kitchen work and its embedded rationalities (*dao li* 道理) taught by grandmother and aunties, such as no meat meaning no killing animals for accumulating merit or virtue (*ji de* 積德) and no food-wasting meaning saving good fortune (*xi fu* 惜福), were the first moral lessons little Yi Ling learned in life. Sometimes she walked around the cluster of buildings and glanced at what people were doing in temple. They were chanting, kneeling and bowing, meditating, talking, eating, and Yi Ling noticed how people inside the temple walls behaved differently from those who lived outside of the walls. Her grandmother often told little Yi Ling that Buddhist monasteries are *good* places and whatever is happening there is meritorious and auspicious. Every time Yi Ling finished a short-term stay with her grandma and went back home to the city, Yi Ling always felt an

[5] For more details of how Chinese American communities spread from older Chinatown in Downtown Los Angeles to suburban areas like the cities of Monterey, Rosemead, Hacienda Heights or Rowland Heights, see Lin and Robinson 2005.

unspeakable sense of peace and joy, though she was not aware of the cause.

HLT did not disappoint Yi Ling. The splendor of the Chinese traditional architecture of this Buddhist compound matched Yi Ling's image of Buddhist monasteries in mainland China. Yi Ling first felt at 'home' in the United States when she entered HLT. Walking around the courtyard surrounded by grand halls and seeing the San Gabriel River Valley below by standing at the temple's Front Gate, Yi Ling remembered the old Buddhist monastery hidden in the mountain and her grandma, who died a few years earlier. The noises and smells from the kitchen were the same as in the temple Yi Ling visited in mainland China. Yi Ling noticed the same differences in people's behavior inside the temple versus outside of the temple as she watched people engage in chanting rituals and participate in other temple activities. Most importantly, Yi Ling understood what these people were doing and why they were doing it because of her distant childhood memories. Therefore, when a monastic asked her to participate in a new live-in weekend program exclusively for young people, Yi Ling recalled how grandma said Buddhist temples are a good place to stay, and enrolled in the program without a second thought.

Yi Ling told her friends that she had now found a good place where she could go on the weekends, and she was much better at enduring the weekdays in her room alone. Soon Yi Ling was gradually trying to participate in temple activities rather than merely doing volunteer work in the kitchen or customer service at the information desk. Unlike her first visits, in later visits Yi Ling became willing to stay during chanting rituals, try sitting meditation, read scriptural texts, ask monastics the meaning of scriptures written in classical Chinese terms, and greet people by joining palms and saying 'Amitoufo.'[6] She even setup a small altar with a Buddha image in her bedroom at home. As a result of creating this home altar, Yi Ling started to enjoy her private time at home in the presence of merciful Buddha. Later Yi Ling began to advocate for her friends to come with her to the temple in order to deal with their own problems and desires.

[6] This particular gesture is widely used by practitioners of Chinese Buddhism as a greeting to each other. 'Amitoufo' is the Chinese pronunciation of the name of 'Amitābha Buddha,' the primary Buddha who is revered among the devotees of the Pure Land tradition in Chinese Buddhism. Traditionally Chinese Buddhists have viewed the practice of repeatedly reciting 'Amitoufo' as the method to be reborn after death in the 'Western Pure Land,' a blissful realm in Buddhist cosmology like heaven in the Christian tradition.

Scope of research

When one monastic at HLT said to me that Yi Ling now "walks inside, not just wanders outside, the Buddhist gate" (literally meaning she is a Buddhist follower now), this comment strikes me from three perspectives as a religious studies researcher. First, I wonder why Yi Ling wandered outside while she had once stayed inside a Buddhist monastery and learned her first moral lesson there? Why wouldn't Yi Ling's past life experiences make her a genuine Buddhist follower from the monastic viewpoint? Second, it is clear that such life experience having contact with a Buddhist monastery in mainland China significantly influenced Yi Ling to seek an overnight stay at HLT as a way to deal with problems she was facing in America. How can researchers study this particular occasion in the context of Yi Ling's ongoing religious experience? How can researchers study a so-called historical memory in framing religious behavior being observed today? In what way do religious behaviors merge one's current living situation with his or her past experience? Third, by choosing to stay in Hsi Lai Temple on weekends Yi Ling intensified her religious experience in an American Buddhist temple and eventually 'walked' inside the realm of Chinese Buddhism. How can researchers approach this type of spiritual transformation? Can researchers frame Yi Ling's personal transformation as a type of religious conversion in the domain of American religious studies? This research addresses occasions such as these – occasions when individuals respond to this-worldly problems with strategic action and then generate religious experiences either consciously or unconsciously from that move.

Through looking into Yi Ling's life experience and other narratives I have listened to in HLT, I found that individuals had different kinds of occasions in life to which they attributed their distinctive performance in HLT at the present time. Some of them admitted they were originally atheist, and still held atheism in their hearts when they participated in HLT's activities. But some of these individuals had worshipped every deity and shrine they encountered, and continued to do so after staying at HLT. While some individuals insisted on only participating in ritual programs which would contribute to the individual's salvation from the suffering of transmigration, others disagreed with that and instead only attended classes on scriptural study and sitting meditation for individual salvation. Some believed that doing the volunteer work of community service was a waste of their spiritual energy and valuable time for practicing Buddhist ways of salvation. But there were a few volunteers who only worked for temple's kitchen, traffic control and community service programs without having an interest in studying Buddhism and participating in ritual activity at all. While a great number of people were religious vegetarian because of taking Buddhist precepts, I also knew some only ate meatless food inside HLT or on particular dates prescribed by the traditional Chinese lunar calendar. Though each individual believed in Buddhist causes and participated in Buddhist behaviors differently, in most cases a person told me a variety of his or her religious experiences facilitated by his or her coming to and staying at HLT. How can these diverse religious experiences be organized and understood from a theoretical perspective? Can we differentiate a person who is more Buddhist from someone else by using contemporary theories in academics? Should we do this type of intellectual labor to

differentiate so-called 'orthodox' Buddhist conceptions and experiences from the ones of 'apocryphal' Buddhist sources or Chinese folk religions? My research also addresses study frames such as these – frames to assist religious studies scholars in approaching the complexity of people's religious experiences observed in a single religious place.

Chinese American religiosity

This research aims to isolate some of the basic study frameworks of describing and understanding how 'religion' is currently practiced by Yi Ling and many Chinese Americans in the United States. I rely on insights into Chinese American religiosity gained through an ethnographic field research and participant observation in HLT. Through living at HLT I engage with current religious activities popular amongst Asian American communities in Southern California, particularly among Chinese Americans who do not have membership in so-called Western religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam. In this approach my research is firmly rooted in the observed conduct of the followers of Chinese traditional religions as practiced in their everyday American contexts. The resulting work provides a practical framework for scholars to examine how religion is woven into the fabric of the Chinese American community at large, and how religion shapes and structures individuals' daily lives.[7]

[7] In current scholarship, Asian 'immigrant religion' is the religious matter that is transplanted to the United States through the immigrants who originated from Asia. However, the perspective that Asian American religious matter is particularly 'immigrant' in nature is highly contestable (Snow 2015). I plan to adopt 'Chinese American religion' to refer to the study subject in this research. In this way I hope to avoid misunderstanding of the religious lives of Chinese Americans by referring to the 'foreignness' to some extent when using the term 'Chinese immigrant religion.'

I suggest that 'religiosity,' or what William James (1917) called the "mystical state of consciousness," arises when people try to make sense of what the involved situation means for them and how they should respond to it properly in a mystical way.[8] A 'religious experience,' or James's "mystical experience," then, is a subjective experience elicited from such arising religiosity and organized within a religious 'framework' or a set of religious principles.[9] Two critical qualities of religiosity, according to James's scheme of mysticism, are emotional ineffability and noetic insight into depth of reality revealed from the situation. The former initiates a variety of affective experience, such as the numinous experience of '*mysterium tremendum*' and '*mysterium fascinans*' described by Rundolf Otto (1923). The latter defines the cognitive experience of endowing meaning with an established belief system, as the emplacement experience of constructing a ritual environment theorized by Jonathan Z. Smith (1987). I argue that both affective and cognitive aspects of people's religiosity and past religious experience provide a common repository of familiar experiences that organizes the course of

[8] As a starting point of the research, I follow a tradition of studying people's religious experience established by William James in his famous work *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature,* published in 1917, particularly his Lecture XVI and XVII Mysticism. As for the nature of Chinese religiosity, I will discuss its useful characterizations for my research later on.

[9] My research is also indebted to Erving Goffman's notion of 'primary frameworks' and group's 'framework of frameworks' to analyze people's act of recognizing the event they are currently involved in (1974, esp. Chapter 1 and 2). Goffman proposes that "the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principle classes of schemata, the relations of these classes to one another, and the sum total of forces and agents that these interpretive designs acknowledge to be loose in the world. One must try to form an image of a group's framework of frameworks – its belief system, its 'cosmology' – even though this is a domain that close students of contemporary social life have usually been happy to give over to others" (1974, 27).

individuals' recognition of the involved situation, and guides their response to that framed situation in the present moment.

Individuals interact with other people and/or objects during almost every occasion in their daily lives. Defined by such assemblage of people and objects in a flowingly temporal and spatial aspect, the evolved trajectory of a situation is impermanent by nature. Therefore, I suggest that individuals could not really define or control the involved situation at will; rather, they can passively assess what the situation ought to be and act accordingly in relation to their past life experience. If the process of assessment in an individual's mind is interrupted or does not make sense based on his or her familiar frameworks, the individual will first develop his or her affective experience in negative terms, such as anxiety and depression. The question: "What is going on here?" and "Where should I go?" in Yi Ling's narrative exemplifies this state of confusion and doubt that is often noticed by individuals in their everyday lives. During successive occasions the answer to such a question is always presumed by the inquirer in a way that agrees with his or her familiar frameworks. In this making-sense process the cosmology or religious framework of personal intellect, common sense, feeling, memory, metaphysical imagination, and so forth, explicitly and implicitly guide individuals to look for possible therapies, either in secular fashion or religious formation, in order to solve their concerns and problems in their social lives.

In this research I also emphasize the Chinese spiritual matters that constitute the "Chinese" religo-cultural framework of so-called Chinese American population nowadays. While examining HLT, I will extract the religious and spiritual ideas and

practices of various kinds from the findings that can be attributed to Chinese religio-cultural tradition, despite the fact that almost all the people I met in this Buddhist temple, including monastics and many lay visitors who participated in the temple's religious and non-religious programs, not only recognize their necessities to be Americanized and modernized, but also embrace them. In other words, I intend to discuss my findings about this Chinese American community in terms of a spiritual dimension in Chinese religo-cultural terms, not the traditional ideas of immaterial reality and inner self or even secular values of democracy and freedom within the Western tradition.[10]

Specifically, I am interested in studying the relationships between tempo-spatial embodiment and ritualized performance of Chinese religiosity in a multicultural perspective derived from current studies of American religions. I look at how HLT exhibits the Chinese cosmology or religious framework by arranging the spatial organization of the temple's objects following a complex, multifaceted temporal order of Buddhist rituals, and by formulating a variety of ritual-like activities based on the notion of 'Humanistic Buddhism,' which has been highlighted as a modern formation of Chinese Buddhism to serve and benefit the living in this world here and now.[11] I also

[10] James Spickard (2017) indicates that there is a Sociology's "default view" of religion, which is largely formulated by the rational thought and scientific focuses of post-reformations Protestantism in late nineteenth-century Euro-American intellectual community, to understand people's religious lives that take the forms other than formal church organization, belief and morality. Spickard argues that this Western view typically sees religion as a separated institutional sphere, which prevents it from understanding religions' connections with practice, experience, and emotion in everyday life that, I argue, are central to the spiritual sphere of contemporary Chinese American community in Southern California.

[11] There is no existing consensus of what 'Humanistic Buddhism' is among scholars and Buddhist community. Many relate it with the scholarly discussion of 'Engaged Buddhism,' with which I disagree on several aspects. Generally speaking, this notion of modern Buddhism is a direct reaction against the ritual practices for the dead in traditional Chinese Buddhism (see Chapter 2). Here I adopt a simplistic definition

look at how HLT lay visitors assess and respond to such religious occasions in the ritualized actions performed in a Buddhist place. Through this interaction I illustrate how Chinese American religiosity and experience arise in a variety of ritualized settings situated in HLT, and how the observed religiosity and experience inflect and are inflected by Chinese religious ideas and ritualized practices through human agency. The resulting work reveals how modern Chinese Buddhism has transplanted its systems of doctrine and practice in the United States, and how those systems as well as their participants have undergone a transformation in response to their American circumstances.

Chinese religio-cultural framework

This research is centered on the role, meaning, and nature of traditional Chinese religio-cultural frameworks and how they impact daily life in the Chinese American community. My argument is that traditional Chinese religious culture is a normative and fundamental theme in the structure and framework of Chinese American religiosity seen today – sought through various ritual and ritual-like practices, symbolized by ritualized gestures and objects found in Chinese religious places like HLT, and affirmed in doctrinal terms in modern Chinese Buddhism. This religious sense of cultural heritage is vigorously proselytized by those ritualized activities historically instituted within established Buddhism in China. And with this religious campaigning in the modern era, Chinese Buddhism in America proclaims a similar underlying impulse as that of the HLT

of Humanistic Buddhism developed by Xue Yu (2013) in studying the ritual practice of Fo Guang Shan, the Buddhist Order to which Hsi Lai Temple is a branch temple in America.

that international student Yi Ling joined: a religion that is true because it actually worked in everyday life.

The range of complexities related to the seemingly simple notion of a Chinese religio-cultural framework that is experienced and referenced by many Chinese Americans in dealing with various living occasions will become more evident as the research continues. However, there are three primary points I wish to introduce here that will provide both the scope for the chapters that follow and the definitional focus to the wider subject of Chinese religiosity and experience I am discussing. First, although I argue that the religious matter observed in HLT is governed by a world-affirming standpoint, it does not mean that I disregard the importance of various concepts and practices relating to death and post-death salvation. Actually, such other-worldly concerns are the most critical ingredient by which Chinese religious framework has evolved over the past 4,000 years. Indeed, in terms of participating in religious activities, few conceptions in Chinese religion have been more essential or fundamental than the assurance of spiritual standing after death and the promise of eternal post-death salvation, and few practices are as important as activities in daily life related to establishing protocol for communicating with unseen beings and instituting ritualized practices centered around the deceased. The field data collected in HLT evidences this point. This research argues that such conceptions and practices themselves are embedded within this-worldly orientation, such that by venerating ancestors the living are in quest of favor in this life while believing that post-death salvation is a spiritual necessity in the development of this-worldly *xin an* (i.e., peace of mind).

The second point is that the ritualized practice of dealing with this-worldly concern should not be seen as simply popular or corruptive within an orthodox perspective of modern Buddhism. As this research will demonstrate, a number of spiritual states and other qualities inherited from the Mahayana Buddhism tradition are closely related to these practices and the doctrinal meanings upon which they are based. In addition, there is a strong moral impulse and embedded rationalities to the conceptions and practices observed in HLT, which relate most directly to living a good and positive life in the present, the notion that permeates much of the modern Humanistic Buddhism spectrum in China and broader East Asia and Southeast Asia today.

The third is that, in emphasizing the centrality of Chinese religio-cultural framework in guiding people's assessment and ritualized response to involved situations, I notice that such guided doing through referencing the ancient past involves plenty of individual and collective ingenuity that constitutes the syncretized nature of so-called 'traditional' Chinese Buddhism in America claimed by HLT, as Eric Hobsbawm's 'invented tradition' in describing the historical continuity of the British royal ceremonial performed in the twentieth century.[12] To some extent, HLT monastics and visitors both are not really passively constrained by traditional Chinese matter but actively 'consume' that continuity with the past to assess and respond to novel situations in America, which take the formalized and ritualized form of reference to historical situations recorded by

[12] 'Invented tradition' in Hobsbawm's theoretical thinking refers to "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1992, 1). Hobsbawm's revolutionary concept that helps me open a new perspective on what I observed in HLT and its notion about 'Humanistic Buddhism.'

Buddhist sources. Here my findings do imply a 'consumer production' aspect of people's ordinary practices in everyday life underpinned by Michel de Certeau's theoretical invention in *The Practice of Everyday life* (1984). In exploring the dynamics of the common man's tactics in response to the established forces of political and cultural institutions in society, de Certeau's work opens a new avenue for researchers to stand on the practitioner's side to understand how common life operates. Normally framed as 'users,' who are passive and guided by institutional religion with a well-defined system of soteriological teaching and doctrinal precept, most followers of a religious tradition often 'make tricks' to maintain their autonomy during religious events by thinking about this-worldly concerns while ostensibly being engaged in religious practices that point to otherworldly matters, such as post-death salvation.

Death and post-death salvation in Chinese American religious experience

Compared to attending festivals and other religious occasions focused on gaining this-worldly benefit, how to have a 'good' death is the most important occasion in the life cycle of every traditional Chinese individual. Regardless of one's beliefs in distinctive religious traditions, the contemporary Chinese already have a hazy notion of what happens to the individual after death, which is largely generated from family talks and the popular stories in novels and drama in television and movies. Death is the fate of the individual by which one can no longer control his own destination. After death the *hun po* (魂魄), or the spiritual element of the personality, stays close to the corpse and the

tablet[13] as a temporary residence for forty-nine days. Afterward, *hun po* will be assigned a new lifeform in either heaven or hell by a judge (normally called King *Yen-lo* 閻羅王), who evaluates the itemized good deeds and misdeeds written in the life record of the deceased. During this intermediate period, the departed *hun po* can still "sense" and receive the offerings made by the filial descendants. If offerings are ignored or cease during this forty-nine-day period, the departed *hun po* becomes orphaned *hun* or wandering ghost and loses the opportunity to obtain a better new lifeform. Orphaned *hun* or wandering ghost is always pitied in the Chinese imagination of the afterlife, but is sometimes feared. Particularly, a spiritual object of fear is the vengeful ghost, the ghost of a deceased who has been unjustly executed or killed in "premature" or unforeseen time of death (as in war, accident, plague or suicide), or who has been improperly buried. This type of ghost might wander in the human realm and take his revenge indiscriminately on all who encounter him. The fortune of the ancestor and the welfare of the community, therefore, depend on the proper care of the *hun po* of the dead in the popular belief of afterlife in Chinese origin.

To serve this tremendous demand for mortuary practices in society (i.e. every family and community should have the occasion of human death frequently), there were several distinctive rites of the dead that existed in various parts of China historically, especially within the Guangdong Province, the ancestral homeland of most early Chinese Americans in California. Various historical accounts indicate that early Chinese

[13] Normally a tablet is perhaps eighteen inches and three inches wide, inscribed with the name of the deceased and his offspring.

American immigrants preserved as much of their traditional notions of afterlife and associated funerary practices as possible, although they had adopted American mortuary practices for funeral rites and burials between the mid-nineteenth century and twentieth century (Chung and Wegars 2005).

To most earlier Chinese immigrants, shipments of bodies and or exhumed bones back to China for reburial in the person's hometown was the most critical step to being counted as a 'good' death. To most later Chinese Americans who have established families and career lives in their second homeland in America, burial in Chinese funeral customs constitutes a 'good' death that facilitates them returning to their family roots in China. The mourning activities during funeral rites, such as an unusual piercing shriek, wail, and loud music, clang of the funeral procession on the street for public exhibition purposes as well as mass burning of the deceased's belongings and paper money at the cemetery, have been observed and recorded since the late nineteenth century by several local news correspondents (Chung and Wegars 2005). Through these mortuary arrangements, according to the Chinese framework of the afterlife, their spirits can rest peacefully at home and be worshiped by their descendants.

During this more than one-hundred-year period there were two community developments that gave traditional rites for the dead in California a diaspora formation. First, the almost inexistence of natal and marriage family structure [14] forced early

[14] There were multiple conditions that caused the lack of women and, consequently, family structure in early Chinese immigrant societies in the United States, including the material cost and cultural value of Chinese immigrant laborers, and the legal and bureaucratic obstacles generated by different levels of American governments. See Chan 1991, esp. Chapter 4.

Chinese immigrants to turn to their individual *huiguan* (會館), or district association of the birthplace in China, to take care of their mortuary services, including the burials in American cemeteries or the shipment of corpses or exhumed bones back to China. Second, the lack of a Chinese religious specialist [15] also forced traditional Chinese to rely on lay people for directing funeral services. Therefore, the elders of *huiguan* had to assume the role of ritual specialist in Chinese immigrant communities. When the elders instructed their countrymen about the proper procedures in mourning rites, the popular mortuary practices in the Chinese homeland were naturally followed. This type of ritual transplantation of the traditional rites for the dead was still prevalent among the Chinese American communities in Southern California after the 1980s, as remembered by the lay visitors I encountered in HLT.

Ritual practice and Chinese American religion

The importance of performing rituals for the dead among Chinese American communities corresponds to recent scholarly efforts to criticize Western secularization theories and to try to define Chinese or broader Asian religions in a non-Western context (Szonyi 2009). Traditionally, studies based on the theoretical framework of secularization assume the decline of Asian and Chinese religiosity in the process of societal modernization, and a number of statistical results support those viewpoints. For instance, nation-wide survey results show that almost one in three Asian Americans and 39 percent of Chinese Americans are categorized as "nonreligious" when asked about their religious

[15] By the 1892 extension of the 1882 Chinese Exclusive Act, Chinese religious leaders and priests were classified as "laborers" to make them ineligible for immigration into the United States.

affiliation (Jeung 2015). Yet quantitative methods to measure religion and religiosity in an Asian context have been critically questioned. Scholars argue that neither church attendance nor survey-based evaluations of individual beliefs have much meaning for Chinese people (Li 1998; Yao and Badham 2007). Participation in communal rituals, such as ancestry worship and funerary ceremonies, is a more practical indication of Chinese religion and understanding Chinese religiosity. In order to accurately measure broader Asian American religiosity, "an examination of the religious rituals, practices, and orientations that they employ for spiritual purpose" should be included in Asian American religious studies (Jeung 2015:144). Therefore, I suggest that the effort of studying ritual practice among Chinese American communities is particularly important to understanding the historical background of traditional and modern practices in Chinese cultural regions and their links to Chinese American religiosity.

Action and response

This research intends to describe and analyze Chinese Americans' actions in various religious settings in terms of their own voices and thoughts. It would give me insight into how Chinese Americans appropriate religious matters taken either from historical Chinese Buddhism in the case of the HLT monastic community or from the temple's ritual services in the case of the HLT lay visitors as they need them in response to different occasions. However, the examination of such practices does not imply a reduction in the scope of individuality, which might be easily overstated by amplifying de Certeau's sense of individual autonomy and playfulness in making things. I would stress that intellectual ingredients of Chinese religious framework come first and individual or

subjective consciousness is derivative. This consideration reminds me to always look at the contextual factors that Chinese Americans live with. In this scope, Chinese-American religious practitioners observed in HLT are studied in de Certeau's sense on the one hand, meaning one is able to develop private tactics by appropriating whatever religious matter is at his disposal in response to different lived scenarios in America. On the other hand, such a degree of freedom is not limitless. A practitioner is framed by inherited Chinese religious framework and other cultural frameworks built in his mind, which supply a range of religio-cultural idioms and conceptions taken for granted in organizing the religious experience of American life. I name this logic of practice 'framed ingenuity.'

People's 'framed ingenuity" is a common practice I have found on many social occasions. For instance, the notion of eatable and uneatable foodstuff is often an arbitrary one in different cultures. By using a few eatable foodstuffs as the ingredient, the chefs in different places make up variegated cuisines. Kung–pao chicken is a classic spicy stir-fry dish in China made with chicken, peanuts, chili pepper, and other vegetables. Coming to the United States, however, new dishes of Kung-pao pork, beef, fish, shrimp, or even Kung-pao veggie are developed and popularized. This practice of inventing new Chinese-American cuisines could be the hallmark of the immigrant's ingenuity from an academic perspective.[16] These new dishes break from the traditional set of ingredients but those new ingredients (pork, beef, fish, shrimp, veggie, etc.) still feel right as eatable foodstuffs

[16] For recent scholarship centered on the production of Asian American culinary and alimentary ideas and practices, see Ku, Manalansan IV and Mannur, eds. 2013.

in both Chinese and American culture. Nevertheless, this ingenuity is usually accompanied by a set of rules. For instance, if the chef takes chili pepper out of the list of ingredients, his new dish of Kung-pao pork might still feel right to American consumers, but it will no longer be right to Chinese consumers. Without that tiny chili pepper, Chinese Americans would refer to the dish as Shanghai braised pork, which is another Chinese traditional style of cuisine. In other words, although the traditional practice of Kung-pao chicken allows the chef in America to make many new dishes, the framework of Kung-pao cuisine remains consistent in the Chinese Americans' mind, even though that framework is fundamentally arbitrary in the American imagination.

This practice of 'framed ingenuity' in terms of making new Kung-pao dishes in America can serve as a corollary to religious matter found in HLT and the Chinese American community at large. Like the chef, HLT monastics and visitors are able to appropriate whatever they feel is right within their primary frameworks, either those frameworks they inherit from Chinese religio-cultural traditions or those they pursue in their American life, as the 'ingredient' and then make their own spiritual 'cuisines.' From this aspect I am able to ask under what conditions can Chinese Americans improvise certain activities through a religious mode in HLT; and why such activities are performed in what particular way for what purpose. Through this line of inquiry, I am able to not only describe the observed practice verified by detailed accounts of individuals' reflection on their own spirituality, but also elaborate on the contextual factors of these practices that have been invented in and performed on certain occasions and places from the researcher's perspective.

HLT and Fo Guang Shan

HLT is the largest overseas branch temple of the Fo Guang Shan (佛光山, literally meaning "Buddha's Light Mountain"; a.k.a. FGS) Buddhist monastic order in Taiwan. FGS was founded in 1967 by Monk Hsing Yun, the forty-eighth Patriarch of the Lin-chi sect of the Chan tradition in Chinese Buddhism.

Monk Hsing Yun (1927-) was born in Jiangdu, a city in the Jiangsu Province in mainland China. Being trapped in China during one of the most miserable wartimes in Chinese modern history, he left household life in 1937 as a novice monk to study Buddhist teachings and practice under Monk Zhikai of the Dajue Temple, and he received his full ordination in the Qixia Mountain monastery complex (栖霞山) [17] near Nanjing in 1941. After completing his 'modern' curriculum of monastic training at the Jiaoshan Buddhist Studies Institute,[18] he embarked upon his Buddhist career of being a magazine editor, a secular high school principle, and an abbot of the Huazang Temple in Nanjing. In 1949, he followed the same trail of those young and less-distinguished monks who fled from Communist-occupied mainland China and became a refugee monk in an unfamiliar land called Taiwan.

According to various sources of FGS narratives, after a couple years of being 'homeless' (meaning none of Taiwan's temples were willing to accommodate him as a regular monastic member), Monk Hsing Yun had a fortunate opportunity in 1953 to settle

[17] The main temple in Qixia Mountain complex, Qixia Temple, built in 489 CE. Qixia Mountain was one of the four major powerhouses in representing traditional Chinese Buddhism before 1949.

[18] The Institute was founded in 1934 in response to Monk Taixu's vision of the modern monastic education system to refine Chinese Buddhism to his idea of "Buddhism of Human Life" (See Chapter 2).

in the Leiyin Temple, a small temple in the remote coast town Ilan in north-eastern Taiwan, to lead a local Buddha-recitation society. Starting at this home base, Monk Hsing Yun quickly organized a variety of "modern" Buddhist activity programs with the loyal support of a few local followers. These unconventional activities included a Buddhist choir composed of young students, a Buddhist kindergarten and Sunday school, a public procession in Ilan to celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, and the first Buddhist dharma-propagation radio program in Taiwan. He also broke the traditional formation of the Buddhist sermon by using a slide projector and a musical component to make Buddhist teaching more appealing to the younger generations. His popular novel "the Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha" was published in 1955 when he was only twenty-eight years old.

Monk Hsing Yun's activism to engage Taiwan's society on behalf of Chinese Buddhism, which largely corresponded with Monk Taixu's vision of "Buddhism of Human Life," enabled him to develop many contacts and gather lay followers who eagerly invited him to found permanent institutions closer to their home towns in Taiwan. Through these opportunities Monk Hsing Yun came to City of Kaohsiung, a highly populated and prosperous urban area in southern Taiwan, to supervise the institution of Kaohsiung Buddhist Hall in 1955 as a base for developing his career of public preaching and lecture on Buddhism. In 1962, he established his own Shoushan Temple where he hosted a Buddhist Studies Institute (the forerunner of later FGS Monastic College) to educate his monastic disciples with the modernized curriculum of Humanistic Buddhism. At the same time, he launched the construction project of the FGS monastery complex on a hilltop property in suburban Kaohsiung.

Since then FGS has evolved into the largest Buddhist monastic order in Taiwan with many branch temples throughout Taiwan and the world, including mainland China. Prior to the construction of HLT, FGS's first branch temple in the United States was an aged church property in Maywood in Los Angles called the Bai Ta Temple (白塔寺, literally meaning White Pagoda) in 1977. Soon the church-like building became too small to accommodate the expanding needs of Asian American communities within an evolving ethnic-religious landscape in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.[19] FGS then purchased a 15-acre hillside property in Hacienda Heights and presented the proposal of constructing HLT to County of Los Angeles in 1980.[20]

To some long-term residents in Hacienda Heights, the proposal to build a gigantic Buddhist monastery complex near their home properties was like a bomb exploding in their peaceful lives in an American suburban setting. Soon waves of local opposition flowed to the county. Messages like "[T]he temple would be an eyesore because of disproportionate height, size and prominent location on a hillside in the 3300 block of S. Hacienda Boulevard,"[21] and "[T]the temple's hillside location will make it visible throughout the community"[22] represent local concern about the HLT construction project.

---

[19] For perceiving the changing ethnic composition of the Los Angeles area, see Meyer, Richard E. 1980. "Exploding Ethnic Populations Changing Face of L.A.: Minorities Take This Year as Majority." *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, and Lin and Robinson 2005 for Chinese "ethnoburb" of Los Angeles. For the analysis of the associated expansion of religious landscape, see Weightman 1993.

[20] Hacienda Heights is an unincorporated area in County of Los Angeles, which provides all civil services to this suburban resident community, including land use planning and the review and approval of development application.

[21] Valle, Victor M. 1982. "Temple at 'Square One' on Its County Permit." *Los Angeles Times* Sep 26.

[22] Birkinshaw, Jack. 1983. "Buddhist Temple Gets OK to Build." *Los Angeles Times* Jun 2.

Organized by the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association (HHIA),[23] oppositional claims were largely against the immense scale of FGS construction plans. The second main concern was the amount of traffic the temple would generate on Hacienda Boulevard and neighboring streets. According to the original proposal in 1981, FGS announced plans to erect a pagoda and a golden statue of Buddha on this hillside lot, both 9-stories eighty-feet tall standing in front and back of building complex. The tilted roof of all fifteen proposed halls was named "Chinese red" in resident's language, which largely corresponded with the political propaganda of representing Communist China as the "Red Regime" during the Cold War era. These "eyesore" features in local residents' minds were actually the architectural style of traditional Chinese monasteries. "It is such a huge development," complained one homeowner near the proposed construction site, "It's not just a community church. As [a] resident, it's not fair to have something that big in our backyard."[24] At the end of local opposition, the size and scale of HLT was proportionally reduced in its final approval of construction in 1983 as seen today.[25] HLT then was completed in 1988, and since then the relationship between HLT and its local

[23] A civic organization incorporated in 1955 and has represented the voice of Hacienda Heights residents in the related administrative affairs of County of Los Angeles since then. During the times of conducting public hearings that were required by the County to review HLT construction proposal, HHIA was the leading community opponent trying to block any chance of gaining building permits for the FGS development project.

[24] Barker, Mayerene. 1982. "Buddhist Vision of Temple Complex Clashes with Real World: Some Just Don't Want It Build in Hacienda Heights." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 21.

[25] The approved construction removed the pagoda and Buddha statue completely, reduced building numbers from fifteen to seven with tilted roofs in earth tones instead of Chinese red, restricted the height of all buildings to 2-stories tall, and further graded the construction site to reduce the overall elevation of HLT in relation to its surrounding hillside environment.

community has largely improved. The photo of HLT complex on the hillside has been used as the cover of HHIA official brochure to represent this organization to the general public. HLT has become the official landmark in Hacienda Heights today.

HLT's stated goal is to spread the Buddha's teaching to the Western Hemisphere. Except being a religious organization in Chinese Buddhism, HLT also serves as a Chinese community center, providing a public space in Los Angeles for Chinese American communities to run different community activity programs. This type of outreach activities is primarily instituted by HLT's lay organization called Buddha's Light International Association, Los Angeles Chapter (國際佛光會洛杉磯協會, a.k.a. BLIA Los Angeles), founded in 1992.[26]

Chinese immigrant and Chinese American

"Chinese American" community in this research includes Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese, Americans who have full or partial Chinese ancestry. This general definition follows the commonly accepted scheme to identify a certain segment of the American population, such as Asian American (for example see Lee et al. 2015:xvii). According to U. S. Census data, there were 4.0 million Chinese Americans in America in 2010, the largest segment of the fast-growing Asian American population. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that nationwide and in 31 states (including California),

[26] However, HLT's community outreaching programs are less discussed in this research, although these social activity programs are also ritualized as those religious activities discussed in this research. For a comprehensive discussion of HLT social function among Chinese American community, see Lin 1996.

immigrant arrivals from China outpaced those from Mexico in 2014.[27] Yet Chinese in America are culturally and religiously pluralistic as has been concluded by numerous studies.[28]

The Chinese immigrant population in this research encompass what scholars understand as the "old" immigrants since mid-nineteenth century, the post-1965s "new" immigrants, and the recent Chinese immigrants to the United States. After the normalization of the U.S. and People's Republic of China relation in 1979, according to the U.S. Census data summarized by the Migration Policy Institute,[29] immigrants from mainland China have been the major body of the Chinese migration to the United States (the remaining part includes citizens of Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese). The number of the immigrants from mainland China in the United States tripled from 299,000 in 1980 to 989,000 in 2000, then reaching 2.1 million in 2016. The total number of Chinese immigrants tripled from 384,000 in 1980 to 1.2 million in 2010, then it reached 2.4 million in 2016.

The bulk of so-called post-80s immigrants from mainland China has dramatically changed the everyday life of Chinese American communities in Southern California, which might need more scholarly effort to investigate this new development trend of Chinese American population in the United States. Although the lack of analysis data on

---

[27] Adamy, Janet and Paul Oveberg. 2016. "Immigration Source Shifts to Asia From Mexico." *The Wall Street Journal*. May 12.

[28] For the complexity behind how to establish a Chinese American identity, see Cassel ed. 2002. For the example of the religious diversity of recent Chinese immigrant community in New York City, see Guest 2003.

[29] https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states, Retrieved April 24, 2018.

the difference in socio-economic characters between the recent immigrants and "old" segment of Chinese American community in Los Angeles, which is largely composed of the waves of Chinese immigrants in nineteenth century and so-called post-1965s period, I suggest that the experience of displacement between these two types of Chinese Americans is significantly different based on personal observation.

Simply speaking, the displacement experience of immigrants refers to the psychological state that feels compelled to substitute new goals and ways in a diaspora life when immigrants perceive their original goals and cultural habitus to be unacceptable in the host community. Such understanding of displacement experience largely explains the changing development of ethno-immigrant or diaspora communities throughout U.S. history. However, I argue that by means of transportation and communication development in 21st century, the distance between networks of support in the homeland and in the foreign settlement place, which is the main cause of displacement experience among immigrants, has been reduced to a minimum. Nowadays recent Chinese immigrants can easily maintain dual homesteads and workplaces simultaneously in China and America by convenient flight travel and a network of virtual communication. In addition, due to the globalization of commodity consumption, the living standard in major metropolitan areas of China, for instance, is not much different from the socio-economic average of American life. The motive of becoming American citizens and permanently settling in the United States has been weakened in the mind of recent Chinese immigrants. Therefore, the experience of displacement and the urgency of finding one's place in a foreign country among recent Chinese immigrants is far different

from the experience of "old" immigrants in 19th century and, to some extent, post-1965s immigrants before the 1980's, whose goal of migration was to escape from the socio-economic backwardness in their homeland and look for a new life in prosperous America. Such demographic change and different expectation on immigrant living in twentieth-first-century America gives a new perspective of understanding fast-growing Chinese American community in Southern California, which is reflected in this research.

Reflexivity and position shifting

While my research largely complies with ethnographic fieldwork methods, my aim has not been to contribute a seamless "story" of a Chinese Buddhist temple and its religious followers in Southern California to American religious studies. Rather, I present research on how Chinese Americans perform their religiousness in their daily life within a monasterial context of modern Chinese Buddhism, although the result is complicated by nature, and of how non-native scholars could approach Chinese American religious experience if interested. As such, I am performing one of the slogans upheld by the ethnographic profession, that is, "giving voice to the unvoiced." To some extent, as a Chinese American and first-generation Chinese immigrant, I act more as a trained chief informant of an emerging segment of the American population to work within broader scholarship of the religious studies of American religions.

Moreover, I have been a part of HLT, my study field, since 1999. During these 19 years, I stayed in this Buddhist compound as lay staff for the first ten years, and for all 19 years I was a senior volunteer for all kinds of temple activities. I had countless opportunities to talk to people who I already knew and those I had never met before. As I

shared pieces of my own life stories, relative strangers also shared their stories of coming and staying in HLT with me. Most of them did not seem to mind the consent notices, as I explained the confidentiality of our conversation before turning on my voice recorder. Most of them expressed a desire to assist in my research project, and wondered if their stories and response to my questions would help at least in "some small way." Many monastics allowed me to ask the questions a lay person was not supposed to ask, and borrowed the ritual manuals and liturgical procedures out of temple for my study at home. Even some close friends laughed at me saying, "why ask me? You should know much better than what I can tell you." Yet they still eagerly supplemented what I missed or could not remember exactly to recover the full story together. Without their generous devotion of time and stories and comments, this research would never have gotten off the ground.

To be sure, in this qualitative study I deliberately and incessantly reflected my positions as researcher on one hand, and volunteer, participant, devotee, lay person and intimate friend on the other hand to recognize where and how I fit into the social setting of the temple. Through participating in temple ritualized or secular activity, I often found people (including monastics and lay visitors) used the ideas and tools at hand to craft a response to the situations that are always in flux in both the Buddhist and the pragmatic sense. At that time, I had no choice but needed to participate in such crafting process, and have often been asked, "what's your suggestion" or "what's your thought," the questions I was supposed to ask them as a researcher thereafter. All along I appreciated and I have been honored that HLT people would consider me capable and worthy of such an

important role of partner to face the situation together. However, the quality of the fieldnote for that particular event, which has involved my own effort as HLT devotee or volunteer, would be problematic as a researcher.

There are two polarized components of the controlled empathy of participant observation, 'going native' and 'keeping distance,' that often confront my own field experiences of being a researcher or one of these temple people on several occasions. As Kirin Narayan (1993) and Karen McCarthy Brown (1999) and all other postmodern ethnographers [30] indicated, I found in fieldwork that I was continuously shifting my self-affirmed identities in relationships with the people and issues an ethnographer sought to understand and represent. The constructed divide between the insider and outsider in the academics has been frequently broken and reconfigured throughout my fieldwork period.

Brown's "going native" approach let her become not only a member of her research subject Mama Lola's extended family, but also a true believer, a Vodou initiate she might feel that she needs to be in order to understand Mama Lola 'authentically,' a process that gave her understanding she might never have gained solely through research conducted from the outside. Narayan's "native Anthropologist" identity further complicates the dichotomy of insider/outsider or observed/observer in modern anthropology and ethnography in the late twentieth century. A native anthropologist, to some extent a chief informant in a native community who has received the accredited

[30] So-called 'postmodern ethnography' mainly refers to a 'reflexive turn' in cultural anthropology and its main method, ethnography, that occurred during the 1980s. The ideas behind this turn focus on a self-critical approach through which ethnographers reflect on their own role and assumption of making truth claims from their fieldwork. Such self-reflection also pursues creative experiment on the new mode of report writing in ethnography to make sure that research participants (not research subjects) have significant voices over the research and how it is presented to the academic audience.

training in the discipline of anthropology, is largely expected to contribute an authentic insider's view to the anthropological community fabricated by Bronislaw Malinowski in the early twentieth century. Yet Narayan, daughter to an Indian father and German-American mixed blood mother, disagrees with this homogeneous term as Malinowski's view that assumes all natives are the same native. She used her own complex lifeworld to demonstrate that a person may have many non-cultural strands of identification available that may be invisible. She then claims that a trained native anthropologist might belong to different communities simultaneously and therefore position himself or herself in study field depending upon the change of encountering situations; in that way, a native anthropologist might develop his or her multiplex subjectivity in response to the shifting situations and produce ethnographic knowledge accordingly.

Narayan's notion of multiplex positions of a native anthropologist in study field and situated knowledge helps me to figure out more deeply my real situation as a researcher in the study field of HLT, without the predisposed presumption of insider/outsider dichotomy inherited from my ethnographical training. To acknowledge personal locations in field is to admit the limits of one's purview from these positions. It also indicates that the understanding from a particular position becomes subjectively based and forged through actions and responses within fields of personal relations. In this research, I inherit multiple identities in HLT that give me a line of shifting positions to observe, to engage, to talk to people when, for example, I walk from the temple's outer parking lot toward the Main Shrine, the religious center space of the Temple. Within this short walk my positions in the study field often switch among researcher or volunteer,

ritual participant, devotee, lay person and intimate friend depending on who I meet and talk to about what kind of concern and issue.

Given the claim of situatedness of ethnographic knowledge, I reflect on my methodological perspective of doing fieldwork in HLT I always call 'home' community. As an uncontested identity of a native anthropologist in American academia, I inherit some advantages arising from the insider status as cultural intimacy of Chinese and Buddhist traditions, easier establishment of trust relationship to research subject, and a lesser tendency to rely on the translation service provided by the informants to non-native anthropologist. However, the same cultural intimacy can play to my disadvantage. The excessive self-confidence of insider status tends to take certain things for granted. My methodological challenge in studying home community is how to get out of my presumed insider status in order to have an ethnographic gaze in a familiar field setting. The awareness of shifting identities and field positions could facilitate me to avoid the trap of being an over-confident insider.

Organization of the chapters

Immediately after this chapter of Introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of recent scholarly achievements in studying Chinese religion on certain themes that constitute the Chinese religio-cultural framework I observe at HLT. I provide a brief history of how an array of religio-cultural concepts and practice have evolved throughout Chinese social and cultural history that are attributed to the development of Buddhism in China. This historical setting has been dynamic, and its continuities and changes are emphasized, particularly in three themes that, I argue, shaped the religio-cultural

framework observed in HLT. The first is the vernacularized worldview, based on which Buddhist ingredients of Chinese religious ideas and practices have been fully diffused among the society in past centuries and have begun to guide common people on how to properly deal with this-worldly concerns and respond with religious solutions. The second is the anti-superstition movement in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, which aimed to eradicate traditional vernacular ideas and practice from Chinese civilian life. The third is a juxtaposed revival of Chinese Buddhism with refined formation during the twentieth century. With this historical context, I examine the religio-cultural continuity and changes of the Humanistic Buddhism upon which HLT's religious programs are instituted.

Chapter 3 presents the background setting for this focused field of research: HLT. I briefly describe my analysis of HLT's organization of its ritualized space, an ingenious construct of the mind and knowledge, to sustain a variety of religious and non-religious programs for serving the constant flow of lay visitors. While the palatial-style architecture and space functionally create a Chinese sacred landscape in Southern California, the humanizing atmosphere throughout the physical design of this Buddhist complex set the accent of FGS Humanistic Buddhism in a concrete form.

Chapter 4 describe HLT's ritual calendar and ritual package for serving the living and the deceased. I also briefly describe the other ritualized activities, particularly a variety of temple etiquettes applied to different occasions that are prescribed for people's proper behaviors within a Buddhist temple and, ideally, in their everyday life outside the temple wall. I provide on-going analysis for each of them and emphasize that HLT

ritualized activity programs are embedded with a forceful moral impulse to promote a modern Buddhist life style.

Chapter 5 switches my attention to analyzing the efficacy of these ritualized programs from the HLT visitor's viewpoint. I develop an approach of psychic causation to explore the condition and evolution of psychological satisfaction and other practical benefits in visitors' accounts from their participation in these ritualized activities instituted by HLT. This approach is deeply rooted in the Chinese religio-cultural framework discussed in Chapter 2, particularly related to the popular conceptions of 'fate,' 'opportunity,' 'luck,' and 'retribution' in their Chinese Buddhist contexts.

Chapter 6 presents the research's conclusion. The analyses from each of the five chapters are brought together and discussed along with the theoretical significance with contemporary literature of American religious and cultural studies. As a research of Chinese American religiosity, it is concluded with a theoretical framework of what I name 'ritualized mechanism.' This ritualized mechanism functions as a performative medium to impose an order and to frame participants' disposition to experience that order in their current situation and then respond it properly. On the other hand, this medium also effectuates human ingenuity that fashions the ritualized mechanism through people's strategic participation in it. Ultimately, such a mechanism embedded in HLT spatial design and ritualized program intends to make Chinese Americans in Southern California believe in Humanistic Buddhism, the modern formation of Chinese Buddhism. From this perspective, change in modern Chinese Buddhism becomes a dynamic process integral to how Chinese Americans live and recreate the Buddhist lifestyle in Southern California.

In the conclusion chapter I also position the results of this research within emerging Chinese American religious studies in the twentieth-first century. In the meantime, the inward religiosity and outward expression of "religious modernity" among Chinese American visitors in HLT, who are largely framed with the traditional religio-cultural worldview to respond the problems and concerns in present lives, would be explored in terms of its potential contribution within the contemporary discussion of either "modern religiosities" in Chinese religious studies (Goossaert and Palmer 2011) or "Buddhist modernities" in American Buddhist studies (Mitchell 2016). That Humanistic Buddhism demonstrated in HLT in Southern California is a product of modern Chinese Buddhism through human agency would not be fully understood without a discussion of the various perspectives through which the Chinese Buddhist tradition has been shaped by various modernist discourses and made its continuity possible in the modern timeframe of twentieth-first century.

CHAPTER TWO

Chinese Religio-cultural Framework of Humanistic Buddhism

This Repentance was compiled at the request of Emperor Wu of Liang on behalf of the deceased Empress Chi. The Emperor had been mourning her death for several months, pining for her during the day and suffering from insomnia at night. One evening when the Emperor was in his bedroom, he heard a rustling sound outside. Upon taking a closer look, he saw a python curled up in the main hall, staring at him with its eyes blinking and mouth wide open [….]

The python answered with a human voice, "I was your wife Chi, and am now in the form of python. When I was alive, I was very jealous of your concubines. I had a ferocious temper and a vicious nature. Once my anger erupted, it was like blazing fire or darting arrows, harming people and destroying things. Due to such offenses, I was reborn in lower realm as a python. Without food and shelter, I suffer unbearable hunger and misery. Moreover, there are many parasites underneath each of my scales and they gnaw at my flesh. The pain is like sharp knives stabbing my skin [….]

Mindful of your Majesty's deep affection for me in the past, I now reveal myself before you in this grotesque form. I pray that you can create some merit on my behalf so that I can be rescued from this predicament."

[….] The following day, the Emperor gathered a large group of monks in the palace, explained what had happened, and asked them the best method to liberate the python from its suffering. Venerable Baozhi said, "The only way is to bow to the Buddhas and repent sincerely on behalf of the Empress." The Emperor agreed to the advice. The monks then searched the sutras, gathered the names of Buddhas, extracted passages, and compiled the Repentance … that the assembly used to repent on the behalf of the empress [….]

One day, a rare fragrance permeated the palace and lingered for a long time … when the Emperor looked up, he saw an adorned heavenly being, who said to him, "I was the python that you saw previously. Because of the merit and virtue accrued from the Repentance, I was reborn in the Trayastrimsha Heaven. I am here to give testimony to your repentance effort." Having expressed heart-felt gratitude, the heavenly being disappeared (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016:2-3).

This prologue to the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang, a ten-chapter Buddhist ritual attributed to Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (502-587 CE) and one of the popular ritual activity programs conducted annually within HLT's ritual calendar in the twenty-first century, tells a classic story of retribution in the afterlife as payback for misconduct in this life, and describes the mitigation of the dead's suffering by means of a Buddhist ritual instituted by the monastic community. This story also reveals a Chinese mythological framework of family obligations that is continued beyond the grave. Often the *hun po*, or 'spirit,' of the deceased would return in a variety of sensible forms when they have great suffering to seek support from family members. Upon recognizing the request, the living descendant then participates in various religious practices, such as the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang conducted by an assembly of Buddhist monks, to perform the repentance on behalf of the deceased. These Chinese cultural matters in a religious sense, are still vividly penetrated in the contemporary Chinese American mindset, which is evidenced by thousands of Chinese Americans with no exclusive religious affiliation who attend this traditional Buddhist ritual program in HLT regularly.

This chapter attempts to trace the evolution through the early twentieth-first century of these Chinese religio-cultural subject matters like 'afterlife,' 'retribution,' 'repentance,' 'dedication of merit to the deceased,' and others as expressed in the ritualized practices I have observed and learned in HLT. This historical survey of Chinese religion will suggest that the development of these religio-cultural matters is largely characterized by various improvised actions of remembering and framing a past that was retrospectively formulated and imagined in Chinese Buddhist communities. The

development of Buddhist ethics and practices in different periods thereby presents repeated – but always modern-day – efforts to invent a tradition within a framework of Chinese religiosity that embeds current forms of thought and practice with the significance and authority of the past. In other words, I argue that any sense of continuity in the Chinese Buddhist tradition claimed by HLT is the result of skillful efforts to pattern the present after a particular vision of the past in response to contemporary concern in American life. Thus, rather than focusing on whether or not certain values and practices observed in HLT are "authentically" Buddhist compared to their historical antecedents, this chapter will provide a historical context of these observed values and practices that gained influence in different periods, and note how people in HLT related these Chinese religio-cultural matters within a Buddhist framework to their present situation in their life in America.

This survey will focus on an array of religio-cultural concepts and practices that are attributed to the development of Chinese Buddhism. I focus on three primary themes in Chinese history: 1) vernacularized worldview,[1] a composition of the conceptions of afterlife and retribution and ritualized practices of repentance and dedication of merit; 2) anti-superstition movement, which aimed to eradicate traditional vernacular ideas and practice from Chinese civilian life in the first three quarters of the twentieth century; and 3) juxtaposed revival of Chinese Buddhism with the refined formation during the

[1] Here I agree with Richard von Glahn's concept of "vernacular religion" (2004) to represent the common religious orientations of Chinese people in history. As von Glahn's argument, this categorial term is much better than adopting traditional "popular religion" or "folk religion" or secular religion to perceive Chinese traditional religious ideas, values and practice in research. The scholarly discussions on using "popular religion" in studying Chinese religious culture are numerous. Significant examples are: Bell 1989, Szonyi 2009, Teiser 1988 and 1995, Wong 2011, and Yang 1961.

twentieth century. This thematic approach is, admittedly, arbitrary and imprecise; but it is strategically useful to group seemingly distinct ideas and developments that were critical for forming the rationale and practice of what we now call Chinese religio-cultural elements of Buddhism at different points of history. Moreover, I suggest that these three themes in the development of the religo-cultural framework among Chinese common people largely compose the historical origin of Humanistic Buddhism, the modern formation of Chinese Buddhism now upheld by HLT within its American context.

Each of the following sections will highlight historical events and cultural movements that are important for understanding how people in those eras encountered challenges in daily life and responded to these challenges with a religious mode of action. The hope is that the examination of the contemporary Buddhism demonstrated in HLT may thus be put in a historical context that recognizes the shifting grounds from which people have traditionally practiced and talked about the religious activity that was composed of Buddhist idioms and ideas.

Vernacularized worldview

The existence of the ancestor and his or her role involved in the descendent's life has been the spiritual foundation of the Chinese worldview since the beginning of recorded history. The recent archeological discoveries of numerous oracle bone inscriptions show record of the sacrificial and divinatory rituals undertaken by what Mario Poceski (2009) called "the ancestral cult" in the Shang Dynasty (1766-1122? BCE). The main concern of the cult members in ritual practice was to obtain knowledge about the future unfolding event through channels of communication to unseen forces.

Although the most powerful representative of such unseen forces is called “Shangdi,” it seemed this High god was often aloof and inaccessible in his believer’s minds. The only possible way to contact, or control Shangdi for answering people’s concerns was with the help of past family members, the ancestors.

The Zhou Dynasty (1025?-256 BCE) also held this faith in the reciprocity between the supernatural power and the political ruler, but gave it a moral ingredient that legitimated their conquest of the Shang court which was portrayed as an evil regime. Heaven, the new Zhou’s High god, bestowed ‘the mandate to rule (*tianming*; 天命)” on the man who had proven himself capable of ruling virtuously. The rulers, either of the Zhou court or of its constituent states, and their descendants held their *tianming* only as long as they continued to rule virtuously. In this system of cosmic retribution, the Zhou king and his ministers, who ruled their individual states, were thus directly responsible for their political fate. The historical records throughout the Zhou regime are full of cautionary stories of overthrown rulers not by a human enemy but by their own misdeeds. All these records indicate the existence of the Heaven or a group of ancestors fully conscious of human activities and vigorously active in their punishment or reward. Ancestral worship and associated ritualized offering to the Heaven in the Zhou period, therefore, was endowed with a moral dimension of cosmic retribution not present in the Shang period.

This ritualized connection to the ancestor in scholars’ reconstruction from the archeological record summarizes several major themes that characterize much of the Chinese worldview in the early period: 1) the coexistence of this world and another world

where the High god, his pantheon, and the ancestors reside, 2) the ritual of communication to unseen forces through spiritual medium in a ceremonial arrangement, 3) the influence of the departed ancestors on their living descendants, and 4) the reciprocal relation between the departed and the living (Poceski 2009:13-19). Through this metaphysical configuration, the centrality of ancestors has become an integral part of a cluster of practices and concerns within Chinese religion and society since then. Ancestral worship predicates on the belief that the living and the departed "can affect one another because they share the same substance (*ch'i*), uniting them with a single, corporate kinship body" (Gregory and Ebrey 1993: 6). On the other hand, the spiritual coming and arriving at the descendant's state of mind is also realized through a ritualized setting. Several hymns drawn from *Shijing* or *Songs Canon* (*Odes* or *Book of Poetry*) [2] describe how the filial descendant offers alcohol or musical invitation of drums, pipes, and bells to the ancestors that "let us realize our thoughts" (Brashier 2011:184). According to later commentary texts, "the pacified mind first endured several days of pre-sacrificial meditation and abstentions and then ultimately visualized the ancestors, thus causing 'spiritual brilliance to come and arrive' (*shenming laige* 神明來格)" (ibid.). This ritualized performance, the meditative invitation of incoming ancestors and spirits, has become an indivisible component of the liturgical procedure for ancestor worship or any other ritual program performed in Chinese history and at HLT today.

[2] During the lifetime of Confucius (551-479 BCE), the so-called Classics in Chinese cultural tradition included six canonical volumes of texts. Besides *Shijing*, the Classics include: *Shujing* or *Documents Canon*, *Lijing* or *Ritual Canon, Yijing* or *Changes Canon, Yuejing* or *Music Canon,* and *Chunqiu* or *Spring and Autumn Annals* (a history of the state of Lu from the eighth to the fifth century BCE).

This crossing-time or after-life understanding of what it means to be the extended family also connects with the paramount emphasis placed on filial piety that underpins the ethical and moral concerns of the Chinese family system in Confucianism. This religious orientation concerning the ancestors began penetrating into Chinese society through "the first wave of Confucianization" that washed over China's learned elite in the late first century (Knapp 2005). During that period, the popularity of the filial piety tales indicated the idealized manner and behavior of the children to the parents as well as of the living descendants to departed ancestors. The stories told the appearance of miracle tales happening when the offspring not only went to extremes to take care of their parents, but also did so "in a manner that exalted their parents' status while degrading their own," a model of filial piety known as "reverent caring." When the parents died, the observation of the Confucian three-year mourning ritual was officially prescribed to all cultural elites; one's sincerity in taking the mourning rite, including performing daily sacrifice to departed parents and sleeping beside the graveyard in a three-year period, was kept under severe surveillance as the meritorious record of being considered for an official position. The purpose of these stories was to suggest that the privileged position of living descendants within local society was "due to the treasury of merit that its ancestors had accumulated." For instance, Cai Yong (133-92 CE), an eminent official and intellectual, wrote his response toward the prodigies as a result of the "reverent caring" of his passed mother in the "Hymn of Praise on the Virtues of My Ancestors" as follows:

> … Of old my ancestors, down to my father, were recorded through generations as filial and worthy companions. They planted the seeds of bright virtue, never erring in the various rituals. This is why [their] numinous powers bring down increase and good omen [the

> prodigies] … This is the result of the numinous spirits lingering at our ancestral and paternal temples, bestowed by their overflowing virtue. How could I, in my youthful ignorance and solitude, have accomplished it? (Bokenkamp 2007:2-3)

Cai Yong clearly expressed his gratitude in hymn that the ancestors did provide grace of virtue for their offspring's good fortune and blessing. His material and virtuous achievement in this life was considered as the downward lineal transfer of accumulated merit from the ancestors. Such Chinese mentality of "reverent care" to the dead based on the cross-temporal concept of filial piety in the extended family was firmly instituted in the first century, and can be continually observed among Chinese Americans who attend a variety of ritual activity programs in HLT today.

Indian Buddhism also began to influence Chinese worldview in the first century [3] when two Indian monks, Dharmarantna (Zhu Falan 竺法蘭) and Kaśyapa Mātaṅga (Jia Yemoteng 迦葉摩騰) carried Buddhist texts and images from central Asia to the capital city of the East Han Dynasty (25-220 CE) via the Silk Road.[4] At that time Emperor Ming (28-75 CE) built the first Buddhist monastery in China, White Horse Temple, in 68 CE to host these two Indian monks and their Buddhist material. Soon Buddhist idioms and conceptions were diffused among the literati by translation work sponsored by the court

[3] Buddhism originated from Hindu cultural context has become one of three pillars of traditional Chinese culture (with the other two pillars of Confucianism and Daoism) by interacting with all levels of indigenous philosophy, morality, literature, arts and religion. For a detailed analysis of how Buddhism has impacted the development of Chinese culture since the first century, see Guang 2013.

[4] There are different popular accounts in Chinese textual material regarding the introduction of Indian Buddhism into China. For instance, according to the *Book of Han*, Emperor Wu of West Han (141-87 BCE) sent his cavalry to attack the Xiongnu empire in Central Asia in 121 BCE, and capture "a gold man used by the King of Hsiu-tu to worship Heaven." Some scholars claim this "gold man" as the first Buddhist figurine in China. An 8th-century fresco found in Dunhuang Caves portrays Emperor Wu worshipping this statue of "gold man."

and royal families. These foreign ingredients of developing the individual's spiritual life not only shifted the Chinese worldview to a new direction, but also stirred indigenous philosophies prevalent in society like Daoism to develop various institutional forms of practice for spreading their teaching. Among these, two particular categories of Buddhist conceptions gave the form of Chinese indigenous cosmic retribution and its institutional practice greater currency: the karmic law of cause and effect, and the metaphysical conception of *samsāra*, the endless circle of rebirth.

During the pre-Buddhism period, the basic concept of cosmic retribution in Chinese society grounded in an organic worldview in which the individual, the community, and the natural world were subject to a cycle of change and mutation. This worldview was constructed in an indigenous Daoist philosophy and stressed the harmonious equilibrium and coherence that worked through natural movement of *qi* underneath all seen and unseen phenomena in the world. Despite the fact that it was somewhat infused with an ethical significance emphasized by classical Confucianism,[5] this indigenous notion of cosmic equilibrium subsequently strengthened its moral ethos with the Buddhist law of cause and effect. With the new Buddhist idea of the karmic force generated from the law of cause and effect, Chinese literati began to perceive each event surrounding them as growing out of a specific inevitable cause the way a specific plant grows from a particular seed. In return, the karmic effect was inherent in the cause;

[5] Typically, the ethical teaching of the classical Confucianism encompasses the virtues of five social relations: affection between parent and child, rightness between ruler and minister, differentiation between husband and wife, precedence between elder and younger siblings, and trust and honesty among friends.

there were no morally overlooked gods in heaven, no outside ghosts as agents. A good action would produce a good effect, a bad action inevitably a bad effect.

The successive actions of cause and effect in human affairs in the Buddhist perspective also greatly extended native Chinese views of the afterlife. Facilitated by the Buddhist idea of *samsara* that signifies the endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth through six interconnected realms (heaven, *asura*, human, animal, ghost, and hell), Chinese literati began to envision the journey of the dead, particularly the occasion of one's fatal trapping in the hell. It was the first time that the Chinese could actualize the underworld as an existing place, or a network of hells, where the dead were held for a period of cruel sentence in retribution for the evils that they had individually committed during their lifetime and, most likely, their previous lives. Although the Chinese already had several illusionary notions in relating to the lands of the dead, such as the subterranean Yellow Spring and the underworld ruled by the Lord of Mount Tai, many lived "reports" from the afterlife to one's living descendent began to be recorded in Daoist literatures in the fourth century. These reports were often revealed through the professional services of a medium between the living and the dead for describing the unpleasant journey in underworld. Correspondingly, a novel category of Daoist rites was invented to 'rescue" these unsettled dead, called *zhaohun zang* or soul-summoning burial, to serve as mortuary practice in a diasporic setting (Bokenkamp 2007).[6] Confession of the

[6] Since the last decades of East Han Dynasty, China has undergone a four-hundred-year period of brutal wars and mass refugee migrations until the political unification of the Sui Dynasty (581-618). During this period, the Yellow River region in the North, which was the traditional political and socio-economic center in Chinese history, was successively attacked and occupied by different barbarian tribes. The surviving members of Imperial families and certain high official families often fled to the Lower Yangtze River region in the South to rebuild their diasporic regimes. To solve the crisis of conducting the unorthodox funeral

wrongdoing on the behalf of the unsettled dead, therefore, became one aspect of the canonical death rituals in Daoist tradition after the mid-fourth century.

Confession in a ritualized formation had been instituted as a critical component of faith healing procedure since the early development stage of Daoism in the second century (Wu 1979). For healing their sickness, patients were asked "to kneel, make obeisance, and confess their offences." One "demon-deputy" then wrote down each confessor's name and his confession to three copies of "memorials": "one was to be placed on a mountain peak for presentation to Heaven, one was to be buried underground, and one sunk into water. These were called the dispatches to the Three Offices."[7] The psychological effect on the ritual participant that generated from the Daoist way of writing the individual's name and presenting to the divinities was continually preserved as a standard function of ritual practice in China.[8] A moralistic ethos of faith healing ritual was interpreted by Daoist scholar Ge Hong (283-343) in his *Shengxian Zhuan* or *The Biographies of the Deities and Immortals*:

> Chang Tao-ling [9] wished to govern the people by inculcating a strong moral sense in them rather than by applying punishments. Therefore

---

rites in the South for those who had perished in the wars and on the road of migration without corpse, as Bokenkamp indicated, a "summoner" ascended to a rooftop bearing a piece of clothing belonging to the dead to call back the *hun* before burial.

[7] Quoted from *San-kuo chih* or Record of Three Kingdoms Period, 220-280 CE (Wu 1979:7).

[8] The writing of depositions in a memorial to be presented to the divine order was a new feature in the Buddhist practice of confession that had no precedent in Indian Buddhism (Wu 1979:12). In HLT, reciting 'memorial' to the Buddha is typical at the concluding section of any repentance ritual program. Names of ritual participants are written down one by one in memorial to "report" to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to certify their devotional labor.

[9] Chang Tao-ling (34-156 CE), the founder of the Way of the Celestial Masters sect of today's orthodox Daoism.

> he stipulated that anyone suffering from disease should confess all the misdeeds he had committed since birth. Chang would then write down the confession and have the patient sign a covenant with the Divine Intelligence swearing that he, on pain of death, would never violate the laws again. The document was to be cast into the river. From that time on whenever anyone became sick he would confess. Not only would he get well but he would also be so shamed that he would not dare to offend again. Moreover, his fear of Heaven and Earth would make him mend his ways (Wu 1979:7).[10]

With this liturgical tradition and a Buddhist cosmological foundation of karmic retribution, the Daoist practitioners began to transform the idea of confession in their popular rites other than healing. For instance, in the *San-yuan* services,[11] the most popular exhibition of Daoist penitential rites in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), the participants did not specify one's own wrongdoing but made acknowledgement of the general guilt of mankind. They did not confess one or two particular bad deeds in this life but repented all possible demerit actions of this and all former lives to accumulate merit for the well-being of this and all future lives. To some extent, the Daoist penitential rites both in format and content has resembled their Buddhist counterparts very much since the mid-fourth century (Wu 1979).

On the other hand, there were no established public rites when Indian Buddhism was first introduced to China in the first century. Later in the sixth century Buddhism reached its first pinnacle in Chinese society during the Liang Dynasty (502-557 CE) when Emperor Wu was frequently involved in organizing several auspicious Buddhist

[10] Quoted from Sun, Ko-Kuan 孫克寬. 1968. *Yuan-tai tao-chiao chih fa-chan* (元代道教之發展). Taichung, Taiwan: Tung Hai University. p.11.

[11] It was an annual set of three collective repentance services for the Office of Heaven on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month (*Shang-yuan* 上元), for the Office of Earth on the fifteenth of the seventh month (*Chung-yuan* 中元), and for the Office of Water on the fifteenth day of the tenth month (*Hsia-yuan* 下元).

ceremonies held in public for accumulating national merits (Janousch 1999). Emperor Wu's sponsorship of Buddhist ritual programs reflected the diffusion in Buddhist practice by lay devotees, including literati and commoners, seen in early medieval China. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most popular ritual programs attributed to Emperor Wu that is still in practice today is the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang. This repentance ritual demonstrated the development and popularity of the Buddhist confession ritual around this period. Later, Buddhist monk Zhiyi (538-597) and his scholar monk followers formalized a number of liturgical texts based on scriptural material, and established ritualized formats of these Buddhist texts for the daily practice of confession, meditation and other activities within a monastic community (Yu 2013). Typically, the liturgical procedure of penance rituals was composed of the recitation of scriptural texts and formulaic passages of confession before the thirty-five or more Buddhas, calling each of them by name for appealing to their certification. When the rites were performed on a specific occasion outside the monastic community, for example, transferring merits to the dead and praying for longevity, monastic members acted as shaman as their Daoist counterparts and performed these rituals on behalf of lay sponsors to rescue their ancestors from suffering in the underworld.

The Buddhist monastic community also appropriated the liturgical tradition of Chinese Daoism to invent its community ritual program to celebrate, for example, the birthdays of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or other special occasions like the progress of monastic training in Buddhist doctrine and practice. One of these festival-like ritual programs in Tang times named *yŭ-lan-p'en fahui* or the Ghost festival was a typical

example. This Buddhist festival was held in Buddhist monasteries nationwide on the fifteenth day of lunar July, the day on which the monastic community ended its three-month summer retreat.[12] Normally laypeople participated in *yű-lan-p'en fahui* and Daoist *Chung-yuan* rite,[13] both held on the same day. Yet the purpose of attending Buddhist *yu-lan-pen fahui* was to make offering to the monastics, who had refreshed ascetic power in retreat, for the salvation of their ancestors. Stephen Teiser states that,

> by donating gifts to the Buddhist establishment donors produced a stock of merit that was dedicated to their forebears, who received the benefits in the form of a better rebirth and a more comfortable existence in the heavens or hells of the other world (Teiser 1988:3).

Like the salvation story of Empress Chi to give testimony to the power of the repentance effort by attending the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang, most laypeople learned the Buddhist story of *yű-lan-p'en fahui* through a popular tale in the Tang times, entitled *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother from the Dark Regions.* The main character in the story, Mu-lien, is a Sinicized figure who corresponds with a disciple of the Buddha named Maudgalyāyana. As the disciple of the Buddha most adept at supernatural power stated in various scriptural sources, Mu-lien uses his skills to try to find his mother, Ching-ti, from the infernal realm of hungry ghost in the underworld. When Ching-ti finally is found, Mu-lien tries to deliver the food offerings on the ancestral altar by means of his supernatural power but the food still

[12] During the retreat period, members of Buddhist monastic community were required to stay in the monastery and abstain from contact with outside world. In return, they attended an intensified regimen of meditation and repentance of their transgression in order to release themselves from individual karmic effect and pursue enlightenment.

[13] See note 11 in this chapter.

bursts into flame just as it reaches Mu-lien mother's mouth. Finally, Mu-lien asks the Buddha to rescue his mother from this miserable fate. The Buddha then institutes the method of *yű-lan-p'en* in that,

> he instructs Mu-lien to provide a grand feast of "yű-lan bowls" on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, just as monks emerge from their summer retreat. The Buddha prescribes this same method of ancestral salvation for other filial sons to follow in future generations, and the story ends with Ching-ti's ascension to the heavens (Teiser 1988:7).[14]

Teiser argues that the popularity of the Ghost festival in medieval China illustrates the Chinese response to accommodate an ascetic way of monastic life, which originates from Indian context, to its new cultural world which traditionally emphasizes the essential function of family as a capstone in Chinese society. Monasticism was always a critical issue in the transmission of Indian Buddhism eastward to Asian societies. Often the bottom line was to incorporate monasticism by recourse to an exchange relation in which lay families provide material support for the monastic community while monks and nuns bestow religious benefits on laypeople. Yet "the Chinese solution not only accepted monasticism, it placed the renouncer at the very center of secular life; in the ghost festival the participation of monks is deemed essential for the salvation of ancestors" (Teiser 1988:14). In other words, in the Ghost festival Buddhist monks and nuns were not perceived as inferior members of the population such as beggars or idlers in the Chinese traditional view; rather, they were viewed as mystical and powerful shamans within Chinese traditional worldview. The foreign sense of

[14] The *yu-lan-pen fahui* or Ghost festival and its Mu-lien story has been observed until today in Hsi Lai Temple in America. The details of this ritualized festival will be further discussed in following chapters.

Buddhist monastery therefore was largely eliminated and the group of Buddhist monastics became a functional component of people's social life in China through the institutional mechanism of ritual performance. Such imagination and belief in the spiritual potency performed by the monastics within a ritualized setting is still vividly evoking many Chinese Americans living in Southern California today to attend similar ritual programs instituted by HLT.

To be sure, "*yŭ-lan-p'en*" is not a Buddhist or Daoist ritual practice per se; it is something "quite central to the fabric of daily life of the vast majority of people in medieval China" (Teiser 1988:17). To some extent, the Ghost festival can be seen as a religious manifestation of the Chinese core value developed in the early Chinese moralized worldview – the ancestor and the filial piety in the extended family – with a contemporary formation of ritual practice. For the lay participants in *yŭ-lan-p'en fahui*, the distinction between "Buddhist" and "Daoist" or even "Confucian" aspects of rescuing ancestor's fate in the cycle of cosmic retribution are irrelevant. In other words, the participation in Ghost festival or other forms of repentance rituals in the actor's mind is somewhat of a good social act in taking care of family responsibility, not a religious sacrifice or devotion activity in patronizing a certain religious establishment such as Buddhism or Daoism.

Consequently, the development of the ritual tradition in Medieval China can be seen as a transformation of Indian Buddhism to Chinese Buddhism. It is a localization process through which Buddhism embraces the spiritual culture prevalent in medieval China and evolves into a new form of vernacular Chinese religion. For instance, Barend

J. Ter Haar discusses that the transformation of Chinese religion as a "Buddhist-inspired option" existed to define the daily problem encountered by ordinary people settled in the Lower Yangzi region [15] during the period from 1100 until 1340, and, most importantly, then solve it (Ter Haar 2001). Ter Haar defines the option as "Buddhist" as "all of those elements in lay religious life that are somehow linked to a Buddhist background." These options could include divine figures or ritualized activities from Buddhist doctrinal background, such as Bodhisattva Guanyin or eminent monks worshipped posthumously as a source of merit; or other practices that are often seen as Buddhist at that time, such as the avoidance of meat-eating and liquor-drinking, offerings of food and money to Buddhist monasteries, and acts of devotion to accumulate karmic merit. The most complete assembly of these Buddhist-inspired options together in one social event was the repentant ritual, which penetrated every facet of people's social life in medieval China.

Since the early period of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the appearance of various Buddhist repentance rituals accommodated more and more people who had different purposes to participate in them. A line of periodic and non-periodic confessional rituals was finalized, including several of them still active today from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia to North America, for example: the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang, the Loving-kindness and Compassion Samādhi Water Confessional Ritual, the Pure Land

[15] This region is part of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces in China that encompass today's Shanghai metropolitan area. Historically the Buddhist doctrinal and ritual traditions held by the major monasteries located in this region represent the most authentic component of Chinese Buddhism, especially the tradition that was transmitted to Taiwan after 1949. For example, a majority of the eminent monks in past decades were born and trained in this region, including Taixu, Yinshun, Hsing Yun, and Sheng Yen mentioned in this chapter.

Confessional Ritual, the Great Compassion Confessional Ritual, the Ullumbana Meeting (Ghost Festival) and the Water and Land Great Dharma Function (Yo 1991). The emperors of various dynasties also frequently held nationwide repentance rituals. For ordinary people, the repentance rituals became the major religious medium in Buddhist context to harmonize their social life, because in the Chinese traditional framework of spiritual life, confession is the capstone in the process of forsaking evil and cultivating goodness. For instance, Chinese Confucianists traditionally affirmed that, "if you make a mistake yet don't correct it, this is called a mistake";[16] (過而不改 是謂過矣) and "if you have a mistake but correct it, nothing could be better than this"[17] (過而能改 善莫大焉). This is a clear indication that confession is a basic expression of moral action in Chinese terms. Meanwhile, some people attended Buddhist rituals in order to prevent calamities and attain peace materially and mentally, some for the sake of rescuing the deceased from the state of torment, and others for the retribution of grace given by the gods or compassionate people. The religious functions of Buddhist repentance rituals were thus expanded. As a result, these rituals became increasingly popular in medieval China.

It was the later period of Song when the development of Buddhist rituals began to systematize and reveal a doctrinal nature that made ritual activity an indivisible part of the Chinese Buddhist tradition. Daniel B. Stevenson surveyed the repertoire of various ritual programs in Song Buddhism and summarized two vernacular forms of Buddhist rites (Stevenson 2014). First, 'rites of repentance' might be practiced both for personal

[16] Source: Book XV, Wei Ling Kung Chapter, *the Analects*. 論語衛靈公篇十五, translated by author.

[17] Source: Volume 5, Commentary of Zuo for Spring and Autumn. 春秋左氏傳卷五, translated by author.

self-cultivation and the benefit of second parties, which was the Mahayana nature of Indian Buddhism manifested in its Chinese context. Ritual programs of this sort were perceived among the monastic community as an essential component of a comprehensive meditation program or contemplative practice. They shared a common idea of karmic roots seeded from practitioner's past lives. This disposition of evil and wholesomeness, therefore, must be confessed and dealt with through the rites of repentance as an integral part of disciplining and cultivating the spiritual self. However, certain Buddhist rites of repentance floated ambiguously across the divide between self-cultivation on the one hand, and on the other hand ritual intercession directly to this-worldly or non-Buddhist concerns in public. This second vernacular form, 'rites of Buddhist service,' was programmed for "second-party expiation of sins, generation of blessings, and deliverance on behalf of gods, ghosts, ancestors, and animals" (Stevenson 2014:333). Ritual programs of this sort emphasized the Mahayana nature of benefiting others as compassionate action and presupposed the power of buddhas and bodhisattvas who disposed to intervene directly in the affairs of their devotees through ritual participation. Certainly, such rites of intercession would be populated with the vernacular idioms and concerns of a consuming Chinese public. Stevenson argues that this sort of accommodation with vernacular Chinese religiosity is evident throughout Buddhist history even back to its Indian history. He continues,

> Buddhist motifs such as multiple lives, karmic reciprocity, hungry ghost and hell realm, Yama and the intermediate state, and salvation through rebirth in the pure land may well have had as such, if not more, impact on Chinese popular religion as the reverse. Ritual may also have been one of the key mediators for such interaction (ibid.).

The Buddhist ritual landscape in late medieval China became further immersed in the religious minds of ordinary people, especially in the funeral, which was the most important rite of passage for the traditional Chinese population. A line of Buddhist rites for transferring merits to the dead was invented and customized upon the different contexts of dialectal and ethnic cultures throughout China.[18] Besides the rites of funeral services, vernacularized Buddhism in late medieval China also developed a variety of ritual-like mechanisms such as the ledgers of merit and demerit (*gongguoge* 功過格) [19] providing moral guidance to individuals who were confused about dramatic changes in their daily life. Behind the Buddhist idea of 'merit,' and the ritualized ways to accumulate merits for oneself or to transfer the materialized merits to another, lay the moral belief in a supernatural or cosmic retribution governing individual's affairs not only in this life but also in the afterlife. Through ritualized mechanisms, people perform their good deeds in order to accumulate the reward of merit, which is supposed to offset the demerit accumulated by their previous bad deeds and by their concerned one. To some extent, by attending the ritual events in a monastery and by adopting ritual-like tools such as the ledgers of merit and demerit in everyday life, the living reaps the fruits of their good works conveniently and, most importantly, morally within a vernacular religious worldview.

[18] For example, Yik Fai Tam (2012) describes a funeral tradition called *Xianghua foshi* (village or incense flower Buddhist service) that existed during the early seventeenth century in the Meixian Hakka region of today's Guangdong Province in China as a "folk Buddhist funeral rite."

[19] The popularity of adopting the ledgers of merit and demerit was to respond to the political, economic, and social insecurity in late imperial China. For more detail, see Brokaw 1991.

Overall, during the late imperial period in China, Buddhism followed the vital trend of "commoner culture"[20] to exhibit its Chinese transformation in different aspects. The monastic community showed considerable interest in making Buddhism accessible to ordinary people outside the temple walls. New ways of spreading Buddhist idioms and concepts, exemplified by those aforementioned rites of repentance and Buddhist service as well as ritual-like ledgers of merit and demerit, enabled Buddhism to become a pervasive force in people's lives and form an integral part of their mentalities. There were several emerging spiritual demands of ordinary people that formulated this vernacular culture of Chinese Buddhism. Meanwhile, the socio-economic prosperity of the Song era promoted a growing confidence in the power of mortals to manipulate the gods and thus shape their own fate (Von Glahn 2004:130-179). While the traditional concern with sin and fear of punishment intensified religious imagination of the afterlife and underworld drawn from both Chinese and Buddhist mythology, this concern and fear stimulated the growth of religious demands of rescuing the *huns* of the dead from the torments of the underworld.

At this time, Buddhist monastery complexes and local temples, even modest or abandoned ones, also began to be endowed with an aura of sacred power. This type of vernacular sanctification on Buddhist places was largely caused by the popularity of novels and dramas that were based on the folklore of reward and punishment through an imagined platform of monastery-based Buddhism. On the other hand, the Buddhist

[20] An emerging cultural movement that has diffused among Chinese society since the rise of the Song Dynasty. For more analysis on how this cultural movement impacts the development of Chinese Buddhism, see von Glahn 2004.

temple retained its traditional function as community activity center, that is, public place constantly open to any supplicant, believers or non-believers, to approach the gods with private prayers and to participate in community-oriented festivals. Buddhist monasteries often sponsored public ritual services and associated with traditional community entertaining and commercial activity on major holidays (like New Year, Qingming customs of sweeping the ancestors' graves, and Duanwu festival) and feast days (like buddhas' and bodhisattvas' birthdays, anniversary of the Buddha's nirvana, midsummer Ghost Festival, and feast days of local gods and past heroes). The ritual calendar of Buddhist temples usually varied from one local community to the next in keeping with their own local religious cultures and traditions. Von Glahn (2004) argues that despite the popular use of the ledgers of merits and demerits and mass circulation of morality books among Song society that indicated ordinary people increasingly sought secular avenues of deliverance, laypersons were still engaged in a dialectic with the institutional ideologies of established religion. The tripartite nature of the religious culture demonstrated by the vernacularized ritual programs of the temple, the monastics, and religious patrons, has formulated the backbone of Chinese religio-cultural heritage that continued its evolution throughout the late medieval and early modern periods until the clash with the Western sense of 'religion' in late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Anti-superstition movement in twentieth-century-China

Since the late-nineteenth century the withdrawal of institutional Chinese Buddhism from its traditional role in Chinese social and political realms has provided a

historical vacuum in Chinese spiritual life.[21] This spiritual vacuum was largely caused by the dramatic denial and assault on China's religious heritage under the slogan of "anti-superstition" both from the state government and Chinese intellectuals in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang indicates that there are three intellectual orientations prevalent in Western civilization in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that greatly formulate such self-denial mentality among educated Chinese. These three intellectual trends are,

> (1) a century of Western missionary contempt for the Chinese "idol worship" and "superstition," (2) a sense of the superiority of science and modern rationality in the nationalist cause of China's self-strengthening; (3) social evolutionist doctrines that arranged different cultures and religious systems of the world into a hierarchical progression whose theological end was Western-style civilization. (Yang 2008:2)

Dramatic assaults against institutional Buddhism and the secularized movements of cultural 'enlightenment' spanned over the seventy-five years of Chinese modern history, including the late Qing New Policy agenda to convert temples to public schools in 1898, the May Fourth rejection of divine authority and the Nationalist state campaigns against superstition in the early Republican Period, and the ideological atheism of the Communist revolution that claimed victory in 1949 and unleashed its antireligious violence in the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976). Each of these events involved the

[21] Scholarly research on narrating this period of Chinese history related to Buddhist development are abundant in English and Chinese sources. The following is a list of most reference material in this research: Goossaert and Palmer 2011, Kiely and Jessup, ed. 2016, Pittman 2001, Welch 1967, 1968 and 1972, Yang 1961, and Yang 2008.

rejection of Chinese religious heritage and the construction of a "new" spiritual civilization for modern China in a modernist perspective.

Buddhist monasteries with their mass tax-free land holdings and traditional worshipping activities became a low-priced target for those reformers who totally rejected Chinese indigenous religions. In 1898, during the so-called Hundred Day's reform in the Qing court, the young emperor Guangxu (1871-1908) and the reformist leader Kang Youwei (1858-1927) launched a series of "New Policy" programs that aimed to radically transform China's society and culture from a dying status quo to a modern and vital nationhood. At the core of these "New Policy" programs, the imperial order of converting local Buddhist temples to westernized 'new' public schools in every city and village was a direct attack on the religious foundations of China's traditional Buddhist institution in society. Thousands of Buddhist temples, many of them just rebuilt from damage caused by the *Taiping* rebellion and other wars in nineteenth century, were confiscated by state and local governments for educational and other secular usage. To justify the mass seizure of Buddhist property for China's socio-cultural modernization, Buddhist monastics were largely portrayed as a group of greedy and unproductive parasites in society. The traditional ritual activities performed in temple were generally described as a commercial mode of selling spiritual products for accumulating material wealth in Buddhist monasteries.[22] This was the first of a wave of anti-religious agendas to

[22] For detailed analysis of the monasterial confiscation movement in the late-ninetieth and early-twentieth centuries in terms of the fate of Chinese religion, see Goossaert 2006.

establish a new relationship between the state and religious institutions in modern China that spanned the entire twentieth century.

Meanwhile, intimately intertwined with the momentum of the temple confiscation movement after the end of the Qing Empire in 1911, a discursive change took place and totally turned the historical relationship between Chinese common people and religion on its head. The time between 1915 and 1922, known as the May Fourth or the New Culture Movement in Chinese modern history,[23] was the vantage point that was commonly described as a rejection of traditional values and a transition to a completely new way of perceiving the world. During this period, Chinese young intellectuals were overwhelmingly immersed in 'new' knowledge of Western modernity in science, democracy, Darwinism, and Marxism. New idioms began to appear in the discourse on religion, usually introduced in individual speeches and news articles to the public. Most important among these are *mixin* for 'superstition.' It was adopted from a new understanding of 'religion' primarily in the Western sense of a system of moral doctrines and meditative prayers organized as a church. This subjective term was generally employed by nonbelievers to signify disapprove of the beliefs and associated ritualized practices that interpreted natural and human events nonempirically as revelation of magic and supernatural power. Despite that some religious sympathizers considered 'religion' as a spiritual force underneath the construction of nation-state identity, 'science' often

[23] This intellectual movement took its name from a mass protest led by college students in Beijing on May 4, 1919, against Chinese Republic government giving away territory and national interest in secret deals between Japan and its European allies after World War I. Soon this political movement switched the target of people's opposition from corrupted government to the Chinese traditional culture that was responsible for the cultural lag and political weakness of the nation.

came to be the capstone in differentiating ‘religion’ from ‘superstition.’ While ‘religion’ was considered compatible with scientific methods and knowledge, ‘superstition’ was considered an unscientific cheat that counterfeited as religion to perplex common people.

The modernist rhetoric in dividing religion and superstition effectively distanced those Chinese people who viewed themselves as progressive modernists from those upholding traditional ways of practicing religion as stubborn conservatives. This discourse also caused the birth of the slogan of ‘anti-superstition’ within the political campaigns of new republican China. Mainly starting with the nationalist regime of *Kuomintang* (KMT), a forceful program to eradicate superstitious practices countrywide was launched on several fronts. Between 1928 and 1930, various laws banned superstitious professions in Chinese traditional religions (such as diviners, spirit mediums, and faith healing), and banned the trade of superstitious items for worshipping traditional gods and ancestors (such as spirit money and ‘wasteful’ offerings). Standards to determine which traditional temples were to be destroyed and those to be preserved were lifted. This law, which prescribed a scientific and therefore civilized form of religious life nationwide, provided criteria and a list of examples for preserving ‘authentic’ religion (such as Buddhism in its ‘purist’ form of doctrinal teaching without accommodating superstitious practices) and temples dedicated to heroes of Chinese civilization; the rest had to be destroyed or converted to secular usage. At the same time a state-led moral reform movement, the New Life Movement, enforced a guide for disciplined life that associated traditional Confucian ethics (such as filial piety and loyalty) with modern notions of nationalism and citizenship. The metaphysical beliefs

and practices of, for example, afterlife and karmic retribution in Buddhism were largely reduced to a Confucian notion of family religion and ancestor worship.

The ethos of anti-superstition was extended into the mass anti-religion movement after 1949 when the communist regime was established in China. Intoxicated with the military success of the revolution and with doctrinaire Marxist hostility towards anything religious, local communist cadres aggressively regarded the establishment of Chinese religion as a 'symbol of feudal superstition' that must be suppressed completely for the rise of 'new' China. They plundered Buddhist monasteries nationwide to smash 'idols,' seize properties, expel monks and nuns, and put a stop to any kind of Buddhist service activities. Despite official statements and directives of freedom of religious belief along with freedom of thought and speech provided from the central government, Buddhist monasteries continued to suffer from malevolent deviations on the part of local cadres. People were forced to renounce any kind of Buddhist language and practice in daily life to avoid political and criminal persecutions. It was the time of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when Chinese institutional Buddhism with its over 2,000-year history was finally systematically destroyed in mainland China. Supported by Mao Zedong (1893-1976) at the highest rank of Communist China, it was a period of political and cultural chaos during which young Red Guard students unleashed havoc and destruction on anything related to 'old' China, including all Buddhist temples and their represented religious heritage. Only a few Buddhist temples were strategically preserved in Beijing and several unique historical sites, staffed by the local cadres who were dressed in monastic robes as

their work uniform to perform the diplomate function of cultural exhibition to entertain foreign tourists.

Overall, the denial of Chinese religious heritage during the first three quarters of the twentieth century was a direct reaction against so-called "heterodox" Buddhist doctrines and practices represented in the performance of Buddhist ritual that was frequently covered in a veil of superstition. Buddhism in China and its thousands of monasteries were known only for the service to benefit ancestors, gods and ghosts living in non-human realms, and its monastics (monks and nuns) were predominantly engaged in performing the rites for the dead. Both the monastic and lay communities had developed a range of anti-ritual sentiment within the political and religio-cultural agenda for reforming Buddhism and Chinese religion at large. To some extent, both educated people and commoners perceived that Chinese Buddhist entities should separate themselves from an individual's superstitious concern like caring for the ancestor and escaping misfortune, and get rid of monastery-based ritual tradition that was deemed as non-Buddhist or even a corrupted parasite along with its historical development in China.[24]

[24] Recent scholars (Yang 2008; Stevenson 2015) argue that anti-ritual sentiment against traditional Chinese Buddhism was largely initiated by the provoking writings of Christian missionaries in the second part of the nineteenth century. For instance, after having occasion to both observe a Buddhist rite of repentance and examine its ritual manual, Reverend Samuel Beal (1884) is shocked at how closely it resembled "a corrupt form of Christian ritual." This resemblance leads him to affirm that it could only come from the religious traditions outside the Buddhist tradition in history, insofar as the notion of ritual repentance of sin before buddhas and bodhisattvas is alien to the "original" teaching of the Buddha over 2,000 years ago.

Revival and Refinement of Humanistic Buddhism

The prolonged secular and atheist attacks on Chinese religious heritage and institutional Buddhism triggered a rise of so-called 'self-help' movements among Buddhist communities in the early twentieth century, with the guidance of a few leading intellectuals who treated Buddhist teachings with respect. Liang Chi-Chao (1873-1929), a famous disciple of Kang Youwei, believed a refined "new Buddhism" could be the spiritual foundation of the Chinese Republic. His vision was a rationalized Buddhism that was de-ritualized, therefore anti-superstitious, and made over into a disembodied philosophy and moral system to be in accord with the modern notion of civilized culture (Liang 1959). Monk Taixu (1890-1947), the most charismatic Buddhist reformist figure in the Republican period (1911-), became a self-described "revolutionary monk" after reading works by Liang Chi-Chao and other Chinese 'new' thinkers, and decided to save Chinese society through reforming and revitalizing Chinese Buddhism.

Taixu was not only personally involved in revolutionary action to overthrow the Qing court in 1911, but also produced a plan to radically reform the monastic community in Chinese Buddhism through a complete overhaul of clerical education and property management of the monastery. However, upon the failure of his revolutionary efforts inside the monastic community, Taixu devoted his intellectual labor later to establishing a solid scripture-based foundation on which to lay his plans for the reformation. His vision for a reformed Chinese Buddhism was socially engaged and "humanist." Until his death in 1947, Taixu travelled all over China and the world to initiate numerous Buddhist

institutes and associations to actively participate in different agendas of political and cultural movements.[25]

Among Taixu's countless public seminars and publications throughout his life, his most popular motto was to transform Chinese Buddhism to a "Buddhism of Human Life" (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教), that is, Buddhism as a provider of moral guidance and liturgical service to the living. It was largely an antithesis of so-called "funerary Buddhism," which has been framed by secular reformers as a superstitious tradition to merely serve something dead and buried. Taixu resisted this portrait of religious 'tradition,' but with caution. One of Taixu's disciples told Holmes Welch when Welch conducted a series of thoughtful interviews with Chinese monks before the World War II, that the Buddhist rite for the dead was a religious expression of filial piety within Chinese culture. Despite saying that sometimes these rites might be effective in relieving the suffering of the dead in hell according to Mahayana scriptural tradition, this monk insisted that they had been instituted merely in response to popular demand in history. "They were not a feature of Buddhism in ancient times, yet because people think they were, they look down on Buddhism as superstition. When you [Welch] write about this, you must make it clear that these things are old Chinese customs, but do not belong to Buddhist thought" (Welch 1968:209).

Taixu never became a recognized leader of a major faction of the Chinese Buddhist world. Yet his reformed vision was appropriated and further enhanced to be the

[25] For a detailed description and analysis of Monk Taixu's life-long career to reform Chinese Buddhism, see Pittman 2001.

mainstream ideology of the modern Chinese Buddhism called "Humanistic Buddhism" (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教) seen globally today. This development was largely initiated by the fatal collapse of the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist regime in mainland China in 1949. To avoid the political and religious persecution of the communist regime, many junior and less-distinguished monks, the younger generation of the monastic community largely made up of Taixu's students or followers, fled from China together with an estimated 1.3 million refugees and KMT troops to Taiwan.[26] Overall, the outlook for monastery-based Chinese Buddhism in the mid-twentieth century was bleak: systematically destroyed in mainland China and languidly surviving in Taiwan,[27] where it appeared as the stain of a timeless folk tradition of Chinese religion before its fated eclipse by the forces of modernization with Taiwanese socio-economic development in the late twentieth century.

However, by the 1980s and through the early twentieth-first century, Chinese Buddhism revealed a new vitality as Buddhist monasteries and ritual traditions rebuilt, expanded, and multiplied in many parts of the Chinese cultural regions – a wave that started in Taiwan and spread to overseas communities in Hong Kong and other parts of the world. The establishment of HLT in an American landscape is a typical showcase for the emergence of Taiwan as a major player and exporter of global Chinese Buddhism and

[26] Many of them were junior monks at that time and have since risen to prominence in Taiwan-based Chinese Buddhism, including Monk Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan and Monk Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain.

[27] After a period of Japanese colonial restrictions on Chinese temples before 1945, the new KMT regime in post-war Taiwan continued to institutionally curb the influence of Buddhism and other folk religious traditions in society, although no longer as committed to the eradication of superstition as during its phase in mainland China. For more details see Jones 1999.

new religious movements. Soon this wave of Buddhist revitalization reached the coastal regions of mainland China and the cities of Beijing and Nanjing, and further to the remote hinterland. All these developments shared a range of intellectual features that were derived from the refined Taixu vision of Humanistic Buddhism.

Monk Yinshun (1906-2005) represented this intellectual force of Chinese Buddhism's modern revivalism in Taiwan. Despite recognizing a heavy debt to his mentor Taixu about a modern reformulation of Buddhist ideals (Jones 1999), Yinshun was careful to distinguish his own thought from that of Taixu, especially his idea of "Buddhism of Human Life." Rather than attributing the major problem of traditional Chinese Buddhism to its excessive focus on performing rites for the dead and spirits in Taixu's perspective, Yinshun's concept of "Buddhism in the Human realm," or Humanistic Buddhism, shifted more focus on identifying what constituted Chinese Buddhism's essential element to meeting human's spiritual needs in modern society. While Yinshun believed that Taixu remained caught in traditional, ritual-oriented Chinese concepts of Buddhism, he directly traced the essence of Buddhist ideas and values back to the Buddha's era 2,600 years ago in India. Here Yinshun appropriated Taixu's scriptural foundation of Buddhist reform to formulate his own discourse. First, he argued that progress in the Buddhist path toward Buddhahood could only occur during a human life in this world and not after death in non-human realms (i.e. so-called Pure Land and other kinds of heaven realms). Second, he argued that the religious life in a Buddhist context consequently must emphasize the affairs of the living and morals in scriptural teaching, especially those in early Buddhist texts such as four Āgama sutras

and Abhidharma texts written either in classical Chinese or Pāli and Sanskrit. Yinshun's vision of Humanistic Buddhism has taken hold in many segments of modern Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan.

To some extent, Yinshun's vision corresponded somewhat with Liang Chi-Chao's rationalized Buddhism in the early twentieth century that highlighted Buddhist learning rather than ritual practice and secular application rather than temple-based activity. It promoted a variety of lay community groups to participate in studying Buddhist teachings and to be involved in social service works. Venerable Cheng Yen (1937-), who founded the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, the most vital Taiwan-based Buddhist association specializing in humanitarian work around the world with over 10 million members and volunteers in 47 countries, respected Monk Yinshun as her mentor Master. "Humanistic Buddhism" also guided a new generation of monastic education that concentrated on studying scriptural texts and teaching Buddhist knowledge to lay Buddhist communities. In other words, Yinshun's discourse of Humanistic Buddhism actualized an almost hundred-year vision of the Chinese intellectual that intended to refine Chinese Buddhism based upon so-called modernized ethos and principles.

To be sure, Yinshun's intellectual leadership provided a firm foundation for the Buddhist revival in Taiwan in the 1980s. Buddhist concepts and values again diffused among the society through a mass self-learning and self-cultivation movement, thanks to the success of compulsory education policies instituted by the KMT regime that helped Taiwan's literacy rate jump to 94% in 1994, a 34% increase from 1952 when less than

60% of the population older than 15 could read and write.[28] But the expansion of monastery-based Chinese Buddhism in the same period [29] provided an institutional mechanism to frame the kinetic energy of Humanistic Buddhism to a worldwide religious movement. HLT and its Taiwan-based Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order (FGS) always self-portrayed as a learning-center-like school to the individuals who pursued the Buddhist way of life in response to everyday challenges (Chandler 2004; Lin 1996; Nagata 1999).

Yet, to some extent FGS founder Monk Hsing Yun's vision of Humanistic Buddhism involves a more traditional religious worldview in Chinese vernacular culture than Monk Yinshun's rational and text-based vision of Chinese Buddhism. The most significant division between these two monastic leaders of the revival of Chinese Buddhism in the late twentieth century is the attitude toward the ritual activity program instituted by the Buddhist monastery. While Yinshun and his intellectual followers emphasize the scriptural-based Buddhist learning, Hsing Yun assigns traditional ritual system a critical function of Buddhist teaching and preaching among common people. To refine the traditional ritual program in echoing Monk Taixu's "Buddhism of Human Life" in early twentieth century, Hsing Yun argues that,

> Ritual practice and burning of incense in the Qing and Republican periods caused the degeneration of Buddhism. Strictly speaking, what happened in these periods was a kind of formless catastrophe for

[28] http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/taiwan/pro-education.htm, Retrieved November 23, 2017.

[29] Several external factors in the 1980s contributed to the boom of constructing Buddhist temples and their associated devotional organizations in Taiwan, including the lifting of martial law in 1987 and revised law on the organization of civil groups in 1989. Both government acts paved the way for Buddhist temples and individuals to bypass the control of the government's supervisory mechanism of Buddhism (Jones 1999).

> institutional Buddhism. It would have been better if the practice of ritual and incense burning had been accompanied with Dharma preaching. In other words, the Dharma should be preached when a ritual is performed; sermons should be delivered to pilgrims. Only when the Dharma and rituals can complement each other … will Buddhism be revitalized. (Hsing Yun 2008:67; translated by Xue Yu 2013:356)

With such reform tenor, the overall purpose of the FGS and HLT ritual activity program is to perform Buddhist service to actually benefit both the living and the dead in accordance with the Dharma or Buddha's teachings. The literal meaning of *fahui* or assembly of rites in the Chinese language, as FGS and HLT always emphasized, is *yi fa wei hui* (以法為會), or the meeting (*hui*) composed by the Dharma (*fa*). The ritual activity program and the actualization of Hsing Yun's vision of Humanistic Buddhism at HLT will be further discussed in detail in following chapters.

On the other hand, the rebirth of institutional Buddhism in mainland China following the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the chaotic Cultural Revolution in 1976 came abruptly and displayed a different trajectory from Taiwan-based Chinese Buddhism at the same time.[30] With the almost wiped-out condition of traditional Chinese Buddhism and other traditions in Chinese religion, old temples were renovated and new temple construction was thriving in cities and countrysides with merit generation and accumulation in mind (Fisher 2008). The expressions and practices in the name of "Buddhism" were blooming in a vernacularized formation that was often portrayed as being the simulation of pre-twentieth-century Buddhism and the long history of Chinese

[30] For a detailed analysis of the post-80s development of Chinese religion in mainland China in the context of the broader Chinese cultural world, see Goossaert and Palmer 2011, especially the chapters in Part II: Multiple Religious Modernities Into the Twentieth-First Century.

popular religion stretching back through time.[31] For instance, the courtyard of Guangji Temple [32] (or Universal Rescue Temple; 廣濟寺) in Beijing "comes to life with a variety of informal and often impromptu activities among mostly self-defined Buddhist lay practitioners" (Fisher 2014:6). Among this flea-market style of Buddhist activities, the most popular activity is referred to by the courtyard participants as "preaching on the Dharma." The topics of one popular lay preacher in the courtyard include "lessons in ritual etiquette, guides to the correct pronunciation of Buddhist sūtras and dhāranīs, and descriptions of how to obtain cures for health ailments through combinations of sūtra singing and a correct diet and lifestyle" (ibid) and other topics of morality relating to applying Buddhist ideas in everyday life. Almost all lay preachers have convinced their followers of understanding the change in their personal life through "the Buddhist doctrine of cause and consequence (*yin guo*)", and "their special pre-fated bond with the Buddha (*foyuan*) carries with it important moral responsibilities" (Fisher 2014:7).

As Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham's groundbreaking survey of the religious experience in contemporary China indicated, ordinary people in mainland China in the twentieth-first century are more influenced by popular Buddhist ideas or beliefs in relation to daily life than by their traditional philosophies, and sometimes exercise them

[31] There are plenty of recent ethnographic studies to explore the emerging religious development of post-Cultural Revolution China. The common patterns of religious experience are communal- and lay-oriented expression and practice to pursue this-worldly benefits and solve concerns and problems in present time. Examples are: Chau. 2006, Cheung 2016, Fisher 2014, and Walsh 2007.

[32] The Guangji Temple was built in the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234 AD), and is now the headquarters of the Buddhist Association of China (中國佛教協會), the official supervisory mechanism of Buddhism in the People's Republic of China.

instinctively. For instance, despite only 4.4 percent of interviewees identifying themselves as Buddhists, Yao and Badham find that over half agree vaguely with Buddhist concepts of cause-effect and conditional arising in that current relationships between husband and wife, relatives in family and friends in society are derived from what they have done to each other in their previous lives (Yao and Badham 2007:9). Even more surprisingly, 77.9 percent believe the Buddhist concept of causal retribution and karma that goodness would be rewarded with good and wickedness would be rewarded by evil in this and the next lives (ibid). Yao and Badham argue that these popular Buddhist doctrines have been transformed and frequently integrated in people's daily life, and function as part of their moral system. In this sense, traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices are successfully embodied in the social norms and expectations that formulate Chinese religious experience collectively in the contemporary period.

The close relationship between Buddhist teachings and popular understandings of life indicates a typical Chinese attitude of believing in but not belonging to one particular religious tradition.[33] For instance, those who realize that how their previous lives and next lives are related to what they are doing in this-worldly life must have committed themselves, or have been exposed to the Buddhist doctrine of casual retribution and conditional arising. However, there is no evidence that such popular realization of life is

[33] This type of individual religiosity is prevalent in the Chinese cultural regions. Zhiming Zheng (2005) calls it "flowing cult" (游宗) to describe people constantly flowing among different temples and religions to worship diverse gods and learn the teachings offered from different faith traditions in Taiwan. In this way, belief and practice initiated from Buddhism, Daoism, popular religion and Christianity could coexist in individual daily life by people's bodily moving around different religious institutions. The only protocol to attach individuals to one temple or church particularly is not membership but to participate in different rituals that respond to diverse problems and challenges in life.

causing mass conversion to Buddhism within the Western conception of religious membership in China. Even among Beijing Buddhists, defined in Yao and Badham's research as urbanized people who enshrine and worship Buddhist images at home, 29.4 percent clearly disagree that sincerely worshipping Buddhas or Boddhisattvas would bring about spiritual protection and blessings and 42 percent disagree with the Buddhist claim of reincarnation (Yao and Badham 2007:108). Yao and Badham argue that the more specific and spiritual in religious practice (worshipping gods for reward and reincarnation) the fewer people, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, would participate in it. In contrast, the more abstract and vaguely phrased a belief (causal retribution and karma) the more people are ready to 'live' it. In other words, even though people might not self-identify as a Buddhist or even fully understand Buddhist teaching at all, they could still 'get' Buddhist concepts from non-institutional sources at their disposal to deal with the reality in their individual life.

Conclusion

Through a thematic survey of Chinese over a four-thousand-year history in this chapter, I present a historical context of various ritualized actions that Chinese common people have continually invented and practiced since recorded history to respond to problems perceived in their individual present lives. This "action and response" framework refers to retribution as a cosmological process that operates through an intricate system of correspondences existing between the human and the other nonhuman realms and between the present, past and future. Applied to the sphere of daily life, this framework means that disasters and successes in this life are interpreted as cosmic

responses to specific human actions from past to present. Actions of repentance and merit production, therefore, warrant the process of retribution, and are always formalized with the liturgical components developed by religious traditions that enable common people to attend and fulfill their spiritual need of manipulating the cosmic retribution process and shaping their own destiny. From this perspective, Chinese religiosity is in complete accord with how to *do* religion in a ritualized formation, not with what to *believe* religion in different doctrinal discourses.

The worldview of afterlife and karmic retribution in the "action and response" framework further actualizes the concept of the extended family that linearly binds the ancestors and generations of descendants together with a relation chain of filial piety. To some extent, ancestors and their living descendants are predestined partners in mutually shaping their individual fate, either in this life or the afterlife. Consequently, the action of performing filial piety in ritualized settings becomes worthy strategy to generate favored retribution in Chinese mentality. By labor of confession on behalf of the ancestors, the descendants simultaneously rescue the ancestors and accumulate merit for themselves. By prayer of dedicating merit to the dead, the living reinvests their capital of merit to reproduce abundant merit for future dispensation. Moreover, this merit-production and dispensation process is authenticated if it operates within a ritualized mechanism established by religious institution and officiated by ritual specialists. The tripartite nature of Chinese religiosity demonstrated by the popularity of the ritualized activities of Buddhist monastery (place), the monastics (specialist) and lay participants (patron) has formulated the backbone of Chinese religio-cultural heritage since medieval times, which

has been labelled as superstition and fatally disaggregated in the hand of Chinese governments and intellectuals through the mid-nineteenth to late-twentieth centuries.

The so-called revival of Chinese Buddhism in the late-twentieth century represented by the rise of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan and the FGS establishment of HLT in Los Angeles, therefore, offers an interesting window of studying how traditional Chinese Buddhism is restored and continued in the contemporary world. Given the broken legs of the Buddhist monastery and monastics for upholding the tripartite base of Chinese Buddhism in mainland China, why do the remaining lay patrons of having vernacular Buddhist ideas and practices after the 1980s come to HLT when they migrate to the United States? As discussed in Chapter 1, recent immigrants from mainland China have been the bulk of Chinese American population in the twentieth-first century. How do they become the followers of Humanistic Buddhism Monk Hsing Yun envisioned as the new formation of Chinese Buddhism benefiting the living and the deceased? Through a refined mechanism of Humanistic Buddhism configured by FGS in the HLT space and ritual activity program, which will be discussed in following chapters, how does the traditional type of vernacular religiosity endow the experience of "religious modernity" among thousands of HLT Chinese American visitors?

CHAPTER THREE

Spatial Organization of Hsi Lai Temple

> Landscape is an ordering of reality from different angles. It is both a vertical view and a side view. The vertical view sees landscape as domain, a work unit, or a natural system necessary to human livelihood in particular and to organic life in general; the side view sees landscape as space in which people act, or as scenery for people to contemplate. The vertical view is, as it were, objective and calculating. … The side view, in contrast, is personal, moral, and aesthetic. … If the essential character of landscape is that it combines these two views (objective and subjective), it is clear the combination can take place only in the mind's eye. – Yi-Fu Tuan (1979:89).

From a microscopic viewpoint, HLT in Hacienda Heights is not merely a spot on the metropolitan map of Southern California. HLT is made up of fields and buildings "out there" in the mind of people who pass by, a sector of reality that invites visitors to feel and to develop relationship (Figure 1). This Buddhist monastery complex is composed of halls for worship, rooms for meeting and exhibition, administrative offices, schooling sectors, dining service zones, resident dormitories and guest houses, a central courtyard, gardens, internal roads, parking lots, pedestrian pathways, trees and planting, and other tangible elements to support the functional life of a religious place. When people enter HLT, all kinds of buildings and fields intertwine a multi-sensorial sphere that unites distinctive auditory, olfactory and visual stimuli imbued with Buddhist mythical lore to



Figure 1: Hsi Lai Temple (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

invite people to project their own thoughts and feelings on this Buddhist complex. HLT itself is such a religious landscape, a place-holder where time, space, and people fuse, a construct of the mind and of feeling on the existence of Chinese Buddhism in America.



Figure 2: Hsi Lai Temple on the Puente Hills (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

As one drives down winding Hacienda Boulevard upward to cross the Puente Hills toward La Habra, Whittier and further into Orange County, a glance up to the left reveals a compound of non-American buildings nestled in the hillside. Next to widely spaced, typical single-family residential homes in Southern California which dot the slopes, the visualization of HLT complex from the surrounding appears incongruous (Figure 2). Palatial-style buildings which possess glazed, orange-color roof tiles are a

distinctly Chinese architecture to an American mind. These visual stimuli defy a traditional American image of church or mosque as a sacred place.

Scholars are always interested in the relation between landscape and religious faith. Topics related to how natural features and man-made monuments incorporate into a symbolic structure of one religious tradition are frequently studied in a spatial perspective. This tracing of the spatial sanctification from faith to land and objects seems to be a paradigmatic approach taken by many contemporary researchers in religious studies and cultural studies at large. The religious landscape therefore becomes what cultural geographer Antonio Gualtieri calls "a symbolic document" by which scholars can read people's meanings and faith orientations. Gualtieri, however, takes a somewhat reverse approach to study the role of mountains as symbols of "ultimacy" within specific religious traditions in the world. His inquiry starts at "[w]hat is the psychological and existential consequence of inhabiting a particular configuration of geographical features?" (Gualtieri 1983:161). He asks not only how religious culture influences landscape, but how landscape influences human consciousness and then the development of religious culture. Gualtieri argues that the peaks of the Himalaya and Kun Lan provide psychological power to formulate Tibetan religiosity and mold its meditation traditions. To some extent, Gualtieri is trying to refine the out-of-favor perspective of geographical determinism from centuries ago and explore "the possibility of a causal relation wherein life in the presence of great mountains induces certain cosmological and axiological meanings that would not otherwise exist" (Gualtieri 1983:164).

In this chapter I adopt Gualtieri's geographical perspective to delineate the spatial organization of HLT as a religious landscape. Three decades ago FGS constructed HLT as an institutional headquarters for launching its global missionary work. To serve this goal, FGS imbued HLT with all kinds of symbolic meanings in the site plan and architectural design to represent an "orthodox" Chinese Buddhism in the West. For the people with whom I engaged over the past eighteen years and during recent fieldwork, HLT is an existential landscape, at least physically, not for them to build or shape, but to learn objectively and to feel subjectively from it. All symbolic features and meanings FGS has assigned to HLT are important enough, but they happen not to be the principal ones that interest me here. My research concern is with the effect of HLT's spatial organization of buildings and fields on visitors' imaginations of it as a religious place. What is the power of the religious landscape to shape people's religiousness itself? In characterizing their "environmental perception" approach to study the nature of man-land transactions, English and Mayfield (1972: 212) state that,

> At the simplest level, environmental perception assumes that each man has an "image" of the world and that his preferences, evaluations, decisions, and subsequent behaviours are based on these pictures in his head rather than on the world of objective reality (if such exists).

As Gualtieri argued in his conclusion, "[t]hat man must be influenced by his environment is undeniable, but to define its influence is another matter" (Gualtieri 1983:173). Therefore, I try to indicate a potential trajectory that can be used to explore how landscape and religiosity are related in this chapters.

I suggest that in these visitors' minds HLT is simply an existent Asian Buddhist place in Southern California at which they cast a mental projection of what Buddhism

could be or should be. For this fieldwork, I then use my "mind's eye" objectively and subjectively, drawing on Yi-Fu Tung's terms referenced at the beginning of this chapter, to follow visitors' cosmological images of HLT and study their "preferences, evaluations, decisions and subsequent behaviour" in terms of their consciousness of a religious landscape.

Inventing new things out of the integration of the tradition

HLT is usually described as a replica of an FGS headquarters monastery complex located on an 80-acre hilltop property in Kaohsiung, a major seaport city in southern Taiwan. As a result, the founding myth of how Monk Hsing Yun began construction of the FGS complex during the 1960s is still circulated among today's HLT devotees and visitors. In one scene of these stories it is dramatized that Monk Hsing Yun used a stick to draw the architectural style of Buddha hall on the construction ground to teach local craftsmen how to build a Chinese Buddhist monastery in Taiwan. Though it somewhat contradicts the fact that the construction of the FGS complex received official building permits by its modern architectural plan and technology, this scene of drawing a blueprint on the construction ground vividly reveals the fact that the architectural form of FGS monasteries follows what Monk Hsing Yun remembered from his monastic life in traditional Buddhist monasteries in China.[1]

The construction of the FGS monastery complex in Kaohsiung invented a tradition of Chinese monasterial architecture in the modern era that FGS's branch temples in Taiwan and later throughout the world have followed since then. First, the spatial

[1] For a brief description of Monk Hsing Yun's monastic life, see Chapter 1.

arrangement and architectural style of FGS buildings and fields take the classical form of Chinese monastery compounds through history. In Monk Hsing Yun's vision, "a monastery should retain enough traditional elements to make it readily recognizable as a monastery" (Shih and Kao 2011:410). Life in Qixia Mountain and other monasteries back in China provided Monk Hsing Yun with abundant images of how an orthodox Buddhist monastery complex *should* look. Yet in constructing the HLT, the FGS blended modern architectural and engineering techniques to construct buildings and fields in the Chinese traditional style. In order to meet the functional demands of a modern religious place, for instance, the majority of buildings in the FGS complex were built upwards with several floors, although the roofs and color of the structures still followed the traditional design. Due to the technical demand for large-scale buildings, steel reinforced concrete (SRC) was the major building material instead of wood and other traditional building materials. Even the statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas for worshipping in the FGS complex were made of concrete rather than materials that are perceived as respected by the traditional Buddhist community, such as gold and jade. While FGS preserves the cloister design in traditional Buddhist monasteries that was supposed to segment and differentiate various halls, the current function of the cloister system in this complex is to provide a covered pathway to connect adjacent buildings, to shield pilgrims and visitors from the typical hot sunshine and heavy rain in southern Taiwan, and to create a solemn and sacred aura during ceremonial occasions (Shih and Kao 2011). As scholars observed, in constructing the FGS monastery complex in Kaohsiung Taiwan, Monk Hsing Yun "espoused the trend of 'modernization' for the sake of further advancement [of Chinese Buddhism], on the

condition that traditional Chinese Buddhist monasterial architecture be well preserved and maintained" (Shih and Kao 2011:408).

The FGS culture of creating new things out of the integration of traditional values profoundly guides the spatial organization of buildings and fields in constructing HLT in the 1980s in America, and applies to the formulation of HLT's activity program (which I will discuss in the next chapter). To preserve tradition, Susan Ann Grabiel finds that HLT's spatial layout like the FGS complex relies on rich, and age-old Chinese *feng-shui* principles along with Buddhist symbolism to configure, and also dissolve, boundaries of time, space and self (Grabiel 1996).

Feng-shui, which literally means "wind and water," is a Chinese geomantic idea and practice to guide any kind of man-made structure to be built in harmony with its surrounding physical environment. This ancient art of physical planning is critical for Chinese people in daily life to make decisions on either the site selection and orientation of homes, graveyards and businesses, or the interior arrangement of walls, doors, windows, furniture, plants and courtyards. All of these structural plans are not based on mechanical rules, but rather they are an organic or even mystical hybridity of Chinese philosophical (mainly Daoist), cosmological, astrological, mathematical and geographical ideas and practices. It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss *feng-shui* principles in detail here.[2] Simply speaking, this ancient art of physical planning often considers invoking and circulating concretized forms of "invisible forces," known as *qi*, that are

[2] For a detailed analysis of the Chinese *feng-shui* in designing spatial organization of objects and people movement, see Bruun 2003 and 2008, Lip 2009, and Rossbach 2000.

collectively emitted from natural features, man-made objects and living beings. If *feng* (wind) and *shui* (water) symbolize the flowing character of *qi*, the spatial organization of buildings and objects as well as the route of people's movement, like the systematized design of wind tunnel and water channel, it would be crucial to enable *qi* to circulate and resonate throughout a space and place both internally and externally.

This notion of managing the "field of *qi*" in traditional Chinese architecture is particularly vital for a religious place like HLT, due to its supposed function of acting as a liminal space for contact between invisible forces and living beings, as well as contact between the East and the West. HLT boasts structures and artifacts that circulate the *qi*, which reference its Buddhist background and enhance HLT as a Buddhist monastery in Southern California. The traditional pagoda style of roof structure with overhanging eaves, glazed roof tiles, and animated ridge decorations like dragons, phoenixes and other symbols of quadrupeds embodies Monk Hsing Yun's vision of making a place "readily recognizable as a monastery" in HLT's architectural form. Fused with different Buddhist images and the smoke curls of incense, HLT's interior space provides an atmosphere of worship in a Chinese way. FGS sets HLT visitors in a Chinese Buddhist locale independent of the real time and space outside the temple's walls and gate.

<u>An instituted landscape to dissolve space, time, and people</u>

HLT grounds are encircled by a rough triangle loop of driveway that forms the shape of a leaf of the Bodhi tree (Figure 3), the tree under which Buddha



Figure 3: Hsi Lai Temple on a Bodhi leaf (photoed by author)

attained enlightenment 2,600 years ago as stated in the Buddhist Canons. At the bottom of the leaf, the temple's entrance on Glenmark Drive provides a dignified marker to be the official entryway to this Buddhist complex. It is a starting point from which visitors can walk along an axial line that situates the Gate, Bodhisattva Hall, the central Courtyard, the Main Shrine, and the Memorial Pagoda in complete alignment. All these HLT main halls and fields are deliberately laid out in a vertical changing elevation, with the lowest elevation at the entrance and the highest elevation at the Memorial Pagoda. One must ascend, or climb, numerous sets of stairs as one travels, or makes pilgrimage, throughout the complex. This design of elevational axiality is typical in Chinese traditional monastery complexes as it stimulates a sense of monumentality when people enter this religious place.

The Gate, as other religious places in the world, imposes a marker to differentiate a sacred area from a profane world (Figure 4). The Chinese characters of FGS's HLT (佛光山西來寺) and the English International Buddhist Progress Society, the temple's official name in the United States, are engraved in front of the Gate facing the wide opening of the San Gabriel River Valley sprawling below. The Chinese characters on the back of the Gate list four universal vows of all Mahayana Buddhists: to save all



Figure 4: The Gate (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

sentient beings, to eradicate delusion and stress, to study the boundless Dharma, and to attain supreme enlightenment.

Bodhisattva Hall serves as the first scene of Chinese Buddhism that visitors encounter atop the stairs from upper level of temple's main parking lot (Figure 5). Bodhisattva, or "Buddha-in-training" as defined in the temple's pamphlet, is the figure model of the enlightened sages in Mahayana Buddhism who represent distinctive virtues that all Buddhists should self-cultivate in order to attain Buddhahood. There are two guardian Bodhisattvas standing in two alcoves on either side of the Hall's three doorways. In the niche on the right is Skanda, a famous guardian deity in various Indian and Chinese Buddhist tales, and on the left is Sangharama, a hybridized deity of an Indian guardian spirit of temples and a Chinese military general named Guan Yu (162-219 CE) known to all Chinese people for his bravery and loyalty. Two couplets of Chinese characters frame either side of the three doorways leading visitors into the Hall. The outer pair reads: through faith advance chanting, meditation, and wisdom to establish the root for Absolute Emptiness; with pity and wisdom vow to employ a compassionate heart to create the Universal Dharma Realm. The inner pair states: the worldly masses unite their efforts to protect the realm of Enlightenment; the five sages with one heart open the Pure Land.



Figure 5: Bodhisattva Hall (photoed by author)

The five sages referred in couplet are the five most iconic bodhisattvas of the Chinese Buddhist tradition (Figure 6). They sit in their own niches on the wall to invite visitors to pay their full gaze upward. The five statues, from right to left, are Manjusri, Avalokitesvara (also known as Guanyin), Maitreya (also known as Happy Buddha), Ksitigarbha (also known as Ti-tsang or Jizō in Japan) and Samantabhadra. The five virtuous qualities they signify are: wisdom, compassion, benevolence, commitment and practice, respectively. The engraved Chinese texts on the wall beneath the five Bodhisattvas are that of the Diamond Sutra, which is also one of the most popular Buddhist texts in Mahayana Buddhism.



Figure 6: Five Bodhisattvas in Bodhisattva Hall (Source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Various sizes of small Bodhisattva image panels cover the rest of the surrounding walls; names of donors to help construction and maintenance of the Hall are also tagged at the bottom of each tile (Figure 7).


Figure 7: Bodhisattva image panel (photoed by author)

The public altar is setup beneath the niches of the Five Bodhisattvas. Visitors are welcome to bring their own offerings, of which any kind of meat and alcohol is absolutely prohibited. They also can make a donation to obtain the temple's prepared offerings to perform individual prayer. HLT volunteers constantly remind the visitors who leave their offerings on the altar to bring these blessed offerings back home to share

auspiciousness with the others. Yet there are always a lot of left-behind food and flower offerings at the end of day, and volunteers clear them out every day and send them to the dining hall and other halls to share them with the public. Moreover, there are also several containers of Chinese and English "Dharma Words" (大佛法語) in the Hall that visitors may pick from after their prayer (Figure 8). Each piece of paper has different famous Chinese phrases of poetry or folk literature and is sealed within a plastic tube in containers, and visitors need to break the tube and read the "Dharma Words" inside. This type of divination-like activity is very popular among visitors to HLT, and monastic members are always available behind the desks on each side of the Hall to be consulted with every-day problems and to explain the meaning of "Dharma Words." This refined, divination-like setting inside Bodhisattva Hall is one of many of HLT's ingenious designs that fuses religious tradition (divination) with modernized ideas (Dharma Words) to embody Monk Hsing Yun's vision of making a place "readily recognizable as a monastery" in HLT.



Figure 8: Dharma Words (photoed by author)

The Central Courtyard is accessed through the covered corridors on either side of Bodhisattva Hall inside (Figure 9). This open-air


Figure 9: Central Courtyard (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

courtyard provides a broad space between the Bodhisattva Hall and the Main Shrine to serve as a transaction zone for a variety of occasions, such as the celebration ground for folk festivals and the farewell zone for ancestors at the end of confession rituals. The Courtyard is also enclosed by two wings of two-story buildings. The right-wing houses administrative offices and two small meeting rooms on the lower level and a 200-seat auditorium on the second floor (Figure 10). The left-wing provides a gallery space to exhibit Buddhist artifacts and art on the first floor and a 120-seat conference hall on the second floor (Figure 11). The open corridors on the upper level of both wings provide a grand view for visitors to observe the activities performed in the Courtyard below. On the other hand, the covered cloisters on the ground level not only provide visitors shelter space against heavy sunshine and occasional rainfall when walking toward the Main Shrine, but also exhibit different statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas along the pathway to create a solemn and sacred aura surrounding the Courtyard (Figure 12).



Figure 10: Auditorium (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 11: Conference Hall (source: Hsi Lai Temple)


Figure 12: Buddha statues in the covered cloister (photoed by author)

When visitors enter the Courtyard through the left corridor of Bodhisattva Hall, the Information Center is just to the left of the door (Figure 13). Here, one may take a rest to enjoy "Fo Guang Tea" and coffee, browse



Figure 13: Information Center (photoed by author)

newspapers, magazines and free pamphlets, watch videos about Buddhist teachings produced by FGS, practice sutra-scribing,[3] and inquire about temple tours. Across the cloister from the Information Center and its adjacent room which is mainly for the rehearsal of the youth orchestra, an Arhat Garden houses the statues of the famous eighteen arhats who vowed to practice Bodhisattvahood in the Mahayana tradition during the Buddha's era (Figure 14). To the right of the Bodhisattva Hall's door are the temple's public library and other small meeting rooms. As the same layout of the left side, an Avalokitesvara Garden is situated across the cloister (Figure 15). Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) Bodhisattva is seated on top of a giant rock with her two famous attendants, who play important


Figure 14: Arhat Garden (photoed by author)


Figure 15: Avalokitesvara Garden (photoed by author)

[3] Sutra transcription is adapted into Chinese Buddhism in the early days for making Buddhist scriptures more accessible to others. Over time, scribing sutra has become a practice of cultivation, through which one collects merits and calms the minds while deepens the understanding Buddhist teaching stated in sutra. For more on the scriptural culture in Chinese history, see Kieschnick 2003, 164-185, and Chen 2013.

roles in various Chinese popular stories in history. Surrounding the waterfall pond are four Deva Kings of Heaven, which look like the same heroic generals in ancient times portrayed in a sixteenth-century legendary novel *Investiture the Gods*, and four Dragon Kings of the Four Seas portrayed in the famous novel *Journey to the West*. These figures are easily recognized by visitors who have a general knowledge of Chinese vernacular literature.

The Main Shrine, atop the steps from the Courtyard in axial alignment, is the heart of the HLT monastery complex (Figure 16). All major ritual events and ceremonies are conducted here in a hall that has been exclusively dedicated to Sakyamuni Buddha in the Chinese Buddhist tradition over centuries for his heroic qualities of unsurpassed wisdom, virtue, compassion and power. The giant bell and drum hanging on both sides of Main Shrine (Figure 17 and 18) indicate the traditional facade of Buddha Hall to the gaze of ordinary visitors. Inside this grand-size hall which is capable of accommodating over five hundred participants within one ritual event, are three monumental statues at the front of the room, which represent the three most



Figure 16: Main Shrine (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 17: The Bell (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 18: The Drum (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 19: Three Buddhas in Main Shrine (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

important Buddhas in the doctrinal traditions of Chinese Buddhism, who gaze at every visitor entering the Hall (Figure 19). Sakyamuni Buddha, in the center, is the historical founder of Buddhism in the human world, the so-called Sahā World where human beings are bearably enduring all kinds of sufferings so they gain the will to learn and practice Buddha's teachings.[4] On the right is Medicine Buddha, known as the Great Medicine King in Chinese Buddhism, who possesses the power to heal both the sickness of the physical body and afflictions of the mind. He is the Buddha of the Eastern Pure Land of Pure Crystal radiance. On the left is Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, where he receives human beings who sincerely and mindfully follow his teachings to self-cultivate at the time of their passing. Due to the blissful peace in Western Pure Land, people who were reborn there can continually to cultivate themselves without any this-worldly suffering and thus are able to easily attain ultimate enlightenment.

Two giant light towers made with hundreds of bulbs are erected on both sides of the Three Buddhas. Each bulb represents an offering of one individual or family who

[4] Chinese Buddhists traditionally envision that the human realm is the best one of the six realms in Buddhist cosmology to practice Buddha teachings and therefore to obtain ultimate salvation, due to its bittersweet nature. Among the other five realms, beings in the heaven realm enjoy too much in their happy lives to have will for finding salvation from the cycle of birth and death, while beings in the other four realms suffer too much in their miserable lives to have time and energy for learning Buddha's teachings.

prays for the auspiciousness of one year and, therefore, the light offering needs to be renewed every year through personal annual donation. Moreover, there are thousands of Buddha statues with different sizes and forms on the surrounding walls. Each status is lighted. Like the panels of the small bodhisattva on the walls of Bodhisattva Hall, names of donors are also tagged at the bottom of each Buddha statue on the walls of the Main Shrine. With this interior design of objects and lighting fixtures, visitors encounter thousands of buddhas and their devotional followers when they enter and stay in the holiest place of this Buddhist monastery complex. It is not unusual to observe a few visitors practicing sitting meditation during the open hours of the Main Shrine, where a noiseless and sacred atmosphere is preserved.

Below three towering statues of Buddha inside the Man Shrine is the main altar in HLT. Unlike the public altar in Bodhisattva Hall, the offerings of flowers, foods, incense and other sacrifice material put on this main alter are exclusively managed by HLT monastic members and a few designated lay staff. If visitors want to make an offering to the Buddha here, they could make an incense offering outside of the Main Shrine by using free incense prepared by the Temple. After the prayer, they can insert the burning incense in the giant incense burner at the front of the Hall to let the smoke fly through the air (Figure 20). Visitors can also make a light offering to the Buddha by donating money in exchange for a prepared candle to conduct their



Figure 20: Main incense burner (photoed by author)

prayer.[5] The most popular offering prepared by HLT is a candle with a pineapple shaped glass container (Figure 21), because the pronunciation of the pineapple in several Chinese dialects is same as the vocalization of prosperity.



Figure 21: Light offering prepared by Hsi Lai Temple (photoed by author)

The desk area outside the front door of the Main Shrine not only supplies pineapple candles, but it also functions as the register center for attending all kind of ritual events (Figure 22). This administrative area attached to the uncovered plaza around the giant incense burner at the front of Main Shrine demarcates a popular zone of performing devotional actions for ordinary visitors. Contrary to the solemn and peaceful aura inside, just outside the doors of the Main Shrine people freely conduct their traditional ways of incense praying and light offering.[6] They also use this space to ask details about how to register their ancestors to attend incoming ritual program, consult HLT monastics to arrange for Buddhist services for their recently departed family member, cast money into the temple's donation box, and



Figure 22: The Plaza in front of the Main Shrine (photoed by author)

[5] Before 2016, HLT allowed visitors to bring the burning candle and incense into Main Shrine for praying purpose. However, due to the order of County Fire Department, HLT banned any burning material inside the Main Shrine, all kind of individual light and incense offerings must be conducted outside the Hall. In late 2017, HLT replaced the ordinary candle with electric and recyclable candle. Now the visitors are able to make light offering inside the Main Shrine again without violating the County Fire Code.

[6] Traditionally, the popular Chinese way of incense prayer is to hold the incense while bowing to four directions one by one before inserting it into the incense burner.

other popular types of devotional activities. In a Chinese-Buddhist cosmological understanding, all of these pious performances are witnessed under the gaze of three Buddhas and thousands of small buddhas sitting inside, as well as the deities currently living in heaven.

Behind the Main Shrine is the HLT nunnery and Meditation Hall that is not open to the public. To access this area, visitors must exit from the plaza of the incense burner through a gate on the left side of Main Shrine, and continue climbing up to the Memorial Pagoda (Figure 23), which is located atop the Bodhi-leaf shaped driveway and at the same time the end of HLT's central axial line.



Figure 23: Memorial Pagoda (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Sitting at the highest point of the HLT grounds, the Chinese traditional style of Memory Pagoda is a place of afterlife. Unlike the setting in the Five Bodhisattva Hall and the Main Shrine in the HLT monastery complex, the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva (Ti-tsang or Jizō in Japanese Buddhism) sits solely at the center of the altar inside this noiseless, round-shaped pagoda. Accompanying Ksitigarbha are thousands of golden tablets stuck on the surrounding walls. Each tablet has a name printed at the center and one or two smaller names on its bottom left corner. To some extent, each tablet represents an intimate relationship between the deceased (name at the center) and his or her living relatives (small-sized name[s] at bottom left). There is the ancestor who has been

memorized by the descendant, deceased children memorized by the parents, husbands by wives, wives by husbands, and uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, friends by their living relatives; all named tablets present a collective memory of the living to the dead buried in the U.S., China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other countries and places. Based on scriptural tradition in Chinese Buddhism, due to his firm commitment to take care of the beings in hell who are trapped by their retribution of bad deeds, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva postponed his own salvation indefinitely so that he can teach those in hell to learn Buddhist principles of cause-and-effect and to confess sincerely so they won't re-enter hell after a future life. Because of his association with the underworld recognized in Chinese vernacular culture, people usually pray for Ksitigarbha's blessing to the fate of their dead relatives. Quietly standing at the top of HLT monastery complex, Memory Pagoda actualizes a trans-temporal and trans-spatial memory of the dead for Chinese people living in the American diaspora.[7]

A popular ethno-cultural landscape in Southern California

To be sure, FGS skillfully arranges the structures and objects on HLT grounds to establish a Buddhist field of *qi* in Southern California. From an institutional standpoint, HLT is intended to be a sacred landscape which facilitates visitors to cognitively and affectively learn Buddhist values and ideas through the programmed "teaching" of

[7] Traditionally, the Chinese families established their individual ancestry hall to host the permanent tablets of the deceased family members, or erect a general ancestor's tablet and the tablets of most recently passed members at the home altar setup in individual houses. Yet this family tradition of memorizing the dead is hard to preserve in modern living, especially in a diaspora setting. HLT's Memory Pagoda, therefore, assists Chinese American families with hosting their ancestor's tablets in a Buddhist setting. The living can conduct the ancestor's worship and offering properly in a Buddhist way to continue this important ritual tradition of Chinese family religion in America.

building, fields and iconic objects. Yet some worldly matters in the HLT complex also vividly attract visitor's attention; some of them are part of the institutional arrangements for serving modern human needs in an ethno-cultural place.

Parking space is definitely an "eyesore" feature in monastic mind to detract from HLT sacred landscape. Since the planning stages, FGS has fought the County of Los Angeles requirement to provide on-site parking spaces in HLT. To release local resistance on HLT construction, FGS gave up the planned sites of buildings and fields to rather lay the on-site parking spaces "as minimum as possible." Today, often called by HLT traffic-control volunteers as Lot 1, 2 and 3 provide totally around 160 visitor parking spaces inside the complex.[8] This number of spaces is easily deficient in peak hours of every Sunday and event periods when hundreds or thousands of visitors drive to HLT (Figure 24). A typical scene is that spilling-out passenger cars flow in and out of neighborhood streets to look for street parking near HLT. Once parked people then flow in and out of neighborhoods surrounding HLT to find the way to reach their destination. Recently HLT has normalized its shuttle service program for every Sunday and special events like Chinese New Year and the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang to shuffle visitors between the Temple and several contracted off-site parking lots.



Figure 24: On-site parking lot #1 in weekend (photoed by author)

[8] An additional almost 40 parking spaces were constructed in 2017 on the right side of Bodhi-leaf loop driveway for accommodating the temple's own automobile fleet.

For many visitors, HLT is an uneasy place to visit on Sundays and special event days. Even the lay volunteers who are supposed to be willing to cooperate with the monastic community sometimes complain about the nightmare of driving to the Temple. To reserve on-site parking spaces for ordinary visitors, lay volunteers are often required to park their cars in remote off-site parking lots and take temple shuttles back and forth. For some long-term volunteers, the spatial treatment HLT assigns to their cars against ordinary visitor's cars is uncompassionate. On the other hand, the lack of on-site parking spaces in HLT is also perceived as unfriendly by some ordinary visitors. They need to squeeze into the HLT complex to test their luck and patience of that day to find a parking space, or they must find street parking or drive to an off-site parking lot and wait for shuttle service. The worst scenario during the Chinese New Year event is to spend three hours in a traffic jam around HLT in order to get in by taking the temple's shuttle. All these complaints about HLT's parking space are largely caused by the predominant culture of car driving in Sothern California, which considers the convenience of on-site parking as a yardstick for the friendliness of the visiting place. To patron an ethno-cultural attraction place like HLT, most visitors, including temple's volunteers, feel they deserved to have a convenient on-site parking space to enjoy the Asian hospitality or Buddhist compassion portrayed in different literary genres and popular media dramas.

There is no question that HLT is an ethno-cultural attraction in the Los Angeles area. Since the temple's opening days in 1988, the nickname "little Forbidden City"[9] for

[9] "The Forbidden City" is a popular name in the West to refer to a palace complex in Beijing, China which served as the imperial home of Chinese emperors and the political center of imperial China between 1420

HLT has been circulated in the public through local news articles. A compound of Asian palatial-style buildings with glazed-tile roofs and broad eaves attracts not only American tourists, but also Chinese immigrants and second generation Chinese Americans or so-called ABC (American-born-Chinese). To reinforce the character of the Buddhist or Chinese ancient culture at large in America, HLT has developed several worldly and modern features in its religio-cultural landscape over the past thirty years.

The Dining Hall in traditional Chinese monasteries is the place serving monastic living only. The FGS headquarters complex in Taiwan, however, changes this food-consumption tradition in the modern Buddhist monastery.[10] HLT's Dining Hall is located below the Main Shrine and can accommodate around four hundred people (Figure 25). Currently HLT hires professional chefs to provide a scrumptious vegetarian buffet lunch every day to serve devotees and ordinary visitors.[11] Lay volunteers and casual visitors can also freely enjoy simple but classical vegetarian foods in breakfast and dinner time with all monastic



Figure 25: Dining Hall (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

and 1912. Since 1925, this palace complex has been switched to the Palace Museum and has become a famous tourist attraction even today.

[10] According to FGS narratives, Monk Hsing Yun had several starving occasions in the early 1950s when a few Buddhist temples in Taiwan refused to provide meals to him. Therefore, when he had his own temple, Monk Hsing Yun vowed to provide meals for everyone who came to FGS temples.

[11] Originally HLT's lunch buffet was free to the public. However, later it began to charge ordinary visitors to prevent greedy and food-wasting behavior. When I first came to HLT in 1999 the price of lunch buffet was $5. Now it is $7 per person. But on Sunday the devotees and visitors who attend the weekly Sunday chanting service can take lunch in the Dining Hall free of charge.

members. As HLT Abbot says, FGS monasteries are not afraid of people coming to eat, rather, they are afraid of people's unwillingness to come. Next to the Dining Hall on the lower level of Main Shrine is the Book Store (Figure 26), which also hosts a Tea Room that serves café style lighter fare with hot and cold beverages. FGS temples traditionally provide distribution facilities to make a variety of Buddhist materials accessible to the general public. HLT visitors can find Buddhist books, CDs and DVDs, statues, incense, prayer beads, meditation supplies, artwork and postcards for personal use in the Book Store. On weekends HLT volunteers also sell a variety of "home-style" foods to visitors in front of the Book Store. One of the most popular food items is fresh Taiwanese style "Red-bean cake" (Figure 27). Many ordinary visitors explain that it is the "Red-bean cake" and other home-style of Chinese food items outside the Book Store to make them continually come back to visit HLT.



Figure 26: Book Store (source: Hsi Lai Temple)


Figure 27: "Red-bean cake" vendor outside the Book Store (photoed by author)

The FGS Hsi Lai School and its classrooms are located below the Bodhisattva Hall and off of HLT upper parking lot. As part of the temple façade to exhibit a Chinese Buddhist monastery in front of the American public, the schooling facility is a modern

feature within people's images of a traditional Asian religious place.[12] In the early 90s, FGS established Hsi Lai University to launch its higher education enterprise globally.[13] Today FGS Hsi Lai School offers an after-school program for K-6th grade students on weekdays, and Chinese language classes on Saturdays. The classrooms are used by local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops sponsored by HLT on Sundays. Many parents and their children I encounter in these education programs are non-Buddhists, and having children learn Chinese language and culture is often the primary goal of developing a socio-cultural relationship with HLT.


Figure 28: Guest House (photoed by author)

Guest Houses located outside of HLT's bodhi-leaf ground are the living area that many visitors have confused feelings about (Figure 28). On the one hand, HLT's Guest houses provide a convenient live-in space to stay short-term for those devotees and visitors who attend overnight and week-long HLT activity programs. Without the listed price tag to the rooms of different sizes and capacities, lodgers donate money and/or volunteer labor to HLT as their willingness.

[12] Courses of homeland language and culture for the next generation of Asian immigrant community is always a part of the cultural service provided by various ethno-religious organizations in America (Min and Jang 2015). Through these language and culture courses, Asian immigrant communities intend to enhance their members' ethnic fellowship and identity as well as the power of ethno-cultural retention in American society.

[13] Hsi Lai University moved to its own Rosemead campus in Los Angeles in 1996, and changed name to the University of the West (UWest). UWest has received its accreditation from WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) since 2004. After Hsi Lai University, FGS established several universities around the world, including Nan Hua and Fo Guang Universities in Taiwan, Nan Tien Institute in Australia, Fo Guang College in the Philippines, and a constellation of community colleges in several countries.

They also have a meal pass for enjoying the dining services provided by the Dining Hall in HLT. During the busiest seasons like Chinese New Year and the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang, devotees need to make reservation in advance, and might only have a bed-size of space on the *tatami* or wide straw mattress loaded on the ground for twenty or thirty people in one room.

On the other hand, for those who yearn for living in a monastic-like lifestyle within a monastery, HLT Guest Houses are more like a worldly hostel facility. Beside the required curfew and bedtime during the period of conducting major ritual events, living in Guest Houses is full of relaxation and sociability, not the solemnity and solitariness supposedly maintained in a Buddhist monastery. Lodgers who are mainly Chinese American visitors and come from different places often enjoy their private time in a peaceful place and are entertained by meeting new friends and chatting about things around the world. If they have their own cars, the parking space for the Guest Houses is free of crowding and they can easily drive out to visit friends and places in Los Angeles and, as many lodgers tell me privately, to eat non-vegetation food. This aura of worldliness and coziness is completely opposed to the sacredness that FGS is always trying to manage inside the temple walls. One young Caucasion American told me that when she conducts sitting meditation inside the Main Shrine and walks meditation around HLT halls and fields, she feels she is situated in a blissful realm portrayed by the scripture. Yet when she walks back the Guest Houses every night it seems like going back to hell. In her view, the five-minute walk between HLT and its Guest Houses reveals the fantastic journey of *samsara*, the endless cycle of birth and rebirth.

HLT – A Buddhist landscape in a humanistic perspective

One night I walked with Abbot in the covered cloisters on the ground level of the Right Wing. The doors of two small meeting rooms were opened to enable the summer breeze from the Courtyard to circulate though the rooms. Through the door of one room we observed a sutra-study group reciting a paragraph of scriptural texts. Another meeting room was functioning as a temporary office space for several lay volunteers to prepare for an incoming ritual event. The Abbot walked into that room to comfort those volunteers, and I stayed outside and read the description post of one Buddha statue sitting on a pedestal in the cloister (see Figure 12). The description of the statue I was looking at says this Buddha statue is engraved from a precious jade stone originally exploited in Burma. When the Abbot walked out of the room, I asked him casually: does HLT worry about the safety of such valuable object been exposing to the public? Why doesn't HLT act as the other Buddhist monasteries that protect these Buddha statues carefully in a variety of enclosed spaces to sanctify them? The Abbot replied that FGS's purpose of establishing Buddhist monasteries in the world is to allow people to have access to Buddhist teaching and practice, not to be the holy residence of the deities or to become a museum to exhibit these iconic images. Therefore, HLT spaces like the meeting room, conference hall, and auditorium are not built to be isolated chapels but are reserved to be worldly facilities used by ordinary people for learning and practicing Buddhism.

Human cognitive and affective experience of the Buddhist monastery is the capstone that forms the HLT landscape. Every place in the HLT complex, one can observe FGS's ingenious design to invite visitors to sensually walk into a Buddhist field

of *qi*, or aura of the sacred. Once visitors enter the HLT Gate, they walk through all significant structures grounded by an elevational axial line. By climbing numerous sets of stairs, visitors are led to the higher interior of the HLT complex. A state of consciousness is reinforced by entering the orchestration of alternating open and enclosed spaces. Visitors first enter a semi-enclosed Bodhisattva Hall, where they leave the view of the ordinary lifeworld below at the back and encounter five Bodhisattva images in front. Visitors next walk to an open-air but fully enclosed central Courtyard through the covered corridors on either side of the Bodhisattva Hall. This broad courtyard is flanked with covered ambulatories among the sacred (the Bodhisattva Hall and Main Shrine) and the profane (the Right Wing and Left Wing and the dining area below the Main Shrine). Natural ventilation and air movement are often mixed with burning incense and candles to facilitate a refreshing and cleansing breeze of scented air for the visitors who just passed through dimly lit corridor ways. Further up, the Main Shrine exists in an enclosed structure of grand and expansive size. Standing at the high plaza of the incense burner in front of the Main Shrine, three towering Buddhas inside the spacious shrine gaze solemnly at the visitors who walk to their end of climbing along the axial line in the HLT complex.

Overall, a feeling of enlargement and smallness is induced continuously as visitors perceive differing heights of buildings and fields. Spaciousness is sensed and accentuated by the flow of bodily movement from alternating enclosed and open spaces. As visitors move from one space to the next, an awareness of shifting level and volume evoke conscious inner expansion and contraction of self in relation to surrounding

people, images and objects. This is an intended aesthetic impact on developing sacredness and is characteristic of HLT spatial organization within Chinese Buddhist monastery tradition.

This spatial organization is also symbolic as it arranges visitors' route of progressive climbing from the HLT Gate toward the Main Shrine. The climb symbolizes progress forward and upward. When vistiors travel throughout the HLT complex, they must ascend numerous sets of stairways. Elevational changes and physical laboring bestows the status of pilgrim upon visitor. Vistors symbolically advance up from the mundane world outside the Gate through continuously ascending steps leading to different prayer places. First, they encounter Bodhisattva, a Buddha-in-training, in Bodhisattva Hall. They learn how to be an ideal Buddhist by recognizing five characters represented by the five Bodhisattvas in front of him. He also learns how to refine popular religious practices in Buddhist fashion by the teaching of the offering on public altar and the Dharma Words. Next, they continue the pilgrimage to enter a sweeping but enclosed Courtyard. Without the disturbance of noisy worldliness from the outside, the spacious Courtyard enables them to mindfully perceive the majestic image of being Buddha. The Three Buddhas in the Main Shrine represent the ultimate figures the Buddhist should vow to be, and thousands of buddha images surrounding represent the previous success of enlightened beings living in innumerable times long ago. From the Gate toward the Main Shrine in the HLT complex, pilgrims advance along the bodhisattva path from *samsara* towards *nirvana* proclaimed by the Mahayana tradition of Chinese Buddhism.

However, distraction is also inevitable. As a popular tourist attraction, the modern facilities to comfort ordinary visitors increase the ethno-cultural accessibility to the American public at the cost of diluting the aura of Buddhist sacredness in HLT. The problem of on-site parking significantly indicates the typical dilemma of a popular religious place in the modern era. The convenient dining and hostel features also represent the FGS character of openness toward the secular appetite of modern society, which is particularly important in its American circumstance.[14] Against the traditional imagination of a silent, vacant, atemporal and out-of-touch monastery, FGS illustrates a humanized Buddhist place in dialogue with contemporary society. Yet the challenge is, as FGS founder Monk Hsing Yun's vision that "a monastery should retain enough traditional elements to make it readily recognizable as a monastery." How can HLT redefine the notion of sacredness in a humanistic perspective without losing its recognizable form as a Buddhist monastery among the Chinese American community?

On the other hand, ordinary visitors to the HLT landscape perceive primarily a field of making merit, despite that the FGS downplays this spatial recognition and HLT represents itself as a field of spiritual learning and practicing. Many visitors who come to Bodhisattva Hall, for instance, do not read the description prepared by HLT to learn about the character represented by each Bodhisattva and the meaning of being

[14] Although there were housing and meal services provided by traditional Buddhist monastery complexes throughout Chinese history, these "non-religious" function areas were skillfully separated from the Main Shrine and halls of worship in overall layout design. Normally this type of secular service areas is located outside the temple wall, let alone the modern facilities like parking lot and bookstore. The walking distance for temple's pilgrims and visitors between the religious center of monastery complex and secular service areas outside the temple wall is always far and time-consuming, which is not welcomed in American lifestyle, especially in Southern California.

Bodhisattva, rather, they make offering and bow to two guardian Bodhisattvas.[15] When they glimpse at the donation box,[16] they cast money into the box without any inquiry and instruction. Sometimes the adults actively teach the children how to pray then cast money into box. Moreover, thousands of bodhisattva plates in Bodhisattva Hall and Buddha images in the Main Shrine, each of which is tagged with the individual name of the sponsor on the wall, clearly indicate that HLT is a field of making merit through a variety of offerings. Occasionally, visitors put coins on the small Buddha images in Main Shrine, and leave flowers or fruits on the pedestals of the Buddha statue in the cloister. At the same time, the money in exchange for prepared offerings to put on public altar in Bodhisattva Hall, the pineapple candles to put on the main altar in the Main Shrine, and the labor to do volunteer work for HLT, are also deemed donation of making merit in the visitors' minds.

This type of autonomous donation is obvious to enact the traditional notion of merit, in which one earns credit for making objects that are either contributions to the monastic community (construction and operation of monasteries), useful to the living (bridges, roads, foods, services, etc.), or more generally expressive of devotion to

[15] Originally HLT prepared free incense to facilitate visitor's incense offering action three years ago. For considering the County's Fire code and 'modernized' notion of performing prayer, now HLT prepares free flower for visitors who use it to pray and offer something to these two guardian Bodhisattvas and then begin their HLT pilgrimage by entering Bodhisattva Hall.

[16] Like the setting of the other traditional Chinese temples, there are two donation boxes for receiving irregular donations from ordinary visitors in HLT. One is located inside Bodhisattva Hall together with the container of Dharma Words (see Figure 8). There is no sign related to donation except the Chinese and English terms "Dharma Words 法語." The second one is in front of the Main Shrine, which has Chinese term "Box of merit field 福田箱."

Buddhism (icons, scriptures).[17] In general, a variety of folk tales in China describe the importance of "accumulation of goodness" in daily life. The lines within these stories stating that people sacrificed owned labors and properties in order to perform good deeds are also revealing. In Buddhist hagiologies and sermons like the ones HLT monastic members often offer to the visiting public, doctrinal knowledge stated in scripture is often juxtaposed with pious work conducted in the human realm. At the end of textual or oral testimonies that are dedicated to certain eminent monks and laypersons who perform good deeds in their life, either the complier of the narrative or the speechmaker of the sermon always attempts to balance meritorious deeds and knowledge of Buddhist doctrine. These story-tellers often state explicitly that the "good work" and "right understanding" are like the two wings of a bird or two wheels of a cart (meaning each worthless without the other), and implicitly that, good deeds are the foundation of wisdom. But as seen in the popular devotion practices of Chinese past and HLT at present, many people are willing to make do with good deeds alone, contributing toward the manufacture of images or other objects in Buddhist monasteries, *in place of* doctrinal knowledge of the scriptures. In other words, people often give pious work precedence over the finer points of the scripture in monastic standpoint. Yet this tendency of popular religiosity really illustrates the detailed teachings of *upāya* or "expedient means"[18]

[17] For more detailed analysis of how Buddhist concepts like merit and their associated practices has transformed Chinese material culture of architecture and objects in daily life since the first century, see Kieschnick 2003.

[18] Simply speaking, the doctrines related to the term *upāya* in Mahayana Buddhism refer to an aspect of the alternative paths to lead to the ultimate liberation from worldly affliction or the Enlightenment. *Upāya* is always used in Buddhist contexts with cleverness, meaning skillful means. The implication is that even if a worldly method that fits individual situation is not ultimately holding "true" in the finest sense of

praised in Buddhist scriptures – if one doesn't have it, some replacement could be found – that one could get by with less erudition of profound doctrines and philosophies through piety and good works in daily life.

The popular notion that making material donation can take the place of learning Buddhist teaching indeed creates an invisible tension among HLT spatial organization and activity program (which will be discussed in the next chapter). While many of the structures and objects that I have seen in HLT are made in part of field of *qi* in order to facilitate Buddhist learning and practice in modern Buddhist context, it is the predominant image of HLT's landscape in visitors' perceptions that this Chinese temple in Southern California is a field of earning merit to assist Chinese Americans to fulfill their yearning for religious performance in a traditional sense. This is particularly true for the existence of the Memory Pagoda, which is symbolically standing at the highest and ending point of the central axial line in the HLT monastery complex. Given that the most frequent recipient of accumulated merit are the past family members of the donor, the establishment of the Memorial Pagoda at this critical location in the HLT complex is phenomenal. To some extent, this spatial layout seems to symbolize an intent to rebalance the prevalence of popular religiosity among Chinese Americans to a refined lifestyle of "Humanistic Buddhism," which is the FGS goal to establishes HLT and other branch temples in the world.

scriptural teaching, it may still be an expedient practice by which can assist the practitioner in finding true Enlightenment in a similar way.

In the next chapter I focus on FGS's main mechanism based on the HLT spatial organization of buildings, fields and objects to redefine the Buddhist aura of sacredness in a modern sense and reshape Chinese American religiosity in Southern California into a focus on ritualized activity and etiquette. This ritualized mechanism designed by the monastic community plays a prominent role not only in the history of Chinese Buddhism, but also in today's monastery-based modern Buddhism like HLT.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ritualized Activity Program of Hsi Lai Temple

> Clearly, ritual is not the same thing everywhere; it can vary in every feature. As practice, the most we can say is that it is involves ritualization, that is, a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does; moreover, it makes this distinction for specific purposes. – Catherine Bell (1997:81)

> … there is at heart of ritual a relationship that has certain logically necessary entailments. Certain meanings and effects are intrinsic to the very structure of ritual, and ritual thus may impose, or seem to impose, logical necessity upon the vagrant affairs of the world. – Roy A. Rappaport (1979:173)

At the turn of the twentieth-first century, HLT is known for its grand scale of a Chinese monastery compound as discussed in Chapter 3, and its ritual activity program that draws the attention of many Chinese Americans in Southern California. This religious phenomenon might subvert the scholarly perception of a modernized Chinese Buddhism that is grounded by the personal cultivation of scriptural knowledge and meditation experience with a kind of anti-institutional and anti-ritual sentiment, which I have discussed in Chapter 2. Yet, the intimate contact between HLT monastics and lay people in different aspects of social life does provide evidence of the humanistic nature of modern Chinese Buddhism. HLT monastics frequently consult for individual and family's challenges in daily life, and they normally guide individuals to look for a solution by themselves by engaging in an HLT ritual activity program. The typical advice from the monastic would be something like "you will sense the Buddha's guidance when you sincerely participate in ritual program." Ritual activity program under this monastic

perspective, therefore, is formulated as a religious medium in the modern era for learning and experiencing Buddhism within a monasterial establishment.

As I am using it here, "ritual" is a generic term for any kind of collective performance for specific purposes in a temple's setting, regardless of its degree of complexity. As a categorical concept, however, ritual in my field study must be broken down into its component units. For this study's purpose, the "liturgical procedure" is the minimum unit of ritualized action. Rarely, nevertheless, does a single liturgical procedure exist as a complete ritual event. Normally, liturgical procedures are part of larger ritual configurations, which I designate as "rites" and "*fahuis*" (法會). A rite is the smallest configuration of liturgical procedures constituting a meaningful ritual whole, and one *fahui* is the assembly of rites performed during any ritual occasion. The totality of its liturgical procedures, rites, and *fahuis* constitute the ritual activity program of HLT.

The HLT ritual activity program is composed of a ritual calendar for serving the general public, and a ritual package for serving the living and the deceased. These two ritualized components of FGS Humanistic Buddhism observed in HLT, I argue, have maintained the idea of transcendence in traditional Chinese Buddhism in a diasporic context. At the same time, the ritualization of Buddhist learning and experiencing in HLT imposes a logical necessity on ritual attendants in both Catherine Bell's and Roy A. Rappaport's visions that facilitate the ordinary Chinese American sanctifying his or her secular life of being a Buddhist. Through its ritual activity program, HLT extends Buddhist sacred space to the everyday life beyond the walls of its monastery compound

in Southern California, which manifests the religious nature of the Humanistic Buddhism in FGS founder Monk Hsing Yun's vision.

Ritual calendar in HLT

The HLT ritual calendar clearly sets the throbbing life of the traditional Chinese Buddhism in America, as it is lived both inside and outside the temple walls in the Chinese American circles of Southern California that gather around this religion. For most of lay visitors I talk to in HLT, routine participation in calendaring ritual activities (in their perception) is a pledge of devotional labor to performs good deeds in their daily life for satisfying their individual spiritual needs. To some extent, regularly attending the temple's ritual activity, in participant's mind, is the same as taking a breathing meditation as a daily practice to calm down and, consequently, to sense the sign of spirituality.

HLT's daily morning rite (早課) begins at 6:30 AM, and daily night rite (晚課) begins at 5:00 PM. Both are performed in the Main Shrine and Memory Pagoda approximately at the same time. Every day before lunch time, the food offering and bestowal rite (午供施食) is performed in the Main Shrine. According to popular acknowledgement among Chinese Buddhists, the religious place performing these three daily rites regularly represents an orthodox Buddhist temple that is deserving of people's devotion. Normally, the morning rite in the Main Shrine has more monastic and lay participants than the other daily rite events. HLT monastics are assigned to officiate these daily rites respectively and perform them routinely despite there sometimes being no other monastic or lay participants.

The daily food offering and bestowal rite expends its liturgical procedures and number of monastic and lay participants in the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month. In traditional Chinese culture, common people often take a vegetarian meal on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month to observe the Buddhist moral standard of "no-killing" in a vernacular fashion. This food consumption custom is also prevalent in overseas-Chinese communities in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries that constitute the major portion of HLT regular visitors. Therefore, HLT and its lunch buffet becomes an ideal place for those vegetarian-seekers who habitually follow this religio-cultural practice in Southern California. On these two days every month, the number of patrons of the HLT Dining Hall increase significantly. If these days fall on a weekend, special control of the temple's parking and traffic needs to be arranged, and sometimes shuttle service for off-site parking lots is provided for serving incoming diners. Normally, most of the diners who come to HLT merely for having a vegetarian meal do not participate in the offering rite at noon. But they often pray individually to the three Buddhas in the Main Shrine and make an offering of incense and "pineapple" candle or donating money while they are waiting for the opening of Dining Hall.

The weekly Dharma Function on Sunday morning (週日共修法會) in the Main Shrine is the most popular *fahui* on the HLT ritual calendar that attracts most temple's devotees to regularly attend. Within its ritual configuration, different rites and liturgical procedures are assembled to a logical sequence, starting with an opening praise-chanting and incense offering, then reciting scriptural poetics, venerating the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas through intoning the names and bodily prostration, making offerings to the

designated deceased, taking refuge to the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), reciting a prayer, and ending with dedication of merit. After the conclusion of liturgical procedures, a sermon is delivered by the officiating monk. Such routine of *fahui* procedure is varied by the weekly change of the scriptural poetics and its associated prayer in every month, including the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Repentance (week 1), Diamond Sutra (week 2), Amitabha Sutra (week 3), and Sutra of the Medicine Buddha (week 4). Normally, the Main Shrine reaches full capacity while performing this weekly *fahui*.

Including a so-called a seven-seventh rite for the dead, by which the deceased can receive food offering from their living relatives at each seventh day following the death for seven weeks in traditional Chinese religious culture, in Sunday *fahui* is a means for HLT to serve the Chinese American community. With this ritual configuration, HLT follows this popular funeral tradition in Chinese society while inviting the offspring of the deceased, who might not have any ritual experience in the Buddhist context, to attend its Weekly Dharma Function event. More detail of the rite for the dead in Sunday *fahui* will be discussed later in this chapter.

Every month HLT conducts the Great Compassion Repentance Service *fahui* (大悲懺法會), which is performed on the second Friday night of every month. The history of this ritualized repentance service tradition can be traced back to the Song Dynasty (960-1276 CE). Unlike most of the other routine ritual events that follow FGS's own liturgical procedure, this repentance *fahui* in HLT follows a traditional liturgical manual that was compiled and transmitted over hundreds of years from the monastic orders in

China.[1] By attending this Buddhist *fahui* that is based on the *Mantra of Great Compassion* prescribed by Avalokitesvera or Guanyin Bodhisattva,[2] people practice repentance to cleanse their thoughts embedded in daily misdeeds and to gain merits for a beneficial future. Due to the extra space needed for laying ritual objects in the Main Shrine, this repentance service includes the secondary ritual space in the Conference Room located on the upper level of the Left Wing to accommodate more participants. However, the monastics who officiate the *fahui* perform all procedures and rites prescribed by the liturgical menu in the Main Shrine. The participants in the Conference Room can only follow the *fahui* procedures by viewing the on-time video transmission from the Main Shrine. Another fixed monthly *fahui* in the HLT ritual calendar is the Light-Offering Service *fahui* (光明燈法會) on the first and the fifteenth day of the lunar month. The annual donors who sponsor the two giant light towers in the Main Shrine can participate in this monthly rite to perform their light-offering action in a collective and ritualized setting. The third monthly *fahui* is the Chan and Pure Land Practice (禪淨共修) on the last Saturday night of each month. This ritual event is programmed by combining Chan meditation with Pure Land's Buddha-name-reciting together, which follows the Buddhist self-cultivation practice tradition that also originated in the Song Dynasty.

[1] The rites and liturgical procedures of the Great Compassion Repentance Service have been largely revised by two eminent monks Duti and Jihsin during the early seventeenth century. The liturgical menu HLT is following was the reprint version of this Buddhist repentance service in 1916 from Nanjing, China.

[2] The full name of this Mantra is "Thousand-arms and thousand-eyes Avalokitesvera Bodhisattva's all embracing great compassion Dharani" (千手千眼無礙大悲心陀羅尼), which consists of eight-four phrases. This Mantra is widely recited among Chinese religious traditions, including Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

However, unlike those fixed rites and *fahuis* mentioned above, the ritual event of Chan and Pure Land Practice might be cancelled due to the time conflicts with other major events. For instance, this monthly *fahui* was cancelled three times in 2017.

Annual *fahuis* have privileged status within HLT's annual operation schedule. Other ritual and non-ritual activities are often scheduled at times to avoid annual *fahui* periods or are even be repealed if in conflict. Before the *fahui*, monastics are gathered recurrently to conduct the rehearsal of its ritual chanting and liturgical procedures; lay volunteers with special skill in arranging and decorating ritual objects and spaces are assigned to work intensively; chefs and kitchen volunteers are required to postpone vacation and keep healthy. Patrons are hurried to register and reserve time in their personal schedule to fully participate in every liturgical procedure and rite performed in the *fahui*. Annual *fahuis* are the focal point of the HLT activity program that illustrates the vitality of Chinese Buddhism in its American circumstance.

Different annual HLT *fahuis* mark a series of vintage moments within the social life of the Chinese American community. In 2017, for instance, a Chinese New Year's Eve Service (除夕延生普佛法會) on the night of January 27, which was the last ritual activity of HLT in the 2016 lunar year, is a prelude to open the festival of Chinese New Year. The main rite performed in this *fahui* was the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Repentance, a traditional Buddhist service rite through which ritual participants are able to repent their wrong deeds in 2016. The first HLT ritual activity on the morning of Chinese New Year (besides a special pilgrimage and the fixed morning rite on that day) is the Homage to the Thousand Buddhas *fahui* (禮千佛法會). By chanting hundreds of Buddhas' name and

performing an orderly bowing motion in front of three Buddhas in the Maine Shrine, this *fahui* offered participants a ritualized formation to pray for a new start of daily life in 2017. The traditional performance for Chinese New Year, like the lion dance and inviting the god of wealth and fortune, began immediately after the end of the Homage to the Thousand Buddhas *fahui* in the HLT Courtyard.

One week later, another *fahui* of Offering Ceremony for Buddhas and Celestial Guardians (供佛齋天), which was invented in Chinese Buddhist tradition also in the Song Dynasty, indicated the traditional market-opening date in Chinese society when all workshops and stores began their business in a new lunar year. According to the liturgical manual transmitted from the monastery complex in China,[3] twenty-four deities who are regarded as the guardians of different types of business in Chinese society were ritually invoked one by one and received various offerings sponsored by ritual participants in HLT. Through this popular *fahui*, ordinary people could pray for an auspicious start of their business in a new year.

Every year April 4 or 5 is the day of Ching Ming festival, also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day in Chinese family tradition. On Ching Ming, Chinese people, including overseas Chinese in Southeastern Asian countries, always visit family graves or columbaria to sweep and clean the sites, then offer food and libations and burn joss paper to the ancestors. This traditional family outing activity usually involves younger generation so that the children learn to honor and remember their deceased family

[3] The liturgical manual HLT is following is the revised version of the Liturgical rites of Offering Celestial Guardians (齋天科儀) by eminent monk Hongzan in the early seventeenth century.

members. In Southern California, HLT institutes a Filial Piety Memorial Dharma Service *fahui* (孝親報恩清明法會) on the Sunday before the day of Ching Ming every year to assist the Chinese American community in faithfully observing this family tradition in a diaspora circumstance, which prevents from travelling back to their homeland to visit family grave sites. Moreover, this *fahui* is configured by a traditional Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance Service (慈悲三昧水懺), which was invented by the Buddhist monastic community in the Tong Dynasty (618-904 CE) for the monastic practice of self-repentance and self-cultivation.[4] By the ritual configuration of repentance, HLT participants in the Filial Piety Memorial Dharma Service *fahui* are enabled to repent on behalf of the ancestor and to accumulate merit for benefiting their own living.

Every year the concept of participating in Buddhist traditional rituals to ease the suffering of the dead as the performative form of filial piety significantly configures HLT's two main *fahuis* in the summer season. As discussed in Chapter 2, the seventh month in the Chinese lunar calendar is generally regarded as the Ghost month in Chinese traditional society, in which the deceased ancestors, homeless ghosts and wandering spirits come out of hell to visit the human realm. The annual Ghost Festival has been the most important ritual occasion in Chinese vernacular religio-culture since the Medieval Era.[5] Yet, HLT configures this vernacular type of Ghost Festival to two Buddhist *fahuis* in order to continue this festival tradition in its American circumstance.

[4] The preface of the liturgical manual of this repentance service HLT is following indicates that the rites and liturgical procedures are revised in 1416.

[5] See Chapter 2.

First, the *fahui* of Sangha Day Celebration (供僧法會) is set on mid-July (July 23 in 2017) to performs the portion of lay offerings to the Sangha and monastic feeding to visiting ghosts and spirits in Ghost Festival tradition. All monastics of FGS branch temples in North and South America travel to HLT on that day and receive food offerings and other material items presented by lay participants. In the afternoon a separated *fahui* called the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service (瑜伽焰口法會) is conducted by the monastics of HLT and other FGS branch temples together to ritually perform the compassionate work of feeding visiting ghosts and spirits. Originating from the Vajrayana tradition of Tibetan Buddhism that was transmitted to China in the Tong Dynasty, the liturgical manual of this Buddhist ritual service [6] is composed of various hand gestures in mystical position (mudra) together with the vocalization of esoteric words (*dharani* and mantra) and the concentration of the officiating monastic mind in contemplation. Through these ritualized actions, *fahui* participants' offerings to the Sangha are transmuted and bestowed on infinite masses of unseen beings in the cosmos, which is perceived as the greatest meritorious action a lay person can do.

The second *fahui* to represent Ghost Festival tradition is the Ullambana Dharma Function (孝親報恩盂蘭盆法會), which is set in the lunar month of July (August 20-27

[6] The liturgical manual of Yogacara Ulke-mukha Service that HLT is following was compiled and revised by eminent monk Daji in 1693. However, the mythical story underneath this Buddhist ritual service is not about how Mu-lien heroically rescued his mother in hell by the Buddha's instruction narrated by *yŭ-lan-p'en* tradition (see Chapter 2); rather, it is about how Ananda, the Buddha's servant disciple, received Buddha's instruction to transmute the food and other material items and bestow them on the infinite numbers of hungry ghosts. By the meritorious action, Ananda escaped the fatality of becoming one of the hungry ghosts. Since the seventeenth century, Buddhist monasteries have applied this Buddhist service to replace the vernacular customs of food and material offerings in Ghost Festival that originated in the Medieval Era.

in 2017). Unlike Sangha Day Celebration in the previous month, the main purpose of this *fahui* is to facilitate participants to dedicate merit to the ancestors and deceased relatives. Beside the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service, the so-called crown of Buddhist repentance service in Chinese Buddhism, the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang (梁皇寶懺) is performed weekly. I will further discuss this repentance ritual and *fahui* to represent a comprehensive aspect of HLT ritual activity program later in this chapter.

In November, HLT institutes a *fahui* of Medicine Buddha Dharma Service (藥師法會) over a four-day period. As one of the three Buddhas in the Main Shrine, Medicine Buddha made twelve vows when he practiced his bodhisattva path, wishing to relieve sentient beings from physical and spiritual suffering and to create a realm of pure land for letting sentient beings reach final liberation. This November, *fahui* is configured as an assembly of self-cultivation rites, including repentance and vow-making, to assist participants in following Medicine Buddha's twelve vows in practice. As Medicine Buddha's promise, those who follow his instruction can not only relieve themselves from worldly suffering, but also be able to be reborn in his Lapis Lazuli Pure Land.

As the same consideration, HLT institutes another *fahui* of Amitabha Dharma Service (彌陀佛七法會) in late December to facilitate participants to practice the instruction of Amitabha Buddha, also one of the three Buddhas in the Main Shrine, to be reborn in his Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. Like Medicine Buddha, Amitabha Buddha made forty-eight vows when he practiced his bodhisattva path to create a realm of pure land for letting those sentient beings who contemplatively chant his name to enter and reach final liberation. During the eight-day *fahui* period, participants are able to

concentrate their body, mouth and mind by continually intonating the Buddha's name and meditating his image without worldly interruption. On the last day, an Amitabha Triple Contemplation Service (三時繫念佛事) is performed. Participants are able to exhort the deceased relatives and ancestors to be reborn in Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land by dedicating all merits accumulated during this *fahui* period.

There were many other rites and *fahuis* that are interspersed among HLT's calendaring ritual activities in 2017. The Eight Precepts Retreat (八關齋戒) is a self-cultivation program that allows lay participants to experience a full day of monastic life in a monastery. HLT offered this program in February and December respectively. Rites of observing the special days for individual Buddha and Bodhisattva are also interspersed among the HLT ritual calendar. In 2017, there were two pilgrimages (朝山) related to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guan-Yin), one was for her birthday on March 16, and another was for her Renunciation Day on November 4. The pilgrims were led by HLT *monastics* to start one bow for every three steps from the Gate toward Five Bodhisattva Hall as the traditional practice in Chinese Buddhism. Another similar event is for observing Buddha's birthday. Traditionally Buddhist communities practice a symbolic bathing of the Buddha's statue to ritually cleanse their mind. HLT followed this Buddhist tradition and instituted its Buddha Bathing Ceremony (浴佛法會) on May 7, 2017. In addition, HLT and other Buddhist monasteries and organizations in Southern California jointly hosted a Buddha's Birthday Celebration, or Vesak Day, on May 21, 2017 in Whittier Barrows Recreation Area Park in South El Monte. This joint effort to promote public awareness of Vesak Day was initiated in 2000, including Buddhist offering,

chanting, and other cultural performances and exhibitions. Lastly, HLT usually institutes a Prayer for World Peace Ceremony (祈求世界和平法會) on the first Saturday of the new year (January 6 in 2018). It is an inter-faith rite in which different Buddhist and non-Buddhist organizations are invited to HLT and perform the prayer for world peace with individual ritual practice.

In 2017, a special *fahui* of Water and Land Dharma Service (萬緣水陸法會) was instituted between April 8 and 22. The last time HLT instituted this special *fahui* was in 2008, due to its most elaborate and extremely complicated nature of liturgical requirements and procedures in Chinese Buddhist tradition. Unlike the other traditional rites and *fahuis*, during a fifteen-day period this assembly of Buddhist ritual activities requires a total of seven different shrines, each of which performs different sutra-reciting activities and rites of repentance and offering simultaneously at every ritual moment. Same as the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang, this Buddhist *fahui* is attributed to the Emperor Wu of Liang by his night dream of monastic advice, and compiled by Monk Bao Zhi in the sixth century. The goal of these two assemblies of ritual activities aims to assist beings in the lower realms (i.e. the realms of animal, ghost and the hell) to release from endless sufferings. Participants in both *fahuis* are able to receive auspicious blessings and accumulate great merit for dedicating to their deceased relatives and ancestors.

Ritual package for serving the living and the deceased

From a sociological standpoint raised by Emile Durkheim, ritual is central to bind people together in a social group like the Chinese American Buddhist community in

Southern California. To perform such critical function of societal cohesion, HLT institutes a package of specific rituals for serving individuals at times of life change and crisis, when people are in need of meaning and order in their daily lives. Marriage and death, for instance, are experiences common to all individuals and can unsettle existing and future social relationships. For HLT then, ritual package for serving the living and the deceased is a protocol to reaffirm the solidity of a Buddhist community in a diaspora circumstance when its members are most in need of spiritual support and reassurance.

HLT rituals for serving lay communities cover all aspects of human life at different occasions. In 2017, for example, HLT instituted a Children's Blessing Ceremony (佛光寶寶祝福禮) on July 1st to invite devotees' children to have their first initiation experience of being a Buddhist. There were over one hundred children, including many babies carried by their parents, participating in this special rite. There were also several wedding ceremonies (佛化婚禮) conducted in HLT auditorium throughout the year, which are similar to those performed in a church or chapel. Those brides and grooms with their best men and bridesmaids are dressed in American fashion and married on the etiquette generated from a Buddhist ritual tradition. HLT monastic acts as the chief witness to preside over the ceremony. While monastic leads the congregants in chanting verse of praising the Buddha, the bride and groom offer incense and make three bows in front of Buddha statues in the Auditorium. After the bride and broom pay their respects to the parents, monastic then enquires of both whether they truly love each other and will share their family duties together. Based upon their confirmatory answers, monastic then declares them husband and wife and reads the wedding

certificate, and the bride and groom exchange gifts and receive blessings from their family members and friends. Besides these liturgical procedures, the most distinctive procedure of the wedding ceremony in HLT is the Buddhist address delivered by monastic, who often talks about the karmic affinity of the bride and groom and advises them to cherish this transmigrated relation, as well as repay the kindness of their parents.

HLT's ritual package for serving the living not only enters the lives of ordinary people and families, but also embraces different social activities in a profane lifeworld. Upon request from devotees, for instance, HLT monastics often perform the purification rite for new resident houses, store openings, ground-breaking of construction sites, disaster places, and so on. The procedure of the rite is normally composed of successively chanting the *Mantra of Great Compassion* to invoke the blessing of Avalokitesvera or Guanyin Bodhisattva while sprinkling Great Compassion water over the place. The ritualized action, according to monastics, is aimed at awakening the compassion and wisdom that has been embodied in each living being and welcoming peace and harmony to the place. For the ritual petitioner, however, the purification rite performed by HLT monastics is aimed to chase unfavorable matter away and invoke favorable deities to settle.

Although HLT's ritual package for serving the occasion of human death is not as routine as a calendaring series of ritual activities, its effectiveness of learning Buddhist teaching on ritual participants, according to many monastics, is much more intense than the outcome of participating in regular rites and *fahuis*. A great portion of lay visitors I encounter in HLT share the same kind of stories that attending the rites for the dead is the

first occasion in life to "really" enter the lifeworld of Chinese Buddhism. By directly encountering the departed relative to either his corpse or image or the name tablet used in ritual event, the stories always involve how they profoundly begin to recognize the phenomenon of human death as an essential stage for all and, then, to consider what Buddhism discusses about transmigration in afterlife among six different realms: heaven, human, Asura, hungry ghost, animal, and hell.

As discussed in Chapter 2, FGS founder Monk Hsing Yun has never attempted to repeal the ritual tradition for the dead in traditional Chinese Buddhism altogether. Instead, in his vision, if performed in accordance with original Buddhist teaching and with participant's sincere faith and due respect, Buddhist rites for the dead can actually benefit both the deceased and the living. He gradually reconfigured the performance of traditional Buddhist rites for the dead in his temples in Taiwan.[7] HLT's ritual package for serving the descendants in memory of the deceased relatives largely follows FGS invented ritual tradition within its diaspora environment in Southern California. Generally, this ritual package is comprised of three parts: 1) hospice, 2) funeral rite and 3) rite of making offerings to the deceased in Weekly Dharma Function every Sunday.

According to Buddhist cosmology, death is deemed as a launching position or a door toward a new phase of life and not as a process of vanishing or the annihilation of everything. Such a belief plays a critical function in HLT's ritualized practices of hospice

[7] The majority of native population in Taiwan came from the mainland provinces of Fukien and Guangdong across the Strait of Taiwan in the past five hundred years. Therefore, the folk tradition of funeral rites in their ancestral home counties in China was still preserved when Monk Hsing Yun came to Taiwan in 1949 and established FGS temples in later years. For a detailed account of folk rites for the dead in Taiwan, see Thompson 1973, 160-169.

service by which they provide psychological comfort for the dying person who may be panicked about imminent death and uncertain of what comes next in the afterlife. Upon request from HLT devotees, monastic approaches the dying individual and persuades a rightful perception of death as a door, a path toward a new life in order to dispel his fears. The dying person is encouraged to let go of all worldly attachments and to die with an enlightened mind. Monastic also uses "great compassion water," or water blessed with the Great Compassion Mantra, on the dying person's face and body to symbolically cleanse the karma to comfort his mind. Meanwhile, the relatives of the dying person are also advised that they should continually remind the dying one of the good deeds in everyday life and meretricious work to Buddhism he has performed throughout his life time. With good karma on hand, as monastic said according to sutra teaching, the dying individual is assured a good rebirth.

In either popular Chinese or Buddhist notion on the moment of death, dying in peace is a critical step for a person's well-being of the afterlife and ability to later be reborn into a happy state. Yet, in popular tradition, the relatives of the dying persons, particularly their offspring, need to mourn the person's imminent death with excessive or even hysterical cries to express their reluctance to let him or her go, which is a way to demonstrate their filial piety. This popular practice is discouraged by Buddhist teaching, according to HLT monastics, because the crying of the offspring may arouse the dying individual's attachment to this life, thereby causing his mind to be chaotic as he dies and thereby endangering the rebirth journey. Instead, the relatives are advised to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha with a firm and steady voice around the corpse for eight

hours. This simple rite of reciting Buddha's name not only assists the departed to focus on his afterlife journey to be reborn into the Pure Land, but also eases the grief of offspring and relatives, whether they have already had Buddhist contact or not, by firmly believing the assurance of Amitabha Buddha that protects the departed with great compassion.[8]

HLT rites for funeral practice are also simple and solemn without the excessive ornamentation and procedures found in Chinese folk tradition. Following American funeral service custom and the request of the family, the HLT rite for the dead normally performs the occasions of viewing, the farewell ceremony and burial or cremation. While these three rites are performed by both monastics and the relatives of the deceased at different mourning sites, essentially they share the same liturgical procedures. The images of Amitabha and his two servant Bodhisattvas stand at the center of the altar with an incense burner. The rite is often comprised of the following procedures: 1) offering incense, vegetarian dishes, fruits and flowers; 2) chanting verse to pay respect to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; 3) reciting either Heart sutra or Amitabha sutra; 4) reciting various mantras to transform offering foods to the dead; 5) intonating the name of Amitabha Buddha; 6) reading the prayer for the deceased written by Monk Hsing Yun; 7) taking refugee to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; 8) dedicating merits; and 9) addressing the descendant and participants with the Buddhist teachings related to human death. As usual before the rite begins, monastics give instruction to all participants that

[8] Upon the request of the dying person's family, HLT often dispatches a Recitation team, comprising primarily of lay devotees, to the hospital or private home to assist with the rite of reciting Buddha's name over an eight-hour period.

they act as the representatives of the deceased so their verbal, bodily and mental actions should sincerely follow all liturgical procedures. Only then can the funeral rite be efficacious and truly generate merit for the deceased.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *hun po* of the deceased still "expects" to receive food offering and merit transferring from their relatives within the forty-nine days following a death in Chinese vernacular imagination of the afterlife. Accordingly, before mid-twentieth century Chinese Buddhist tradition often performed an elaborate rite of feeding the dead on each seventh day following a death for seven times to privately serve requested descendant family. HLT follows this seven-seventh tradition but largely reconfigures it. Instead of traditionally lasting four-to-five hours or even a full day, HLT institutes a public rite for making offerings to the deceased that becomes a part of Weekly Dharma Function on Sunday. This public rite serves all descendant families who request HLT to perform the seven-seventh rite for their individual deceased family member. First HLT sets a group of paper tablets on one special altar in front of the West phalanx in the Main Shrine. On each tablet one name of the deceased is written. The offerings of vegetarian dishes and flowers are prepared by HLT on the same altar. Then all descendants are lined up to form the West phalanx of Sunday *fahui*. The rite is comprised of the following procedures: 1) chanting verse to pay respect to Pure and Cool Land Bodhisattva; 2) while all *fahui* participants chant the verse continually, individual descendant family members walking to the altar one by one and offering incense to all tablets; 3) all descendants in the West phalanx bowing three times to all paper tablets on altar; 4) chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha; 5) reciting the Heart sutra; 6) reciting

Rebirth in Pure Land Dharani; 7) reciting various mantras to transform offering foods to the dead; and 8) chanting the verse to praise all Bodhisattvas in the Pure Land. Because this rite for the dead has been a part of fixed *fahui* of every Sunday, individual tablets will set seven times for every seven days successively to receive food and incense offerings as prescribed by Chinese folk tradition, even when the descendant family member is absent.

Specific purposes and structure of HLT ritual program

Buddhism has made a remarkable impression upon the traditional lifeworld of Chinese American community in Southern California by means of the ritual program instituted by HLT. These ritualized matters cause participants, either Buddhists or non-Buddhists, to stop for a time in their restless pursuit of the things in daily life, and think of the life which is coming, and of their "sacred" responsibility toward the needy. Naturally the ritualized space with Buddhist objects and symbolic motions in which participants, feel and experience the presence of the invisible, inspires them to consider Buddhist options as moral guidance in everyday life and, consequently, transform themselves into Buddhist men and women at least in this ritual moment.

Clearly there is no simple rubric for reducing HLT's ritual repertoire and its complex compositions to a single and comprehensive taxonomy. But as the HLT ritual programs surveyed above shown, temporal cycle and occasion-specific setting clearly play a framing role, as do monastics, participants, and their manifold motives. Within this complex arena of ritual practice, patterns of liturgical logic become evident, as do ritual repertoires and their different applications. Here taking HLT's institutional purposes as a focus, I will sketch out some of the prominent patterns that I have seen operating

underneath its ritual program, through which traditional Buddhist rites and *fahuis* are enlisted for cleansing of past transgressions, prayer for meritorious blessings, personal cultivation, and other specific purposes. One of the HLT *fahuis*, Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July, is further analyzed to see the most consistent use of these patterns across different ritual venues.

First, HLT ritual activities in both ritual calendar for serving the general public and ritual package for serving the living and the deceased are occasions for intense interaction between monastic and lay communities. Through the monastic's leading chanting and gestures in a ritualized environment, lay participants praise Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, present offerings, repent for their evil deeds and recite Buddhist sutras. At the end of the rituals, lay participants receive the interpretation of the rituals' significance through monastic's sermon, which is always based on Buddhist notion and the suggested solution in relation to various individual situations in life.

Each of the various rituals has a designated purpose and is performed on a specific occasion. Generally, HLT ritual activities fall into four categories: 1) monastic practices: monastics routinely undertake such daily rites as holding morning and evening rites and food offering and bestowal rite, all of which are considered to be religious practices in the monastic community; 2) community observance: festival activities are ritualized and often entail a cluster of nested rites and cultural performances that extend over successive days. On the important festival days, such as the New Year and Ghost Festival, Buddhist *fahuis* are directed not just to the accumulation of individual merits, but also to renew community bonds with non-Buddhists and Americans at large; 3) rites

of repentance to cleanse one's own and others' past transgressions, and 4) rites for spiritual advancement, such as retreats and recitation of the name of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. All of the aforementioned ritual activities are proposed not only to enhance participant's religiosity and spirituality, but also to generate merits for designated relatives and universal beings, both living and dead, thus benefiting both oneself and others.

All of these rites and *fahuis* that entail a similar staging of repentance or personal cultivation events involve public participation, including the designated deceased and ancestors who are supposed to be present at the ritual place and receive the dedicated merits. Through the setup of paper tablets and monastic's sacred words and gestures, the deceased are instructed to follow the guidance as the living recite liturgical poetics written in ritual manual, repent for their past transgression, and venerate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The living at the same time are no longer simply supporters or observers in the traditional ritual system; rather, they have become active participants by collectively reciting the ritual manual and performing ritualized gestures.[9] In other words, ritual performance in HLT eliminates the division of performers and audiences in the traditional sense of religious practice, but presents a collective action for pursuing a specific purpose.

[9] I had several occasions to observe Buddhist rites for the dead conducted in the monasteries located in China. In these ritual occasions, almost all liturgical procedures are performed only by the monks who aim at alleviating the dead's hunger with food and cancelling out the bad karma of the dead by transferring to the dead the good karma accumulated by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and by the monks themselves. The ritual sponsors just watch the ritual performance as the audience, and occasionally follow monks' direction to make incense offering and burn paper money and other offerings during the ritual time.

Overall, the spiritual potency (*ling yan* 靈驗) generated from the ritual moment, as HLT monastics often emphasized to me, can be perceived as a collective *qi* that is converged from 1) the endowment of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, 2) a monastic's disciplined mastery of meditative askesis, 3) the sincere faith and due respect of the participated living, 4) the yearning for repentance of participated deceased and their offspring, and, often being overlooked, 5) the spiritual largess of HLT's guardian deities. It is the "technology" or logically ordered liturgies of the ritual program and contemplative regimen - mystified inseparably with participating monastics and laypersons – that enable one to access the sources of numinous potency and channel the collective *qi* to serve designated beings, either to relieve their past transgression or to bless them with health and peace. Therefore, the spiritual potency of HLT rituals is not thaumaturgy in the strict sense of the word per se. The power is more nuanced than that of simple supernatural force or personal charisma, conventionally understood as arising from the priest's embodiment of a wholly "other" transcendent power or spiritual possession. On the other hand, such ritualized "technology" provides an expedient means for according with conventional reality of the American lifeworld and the expectations of ordinary Chinese Americans, by which ritual participants are promoted individually to pursue self-cultivation within this current lifetime and to directly experience the spiritual potency in a Buddhist circumstance. With this insight into the ritual effectiveness in a collective term, what HLT is suggesting is that ritual activity program can benefit both the living and the dead and can be understood in its own term.

Ritual repertoire is not only the repository of ritual technology or liturgical procedures, but also a vernacular narrative to demonstrate how one occasion-specified ritual program figures people's concerns about day-to-day existence and the discourses of Buddhist response to this barely endurable situation in life. Ritual programs and their repertories that float in idealized time and space come to life in vividly personal accounts of life crisis, spiritual endeavor, and encounter with various aspects of unseen forces that are believed to withstand everyday existence. Among them, Emperor Wu's dilemma is one of the classical incidents in Chinese Buddhist history that extends to the popular Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Although the source of the retribution and salvation of Empress Chi is unknown,[10] the story itself is widely circulated among Chinese Americans while they attend HLT's Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July. The Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang is the adopted platform of compassion as the major component of this Buddhist function in response to the spiritual need of caring for the ancestor among the Chinese American community in traditional Ghost month. The story of Empress Chi's suffering and her final salvation through collectively ritualized action stirs an empathic interaction of Chinese popular belief that Buddhist repentance *fahui* can relieve the suffering of family members, living and deceased. By participating in HLT *fahui*, the family obligation to the ancestor can be publicly performed in front of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to display out of a sense of duty or filial piety.

[10] The origin of the manual and its snake story of Empress Chi used today probably was finalized in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). For the studies of the history of ritual manual, see Chappell 2005, especially his note 3 on page 64.



Figure 29: Ritual manual of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

The ritual manual of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang used in HLT [11] (Figure 29) is littered with all kind of ritual terminologies that are shared with other ritual manuals used by, for example, the Great Compassion Repentance Service every month and the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance Service during the Ching Ming festival. These terminologies range from such matters as 'making offering' (供養), 'venerating a given buddha [or bodhisattva]' (禮佛), 'reciting sutra' (誦經), 'reciting incantations' (持咒), 'intoning the name' (稱名), 'repenting or confessing transgressions' (懺悔), and 'professing a vow or prayer' (發願). They participate in a conventionalized liturgical lexicon that is grounded in an equally complex poetics of ritualized activity. Together, an action such as venerating the Buddha and repenting past transgressions becomes a focal module of ritual performance. Different modules of liturgical poetics and associated scripts of bodily motion are hedged on all aspects of performance by spatial, material, and choreographic expectations that functionally present a large framework of ritual form and logic. Therefore, the pages of the ritual manual actualize all manner of Buddhist foci and regimens of ritualized activity when people recite them in the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang.

[11] The preface of the ritual manual of this repentance service HLT is following indicates that the rites and liturgical procedures are revised in 1338 by monk Hang-cheng Miao-jue and Zhi-song Bai-ting. This version then supplements the traditional Chinese phonetic notation in 1989 by Monk Xiang Yun in Banqiao, Taiwan.

As Daniel B. Stevenson's detailed study of the Buddhist rituals popularized in the Song Dynasty (2015) indicated, the modularized performance scripted in ritual manual manifests overall structure and constituent elements of Buddhist ritual activity, regardless of whether the given focus involved something like praising the Buddha in a simple rite or an elaborate multi-day *fahui* such as the Ullambana Dharma Function in HLT. Stevenson stresses that repeated exposure to these ritualized modules "might thereby build up a meta-language of material object, gesture, and discourse that united individual ritual performances and informed the various ways in which ritual was featured in the discourses of vernacular narrative" (Stevenson 2015:371). Therefore, the collective performance of traditional ritual program like the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang in today's HLT reenacts the salvation story of Empress Chi in the sixth century in the flesh. On the one hand, the lineaments of ritual poetics in the manual structure the very method in which participants engage in action matters that are considered to generate and dispense spiritual potency, whether they are to recite words of liturgical poetics and mantra incantations scripted in the manual, see sculpted images of buddhas and bodhisattvas around ritual space, or participate in ritualized activity in a Buddhist monastery. On the other hand, ritualized poetics become a medium for understanding the probable causes of everyday concerns and how to best manage them therapeutically.

In the case of the Repentance of Ritual of the Emperor of Liang conducted in HLT, the contents of its manual appear in the consistency in structure and constituent building blocks, or modules of liturgical poetics, that pertain to what Stevenson has analyzed in the ritual programs in the Song period. The liturgical sequence is broken

down into forty sections across ten chapters, each of which is marked by a specific title shown in Table 1. While the titles differ, they do so to make overall repertoire in structurally consistent ways that signify the particular function of each section. Each section of liturgical poetic, in turn, dwells in a ritualized order or syntactic placement in relation to the others. Together this structure and its constituent sections logically describe an arc of performance that facilitates participants to satisfy their various motifs.

Table 1 – Contents of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang

Chapter 1	
	Verses chanting to cleanse ritual space and to pay respect to the Triple Gem and numerous bodhisattvas
Section 1	Taking refuge with the Three Treasures
Section 2	Severing doubt
Section 3	Repentance
Chapter 2	
Section 4	Bring forth the Bodhi resolve
Section 5	Making vows
Section 6	Bring forth the resolve to dedicate merit
Chapter 3	
Section 7	Revealing retributions
Chapter 4	
	Revealing retributions (continued)
Section 8	Exiting the Hells
Chapter 5	
Section 9	Dispelling enmity and resolving animosity
Chapter 6	
	Dispelling enmity and resolving animosity (continued)
Chapter 7	
Section 10	Treasuring our good fortune
Section 11	Exhortation to rely on the Three Treasure
Section 12	Encouragement from the repentance Host
Section 13	Making all-encompassing vows
Section 14	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of heavenly beings

Section 15	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of ascetic masters
Section 16	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of Brahma kings and others
Chapter 8	
Section 17	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of asuras and all wholesome spirits
Section 18	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of dragon kings
Section 19	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of demon kings
Section 20	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of rulers in the Human Realm
Section 21	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of the dukes, princes and all officials
Section 22	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of all parents
Section 23	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of parents from the past
Section 24	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of all spiritual teachers
Section 25	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of monastics of the ten directions
Section 26	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of all past monastics of the ten directions
Chapter 9	
Section 27	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of beings in the *Avici* Hell
Section 28	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in the Hell of River of Ash and the Hell of Iron Pellets
Section 29	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in the Hell of Drinking Molten Copper and the Hell of Charcoal Pits, and other hells
Section 30	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in the Hell of Military Weaponry, the Hell of Copper Cauldrons, and other hells
Section 31	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in the Hell of the Flaming Cities, the Hell of the Mountains of Blades, and other hells
Section 32	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in Realm of Hungry Ghosts
Section 33	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of those in the Animal Realm
Section 34	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of sentient beings of the six Realms
Section 35	Wary and mindful of impermanence
Section 36	Bowing to the Buddhas on behalf of laborers and others
Section 37	Dedication of merit
Chapter 10	
Section 38	Bodhisattvas' dharma of dedication of merit and virtue
Section 39	Making vows about sense faculties
Section 40	Sincere requests

Source: Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016. *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang: A complete translation of Repentance Dharma of Kindness and Compassion in the Bodhimanda.* Ukiah, CA: Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

In brief, the master sequence of ritual performance comprises several phases of foci and regimens in a logical order of 1) opening invitation with cleansing the space and praising the principal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas then taking refuge, 2) repenting for one's own transgression, professing vows and transferring merits (Section 2-6), 3) demonstrating the realness of retribution (Section 7-9), 4) assuring one's own salvation (Section 10-13), 5) venerating the Buddhas on behalf of different non-human beings (Section 14-33), 6) professing vows and dedicating merits on behalf of non-human beings (Section 34-38), 7) professing one's own vows to avoid future transgression (Section 39), and 8) appealing to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for caring of all sentient beings in future (Section 40). This syntactic order allows for component phases and sections to be streamlined into a more generic and comprehensible liturgical repertoire. Opening invocations to the presiding deities must precede self-confession. Profession of vows and dedication of the merits that are generated by venerating Buddhas and repenting transgressions must follow afterward. After gaining benefits for oneself, ritual participants must pursue the benefits for those who cannot attend the ritual visibly, including the deceased and the living. Therefore, a technically denser and more doable ritual program like the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang is produced.

The liturgical poetics signifying the foci and regimens in Buddhist ideas and values are also clear and affirmative. For instance, there is a precondition that to fully repent for past transgression, one needs to truly understand the causal relationship between karma and retribution. In Section 2 "Severing doubt," the text first initiates the

nature of human doubt on one's own karma and its consequence due to the complicated operation of the law of cause and effect. It delineates the doubt that,

> Some may question why a person who vigorously upholds the precepts lives a short life instead of a long one; or why a butcher lives a long life rather than a short one; or why an honest official who should be wealthy ends up in poverty; or why a greedy thief who should suffer poverty turns out enjoying a life of abundance. Who could be without such doubts? These doubts arise in people because they fail to recognize that these retributions are caused by their past karma, which can be likened to seeds planted in the past. (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016:20-21)

The text then answers these doubts with a scripture-based solution that,

> As clearly stated in the *Prajna Sutra*, "If a person who reads and recites this sutra is slighted or humiliated by others, that person's karmic offenses from previous lives which would have destined him for the evil paths, are now eradicated. However, living beings do not have deep faith in the Sutra text. Their doubts are caused by their ignorance and delusion, which lead to such inverted thinking." (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016:21)

In this Buddhist regimen, the text reaffirms the law of cause and effect in relation to the truth of karmic retribution immediately, and indicates the faith in what sutra says and the action of reciting sutra texts is the way to sever doubt.

There are many unwholesome characters that prevent one from willingly praying for the benefit of the other and, most importantly, from really cleansing past transgressions. The enmity and animosity against each other is one of these characters. Within the Buddhist conceptual framework of retribution, the existence of enmity and animosity not only causes one to harm the other continually, but also traps one into the other's endless revenge without the chance to escape. The cycle of revenge begetting revenge is one of the most popular idiomatic phrases that provides ordinary Chinese

people a general moral warning in their daily life. Moreover, the popular thinking about why one and his current family members are reborn together is attributed to the result of collectively karmic retribution. Sometimes one even perceives one's couple and children as malicious debtors in past lives. In realty, enmity and animosity is more easily generated and intensified among intimate family members than to strangers. To deal with this unwholesome character, Section 9 "Dispelling enmity and resolving animosity" in the ritual manual advises that,

> By the power of the Buddhas, Dharma, Bodhisttvas of the Great Grounds and all other sages and worthy ones may our parents and relatives in the six paths [realms] who harbor animosity gather together now at this Bodhimanda [ritual site]. Let us together repent of past offenses and resolve all knots of animosity. If these beings cannot be physically present, may the power of the Three Treasures draw them in so that they can be spiritually present. May these beings all bring forth a compassionate heart and receive our repentance so that all animosity can be resolved. (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016:157)

The consideration of others who cannot physically present during the ritual moment is the capstone of ritual performance in Chinese Buddhist tradition. The existence of the others, including the deceased and all sentient beings in six realms, is always configured into the modules of liturgical procedures and plays a critical role in performing the ritual activity. They are the subject of receiving one's repentance and confession to grant forgiveness of past enmities and resolution of animosity. They are also the subject of dedicating the merit generated by the collective performance within the ritual occasion. According to Section 37 "Dedication of merit," the ritual poetic indicates that it is the most beneficial to dedicate the merit to the others, which is taught by the sutras to avoid the attachment on it and lead to liberation. However, the actors of

dedicating merit are not merely limited to the lived participants but also include all types of sentient beings. In the same section, a method of dedicating merit on behalf of others is instituted. It specifies that,

> Today, we are here in this Bodimanda [ritual site] due to our shared karma. Let all of us kneel and put our palms together. Let us be mindful and follow the Dharma host as we now make these dedications on behalf of others: We dedicate all the merit from virtuous deeds performed by all the heavenly beings and ascetic masters of the ten directions … by the dragons, ghosts, and spirits of the ten directions … by people and kings of the ten directions … by beings in the six realms … by all Buddhist disciples of the ten directions … by all Bodhisattvas of the ten directions … Furthermore, we now exhort beings in the heavens and human realms … to dedicate their merit so that together we return to the unsurpassed Way. May they dedicate to all living beings their blessings, however minute, from resolving on bodhi and practicing repentance, whether practicing themselves or exhorting others to practice. (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2016:299-300)

The phrase of "on behalf of" adopted in different modules of liturgical poetics becomes a critical signifier to demonstrate what "public participation" means and "spiritual potency" generates in understanding the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang conducted in HLT. When monastics and lay participants collectively recite the ritual manual chapter by chapter and section by section, they act as a group of spiritual mediums to collectively perform what all invisible beings in six realms, either physically presenting or not, would perform according to the liturgical modules scripted in the manual. One venerates the Buddha through vocal and bodily action performed in ritualized fashion, and all hungry ghosts who are locked down in all kind of hells are also venerating the Buddha at the same time. One repents for one's own past transgression by revealing all evil deeds, and all deceased are repenting their own sins. One is enlightened

to properly deal with problems in daily life by reciting Buddhist regimen in ritual poetics, all beings in hell are enlightened and know how to solve their own problems. Through meditatively reciting and performing the ritual manual, lay participants fulfill the compassionate task of benefiting universal beings that is the core teaching of Mahayana Buddhism in Chinese tradition.

The Ullambana Dharma Function: a showcase of HLT ritual program

Although the structural logic of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang remains intact, certain allowances are made for adjusting this ritual program to meet the particular need of the performance in HLT's Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July, or the so-called Ghost month. As discussed earlier, rescuing the ancestors and wandering ghosts is the primary goal for conducting this annual *fahui* in the HLT ritual calendar. The chapters and sections of veneration, teaching, confession and dedication of merit scripted in the ritual manual provide key ritual focus in *fahui*, yet other ritualized components and liturgical procedures establish a theatrical circumstance where they convey the arc of ritual performance and nourish the spiritual potency that aims to benefit the designated beings.

The *Daochang* (道場), or ritual site (Sanskrit: *bodhimaṇḍa*), is a key liturgical component of *fahui* where the principle ritual action takes place. The HLT Main Shrine is a typical space as *Daochang* to perform rituals in a monasterial environment. There is a variety of the requisite paraphernalia installed for ritual performance: images of Buddha and Bodhisattva; altar space for the arrangement of incense burners, lamps, flower, candles and vessels for offering water and food; musical instruments such as the gong,

wooden fish and drum; and a roomy, enclosed space for holding people's various ritualized movements. Besides as a physical space for setting ritual objects, *Daochang* is also a ritual phrase and topos in the liturgical poetics to refer to "a place of the Dao," the locution in which merit is generated by the performance of good deeds and dedicated to the beneficiaries according to the Dharma teaching (Dao). Therefore, the term *Daochang* needs to be considered comprehensively as a performative space, a spatial organization of objects and human motions in Buddhist liturgical tradition for upholding theatrical performance.

First, the physical presence of designated beneficiaries is a logically and necessarily thematic component of *Daochang* to facilitate the ritual repertoire of the Ullambana Dharma Function. It calls for varying procedures of preparation from invoking the invisible beings at the beginning to seeing them off at the end. As usual, the bulletin about this *fahui* in the week of August 20-27 in 2017 [12] was sent out in early May to individual devotees and posted on the temple's website. Soon the lay participants began to register their designated ancestors or the deceased relatives with whom they were concerned, including unborn children and malicious debtors in past lives. The names of deceased or general titles like "malicious debtors in past lives" and "all sentient

[12] Actually, the *fahui* period was started at the 29th of intercalary June to the 6th of July in the lunar calendar. Due to the intercalary June in 2017, HLT needed to postpone this ritual program's normal period almost one month to at least cover the start of lunar July, the traditional Ghost month. The lunar day of July 15th, however, was September 5 in 2017. The reason HLT did not choose the first week of September to conduct *fahui* was that most of HLT monastic members needed to travel back to FGS Headquarters in Taiwan in early September of every year and attend the global conference of FGS Buddhist Sangha Order, which always involved the celebration of the birth day of Monk Hsing Yun. This time arrangement demonstrates the flexibility of HLT ritual activity program that allows it to balance the traditional requirement of ritual time in the Ghost festival and the modern schedule of business operation in a Buddhist monastery.

beings lived on the land and in water" are then written on individual paper tablets with the names of those who enroll the tablet (Figure 30). The form of tablet as the "seat" of invisible beings within the moment of ritual performance is a traditional practice of ancestor worship in China. The first thing done immediately after one's death is to erect a tablet with the name of the dead to hold his departed *hun po*. After the funeral rites, the tablet is permanently seated in the family's ancestor hall or home altar to continually receive offerings from the living offspring. It is uncommon to make a temporary paper tablet to indicate the presence of the dead in the occasion of worshipping. Yet, in a diaspora circumstance like the Chinese American community in Southern California, making a temporary tablet of the dead in a ritual moment has been an ingenious practice of performing ancestor worship since the first generation of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century.


Figure 30: Paper tablets in *fahui* (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Around two weeks before the *fahui* began, individual tablets started to be "seated" in a *fahui* altar called "the altar of rebirth" located in the Western lounge of the Main Shrine (Figure 31). There were estimated over ten-thousand tablets registered in the 2017 *fahui*. Images of Amitabha


Figure 31: Altar of rebirth in *fahui* (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Buddha, the Buddha who established the Pure Land, and his two attendant Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara (Guan Yin) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, were installed at the center of altar to "care" for those paper tablets either set on the altar or stuck on walls around the altar space. On the morning of the first day in *fahui*, this altar space began to be restricted from public access, food and flower offerings were setup, and continuous chanting of the name of Amitabha Buddha were played by chanting machine. Through these ritualized activities, the space of the altar of rebirth was demarcated to the ritual sanctuary from its surrounding environment.

The first module of liturgical procedures that was performed in the 2017 *fahui* was the rite of establishing *Daochang*. Upon entering the precinct of Main Shrine, officiating monks and other monastics led lay participants, with all kinds of musical instruments, to chant the verses that have been scripted at the beginning of the ritual manual of the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang. By collective chanting and ritualized motions such as offering incense and kneeling, the very first action performed was an opening purification of ritual site and invocation to the abiding Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and guardian Bodhisattvas to attend *Daochang*. As the manual indicated, the canopy of the incense smoke and virtues of practicing Percepts spread throughout the *Daochang* in HLT, raining blessings of fresh flowers and water of great compassion from buddhas and bodhisattvas in all universal realms, the *fahui* participants verbally venerated and bodily prostrated to the abiding Triple Gem.

The next liturgical module was to expand the spatial dimension of *Daochang* to invoke the registered deceased to attend *fahui*. All lay participants led by monastics to

march in procession to the altar of rebirth in the Western lounge, holding the burning incense individually and collectively intoning the name of Amitabha Buddha, and formed a solemn phalanx in front of the altar (Figure 32). The sequence of liturgical procedures, which were added to the normal procedures scripted in the Repentance ritual manual, started with the performative rite of cleansing. Initial offering of incense by all participants to all tablets seated in the altar area was followed by continually chanting the *Mantra of Great Compassion* (Figure 33). Within the sound wall of mantra chanting, the officiating monk spread water of compassion toward all tablets and the food offerings to perform the cleansing action. Then a regular rite of food offering liturgies is performed, including collectively chanting mantras of food and water transmutation and feeding the deceased. At the end of feeding procedures, the officiating monk presented a formal declaration or announcement of the intentions of the *fahui*, and called for the attendance of the deceased together with their sponsored participants in the week-long ritual activity within *Daochang*.



Figure 32: Procession to altar of rebirth (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 33: Invocation of the deceased (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

After monastics and lay participants returned to the Main Shrine, the *fahui* resumed its ritual focus on the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang by following the sequence of liturgical modules scripted in the ritual manual. HLT divided the ten chapters of ritual poetics into a six-day *fahui* schedule, and performed the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service on the last day (Table 2).

Table 2. *Fahui* schedule of the Ullambana Dharma Function in 2017

	Morning	Noon	Afternoon	Night
August 20 Sunday	Rites of Invocation and Purification	food offering and bestowal rite	Repentance manual – Chapter 1	Repentance manual – Chapter 2
August 21 Monday	(none)	food offering and bestowal rite	(none)	Repentance manual – Chapter 3
August 22 Tuesday	(none)	food offering and bestowal rite	(none)	Repentance manual – Chapter 4
August 23 Wednesday	(none)	food offering and bestowal rite	(none)	Repentance manual – Chapter 5
August 24 Thursday	(none)	food offering and bestowal rite	(none)	Repentance manual – Chapter 6
August 25 Friday	(none)	food offering and bestowal rite	(none)	Repentance manual – Chapter 7
August 26 Saturday	Repentance manual – Chapter 8	food offering and bestowal rite	Repentance manual – Chapter 9	Repentance manual – Chapter 10
August 27 Sunday	(none)	- food offering and bestowal rite; - Presenting memorial of requesting blessing for the living	- Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service; - Presenting memorial of requesting relief from karmic retribution for the deceased; - Rite of seeing the deceased off	

source: Hsi Lai Temple

During the *fahui* period, HLT adjusted the traditional timeframe of conducting the Repentance Ritual of Emperor of Liang to meet modern lifestyle in Southern California. Instead of successively reciting chapters of the manual day and night, only one chapter of liturgical poetics was performed each weekday night to it convenient for day-time workers to fully attend the *fahui*'s program. Food offering and the bestowal rite were performed every day at noon to care for those invisible beings presented in the altar of the rebirth arena, regardless of absent offspring and tablet sponsors. Although there was a built-in module of opening and closing procedural poetics within each chapter for dividing the repertoire of repentance to a meaningful order of liturgical foci and a manageable sequence of performative activities, HLT physically broke the original design of accomplishing what the ritual manual prescribed at one ritual occasion to a series of ritual events that moments of rest, meal-taking, work, commuting, sleep and even private entertainment at home are blended into the period of the Ullambana Dharma Function. When asking whether this type of fragmented schedule would dismantle the sacred wholeness of one ritual program, monastics responded that it was an inevitable adjustment of traditional practice in modern era, especially in its American circumstance where there was no cultural custom of so-called Ghost month in the Chinese sense. The remedy was to frequently exhort participants to maintain the mood of sincerity during the *fahui* period no matter if they were situated in HLT's Main Hall or dining hall, where they were "physically" closed to their designated beneficiaries seated in the altar of rebirth, or in the workplace or at home by remembering the original intent to register those deceased relatives in the HLT *fahui*. Actually, HLT monastics always advised that

lay participants could utilize the break times during *fahui* period, when all Buddhas and Bodhsiattvas were presenting around ritual participants, as a unique occasion to reinforce their own Buddhist practice, such as intensively intoning names of Buddhas and reciting incantations while eating and walking, to generate more merits for their designated beneficiaries. In other words, the spatial nature of *Daochang* established by the *fahui* is expanded to encompass not only the Main Shrine and altar of rebirth and other places in the HLT arena, but also the secular spaces and places where ritual participants sincerely practice the liturgical poetics stated in the repentance manual.

Visually imaging themselves to be standing directly before the assembled Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the participants conceived that either the three Buddhas in the Main Shrine or Amitabha Buddha and his two attendant Bodhisattvas in the altar of rebirth, with their omniscient insight and wisdom, gazed upon the deposition of the performers through and through, thereby laying bare one's private history, past lives and present. Monastics instruct all lay participants to be sincere when attending *fahui*. With such mindfulness of the presentation of the sacred, ritual participants then solemnly recited pre-written liturgical poetics scripted in the manual that repeatedly recount the afflictions and hindrances accumulated through an endless mass of ignorant and evil actions (Figure 34). Professing in front of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to reveal all misdeeds and conceal nothing, participants followed the liturgical procedure of "venerating the



Figure 34: Participation in the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang in 2017 (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

buddhas" that was nested recurrently in individual chapters and sections to bodily bow in full prostration and take refuge with numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Figure 35). Through reciting the scripted poetics, they pledged to mend their past misdeeds and appealed to the deities to eliminate past transgressions and present obstacles with their powers of purification. The logical sequence concluded with the modules of vowing that all participants and sentient beings in six realms may receive the assurance of Amitabha Buddha's grace to be reborn in his Pure Land, and dedicating any merit generated by attending this *fahui* unconditionally to all beings in six realms. As discussed earlier, liturgical modules of venerating, repenting, and dedicating were also performed repeatedly by participants on behalf of their designated beneficiaries and all beings in six realms.



Figure 35: Participation in the Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang in 2017 (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

The last day of the Ullambana Dharma Function in HLT was the feast for the hungry ghosts, which was the original function performed by this Buddhist ritual in a traditional sense. As previously described, the function of the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service scripted in its ritual manual is threefold:[13] 1) to purify the evil karma of the ancestors and wandering ghosts; 2) to instruct the dead with Buddhist teachings and 3) to alleviate the suffering of the dead through sacred mantras and mudras that feed

[13] See note 6 in this chapter.

foods and dedicate merits to the dead (Figure 36). In the meantime, the performative nature of this Buddhist service program "naturally" actualizes the different stories underneath all liturgical modules of ritualized poetics during this weeklong *fahui*. As mentioned previously, the primary theme of rescuing one from the fate of suffering runs through the ritual performance of the Ullambana Dharma Function (rescuing a deceased mother from hell by Mu-lien) and the Repentance Ritual of Emperor of Liang (rescuing a deceased wife from the animal realm by Emperor Wu). The liturgical repertoire of the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service is scripted by the Buddha that aims to rescue Ananda from the fate of becoming hungry ghost by means of transmuting human foods and feeding all hungry ghosts,[14] who were supposed to be present at the *Daochang* and participate in the ritual moment. In other words, the liturgical repertoire of the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service reconciled three recusing stories with one sequence of ritual performance that accomplished the purpose of conducting the Ullambana Dharma Function in traditional Ghost month.



Figure 36: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: performing sacred mantras and mudras (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

If the ritual performance of the Ullambana Dharma Function entailed a single cycle of invoking, venerating, repenting, vowing, dedicating and feasting, it would

[14] Ibid.

conclude logically with rites of presenting a memorial to the Triple Gem and then disbanding the parties in *Daochang*. The history of presenting memorial to certain deities in Chinese ritual "technology" can be traced back to the rise of Daoism in the first century (see Chapter 2). For the HLT ritual activity program, presenting a memorial to the Triple Gem is a ritualized action to summarize the origin and achievement of one *fahui* event, and to publicly certify the names of *fahui* sponsors and their meritorious action of dedicating merits to universal beings to the Triple Gem, the highest authorities that have been invoked to *fahui* (Figure 37). The memorial itself is a prefabricated document made by FGS Headquarters in Taiwan that only needs to feed in the *fahui* information (name, time, place) and, most importantly, the name list of the sponsors of all paper tablets. The rite of presenting memorial in HLT's Ullambana Dharma Function in 2017 lasted for almost forty minutes, because individual names of the thousands of *fahui* sponsors must be read aloud one by one.



Figure 37: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: presenting memorial (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

The rite of seeing the designated deceased off was immediately after the concluding module of the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service, which aimed to exhort the presented deceased to practice the Buddhist teachings learned during this weeklong *fahui* and make peace with those living participants in *fahui* after receiving food offering. Logically the paper tablets seated in the altar of rebirth were carried by living participants

in both hands, with continually intonating name of Amitabha Buddha, and delivered to the courtyard for departing in ritualized motion (Figure 38). Then all paper tablets were thrown to furnaces and burned to the air (Figure 39). At the end, all monastics and lay participants bowed farewell three times to the rising smoke, and returned to the Main Shrine to receive the concluding sermon.



Figure 38: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: transporting the paper tablets (source: Hsi Lai Temple)



Figure 39: Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service: burning the paper tablets (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Buddhist etiquette embedded within the HLT ritual program

To be sure, the HLT ritual activity program is not only in formal, liturgical formation but also in a series of ritual-like behaviors or so-called Buddhist etiquette in everyday life. The gesture of calmness and intonating the name of Amitabaha Buddha performed by the living at the moment of one's death, as early mentioned, is a typical Buddhist etiquette that demonstrates the "proper" way to deal with the phenomenon of human death. It provides an alternative way for laypersons to practice Buddhist teachings outside the temple wall. Yet, properly performing as a Buddhist is also part of the purpose of the HLT ritual program inside the temple. While the actions of offering and

venerating the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have been configurated by liturgical poetics in the ritual manual, there is a set of specific motions Buddhist should perform whether in a ritual moment or not. In facing the Buddha or Bodhisattva images to make offering of incense, the incense stick should be held at the chest, while a short prayer is set. Then the incense is raised up to the position between the eyes, returned back to the chest, then placed into the incense burner. To venerate the images, prostrations are done in sets of threes with a half bow at the waist before the first and last prostration. As the ritual manual indicated, a practitioner consciously develops a proper attitude of giving and humility as a Buddhist from practicing these ritualized gestures consciously or unconsciously.

This type of ritualized behavior is prescribed by HLT often beyond the ritual moment. Through the HLT monastics' instruction and the pamphlet titled *Visiting a Buddhist Temple* in the Information Center, Buddhist etiquette is promoted to be performed in the temple's grounds. For instance, when entering and existing the shrine with three-door entrances, one should walk through the left or right doorways. The honor of using the central doorway, explained by the pamphlet, gives to the abbot or officiating monks in *fahui* moment. In addition, there is specific etiquette for accessing the Main Shrine, the holiest place in HLT. The signboard outside the entrance of Main Shrine (Figure 40), with both Chinese and English wording, indicates that several objects and behaviors are prohibited inside the shrine, including

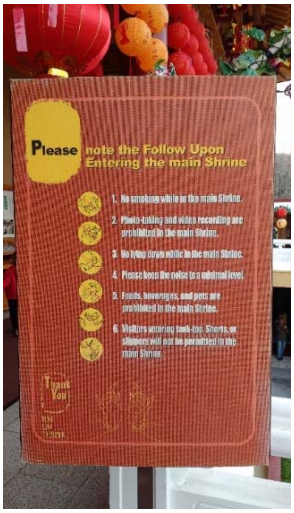


Figure 40: Signboard in English outside the Main Shrine (photoed by author)

smoking, photo-taking, video-recording, lying-down, foods, beverages, and pets. The bare shoulders and legs are considered impolite in front of images, so one wearing tank-top, shorts, or slippers need to be covered by the clothing supplied by HLT monastics to enter the shrine. Also inside the Main Shrine one should sit with his or her feet flat on the floor or in a cross-legged posture usually used in meditation. Noise of any kind should keep as low as possible; moving from one side to the other side by directly crossing the center zone of the shrine is not permitted, because both demonstrate disrespectful behaviors in a Buddhist temple like HLT.

Buddhist etiquette of polite and respectful behaviors is also prescribed for ordinary occasions in daily life. For example, greeting each other is to join palms and place at the center of the chest. At the same time both say "Amituofo," the Chinese pronunciation of Amitabha Buddha, to each other as a way to say hello, goodbye, or thank you. Also, eating is a time to foster an attitude of gratitude toward all the individuals who work on growing, transporting, and cooking the food. Therefore, HLT Dining Hall discourages wastefulness by advising diners to not take more food than is needed from the buffet bar. At meal time, foods need to be eaten in complete silence, and by this time diners pay close attention to every single bite in calming the mind and meditating the labors in the process of food production. Especially during retreat periods, taking meal become a rite of self-cultivation within a ritual program. Besides chanting verses before and after taking meal, every move to hold bowl and chopsticks needs to follow a set of prescribed gestures for occasions such as asking for foods from servants without vocal action and taking foods in the mouth. Through practicing this type of

motion meditation, eating behavior in everyday life has been transformed into a ritualized activity that generates one's attitudes of respect and gratitude to all beings.

To some extent, the action performed according to Buddhist etiquette in daily life is a necessary complement to HLT ritual activity program. These ritualized attributes in performing behaviors with Buddhist ideals provide a "line" of morally proper behaviors with which one can expect to sustain one's "face" as a good Buddhist within particular occasions in daily life.[15] Through response to ordinary occasions like greeting others on a walk or extraordinary occasions like venerating the Buddha image in HLT, the actor must take into consideration the nature of his encounter in the social world and must maintain face in the current situation. Certainly, he is given a considerable latitude to choose how to respond in ordinary life. Yet, inside a Buddhist monastery like HLT, he will find a small choice of lines of behaviors that are open to him, and find a small choice of faces other than acting as Buddhist that is waiting for him. Others he encounters are not likely to be conscious of his willfulness to possess Buddhist attributes until he acts perceptibly in such a way as an imaged Buddhist. Through the performance of vocally intonating "Amituofo," voicelessly taking meal, or bodily prostrating himself in front of an image,

[15] Here I borrow Erving Goffman's terms "line" and "face" used in his analysis of the face-to-face behaviors in human interaction. In daily contact with others, Goffman argues that one tends to respond with a "line" of action, that is, "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of participants [of interaction], especially himself" (1982, 5). The participants then assume the actor's line and respond with their lines of action in return. The term of "face" is elaborated by Goffman from the Chinese conception of face in various scholarly works and the Native American conception of face particularly discussed by Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*. "Face" is defined by Goffman as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (ibid.). Goffman argues that "face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself" (1982, 5).

everyone becomes conscious of those Buddhist attributes embodied in performance and assumes that the actor willfully gives the others a positive impression of possessing moral characters prescribed by either monastic instruction or the liturgical poetics in the ritual manual. On the other hand, an individual who can maintain the face of being good Buddhist is the one who abstains from certain misdeeds in the past that has repented explicitly in *fahui* and would have been difficult to face up to later. Consequently, a line of morally proper behaviors is able to be internalized through one's participation in either the formal liturgical procedures of the HLT ritual program or Buddhist etiquette promoted by HLT monastic community.

Conclusion

Acting out like a Buddhist, therefore, is the specific purpose of participating in various modules of ritual activity program promoted by the HLT monastic community. As Bell's conception of "ritualization," the acting within HLT distinguishes itself from the ways of acting within the secular circumstances outside the temple wall. Through their verbal, bodily and mental actions that follow those of fellow participants, ritual practitioners' ritualized activities at HLT internalize what Rappaport refers to as the meanings and effects embedded in the structure and all logically and necessarily liturgical procedures of the ritual. They learn Buddhist values and etiquette through a ritualized mechanism that imposes a cosmological order on the seeming chaos of the living world in America. Their bodies emulate the gestures of the traditional Buddhists who also practiced the same ritual manual over the past thousand years, their mouths recite the same sacred words, and their minds visualize the same sacred nature scripted within the

Chinese Buddhist ritual tradition held in HLT. Only then can the ritual performance be efficacious and truly generate merit for the living and the dead as signified by the HLT monastic community.

From the brief survey of the HLT ritual program in this chapter, the traditional Buddhist rituals practiced in HLT have several important characters of meanings and effects on formulating Chinese American religiosity. Firstly, traditional religion is a springboard of ethics in modern life. All liturgical poetics and etiquette observed in HLT usually illustrate the cause and effect relationship and karmic retribution between good deeds/misdeeds and happiness/sufferings. Since the moralism of original Chinese Buddhism is fully manifested in the HLT ritual activity program, Buddhism has become an indivisible part of Chinese religiosity in Southern California when Chinese Americans attend HLT ritual events. Secondly, Buddhism is a perfect union with the spiritual demands of filial piety. The principle of filial piety is the core axis of Chinese spirituality as discussed in Chapter 2. Activities of the HLT ritual program usually express the principle of filial piety within the ritual repertoire and liturgical procedures. Because offering and rescuing are two critical aspects of Chinese filial piety, and because the confessional rites and *fahuis* resonate with the demands of demonstrating filial piety, the Buddhist rituals conducted in HLT harmonize with the Chinese tradition of ancestral worship. This is a most important reason for the popularity of HLT confessional rituals like the Ullambana Dharma Function and its Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang among the Chinese American communities in Southern California.

Thirdly, the ritual "technology" of the HLT ritual program maintains the balance between reason and emotion, and integration of doctrine and practice. HLT ritual activities emphasize not only rationalized contents such as sutra reciting and meditation, but also the revealing and sublimation of religious feeling like chanting and venerating Buddhist images. Furthermore, most liturgical procedures illustrate the profound contents of contemplation on past karma and retribution on the one hand, and specify the actual methods of practice on the other. In other words, participating in HLT rituals implies not only the learning of Buddhist concepts and values, but also the actualization of religious practice.

Fourthly, traditional Chinese cosmology is restated in the American diaspora. Most HLT ritual activities involve not only the living participants, but also the deceased relatives. Ritual attendants pray not only for themselves, but also for past relatives and friends; not only for mankind, but also for the sentient beings of the six realms including the gods, the animals, the wandering ghosts and the suffering beings in hell. Therefore, participation in the HLT ritual program can be expanded indefinitely in a spatial dimension. And, the merits generated from the ritual performance can be extended to the past life, the present life, and the future life in a temporal aspect.

Fifthly, the nature of the ritual repertoire and procedures follows a common set of narratives, terminologies and pre-configured modules of action shared with Chinese cultural tradition. It is crucially important to recognize that the resonances that pertain between the ritual manuals used in HLT ritual activities and vernacular narratives of crisis in life and ritualized redress are represented in the likes of how Mulien's mother

and Empress Chi were rescued. Therefore, in spite of the extent of the multiple Chinese life experiences and the existence of many dialects among Chinese American communities, the ritual program can be adapted and followed without much difficulty in the greater Chinese cultural context. When we as outside observers recognize so, we observe striking continuities of Chinese Buddhist repertoire, form, and discourse in American diaspora circumstance. We also discover consistent ways in which major ritual genera and their certain logically necessary entailments of performance are woven into the religious experience of Chinese Americans through their estimations of everyday life in Southern California, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Lastly, the ritual conception of *Daochang* greatly extends the spatial dimension of Buddhist practice from the shrine to the temple ground, and from the monastery to ordinary world. *Daochang* is a component of Chinese ritual tradition as a theatrical performance space where ritual objects are deployed and liturgical repertoire is performed. The establishment and purification of *Daochang*, therefore, always takes place precedent to other liturgical modules proper. The liturgical actions of ritualized cleansings on either the site or participants functionally demarcate the ritualized sanctuary from its surrounding environment, and in doing so, they impose restrictions within the sanctuary to distinguish it from profane space. By means of the conception of *Daochang* as a sacred place of performing ritualized behaviors, HLT Main Shrine requires a specific etiquette from visitors such as adopting a dignified and solemn demeanor when entering the shrine. HLT monastics instruct visitors in how to greet each other, diners in how to eat properly, and worshipers in how to offer incense and to

prostrate the image. In this way, performing Buddhist etiquette beyond the ritual moment in HLT functionally cleanses the surroundings and transforms HLT grounds to a peaceful *Daochang* in Southern California. By internalizing liturgical poetics in the ritual manual and Buddhist etiquette as a line of morally proper actions, individuals who leave HLT and go back to their secular life also transform their surrounding places to *Daochang* by maintaining their face of being a good Buddhist and performing Buddhist practices.

As Xue Yu concluded in his study of ritual theory of Monk Hsing Yun and recreation of Buddhist ritual tradition in FGS temples worldwide, the ritualization of Buddhist activities in secular society is one of the great reinventions of Humanistic Buddhism (Yu 2013). Yu argues that ritual practice sanctifies the secular life of Buddhists and extends the sacred space beyond the temple walls. As manifested by the HLT ritual activity program discussed in this chapter, Chinese Buddhism demonstrates its humanistic nature that not only benefits the fate of the deceased but also facilitates the spiritual advancement of living Chinese Americans in their diaspora circumstance. In the next chapter I will switch my attention to the HLT visitors, the supposed beneficiaries of participating in the HLT ritual activity program. With the consideration of ritual participants' psychological response and spiritual experience, the nature of the spiritual potency of the HLT ritual program will be further examined.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Moral Luck": The Psychological Satisfaction from Coming to Hsi Lai Temple

One might get the impression that Chinese American people are very religious when looking at the constant flow of ritual participants and ordinary visitors into HLT with which Chinese Buddhist architecture and activities have been visualized in Southern California. But what is the nature of Chinese American religiousness revealed within a monasterial environment like HLT? Is any common state of mind shared with the lay visitors (in opposition to HLT monastics) who enter HLT? When lay visitors leave and go back to their ordinary life in America, do they believe what they have seen, heard and felt inside HLT? To explore these inquires in this chapter, I should first revisit the concept of "religiosity" in the Chinese religio-cultural framework, which has been generally discussed in Chapter 1, and further question its indivisible relationship with another term "belief" in studying people's religious experience, as many scholars in recent Chinese religious studies have critically examined this term "belief" with its Judeo-Christian theological baggage.[1]

The noun "belief" or "faith" (*xinyang* 信仰) that is so important to be the essential component of the religiosity in Western religious traditions, is almost absent from the vernacular language of describing metaphysical experience among the Chinese common

[1] There is a line of thought in postcolonial studies of contemporary Chinese religions that criticizes the adoption of western conceptions such as "belief" and "religious experience" because it assumes an intellectual equivalence toward the seeming-like phenomena within the Chinese cultural context. The most significant studies to help me develop my arguments are: Chau 2006, Goossaert and Palmer 2011, Li 1998, Yang 1961, and Yao and Badham 2007.

people interviewed in recent Chinese religious studies (Chau 2006); ordinary people simply did not explicitly speak of a "belief in Buddhism" or "Buddhist faith." I found precisely the same phenomenon in my research at HLT, particularly among those who come to HLT in a casual manner or for the first time. While words for "belief" exist in modern Chinese language, a majority of lay visitors in HLT do not use these words to describe their religious orientation and experience. Instead, they often use the verb "believe" (*xiangxin* 相信) to specify certain subject matter, and would say something such as "I believe in the power of Guan Yin Bodhisattvas" or "I believe in the existence of karmic retribution." HLT lay visitors also do not speak about their personal "belief" during our conversations, except those HLT monastics who sometime differentiate "Buddhist beliefs" (*fojiao xinyang* 佛教信仰) from "folk beliefs" (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰), or praise the United States for "freedom of religious belief" (*zongjiao xinyang ziyou* 宗教信仰自由). Thus, usage of the word "belief" is the official and modern way of speaking about religions, not to the common people of conceptualizing their living world. Sometimes "belief" is the kind of language used by Chinese people in daily conversation with an unacquaintance (such as an interviewer like me) to exhibit their sense of "modernity," for example, they might say "I don't have any religious belief at all." Therefore, scholars often found a mystical disconnection between religious self-identity (which we normally think of in terms of "belief") and the attitudes and behaviors toward varying religious concepts and practices (by which we normally measure people's religiosity) among Chinese common people. For instance, a survey of religious experience in contemporary China conducted by Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham from

2004 to 2006 found that while only 4.4 percent of interviewees identify themselves as Buddhists, 18.2 percent experience influence or control by Buddhas or Bodhisattvas or fate of cosmic retribution, 27.4 percent pray to Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and more surprisingly, 77.9 percent agree with the Buddhist concept of causal retribution and must do good (Yao and Badham 2007:31). From these statistics, it seems Chinese people have less of a connection to Buddhist "beliefs;" rather, they believe in the metaphysical law of karmic retribution to regulate everyday life and believe in the efficacy of praying to Buddhas or Bodhisattvas to change the fate of retribution to a more favorable direction in their individual life.

The verb "believe" is often used in everyday language in relation to personal metaphysical experiences among HLT interviewees, and in my opinion it reveals an artful identification of the psychological state upon which Chinese American people act within a monasterial environment. Literally, "believe" indicates the personal manner to consider something to be true or real, such as "I believe what you say" or "believe me, it really happened." Also, "believe" holds an opinion in that it is often used as a synonym for "suppose," such as "I believe he has come" or "I believe he did it." In comparison to the purport of direct conviction embedded in the use of the word "belief," the willingness of individual's "investment" in certain propositions, the *action* of saying them and considering them as real,[2] would be more appropriate to underscore the use of "believe" within the ordinary language I encounter at HLT. When people say, "I believe in the

[2] This argument of defining the use of "believe" in people's common language is indebted to Michel de Certeau's notion of "making people believe" to analyze the strategies of political parties to formulate people's ideological inclination in modern society. See de Certeau 1984, esp. 177-189.

spiritual potency generated from participating in the Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July," they might not be convicted of the real salvation of the ghost but may commit themselves to invest spiritual energy in believing the "credibility" of the scripted modules in the ritual manual and the liturgical procedures during the ritual moment. In other words, ritual participants are willing to give credit to the stories of suffering and Buddhist remedies embedded in HLT's ritualized activities that deserve their devotional labor. The dynamic of the psychological state that motivates individuals to believe in a Buddhist way as prescribed by the HLT spacious organization and ritual program, therefore, is the main area of discussion in this chapter.

Chinese American religiosity

Normally when scholars profile people as being "religious," they usually mean that these people's lives are immersed in a heightened level of religiosity, and a system of religious values and practices suffuse their consciousness and behaviors in everyday life. Yet, this understanding of people's attitude and activity in the religious arena of life is based upon the perspective of Christian institutions throughout history. As Adam Chau (Chau 2006:61-62) indicated, there are two modalities of religiosity in Christian history: ritualism and piety. The modality of ritualism demonstrates a formalistic and behavioral display of faith in an institutional circumstance such as church and synagogue. Through the ritualized elaboration of church service with systematized manipulation of religious symbols and objects, one's religiousness is recognized by the frequency and intensity of his ritualized behaviors that conform with doctrinal requirements. In opposition to ritualism, the modality of piety perceives religiousness as an internal state of reverence

and devotion, not conspicuous expression of such inner life to the public. Quietism as a form of religious mysticism and modern appreciation of meditation as spiritualism exemplify the "higher" religiosity pursued by "piety believers." Historically these two modalities of religiosity compete against each other to define whose religiosity is a "truer" religiosity, and subsequently, who are the "truer" religious people.

But both ritualism and piety are only two modalities of Christian or common understanding of religiosity, which dichotomize the complicated behaviors in daily life into over-simplified categories of religiousness and irreligiousness. In the meantime, such dichotomy is based upon a particular belief system. Thus, when an individual being classified as a Christian makes a tour to Mecca and visits the Grand Mosque of Makkah, or a Muslim goes to Jerusalem and visits the Western Wall, known in Arabic as the Al-Buraq Wall, such individual action is difficult if not impossible to identify the manner and extent of religiousness with the framework of either ritualism or piety modalities. By the same token, it is equally difficult to explore the Chinese American religiosity when I found numerous cases at HLT of Chinese American visitors who claimed to be atheist or even Christian yet participated in Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July, and told me they believed in the spiritual potency of Buddhist ritual to benefit their beloved deceased relatives. Are these people religious? Do they betray their own religious identity and "belief" by visiting HLT? If not, how could they accommodate themselves to this kind of mismatch between personal faith and action in the religious arena of everyday life? Consequently, the nature of Chinese American religiosity must be reconsidered to properly understand how HLT visitors articulate the conceptual ingredients in their minds

to motivate them to visit a Chinese Buddhist monastery in Southern California, or further give credit to and invest devotional labor in the Ullambana Dharma Function and other HLT rituals and ritualized activities.

By Chinese American religiosity, I refer to the psychological state underneath the manner and extent of religiousness that can be analyzed from lay visitors' behaviors at HLT. Such psychological state in my understanding, as Chapter 1 indicated, is close to the conception of the "mystical states of consciousness" developed by William James. In Chapter 1 I have argued that two primary qualities in James's scheme of mystical states: emotional ineffability and noetic insight into depth of reality (James 1917:370), initiate both affective and cognitive aspects of people's religiosity and develop a variety of sensual experiences onto HLT's space (described in Chapter 3) and ritualized activities (analyzed in Chapter 4). While the affective aspect develops ineffable experience of HLT matters, it is the cognitive aspect that endows meaning with established knowledge, supplied by either the HLT ritual manual and monastic instruction or personal memory in the past. These two aspects constitute the psychological state in the sense of Chinese American religiosity discussed in this chapter.

Moreover, two associated qualities of "mystical state of consciousness:" transiency and passivity, despite James conceptualizing them as "less sharply marked" (James 1917:370-71), actually do characterize the dynamics of Chinese American religiosity I observed in HLT. Transiency in James' scheme of the mystical state refers to the temporal dimension of people's mystical experience. As the Buddhist concept of impermanence, the fervor of mystical state won't stay long; it will always be alleviated

into ordinary scenarios of daily life when the ineffable moment passes. When faded, James argues, the mystical quality of such experience will be imperfectly reproduced in people's memory. The similar experience will be recognized again when the ineffable moment recurs, "and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance" (ibid.). Another associated quality, passivity, indicates the profound change of psychological state in that "when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power" (James 1917:371). Although such a mystical state might be explained as merely the interruption of exterior beings like the phenomena of mediumistic trance or spirit possession, James disagrees to this way of looking at mystical experience. He argues that "some memory of their [mystical states] content always remain, and a profound sense of their importance. They [mystical states] modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence" (ibid.). Both qualities specify the power of the mystical state of consciousness in transforming one's inner life, especially if the ineffable and noetic qualities of mystical experience on the same or similar matter are raised from one recurrence to another.

Based on James's analysis of people's mystical state of consciousness, the Chinese American religiosity studied at HLT, I believe, should present a dynamic range of patterns with varying intensities to motivate lay visitors' manner and behavior according to various occasions of "recurrence," such as the recurrence of visiting HLT, recurrence of participating in ritual activities, or the recurrence of past memories when

bodily situated in HLT spacious and ritual settings. Certainly, such varying patterns and intensities depend upon distinctive individual motives of coming and staying in HLT. In order to understand how religiosity is expressed by varied actors at HLT, I propose a typology of modes of behaviors to account for the varieties of lived Chinese American religiosity found there.

Typology of lay visitors at HLT

This approach to identify groups of lay visitors according to their modes of "doing religion," rather than how they conform to certain doctrinal and institutional ideals, avoids the mystical disconnection between religious identity and religious practice in Chinese daily life. As demonstrated in many studies, I found HLT visitors do not act out their religious identity in the neat and clear ways that are normally suggested by the labels Buddhist, Buddhist sympathizer and non-Buddhist. Monastics who have formally taken the monastic percepts and outfits may reliably be categorized as professional religious individuals such as Buddhist monks and nuns. Yet lay visitors who self-identify as Buddhists or who otherwise have formally taken refuge,[3] two of the most common criteria to differentiate Buddhists from ordinary people,[4] may not reliably indicate what religiosity would be demonstrated inside HLT. I found that many visitors who sincerely

[3] In the Buddhist tradition, taking refuge in the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) is an action of commitment to become a follower of Buddhist teaching and not convert to other religious traditions.

[4] The definition of "who is Buddhist?" has been debated in American scholarship over the past forty years. To escape the trap of defining Buddhist adherent based on various ethno-cultural factors, which could initiate further debate in racialist terms, these two criteria of self-identification and taking the Three Refuge are commonly adopted to identify Buddhists in research. For more detailed analysis of the scholarly debate on Buddhist identity, see Tweed 1999.

offered incense and bowed to Buddha unnecessarily called themselves Buddhist during their interview, or who admitted taking refuge and additional lay percepts [5] but still consumed meat and alcohol in daily life. These individuals constitute the majority of lay visitors I encountered at HLT, but should they be considered Buddhists? If not, how should we approach their religious experience and the psychological state underneath? Therefore, the behavior-centered aspect of classifying lay visitors enables shaper focus on both the different types of actions observed at HLT and a broader range of actors, including the tourists who engage in activities that are often not considered religious.

Using a "doing religion" approach I can identify six groups of lay visitors at HLT: sightseer, consumer, worshiper, volunteer, ritual participant, and devotee. It is worth pointing out that these six categories do not necessarily demarcate six groups of HLT lay visitors but instead six genres of performative thinking in a monasterial environment. That is, even if they might be logically inconsistent with one another, they can be simultaneously maintained and performed by the same actor to respond to varied occasions and situations. There are, for example, sightseers who try to experience offering incense when they glimpse at the same gesture performed by worshipers in front of the Main Shrine, or ritual participants who give up their seats in popular ritual programs for the crowd of try-out worshipers and instead do the volunteer work of traffic control at HLT parking lots during ritual moments. To the extent that they are originally identified as sightseer and ritual participant, they also fall into the categories of worshiper

[5] Five precepts for lay Buddhists are: refraining from taking life (no killing), from taking what is not given (no stealing), from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from taking alcohol or intoxicating substance.

and volunteer respectively in different occasions. A closer examination of these six categories of performative thinking will reveal the states of religiosity most characteristic of each group.

1. Sightseer. At HLT the group of lay visitors referred to as sightseer or tourist may be the hardest to account for in the scholarly schematization of religiosity, but it is worth incorporating this group into the articulation of Chinese American religiosity here [6] because many ritual participants and devotees often spoke about their first-time experience as a typical sightseer at HLT. They remembered that they were entertained by HLT's Chinese palatial-style buildings and gardens; took pictures and read a variety of descriptions associated with Buddhist objects; joined the temple's guided tour; and just sat at a quiet corner to watch children play in the courtyard, or rested inside the Information Center to have tea and even take a nap in the afternoon. This type of lived performance within a scenic area describes sightseer behaviors when they tour in HLT.

Sightseers are often informed about this Buddhist compound in Southern California by either local news media or a friend's referral. A peaceful and relaxing experience at HLT is a typical response of these sightseers who told me about their feeling inside HLT. Some sightseers regularly visit HLT during individual leisure times because the temple is open every day free-of-charge. One sightseer told me he always

[6] As defined in Chapter 1, although the sightseers at HLT in reality encompassed Chinese Americans and all other common American people, I found no major difference in their behavior pattern to display the sightseeing experience inside HLT. For the purpose of my research, I refer all field notes of lay visitors been categorized as sightseer group as a part of Chinese American religiosity. For the remaining five groups of lay visitors, this ethnical concern will be reduced to a minimum level of representing Chinese American religiosity because fewer non-Chinese Americans can be observed among those five categories of HLT lay visitors.

enjoyed sitting in the Main Shrine during summer time despite been required to follow the rules, because "the hall is cool, quiet and spiritual."

Students are part of the sightseer group at HLT. Often, their field trips to HLT are organized by local schools as part of their cultural-awareness course. The tour normally covers most of the temple grounds accompanied by a volunteer docent, and pairs the tour with a vegetarian lunch in the Dining Hall. A few students I met during classes at University of California, Riverside, still remembered the Buddhist building, objects, people and food they encountered when they visited HLT as high school students. Guided tour service offered by HLT generates more cognitive experience than merely reading a self-explained description of Buddhist objects for local students and ordinary visitors (Figure 41). Besides the self-guided audio tour package available in the Information Center, HLT takes reservations for scheduled tours with docent service during the weekdays, and offers drop-in tours on weekend afternoons. Combined with vegetarian buffet lunch, many sightseers told me they enjoyed their time learning about the Buddhist way of life with family members and friends at HLT.



Figure 41: Sightseer tour guided by volunteer docent at HLT (photoed by author)

2. Consumer. The second orientation of performative thinking among HLT lay visitors can be explained by reference to Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). In his work, instead of focusing on the structural forces and established rules to impose on the users who consume the property of others, such as walking in the city's

space and reading narratives written by others, de Certeau analyzes the tactics of consumer's practice (i.e. walker's and reader's behaviors) to actively "seize" the opportunity at propitious moments when they are able to capitalize on their advantage, and secure this advantage independently with respect to circumstances (i.e. city's space and narrative). This approach raises a different set of insights to investigate how ordinary visitors use and take personal advantage of the HLT space and services at their disposal.

Unlike those sightseers who appreciate HLT's scenery and service in a casual manner, I identify three types of consumers who actively take advantage of HLT's various capacities according to their specified motives to approach HLT. The first are divination-seekers who request guidance from the deities to solve personal or family problems in daily life. Common concerns for individuals asking for divination services at HLT are for the decision-making of medical healing option, marriage, family affairs, business venture, or schooling future. Such divination services are most often requested in the Bodhisattva Hall, the front hall of the HLT compound. According to HLT monastics, divination-seekers are easily identified by their asking the place for drawing *chiam* (籤) or fortune stick, the popular object in Chinese traditional temples to initiate the divination process. As described in Chapter 3, HLT instead provides a container of "Dharma Words" for drawing (see Figure 8). Normally these divination-seekers are instructed to kneel down in front of the Bodhisattva images first, then recite *na mo ben shi shi jia mo ni fo* (南無本師釋迦牟尼佛 or taking refuge in Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha) for guidance, and draw the Dharma Words from the container. HLT monastics then provide their Buddhist guidance on personal affairs based upon the Dharma Words

drawn by individual seeker. In most cases, unless it is an emergent situation like suicide and homicide, HLT monastics will not give out any concrete direction as seekers expected. The questions such as either taking surgery or radiological treatment for cancer and either divorce or maintaining marriage, are answered by the HLT monastics' interpretation of how the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would explain from the drawn Dharma Words and the description of the best Buddhist options the seeker can take. HLT monastics always promote divination seekers to participate in the temple's ritual activity and sutra-study class to find out what Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would "directly" tell them the answer to their question. A great portion of seekers, according to HLT monastics, accept this modern way of divination as a service of psychotherapy at HLT and come back several times or participate in the temple's activities to seek more guidance from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

A second type of consumer is those who are interested in cultivating relationships with certain monastics or the abbot at HLT and regularly visit with them. Some are more intellectually interested, often entering discussions on a variety of topics about Buddhist thought and practice. These laypersons may begin to attend the Buddhist speech and enroll in the sutra-study class, both supervised by those HLT monastics they want to be close to. Others are interested in developing personal friendship and enjoy cultivating a social relationship with a member of the HLT monastic community. They may become active volunteers for helping with certain temple event that involve their monastic they are interested in cultivating a social relationship with. A few in this type of lay visitor are local politicians and members of Chinese and Taiwanese offices of political, economic

and cultural affairs. They stop by HLT to keep tabs on what is happening on their concerned issue in local communities and home countries. The relationship between these individuals and the HLT monastic community is based on secular affairs, and is not clearly marked by religious reverence and patronage.

A third and final type of consumer is most strictly exchange-oriented. Strictly exchanging behavior at HLT is expressed by paying monetary matter for temple goods and services, including eating vegetarian buffet in Dining Hall, shopping for gift items in the Book Store, sending children to educational programs like FGS Hsi Lai School or Boy/Girl Scout troops or youth orchestra, and enrolling in classes like chorus, floral art, traditional drumming, cooking, yoga, meditation, and so on. Although the original purpose of launching and sponsoring these temple's goods and service programs is to enlist more Buddhists, I found no significant indication provided by HLT monastics that the growth of patronage on temple's secular goods and services corresponds with a comfortingly expansion of the pious devotee group at HLT. However, many parents of FGS Hsi Lai School and Girl Scout troop members told me that they believe in the non-profitmaking and compassionate atmosphere of HLT's affiliated institutions, despite having no interest in attending other temple activities promoted by HLT monastics. A few parents admire HLT for caring for their children when they are late picking them up. Normally, HLT monastics and volunteers would accompany children to wait, or take children to eat dinner in the Dining Hall while waiting for their parents to arrive.

3. Worshiper. To be sure, the most observable group of lay visitors at HLT are worshipers, who are characterized by offering and bowing to the images of Buddha and

Bodhisattva under the gaze of the public. To some extent, a worshiper is a type of consumer interested in consuming HLT's religious objects. These individuals and their devotional gestures and manners, in fact, constitute a lived component of the HLT sacred landscape in the eyes of sightseers and other lay visitors.

Worshipers usually start their personal pilgrimage at the front of Bodhisattva Hall to show respect to the two guardian Bodhisattvas: [7] first to Skanda on the right and next to Sangharama on the left. Then they enter the Hall and bend a knee to each of five Bodhisattvas. Some prepare food and flower offering to the Bodhisattvas, or cast money in the donation box. When passing the Bodhisattva Hall, worshipers begin to tour the temple by visiting a set of "personal pantheons" they believe most efficacious in meeting their personal purpose of entering HLT now. Such a set of personal pantheons may vary from person to person based on individual knowledge and past experience, given that HLT supplies a diverse range of Buddha and Bodhisattva images placed in the Main Shine, the covered cloisters around the Courtyard, two gardens, and Memorial Pagoda. It is not unusual to see flower and food offerings left on a few pedestals of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues around the Courtyard by unknown worshipers. Normally, almost all routes of personal pilgrimages inside HLT would cross at the uncovered plaza outside the Main Shrine, where the main incense burner is located. There worshipers can make incense offerings and light offerings to the holist images inside HLT: the three Buddhas in the Main Shrine. A few worshipers continue their personal pilgrimages to the

[7] Originally HLT supplied incense in front of these two guardian Bodhisattvas for worshipers. Starting at early 2017, only fresh flowers were supplied to facilitate worshipers to do flower offering instead.

Memorial Pagoda, the highest point of HLT where the parament tablet of their ancestor is installed.

Besides personal maps of HLT sacred landscape and pilgrimage routes, HLT worshipers come and go within their own timeframe. They visit HLT during meaningful moments of the Chinese lunar calendar, such as the first and fifteenth days of every month, and New Year, Ching Ming festival, Ghost Month, and the birthdays of those significant Bodhisattvas revered in different family traditions. They also come to HLT at any time for various specific needs to obtain blessings from hardship or disaster in one's daily life, or for returning thanks to HLT's Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Parents bring children to worship with incense for the ideal result of the application of university's application, pregnant women for the safe delivery of their child, college graduation and unemployment for the good luck to incoming job interview, and children for the health condition of aged parents. One consumer told me he worshipped the Buddhas in the Main Shrine for the Buddha's magical protection when he must travel to China to pursue an escaped debtor. After he safely returned home with good results, he came back and brought all family members to return his thanks, with offering incense and giant "pineapple" candle, to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at HLT.

4. Volunteer. Volunteers associated with HLT in various capacities are service oriented. These individuals wish to be close to HLT and offer their time and labor to support a variety of the temple's activities. Unlike sightseers, consumers and worshipers, this type of lay visitor "produces" material and immaterial capital to enrich HLT's tangible capacities shown to ordinary visitors. For the limited number of monastics and paid staff,

which is estimated at always below fifty, the seemingly unlimited reservoir of volunteers is the most precious resource for maintaining HLT operation and lived quality of its monasterial space, objects and activities.

Volunteers at HLT generally can be divided to three levels of capacities to serve. The first are more strictly devotional in their temple's work. Devotion is expressed by dutifully wearing the volunteer uniform and reporting to their assigned work position in HLT as a paid employee. Devotional volunteers are always assigned multiple tasks in a typical day, including preparing the food items for cooking in kitchen, shipping materials around the temple ground, taking care of the Main Shrine, Bodhisattva Hall, Information Center, temple's library and other facilities, driving to local markets to purchase or pick up goods, accompanying monastics to take care of personal business outside the temple walls, and all kinds of day-to-day tasks for maintaining a functional public place like HLT. Moreover, most of time the working hours at HLT for these devotional volunteers are more than the hours of paid employees, especially during the primary *fahui* period in summer. The tasks need devotional volunteers to devote additional effort during major activity periods include decorating and cleaning out the venue of activity, playing a walking part of the offering team in primary moments of ritual performance, running supplies behind the scenes, picking and sending guests between temple and airports, directing traffic at the Gate and parking lots, and other critical functions of keeping HLT activities solemn and well-organized. To some extent, devotional volunteers express the full dedication of body and mind to HLT.

The second level of volunteer work is not necessarily related to people's manner of dedication; rather, it has to do with their dispersed concerns and responsibilities to their family and work outside the temple walls. Their dedication is expressed by their dutifully showing up on the time and at the place that has been negotiated and agreed upon by HLT monastics and leaders of devotional volunteers. Compared to those devotional volunteers who spend most of their time at HLT like full-time employees, the majority of HLT regular volunteers act as part-time employees who skillfully balance their time and labor contributed to HLT with their individual family and work circumstances. Some have professional skills and are trained in secular work that benefits a critical part of HLT activities, such as oral translation and floral arts. Some have leisure time during the temple's activity moments, which largely happen on the weekend. Depending upon their availability, regular volunteers often take over particular tasks described above from the monastics and devotional volunteers to become involved in HLT activities and events.

The third level of volunteer is the minimum level of service that helps HLT activities sporadically on specific occasions. Normally these occasional volunteers are personal relatives or friends of devotional and regular volunteers who assist with the temple's activities and events by acting as personal helpers to do temple's business. They may be young adults being called for help by their parents, or husbands being called to do hard-labor work by their wives, or employees being called to provide skillful labor by their supervisors. One volunteer told me he is a "logical" volunteer to serve his wife as volunteer at HLT. Many female volunteers call husbands or kids to HLT as occasional

volunteers because they would not have time to go back and forth between the temple and home to make meals during busy moments over the weekend, so they can eat together at the temple while helping with the temple's activities at different venues. For various reasons or motives, occasional volunteers act as a reservoir volunteer force for supporting HLT activities and events on an on-call basis.

Sometimes students coming from local schools who need to fulfill their requirement of community service hours form a part of the volunteer crew to serve food in the Dining Hall during Sunday lunch hours, the busiest time of HLT dining service. These students learn the Buddhist manner of volunteering for serving the public, and through the limited time have they develop relationships to monastics and other volunteers who supervise their work at HLT.

5. Ritual participant. As discussed in Chapter 4, lay visitors who participate in a variety of ritual activities instituted by HLT intimately contact with the Buddhist system of ritualized prescription on the lay community. Yet, they are not passive participants per se. Many participants in HLT ritual activities develop different thinking patterns that guide them to become involved in ritual activities. Among the mass of ritual participants, only a few participated in HLT's calendared ritual program with a universal manner, meaning regularly attending scheduled daily, weekly, monthly and yearly rites and *fahuis* without preference. Almost all lay visitors who are typologized as ritual participants at HLT are somewhat cult-oriented. They develop a kind of cultic habitus to devote their time and labor toward a particular series of ritual events. While some commit themselves to attend every daily morning rites or weekly Dharma Function on Sunday or meditation retreat

programs as the practice of self-cultivation in Buddhist teaching, a great majority base their ritual participation on the principle of practical utility. For those pursuing liturgical service to the concerned deceased, it is the most important to participate in HLT ritual package of serving the dead, the Filial Piety Memorial Dharma Service in April, the Ullambana Dharma Function in lunar July and all kind of ritualized occasions that can install the paper tablet of the dead. For those looking for blessing and protection on health and general welfare in one's immediate life, they would focus on attending the ritual activities during the New Year period and other calendared events involving a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva, such as the Medicine Buddha Dharma Service in November, the Amitabha Buddha Dharma Service in December, and the Avalokitesvera or Guanyin Bodhisattva's monthly Great Compassion Repentance Service *fahui* and two times of pilgrimage in March and November. All these cultic habitus of ritual participation are facilitated with a wide choice of ritual programs that HLT offers to the public.

There are also different types of manner on demonstrating one's own dedication when participating in ritual activities. For example, formal dressing is often deemed as the expression of sincerity to attend a ceremony. Although there is no uniform code in attending an HLT ritual program (Figure 42), the participants who wear black gowns indicate their refuge-taken as formal Buddhist, and those who additionally wear a brown gown outside the black one



Figure 42: Dressing in ritual program (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

indicates their status of having taken the Five Precepts or Bodhisattva Precepts, which represent the higher personal commitment to being a dedicated Buddhist. Traditionally, those ordinary participants who wear no black gown are arranged to be seated behind those having, and those black-gown Buddhists are lined up behind the brown-gown Buddhists. This seat-arranged rule in ritual situations is crucial when the popular ritual program like the Repentance Ritual of Emperor of Liang is crowded and almost all participants expect to have a seat inside the Main Shrine, the most sacred place of performing dedication in front of the Three Buddhas. Although HLT always reserves seats inside the Main Shrine for accommodating the ordinary participants, the higher priority of entering the Main Shrine is always assigned to formal Buddhist participants who wear the brown and black gown. Therefore, some behavioral patterns among the ritual participants are developed. While some Buddhist participants chose to give up the seat opportunity by taking off their gown to make room for ordinary participants who might seldom attend HLT rituals, some especially wore the gown at that moment in order to win the seat inside the Main Shrine. Some decided to leave when crowded by taking off the gown and come back when the seat is available. The explanation of those who insist on staying inside the Main Shrine during the ritual moment is that the dedication needs to be performed completely under the gaze of the Buddhas. For those who give up their seat inside the Main Shrine, any spot at HLT is included in the *Daochang* or ritualized space during the ritual moment.

To be sure, those who left the Main Shrine still found the ways to express their dedication to the ritual. A few switched their role to that of volunteer in performing

kitchen work or traffic control work at parking lots. However, most of them seated themselves together with other ordinary participants in the Auditorium or Conference Center, the satellite places for participating in the same ritual performance as that inside the Main Shrine. Although there was no intimate sense of bodily presence under the gaze of the Buddhas (only video images and audio signals were transmitted from the Main Shrine), dedicated Buddhists, without wearing the black and brown gown, still loyally performed the required gestures by following the liturgical modules scripted in the ritual manual (Figure 43).



Figure 43: Performing gestures in Conference Center during ritual moment (source: Hsi Lai Temple)

Another type of manner to participate in HLT ritual program is revealed by the personal choice of whether or not to attend the full ritual program. Supposedly, as HLT monastics instruct, individuals need to participate in every component of a ritual program to display their full dedication to the purpose of the ritual. However, despite the fact that individual work and family matters may practically cause the required absence from a portion of the ritual program, some participants tactically choose various portions of the ritual program to attend and are absent from others. For example, the most crowded moments of a typical ritual program like the Ullambana Dharma Function, are the liturgical modules of first establishing *Daochang* at the first day, which encompasses invoking the registered deceased to attend *fahui*, next conducting the grand feast with the dead, and lastly presenting a memorial to the Triple Gem then disbanding the parties of

the deceased in *Daochang* at end of ritual program. Clearly, this strategical consideration of participating in ritual reflects the popularized imagination on the Buddhist ritual program at HLT, which is a proper way of inviting and feeding ancestors, gods and ghosts. On the other hand, I found many cases in which lay visitors only register the deceased relative in *fahui* so the dead can participate in ritual programs represented by the presence of paper tablets, but they never show up and attend any liturgical module. For these absentees, their role is to provide the entry ticket to their concerned deceased for their participation in HLT ritual activities.

6. Devotee. The performative thinking of the "devotee" in the analysis of the lay visitors at HLT strictly refers to an attitude of whether HLT is a unique *Daochang* deserving of one's full dedication of devotional labor or not when performing the role of either worshiper, volunteer or ritual participant. In other words, the devotees in this research is characterized by devoting one's body, mind and spirit fully to one religious place like HLT and they will not go to the others. Traditionally, religious habitus among Chinese people is polytheism in nature. People not only worship multiple deities, but they also wander in multiple temples to perform the same kind of devotional labor. Most of the time the lay visitors I encountered at HLT, no matter how they are typologized to the five groups discussed above, were not necessarily only visiting HLT to satisfy their material and spiritual needs in daily life. They said they also exercised the same form of religious and non-religious behavior at temples in Southern California that hosted Guanggong, Mazu, the Jade Emperor, or any deity depending on the makeup of their "personal pantheon" in family tradition. They even committed themselves to do the same kind of

volunteer work for different religious organizations and places. These places of worship, however, are often profiled as folk religion by HLT monastics. Some religious places popularized among HLT lay visitors are even described as fulfilling evil beliefs and false practices.

Therefore, the lay visitors that have been typologized as "devotee" at HLT are unique. Strictly speaking, only the lay devotees can claim HLT as their spiritual "home" in Southern California. They may not demonstrate great sophistication in their understanding of Buddhist doctrines, but they express a firm attitude of believing in every instruction HLT provides. An HLT devotee's devotion is expressed by not only his or her regularly joining ritual programs or volunteer work, but also by him or her reluctantly visiting other religious places to display the same devotional behaviors that he or she performs at HLT.

Personal narratives at HLT

As mentioned earlier, these six genres of performative thinking (sightseer, consumer, worshiper, volunteer, ritual participant and devotee) can be switched within an individual's mind to respond to different situations and occasions. At the same time, these six can represent six different phases of transformation within an individual's mind along with one's recurrence of contacting HLT. For example, Yi Ling Cheng, a figure of the lay visitors at HLT I have portrayed in Chapter 1, demonstrates a typical spiritual transformation when she recurrently approaches HLT. Yi Ling first acts like a homesick young student whose sightseer experiences later encourage her performance of volunteer and ritual participant when continuing to appear in HLT. Yi Ling told me one time when

we worked together to move furniture around to clear out the place after the end of Ullambana Dharma Function, that she never thought she could contact her ancestors and other ghost beings in such performative occasions within a ritualized setting.

> "Did you ever hear anything related to the ancestor and ghost when you were in China?" I asked. "Oh! ya!" Ling replied, "I liked to watch TV drama and read fiction when I had leisure time in China. That's a lot of scared scenes involving angry ancestors and vengeful ghosts. They always liked to do negative things to people. That's why I felt reluctant the first time *shifu* [8] advised me to attend the *Emperor Liang fahui* for healing my inexpressible anxiety." "So those unseen beings wouldn't frighten you now?" "Not at all! That's why I feel safe when I have the Buddha [statue at home]!" Ling laughed, "but now I begin to understand their sufferings after reciting the texts written in *fahui* manual. They need our assistance to receive Buddha's guidance and power for releasing from hell. Every time [during *fahui*] when I participate in the daily feast offering rite in front of those paper tablets, I always speak to them in my mind saying 'OK guys! You better listen what you hear and repent what you did in past lives in *fahui* today.' In giving out such advice, I start to feel good about me. Am I too naïve to be a good Buddhist?"

Yi Ling's experience is not alone. The intimate participation within the ritualized circumstance cause many participants to develop insightful knowledge into the mystical cycles of karmic retribution and proper feeling on dealing with mystical phenomenon in their own terms. Yet the affective experience of feeling good or relief is not caused exclusively by intimate participation in ritual. For instance, I met Jonathan Wu [9] in the afternoon when hundreds of lay participants were assembling in the Main Shrine to participate in the Yogacara Ulke-mukha Dharma Service, the last liturgical program of

[8] *Shifu* is a common title in daily language referring to Buddhist monks and nuns in Chinese pronunciation.

[9] Same as Yi Ling Cheng, Jonathan's narrative is also a composite I put together from a number of similar accounts gathered from the interviews conducted for this research. See note 4 in Chapter 1.

the weeklong Ullambana Dharma Function. Jonathan leaned on the rail alone as he stared at one particular spot of tablet walls. Once Jonathan noticed my approach to him, he revealed an uneasy smile to me. After he knew both of us came from the same local town in Taiwan, he began a little relaxed.

> "My mom is over there." I first pointed to the other side of the wall. Jonathan nodded and pointed to the spot he kept staring at, "my mom is here." Jonathan's mother passed away last year and is buried in Taiwan. I asked, "why don't you go inside the Main Shrine to recite sutra for her?" He answered it without any hesitation, "I'm not a Buddhist." Jonathan was a typical 'modernized' Chinese American who worked for an investment bank. His wife was a pious Christian and didn't believe in any kind of Chinese ancestral and spiritual matter. Jonathan never entered HLT until he brought his American customers to sightsee a 'Chinese place' in Los Angeles two months ago. By that visit he knew the ritual event of the *Emperor Liang fahui* in August. "But you register your mom's name in a Buddhist *fahui*." Jonathan seemed to know I was not teasing him. "My mom was a pious Buddhist. She always felt unhappy with my decision to marry a Christian wife. She told me several times on the phone before she passed away 'don't forget your mom in the future!' Sounds of Buddhist chanting uninterruptedly encompassed us and the space in front of tablet walls. Jonathan looked very sad, and stared at that particular spot on tablet walls again, "so I bring her here and wish her happy again on how I remember her."

Yin-liang Pong [10] presents another genre of thinking to make himself feel relief by not bodily participating in ritual performance. On Sunday morning of the last day of the Ullambana Dharma Function, Yin-liang and I worked together with other traffic-control volunteers to stand at HLT's front Gate to block incoming cars and direct them to park on the streets outside the HLT. "We are sorry! Temple's parking lots are full! You have to park outside and walk back!" Certainly, many visitors expressed their annoying

[10] Yin-liang's narrative is also a composite like Yi Ling's and Jonathan's.

attitude on varying oral and bodily languages, and Yin-liang always maintained his smile to firmly direct the traffic. One time I asked Yin-liang if he felt sorry to work as a traffic-control volunteer at the Front Gate and not gain any opportunity to recite scriptural texts inside the Main Shrine for his registered ancestors? Yin-liang responded to my question with careless ease that his mother already memorized those scriptural texts before she passed away. "If she hears what I recite is wrong in front of the Buddha, she would come to my dream that night and force me to repeat the correct one. That would be a big headache!"[11] In contrast to Yin-liang's dedication to volunteer work and Johnthan's absence as a ritual participant, although the causes of their absence depend on distinctive situations in life experience, Yi Ling's immersion within every scene of *fahui* represents another type of affective experience within HLT's ritualized circumstance. One time she felt her passed grandmother came to the Main Shrine and reunited with her when she sensed a soft wind touching her back during her participation in the liturgy module of final grand feast, the similar feeling in her childhood memory of that grandmother touching her back in the temple's kitchen back in China.

Another scene to illustrate the distinctive spiritual transformation and associated affective experience contained within one ritualized moment is when the monastics initiated the last liturgical component of the Ullambana Dharma Function – the series of

[11] Later that day, Yin-liang told me his story. His first time to enter HLT was to escort his mom to attend the *Emperor Liang fahui* in his 30's. His mom had him help traffic-control volunteer work in the front Gate, rather than accompany her to participate in day-long liturgies and "nagged" her for going home early. "My mom knew her son really well!" Yin-liang confessed. Since then, Yin-liang has continuously done the same praxis over 15 years, and still believes this ritualized work of traffic-control volunteer performed in HLT front Gate is the filial way to participate in *fahui* accompanying his mom, even though she passed away five years ago.

departing rites. Starting at Main Shrine, a group of participant representatives processioned to the walls of paper tablets, while the remaining processioned to outside the Main Shrine, reassembled on the stairs and all faced the courtyard. With unremittingly Buddhist chanting, all paper tablets were torn off and delivered to the courtyard by those participant representatives. After the long procession of torn paper tablets began to reach the courtyard, HLT staff put all paper tablets, one by one, in numerous furnaces and burned all to ashes. The monastics then led all participants to take three bows to the rising smoke to end this series of departing rites. At this exact moment, Yi Ling felt so good about her weeklong enduring effort, and escorting those unseen ancestors and ghosts to their "new comfort home." She then began to think about where she can find good food to eat later. In the meantime, Jonathan who stood in the crowd stared at the rising smoke, finally began crying; and Yin-liang still loyally stood at the front Gate to control incoming and outgoing traffic, without turning his head toward the rising smoke behind him.

These personal narratives presenting the affective and cognitive experiences of Yi Ling Cheng, Jonathan Wu and Yin-liang Pong certainly do not fully encompass every scene of lay visitors' transforming attitudes at HLT that I have collected. To further analyze the nature of the psychological state underneath, I summarize the following five thematic descriptions from the personal accounts of those lay visitors who have been typologized as sightseer, consumer, worshiper, volunteer, ritual participant and devotee in this research.

1. Motive. When lay visitors started to approach HLT, most people put their this-worldly concerns above their spiritual salvation from the human world, the soteriological goal that scholars normally perceive as people's primary reason to approach religion. Many HLT visitors sought out the temple because they were faced with some kind of existential concern or problem in their present life. Some of these problems might be related to the symptom of cultural shock when migrating to a new place, America. But most of the existential problems were related to different ordinary concerns about various aspects of one's everyday life, like personal advancement and disappointment, marriage, illness, aging, the death of a family member, and so on. These this-worldly concerns (as opposed to other-worldly concerns) caused them to visit HLT, a Chinese Buddhist temple in Southern California, in order to diagnose their personal concerns about their everyday life and then help remedy them.

2. Non-exclusion. The action of visiting HLT was often one of the most plausible options in people's minds that might relieve their concerns about their daily life. Chinese Americans often tried all kinds of available options simultaneously, including secular ones and religious ones, in order to figure out the "best" solution to their individual concern. In most cases, unemployed people had sought job opportunities in other places and patients had already gone to medical facilities to receive treatment. Students knew they needed to study hard to earn good grades and drivers knew they needed to obey laws to avoid accidents and tickets. In other words, coming to HLT in most visitors' minds was not an exclusive move; they often thought that going there might have positive

effects or grant them "religious luck" to facilitate their efforts to avoid trouble, to gain benefit, or at least to come to no harm.

3. Effectiveness. The most popular reason people continued to visit HLT or even began to stay and actively participate in the temple's activities was because the visit actually worked to some extents, and therefore offered visiting individuals the hope of gaining something more beneficial and positively relevant to their daily lives. Most of the time visiting HLT did not directly solve the individual's problem and give him or her benefit per se, but it definitely changed the way the personal concern developed later on in the individual's life. For instance, besides volunteering in HLT, Yi Ling also began to attend a yoga class near school in order to help calm her uneasiness at home. Then Yi Ling got the idea of setting up a Buddhist altar and chanting Buddha's name in her bedroom from her yoga teacher who claimed herself as a devotee of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Over time this move (creating the altar and chanting Buddha's name) practically relieved Yi Ling's inexplicable uneasiness. Through these occasions Yi Ling recognized what the *shifu* at HLT had told her: proof of Buddhist validity can only be perceived through empirical experience. After relieving her uneasiness, Yi Ling gave the credit to the power of the *shifu*'s instruction because it worked for her, and this deepened her commitment to participating in the Chinese version of Buddhist practices instituted by HLT.

4. Psychological relief. Although the primary motive to visit HLT is oriented to pursue the best solution of various this-worldly concerns, individuals accounts were more likely to emphasize the less tangible "good omen" (*hao zhao tou* 好兆頭) or positive sign, such

as an increased sense of personal well-being and freedom from problems. The most popular word in their language was *qiu xin an* (求心安), closely meaning "pursuing a peace of mind" in English. To some extent, the mental state of *xin an* might parallel the popular term "tranquilization of mind" used in various studies to indicate the efficacy of sitting meditation. But in most accounts at HLT, the mental state of *xin an* was gathered from multiple sources in HLT other than sitting meditation, including having religious objects such as Buddhist prayer beads and talismans, offering lighting candles, attending *fahui*, practicing Buddhist ways of greeting and eating, doing volunteer work, and other kinds of ritualized activities instituted by HLT discussed in Chapter 4.

5. Memory. The experience of making contact with religious or religious-like material in the past often implicitly guided people to approach a religious place in a novel situation. Yi Ling's experience of staying at a Chinese Buddhist monastery with her grandmother is one such example. Other cases also showed that an earlier experience of being in a religious place (either in other Buddhist and Daoist temples or any place of worship in Chinese folk religion or Western churches and mosques,) or of doing religious practice in a traditional sense (such as worshipping ancestors at home, burning paper-money for the dead or sweeping tombs at Ching Ming Day) was always referred to currently by the individual while he or she was at HLT. Especially for the young generation of so-called 'post-80s' in China, which represents the most recent Chinese immigrant population in the past two decades in contrast to the so-called post-1965's "new" immigrants in traditional American religio-sociological studies, the religious-like experience in China was most crucial for their presence at HLT. Such experience included contact with the

scenarios of retribution in popular television dramas and novels, textbooks on Chinese morality in school, popular folk stories and sayings, family tradition, and, interestingly, anti-religious materials. Through these contact experiences people either decided to visit HLT on certain occasions or made sense of what they had previously encountered once inside HLT accordingly. Also, when these people physically moved around the temple, any kind of expected event and what the proper response to such event would be were explicitly or implicitly guided by their past religious and religious-like experiences. Therefore, such past religious and religious-like experiences form an invisible framework of reference to guide their actions in the present.

Good omen – practical indicator of incoming this-worldly benefit

The searching for this-worldly benefits and using ritualized practices linked to spiritual potency, as people's narratives shown, is an intrinsic element within the religious experience of Chinese Americans who come to HLT. Normally, this-worldly benefit gained by believing in certain religious discourses and praxis are understood to involve primarily material or physical benefits such as fortune and success in one's life path, and immaterial benefits such as good health and healing of the sickness. Yet pursuing the "good omen" of this-worldly benefits in the near future, as mentioned earlier, represents what lay visitors are really looking for at HLT. It is likened to a lucky sign for lottery gamblers when they dream a series of numbers shown by the ancestor, or a shining light to the pious prayers when they gaze on the Cross. To a great extent, pursuing a "good omen" of incoming this-worldly benefits is in fact typical of Chinese

religion, including Buddhism, and, if the matter were to be elaborated further, of human religion in general.

Although the nature and detail of a "good omen" depends on individual recognition and imagination, it can be considered to two aspects of mentality among ordinary people. On the one hand, the hope and expectation in mind, such as an increased sense of personal well-being and release from problems in the near future, characterize the psychological state that can be likened to those who purchase insurance. This kind of psychological satisfaction or *xin an* is often related to direct and immediate benefits in everyday life that flow from believing in certain religious discourses or practices and adherence to their tenets. On the other hand, the promise or covenant of higher authorities, more like a ticket of entry, pulls the spiritual state to follow certain ideological discourses or practices that offer such sign of promise. This kind of spiritual conviction is often related to acquiring the assurance of ultimate salvation into the other-worldly realm like the Pure Land or Heaven. However, religious discourses and practices always need to be validated by the recognized proof of 'actually working' to gain benefit, whether it is material, psychological or spiritual. In other words, any this-worldly benefit must be effectively translated into a conceivable good omen as a "practical benefit" so the actors are encouraged to believe in such discourse and practice and then further invest their devotional labor to secure good omens for maximized benefits in life.

However, whenever I asked varying questions to lay visitors at HLT about the practical benefit of worshipping behaviors or participating in ritualized program, the responses have always confused me. For instance, while the response is negative to have

any kind of sign toward the ancestor's relief from their past karmic retribution by participating in HLT's Ullambana Dharma Function in last year, the response is always positive to the following questions like "then why you attend the same *fahui* again this year?" Most of them take the guidance offered by the monastics as their own motives to attend the same *fahui* every year that the main beneficiaries of participating in the ritual program are the participants themselves. For those who can't articulate a clear reason, their repeated actions to register the same deceased this year and continually participate in various liturgical modules demonstrate their response in a performative way to my inquiries. Similar scenarios happen when encountering either sightseers, consumers or volunteers. Their explanations of why they visit HLT again to perform the same behaviors or furthermore religious practices are also diverse in distinctive aspects. The fact is that they are willing to revisit HLT and repeat what they did before. However, two common themes among these diversified personal accounts of lay visitors can be identified, that is, an opportunistic mentality of "there-is-no-harm-to-practice" and a state of mind called *xin an li de*, or a self-affirmed rightfulness caused by the conceivable peace of mind.

1. There-is-no-harm-to-practice mentality. One time HLT Abbot told a story in the sermon of the weekly Dharma Function on Sunday.

> One scholar presented his research about the scientific evidence of the Buddhist imagination of the Pure Land in the West with a speech in a Buddhist temple in China. The audience was silent when the scholar asked for comment and feedback at the end of his speech, until an old lady raised her hand. She asked the scholar, "if I sincerely intonate the name of Amitabha Buddha every day and night in life, and after I die I find there is no such place called Pure Land in afterlife as you said, what could I do at that time?" The scholar politely replied, "I would let

> it go, because you don't lose anything." That lady continually asked, "if I never believe in the matter of intonating Buddha's name in life, then later find out the Pure Land does exist in afterlife and I lose my opportunity to reborn over there as promised by Amitabha Buddha, what might I think at that moment?" The scholar cannot give an answer at first, then slowly said "you might be seized with remorse."

Obviously, the primary message is that the opportunity to be reborn in the Pure Land would be definitely lost if one does not perform the required practice of intonating the name of Amitabha Buddha in life. Although this-worldly practice does not necessitate the assurance of otherworldly reward, the lack of this-worldly practice would assure a permanent loss of the otherworldly reward if it existed. On the other hand, the story also promotes the required practices in life with a no-harm manner even if the promised benefit of practicing might not exist. Although no gain in afterlife, there is also no loss when these practices are practiced in this life. Yet it is obvious that preparedness ensures success, and unpreparedness results in failure. To some extent, this story reveals a practical component of Chinese American religiosity, that is, the opportunity of reaching salvation needs to be earned by sincere work in this life without considering the realness of the salvation itself, because no lived one can really prove the existence of salvation in afterlife.

Strictly speaking, the attitude of "no-harm-to-practice" is originated not by Buddhist sources but from the polytheistic traditions of Chinese vernacular religion. With different temples established for diverse deities in one locality, Chinese people developed a religious habitus in history that worshipping every deity they encounter by any chance would help them avoid plausible trouble, so-called "having-blessed-by-worshipping" (*you bai you bao bi* 有拜有保庇) and "no-worshipping-may-have-tragedy" (*mei bai chu*

dai zhi 沒拜出代誌). One would rather believe in deities and their powers than not believe in them. There is no harm to establishing a good relationship with any deity by worshipping him or her because one never knows when that particular deity would cause tragedy or save him or her from trouble in life. Such opportunistic mentality or "in-case-ism" (Yao and Badham 2007:175). in managing spiritual affairs in daily life reveals a tactical attitude of facing individual fate, the ultimate concern within the mind of typical Chinese individuals especially when they are bodily situated in a foreign circumstance such as America.

Individual fate caused by karmic retribution has deeply rooted in the average Chinese mind over a thousand years, as discussed in Chapter 2. The popular concept of reincarnation supported by Buddhist tradition indicates that good and evil karmas of previous lives are held responsible for one's fate in this life. Therefore, many believe that major changes of personal life simply augment the results of a certain fate, and a certain luck needs to be pursued by accumulating merits for changing or even controlling the course of one's life. To a certain degree, this popular conception of individual fate and luck in the Buddhist context contradicts religious determination, which believes that all individuals have their own fate which is decided at birth and cannot be changed by their own efforts. Cultivated in such a culture, worshippers are enthusiastically involved in the flourishing activities of praying, burning incense, food offering, donating or participating in ritual programs because they believe that these worshipping activities can counterweight the negative effect of a bad fate or increase their good luck. By resonating "no-harm-to-practice," a typical "better-than-do-nothing" mentality was also developed

throughout the history of the vernacular traditions of Chinese religion, and can be clearly identified among the lay visitors I encountered at HLT, especially among the performative thinking of worshiper and ritual participant and volunteer, let alone devotee.

However, it would be a mistake to think that the Chinese religious practitioners are leaving everything to blindly practice the ways inherited from their ancestors. Like professional game players, many lay visitors at HLT say that worshipping and participating in ritual activities is not just a perfunctory business but a dedicated task requiring great knowledge and technical skill honed through countless hours of sincere practice that enable one to detect the good omen of incoming this-worldly benefit as expected. Amy Lee,[12] a veteran worshiper and ritual participant who regularly claimed to see good omens of incoming this-worldly benefits during a ritualized circumstance at HLT, explained how to read the mysterious moment and grab them to her advantage. It may be that the spiritual potency is the only real determinant in ritual program such as the Ullambana Dharma Function, but Amy, even as she hopes to get blessing, did not depend solely on mercy from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: she added her own skill and technique to take the ritual out of the hands of religious luck and bring it under her control. Beside routinely registering her ancestor in the Ullambana Dharma Function every year for receiving their thankful blessing, Amy regularly studied varying sutras and listened to different sermons filled with tips and advice on how to improve one's chanting skill and reinforce one's confidence on ritual program's spiritual potency. Through

[12] This is a pseudonym for a female worshiper and volunteer I met at HLT, who is often made fun of and called superstitious by her close friends in the temple.

reciting the ritual manual, Amy often discovered the strategies of solving her own problems in daily life and the omens of measuring the rightfulness of those strategical actions by herself. Sometimes I have a feeling that Amy's account of being a devotional follower at HLT looks like an NBA player talking about his professional basketball career.

To be sure, focusing on pursuing good omens and good luck, based on the traditional mentalities of "no-harm-to-practice" and "better-than-do-nothing," is thought of as an incorrect attitude of engaging in Buddhist teaching of the law of cause and effect and the ultimate salvation of *nirvana* and enlightenment by monastic community. The excessive desire of pursuing this-worldly benefits is always deemed as the root of suffering from the doctrinal standpoint of modern Buddhism. The attachment of this-worldly pleasure is also the obstacle in the path of liberation. Yet the nature of Buddhist ritual programs and ritualized activities instituted by HLT is demonstrative of a world-affirming viewpoint in Chinese Buddhism or Mahayana Buddhism at large. Either releasing suffering of the ancestor and hungry ghosts or repenting one's accumulated bad karma in this life and past lives, the popular motives of participating in HLT ritual, are clearly oriented to the consideration of the selfish pursuit of this-worldly benefits. In addition, various popular sutras in Mahayana tradition also promote different this-worldly benefits by reciting the sutra or intonating names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.[13] Yet the

[13] For instance, there are twenty-eight benefits in life by reciting the sutra stated at the end of *The Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra* (地藏菩薩本願經), and a detailed description of the benefits in life by intonating the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva stated in Chapter of The Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Universal Gate in *The Lotus Sutra* (妙法蓮華經觀世音菩薩普門品)

discomfort with the tendency of "materialism" among lay visitors persists among monastic community at HLT - especially when spiritual means of ritualized activities, which should be free of the selfish pursuit of pleasure, are used to acquire this-worldly comfort that pleases the self.

Consequently, I found a variety of instructions provided by HLT monastics within distinctive moments of public gathering to "upgrade" or guide the mentality of lay visitors toward the rightful direction of engaging in Buddhist ritual and ritual-like activities at HLT. These moral injunctions generally encompass four themes of guidance. The first is a doctrinal one that indicates the mundane benefits stated in scriptural texts as the secondary meanings of the Buddha's teaching to common people. It is an expedient means that assists people to transcend the mundane attachments to the primary or true meaning of enlightenment and liberation. The second is a practical direction. The lay visitors are reminded that the stories and teachings scripted in the ritual manual signify an ethical guidance and moral obligation to be attentive for the sake of oneself and others.

The third theme promotes the attitude of gratitude. All benefits collected from worshipping and participating in ritualized activities are received from the cooperation of one's family members and invisible beings of enmity and animosity by whom one is able to attend temple's activities without hindrance. Thus, one has an obligation oneself to give back something in return to thank family and community. This obligation is often discharged, as monastics instructed, in terms of social welfare and volunteer work. The last theme is to dedicate individual merits collected from involvement in the temple's activities to pray for all and seek well-being for all humanity. Despite that the universal

dedication of accumulated merits has been configured to the ritual manual and liturgical procedures of every ritual program, this theme of instruction is repeatedly elaborated with various contemporary examples in the final sermon of ritualized gatherings at HLT.

2. *Xin an li de* mentality. Compared to the opportunistic mentality of "no-harm-to-practice" and "better-than-do-nothing" that focus on changing individual fate in life, *xin an* (心安), or peace of mind, is a key word I found from the personal accounts of those lay visitors who describe their sense of the "good omen" obtained while situated themselves in HLT; even Amy Lee adopts *xin an* to express her manner at HLT. The psychological state of *xin an* still focuses on individual fate, but is not built upon the aggressive thinking of future gain such as affective "securing" and cognitive "forecasting." It is a psychological relief of achievement when one rightfully performs his duties to other parties in life no matter what the result is success or failure. *Xin an* is likened to the state of "feeling peace" when an athlete participates in a running game and tell himself "I have done my best!" when reaching the ending line. Sometimes it is a magnanimous strategy of "let-it-go-at-that" to deal with the result of the competition, which can effectively reduce one's psychological pressure at the beginning and focus on the process rather than the unknown outcome.

Xin an in some ways indicates a kind of "pursuing-nothing" (*wu sho qiu* 無所求) attitude that has been admired by the scriptural sources of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism. However, while the word *xin an* used by the lay visitors who express their account of worshipping and participating in a variety of ritualized activities at HLT, it is not necessary to indicate *xin an* itself in the goal of performance, meaning doing one's best

for pursuing nothing. In my opinion, the mentality of *xin an* at HLT needs to be considered with the word *li de* (理得) or justification. Together *xin an li de* refers to a psychological state that indicates a peace of mind is achieved by the internal self-justification of what one has done. It is constructed upon a cognitive and affective resonance of perceiving one's own action performed in a situation, and believing the action is correct. Consequently, the ideal result should be naturally realized. Therefore, the psychological state of *xin an li de* is embedded with an expectation of the future benefits in life. Such confidence of incoming benefit facilitates peace of mind, which many HLT lay visitors refer to as a "good omen."

Xin an li de is a popular idiom used by Chinese common people to refer to the reward or luck naturally earned by doing right in everyday life. The expanded stories about *xin an li de* are varied among Chinese vernacular culture in history. The most popular one is *pin shi bu zuo kui xin shi, ye ban bu pa gui qiao men* (平時不做虧心事，夜半不怕鬼敲門), or "he who never does evil thing in daily life won't fear the knock by the ghost at night." The original sense of the luck caused by the right effort in daily life is understood as not a matter of chance, neither a result of calculated deliberation through religious ritual. In other words, it is a "moral" luck, parallel to the Buddhist concept of retribution that doing good thing causes good reward in daily life. The luck is justified by a moral cause. However, the idea of moral luck has been transformed by many HLT lay visitors to express their self-affirmed benefit caused by the "right" action of participating in various ritual programs or performing volunteer work.

Jason Chao [14] represents a typical case of coming to HLT for pursuing *xin an*. Three years ago, he was laid off because of the accident he caused in factory work. Since the day of the accident, he frequently had nightmares with different persons he never met before in life. He visited HLT with his wife to worship the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as his remembrance of what his grandmother did in Taiwan when unpleasant things happened in the family. At first, he could not find the *chiam* for asking divination service in Bodhisattva Hall. Later, he followed the instruction of drawing the Dharma Words and consulted with the monastics about his problem with the drawn Dharma Words. According to monastic suggestion, Jason registered several tablets in the Filial Piety Memorial Dharma Service *fahui* around the day of Ching Ming, including his ancestor and malicious debtors in past lives. He felt uneasy at first when he was seated with hundreds of people in the Main Shrine to recite the ritual manual of traditional Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance Service together and frequently bow as required by the ritual manual. He told me it was not the case in Taiwan when he accompanied his grandmother to worship the deities. They only needed to make incense and food offerings and money donation in Taiwan. For the first time to participate in HLT *fahui*, Jason compelled himself to follow the behaviors of his peers as close as possible because he did not want to lose face with his wife, who was seated next to him. "That was a horrible experience honestly," he told me. Jason could not catch the speed of public reciting so he decided to read the manual by himself instead. "I never thought I

[14] This is a pseudonym for a male worshiper I met at the first day of lunar July at HLT, the day of opening the Hell in the Ghost Month tradition in Chinese religion.

probably did so many terrible things in past lives. If I really did those evil things, I should repent of my folly without any excuse!" At the end of day-long *fahui*, he felt release and even proud of his endurance when all tablets were burn to the air. "I was not used to be such a 'soft-minded' person that easily followed the rules and procedures prescribed by others." Therefore, he said he was *xin an li de* at that moment. He was so tired on that day that he slept very well at night. When he woke up after the third day of good sleep after the *fahui*, he dawdled on the bed and felt peace with the sunshine covering him. He finally believed in what his grandmother did before to visit the temple when family members had problems or the anxiety about incoming events like taking exams and job interviews. Since then, Jason regularly visited HLT and participated in several *fahuis* if he had time. A couple months later, he got his current job.

The good omen of incoming this-worldly benefits in the psychological state *xin an* have been widely regarded as an integral feature of Buddhist monasteries in Chinese religo-cultural context, and a crucial factor in the appeal of Buddhist temples to a diverse audience both in their spatial characteristics and in their ritualized activities. Buddhist temples have long been as active as other Chinese religious traditions in promoting this-worldly benefits that can be obtained through venerating their images of worship and through ritualized activities and the purchase of talismans and amulets. The Upper Tianzhu Temple in China, for example, is drawing waves of pilgrims to visit Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, and perform devotional gestures in the Buddha Hall. Healing or becoming healthy has salvific value in pilgrims' minds, but it is to be "worked out" tangibly in this realm, not simply in a general state of grace or in an unknown

afterlife (Walsh 2007). Through the work of bowing to Guanyin, stringing the incense smoke over the head and shoulder, rubbing aching knees and any body part in pain against the red pillars inside the temple, the *xin an* of becoming healthy is achieved in the mind of the pilgrims in the Upper Tianzhu Temple.

Buddhist places as the space of becoming well-being are not only legitimated and affirmed by scriptural sources, but also repeatedly emphasized as a vital religious value essentially, not just as an expedient device or a compromise with folk or popular praxis. Stated in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha gave Ananda instruction on how to properly manage the remains of the Tathâgata by burning the body and erecting stupa at the four cross roads. Then the Buddha further gave instruction that "whosoever shall there [the stupa] place garlands or perfumes or paint, or make salutation there, or become in its presence calm in heart – that should long be to them for a profit and a joy."[15] Such psychological state obtained by ritual performance was critical in pursuing other-worldly benefits, as the Buddha indicated, that "the hearts of many shall be made calm and happy; and since they there had calmed and satisfied their heats they will be reborn after death, when the body has dissolved, in the happy realms of heaven."[16] In other words, a calm and happy heart is caused by ritualized offering to the stupa, the image of Tathâgata. A calm and happy heart then naturally causes one to be reborn in the realms of heaven. Through the ritualized behaviors of flower offering and worshipping the Buddhist place

[15] Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 1910. *Dialogues of the Buddha – Translated from the Pali of the Dīgha Nikāya, Part II.* London, UK: Oxford University Press. p.156.

[16] Ibid.

(i.e. stupa), the incoming benefits in this world and afterlife could be closely related by a good omen of attending *xin an*.

To some extent, HLT monastics felt comfortable with the lay visitors' mentality of *xin an le de* embedded in all of their devotional labor on worshipping, volunteering and participating in ritual programs at HLT. Although still expecting this-worldly benefits, *xin an le de* more emphasizes the right cause of making good luck. Through such a psychological state among lay visitors, consequently, all designed components of HLT space, object and ritualized program would be appreciated because these spatial and ritual configurations facilitate lay visitors conducting the right effort in life to bring in moral luck without inclining toward the material benefits, which are often pursued by folk beliefs. In the meantime, the development of *xin an le de* among HLT lay visitors largely corresponds to the FGS vision of Humanistic Buddhism, that is, Buddhist teachings and activities for the benefit of all sentient beings including both the living and the dead.

Conclusion

The religious décor of space and ritual program in HLT play on the confluence of individual perspectives of fate, luck and effort within the Chinese American community in Southern California. Many lay visitors admit that the religious flavor of the appeal in a dignified scale of Chinese traditional monasterial complex allows HLT to make a claim that is more believable than it would be left in the store-front places of worship and small

temples dotted throughout the Los Angeles area.[17] Most lay visitors also believe in the spiritual potency of HLT ritual programs for several reasons. One popular reason is that the large numbers of the tablets of the deceased and ritual participants always give them confidence of participating in a "right" event in a "right" place. The effect of "following-the-crowd" among common people plays a significant role in giving credibility to HLT. It actively transforms the psychological state of lay visitors who are willing to invest their devotional labor to HLT ritualized activities, and further expand their Buddhist experience from sightseer or consumer or worshiper to ritual participant or volunteer or devotee.

Another ordinary character of HLT ritual programs also plays an unexpected result. According to those who just immigrated to the United States in the past two decades, which is a fast-growing segment of HLT's lay visitor population, that each participant has his or her own ritual manual to recite is an attractive point to participate in the HLT ritual program. In China, the ritual manual is monopolized by the monastic community in ritual activity and lay persons are only the audience to watch the performance of ritual activity. At HLT visitors feel they are really participating in the ritual program by reciting and learning from their own ritual manual. This feature has changed their impression of the ritual activity tradition in Chinese Buddhism. Through sharing personal experience with other ritual participants and volunteers, the stories and

[17] This type of comment on the spatial uniqueness of HLT in the Los Angeles area is prevalent among recent Chinese immigrants over the past 20 years. While the revival of Buddhist learning has risen since the 1980s, the deteriorated structure of Chinese monasteries managed by ignorant clergies discouraged Chinese people from approaching Buddhist temple and they found alternative sources to learn Buddhism, such as *qigong* cults.

instruction of the ritual manual becomes a source of Chinese wisdom and morality to guide them living in America.[18] For some, HLT is a right place to become Chinese Buddhists in America.

Moreover, almost all modern Chinese Americans acknowledge their fate in America depends on their own efforts, but the religious language of HLT ritual programs and ritualized activities suggests to lay visitors that they think of visiting HLT and participating in Buddhist activities as a devotional labor to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. A ritual program like the Ullambana Dharma Function at HLT is no longer just a ceremony of blessing to randomly dispense blind god fortune to worshipers; rather, the Three Buddhas in the Main Shrine can tip the scales of opportunity in one's favor and thereby offer certain good omens of future benefits in life. Magical thinking, or responding to the memories of the existence of karmic retribution told by popular stories and intimate experience of passed relatives, is an important part of approaching religion because it persuades Chinese American people that in their personal adventure of changing fate in life, there are right efforts that can be made to override accidents or bad luck and bring in moral luck. Ritual programs at HLT are not just a matter of luck; they involve "right" rewards earned for "right" effort expended through knowledgeable skill and religious fervor.

[18] Many recent Chinese immigrants shared their personal reflection on participating in HLT's various ritualized activities with me. They often said what they imagined Buddhism in China to be has been changed through their visits to HLT. Although a kind of revival movement in Chinese Buddhism has been noted after the 1980's, the Buddhist teachings offered by those new and spectacular temples did not fulfill the spiritual demands of recent generations of Chinese people. Many learned so-called Buddhist teachings from masters of *qigong* or popular novels and TV dramas.

Religious luck, then, is understood by many HLT lay visitors to require right effort before the desired benefits can be realized. If personal effort were not required in the game of fate and rewards were solely a matter of luck, people would be helpless victims living in a kind of existential lottery drawing machine bouncing the numbers entirely by chance. They would not feel the urge to perform worshipping activities or take any of the actions programmed to achieve the pursuit of good fortune and the prevention of bad luck. Such actions are performed not because people feel helplessly at the impersonal chance and mercy of fate. They are performed, rather, because people feel that individual fate can be modified, that religious luck can be made to work for them, and that the relationship of fate and luck can be explained in a moral context that is conceivable to human beings.

Therefore, the performative thinking of worshiper and ritual participant at HLT, to some extent also including the consumer behaviors of purchasing good luck charm and amulets at the Book Store for personal use, is not about luck at all, since it involves two kinds of causes that work hand in hand: human effort and divine help. Whenever the actions and objects are understood as matters that "bring" in good luck, either to oneself or to deceased relatives, a confidence is being expressed in the ability of those performances and objects to act in some fashion as a causal agent. Underlying this confidence is a popular understanding of the Buddhist doctrines of causality and karmic retribution. That is, the causes of incidents in life are found not merely on the material level but have psychological and spiritual causes as well; the remedies, consequently, need to focus on these three levels of causes. The this-worldly concern of, for example,

why one becomes ill is not only answered solely in terms of physical causes of germs and unhealthy behaviors, but also requires an explanation of why those psychological and spiritual causes of the illness have inflicted a particular person. Interpretation of misfortune and fate, which is the primary theme both in daily consultation work by drawing the Dharma Words in Bodhisattva Hall and in all kind of ritual programs and ritualized activities at HLT, always hinges on moral and ethical issues relating to the afflicted person (and sometimes his or family group). Therefore, the remedies of healing and of reinstating good fortune usually offered by the HLT monastic community and its ritualized activity programs require moral actions in daily life and, by considering the incantation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, ritual actions that deal with the psychological and spiritual causation.

The reaction of lay visitors to moral actions outside the temple walls is ambiguous. Despite the instruction that moral virtues and ritual merits are both important, many lay visitors still believe that merits generated from worshiping the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and participating in ritual program and conducting volunteer work at HLT, can accomplish what cannot be achieved by the moral virtues obtained from doing good deeds in daily life. In other words, the ritualized performance inside HLT will generate more good omens of securing this-worldly benefit than merely being a good person outside the temple wall. This type of religiosity has been revealed by the mentalities of no-harm-to-practice and *xin an li de* analyzed in this chapter. It is significant to note that the positive sign of spiritual transformation of Chinese American community from the practical orientation of Chinese popular religion (i.e. sightseeing, consuming,

worshipping) to the spiritual orientation of modern Chinese Buddhism configured by FGS and HLT in its volunteer and ritualized programs. Yet, to some extent, the patterns of Chinese American religiosity and associated manners and behaviors analyzed in this research at HLT is still permeated by the traditional religio-cultural ingredients in China.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In recent ceremonies of taking refuge to Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) for initiating novice Buddhists instituted worldwide by FGS, including the ceremony held in HLT in Southern California, Monk Hsing Yun or his monastic disciple the HLT abbot always leads the participants in shouting "I am Buddha!" (我是佛) several times at the end of the ceremony. Such ritualized action of shouting can be understood in two aspects. As FGS founder, Monk Hsin Yun has been striving throughout his life to revive Chinese Buddhism to a new formation of "Humanistic Buddhism" in the contemporary world. By leading followers to publicly identify themselves as Buddha by shouting out, he tries to convince people that the goal of becoming a Buddhist is to become enlightened and compassionate in present life, just like the historical Buddha did over 2,600 years ago. He also tries to point out that becoming a Buddhist is to become a refuge for others in the present life, just like numerous Buddhas and their affiliated Bodhisattvas have been working in this life and all past and future lives, rather than a mere ticket of salvation for entering the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha in afterlife, as the traditional sense of a safe haven in non-human realms, to pursue the protection by powerful supernatural beings. Becoming a FGS and HLT follower, therefore, is a heroic move in life to join all enlightened beings together to make our living human world become a Pure Land itself with a traditional tune of Mahayana Buddhism. When Buddhists clearly and firmly identify themselves as Buddha, their nature and capacity of mind have become the same as the Buddha; they don't need to wait for the future

moment they pass away to reach salvation because they are situating themselves in the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism in the present.

This research suggests that HLT offers a "greenhouse" environment for raising followers of Humanistic Buddhism among the Chinese American community in Southern California. In the process of making people believe in Humanistic Buddhism, FGS and HLT fabricate their own world of credibility in order to bring back some of those Chinese American religiosities that have retreated and disappeared in modern society. Where is the material to be utilized which can inject credibility into their belief-making mechanism deployed on HLT grounds? This research argues that there is a broad and deep reservoir of Chinese religio-cultural matters as the source to facilitate the construction of HLT with the blueprint of the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism in the present. Such Chinese religio-religious matters have been fostered by the cosmologies and praxes of Chinese Buddhism over thousands of years, and long preserved and diffused in every aspect of Chinese vernacular lives. And, the same matters constitute the indivisible "Chinese" component of today's Chinese American community recognized in Southern California.

For settling in a new life in America, Chinese immigrants to the United States (particularly the first generation) between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth-first centuries draw various religious concerns and questions to the forefront, and cause Chinese immigrants and their Chinese American offspring to change as emphasized in much of the literature on immigration, ethnicity, and American religions. By bodily situating themselves in HLT, Chinese American visitors become religious in the traditional sense of Chinese religion. The evidence from studying traditional Chinese

ingredients of the HLT spatial organization and ritualized activity programs and the psychological state of lay visitors at HLT in this research suggests that the Chinese spiritual elements of their inherited religious traditions in symbolic forms and meanings are explicitly displayed to, rather than purposefully withheld from, the general public in reinventing people's religiousness in American society. Studying these religious experiences and mentalities provides an insightful opportunity for understanding how Chinese Americans in the twentieth-first century are developing identities and moral guidance in their daily lives in the United States.

To conclude, I review the argument and findings I have set forth in this research - that FGS Humanistic Buddhism develops a "ritualized mechanism" to help transform Chinese Americans into religious individuals within Chinese religio-cultural framework – and situate my argument in the literature on the religious experience of Chinese and other Asian American communities in contemporary American religious and cultural studies. In the end, I discuss the inward religiosity and outward expression of "Buddhist modernity" among the monastics and Chinese American visitors in HLT within the ongoing dialogue of "multiple modernities" and "Buddhist modernities" in American Buddhist studies represented by David L. McMahan and Scott A. Mitchell. I suggest that the trans-temporal and trans-spatial sense of "modernity" in Humanistic Buddhism provides an alternative perspective in contemporary scholarship of American religious studies to investigate how traditional religious values and practices continue their modern vitality in the twentieth-first century.

Ritualized mechanism – theme place for making followers of Humanistic Buddhism

This research argues that the individual frameworks of lay visitors to look at the surroundings at HLT are inflected by being bodily situated in HLT's space and ritualized activity program, through which they are able to grasp Buddhist teachings and ancestor experience from a variety of ritualized performances as either sightseer, consumer, worshiper or volunteer, ritual participant and devotee. Concurrently, their stories of becoming psychological *xin an li de* of believing in incoming this-worldly benefit inflect the spatial sense of HLT and its ritualized program among people who look for a sacred place in Southern California. Along this line of argument, this research concludes that people (including unseen beings), religio-cultural objects and the activity program at HLT have been strategically organized using an architectural and spatial design that articulates a "ritualized mechanism" for the Chinese American community in Southern California. Chinese American visitors pass through the HLT ritualized mechanism and its logically necessary entailments of performance to evoke and refine their inherited frameworks of action and response in Chinese traditional religo-culture for dealing with emerging problems and concerns that constitute the broad framework of managing their American daily life. The fabrication of ritualized mechanism, thus, provides the means of making followers of Humanistic Buddhism and at the same time facilitating people to practice their this-worldly oriented "religion" in America.

Social gatherings - which include a succession of bodily encounters with people, religious objects and unseen forces by touring HLT or participating in a ritual activity like the Ullambana Dharma Function and all kind of ritualized occasions - is a collective

form of ritualized action that is continuously shifting entities and provides a social space for participants to skillfully move around in order to score points for a good life and guarantee their ultimate salvation. Therefore, bodily movement in a ritualized setting is not merely a meaningless habitual motion as Frits Staal argued (1979), rather, it is a strategic way of acting collectively to put human thought into action in regard to the changing situations in life. With bodily motion, actors in HLT not only grasp the established themes underneath these distinctive features, but they also endow their own meaning to these features in the ritualized environment, which might be ingeniously grasped from other personal frames developed in their distinct life experience.

Ritualized mechanism and its involved bodily movements operate not within human thought, but in space. Although "space" in human experience is somewhat abstract, as Yi-Fu Tuan specified (1977), the locational qualities of space become a "place" where people can endow meaning. While people think of space as that which is open to allow bodily movements, Tuan indicates that each pause in movement, then, allows the location to be transformed into place. For this research, even though invisible entities (such as the gods, ghosts, and ancestors) are theoretically able to move freely around in a ritualized space in HLT, "place" is the pause of bodily movement to mark or signify the existence of those matters in human perception. The actuality of paper tablets for registering the names of the ancestors and ghosts in the ritual activity program at HLT illustrates Tuan's idea of a themed place as pause or anchored point in the movement of invisible beings in HLT. The Memory Pagoda at the highest point of the HLT compound

also indicates the real coexistence of Buddhist deities and family ancestors within the mind map of Chinese American visitors.

HLT, then, offers lay visitors a kind of spatial reality within the Chinese American community that can be likened to a theme park such as Disneyland in American life. As Margaret King and J. G. O'Boyle (2011) argued, the theme park like Disneyland presents an enclosed "hyperreality" – "a tightly edited, stylized, and focused version of reality, shaped to advance a specific narrative" (King and O'Boyle 2011:12). The construction of hyperreality is not merely a task of physical creation in three dimensions as planning a building and park; it largely depends on the fourth dimension of time in relation to a demarcated space. The nature of hyperreality is a psychological hybridity in the human mind that every programmed feature in a theme park environment "evokes images of other times, people, and places." To a great degree, the psychic echo of human memory plays a critical role in making the realness of hyperreality when one visits a themed place. Many HLT visitors told me, "I've been to [one monasterial complex in China], and it look just like this [HLT in America]." Such affective experience of actually "being there" causes HLT visitors to totally immerse in another time and place, which might not be explained by the similar concept of "simulacrum" elaborated by Jean Baudrillard in his *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). The hyperreality in Baudrillard's vision is generated by "models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1994:1). Thus, the map that precedes the hyperreality, "precession of simulacra," to engender imagined territory is a fable exclusively invented by the human imagination. Yet, the theme park experience of HLT visitors is grounded by individual

memory, despite being imperfect to some extent, and is colored by real time and emotion about real people and places in life.

Memory is not only framed by images of place and people, but it also contains associated events and modes of behavior. Together these ingredients weave individual narratives in life that are evoked by bodily situating oneself in HLT. Well-religious visitors may remember the habitus of worshipping in Chinese temples from personal experience. Most of the lay visitors, however, often bring scrappy memories from popular sources, such as exotic images of Buddhist behavior from television, movies, books and advertising. In either case, these thematic narratives in memory then cue visitors to perform the module of behavior within the present HLT environment when a feature like a statue and incense burner turns out to be the point of focus. At that moment the present narrative starts to be advanced by filling the rudimentary parts of the scenario involving focused features with cognitive learning and unconscious memory in the details. When one visitor gazes at the incense burner in front of the three giant Buddha images in the Main Shrine and the incense on the side of burner, he habitually takes the incense as his grandmother did in memory in order to pay respect to the Buddha for starting prayer. After the instruction of how to correctly make an incense offering according to Buddhist etiquette by HLT monastics, he feels *xin an* or psychological satisfaction as the grandmother felt in memory, and focuses on the purpose of the prayer he visits HLT for today. After the prayer he makes three bows sincerely then inserts the burning incense to the burner, just as his grandmother did in memory. Also, when one ritual participant recites the suffering stories of Empress Chi (beloved wife of Emperor

Wu of Liang) and Ching-ti (mother of Mu-lien), he naturally reflects the scenario of the stories on his own past and current affliction of fatal retribution. At that moment, the Buddhist remedies of repentance and merit-generation scripted in the ritual manual begin to cue the potential solution in solving such affliction in HLT visitors' present lives.

Therefore, ritualized mechanism at HLT involves storyboards of past and present narratives to facilitate participants to recognize and endow meaning in relation to their own situation in life. HLT as a Buddhist and Chinese themed place provides a variety of symbolic objects and activities with different myths and stories to be the focal point of physical sensations that is appropriate to fill with individual memory. There are many features to enable visitors to encounter and give attention to: architecture, statues, objects, sound, smell, ritual performance and the simple fulfillment of pedestrian movement like gardens and light techniques within and among the artfully themed places. Individual pilgrims tour the temple ground based on their own mind maps of pantheons and associated worshipping behaviors. Yet most lay visitors participate in ritual programs that are designed to position the participant's point of view moving people past a series of programmed vignettes to advance personal narrative in present time. To a great extent, the liturgical modules of ritual program act as "executive summaries" to narrate the principle themes of overall Chinese Buddhism such as karmic retribution and universal dedication of merit. By bodily participating in a ritual program with hundreds of peers surrounding, ritual participants are offered the opportunity to expand their personal experience with emotional sensations appropriate to the narrative scripted in the ritual manual: the sufferings caused by wrong deeds in past lives, the remedies proved by the

positive results of relieving from hell, and the benefits of dedicating merit certified by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The thematic language of ritualized actions recited in a ritual moment subconsciously but instantly cues ritual participants to their own situation in space and time in American life. Individual memories of karmic retribution inherited from Chinese religo-cultural framework, then, are reinforced to advance personal narrative in American life by matching and blending the sensory input with a behavior mode appropriate for the present situation.

The function of a ritualized gathering designed by HLT ritualized mechanism onto the psychological change of its participants cannot be underestimated, especially in the aspect of the spiritual transformation during the moment of individual ritualized performance. In his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Émile Durkheim develops an idea of "collective effervescence" to elaborate the psychological state that occurs among people in contact with other people during a ritual moment. W.S.F. Pickering further develops a concept of "effervescent assembly" that brings out the character of the concrete structure of ritual event associated with collective effervescence (Pickering 2009:380-417). Pickering points out that a purposeful gathering with a ritualized structure of meanings and procedures stirs two collective levels of feeling or effervescence due to individual intensive contact with the ritual itself and an assembly of other participants. On the one hand, the gathering creates the delirium of becoming a new being and realizing that his fellow participants are also in this state of exaltation and interior transformation. On the other hand, through intimate bodily contact with similar emotional fellow participants, individuals feel a bond of community and reunion, and as a result the

assembly members feel morally strengthened at the end of ritual. The personal accounts of HLT ritual participants support this functional concept of effervescent assembly that interior change of how to perceive their own problems in everyday life has been achieved by recognizing the cognitive and affective experience of fellow participants. When one knows other individuals gain benefits from the same kind of devotional labor involved in the same ritualized event, one becomes confident in what his own feelings of the *xin an le de* that have been raising during the ritual moment.

Overall, the organization of spatial and ritualized features at HLT are far more than mere a place of worship for serving local Chinese immigrant communities or a Chinese American cultural museum for entertaining the general American public. Rather, HLT is a missionary attempt of Taiwan-based FGS to construct a totally alternate universe of Humanistic Buddhism, an enclosed "Pure Land" physically separate and therefore psychologically autonomous in regard to the surrounding world of American religio-culture. This research concludes that FGS and Monk Hsing Yun reincarnated HLT as a "greenhouse" field, a ritualized mechanism geared to increase the followers of Humanistic Buddhism. The predominant themes of Chinese traditional architecture and narratives in ritualized articulation function as a prompting device that evokes the collective and individual memories of Chinese American visitors and cues them to learn what Humanistic Buddhism focuses on: benefiting the deceased and living at the same time, and extending the traditional Buddhist teaching and practices to the lives of ordinary people and the public arena. In other words, by establishing a ritualized mechanism at HLT, FGS has in fact revitalized traditional Chinese Buddhism in a

formation of Humanistic Buddhism in Southern California. Chinese Americans, thus, are enabled to participate in a sacred space and time through visiting HLT so that they can practice and experience their this-worldly "religion" and live with the sacred.[1]

Making Chinese Americans believe in Humanistic Buddhism

Monk Hsing Yun and other Buddhist leaders in China in the second half of the twentieth century all encountered a matter of crisis where the survival and continuity of Chinese traditions of Buddhism has been threatened for hundreds of years. After the late nineteenth century, the past doctrines and philosophies held by monastery-based Buddhism in China no longer organized the religious practices among common people. The Buddhist monastic community and its temples lost credibility among modernized civilians. Rituals for the dead in Chinese Buddhism became an inevitable target used by nationalist governments and Westernized intellectuals to disorganize the traditional forms of monasteries and discredit traditional practices in the name of Chinese Buddhism. "Superstition" was an embarrassing label given to institutional and ritualized practices that caused common people, and even many young Buddhist monastics themselves, to no

[1] The effectiveness of practicing HLT guidance of Buddhist morality among Chinese American visitors when they leave HLT and go back to ordinary American life, however, is beyond the scope of this research. Based on my long-term experience of meeting with HLT lay followers, I could not be sure about this effectiveness on Chinese American community as expected by Monk Hsing Yun and his FGS, especially the effect on those who hold the performative thinking and have been classified as sightseer, consumer and worshiper at HLT. Many volunteers and ritual participants perceive HLT as a field of generating merit, which is the traditional mentality of Chinese religious people. Yet HLT has a high return visitation rate sensed by my field data. Most of my interviewees, either in formal settings or informal chatting in field, were frequent visitors. Almost all first-time visitors reported they would come visit HLT again for various purposes. This high return visitation may be an indication that lay visitors feel benefit to some extent in their daily lives and thus are willing to revisit HLT.

longer invest and commit themselves to believing Buddhist teachings and practices held for over 2,000 years in Chinese history.

To face these fatal challenges, Buddhist leaders in the twentieth century looked for the "relics" of former conviction among Chinese people that used to believe in what Buddhist monasteries taught and practiced in the past, then refined these essential elements of Chinese Buddhism into modernized forms and contents. These revival projects initiated by Buddhist reformers were aimed to make modern people believe in Chinese Buddhism again. The approaches were varied. Many took either the philosophical approach to rearticulate Buddhist scriptural texts or the psychotherapeutic approach to reformulate the Buddhist practice of meditation. Both proposed to refine traditional Chinese Buddhism out of the mystical status within the traditional culture mass into a rational and empirical form to meet the spiritual demands of modern society.

However, Monk Hsing Yun and a few other monastic leaders detected a problematic backfire in these projects. They argued that the people who adopted these "relics" of Chinese Buddhism to philosophical and psychotherapeutic forms did not believe these "relics" in religious terms. The development trend of philosophized Buddhist texts and popularized meditation programs would make Buddhist monasteries a museum of Buddhist doctrines without believers. They argued that Chinese common people, in fact, used to believe in Buddhist matter from one myth to another, from one ideology (such as karmic retribution and afterlife) to another, and from one ritual to another; not from statement to statement or from words to words. Therefore, Monk Hsing Yun took another approach to launch the project of reviving Chinese Buddhism. First, in

the 1960s he re-established the FGS monastery headquarters in a modern form of religious place with Chinese traditional architecture elements in Taiwan. Starting there, over the next five decades he constructed over two hundred temples worldwide. HLT in Southern California was constructed in the 1980s as a replica of the FGS monastery headquarters outside Taiwan and as its global missionary headquarters since then. Next, Monk Hsing Yun reconfigured the traditional ritual activity program not only for the sake of the deceased and ghosts, but also for meeting the this-worldly concerns of living human beings. Such reinvention of Chinese Buddhist ritual tradition is crucial for the Chinese American community when implementing the ritual program in HLT. The surreal scene created by such a reinvented ritual program always produces a sacred atmosphere that embraces every participant present in the *Daochang*, or ritual place, and psychologically transform them into religious people in Chinese traditional religio-cultural fashion.

This research concludes that FGS injects credibility into HLT to make the Chinese American community in Southern California believe in Chinese Buddhism that has been revitalized in a modernized formation. The source of credibility is embedded in the spatial and ritualized features at HLT that lay visitors can see, hear, smell, touch, walk, involve and perform by themselves. The physical sensation by visibility and tangibility ensures people consider the karmic retribution and Buddhist remedies to be real. In other words, Monk Hsing Yun and FGS fabricate a hyperreality of credibility in the Chinese traditional characters of HLT space and activity program in order to procure

Chinese American visitors to invest their spiritual energy and devotional labor in Humanistic Buddhism, and become followers of FGS and HLT in Southern California.

Switching to the lay visitors, the realness of Chinese American religiosity demonstrated in HLT reveals a similar disconnect between doctrinal understanding and the popular attitude of varying religious practices among Chinese vernacular culture. Through ritualized action of touring the temple's grounds and participating in the ritual activity program, the psychic echo of HLT visitor memory in the past and advanced narrative in present time plays a central role in formulating Chinese American religiosity, which is the main area of investigation in this research. The analysis suggests that the psychological states of "no-harm-to-practice" and "*xin an li de*" among lay visitors at HLT largely represent the Chinese American religiosity found at the HLT "greenhouse" field of Humanistic Buddhism. The this-worldly orientation of Chinese American religiosity may be questioned in terms of whether Humanistic Buddhism at HLT constitutes the desacralization or the secularization, meaning Buddhism without transcendent thirst for other-worldly salvation. Yet, by practicing the moral guidance learned from the ritual repertoire scripted in the ritual manual in daily life, for instance, the psychological state of *xin an li de* on incoming this-worldly benefits and other-worldly salvation, which is also clearly specified in all kinds of liturgical modules, should be the "right" path to approach enlightenment within the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Therefore, ritual program and ritualized activity, the major component of the ritualized mechanism at HLT, endeavor to bring the idea of the sacred back into the ordinary lives and social activities of Chinese American people in Southern California.

The emphasis in this research is that the religiosity of the Chinese American community must be understood in light of where that religion is practiced in American life. Religion for Chinese Americans is treated as a matter not only of doctrine and belonging, but also of custom, action, practice, ritual, and participation. It is as much a matter of religio-cultural attitudes and behavioral modules located in day-to-day concerns and ordinary processes of life – as it is concerned with ameliorating life in the present, in giving explanation of why things have gone wrong, and in providing mechanisms that offer hope for improvement. Under the rubric of Chinese religion, this research focuses on such things as visits to temple, participation in ritual programs and ritualized etiquettes, and seeking this-worldly benefits through situating oneself in a religious occasion in a religious place. Like the followers of Humanistic Buddhism, the traditional visitation of temple and participation in temple's activity have once again become a spiritual practice and religious activity in the daily lives of Chinese Americans. By becoming religious practitioners of Humanistic Buddhism, Chinese Americans are revitalizing the Chinese traditional religiosity in America.

From Chinese immigrant religion to Chinese American religion

This research suggests that the resulting theoretical elaboration of the Chinese American religious experience generated from a Chinese Buddhist temple in Southern California provides an alternative study framework for describing and understanding how 'religion' is currently practiced by Chinese or broader Asian American communities in the United States. To position myself as a native ethnographer, I suggest that throughout the process of displacement within the immigration experience, religions facilitate

immigrants with concrete institutional structures, narratives, ethics, and practices with which they can engage in the unknown challenges coming from the varying situations in the hosting community. The tasks of reconstructing self and community in a diasporic setting might be critical to some extent from a bird's-eye perspective, but the realness of the problem and anxiety is striking new immigrants in their everyday lives and forcing them to respond as effectively as possible. For the majority of Chinese individual immigrants and their families, I argue, right action in response to unknown surroundings is a matter of life and death to install their new roots in a foreign land, and "who am I" might be the meditative inquiry they have when their life is in a comfort zone. The this-worldly tendency of concerns and questions among HLT lay visitors illustrates most vividly how Chinese American individuals pursue religious support from a Buddhist temple. This research concludes that spiritual and moral guidance in this life is the capstone of the relations between a religious place and displaced individuals on the ground. The spiritual demand of such moral guidance is significantly evident to the consequent religious behaviors and experiences of recent post-80s Chinese immigrants and new members of the Chinese American community in Southern California.

However, current immigration religion studies invest too much focus on the reconstructing self and ethnicity-based community in a diasporic setting. Traditionally, theoretical construction in social sciences over the past several decades that discusses religion and Asian immigrant communities in the United States largely follows the conceptual paradigms derived from Judeo-Christian religio-social life experience (Min 2002; Min and Jang 2015). The notable example is the dominant framework of 'de facto

congregationalism' with which many scholars describe and analyze non-Christian immigrant religions to transform their organizational structure and ritual formality following the American Protestant congregational model (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Hirschman 2004; Warner and Wittner 1998; Yang and Ebaugh 2001a, b). Popular themes in the literature include lay leadership, local autonomy, voluntary membership, trans-local and transnational networks, time and language and ways to worship, volunteerism, and other new characteristics of immigrant religious institutions (i.e. temple, church, mosque, gurdwara) that are usually not found in their countries of origin. Among these new characteristics, the most significant is providing numerous community services and socio-economic opportunities for members of the religious institution and their children.

Another productive framework that facilitates research on Asian immigrant religions is that 'Americanized' religious institutions in immigrant communities significantly enhance their members' ethnic fellowship and identity as well as the power of cultural retention in the melting pot of American society (Min 2002; Min and Jang 2015). The related studies are abundant (see for example, Ama 2011; Cadge 2005; Chandler 1998; Chen 2008; Guest 2003; Kurien 1998, 2007; Lin 1999; Lucia 2014; Min 2010; Nagata 1999; Nattier 1998; Numrich 1996, 2003; Suh 2004; Yang 1999, 2000). A number of research topics have been comprehensively examined in these studies, including the secular program of religious institutions on linking language instruction with ethnicity and religion, the leading role of ethno-religious organizations in providing community service for socio-culturally and politically integrating into American society, the protocol of global religious movements for establishing transnational linkages with

the political and cultural institutions in the homeland, and other religious features that help to constitute distinctive Asian American communities seen today.

In sum, the existing social science studies and cultural studies are most often concerned with the functional role played by immigrant religious institutions within the American social structure. These two perspectives, de facto congregationalism and formation of ethnic identity, contribute a variety of research efforts on the adaptation of foreign religious traditions to American socio-cultural and political contexts on the one hand, and a line of theories that explain cultural assimilation and resistance to the nature of Americanness on the other hand. To some extent, both perspectives treat the religion carried by immigrant communities as a societal medium that enables immigrants to manage their new lives in America. Accordingly, the subjects of study in current immigrant religion studies, either institutions or individuals, are considered the religious manifestation of how non-American people and their social activities function within the socio-cultural and political currents in American society. However, the spiritual end of immigrants' religious practices, such as pursuing individual salvation and the religious orientation of their current lives, is either overlooked or put under the scholarly lens of American spirituality in order to evaluate the spiritual component of their doctrines, rituals and all kinds of performance being observed.[2] In the meantime, the religious

[2] For instance, a few studies indicate that ethno-religious activities in Buddhist temples in the U.S., such as chanting rituals and festivals which interest the temple's American convert members less than its ethnicity-based followers, are traditionally integrated into the spiritual life of Asian American communities (Numrich 1993; Tanka 1998). However, this type of description seldom develops a thoughtful analysis of the religio-cultural myths and ideological influence on the thinking of Asian immigrants in their American life. Numrich even anticipates in his study that the emphasis on *vipassana* meditation by American converts will steer traditional immigrant Theravada Buddhism in America "in the direction taken by Buddhist modernism in Asia" (Numrich 1993:146-7). On the other hand, the yearnings

experiences of Asian American communities is rarely elaborated on using the communities' own spiritual terms.

Furthermore, becoming American is a research focus that permeates the studies of immigrant religion. Scholars like Oscar Handlin (1951) and Prema Kurien (1998) indicate that immigrants become Americans by first becoming ethno-religious Americans. Yet, Carolyn Chen (2008) argues that the experience of Taiwanese immigrants (which are often deemed as part of the Chinese immigrant group) is to become religious by becoming American. No matter which should happen first, current approaches functionally assist American intellectuals and the general public in looking at Buddhist activities through a familiar framework of Americanization. In this way, Asian Buddhism in America is being slowly transformed to American Buddhism and annexed to the constellation of American religiosity and spirituality. Nevertheless, viewing non-Christian immigrant religion through the lens of a Judeo-Christian way of life limits the breadth of people's understanding of Asian American religion by stripping its original spiritual component that is transplanted from Asian cultural domains by immigrants.

However, the findings and arguments of the traditional Chinese ingredients of the HLT space and ritualized activity programs and the psychological state of lay visitors at HLT in this research switch scholarly attention to the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, the actor group itself, which corresponds with a turning point of American scholarship in studying Asian religions in America during the early twentieth-first

for healing and aspirations of mindfulness in American popular spirituality over other religious concerns such as chanting, ritual, devotion, and doctrine constitute the emergent themes of study of Buddhist meditation in the U.S. (Cadge 2005; Wilson 2014).

century. In contrast to the study frameworks of 'assimilation' or 'Americanization,' some scholars in emerging Asian American Studies have begun to provide an alternative vantage point to view the American religious landscape through Asian immigrant experience and spirituality (Carnes and Yang 2004; Jeung 2005; Lawrence 2002; Lee, et al. 2015; Yoo 1999; Yoo and Chung 2008). These interdisciplinary studies investigate religious thoughts and practices in the daily lives of different Asian American communities that originate from various Asian homelands, and probe how factors such as the concepts of race and diaspora shape Asian Americans' spiritual lives in their new American home. One major trend among the growing monographs and edited volumes dealing with Asian American religiosities has been to include them within a broader definition of American religion, much like the inclusion of Italian pizza, German beer, and Greek salad as a typically American cuisine. These studies argue that American religion expands not by adding assimilated exceptions (such as American Buddhism and American Hinduism) into the longstanding mainstream; rather, it expands by continuously reconfiguring the spiritual boundaries between 'us' and the 'outsider' who lives next door in the same American place.

Several recent ethnographic studies related to traditional activities in Chinese American communities share this intellectual trend of multiculturalism in Asian American religious studies on the real presence of Asian American religiosity. For instance, Jonathan H.X. Lee (2009) profiles American followers of *Mazu*, a Chinese goddess bound to a particular temple and region, to initiate a creative response to replenish their spiritual repository in their powerful Taiwanese motherland from a

perspective of transnational movement. Lee (2006) also portrays a historical context of American immigration regulations in the U.S. government that have particularly impacted the development of Chinese American religions since the 1850s. Lee divides this one-and-a-half-century of change into three phases: the early political and economic consideration of specifically excluding Chinese immigration (before the World War II), the idea of the melting pot (before the 1980s), and current religious pluralism.

Due to exclusionist attitudes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, early Chinese American communities exemplified the pattern of a homogenous bachelor society by either crowding into urban ghettoes to form Chinatown or spreading over the California coast like the historical Chinese community in Mendocino.[3] Without the traditional role of family women to carry out ancestral worship and other private religious practices at home, one small cabin temple in this isolated Mendocino community was dedicated to a popular deity Guandi or *Kwan Tai*, regarded as a god of military affairs and business as well as wealth, and the temple became the community place of worship. This small temple was constructed in 1854, and it unified the intrinsic diversity in Chinese religious life among 500 to 700 Chinese in Mendocino at that time to a single worship tradition seen today.[4]

[3] For instance, the 1875 Page Law prevented Chinese women from entering the U.S. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act further prohibited the admission of new laborers and the wives of existing laborers. See Chan 1991.

[4] According to Lee's article, this small Kwan Tai temple in Mendocino was registered as California Historical Landmark No. 927 in 1979, and was restored as a historical landmark to celebrate Mendocino's community diversity thereafter.

After World War II, the unified function of traditional Chinese American temples in urbanized Chinatowns further served the 'melting pot' concept within the American cultural landscape. The 'tradition' of the Chinese New Year festival in San Francisco (Yeh 2008) and the Bok Kai Temple festival in historical Marysville in California's Central Valley (Chace 1992) illustrate this aspect of Chinese American religious life after WWII. Within the historical context of U. S. Cold War politics, both festivals extended their scope of unifying non-communist Chinese Americans and, most importantly, of manifesting their own ethnic assimilation and patriotism to the nation. In this way, as Yeh indicates, "[B]y strategically Orientalizing ethnic celebration and situating it in mainstream racial and political ideologies, [Chinese American] community leaders strove to incorporate their own culture into the national identity" (Yeh 2008:5). However, the religious nature of these community festival events has been significantly de-emphasized, at least in the eyes of local American citizens. This kind of naturalization is found in the Chinese New Year festival either in urban San Francisco or rural Marysville. For instance, the "smoke-filled Bok Kai Temple" on the date of Chinese New Year, as Chace described,

> was jammed with worshippers lighting incense sticks and bright candles. The hall was noisy with the cracking of the wooden prayer blocks and the rattling of oracle sticks. Offerings of roasted pork, ducks, oranges, and buns covered the tables. Here was an exemplar case of Chinese popular religion. (Chace 1992:1)

Yet the immediate departure of the festival procession diluted such an aura of Chinese traditional religiosity with an Americanized performance in an ingenious way.

> The temple gong and the old temple banner in the lead positions were in the trustworthy hands of Boy Scouts – non-Chinese. They were

> followed by local Campfire Girls costumed as horses for the "Year of the Horse," the Sons of Norway lodge members on a decorated boat, uniformed high school marching bands, city fire trucks, Chinese American beauty queens waving from convertibles, the Marysville City Council, a United States Congressman, and more. Concluding the parade was the community's 150-foot-long golden dragon. The dragon wove its way through the streets and then curled and made respectful bows at four locations: the Bok Tai Temple, the Suey Sing Society hall, the Hop Sing Society hall, and the officials' Reviewing Stand with its honored guests. According to the parade announcer, the legs dancing under the dragon were the men and women of "the Ninth Avionic Maintenance Squadron from Beale Air Force Base." (Chace 1992:1-2)

The sharing of common Chinese popular religious beliefs seems irrelevant to those dragon 'legs' who toured around the town and bowed to Chinese temples and lodge houses, as well as to the other 87% of non-Asian parade participants who enthusiastically participated in this 121-year long tradition of a popular celebration of the Chinese New Year in Marysville. For explaining this cooperative social action involving multiple ethnicities in one communal ritual occasion, Chace develops the concept of 'interpretive restraint,' which means "the purposeful withholding of symbolic meaning for traditional ritual performance" (Chace 1992:4). Interpretive restraint suggests that Chinese Americans in Marysville have 'politely' downplayed the orthodox religious meanings embedded in traditional ritualized actions, such as worshipping behaviors inside the temple and dragon bowing to the temple during its 'inspection tour' around the town. With this tacit understanding of interpretive restraint between Chinese and non-Chinese, the ritual performance of Chinese popular religions could have served to unify the larger civic community and to foster interethnic community relations under a mainstream conception of the 'melting pot' before the 1980s.

After the 1980s, the American religious landscape becomes plural (Eck 2001), and Fenggang Yang (2002) also indicates the diverse nature of the Chinese American population and their religious affiliation and practices under the categories of Buddhism, Christianity, and folk religion. This type of diversity can be seen in Kenneth J. Guest's ethnographic work *God in Chinatown* (2003). Guest demonstrates how one particular Chinese American group of what Yang named *xinqiao* (new immigrants), Fuzhounese-Chinese immigrants, brought in their religious beliefs, practices, and local deities in recent years to build supportive networks to help them cope with the socio-economic challenges they encountered in New York's Chinatown, which is traditionally dominated by the Cantonese-Chinese Americans or what Yang named *laoqiao* (earlier immigrants). During the settlement process, this new Chinese immigrant group has established numerous religious places specifically serving Fuzhounese-Chinese neighborhoods, ranging from Buddhist, Daoist, and Chinese popular religion to Protestant and Catholic Christianity.

Meiguo Mazu, a popular deity who is historically worshipped in Chinese cultural areas in certain regions, also joins the American pantheon with post-80s Chinese immigrants in another form. As Lee (2006) described, *Mazu* is the vernacular name of the Empress of Heaven (*Tianhou*) within Taiwanese popular religion. Her 'new' home, Ma-tsu temple U.S.A., was built in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1986 by Chinese Americans who originated from Taiwan, or *xinqiao*. However, due to be worshiped as a sea goddess in the Southern Chinese coast region in past centuries, *Tianhou* (or in Cantonese as *Tin Hau*) has been brought to America by early Chinese immigrants or

laoqiao (mainly departed from the ports in Canton, a province in southern China), who must spend three-weeks on a life-threatening journey across the Pacific Ocean to Gold Mountain to seek bountifulness and opportunities for fortune in America. As is traditional practice in China, those lucky survivors of the journey constructed a temple dedicated to *Tianhou* to give thanks. The first *Tianhou* temple was founded in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1852. Since their establishment, although this single goddess has two different names and different historical cults of worshippers, both temples erected in her honor have served distinctive Chinese American communities with the same role in her worshippers' mind: "protector of women and children, hearer of prayers, healer of illnesses, giver of prosperity, and protector of family and community" (Lee 2006:246).

To fulfill the 'mission' of protecting the community that worships her, *Mazu* in Taiwanese religious tradition usually performs a 'celestial inspection tour' on her birthday as a celebration ritual. By means of such ritualized procession, the goddess visually inspects the current state of her supervised territory and extends power to 'purify' her precinct from the invasion of demons. Yet this important ritual event that presents *Mazu's* religious sovereignty in traditional Chinese religiosity was not performed repeatedly in America. Rather, *Meiguo Mazu* physically participated in the historical Chinese New Year Parade in San Francisco and the Bok Kai Temple parade in Marysville, two or three months before her official birthday stated in Taiwanese popular religion, to perform an American version of the inspection tour together with other local deities. As Lee argues, the main function of *Meiguo Mazu*'s tour within Chinese American communities is to 'unify' the community which is composed of culturally

distinctive groups of the Chinese immigrant population. “Mazu is able to accomplish this because as a symbol of Chinese religious culture, she reminds both the Chinese and non-Chinese viewers of something that is distinctively Chinese” (Lee 2006:247).

As discussed so far, the religious nature of the Chinese American festival and its ritual components have been de-emphasized in response to the changes in American mainstream culture from previous exclusionist attitudes before the 1980s. The attitude of ‘interpretive restraint’ among Chinese American communities might be caused by the internal and external forces of Americanization underneath the public exhibitions of Chinese religio-cultural practices. The emergent trend of current pluralism and multiculturalism in late-twentieth-century America has somehow released the self-restraint attitude among Chinese American communities to their religio-cultural exhibition in front of the American public. The construction of HLT in the 1980s that explicitly shows off the Chinese-centered orientation of space organization and ritualized activity program, therefore, has largely reflected Lee’s conception of plural America in religio-cultural terms since the late twentieth century. Moreover, HLT becomes a powerhouse of installing the Chinese religio-cultural mentality in blending “Chinese” and “American” characters together into a modern Chinese American community in Southern California.

Sense of Buddhist modernity

This research notices that although the spatial and ritualized aspects of HLT landscape are permeated by traditional elements in Chinese religio-culture, most visitors, including non-Asian Americans, do not feel confused in the twentieth-first century just as

the feeling they have when visiting Colonial Williamsburg [5] "living-history" district in today's City of Williamsburg in Virginia. Most lay visitors in HLT appreciate the reference of the past while giving the sense of the present and even future. This research suggests that the modern attractions of HLT, for the sake of either spiritual pursuit of good omen and moral luck or secular entertainment in daily life, are grounded in the historical past of Chinese Buddhism. To some extent, the ritualized mechanism in HLT presents a time-shift (or trans-temporal) and space-shift (or trans-spatial) sense of the past as it was – as the past Chinese people present in the same kind of Buddhist monastery complex and the same line of ritual programs for pursuing the same purpose of visiting a religious place. By allowing Chinese American visitors to step into an alternative present in the twentieth-first century, the HLT ritualized mechanism enables them to locate themselves on the continuum of historical Chinese Buddhism and make themselves believe that the psychological state of *xin an li de* scripted in the traditional ritual manual and Buddhist teaching is achievable in present American life.

"Modernity" to the people who enter HLT, I argue, is therefore not a set of defining characteristics but a hyperreality in a trans-temporal and trans-spatial sense, which inclines to purely refer to a period of time, mainly a living in the present (活在當下). For instance, by regarding the public discussion of air quality and fire prevention in the present, worshipers accept the flower instead of incense and the electric candle instead of lighting candle to continue their traditional practice of offering task in

[5] Colonial Williamsburg is a 173-acre theme park that presents the colonial life-style in early America. The park is built upon the "real" living quarter of historical Williamsburg, the capital of the Virginia Colony from 1699 to 1780.

worshipping the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at HLT. In fact, such change of worshipping behavior is often identified by HLT monastics and visitors as the sign of "modern" Buddhism. In other words, the traditional practice could be modernized by skillfully injecting new elements that typically are given the convenient label of "modernity" in present society. With the "blessing" of modern elements like fresh flowers and electric light, the traditional practice of worshipping becomes a modern component of Chinese Buddhism or Humanistic Buddhism in America. The same rationale also applies to the injection of concrete technology into palatial-style buildings and grounds of the HLT monastery complex, the addition of sermon into the liturgical procedure of ritual program, blending the moments of rest, meal-taking, work, commuting, sleep and even private entertainment at home in modern life-style into the week-long period of the Ullambana Dharma Function, and other arrangements and compositions that are normally named religious "hybridity" in contemporary literature. The classic phrase in the Chinese cultural world: "keeping abreast of the times (與時俱進)" represents the progressive tune of FGS Humanistic Buddhism demonstrated in HLT that Chinese Buddhism must actively adopt elements of new matters in the present to escape the fate of leaving-behind in the folds of history.

This type of simple but pragmatic sense of religious modernity among HLT monastics and lay visitors may correspond with what David McMahan (2015) calls the discourse of "multiple modernities" in the context of globalizing modernity to some extent. McMahan argues that many indigenous cultures do not resemble the Western prototype of modernity "in morals, media, government, and attitudes toward science;"

rather, "they have taken up these features of modernity in unique ways determined by their own preexisting social formations" (McMahan 2015:182). Such multiple ways of being modern promote different scales of religious revival movements worldwide that attempt to re-engage indigenous religion with modernist ideas and practices or rearticulate indigenous religion to resist certain elements of Western modernity, which is empirically contrast to the conventional predictions of the decline of religion within the process of modernization.[6] When discussing the process of psychologization of Buddhist modernism through which traditional Buddhist values and practices are rearticulated to not as religion but as "spiritual technology" for meeting Western practical needs of therapeutic psychology in daily life, McMahan indicates that the sense of the traditional and the modern is not diametrically opposed but always exists on a continuum of Buddhist options to explain or solve human concerns in everyday life (McMahan 2008:27-59). Buddhist modernism, therefore, is a discursive practice of "how to combine tradition with modernity and how to position Buddhism in relation to its various facets" (McMahan 2008: 59).

Scott A. Mitchell further elaborates on McMahan's theoretical construct of "multiple modernities" to discuss "Buddhist modernities" in the contemporary context of U.S. Buddhism (Mitchell 2016:231-251). Mitchell argues that within distinctive local

[6] McMahan attributes this kind of prediction to the "classical" sociological discourse of a singular and uniform modernity largely articulated by Karl Marx, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and their successors who define modernity as entailing western capitalist modes of production, urbanization, rationalization, structural differentiation, and other socio-cultural processes of detraditionalization and demythologization that contribute to secularization and disenchantment of the world. According to these classical theses, the progress of modernization inevitably erodes the traditional religious life and metaphysical thinking in modernizing societies. See McMahan 2008, 2015.

contexts of globalizing Buddhism, the assignment of the labels "modern" and "traditional" toward any specific Buddhist traditions is "culturally arbitrary" (Mitchell 2016:237). So, what is "modern" in Asian Buddhist traditions may still be rendered "traditional" in American society. From this point of view, contemporary practices like worshipping with flowers and electric candle offerings at HLT might trigger the tension and struggle of the selective assent to apply a preset of axioms and assumptions over the extent and manner of modernization among American religious studies. Therefore, Mitchell suggests that modernity is not a defining set of characteristics but a hermeneutic approach for producing a discursive narrative to interpret the conditions and associated strategical actions in response to contemporary surroundings. He argues that "the labels 'modern' and 'traditional' are applied by Buddhist teachers or practitioners to various practices and doctrinal interpretations as a way to define tradition as either in step or out of touch with the contemporary world" (Mitchell 2016:238).

When mapping the evolution of the Chinese religious landscape in the twentieth century, Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer also suggest that so-called "modernity" was a convenient label adopted by Chinese reformists from the late nineteenth century onward, composed of a variety of Western ideologies and discourses of modernization (Goossaert and Palmer 2011:8-9). Early Chinese "modernists" liberally translated languages of scientific rationalism, Romanticism, Protestant Christianity, and later Western psychology into Chinese religious and Buddhist thought. These discourses set the term by which Chinese Buddhism should become "modernized," as described in Chapter 2, for many Chinese people were either educated in Euro-American systems or

enthusiastically transformed themselves to have a sense of modernity in daily life. However, the sense of religious modernity has been changed after years of the eradication of Chinese religio-cultural heritage in mainland China during the third quarter of twentieth century, despite a limited revival of Chinese Buddhism in the new formation of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan represented by FGS in this research. Goossaert and Palmer argue that during the last decades of twentieth century, unorganized bits of traditional cosmologies and practices, such as karmic retribution and the nurturing of the body and health, fostered an array of dynamic revival movements in the Chinese religious world. The characteristics of "Chinese religious modernity" among these diverse movements are generated by reinventing the traditional forms of Chinese religiosity in the sense that "they create new compositions out of selected elements of tradition – elements often selected for their perceived compatibility with modern, secular values" (Goossaert and Palmer 2011:304). The emphasis on which elements of tradition are compatible, however, is varied in each movement popularized in contemporary China.

"Individual choice," an important characteristic of the modernity generated by market economy, is always latent among the discourses of multiple modernities constructed by McMahan, Mitchell, and Goossaert and Palmer. Local practitioners rearticulate indigenous traditions of religious doctrines and practices by selecting the traditional and foreign elements out of their free choice. Yet, Goossaert and Palmer suggest that such defining characteristics of modern religiosity have been a part of traditional types of Chinese religiosity and function as a fundamental form of practice by which Chinese common people used to freely and historically choose the place of

worship. Therefore, in speaking of Chinese "religious modernity" especially in urban areas, Goossaert and Palmer recommend that researchers not assume a radical rupture with traditional Chinese religiosity.

As previously discussed, I suggest that the sense of "Buddhist modernity" among HLT monastics and visitors refers to a trans-temporal and trans-spatial feeling of living in the present. Along with the effort of "keeping abreast of the times" to avoid the fate of leaving-behind in the folds of history, as claimed by FGS Humanistic Buddhism, HLT is always filled with the aura of modernity throughout its physical and ritualized environment. By participating in such hyperreality of modernity, there is no clear boundary between the traditional and the modern in people's mind. Every sensual viewing, hearing, smelling, touching and knowing from the abundant materials and activities supplied by HLT is a part of modern Buddhism in the present. Rather than freedom of choice (which I assume every lay visitor has exercised before deciding to visit HLT for various reasons among many religious and spiritual choices in Southern California), I recognize a mentality of freedom-of-consumption, another important characteristic of the modernity also generated by market economy, within the Chinese American religiosity that this research concludes. Within HLT, the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism offered by FGS, the monastic community and Chinese American visitors freely grasp whatever they can make sense of to compose an individual plan of action to encounter individual concerns and challenges in American present life. Plenty of evidence throughout the HLT spatial organization, ritualized activity programs, lay visitors' behaviors and manners generated from this research have suggested that this

mentality of freedom-of-consumption is the "modern" sign of Humanistic Buddhism for the new formation of Chinese Buddhism in the twentieth-first century.

To be sure, freedom-of-consumption has been a fundamental attitude underneath the Chinese traditional religio-cultural framework for keeping Chinese Buddhism always abreast of the times since its Indian prototype was transmitted to China in the first century. Indigenous Daoist and Confucianist practitioners freely injected "new" Buddhist conceptions of karmic retribution and *samsara* into their traditions of doctrine and practice. At the same time, "new" Buddhist converts freely injected traditional ancestor worship and ritualized performance in Chinese indigenous religions into their "new" invented self-cultivation and ritual service program for the public. Once Chinese common people began recognizing the Chinese transformation of Buddhism in relation to their social lives, they accepted "new" Chinese Buddhism and its moral values and ritualized practices into the ever-evolving vernacular culture, which historically is always "keeping abreast of the times."

From this point of view, the damage caused by the "modernizing" projects initiated by Chinese governments and intellectuals in the early twentieth century were attributed to forcefully interrupt the Chinese traditional sense of "religious modernity" and internal dynamics of self-adjustment with the times by purposefully separating the "traditional" from the "modern." Therefore, Monk Hsing Yun and his vision of Humanistic Buddhism helps to evoke the Chinese sense of "modernity" back to modern Chinese Buddhism, and to Chinese American religiosity performed in HLT in the twentieth-first century.

Arguably, the trans-temporal and trans-spatial sense of Buddhist modernity elaborated here may functionally eliminate the chronological distinction between "the traditional" and "the modern" to some extent. Yet, the irreversible sequence of temporal duration still firmly establishes the chronological sense of the past and the present within the worldview of common people in everyday life. Therefore, many today's Buddhist practitioners may scowl at the appropriation of the traditional elements of Asian Buddhism, such as meditation and psychic analysis, to articulate the Western style of mindfulness movement in the popular culture. The Buddhist monastic community may also scowl at the secular criticism of the traditional practices held by monasteries and institutional Buddhism in contemporary America. On the other hand, this research has demonstrated that FGS has taken strategic action successfully to inject traditional Chinese elements of architecture and ritualized practices into HLT grounds to build up the credibility and therefore encourage Chinese Americans in Southern California to believe in Humanistic Buddhism. After all, disciplinary interests in the academia still reinforce conceptual distinctions between the traditional and the modern, which often do not do justice in term of the continuous change of religious tradition in modern society.

To further investigate the tension of how to skillfully continue Chinese or other Asian Buddhist traditions in modern times, I suggest that the conceptual tool of "framed ingenuity" developed in Chapter 1 and fully immersed in all analyses and arguments of this research might be useful to facilitate future research in American religious studies. Just like identifying a tiny chili pepper as the key to hold modern kung-po pork and beef in the line of traditional kung-po style cuisines, scholars and practitioners need to clearly

identify and justify their vision of the essential ingredient(s) of Buddhist tradition in order to functionally participate in the discussion of the issues of Buddhist modernization among other topics within American Buddhist studies and Asian or Chinese American studies.

EPILOGUE

In the interest of disclosing the 'real' presence of Chinese religiosity and associated religious experience in its American context, I must acknowledge one event in my early life of HLT that I suspect has shaped my interests in Chinese American religiosity. One evening I stood on the entrance of the HLT courtyard to look at the spectacular scene of the people's procession in the last *Yogacara Ulka-mukha* Dharma Service of a week-long the Ullambana Dharma Function conducted in front of the Main Shrine. The sound of devotional chanting and music made me feel peaceful and blissful. When I immersed myself into this holy moment, an American sightseer, who was also attracted by the sound echoing outside the temple wall, popped up on my side. He gently asked me what was going on here. I told him that was a traditional Chinese ritual related to our ancestors. "Oh!" A glimpse of an odd smile came to his face. "They are worshipping the gods and the ancestor." As a religious studies student, I knew what this American visitor's saying really meant underneath his odd smile. The exotic image of what Chinese people did in a religious mode, which has been introduced by those missionaries who loyally reported the observed 'superstition' in China back to their American fellow citizens since the mid-nineteenth century, still plays a significant framework in understanding Chinese religious activities among today's American general public.

This type of trivial but spoiling dialogue event also can be exemplified in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Pearl, an American-born Chinese in Tan's novel, found her mother prepared "a dozen or so bundles of spirit money" for a deceased friend who

"can supposedly use to bride her way along to Chinese Heaven." So Pearl teased her mom, "I didn't know you believe in that stuff." "What's to believe," her mom replied testily, "This is respect!" (Tan 1991:24)

These two face-to-face confrontations related to different traditional Chinese rituals demonstrate a fundamental crack in the popular framework American people have adopted to interpret Chinese or broader Asian traditional religions in America for over one-and-half centuries. The sightseer's odd smile and Pearl's teasing may not cause much trouble for all parties involved. Yet many stories of vandalism and violence against Asian American religious places and activities, like the ones Diana Eck told in her *A New Religious America* (2001), came out of similar misunderstandings and have horrible sequels. Resembling Eck's conclusion for her Pluralism Project that aims to investigate a new multi-religious America, it is necessary to build a community-wide bridge for the public to broaden their understanding of Asian traditional practices of religion.

May this research be a small bridge to American religious studies for *verstehen* the testily reply of Pearl's mom about her belief of offering spirit money to the deceased: "This is respect!"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aase, Tor H. 1994. "Symbolic Space: Representations of Space in Geography and Anthropology" *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 76(1):51-58.

Ahern, Emily. 1973. *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Ama, Michihiro. 2011. *Immigrants to the Pure Land: The Modernization, Acculturation, and Globalization of Shin Buddhism, 1898-1941.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Arweck, Elisabeth and Martin D. Stringer, ed. 2002. *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outside Problem in the Study of Ritual*. Birmingham, U.K.: The University of Birmingham Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation.* translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Beal, Samuel. 1884. *Buddhism in China*. London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Bell, Catherine. 1989. "Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an Assessment of 'Popular Religion.'" *History of Religions* 29(1):35-57.

------. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions.* New York: Oxford University Press.

------. 1998. "Performance." Pp. 205-238 in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies,* edited by Mark C. Taylor. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Bellah, Robert N. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Dædalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,* 96(1):1-21.

Bhusan, Nalini, Jay Garfield and Abraham Zablocki, eds. 2009. *TransBuddhism: Transmission, Translation, Transformation*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Bielefeldt, Carl. 2005. "Practice." Pp. 229-244 in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism,* edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Blake, C. Fred. 2011. *Burning Money: The Material Spirit of the Chinese Lifeworld.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Blofeld, John. 1948. *The Jewel in the Lotus: An Outline of Present Day Buddhism in China*. London, U.K.: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.

Bokenkamp, Stephen. 1996. "The Purification Ritual of the Luminous Perfected." Pp. 268-277 in *Religions of China in Practice,* edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

-------. 2007. *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brashier, Kenneth. 2011. *Ancestral Memory in Early China.* Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Asia Center.

Brokaw, Cynthia. 1991. *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brook, Timothy. 1989. "Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49(2):465-499.

------. 1993. "Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and Their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21:13-44.

Brown, Karen McCarthy. 1998. "The Moral Force Field of Haitian Vodou." Pp. 181-200 in *In Face of the Facts,* edited by Richard Wightman Fox and Robert B. Westbrook. New York: Cambridge University Press.

------. 1999. "Writing about 'the Other.'" Pp. 350-353 in *The Insider Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader,* edited by Russell T. McCutcheon. New York: Cassell.

------. 2010. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bruun, Ole. 2003. *Fengshui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

------. 2008. *An introduction to Feng Shui.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2016. *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang: a complete translation of Repentance Dharma of Kindness and Compassion in the Bodhimanda*. Ukiah, CA: Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

Cadge, Wendy. 2005. *Heartwood - The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America.* Chicago, IL: The Univesity of Chicago Press.

------. 2007. "Reflections on *Habits,* Buddhism in America, and Religious Individualism," *Sociology of Religion* 68:201-205.

Campany, Robert Ford. 2005. "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China." *T'oung Pao* 91:1-57.

Carnes, Tony and Fenggang Yang, ed. 2004. *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries*. New York: New York University Press.

Cassaniti, Julia. 2015. *Living Buddhism – Mind, Self, and Emotion in a Thai Community*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cassel, Susie Lan, ed. 2002. *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Chace, Paul Gail. 1992. "Returning Thanks: Chinese Rites in an American Community." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside, Riverside, CA.

Chan, Sucheng, ed. 1991. *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Chandler, Stuart. 1998. "Chinese Buddhism in America: Identity and Practice." Pp. 13-30 in *The Faces of Buddhism in America,* edited by Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

------. 2004. *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Chappell, David W. 2005. "The Precious Scroll of the Liang Emperor: Buddhist and Daoist Repentance to Save the Dead." Pp. 40-67 in *Going Forth: Vision of Buddhist Vinaya,* edited by William M. Bediford. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Chau, Adam Yuet. 2006. *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chen, Carolyn. 2002. "The Religious Varieties of Ethnic Presence: A Comparison Between a Taiwanese Immigrant Buddhist Temple and an Evangelical Christian Church." *Sociology of Religion* 63(2):215-238.

-------. 2008. *Getting Saved in America – Taiwanese Immigration and Religious Experience*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chen, Frederick Shih-chung. 2012. "Buddhist Passports to the Other World: A Study of Modern and Early Medieval Chinese Buddhist Mortuary Documents." Pp. 261-286 in *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* edited by Paul Williams and Patrice Ladwig. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, Huaiyu. 2013. "The Rise and Decline of the Scripture Platforms in Medieval Chinese Buddhism." *Material Religion* 9:140-165.

Chen, Yu-nu. 2013. "Min Dai Fo Jiao Chan Yi de Jin Chan Hua (明代佛教懺儀的經懺化)." Pp. 351-396 in *Chen Lun, Chan Hui yu Jiu Du: Zhongguo Wen Hua Chan Hui Shu Xie Lun Ji* (*Fall, Penitence, and Salvation: A Collection of Essays on Confession in Chinese Culture*) (*沉淪、懺悔與救度；中國文化的懺悔書寫論集*), edited by Fengmao Li and Zhaoheng Liao. Nangang, Taipei: Zhong Yang Yan Jiu Yuan Zhongguo Wen Zhe Yan Jiu Suo.

Cheung, Neky Tak-Ching. 2016. "Receiving Prayer Beads: A Lay-Buddhist Ritual Performed by Menopausal Women in Ninghua, Western Fujian." Pp. 291-332 in *Recovering Buddhism in Modern China,* edited by Kiely, Jan and J. Brooks Jessup. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chia, Jack Meng-Tat. 2015. "Toward a Modern Buddhist Hagiography: Telling the Life of Hsing Yun in Popular Media." *Asian Ethnology* 74(1):141-165.

Chinn, Thomas W., ed. 1973. *A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus*. San Francisco, CA: Chinese Historical Society of America.

Chung, Sue Fawn. 2002. "Between Two Worlds: The Zhigongtang and Chinese American Funerary Rituals." Pp. 217-238 in *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the Millennium,* edited by Susie Lan Cassel. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Chung, Sue Fawn and Priscilia Wegars, eds. 2005. *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors.* Oxford, UK: AltaMira Press.

Cohen, Myron. 1988. "Soul and Salvation: Conflicting Themes in Chinese Popular Religion." Pp. 180-202 in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China,* edited by James Watson and Evelyn Rawski. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cole, Alan. 1998. *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Connor, Phillip. 2014. *Immigrant Religion in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe.* New York: New York University Press.

Cook, Constance. 2005. "Moonshine and Millet: Feasting and Purification Rituals in Ancient China." Pp. 9-33 in *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China,* edited by Roel Sterckx. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dean, Kenneth. 2003. "Local Communal Religion in Contemporary South-east China." *The China Quarterly* 174:338-358.

Dell'orto, Alessandro. 2002. *Place and Spirit in Taiwan: Tudi Gong in the Stories, Strategies and Memories of Everyday Life.* New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Dempsey, Corinne. 2006. *The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York – Breaking Convention and Making Home at a North America Hindu Temple*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dobie, Charles Caldwell. 1936. *San Francisco's Chinatown*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company.

Duara, Prasenjit. 1991. "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaign Against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth-Century China." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50(1):67-83.

Ebaugh, Helen Rose and Janet Saltzman Chafetz. 2000. "Structural Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations." *Sociology of Religion* 61:135-153.

Eberhard, Wolfram. 1967. *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. 1991. *Chu Hsi' Family Rituals: A Twelfth-Century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. 1995. "The Liturgies for Sacrifices to Ancestors in Successive Versions of the Family Rituals." Pp. 104-136 in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies,* edited by David Johnson. Berkeley, CA: IEAS Publications, University of California.

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley and Peter N. Gregory, ed. 1993. *Religion and Society in T'ang and Song China.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Eck, Diana. 2001. *A New Religious America – How a "Christian Country" has now Become the World's Religious Diverse Nation.* San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

English, Paul and Robert C. Mayfield, ed. 1972. *Man, Space, and Environment*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Eno, Robert. 1990. *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Feuchtwang, Stephan. 2001. *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor.* Surrey, U.K.: Curzon Press.

Fisher, Gareth. 2008. "The Spiritual Land Rush: Merit and Morality in New Chinese Buddhist Temple Construction" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67(1):143-170.

------. 2014. *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Formoso, Bernard. 2012. "From Bones to Ashes: the Teochiu Management of Bad Death in China and Overseas." Pp. 192-216 in *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* edited by Paul Williams and Patrice Ladwig. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Freedman, Maurice. 1979. "Ancestor Worship: Two Facets of the Chinese Case." Pp. 296-312 in *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman,* edited by G. William Skinner. Taipei, Taiwan: Southern Materials Center.

Geertz, Clifford. 1999. "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." Pp. 50-63 in *The Insider Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader,* edited by Russell T. McCutcheon. New York: Cassell.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Anchor Books.

-------. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.* New York: Harper Colophon Books.

------. 1982 [1967]. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Goossaert, Vincent. 2006. "1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?" *Journal of Asian Studies* 65(2):307-335.

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

Grabiel, Susan Ann. 1996. "The Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple: The New Locus for the Lotus from Secular Space to Sacred Place." Master's thesis, Department of Geography, California State University, Fullerton, CA.

Gregory, Peter and Patricia Buckley Ebrey. 1993. "The Religious and Historical Landscape." Pp. 1-44 in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, edited by Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter Gregory. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Gualtieri, Antonio R. 1983. "Landscape, Consciousness, and Culture" *Religious Studies* 19(2):161-174.

Guang, Xin. 2013. "Buddhist Impact on Chinese Culture." *Asian Philosophy* 23(4):305-322.

Guest, Ken. 2003. *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community.* New York: New York University Press.

Handlin, Oscar. 1951. *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Hansen, Valerie. 1990. *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harrell, Steven. 1979. "The Concept of Soul in Chinese Folk Religion" *The Journal of Asian Studies.* 38(3):519-528.

Heilman, Samuel. 1998. *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Heise, Ingmar. 2012. "For Buddhas, Families and Ghosts: The Transformation of the Ghost Festival into a Dharma Assembly in Southeast China." Pp. 217-237 in *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* edited by Paul Williams and Patrice Ladwig. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Herberg, Will. 1960. *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Hirschman, Charles. 2004. “The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States.” *International Migration Review* 38:1206-1233.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1992. “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.” Pp. 1-14 in *The Invention of Tradition,* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Hong, De. 2014. “The Development of Buddhist Repentance in Early Medieval China.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Religious Studies, University of the West, Rosemead, CA.

Horton, John. 1995. *The Politics of Diversity: Immigration, Resistance, and Change in Monterey Park, California.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Hufford, David J. 1999. “The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies.” Pp. 249-310 in *The Insider Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* edited by Russell T.McCutcheon. New York: Cassell.

Jackson, Alecia Y. and Lisa A. Mazzei, ed. 2009. *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretative, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research*. New York: Routledge.

James, William. 1917. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

-------. 1991. *Pragmatism.* New York: Prometheus Books.

Janousch, Andreas. 1999. “The Emperor as Bodhisattva: The Bodhisattva Ordination and Ritual Assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty.” Pp. 112-149 in *State and Court Ritual in China* edited by Joseph Peter MacDermott. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Jeung, Russell. 2005. *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

------. 2015. “Secularization and Asian Americans.” Pp. 136-145 in *Asian American Religious Cultures, Volume I,* by Jonathan H.X. Lee, et al. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Johnson, David. 1995. “Mu-lien in Pao-chüan: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the *Yu-ming Pao-ch’uan.*” Pp. 55-103 in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies,* edited by David Johnson. Berkeley, CA: IEAS Publications, University of California.

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

Kan, Zhengzong. 2004. *Chong Du Taiwan Fo Jiao: Zhan Hou Taiwan Fo Jiao, Xu Bian 重讀台灣佛教：戰後台灣佛教 續篇.* Taipei, Taiwan: Da Qian Chu Ban She.

Kapstein, Matthew. 2007. "Mulian in the Land of Snows and King Gesar in Hell: a Chinese Tale of Parental Death in its Tibetan Transformations." Pp. 345-377 in *The Buddhist Dead: Practices, Discourses, Representations,* edited by Bryan J. Cuevas and Jacqueline I. Stone. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Keightley, David. 2004. "The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy." Pp. 2-63 in *Religion and Chinese Society, Volume I: Religion in Ancient and Medieval China,* edited by John Lagerwey. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Kempny, Marta. 2012. "Rethinking Native Anthropology: Migration and Auto-Ethnography in the Post-Accession Europe." *International Review of Social Research* 2(2):39-52.

Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. 2005. *Buddhist Inclusivism: Attitudes toward Religious Others.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Kiely, Jan and J. Brooks Jessup, ed. 2016. *Recovering Buddhism in Modern China.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Kieschnick, John. 2003. *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

King, Margaret J. and J. G. O'Boyle. 2011. "The Theme Park: The Art of Time and Space." Pp. 5-18 in *Disneyland and Culture: Essays on the Parks and Their Influence*, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Kiong, Tong Chee and Lily Kong. 2000. "Religion Modernity: Ritual Transformations and Reconstruction of Space and Time." *Social and Cultural Geography* 1(1):29-44.

Kleeman, Terry F. 1996. "You Jisi Kan Zhongguo Zongjiao de Fenlei (由祭祀看中國宗教的分類)." Pp. 547-555 in *Yi Shi, Miao Hui yu She Qu: Dao Jiao, Min Jian Xin Yang yu Min Jian Wen Hua* (*儀式、廟會與社區：道教、民間信仰與民間文化*), edited by Li Fengmao and Zhu Ronggui. Taibei Shi: Zhong Yang Yan Jiu Yuan Zhongguo Wen Zhe Yan Jiu Suo Chou Bei Chu.

Knapp, Keith Nathaniel. 2005. *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Kreinath, Jens and Jan Snoek, Michael Stausberg. 2006. *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Ku, Robert Ji-Song, Martin F. Manalansan IV and Anita Mannur, eds. 2013. *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader.* New York: New York University Press.

Kurien, Prema. 1998. "Becoming American by Becoming Hindu: Indian Americans Take Their Place in the Multicultural Table." Pp. 37-70 in *Gatherings in Diaspora – Religious Communities and The New Immigration,* edited by Stephen R. Warner and Judith G. Wittner. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

------. 2007. *A Place at the Multicultural Table – the Development of an American Hinduism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Laliberté, André. 2003. "Religious change and democratization in postwar Taiwan: mainstream Buddhist organizations and the Kuomintang, 1947-1996." Pp. 158-185 in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society,* edited by Philip Cart and Charles Jones. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Lawrence, Bruce B. 2002. *New Faiths, Old Fears: Muslims and Other Asian Immigrants in American Religious Life.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Lee, Jonathan H. X. 2006. "Contemporary Chinese American Religious Life." Pp. 235-256 in *Chinese Religions in Contemporary Societies,* edited by James Miller. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

------. 2009. "Creating a Transnational Community: The Empress of Heaven and Goddess of the Sea, Tianhou/Mazu, from Beigang to San Francisco." Pp. 166-183 in *Religion at the Corner of Bliss and Nirvana: Politics, Identity, and Faith in New Immigrant Communities,* edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lee, Jonathan H. X. et al. 2015. *Asian American Religious Cultures, Volume I and II.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Levitt, Peggy. 2004. "Redefining the Boundaries of Belong: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life." *Sociology of Religion* 65:1-18.

Li, Fengmao. 1996. "Dao Jiao Zhai Yi yu Sang Zang Li Su Fu He de Hun Po Guan (道教齋儀與喪葬禮俗複合的魂魄觀)." Pp. 459-483 in *Yi Shi, Miao Hui yu She Qu:*

Dao Jiao, Min Jian Xin Yang yu Min Jian Wen Hua (*儀式、廟會與社區：道教、民間信仰與民間文化*), edited by Li Fengmao and Zhu Ronggui. Taibei Shi: Zhong Yang Yan Jiu Yuan Zhongguo Wen Zhe Yan Jiu Suo Chou Bei Chu.

Li, Yiyuan. 1998. "Zhong Guo Ren Xin She Mo Jiao? (中國人信甚麼教？)." Pp. 168-199 in *Zong Jiao Yu Shen Hua Lun Ji* (*宗教與神話論集*), edited by Yiyuan Li. Xin Dian, Taiwan: Li Xu Wuen Hua.

Liang, Chi-Chao. 1959. "Section 30: Buddhism in the Late Ch'ing." Pp. 115-118 in *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Perion (清代學術概論)*, translated by Immanuel C.Y. Hsu. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lin, Irene. 1996. "Journey to the Far West: Chinese Buddhism in America." *Amerasia Journal* 22:107-132.

Lin, Jan and Paul Robinson. 2005. "Spatial Disparities in the Expansion of the Chinese Ethnoburb of Los Angeles" *GeoJournal* 64:51-61.

Lip, Evelyn. 2009. *Feng Shui in Chinese Architecture*, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions.

Liu, Tik-sang. 2003. "A Nameless but Active Religion: An Anthropologist's View of Local Religion in Hong Kong and Macau." *The China Quarterly* 174:373-394.

Lucia, Amanda. 2014. *Reflections of Amma: Devotees in a Global Embrace.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Madsen, Richard. 2007. *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

------. 2008. "Religious Renaissance and Taiwan's Modern Middle Classes." Pp. 295-322 in *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation.* edited by Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang. Berkeley, CA: Global, Area, and International Archive, University of California Press.

Maffly-Kipp, Laurie. 1994. *Religion and Society in Frontier California.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

McClymond, Kathryn T. 2016. *Ritual Gone Wrong: What We Learn from Ritual Disruption.* New York: Oxford University Press.

McCutcheon, Russell T. 2006. "Circling the Wagons: The Problem with the Insider/Outsider in the Comparative Study of Religions." Pp. 235-248 in

Comparing Religions: Possibilities and Perils? edited by Thomas Athanasius Idinopulos, et al. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

McMahan, David. L. 2008. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

------. 2015. "Buddhism and Multiple Modernities." Pp. 181-195 in *Buddhism beyond Borders.* edited by Scott A. Mitchell and Natalie E. F. Quli. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Miller, James, ed. 2006. *Chinese Religions in Contemporary Societies,* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Min, Pyong Gap. 2002. "A Literature Review with a Focus on Major Themes." Pp. 15-36 in *Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities,* edited by Pyong Gap Min and Jung Ha Kim. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Min, Pyong Gap and Sou Hyun Jang. 2015. "The Diversity of Asian Immigrants' Participation in Religious Institutions in the United States." *Sociology of Religion* 76(3):253-274.

Mitchell, Scott A. 2016. *Buddhism in America: Global Religion, Local Contexts.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Nadeau, Randall and Chang Hsun. 2003. "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Religious Studies and the Question of 'Taiwan Identity.'" Pp. 280-299 in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society,* edited by Philip Cart and Charles Jones. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Nagata, Judith. 1999. "The Globalisation of Buddhism and the Emergence of Religious Civil Society: The Case of the Taiwanese Fo Kuang Shan Movement in Asia and the West." *Communal/Plural* 7:231-248.

Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist New Series* 95(3):671-686.

Nattier, Jan. 1998. "Who is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America." Pp. 183-195 in *The Face of Buddhism in America,* edited by Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Nichols, Brian J. 2015. "Typologizing Religious Practice at Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China." Pp. 411-436 in *Proceeding of Foguang Shan Center for Buddhist Studies Inaugural Symposium*. Ilan, Taiwan: Fo Guang University.

Numrich, Paul David. 1996. *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples.* Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

------. 2003. "Two Buddhisms Further Considered." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4(1):55-78.

Numrich, Paul David, ed. 2008. *North American Buddhists in Social Context.* Leiden, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill.

Orsi, Robert. 1997. "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion." Pp. 3-21 in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice,* edited by David Hall. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. 2010. *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Orzech, Charles. 1996. "Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost." Pp. 278-283 in *Religions of China in Practice,* edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Palmer, David. 2007. *Qigong Fever: Body, Science, and Utopia in China.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Pas, Julian. 2003. "Stability and Change in Taiwan's Religious Culture." Pp. 36-47 in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society,* edited by Philip Clart and Charles B. Jones. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Peña, Elaine. 2011. *Performing Piety – Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pickering, W.S.F. 2009. *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories.* Cambridge, U.K.: James Clarke & Co.

Pittman, Don A. 2001. *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism – Taixu's Reforms*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Poceski, Mario. 2009. *Introducing Chinese Religions*. New York: Routledge.

Poo, Mu-Chou. 1998. *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

------. 2004. "The Concept of Ghost in Ancient Chinese Religion." Pp. 173-191 in *Religion and Chinese Society, Volume I: Religion in Ancient and Medieval China,* edited by John Lagerwey. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Prebish, Charles S. 1979. *American Buddhism.* North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press.

------. 1999. *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Prebish, Charles and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds. 1998. *The Faces of Buddhism in America.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Prebish, Charles and Martin Baumann, eds. 2002. *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Puett, Michael. 2005. "The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China." Pp. 75-95 in *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China,* edited by Roel Sterckx. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rappaport, Roy A. 1979. "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual." Pp. 173-221 in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Rawski, Evelyn. 1988. "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Ritual." Pp. 20-34 in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China.* edited by James Watson and Evelyn Rawski. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Reader, Ian and George J. Tanabe, Jr. 1998. *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Reichelt, Karl Ludvig, 1968. *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism*, translated by Kathrina Van Wagenen Bugge. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp.

Roberts, Nicholas. 2004. *Building Type Basics for Places of Worship.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Robson, James. 2009. *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue) in Medieval China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Roof, Wade Clark and Mark Silk, eds. 2005. *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Region: Fluid Identities.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Rossbach, Sarah. 2000. *Feng Shui: The Chinese Art of Placement*. New York: Penguin/Arkana.

Sangren, P. Steven. 1987. *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Scott, Janet Lee. 2007. *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors: the Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Seager, Richard Hughes. 2012. *Buddhism in America: Revised and Expanded.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Seiwert, Hubert. 2003. *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History.* Leiden, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Shahar, Meir and Robert P. Weller, ed. 1996. *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Sharf, Robert H. 2005. "Ritual." Pp. 245-270 in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism,* edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Shih, Chin Ming and Hsiao Chien Kao. 2011. "A Study of the Development of Contemporary Monasteries in Taiwan," translated by Robert E. Johanson. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12(3):401-419.

Smith, Jonathan. 1982. "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon." Pp. 36-52 in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

------. 1987. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

-------. 2004. "The Topography of the Sacred." Pp. 101-116 in *Relating Religion*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Snow, Jennifer. 2015. "Immigration." Pp. 32-36 in *Asian American Religious Cultures, Volume I,* by Jonathan H.X. Lee, et al., Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Sørensen, Henrik H. 2013. "Buddho-Daoism in Medieval and Early Pre-modern China: A Report on Recent Findings." *The electronic Journal of East and Central Asian Religions* 1:109-138.

Spickard, James V. 2017. *Alternative Sociologies of Religion: through Non-Western Eyes*. New York: New York University Press.

Staal, Fritz. 1979. "The Meaninglessness of Ritual." *Numen* 26(1):2-22.

Standaert, Nicolas. 2008. *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe.* Seattle, WA: The University of Washington Press.

Stevenson, Daniel. 2001. "Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui,* the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land." Pp. 30-70 in *Cultural Intersections in Late Chinese Buddhism,* edited by Marsha Weidner. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

------. 2014. "Buddhist Ritual in the Song." Pp. 328-448 in *Modern Chinese Religion I (2 vols): Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan (960-1368 AD)*, edited by Pierre Marsone and John Lagerwey. Leiden, The Netherland: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Storhoff, Gary and John Whalen-Bridge, eds. 2010. *American Buddhism as a Way of Life.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Suh, Sharon. 2004. *Being Buddhist in a Christian World – Gender & Community in a Korean American Temple*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Sutton, Donald. 2003. *Steps of Perfection: Exorcistic Performers and Chinese Religion in Twentieth-Century Taiwan.* Cambridge, MA: the Harvard University Asia Center.

Szasz, Ferenc Morton, 2000. *Religion in the Modern American West.* Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Szonyi, Michael. 2009. "Secularization Theories and the Study of Chinese Religions." *Social Compass* 56(3):312-327.

Tam, Yik Fai. 2012. "Xianghua Foshi 香花佛事 (Incense and Flower Buddhist Rite): a Local Buddhist Funeral Ritual Tradition in Southeastern China." Pp. 238-260 in *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* edited by Paul Williams and Patrice Ladwig. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tan, Amy. 1991. *The Kitchen God's Wife.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Tanaka, Kenneth K. 1998. "Epilogue: The Colors and Contours of American Buddhism." Pp. 287-298 in *The Faces of Buddhism in America,* edited by Charles Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tarocco, Francesca. 2007. *The Cultural Practices of Modern Chinese Buddhism: Attuning the Dharma.* New York: Routledge.

Teiser, Stephen F. 1986. "Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion: The Yü-lan-p'en Festival as Mortuary Ritual." *History of Religions* 26(1):47-67.

------. 1994. *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

------. 1995. "Popular Religion." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54(2):378-395.

------. 1998. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ter Haar, Barend J. 2001. "Buddhist-Inspired Options: Aspect of Lay Religious Life in the Lower Yangzi from 1100 until 1340." *T'oung Pao* 87:92-152.

Thompson, Laurence G. 1973. *The Chinese Way in Religion*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Thompson, Stuart. 1988. "Death, Food, and Fertility." Pp. 71-108 in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China,* edited by James Watson and Evelyn Rawski. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tong, Chee-Kiong. 2004. *Chinese Death Rituals in Singapore.* London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

------. 1979. "Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind's Eye." Pp. 89-102 in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape: Geographical Essays,* edited by D. W. Meinig. New York: Oxford University Press.

Turner, Victor. 1977. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

------. 1984. "Liminality and the Performative Genres." Pp. 19-41 in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle.* edited by John J. MacAloon. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Tweed, Thomas A. 1992. *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

------. 1999. "Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures: Sympathizers, Adherents, and the Study of Religion." Pp. 71-90 in *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship,* edited by Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher Queen. Surrey, U.K.: Curzon.

------. 2006. *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Undie, Chi-Chi. 2007. "My Father's Daughter: Becoming a 'Real' Anthropologist among the Ubang of Southeast Nigeria." *Dialectical Anthropology* 31:293-305.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2012. *2010 Census Brief - The Asian Population: 2010.* Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Commerce.

Von Glahn, Richard. 2004. *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Walsh, Michael. 2007. "Efficacious Surroundings: Temple Space and Buddhist Well-being" *Journal of Religious Health* 46:471-479.

-------. 2010. *Sacred Economies: Buddhist Monasticism and Territoriality in Medieval China*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Walter, Eugene Victor. 1988. *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Wang, Juan. 2013. "Si Ze Chan Fa Yuan You de Chan Hui Shu Xie: Yi Si Sheng Di de Yuen Hang Wuei Zhong Xin (四則懺法緣由的懺悔書寫：以四聖諦的蘊涵為中心)." Pp. 225-252 in *Chen Lun, Chan Hui yu Jiu Du: Zhongguo Wen Hua Chan Hui Shu Xie Lun Ji* (*Fall, Penitence, and Salvation: A Collection of Essays on Confession in Chinese Culture*) (*沉淪、懺悔與救度：中國文化的懺悔書寫論集*), edited by Fengmao Li and Zhaoheng Liao. Nangang, Taipei: Zhong Yang Yan Jiu Yuan Zhongguo Wen Zhe Yan Jiu Suo.

Ward, Barbara E. 1979. "Not Merely Players: Drama, Art and Ritual in Traditional China" *Man,* New Series, 14(1):18-39.

Warner, Stephen R. and Judith G. Wittner. 1998. *Gatherings in Diaspora – Religious Communities and The New Immigration.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Watanabe, John N. and Barbara B. Smuts. 1999. "Explaining Religion without Explaining It Away: Trust, Truth, and the Evolution of Cooperation in Roy A. Rappaport's 'The Obvious Aspects of Ritual'" *American Anthropologist* 101(1):98-112.

Watson, James. 1988. "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites: Elementary Forms, Ritual Sequence, and Primacy Performance." Pp. 3-19 in *Death Ritual in Late*

Imperial and Modern China, edited by James Watson and Evelyn Rawski. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Watson, James and Evelyn Rawski, eds. 1988. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Weidner, Marsha, ed. 2001. *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Weightman, Barbara A. 1993. "Changing Religious Landscape in Los Angeles." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 14(1):1-20.

Welch, Holmes. 1967. *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900-1950*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

------. 1968. *The Buddhist Revival in China.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

------. 1972. *Buddhism under Mao*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wells, Mariann Kaye. 1971. *Chinese Temples in California*. San Francisco, CA: R and E Associates.

Williams, Duncan Ryūken and Christopher S. Queen, ed. 1999. *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship*. Surrey, U.K.: Curzon.

Williams, Paul and Patrice Ladwig, eds. 2012. *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, Jeff. 2012. *Dixie Dharma: Inside a Buddhist Temple in the American South.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Wolf, Arthur P. 1974. "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors." Pp. 131-182 in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society,* edited by Arthur P. Wolf. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Wong, Wai Yip. 2011. "Defining Chinese Folk Religion: A Methodological Interpretation." *Asian Philosophy* 21(2):153-170.

Wu, Pei-Yi. 1979. "Self-Examination and Confession of Sins in Traditional China" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39(1):5-38.

Wuthnow, Robert and Wendy Cadge. 2004. "Buddhists and Buddhism in the United States: The Scope of Influence." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43:363-380.

Wuthnow, Robert and Stephen Offutt. 2008. “Transnational Religious Connections.” *Sociology of Religion* 69:209-232.

Yang, C. K. 1961. *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Yang, Fenggang. 1999. *Chinese Christian in America: Conversation, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University.

------. 2000. “Hsi Nan Buddhist Temple: Seeking to Americanize.” Pp. 67-88 in *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuity and Adaptions in Immigrant Congregations,* edited by Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

------. 2002. “Religious Diversity among the Chinese in America.” Pp. 71-98 in *Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities,* edited by Pyong Gap Min and Jung Ha Kim. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Yang, Fenggang and Helen Rose Ebaugh. 2001a. “Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications.” *American Sociological Review* 66:269-288.

------, 2001b. "Religion and Ethnicity Among New Immigrants: The Impact of Majority/Minority Status in Home and Host Countries." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40:367-378.

Yang, Mayfair Mei-Hui, ed. 2008. *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation.* Berkeley, CA: Global, Area, and International Archive, University of California Press.

Yao, Xinzhong and Paul Badham, ed. 2007. *Religious Experience in Contemporary China.* Cardiff, U.K.: The University of Wales Press.

Yeh, Chiou-Ling. 2008. *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco’s Chinatown*. Berkeley, CA. University of California Press.

Yo, Hsiang-Chou. 1991. “Chinese Buddhist Confessional Rituals: Their Origin and Spiritual Implications.” Pp. 173-187 in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual* edited by David J. Kalupahana. New York: Paragn House.

Yoo, David K. ed. 1999. *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press.

Yoo, David K. and Ruth H. Chung, ed. 2008. *Religion and Spirituality in Korean America.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Yu, Xue. 2013. "Re-Creation of Rituals in Humanistic Buddhism: A Case Study of Fo Guang Shan" *Asian Philosophy* 23(4):350-364.

Zhan, Heying Jenny, Baozhen Luo, and Gehui Zhang. 2013. "Faith and Health: Meanings of Faith for Chinese Elders with Diverse Religious Backgrounds." *Ageing International* 38:343-363.

Zhang, Xiaojun. 2002. "Ancestral Hall and Buddhist *Gongde* Temple: A Study of Fenglin Ancestral Hall and Kaiyuan Temple in Fujian Province." *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 34(3):28-48.

Zheng, Zhiming. 2005. *Taiwan chuan tong xin yang de zong jiao quan shi* **(***台灣傳統信仰的宗教詮釋*). Taipei, Taiwan: Da Yuan Shu Ju.