

BODHISATTVA COMES OUT OF CLOSET: CITY, SURVEILLANCE, AND DOING RELIGION

Abstract

The author is interested in looking at religious groups as a location for discussion and critique in a censorial society in China. This paper will take the approach of the “ecological model” in field research in a highly censorial and increasingly pluralistic city, Shanghai. Shanghai has experienced large scale social changes since the late 1980s. It is critical to understand how socio-structural challenges, such as immigration, affect faith-based groups within the frame of urban aspirations. In this paper, the adaptation of faith-based groups to their political environments will be the primary focus. Due to governmental restriction in province-level municipalities, religious practices are invisible in public spaces but are revitalizing in private spaces in major Chinese cities. The roles urban religious institutions play in adapting to city regulations are especially pressing for faith groups. My research discovered, first, under the political surveillance in city, religious groups are not passively enduring the impact of political control, but also actively engaging in organizational development. Secondly, religious groups can be considered a location which creates a social space for grassroots education and, therefore, develops a more creative and fluid “popular politics” in society, which offers a critique to a highly regulated society.

Key words: Shanghai, immigration, Buddhism, ecological model, transnationalism

Prior to 1949, Shanghai was already the financial, trading, and economic center of Asia. With its international and semi-colonial image, it withdrew into the center of a socialist state-planned economy under Communist regime. Since 1990, Shanghai has experienced accelerated economic system reform and has been recreated as a cosmopolitan, world financial and commercial center. “Ac-

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celerated urbanization,' a term that signifies rapid progress in a short period,"² demonstrates the expansion of Shanghai's city scale, including changes in population structure, improvement in the urban environment, and pronounced progress in municipal administration.³

In 1980, the population of urban China was around 140 million and accounted for about 15 percent of the total population.⁴ Shanghai's population has grown beyond the 23 million mark in the recent year. Of Shanghai's population, only 13.5 million people are considered permanent residents. Most of the rest are domestic immigrants. The city, which is seen as the business capital of China, is drawing millions of domestic and transnational migrants. The increasing pressure on space and resources is progressively more apparent.

Shanghai's primary economic activity is based on diversified industrial production, but the city is also proud of its port, a global financial market, and a high-tech sector, such as Lujiaochang and Zhangjiang's high-tech park in Pudong. In 1996, over 16,000 foreign-funded enterprises in the city employed nearly 600,000 people and produced 34 per cent of the city's industrial output. By 2000, over half the world's largest 500 companies had established operations in Shanghai.⁵ The magnetism of Shanghai in drawing high concentrations of transnational capital-linked migrants and transnational business professionals has also created a resource base that has a significant effect on the religious ecology of the city. There is a gap in the literature focusing on these transnational migrants and their religious reproduction which I will try to help fill in this paper.

What are the relations between immigrant and religion or immigrant religion and host societies? Immigration brings new dynamics to neighborhoods. Immigrants can generate religious organizational growth, competition, cooperation and adaptation even within the ecological limits of growth. When we consider religious ecology in a global context, immigrant faith groups create transnational changes as they establish new connections between host and sending countries. Herberg's proposition that it is in and through religion that immigrants find an identifiable place in urban life would mean that religion really (or still) matters.⁶ As earlier research discovered, language and culture drew many of these newcomers together into ethnic neighborhoods, while racism and social-economic attraction ensured that many would live and worship in immigrant communities. We may not be able to find significant ethnic enclaves in Shanghai after 2009 World Expo since all forms of ethnic solidarities may be considered a

2 Duo Wu and Taibin Li, "The Present Situation and Prospective Development of the Shanghai Urban Community" in *The New Chinese City: Globalization and Market Reform*. Ed. Logan, John R., Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2002.

3 Jos Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition: Changing Perspectives and Social Contours of a Chinese Metropolis*. Routledge, New York, 2003.

4 R. Kirkby, *Urbanization in China*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1985.

5 For any scholar who is interested in learning more about the social-economic transition of Shanghai, Jos Gamble's book, *Shanghai in Transition*, is extremely helpful. Gamble, 2003.

6 Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983.

threat to the authorities, thus people tend to build up their networks in a latent way.

The narrative of this paper is planned as follows. I will start with an introduction of the ecological model. Then, I will briefly describe the political ecology of Shanghai. What makes Shanghai's unspoken regulations so special? Thirdly, I will look at the scope of transnational networks, Taiwanese immigrants and their religious production, and how they encounter political regulations in their new social settings. I will explore the transnational characteristics of both the business and religious networks of Taiwanese immigrants. Then, I will try to understand how those characteristics interact with religious regulations at the municipal level. And, finally, I will discuss the implications of these cultural-political encounters in the concluding section.

Research framework: strength and limitation

By applying the ecological model to this new field, I would like to examine one major sociological indicator, immigration, that reveals how the urban religious development takes place under Shanghai's regulations. In this brief paper, I will only look at Taiwanese transitional immigrants. This indicator represents important social, economic, and cultural changes in many other mega-cities. Immigration is also central in understanding the religious ecology, since these forces have transformed both the residential and commercial life of neighborhoods.

In Nancy Ammerman's research on the religious ecologies of nine communities across the U.S.,⁷ she found that congregational adaptation is assisted by local coalitions, member networks and even governmental partnerships as well by denominations and theological heritage. Through an analysis of a congregation's demography, culture, and organizational structure, the context of the congregation becomes comprehensible. One of the strengths of this framework is that race, age, ethnicity, income, housing, and family structure (among other factors) of the area are taken into consideration when analyzing both the church and community. The change of the neighborhood, its shared practices, traditions, norms, and values are understood. Our previous research in New York follows similar steps to the ones I have undertaken in investigating the relations between faith-based groups and the city of Shanghai.⁸

As Nancy Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner write:⁹ The ecological frame...assumes that [any] congregation is one among

7 Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1996.

8 The outcome of EOL project will be published as an edited volume, *the Ecology of Faith in New York City*, by Indiana University Press in Jan 2013, edited by Richard Cimino, Nadia Miann, and Weishan Huang. Cimino, Mian, and Huang, 2013.

9 Nancy Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner. "Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context." In *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley, and William Mc Kinney, 40-77. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1998, p. 40.

many. other congregations have their place in the community, their own visions, and their particular constituents, and... they influence each other for good and for ill. Congregations can consciously cooperate and compete; they can hinder (and help) one another without intending to do so; they affect each other by their very presence...

Understanding the local religious ecology includes examining the “scope” and “layers” of a community. Eiesland and Warner further explain,¹⁰ by wide scope, we mean the open-ended character of the congregation’s environment...a congregation is linked to networks and events across geographic and temporal space...they are also characterized by shared conversations, common practices, and structures that promote cooperation and exchange...Layers refers to the fact that the interaction between a congregation, or any institution, and its environment occurs at different levels.

The problem with this framework is: when everything belongs to the ecology, it is not possible to study everything in the field. Therefore, with limited research time and resources, I have sought to narrow down the variables. For example, Shanghai, as many other mega cities in the world, has been experiencing large scale social changes since the late 1980s.¹¹ It is critical to understand how socio-structural challenges, such as immigration and increasing urbanization, have affected faith-based groups in Shanghai. Due to governmental restrictions in province-level municipalities, many religious practices may not be invisible in public spaces, but are they are reviving in private spaces in major Chinese cities. The process of urban religious institutions in adapting to city regulations is my main focus in the later discussion. The open-ended scope of an institution, through its networks and events across time and space, sheds light on how faith based institutions do not reside in a closed system, such as within one city. They are affected and influenced by their transnational networks that have been established beyond the urban geographic space.

The limitation of my research is that many questions I raised earlier will require much longer and thorough ethnographic efforts in these neighborhoods, while I just began this long-term project last year. Moreover, some governmental census data is not available to the public yet. More detail on the challenges of this framework in my current research will be elaborated later in this paper.

10 Nancy Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner, 1998, p. 40.

11 The fieldwork was conducted in March 2011 for four weeks in Shanghai.

State discourse and municipal regulation

The post-Mao government has permitted limited freedom of religious belief and behavior, which is subject to legal and regulatory restrictions. Beginning in 1979, a limited number of Protestant and Catholic churches, Buddhist and Daoist temples, and Islamic mosques have opened or reopened for religious services.¹² In 1982, religious toleration was formally reinstated. This basic viewpoint and the policy on religious affairs during the socialist period were documented in "Document No. 19th." The official state discourse grants legal existence to Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism under the government-sanctioned "Patriotic" associations, but not to groups outside of the five religious associations, nor to other religions.¹³ The post-Mao regime adopted a more tolerant perspective on religion. "As a component of a new approach to build the regime's legitimacy, the government accepted a trade-off of broader social and economic autonomy in exchange for continued political loyalty."¹⁴

Yet we must note that other forms of religious practices had been preserved through Cultural Revolution and revitalized in the Putian area of Fujiang, as Kenneth Dean demonstrated in his study. While religion is still a sensitive issue in China, many scholars have contributed to the study of its revival and development, particularly that of Buddhism in urban areas,¹⁵ and that of Christianity in both rural and urban areas.¹⁶ Yet little literature touches on the issue of the development of religion in China through transnational networks. Mayfair Yang has discussed Mazu in the southern part of China and David Palmer and Vincent Goossaert have also dealt briefly with this subject in their recent book.¹⁷

What makes the political ecology of Shanghai different from other places, such as rural areas in China? In my fieldwork, I found out that one important but unspoken regulation among house churches in Shanghai is the separation of "foreign" and "non-foreign" congregations or fellowships. For example, in the "Regulations on the Religious Affairs in Shanghai," one learns that these regulations are formulated in accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws for the purposes of ensuring citizens' freedom of religious belief, maintaining harmony among and between religions, preserving social concord and regulating the administration of religious affairs. Yet this citizens' freedom of religious belief

12 Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China" *The China Quarterly*, No. 174, Religion in China Today (Jun.), 2003, pp. 317-337.

13 Fenggang Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, volume 44, Issue 4, December, 2005, pp. 423-441.

14 Potter, 2003, page 318.

15 Gareth Fisher, "Religion as Repertoire: Resourcing the past in a Beijing Buddhist Temple" *Modern China*, Sep 15, 2011.

16 For rural, see Hunter and Chan, 1993. For urban areas, see Cao, 2007 and F. Yang, 2005.

17 Mayfair Mei-hui Yang ed., *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008. Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer. *The Religious Question in Modern China*. University Of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011.

is limited. In the name of “harmony,” there are many restrictions that have been set up for faith practices. Since it is “illegal” for citizens to practice religious rituals without religious clergy even at permitted religious sites, almost all religious rituals conducted outside of state-sponsored sites are “underground.”¹⁸ And these rules also apply to foreigners. Religious activities of aliens within Chinese territory includes the religious ceremonies that aliens conduct or participate in according to their own religious belief customs, their contacts with Chinese religious bodies, sites for religious activities, and religious personnel in respect to religion and other relevant activities.¹⁹ It reflects the government’s fear of foreign influence on domestic congregations. The Chinese government still treats Christianity as a foreign religion; yet, this regulation is not imposed on Buddhists in Shanghai.²⁰ Despite all of the constraints of written and unwritten rules, local and foreign residents are still “doing religion” in Shanghai, with some political uncertainties. Therefore, it brings up some interesting questions. How do they manage to be accepted by the local regime while at the same time fulfilling their religious visions? How does the ecological approach help us understand the process of doing religion in a highly censorial and increasingly pluralistic city?

The second unspoken regulation I discovered is not only that “nationality” matters in Shanghai, but that the size of a group is also critical. Shanghai city government will be tolerant if each house church or religious groups has an attendance of lower than 50 people at a single event. Therefore, faith-based groups have to stay small in order to survive. The State does not take their small and submissive presence as a threat. This has to do with crowd control in order to prevent the outbreak of disorder and possible mobilization. This number is imposed by the municipal government to quarantine religious groups by isolating them into small groups. Yet it creates a lot of challenges for a researcher to study them or find the various connections among them.

Religious organizations are viewed as participatory actors that shape and are shaped by city life. Eiesland defines religious ecology as the “patterns of relations, status, and interaction among religious organizations within a locality... religious groups may not relate to those nearby, but they are nonetheless part of an ecology because of their physical proximity and by virtue of common environmental factors, for example, economic, educational, or infrastructural

18 The original wordings are as follows. “第五条坚持宗教不干预国家行政、司法、学校教育和公共教育的原则。坚持维护国家主权和独立自主自办的原则，宗教团体、宗教活动场所和宗教事务不受外国势力支配 in <上海市宗教事务条例>..

19 Article 3 in “Decree of the State Administration for Religious Affairs”, No.1. Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the Territory of the People’s Republic of China

20 The original wording is as follows. . 第四十七条外国人在本市进行宗教活动，当遵守中国的法律、法，不得成立宗教团体、建立宗教办事机构、设宗教活动场所和宗教院校；不得在中国公民中发展教徒、委任宗教教职人、散发宗教宣传品以及进行其他传教活动。” in 上<海市宗教事务条例>。

changes."²¹ Yet since many religious practices in Shanghai remain underground, there are limited interactions among religious groups themselves or with other civil organizations. There are also limited interactions between underground groups and their neighborhoods. Yet by making this claim, it does not help in moving my research forward. If one takes the political constraints on religious groups as the biggest ecological obstacle in the city, one will then pay attention to the innovative practices of where and how people are doing religion to bypass censorship rather than only looking the relationship between states and faith based groups.

Transnational religious networks

Taiwan has served as an important source of emigration that has contributed to the religious revival in China since the latter nation's opening to outside influences. The following discussion will focus on the reproduction of religious beliefs carried out by Taiwanese merchants in the intersection of transnational migration and the global division of labor in Shanghai. Most of the Taiwanese in Shanghai are economic migrants who are seeking better economic opportunities. According to Portes, transnational entrepreneurs are different from immigrant entrepreneurs since the immigrant entrepreneurs are those who "settled abroad and became progressively integrated into local ways," while the transnational entrepreneurs cultivate their networks across space, and travel "back and forth in pursuit of their commercial ventures."²²

In China after the post-June 4th period, the state began to encourage direct investment (FDI), which served as a driving force that occasioned the eventual demise of China's state-owned enterprises.²³ Foreign capital, technology, and management knowledge and techniques from the four East Asian newly industrialized countries (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea) have flowed into Shenzhen, transforming it into a free trade zone for multinational factories during the early years of economic reform. A few years later, the government expanded to four "special economic zones," and then fourteen cities, all located along the eastern coast, for joint ventures between foreign companies and the Chinese government. In 1999 the prohibition on foreign-private economic cooperation in China was lifted. By 2000, the government stipulated required quotas of foreign investment that all areas had to fill. Foreign companies gained permission to establish wholly foreign-owned enterprises without joint Chinese state

21 Nancy Eiesland, *A Particular Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb*, Rutgers University Press, 1999. pp. xi and 11.

22 Guarnizo A. Portes and P. Landolt. "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22(2): 219-237. 1999. Page 225.

23 Mary Elizabeth Gallagher, *Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor in China*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005.

ownership.²⁴

There are numerous studies that contribute to the understanding of Taiwanese migrants in China by positioning them in the economic chain of the global division of labor. Scholars often characterize those entrepreneurs who have moved their businesses from Taiwan to China as adopting cost-reduction, innovation, and quality enhancement strategies. Overall, we have learned that migrant networks and organization have emerged as development agents. In the institutional dimension, agents such as hometown associations, networks of merchant associations, and epistemic networks have emerged as collective actors.²⁵ Yet in the current round of the migration–development nexus, just how the migrant networks interact with local adherents in flows of knowledge and religious ideas is still under-studied.

Going underground

When Sister Chiou first showed me the Bodhisattva statue hidden behind the bookshelves, I was surprised by the sophisticated design of this secret closet. “The first layer of bookshelves only opens when Tzu Chi members gather in the room. It remains closed on a daily basis, in case policemen inspect our office spaces unexpectedly,” Chiou said. As a pioneer in bringing Tzu Chi to Shanghai, Sister Chiou has faced harassment, interrogation, and short periods of detention by the government. At least, this was the story in 1998. Between 1998 and 2008, Tzu Chi Buddhist members worshipped as a group in the *Jinshi* Hall²⁶ inside of their factories and companies. After they were harassed a few times by local police and “Taiban”²⁷ officers when they had house gatherings, they decided to convene their events at companies and factories, as they were the respective bosses of those private firms. When religious groups cannot freely express their practices in the public sphere, they bring them into the private sector and private space.

Sister Chiou’s office is in Putuo district. Brother M, in Jiading district, Brother W, in Jingan district, Sister M, in Baoshan district, Sister H, in Pudong district, and brother H, in Minhung district, have also employed their company spaces to shelter their religious events for years. They are all Taiwanese entrepreneurs in Shanghai. They started gathering at home, but somehow “Taiban” officers managed to discover and then ban their home events. They host Buddhist study groups and Buddhist festivals in the manufacturing and office spaces.

24 Gallagher, 2005.

25 Thomas Fais. “Migrants as Transnational Development Agents: An Inquiry into the Newest Round of the Migration-Development Nexus.” *Populations, Space, and Place*. 14, 2008, pp. 21-42.

26 Still Thought Hall.

27 台辦. Officers from Taiwan Affairs Office (台灣事務辦事處).

My fieldwork on this transnational religious movement led me to discover how, firstly, immigrant entrepreneurs used their economic power to shadow religious practice before they gained legal status in 2008. People are doing religion under the risk of losing their businesses. Secondly, even after gaining “legal” status, they still have to practice their belief in a hidden way, within small groups. The increased indigenization of membership has been rapid. Most of the new converts are Chinese. The religious teaching has translated into grassroots education among Chinese and street campaigns, as I will discuss later.

This Buddhist group I refer to is Tzu Chi Foundation. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (Tzu Chi) is an international Buddhist relief organization founded in 1966 and based in Hualien, Taiwan, with millions of members in Taiwan and overseas. Tzu Chi is indeed the largest social group in Taiwan, with more than 300 Tzu Chi offices in more than forty countries, four supporting missions, and 300,000 certified commissioners (lay leaders) worldwide. Tzu Chi today has more new local Chinese than Taiwanese converts in Shanghai. The founder, Master Cheng Yen, was initiated as a Buddhist nun in 1963 and was influenced by her master, Yin Shun, who taught her to “Be committed to Buddhism and to all living beings.”²⁸ Unusual among Buddhist organizations, Tzu Chi defines social service rather than religion as its primary goal, a change that dates back to the late 1960s. This reform is truly the Reverend Cheng Yen’s innovation.

The discourse of freedom or ultimate liberation usually serves as the primary source of religious cultivation. The ultimate goal of all schools of traditional Buddhism remains the same: to liberate people from suffering. The primary sources of human existence and the force that maintains and controls it are perceived in motivated action (karma). Positive and negative actions can be neutralized by each other or accumulated, and that brings the self-fulfilling result of a good or bad life in this world or the next life. Intentional actions always lead to retribution and consequently perpetuate existence, but they never bring complete freedom from suffering. For Buddhists, this liberation is an indication of freedom in another world. Therefore, there are few public religious discourses in the Buddhist history that have ever been put into practice.

What makes Tzu Chi’s teaching different from other traditional Mahayana Buddhism? “Relieve suffering, embrace all beings” is a core teaching of its founder Master Cheng Yen. The focuses on “this world” and on “physical practice” are central doctrines of Tzu Chi Buddhism, and are more potent than sutra chanting or meditation. Tzu Chi members believe that benevolent actions cultivate or repair their karma. Demonstrating the Tzu Chi spirit might include visiting the poor, providing disaster relief, or conducting community services. This doctrine provides the basis for mobilizing commissioners and volunteers into becoming involved in a variety of social service activities. Members repeatedly emphasize

28 This is a story which readers can find in many of Master Cheng Yang’s autobiography and interviews. http://tw.tzuchi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89&Itemid=267&lang=zh (accessed 17.10. 2012).

that it is “Buddhism of this world” that makes Tzu Chi different from other Buddhist organizations. This is Tzu Chi’s way of engaging in publics and societies.

What constitutes Tzu Chi’s grassroots education, if there is any? I will use the example of environmentalism and its actual practice in Shanghai.²⁹ Sister Mei owns a construction company. She has converted her storefront space into a gathering space for all Tzu Chi activities in that district. After I was told there is no public religious display besides tourism sites in Shanghai, I walked into Mei office and was greeted by Tzu Chi posters as her storefront decoration. The office is completely converted into a Tzu Chi local center with clear Tzu Chi interior design elements. Every Tuesday, there is study group gathering in this commercial space. Members watch video clips and listen to senior commissioners’ lectures about environmentalism and Buddhism. Members are from neighboring housing communities and of all ages. Putting Buddhist ideas into action is something new to them. Many of them are former *Jushi*³⁰ and enthusiastic about recycling education in their neighborhood and poverty relief in rural area. Senior members teach new members how to plan and implement organizational activities. New converts bring new ideas as to how to localize this transnational Buddhist teaching in housing communities. On the weekends, residents can also hear music and witness about 75 people singing and dancing to Tzu Chi music outside of Mei’s company. About 75 people dispersed into four residential communities for environmental protection campaigns, mainly promoting recycling. A team of 16-20 members will set up a booth in the plaza or another open space in the housing community (Xiaoqu) to maximize the visual impact. Volunteers start with singing songs and dancing to warm up and catch the attention of passersby. Of course, some residents will complain and report this activity to the housing community committee (Juwei), which also includes a party representative. The purpose of outdoor events is to promote the concept of recycling and environmentalism. Overall, I observed several very high-profile outdoor campaigns with only one complaint received during that day. Yet the complaint was quickly resolved after sister M made a few phone calls. Many other Tzuchians incorporated the concept of sustainable development in similar ways in their communities. Ceaseless efforts at communication and the skillful cultivation of personal relationships with housing community and party leaders are the keys for TC to develop in some residential neighborhoods.

29 Why do Tzuchians promote environmentalism? They have to promote the value of a life of wisdom. Environmentalism provides the only possible field for cultivation. Thus, the master calls Tzuchians “Environmental Buddhas,” “Purified Buddhas,” or “Buddhas of Embracing Earth.” Master Cheng Yen often emphasized the relationship between “reviving decency, decorum, ethics and virtue” and environmental protection. Cheng Yen uses modern language in her discourse, such as “Love the Earth.” As a Buddhist, this means to love the pure Hui Ming (the life of wisdom) in our lives. In the world of the ten directions (the whole universe), the only place where people can cultivate themselves and become Buddha is the earth. Buddha has taught people that human beings cannot become Buddha in heaven, nor in hell. The only place for cultivation is the earth.

30 Lay Buddhist, householder Buddhism.

As many informants mentioned to me, the interpretations of karma exchange are fairly common among businesspeople, yet they are expressed differently. The businesses are different and the discourse and implementations are different. Sustainable development and environmental protection have translated economically into the practice of thrift in the use of electricity and all other resources, as well as raw material conservation in manufacturing. Tzu Chi cultivation teaching has translated into the concept of self-management to control or re-direct the questionable excessiveness, if not greed, of employers, as well as to instruct or even discipline employees.³¹

After gaining their legal legitimacy in 2008, Tzuchians in China have also worked side-by-side with the local governments on relief efforts from time to time. Yet there is evidence of tension between spiritual teachings, censorship, and commercial logic. The municipal regulation has still forced Tzu Chi missions into the private sectors—the companies and manufacturers that are dominated by foreign investors, yet their practices are not categorized as illegal activities. Organizational works promote the idea of environmentalism instead of philosophical Buddhist teachings. This Buddhist belief created a link between religious valuation and moral action. Followers of these teachings could not isolate their good deeds to certain contexts; they had to reorganize their lives methodically and cultivate themselves through their work in daily life.

Buddhist benevolent practices under this structure of restraint

How are Tzuchian's practices changed under this structure of restraint? For example, based on my previous research in the US, Tzu Chi conducts a wide array of social service work in New York City. The Mission of Charity commissioners visit the poor, nursing homes, and jails, and provide long-term and short-term assistance. Every Saturday, the team of commissioners offers free lunch to elderly people at a Buddhist Temple, which is owned and attended by Fuzhouese immigrants in Chinatown. Tzu Chi also distributes winter coats at another Buddhist Temple, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, and other locations in Brooklyn, with assistance from the Guan Ming and Guan Yin temples. In 2001, Tzu Chi New York extended its coat-distribution practice to a Latino neighborhood, the Charas/El Bohio Cultural and Community Center on Manhattan's Lower East Side. These kinds of outdoor and interfaith and interracial endeavors may not be easily conducted in current Shanghai, although Tzu Chi received its legal status in 2008.

Another example will be the Tzu Chi Mission of Medicine, which provides volunteer services in hospitals and has established a medical clinic on wheels for Chinatown's elderly, conducting blood-pressure tests and organizing global

31 Julia Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement*. Harvard University Press, Harvard, 2009.

bone-marrow donation campaigns in New York. It also supports free clinics for Taiwan immigrants in Flushing with the help of the Flushing Chinese Business Association, as well as clinics and relief distribution in rural areas. In the last two years, Tzu Chi has been actively negotiating the possibilities of its medical mission in Suzhou city and is awaiting permits.

The Tzu Chi Mission of Education in USA has established the Tzu Chi Humanities Schools to promote moral teaching, meditation, and Mandarin language instruction for the second generation. The establishment of Tzu Chi School was more difficult than it was for the hospitals in China. Some designated Tzuchians in Shanghai would visit elementary schools teachers or principals with the intention to integrate Tzu Chi Still Thoughts into their curriculums.

The Mission of Culture in New York carries out small programs such as a weekly street clean-up and occasional park beautification projects. Tzu Chi New York also organizes occasional lectures, tea parties, and charity bazaars to raise funds for the poor or for disaster relief. In Shanghai, voluntary street cleaning is not possible. Yet private tea parties and charity bazaars are organized at homes or at the Tzu Chi Center in Changfeng.

Buddhist benevolent practices in Shanghai in 1920s

The unique practice of Tzu Chi Buddhism is its emphasis on social services. The concept of benevolent Buddhist practices in China or Shanghai is not new, which has been part of Buddhist tradition. According to Zongmao Tang, "new" benevolent practices in 1920's Shanghai revealed how Chinese Buddhism was socialized in modern China. It also illustrates the significant transition that Buddhism underwent under modernization in urban areas. Donations for medical treatment, tea, and congee are the ways of being a generous Buddhist in traditional society. Yet those benevolent practices are random and territorially based. Tang argues that the benevolent practices among Buddhist laity (called "householder Buddhism" by Jushi) in the 1920s were significantly different than those of the traditional laity in term of breaking out of the conventional boundaries of territoriality, kinship, and professions in practice.³²

Shanghai laity in the 1920s were deeply influenced by Master Yinguang's teaching on the Pure Land. "Belief, Vision, and Practice" were taught as the three major essences to achieve Western Heaven. Shanghai laity in the 1920s, unlike those holding to conventional practices, did not affiliate with temples or governmental officials. Therefore, the financial sources came from the general public and from some major merchants. The people who received the aid also included war refugees and children who needed education. Buddhist benevolent works also extended beyond their local adherents. Unlike "traditional" Buddhists who

32 Goossaert and Palme, 2008. And Zhongmao Tang. 2011 *Minguo shanghai jushi fojiao cishan de jiben yunzhuo moshi*, tedian yu yiyi, Conference paper. Shanghai University, Shanghai, 2011.

based their benevolent works around local temples, the laity in the 1920s systematically developed various programs in the city, which were expanded outside of Jiangshu province. Tang also uncovered how the leadership of benevolent works had shifted from feudal landlords and traditional patrons to urban merchants. Those urban merchants, as Tang argued, usually utilize those benevolent works as, first, the presentation of prestige and social status, and secondly, as the mean to advance their businesses.³³

A Reflection on the ecological model

Unlike Nancy Ammerman's research, I found it difficult to run an analysis of religious groups' local or street-level demography since census data is not open to researchers. Thus the context of a group and its neighborhood becomes unclear. Race, age, ethnicity, income, housing, and family structure (among other factors) of the area ought to be taken into consideration when analyzing both the faith group and the community. Due to this unavailability, the alternative is to undertake an organizational study. The organizational hierarchy of the faith group, whether it is non-denominational, without a pastor, or governed by a hierarchical structure, may affect a group's relationship and interaction with its community.

Here we can reflect on the importance of the ecological approach in Shanghai, which is an analysis of the political layer, including both written and unspoken rules. With all of the political constraints in Shanghai, people are still doing religion anyway. But they must do it in a very creative way in order to survive and grow. For example, there is evidence of a tension between spiritual teachings, censorship, and commercial logic. My paper discusses how the tension between Tzu Chi and the Chinese state has forced Tzu Chi missions into the private sector—namely the companies and manufacturers that are dominated by foreign investors.

Unlike my research in New York where we can start with the Chinese yellow pages, researchers will have to find the underground sites on a one-by-one basis. Since religious practices are not completely free in Shanghai/China, faith groups cannot really interact with other institutions, including religious and non-religious ones. Faith groups do not know the existence or activities of other faith groups in their neighborhoods or in the metropolitan sense. Since religious practices are not completely free in Shanghai it will be safer for faith groups to "not know other existing practices in Shanghai," especially for large groups.

Spaces could be physical, mental, and social, so it is important to ask what kinds of space are occupied and employed by religions to adapt to municipal regulations? Urban spaces and the practice of religion are extremely transnation-

33 Tang, 2011.

alized and many of these processes are conceptualized as parts or consequences of globalization, such as international migration. This question has encouraged us to look at the ways in which a set of issues relating to place establishes itself in the belief system that connects the relations of a given religious community to its past and to its future.³⁴

Conclusion: something new from an old tradition

In C.K. Yang's study, religion has been put in the center of daily life in Chinese society in his book, which is an innovative idea that stands in opposition to the idea of the importance of Chinese modern elites, such as Liang Qichao (1873-1929). We have also seen this attempt in Goossaert and Palmer's brilliant scholarship.³⁵

In my case, I tried to study a transnational group in a highly controlled city. In my primary research, I discovered, first, under the political surveillance religious groups are not passively enduring the impact of political control, but also actively engaging in organizational development. Up to 2007, over 60 countries had accepted disaster relief from the Tzu Chi Foundation. Tzuchians in China also have worked side by side with the local governments on relief efforts from time to time. This Buddhist belief created a link between religious valuation and moral action. Followers of these teachings could not isolate their good deeds to certain contexts; they had to reorganize their lives methodically and cultivate themselves through their work in daily life. To live a simple life is to run one's business wisely in an economical and pragmatic way. To practice diligence is to be prudent and sensible in business. Cherishing resources leads to recycling and reusing material in one's business. Saving resources and energy are moral actions to save the earth. To control desire is a discipline of mind and body requiring methodical cultivation, such as being a vegetarian and practicing thrift. You are not supposed to spend the wealth you earn. The greater wealth is to be able to share your wealth.

Secondly, religious groups can be considered a location which creates a social space for grassroots education. A social space, which is strategically spatial arranged, allows to develop a more creative and fluid "popular politics" in a highly controlled society, which offers a critique to a highly regulated society. The discourse that I heard from many Tzuchi merchants is very similar. They apply the concept of Tzuchi teaching to their enterprises. Besides the routine donations to the poor, they are strongly encouraged to utilize their profession for the public interest. Enterprises should not limit their goal only to the pursuit of economic profit. Enterprises should focus on carbon emissions reduction to pursue sustain-

34 Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Space and Religion: New Approaches to Religious Spatiality in Modernity." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26.1, March, Oxford, 2002, 99-105.

35 Goossaert and Palmer, 2011.

able development on Earth, and establish good models of enterprises based on shared responsibility.

As I mentioned earlier, putting Buddhist ideas into action is something new to local Chinese converts. Many of them are former *Jushi* and enthusiastic about recycling education in their neighborhood and poverty relief in rural area. Senior members teach new members how to plan and implement organizational activities. New converts bring new ideas as to how to localize this transnational Buddhist teaching in housing communities. The transnational flow of religious knowledge and practice has been localized in the neighborhood. What are the distinctive characters of Tzu Chi teaching comparing with the lay Buddhist history in Shanghai?

If we compare the Tzuchi merchants with the Buddhist laity in the 1920s, there are three major differences. First of all, Tzu Chi is affiliated with a foreign mother temple in Hualian Taiwan. It is registered as a non-governmental organization in China. The financial resources come from the general public and Taiwanese merchants in Shanghai. Tzu Chi Shanghai is not allowed to publicly solicit donations. The benevolence programs also extend beyond urban areas for two reasons. The extreme poverty in rural areas has provided a niche for many faith-based organizations, including Tzu Chi, to expand their missions. Tzu Chi's transnational nature suggests it will not limit its vision for growth to one city. As for the leadership, Tzu Chi merchants have to blend in with other general followers as regular members. As one company's president has told me, "We must shrink ourselves. There is no boss ego in the Tzuchian family." Therefore, the intention of utilizing charitable works to build up their business reputation or their social status is prohibited. Tzu Chi merchants cannot use charitable works to advance their business, such as building up connections with local or remote governments. On the other hand, they will have to risk their business when they promote their faith.

What are the distinctive characters of Tzu Chi teaching compared with its practice in other countries? Tzu Chi practices do not encourage the mix of personal business interest and Tzu Chi organizational interest. Yet under the particular kind of political ecology in Shanghai, merchants will have to take Tzu Chi practice under their commercial wings. The merchants are usually named as the head of district religious shareholder. In the study of relations between spiritual teachings, censorship, and commercial logic, I discovered how the tension between Buddhist Tzu Chi and the Chinese state is different from that between house churches and the local state. Regulation has forced Tzu Chi missions into the private sectors—the companies and manufacturers that are dominated by foreign investors, yet the practices are not categorized as illegal activities.

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БОДИСАТВА СТИЖЕ ИЗ ПЛАКАРА: ГРАД, ПРИСМОТРА И ПРАКТИКОВАЊЕ РЕЛИГИЈЕ

Резиме

Аутор посматра религиозне заједнице као место за дискусију и критику цензуре у кинеском друштву. Овај рад се користи "еколошком методом" у истраживању у високо цензурираном и све више плуралистичком граду, Шангају. Шангај је искусио велике друштвене промене од касних 80-десетих година. Важно је да се разуме како су друштвено – структурални изазови, као што су имиграција, утицали на верске групе у оквиру њихових урбаних аспирација. У овом раду, примарни фокус ће бити на адаптацији верских група на политичку околину. У складу са владиним рестрикцијама на нивоу општина у провинцијама, религиозна пракса је невидљива у јавној сфери али јача у приватној сфери у свим већим градовима у Кини. Улога коју религиозне институције играју у усклађивању са градским регулативама утиче највише на верске групе. Ово истраживање открива да, прво, иако под политичком присмотром у граду, верске групе не подносе пасивно утицај политичке контроле, већ се активно ангажују у смислу развоја организације. Друго, верске групе могу бити посматране као место које ствара друштвени простор за образовање провинције и да као такве, развијају креативније и флуидније "популистичке политике" у друштву, које служе као критика високо контролисаном друштву.

Кључне речи: Шангај, имиграција, будизам, еколошки модел, транс-национализам

Примљен: 5.11.2011.

Прихваћен: 20.10.2012.