

Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan: Two Case Studies

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism booms in Taiwan. Whether one looks at monastery construction, media coverage, or the overall number of Buddhist organizations, the last thirty years have been a period of unprecedented growth for Buddhism in Taiwan. Apart from general historical overviews,¹ several aspects of this development have already attracted academic attention. There are substantial studies on the influence of the Japanese occupation,² the emergence of large Buddhist organizations,³ the development of a Chinese form of socially engaged Buddhism (*renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教),⁴ and the growing empowerment of women within the Sangha.⁵

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¹ For Western scholarship, see Charles Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State 1660–1990* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1999), and Marcus Günzel, *Die Taiwan-Erfahrung des chinesischen Sangha* (Göttingen: Seminar für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde, 1998). For statistics, see Marcus Bingenheimer, "Chinese Buddhism Unbound: Rebuilding and Redefining Chinese Buddhism on Taiwan," in vol. 2 of *Buddhism in Global Perspective*, ed. Kalpakam Sankarnarayan (Mumbai: Somaiya Publications, 2003). For Chinese works, consult the writings of Jiang Canteng 江燦騰, Lan Jifu 藍吉富, Kan Zhengzong 闕正宗, and Yang Huinan 楊惠南, listed variously, below.

² See Jiang Canteng, *Riju shiqi taiwan Fojiao wenhua fazhan shi* 日據時期台灣佛教文化發展史 (Taipei: Nantian, 2001).

³ See Stuart Chandler, "Establishing a Pureland on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization, Ph.D. diss. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2000), and Chien-yu Huang, "Recapturing Charisma: Emotion and Rationalization in a Globalizing Buddhist Movement from Taiwan," Ph.D. diss. (Boston: Boston University, 2001).

⁴ Yang Huinan, *Dangdai Fojiao sixiang zhanwang* 當代佛教思想展望 (Taipei: Dongda, 1991), and Stefania Travagnin, "Il nuovo 'Buddhismo per l'Umanità' (renjian Fojiao) a Taiwan: Una nota sulla classificazione degli insegnamenti (panjiao) secondo il Maestro Yinshun," *Cina* 29 (1991), pp. 65–102. Throughout our article, the term "Chinese" indicates only people who would self-identify as (culturally) Han 漢 regardless of country of citizenship, thus it does not include non-Han citizens of China such as the Kanjurwa (discussed below).

⁵ See Meei-Hwa Chern, "Encountering Modernity: Buddhist Nuns in Postwar Taiwan,"

Compared to such highly visible, important developments in Buddhism, our present topic may appear to be a mere curiosity. The phenomenon of Buddhist mummification in Taiwan, however, illustrates how one marginal practice continues to exist along with tendencies toward greater rationality, gender equality, and social involvement. In fact mummification shows that for contemporary Taiwanese Buddhists, religious beliefs and practices can be rational (explained in terms of causal reasons) and empirical (confirmed through observation or experience), even if they are not scientific. (The latter is taken in the sense of verified through controlled experiments designed to disconfirm false hypotheses if such experiments are feasible, usually including quantified data, and self-consciously open to continual revision in light of new evidence.)

The production and worship of mummies belongs to a mode of Buddhism, sometimes called popular Buddhism, that operates in a space outside the doctrinal discourse as found in canonical texts. Although Chinese texts have noted the existence of Buddhist practitioners – virtually all monks – from the end of the third century onwards who became mummified, either entirely on their own (purportedly through their own spiritual practice) or with some extra (chemical) assistance, their mummification is mentioned only in passing. To our knowledge, there has never been any debate on the hows and whys of Buddhist mummification in canonical Buddhist literature. Neither have there been systematic attempts to integrate the practice into a larger doctrinal framework or to condemn mummification and the worship of whole-body relics. The silence of the texts is not so surprising however, since mummification (including self-mummification) seems to have been a relatively rare though recurrent practice. In Buddhism, as in Christianity, mummification and mummy worship make religious sense only in the larger context of relic worship. Therefore, below we often use the emic term “whole-body relic 全身舍利” instead of “mummy.” Whole-body relics are found in many Buddhist societies and are clearly a pan-Buddhist phenomenon. Gilded whole-body relics have predominated in China, Taiwan, and Vietnam; ungilded mummies in Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Thailand.

The earliest Buddhist mummy in China of which we are aware was that of Heluojie 何羅竭 (d. 298), a mountain ascetic of uncertain origins.

Ph.D. diss. (Temple U., 2000) and Yu-chen Li, “Crafting Women’s Religious Experience in a Patrilineal Society: Taiwanese Buddhist Nuns in Action (1945–1999) (China),” Ph.D. diss. (Cornell U., 2000).

His disciples attempted to cremate him after he died in meditative sitting posture, but after several days on the pyre his corpse still resisted burning. His disciples then placed his corpse in a cave, and thirty years later an Indian visitor named Anshi saw his corpse still sitting there. Other early Buddhist mummies in China include those of Shan Daokai 單道開 (d. ca. 360), Bo Sengguang 帛僧光 (d. 385), and Zhu Tanyou 竺曇猷 (d. 390s). Like Heluojie, all three were mountain ascetics, were from or had connections with areas west of China, and their mummifications do not appear to have been intentionally brought about by disciples.⁶ While ascetic diets may have aided the process along, it is likely that these early cases of mummification were merely accidental: worldwide, such mummification is by no means rare.

Over two hundred years after these early mummies, we begin to find accounts in *Xu gaoseng zhuan* of whole-body relics produced or at least preserved through intentional and artificial means. For instance the corpse of the monk-ascetic Daoxiu 道修 (d. 627) was covered with lacquer-soaked cloth after his non-decaying corpse was discovered and enshrined for worship.⁷ The same method of preservation was used for the corpse of Daoxin 道信 (580–651), the so-called fourth patriarch of the Chan lineage, whose intact, lifelike corpse was discovered some months after his death and then protected with lacquered cloth.⁸ Nevertheless, their successful mummifications were attributed to a high degree of spiritual attainment.

Starting with Daoxin in the mid-Tang, and continuing to the present day, we find that many illustrious monks purportedly have become whole-body relics including Kuiji 窺基 (632–82), Huineng 慧能 (638–713), Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏 637–735), and Yunmen 雲門 (864–949), and although the exact procedures involved in their mummifications are uncertain, lacquer seems to have been involved as a final protective measure.⁹ As Robert Sharf and Bernard Faure have suggested, it is likely that such important monks were intentionally mummified for a number of reasons, including maintenance of a sense

⁶ These mummifications are recorded in *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, *T*no. 2059, vol. 50, pp. 387–95. For a brief sketch of early Buddhist mummies in China, see Robert Sharf, “The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch’an Masters in Medieval China” *History of Religions* 32.1 (1992), pp. 5–10.

⁷ *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, *T*no. 2060, vol. 50, p. 684B.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 606B.

⁹ See *T*no. 2035, vol. 49, p. 385A, and *T*no. 2061, vol. 50, p. 716A (Kuiji and Śubhakarasiṃha, respectively). For more on Huineng and Yunmen, see Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton U.P., 1991) and Faure, “Relics and Flesh Bodies: The Creation of Ch’an Pilgrimage Sites,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, ed. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1992).

of continuity with the past for monastic communities and the enhancement of a monastery's numinous power 靈 in order to increase its claims to authority and qualifications as a pilgrimage site.¹⁰

We can trace a purported connection between mummification, on one hand, and morality, concentration, and wisdom on the other – the same qualities that are said to imbue the more common (crystalized) bone relics – at least as far back as 988, the year that the Chinese Buddhist monk Zanning 贊寧 (919–1002) completed *Song gaoseng zhuan*. In this history under the entry for the Esoteric Buddhist master Śubhakarasiṃha (a monk of central Indian origin, but who lived in China during Tang), it is written that when his corpse became mummified after his death in 735, “as his entire body had been perfumed by concentration and wisdom, it did not decay.”¹¹ Śubhakarasiṃha was also described in this history as having been diligent in upholding moral precepts.

The practice of mummification continued throughout the period of the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. Whole-body relics were worshipped as local deities that could grant favors and interact with people by sending dreams. A relatively recent eminent Buddhist monk, whose whole-body relic is still enshrined along with that of Huineng in southern China, is Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623).¹² Also starting in the Ming, the mountain area Jiuhua shan 九華山 emerged as something of a mummification center, with many whole-body relics appearing there beginning with the monk Wuxia 無瑕 (1513–1623).¹³

By the late-Qing and early-Republic, whole-body relics were quite common. Perceval Yetts claimed that most mummies (or “dried priests” as he called them) were prepared with the intent of creating objects of worship that would attract donations, so perhaps financial incentives as well as increased technical facility in producing mummies (the techniques for which Yetts discusses) contributed to their proliferation.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Sharf, “Idolization of Enlightenment,” and Faure, “Relics and Flesh Bodies.”

¹¹ *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, T no. 2061, vol. 50, p. 716A.

¹² See Sung-peng Hsu, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Hanshan Te-ching* (University Park: Pennsylvania State U.P., 1979), pp. 98–101, and Faure, “Relics and Flesh Bodies,” p. 168.

¹³ See *Jiuhua shan zhi* 九華山志 (Hefei, Anhui: Huangshan shushe, 1990). Jiuhua shan in Anhui province is connected to the bodhisattva Earth Treasury (*dizang* 地藏; Sanskrit: *kṣitigarbha*). Whole-body relics, especially those of Wuxia 無瑕 (1513–1623) and Duduo 杜多 (d. 1660), played an important role in the development of the mountain into a pilgrimage center. Note that Cihang, the first monk in Taiwan to become mummified, had visited Jiuhua shan: see Kan Zhengzong 闕正宗, *Taiwan gaoseng* 台灣高僧 (Taipei: Puti changqing, 1996), p. 52.

¹⁴ Perceval Yetts, “Notes on the Disposal of Buddhist Dead in China,” *JRAS* (1911), p. 712.

Prip-Møller in the 1930s wrote that mummies were common in central China and even more so in Sichuan.¹⁵

The production and worship of whole-body relics continues today. While the Communist regime in China destroyed some whole-body relics, in recent years new mummies have emerged in Jiuhua shan.¹⁶ And in the case of Taiwan we are able to observe how, along with orthodox Chinese Buddhism, this Buddhist practice found its way to the island after 1949.¹⁷

Today we are aware of five or possibly six cases of Buddhist mummification in Taiwan.¹⁸ Four mummies are on public display in the Taipei area and easily accessible. One in Taipei County is inaccessible to

¹⁵ J. Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life*, 2d edn. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 1967), p. 179.

¹⁶ See <www.jiuhuashan.com.cn/jhs99/jiuhuaroushen.htm> for descriptions (in Chinese) and photographs of these recent *roushen pusa*, one of which is of a nun.

¹⁷ Charles Jones and Hubert Seiwert criticize the scholarly interpretation that equates monastic Buddhism with orthodox Buddhism; see Jones, “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period,” in *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*, eds. Philip Clart and Charles B. Jones (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2003), p. 33; and Seiwert, “Popular Religious Sects in Southeast China: Sect Connections and the Problem of the Luo Jiao/Bailian Jiao Dichotomy,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 20 (1992), pp. 33–34. But for our purposes, “orthodox Buddhism” refers to beliefs and practices (not to people) explicitly sanctioned by normative canonical texts, namely the sutras, *vinaya*, and commentaries that have been included in the various “canons” (*dazangjing* 大藏經). Thus despite the highly respected and influential status of monks such as Hanshan 憨山 (1546–1623) and Cihang (1895–1954), their mummifications would not, in our terms, be labeled an orthodox Buddhist practice. Ultimately, of course, the decision to include such texts in a canon reflects the preferences of elite monastic (and sometimes political) figures, but we can distinguish “orthodox” from “elite monastic,” in that orthodox beliefs require textual sanction. This formulation of “orthodox” is also useful in that it coincides with the connotations of the Chinese term *zhengxin* 正信 (which translates “correct faith” as a noun, or “orthodox” as an adjective) in contemporary discourse. Note that Joseph Needham mentions a mummy in Taiwan for 1927, but he probably misunderstood his source, an article by Paul Demiéville: see Needham, *Chemistry and Chemical Technology. Part II: Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Magisteries of Gold and Immortality*, vol. 5 of *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1974), p. 300; and Demiéville, “Momies d’Extrême-Orient,” *Journal des Savants* (1965), pp. 144–70.

¹⁸ We say *Buddhist* mummification intentionally – for we are aware of cases of non-Buddhist mummification and similar phenomena. E.g. missionary George Leslie MacKay mentions a girl near Tamsui 淡水 who died in 1878 and was subsequently soaked in brine, decorated, and worshipped as a goddess (MacKay, *From Far Formosa: The Island, Its People, and Missions* [New York: F.H. Revell, 1896], p. 127). And the body of the woman who became the goddess Wang Yulan 王玉蘭, buried in the Jinmen 金門 islands in 1954, while not enshrined as a mummy, initially resisted decay and this resistance was attributed to numinous power (see Michael Szonyi, “The Virgin and the Chinese State: The Cult of Wang Yulan and the Politics of Local Identity on Jinmen (Quemoy)” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 19.1 [forthcoming, 2005]). Also, we are aware of several non-Buddhist mummies worshipped in Taiwan, and realize that some of the historical people from Fujian who became gods and goddesses that are worshipped in Taiwan (such as Lady Linshui 臨水夫人, Mazu 媽祖, and Sagely King Guo 郭聖王) were said to have been mummified. But these and other mummification-related phenomena in Taiwan and Fujian are outside the present scope, and will be treated in an article under preparation.

the public; another (possibly non-Buddhist) mummy is worshipped in Gaoxiong County. Together they form a diverse, interesting group.

The first to have their corpses mummified were the monks Cihang 慈航 (1895–1954) and Qingyan 清嚴 (1924–1970).¹⁹ Their mummification closely followed the pattern recorded by Perceval Yetts in the early-twentieth century.²⁰ Enshrined in 1959 and 1976 respectively, Cihang and Qingyan were both mainlanders and politically active, fully ordained monks in the Chinese *vinaya* tradition. Their funerals, the preparation of their mummies, and their enshrinement were directed by the same person, the monk Shi Daoan 釋道安 (1907–1977).

Cihang was one of the most influential monks of the late-forties and early-fifties in Taiwan. As a student of Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), he placed great emphasis on monastic education and founded his own seminary for monks and nuns. In his will he ordered his disciples to bury him seated in two earthenware tubs (one inverted on top of the other, with the rims sealed together by concrete). Inside the tubs were placed charcoal and lime in order to absorb fluids and prevent growth of bacteria. After three years he was to be exhumed and, if his body had not decayed, his remains were to be gilded and put up for worship. After some hesitation and discussion his intact body was removed in 1959, two years later than scheduled, and the whole-body relic was created according to his will.²¹ His enshrinement as the first Buddhist whole-body relic in Taiwan caused quite a stir in the Buddhist world. Already in the sixties Cihang's case was mentioned by Western scholars such as Paul Demiéville and Holmes Welch.²² His shrine, the Cihang Memorial Hall, is by far the largest and apparently best endowed among the Taiwanese whole-body relics. It is managed by a group of some thirty nuns, who over the decades have transformed the simple building into an impressive monument to the founding father of their convent.

Qingyan's case, which we describe below in detail, is on the whole similar to that of Cihang. He was, however, much less famous in his lifetime. Like Cihang's remains, Qingyan's whole-body relic is managed by the nuns that used to live with him as students during his life. He was the last Chinese monk well-connected to the Taiwanese Buddhist establishment to become a whole-body relic.

¹⁹ Kan (*Taiwan gaoseng*, p. 52) gives Cihang's year of birth as 1893.

²⁰ See Yetts, "Disposal of Buddhist Dead," and the description of Qingyan's interment below.

²¹ On Cihang's life, death, and means of preservation, see Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*, pp. 47–91 and 237. For the best picture of Cihang's preserved corpse before it was remodeled with clay and gilded, see p. 89.

²² Demiéville, "Momies," p. 156; Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950*. (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1967), pp. 343–44.

Two years after the enshrinement of Qingyan, the “Living Buddha” Kanjurwa Khutughtu (Ganzhu Foye Hutuketu 甘珠佛爺呼圖克圖, 1914–1978) died. The Kanjurwa, a seventeenth-generation *tulku* from Inner Mongolia, had followed the government of Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan in 1949 and had been actively involved in the Buddhist scene there.²³ After his death in 1978 the Kanjurwa Khutughtu was to be cremated.²⁴ One account goes that after the fire in his funeral cremation-chamber had run out of fuel his blackened body was found inside, still intact.²⁵

On the other hand, according to an eyewitness to the cremation, the Kanjurwa whole-body relic was merely the accidental product of an ineptly staged cremation. According to this source some of the attending Mongolian lamas – specialists, who had overseen the cremation of the Jangiya Khutughtu (*Zhangjia hutuketu* 章嘉呼圖克圖, 1890–1957) in the fifties – shook their heads, muttering about incompetence. Only after the corpse failed to burn did the Kanjurwa’s main Taiwanese disciple Guangding 廣定 decide to have the body protected by encasement within a hollow bronze statue, which was produced by two of Taiwan’s most famous sculptors, Yang Yingfeng 楊英風 and Zhu Ming 朱銘.

In his lifetime the Kanjurwa was a respected and well known figure in Taiwanese Buddhism. After the death of the Jangiya he was the highest representative of Mongolian Buddhism in Taiwan and therefore a political asset for the Guomindang government. The *vihāra* in which his body is enshrined was closed down after a 1992 rape case involving a *rinpoche* and a female follower.²⁶ Based on what we can faintly discern through the slot for mail in the locked door to the *vihāra*, and from conversation with a neighbor whose apartment overlooks the *vihāra* grounds, as of June, 2004, his whole-body relic was still inside, not accessible to the public and not worshipped. In fact this neighbor told us that the current occupants, a middle-aged woman and an older man, have refused to open the gates even for police and for a former disciple of the Kanjurwa who came from another city to pay respects.

Yingmiao 瀛妙 (1891–1973), whom we describe in detail below, was married and founded his own hereditary monastery, Anguosi 安國

²³ A remarkable first-person account of his life that focuses on Mongolia is recorded in Paul Hyer and Sechin Jagchid, *A Mongolian Living Buddha* (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1995).

²⁴ This funeral followed the precedent of the Jangiya Khutughtu, who had been cremated twenty years earlier. In accordance with Mongolian Buddhist custom, the Jangiya’s *śarīra* (relics) had been put in small stupas and distributed among the funeral guests and friends.

²⁵ Luo Wen 羅聞, *Taiwan roushen chengfo chuanqi* 台灣肉身成佛傳奇 (Taipei: Hema wen-hua, 2001), pp. 236–37. Notice this account echoes that of Heluojie, described above.

²⁶ Luo, *Taiwan roushen*, p. 237.

寺。After his death Anguo Monastery passed on to his daughter, who later donated it to the Foguangshan organization. Yingmiao's whole-body relic was enshrined in 1983 and the history of his monastery is a good example for the absorption of a smaller Taiwanese Buddhist monastery into one of the nationwide, multi-site organizations that have emerged in recent decades.

The mysterious Puzhao 普照 (d. 1983), whose whole-body relic was also enshrined in 1983, lived as a mountain recluse in the south of Taiwan. There are numerous legends about his life and wondrous powers. His mummy is the only whole-body relic in Taiwan that has not been gilded or encased in bronze. It is kept where he died in a small countryside monastery in Gaoxiong County. Information on Puzhao is extremely scarce and almost completely in the realm of oral history and legend. The mummy seems to be accessible to the public only on certain days of the year. He was probably either a Daoist practitioner or affiliated with the Longhua Sect 龍華派, a school of popular lay Buddhism, rather than a Buddhist monk: a photograph shows him as a man with beard and short hair, dressed in non-monastic garb.²⁷ While his mummy appears dressed in monastic robes, it is not uncommon even today for Daoist priests (called *fashi* 法師, the same term for the Buddhist "Dharma master," but in Daoist contexts better translated as "ritual master") to dress as monks for the performance of certain rituals. Moreover, the Sanqia Gongcheng Hall 三洽共成堂, where he spent his last years, is currently registered as a Daoist temple.

On the other hand, other facts about Puzhao indicate he was affiliated with the Longhua Sect. First, his name begins with the character *pu* 普, the first character in the religious names of Longhua members. Second, some Longhua laity do take the title *fashi*. Third, published stories about Puzhao, while mutually contradictory and fantastic, contain numerous similarities to Longhua doctrine and practices, including use of Daoist and Confucian terminology, communication with the dead through oracle blocks, and mention of terms such as Three Teachings 三教 and figures such as Lamplighter Buddha 燃燈佛.²⁸ Finally, a Longhua religious center is also called a hall 堂.²⁹ He may have even been a Longhua member who later in life was ordained or ordained himself, as

²⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 171–223.

²⁹ On the Longhua Sect, see Lin Meirong 林美蓉 and Zu Yunhui 祖運輝, "Zaijia Fojiao, Taiwan zhanghua chaotian tang suo chuan de longhua pai zhajiao xianzhuang" 在家佛教台灣彰化朝天堂所傳的龍華派齋教現狀, in *Taiwan zhajiao de lishi guancha yu zhanwang* 台灣齋教的歷史觀察與展望, eds. Jiang Canteng 江燦騰 and Wang Jianchuan 王見川 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1994) and Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, pp. 19–24. (We thank Dr. Lin Meirong for pointing out the possible connection between Puzhao and the Longhua Sect.)

a monk, perhaps through an unorthodox ordination ceremony. In any case, more research needs to be done to determine Puzhao's identity.

The sixth and latest whole-body relic is also exceptional in several ways. Elder Gongga 貢噶老人 (1903–1997) is, to our knowledge, the first Buddhist nun in Taiwan whose body has been mummified and enshrined. She belongs to the Kagyu school, a Tibetan tradition that has gained much influence in Taiwan in recent years. Gongga spend long years in retreats in Tibet, China, and Taiwan. She became a Buddhist when she was nineteen, but was fully ordained only in 1980, at age seventy-seven. She was mummified after her death in 1997 and enshrined three years later. Visitors to her monastery, one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist centers in Taipei, are greeted by her gilded whole-body relic in the entrance hall.

Table 1. Buddhist Mummies in Taiwan

NAME	DATE OF ENSHRINEMENT	LOCATION
Cihang 慈航 (1895–1954)	1959	Jingxiu Court 靜修院 in Xizhi 汐止, Taipei County
Qingyan 清嚴 (1924–1970)	1976	Haizang Monastery 海藏寺 in Xindian 新店, Taipei County
Kanjurwa Khutughtu, or Gan- zhu Foye Hutuketu 甘珠 佛爺呼圖克圖 (1914–1978)	1978	Ganzhu Vihāra 甘珠精舍 in Xindian 新店, Taipei County
Yingmiao 瀛妙 (1891–1973)	1983	Anguo Monastery 安國寺 in Beitou 北投, Taipei City
Puzhao 普照 (d. 1983)	1983	Sanqia Gongcheng Hall 三洽 共成堂 in Yanchao 燕巢, Gaoxiong County
Gongga 貢噶 (1903–1997)	2000	Gongga Vihāra 貢噶精舍 in Zhonghe 中和, Taipei County

The most commonly used Chinese term in Taiwan for a Buddhist mummy is *roushen pusa* 肉身菩薩, literally “flesh-body bodhisattva.” The enshrinements of at least the first two of the six whole-body relics (Cihang and Qingyan) were public events directed by the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (B.A.R.O.C., Zhongguo Fojiahui 中國佛教會). Clearly the whole-body relics can be lucrative assets for the communities that own them. They attract visitors and, to use a term from popular religion, enhance the numinous power of the site.

The following two cases describe the whole-body relics of Qingyan and Yingmiao. The study of Qingyan emphasizes his biographical background and the public discourse about his enshrinement. The study of Yingmiao analyzes the use of the whole-body relic in relationship to the sacred space of the altar and probes the intentions of those who pray before the mummy-image. Studies of the other four *roushen pusa* in Taiwan are presently in different stages of completion.

THE CASE OF SHI QINGYAN 釋清嚴 (1924-70)
AND HIS WHOLE-BODY RELIC (1976-PRESENT)

The second Buddhist whole-body relic in Taiwan was found seventeen years after Cihang's. As with Cihang's body, the finding of Qingyan's whole-body relic created quite a stir in the Buddhist world. Compared to Cihang, however, Qingyan was a rather inconspicuous monk during his lifetime, and his postmortem career seems to have surprised even those who knew him.

Life

According to the few sources we have, Qingyan lived an extremely uneventful life.³⁰ He was born in 1924 in Hubei province. The story goes that all his brothers died before they reached the age of twenty, and a fortuneteller predicted the same fate for Qingyan if his parents would not surrender him to the Sangha. They followed the diviner's advice and the nine-year-old Ye Xinghua 葉興華 was handed over to the monk Shengxiang 聖祥, head of Gutan Monastery 古潭寺. After three years he became Shengxiang's disciple and took the monastic name Qingyan 清嚴. Qingyan received full ordination in 1941 or 1942 at the Guiyuan Monastery 歸元寺 in Hanyang 漢陽. It is said he traveled to all of the four holy mountains of Buddhism, including Jiuhua shan, the

³⁰ The sources for Qingyan are scarce. The popular accounts by Yu (Yu Lingbo 于凌波, *Zhongguo jindai Fomen renwu zhi* 中國近代佛門人物誌 [Taipei: Huiju, 1999], vol. 5) and Luo (*Taiwan roushen*), as well as the more academic one by Kan (*Taiwan gaoseng*), all seem to rely exclusively on the slim volume that the Qingyan gongdehui 清嚴功德會 first published 1990 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Qingyan's death. Titled *Chengyuan zailai* 乘願再來 and reprinted in 1998 (Xindian, Taiwan: Wanshengshan Haizangsi), it consists mainly of short articles that were published in 1976-77 when Qingyan's whole-body relic was found and installed. The booklet has no ISBN and is available for free from the monastery (located at Xindian City, Bitan Road, No. 55 新店市碧潭路55號). As far as we know, we were the first to investigate the monastery itself and interview Qingyan's disciples. Our main informants were Shi Changguang 釋常光, who edited *Chengyuan zailai*, Shi Changyao 釋常耀, and Shi Changming 釋常明. Changyao and Changming were ordained by Qingyan, whereas Changguang was a lay follower of Qingyan and was ordained only after his death. For pictures of Qingyan, including his mummification and ungilded mummy, see Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*.

place in China most connected to whole-body relics and relic worship. In 1949, as a consequence of the Communist victory, like many other monks he retreated to Hong Kong, where he stayed until 1954.³¹ During his years in Hong Kong he became involved in anti-communist, “patriotic” activities in the Friendship Society of the Mainland Sangha Based in Hong Kong 大陸留港僧伽聯誼會.³²

After his arrival in Taiwan he stayed in Shipu Monastery 十普寺, where the famous monk Baisheng 白聖 (1904–1989) gathered a group of monks from the mainland.³³ Qingyan’s friendship with Baisheng, whose political convictions he shared and who also came from Hubei, lasted a lifetime. Baisheng, who later became the leader of the B.A.R.O.C., invited Qingyan in the autumn of 1954 to help with the first ordination ceremony led by the mainland monks. After three years in Shipu Monastery, Qingyan moved to Jiayi 嘉義, in southwestern Taiwan, where he stayed in Yongming Monastery 永明寺. There he became the head of the Society for Longevity and the Release of Living Creatures 長壽放生會, a group of people that through the practice of releasing living creatures (*fangsheng* 放生) sought to obtain longevity.³⁴ In 1961 he moved to Xindian 新店, a suburb of Taipei, where he founded Haizang Monastery 海藏寺. In Taipei he took up a position in B.A.R.O.C. and several other, relatively minor, posts in affiliated organizations.³⁵

Haizang Monastery is located in a residential area near the Xindian River 新店溪. The area has seen heavy construction work during the last thirty years and, like most places in Taiwan, today bears little resemblance to the cityscape of the sixties. Haizang Monastery itself was completely redone. After its establishment, the sources state that Qingyan lived a frugal life with “tofu as the best food he ever had.” During this time he took a number of disciples, something the various sources on his life do not mention. One of the disciples, the nun

³¹ Kan (*Taiwan gaoseng*, p. 228) speculates that Qingyan was spared the draft because he was a Kuomintang party member. Other young members of the Sangha were drafted into the army at gunpoint: see Chen-Hua, *In Search of the Dharma: Memoirs of a Modern Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim*, ed. Chün-fang Yü, trans. Denis C. Mair (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1994), pp. 198–202.

³² Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*, p. 228.

³³ On Baisheng and the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (B.A.R.O.C.), see Günzel, *Taiwan-Erfahrung*, pp. 34–36; and Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, pp. 143–77.

³⁴ During *fangsheng*, captive animals, often fish or birds, are bought, then “converted to Buddhism” and set free, in order to generate merit. See Shenphen Zangpo (Stephen Powell), *Releasing Life* (Taipei: Fotuo jiaoyu jijinhui, 2004) and Welch, *Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 378–82.

³⁵ Shi Zhenhua 釋真華, “Wo suo zhidao de Qingyan fashi” 我所知道的清嚴法師, *Haichaoyin* 海潮音 57.4 (1976), p. 12, and Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*, p. 231.

Changming 常明, is in charge of the monastery today.³⁶

It is said that Qingyan led a very disciplined life, rising every day at two in the morning to meditate in the Buddha-hall, resting for one hour during noon, and retiring around eleven. He purportedly maintained this regimen until his death. Qingyan practiced *nianfo* 念佛, recitation of a Buddha's or bodhisattva's name, which is perhaps the most common form of Buddhist practice in Taiwan. He was certainly literate but did not write or publish anything. Since he had never studied in a Buddhist seminary, neither on the mainland nor in Taiwan, it is a safe guess that his doctrinal knowledge was quite limited. It has been remarked that his voice in ritual recitation 梵唄 was especially beautiful, as he had been trained from an early age in this art.³⁷

Death and Mummification

In mid-January, 1970, a funeral procession passed by Haizang Monastery. Hearing the horns and music, Qingyan told Changming not to cremate him after his death but to bury him sitting upright in an earthenware tub that was to be opened after six years. His wish might have surprised her, since Qingyan was only forty-six at that time.³⁸ Qingyan died peacefully on February 12, 1970, during his morning meditation period. One month earlier he had ordered the two tubs for his own burial, which his disciples take as proof that he foresaw his death.

Qingyan was buried according to his wishes. His wake was held in Haizang Monastery for three days. Then monks washed him and, having dressed him in his monastic robes, put him into one of the tubs in sitting position.³⁹ The tub was filled with charcoal and the second tub put on top of it.⁴⁰ The tubs were sealed with cement, lacquer, and asphalt. The original plan was to keep the tubs in Haizang Monastery, but the police, "who did not understand the meaning of the [burial by] sitting-in-a-tub of an eminent Buddhist monk," objected,⁴¹ and the

³⁶ Changming appears in photographs in *Chengyuan zailai* on pages 9 and 10 (in the top photograph, she is second from the right).

³⁷ One of the leaders of B.A.R.O.C., Shi Jingxin 釋淨心, in whose ordination Qingyan was involved (in 1954), remarks on his "exemplary northern recitation style. Not only the timing of every syllable was accurate, but also the pronunciation and the melody were very clear" (*Chengyuan zailai*, p. 20).

³⁸ *Chengyuan zailai*, p. 18, says he died without prior illness. We learned, however, that he suffered from some unspecified chronic disease. His somewhat puffy appearance in one of the photos (p. 1) is also attributed to that illness.

³⁹ Our informants pointed out that only male followers could perform these rites.

⁴⁰ On top of the charcoal was a layer of fine white ash from incense, and on top of the ash, incense and artificial flowers were laid. The photo in *Chengyuan zailai* (p. 3) also shows cement on the brim of the tubs.

⁴¹ *Chengyuan zailai*, p. 17.

tub had to be moved to a hill slope off Wuxing Street 吳興街.⁴² There six years passed, with the body buried in the earth beneath a little wooden hut.

When it was opened on January 21, 1976 (the sixth anniversary of his death according to the lunar calendar), and the body was found preserved, it was immediately coated in a bituminous substance with the face carefully modeled out. Though it seems no photos were taken of the mummified body as it actually came out of the tubs, there are two pictures of the whole-body relic after the first (white) and second (black) coating.⁴³ According to our informants, Qingyan's body was soft and flexible. When it was taken out of the tub for the first picture, the body was still propped up with a stick supporting the spine. Only after the (obviously rather heavy) coating had dried could the whole-body relic sit without support. The gilding was done later, after its installment in Haizang Monastery. Interestingly, the person who contracted the artisan and oversaw the coating was none other than Shi Daoan, an influential figure in Buddhist circles, who also was involved in the preparation of Cihang's whole-body relic.⁴⁴

After the tubs were opened the whole-body relic attracted great attention. In early March an article in the *Central Daily News* 中央日報 reported that almost a hundred thousand visitors had already gone up the hill by Wuxing Road,⁴⁵ and though that is probably an exaggerated estimate, it shows that the discovery of Qingyan's remains must have aroused considerable interest among believers. The residents of the area around Wuxing Street quickly became attached to the whole-body relic and tried to prevent its return to Haizang Monastery. Yet they had no legal leverage in the case and the B.A.R.O.C. decided to hold a ceremony at its own headquarters.

On March 20 the whole-body relic was moved in a large procession to B.A.R.O.C. headquarters next to Shandao Monastery 善道寺, on Zhongxiao East Road 忠孝東路. There, having placed the whole-body relic in front of the main shrine, eminent members of the Sangha held a seven-day ceremony. After the ceremony the whole-body relic was not moved to Haizang Monastery, as Qingyan's followers in the Xindian

⁴² This happened possibly one year later. A photo that shows the conjoined tubs in a newly build hut on the burial ground is dated March 21, 1971: see *Chengyuan zailai*, p. 10 (bottom). According to Changming the tubs seen standing in the hut were later buried in the ground.

⁴³ *Chengyuan zailai*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ On Daoan see Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*, pp. 141–68, which also has a photo of Daoan at Cihang's funeral (p. 159).

⁴⁵ *Chengyuan zailai*, p. 45.

area around the monastery had hoped, though all written sources imply that it was. Rather, according to our informants it was moved back to Wuxing Road, where residents were already starting to build a monastery for it. The nuns themselves, however, then went “in the middle of the night” and carried the flesh-body (ungilded and unguarded) from off the hill, back to Xindian.

For the last twenty-eight years the whole-body relic has served there as an object of veneration and has attracted a steady number of visitors. The presence of the whole-body relic has obviously influenced the economy of Haizang Monastery and allowed it to grow from a small one-floor backyard structure to the relatively large and well-established monastery of today. We were told that after the whole-body relic was enshrined, “busloads of people from all over Taiwan” came to see it.

Patterns and Opinions

In his way to flesh-body bodhisattvahood, Qingyan closely followed the pattern established by Cihang. He was without a doubt aware of Cihang’s mummification and for reasons known only to himself felt inspired by it. The burial in a tub, the five- to six-year period of waiting, the coating, the procession, and the final enshrinement: all these steps were the same as those done in the creation of Cihang’s whole-body relic. The link between both cases is Shi Daoan, who had the know-how and the connections to realize the creation of whole-body relics. Shi Daoan was a learned monk who had widely traveled in China and who certainly had had first-hand knowledge concerning the earthen-tub burial custom.⁴⁶

What did Qingyan’s contemporaries think about his mummification? The opinions can be clearly divided into a traditional view that attributes the preservation of the body to Qingyan’s spiritual attainment and other “non-scientific” factors, and a naturalistic, rational but still religious perspective. The former, emphasizing the miraculous aspects of the mummification, is mainly expressed by members of Sangha, such as Changming, Guangyuan 廣元, Zhaoben 照本, and Zhenhua 真華.⁴⁷ A typical statement of this view follows:

⁴⁶ That this custom was widely used in pre-Republican China, at least for the middle and lower Yangzi region, is attested by Yetts, “Disposal of Buddhist Dead,” pp. 705–7. Yetts’s description of the tub, how the two tubs are joined, and the general process of how the whole-body relic is fabricated match exactly the procedure of Cihang’s and Qingyan’s interments.

⁴⁷ See *Chengyuan zailai* and Shi, “Wo suo zhi dao.”

Why is it that after his death the monk's flesh-body did not decay? Where is the reason for this supernatural biological phenomenon? In one phrase: incessant practice ...

The three undefiled practices 三無漏學 of Buddhism [are as follows]: keeping the precepts, practicing meditation, and practicing wisdom.

The monastic regulations for a renunciant [sramana 沙門] are exceedingly strict. There are rules for everything in daily life, whether one is standing, sitting, walking, or lying, and even for eating, drinking, and passing waste; keeping the precepts is supremely difficult. Only after keeping the precepts can one attain meditation; and [only with] meditation [does one] give rise to wisdom and daily make progress.

Then the text, which originally appeared in the newspaper published by the ruling political party in an authoritarian state, gives oblique praise and credit for the miracle to the government, and also simultaneously emphasizes yet qualifies the miraculous nature of the event:

Precepts, meditation, and wisdom: these are just the factors of one's individual attainment through practice. There are more important factors – a peaceful country with contented people and an extraordinary place that gives rise to outstanding people 地靈人傑. Great Master Qingyan's undecaying flesh body can be said to be a miracle yet it is not a miracle.⁴⁸

In other words, the fact of mummification *is* extraordinary, but only in a certain sense it is not miraculous, because its occurrence can be traced to specific causes.

Doubts regarding the meaning or extraordinary quality of the phenomenon are usually dealt with by silence or by narrowing down the discourse in order to avoid sophisticated reasoning. But even in a worldview where preservation of the body is a sign of successful spiritual practice, believers sometimes have to confront the fact that mummification occurs in other cultures, too. Guanyuan responds to that by drawing a line between “mummification” (here meant in the word's narrow sense, the process by which ancient Egyptians preserved corpses) and “attaining the Way in one's flesh-body”:

⁴⁸ Zhaoben 照本 in *Chengyuan zailai*, pp. 35–36. The fused idiom *diling renjie* often implies that rather mysterious powers in a place – such as unusual geomantic forces – cause outstanding people to be born there or reach greatness there.

It has been rumored and speculated that the unrotting Dharma-body of Great Master Qingyan is similar to that of Egyptian mummies, but this is not so. It should be known that mummies have four characteristics: 1. The five internal organs of the corpse are taken out. 2. On the outer layer of the corpse, preservatives and fragrant substances are applied. 3. Children or skinny people are [most] suited to [become] mummies. 4. The corpses of mummies are hard.

However, after his total nirvana Qingyan's situation was completely opposite that characteristic of mummies. Great Master Qingyan was moderately fat, and seated he looked like a Maitreya Buddha. The five organs had not been taken out when his deceased body was placed into the earthenware tub; neither were preservatives applied. Also, after the opening of the tub, the body was not hard.⁴⁹

After this Guanyuan outlines six reasons why Qingyan's body did not decay:

1. superior power from having kept the precepts,
2. superior power of meditation,
3. superior power of devotion,
4. superior power of intentional effort,
5. additional help from the Buddhas, and
6. support from the Dharma.

None of these reasons could be easily accommodated into a naturalistic or scientific perspective.

It is significant that there were voices already in the seventies that tried to conceptualize Qingyan's remains in a different way, shifting emphasis away from the miraculous and placing it on the social utility of Qingyan's life story. A news reporter writes:

Of course, from the modern medical perspective what is called the unrotting flesh-body is not so mystified. [The writer cites Egyptian mummies and several modern ways to preserve the body after death].

However, Buddhism believes that religion is a matter of spirit. If all spirit is explained only from a purely scientific or materialistic point of view, in the end one will unavoidably be separated [from full understanding?] by one layer. Of course, whether the

⁴⁹ *Chengyuan zailai*, pp. 53-54.

body rots after death or not is in fact not a very important issue. Religion takes virtuous conduct as its foundation. What Buddhism focuses on is the immortality of spirit; the body is nothing more than a bag of flesh. What is important is the exemplary behavior and moral character that one leaves behind, which are provided for posterity to emulate. Great Master Qingyan was just this kind of exemplary person who had attained the Way.⁵⁰

From inside the Sangha too, there have been attempts to reframe the meaning of relics. After Cihang's whole-body relic was found, the monk Yinshun 印順 wrote an essay in which he downplayed the importance of the whole affair (see our conclusion, below).

Qingyan's Remains and the Haizang Monastery Today

Haizang Monastery was completely rebuilt in 1997. Qingyan's small, one-story monastery became a tall, eight-floor building. The grand hall 大雄寶殿 is located on the seventh floor and contains a Buddhist trinity flanked by Weituo 韋陀 and Guangong 關公, the two guardian spirits of Chinese Buddhism. In the basement there is an Earth Treasury Bodhisattva hall, which also serves as a dining hall during Dharma assemblies 法會. The center of the monastery however is the main hall on the first floor where Qingyan's whole-body relic sits stage-right in a trinity,⁵¹ with Guanyin at the center. Stage-left is a Maitreya image in the big-bellied Chinese style.

The monastery gate is open from 8:00 to 17:00. According to our observations, there are often several visitors in the monastery offering short prayers to Qingyan's flesh-body. As of March, 2003, there were only two nuns, Changming and Changguang, in permanent residence. Whenever we went to the monastery we always saw a number of lay believers involved in the day-to-day business of maintaining the monastery, taking care of chores such as the daily cleaning. Nuns and laypeople treat each other in a casual, family-like manner. There is even a small dog often roaming about, which for some reason has taken a dislike to foreigners.

Qingyan's whole-body relic has been gilded heavily, and the features of the image hardly resemble the photos of Qingyan on the wall next to the shrine. A showcase exhibits some personal belongings of

⁵⁰ *Chengyuan zailai*, pp. 50. Notice that this author's comparison to Egyptian mummies appeared in the same newspaper (but on a different date), and later in the same volume, as the article cited above that discourages the comparison to Egyptian mummies.

⁵¹ That is, in the same position on the altar as Yingmiao (see below).

Qingyan, including the clothes and shoes that he had worn during his interment. Tellingly, the people who decided on the setup placed a photo of Huineng's whole-body relic immediately in front of the whole-body relic, between its knees and Qingyan's soul tablet. Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the sixth patriarch of the Chan school, is one of the most famous figures in Chinese Buddhist history, and most visitors have



All photographs are from Gildow's collection.

likely heard his name. Huineng's remains are also purported to be the oldest extant whole-body relic.⁵² By the presence of Huineng's image, Qingyan's whole-body relic is aptly placed in the larger context of tradi-

⁵² Huineng's whole-body image is well studied. For example, see the contributions by Xu Hengbin and Morimoto Iwatarō in *Nihon Miira Kenkyū Gurupu* 日本ミイラ研究グループ, *Nihon, Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū* 日本中国ミイラ信仰の研究 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993).

tion. Those who pray to the whole-body relic are thereby reminded that their practice is part of a long and venerable history. Among Chinese Buddhists, Huineng is well known and highly regarded. The equation “Qingyan=Huineng” thereby justifies and exalts place and practice.

Two long Dharma assemblies are held every year. The first, starting late in February or early in March, is to commemorate the anniversary of Qingyan’s death. This kind of Dharma assembly varies in length from fifty to 105 days. On March 9, 2003, a seventy-eight-day Dharma assembly commenced. During this period a number of nuns and lay believers recited sutras every morning from 8:00 to 13:00 with a one-hour break from 10.00 to 11.00. The sutras recited included the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Huayan Sutra*, and others. On Sundays more than one hundred people attended the ritual, on workdays only a few more than ten. Attendance was free, but as it was explained to us, if one wished for positive results or attended in order to commemorate one’s dead, one ought to make a contribution. As do most Taiwanese monasteries, Haizangsi offers its devotees the chance to inscribe their names onto a little compartment with a Buddha image in it. For a modest fee (2,000 New Taiwan Dollars, that is, roughly \$60 U.S., for seventy-eight days the compartment can be lit by a tiny light bulb, and the Buddha image inside shines golden, signifying or manifesting the merit of the donor.

The second Dharma assembly in Haizang Monastery is the well-known *Yulanpen fahui* 盂蘭盆法會, which begins each year in August. While it is not directly connected to Qingyan, no doubt also in this Dharma assembly the circumambulation of the whole-body relic before lunch serves to remind people that the “flesh-body bodhisattva” is the center of the community at Haizangsi.

THE CASE OF YINGMIAO 瀛妙 (1891-1973) AND HIS WHOLE-BODY RELIC (1983-PRESENT)

Another flesh-body bodhisattva to appear in Taiwan was Old Monk Yingmiao 瀛妙老和尚, whose mummified body was discovered in 1983 when his remains were removed from his tomb, originally so they could be placed in a columbarium tower for bone-ash (the equivalent Chinese phrase being “tower for numen-bones 靈骨塔”). Yingmiao had been the abbot of Anguo Monastery 安國寺, located in what is now the hills of Beitou District 北投區, Taipei City, and his gilded whole-body relic is now in the main hall of the new, temporary structure that currently serves as that monastery. Sitting on the main altar stage-right of

the central statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, at first glance Yingmiao could easily be mistaken for just another Buddhist statue.

As Yingmiao's elder daughter and disciple Venerable Mingding 明定法師 (1922–2002) grew older and incapable of running the monastery, in 1991 she donated it to Foguangshan 佛光山, one of the largest Buddhist organizations in the country.⁵³ Mingding had adopted many children both before and after becoming a nun, and a daughter she adopted in 1964 had gone to the main Foguangshan monastery in Gaoxiong County 高雄縣 in 1980 to become a nun with the monastic name Daoxiang 道祥. Daoxiang returned to the monastery in 1990, and after Mingding donated it to Foguangshan, Venerable Daoxiang was appointed to serve as abbess. At the time we conducted research (the spring and summer of 2003), six other nuns and sixteen female resident lay-volunteers, all of whom were Foguangshan members, assisted her.⁵⁴

The most accessible source of information on Yingmiao and his transformation into a flesh-body bodhisattva is the pamphlet outside the entrance to Anguo Monastery's main hall. The front of the pamphlet has two pictures of Yingmiao: one of when he was alive, another of his mummified, gilded body. The back side contains a brief description of Yingmiao composed shortly after his whole-body relic was discovered, and according to Daoxiang was by written by a *United Daily News* (*Lianhe bao* 聯合報) journalist, who based the description on Mingding's oral account. First-time visitors often take a copy of this pamphlet, books describing Anguo Monastery paraphrase it, and our informants at the monastery swear by its accuracy, so at this time it appears to be the most important source of information on Yingmiao for Taiwanese people. For a full translation, see the appendix.

The only other historical source on Yingmiao we could find was a brief news report in the Buddhist periodical *Zhongguo Fo jiao*, a magazine affiliated with B.A.R.O.C. This relative lack of coverage is in sharp contrast to the numerous reports in the Buddhist press on the discovery of the mummies of Cihang and Qingyan, both of whom were much

⁵³ Information for this section on Yingmiao comes mostly from the fifteen or so informants, especially from several key informants such as the current abbess and long-term residents, interviewed on-site during the spring and summer of 2003. Their ideas are by no means representative of all worshippers at the monastery, many of whom profess to know nothing and have no opinions. For online information about Foguangshan and more references, see Stuart Chandler, "Globalizing Chinese Culture, Localizing Buddhist Teachings: The Internationalization of Foguangshan," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 3 (2002), pp. 46–78, located online at <<http://www.globalbuddhism.org/toc.html>>.

⁵⁴ As one of Foguangshan's numerous branch monasteries, Anguo Monastery now has several web pages devoted to it: see <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/homepage/fgsastw24/>>.

better connected to the Buddhist establishment. The news article on Yingmiao notes that when he was discovered his “flesh and blood had already dried out” and that his body was “stiff and hard like a rock” (unlike Qingyan’s body, which informants claimed was soft).⁵⁵ And in contrast to outright claims that the mummification was a miracle and a result of spiritual attainments, as in the articles on Qingyan, the Yingmiao article neutrally states that his mummification “is believed to be a miracle.”

The pamphlet gives a brief biography of Yingmiao, a history of Anguo Monastery, and a description of his death and exhumation. In contrast to the news article, it claims that Yingmiao’s mummification is proof of his spiritual attainments and is full of anecdotes that indicate Yingmiao was enlightened. In giving praise to Yingmiao, this pamphlet directly copies or paraphrases passages from the previously published articles on Qingyan (see appendix).

Conspicuously absent from the biographical account in the pamphlet is the fact that prior to being ordained, Yingmiao had in fact married and fathered two daughters, one of whom married and lived in Beitou until she died in 2002. Yingmiao ordained the other daughter as a novice nun and gave her the Dharma name Mingding. Both before and after being ordained, Mingding adopted a number of children, and as mentioned above her adopted daughter Daoxiang is the current abbess of the monastery. After Yingmiao was ordained, according to Daoxiang, Yingmiao’s wife continued to live with him but in separate quarters, on the opposite side-room of the monastery with the rest of the other female residents, and they no longer had sexual relations.

Also absent is an account of exactly what was done to Yingmiao’s body after removal from the tomb. Daoxiang allowed us briefly to see unpublished photographs of Yingmiao from the day he was removed from the coffin. In these photographs, Yingmiao’s body appeared grayish, the skin uneven in places, and the right arm largely rotted away. Afterwards, we were told his body was cleaned and then covered with a protective layer of clay, on top of which was applied a layer of modeling clay. Finally, his remains were gilded with gold leaf. According to Daoxiang, someone who makes religious statues using the same methods performed this work. Based on the relatively smooth appearance of Yingmiao’s skin and features today as compared to what they were in the photographs we were shown, it is evident that in some places the clay layers were sculpted down and shaped. When one observes

⁵⁵ *Zhongguo Fojiao* 中國佛教 27.1 (1983), p. 53.

Yingmiao's body on the altar, through his robes one can see that his right arm is at least partially missing.



In researching Yingmiao, we sought answers to the following types of question, from the perspective of the devotees of Anguo Monastery: 1. how central is Yingmiao to the Anguo Monastery today? 2. what does he “do” now, if anything, and what is done to him? 3. what do monastery residents and devotees think of his motivations, if any, and current state of existence?

The dominant icons on the altar are three “statues”: Shakyamuni in the center, Guanyin stage-left, and the Yingmiao whole-body relic/statue stage-right.⁵⁶ Yingmiao, just like Qingyan, is seated on a golden, lotus-shaped pedestal, evoking images of rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The statue to the left/“east” gives blessings to the living, often to those suffering serious illness, and paper tablets with the names of the person to receive blessings (“removal of calamity and extension of life 消災延壽”) are placed in front of this statue, whereas the statue to the right/“west” helps deliver the dead, with soul tablets of the deceased placed near it. For Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries arranged in this way, representative combinations of statues on the main altar are shown as follows:⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Following Chinese usage, henceforth “left” will mean stage-left and “right” stage-right; see Sung-hsing Wang, “Taiwanese Architecture and the Supernatural,” in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, ed. Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1974). Also, Taiwanese regard the main statues/deities as facing “south” – even if that direction is not literally south – toward the main entrance; other directions (east/left, west/right, and north) follow from this. In fact, this same system of directions applies to other structures in traditional Chinese architecture, in which the front of the structure is regarded as facing south; see J. J. M. De Groot, *The Religious System of China* (1892–1910; rpt. Taipei: Literature House, 1964) 1, p. 5. For extensive analysis of the meaning of relative location in architecture and altars, see P. Steven Sangren, *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1987), but note that Sangren does not always clearly distinguish his informants’ stated ideas from his own inferences.

⁵⁷ The history of the second combination of statues listed below, the so-called Sahā Triad

<i>“West”</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>“East”</i>
Amitabha Buddha	Shakyamuni Buddha	Medicine Buddha
Earth Treasury Bodhisattva	Shakyamuni Buddha	Guanyin Bodhisattva

In front of the statues in Anguo Monastery, we see red name-tablets for obtaining blessings 長生祿位 in front of Guanyin and yellow soul-tablets for obtaining deliverance 生蓮之位 in front of Yingmiao. So in



Anguo Monastery, Yingmiao might seem to be taking over the functions of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva (in Chinese, Dizang Pusa 地藏菩薩).

Looking more closely in the vicinity of Yingmiao, we see that located on the altar next to him and on a low table in front of him are the wooden and metal-framed collective ancestral and individual soul tablets of Yingmiao, Yingmiao’s collective patrilineal ancestors of the Lin clan, his younger daughter “Old Bodhisattva Mother Lin Yan 林母燕老菩薩,” his daughter Mingding, and several soul-tablets for families with no descendants and who asked to have the tablets placed there for safekeeping.⁵⁸ The temporary, yellow, paper ancestral tablets are

(*suopo sansheng* 娑婆三聖) is analyzed in Zhiru, “The Emergence of the Sahā Triad in Contemporary Taiwan: Iconic Representation and Humanistic Buddhism,” *AM* 3d ser. 13.2, pp. 83–105.

⁵⁸ Traditional Taiwanese believe that the spirits of the dead who lack male descendants to provide them with offerings will be impoverished in the netherworld and may even become ghosts that will haunt the living. Sometimes the spirits of these dead are placated through post-

those of recently deceased devotees and their family members with “strong karmic connections” to the monastery (in other words, donors of time or money), which are placed on either side of the tablets of Mingding and Mother Lin for about one year’s time. Every morning and evening volunteers recite scriptures in the main hall to deliver 超度 these deceased from unfortunate destinies; Daoxiang suggested that Yingmiao may help them as well. In front of Mingding’s soul-tablet is a small, stupa-shaped reliquary (*shelita* 舍利塔) holding her *shelizi* 舍利子 (from Sanskrit *śarīra*), the tiny pieces of bones that crystalize during cremation and which Buddhists believe to be evidence of spiritual attainment. Evidently Mingding had enough virtue to form *shelizi* but chose not to attempt self-mummification like her father.

So Yingmiao now functions like a spiritually potent and somehow “living” bodhisattva image in the main hall, except that the presence of his family members’ soul tablets makes his side of the altar resemble a family shrine as well. Yet despite the fact that the discovery of Yingmiao’s whole-body relic created a sensation when first discovered in 1983 – a fact we’ve independently verified through long-time Beitou residents – currently Yingmiao functions much like any other spiritually potent Buddhist image does. We found no evidence of any cult forming specifically around him or any special rituals done because of him. As far as we could tell, Anguo Monastery functions the same as any other Foguanshan branch monastery, and holds the same activities. For instance, the largest monthly activities are the Great Compassion Repentance 大悲懺 ritual and the Water Repentance 水懺 ritual held on the first and fourth Sundays of each month, respectively; the same rituals are held at numerous other branch monasteries.⁵⁹ The only offerings given specifically to him are three tiny cups of water each morning, but

mortem adoption or marriage; see David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Folk Religion in a Taiwanese Village*, 3d edn. (San Diego: Department of Anthropology, U. California San Diego, 1999), published online at <<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/scriptorium/gga/ggmain.html>>. Perhaps the Taiwanese who put the ancestral tablets next to Yingmiao believe their spirits will be blessed by Yingmiao or will share in the offerings offered on the altar. At least they are unlikely to cause trouble to descendants with their tablets so close to religious figures. Whether or how such beliefs relate to orthodox Chinese Buddhist beliefs, which state that the dead will be reborn within forty-nine days, is a much more complex question and will not be addressed presently. Briefly though, the reader may wish to consult Stevan Harrell’s “The Concept of the Soul in Chinese Folk Religion,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 38.3 (1979), pp. 519–28, for the folk concepts many Taiwanese have regarding souls, which differ significantly from orthodox Buddhist concepts, and consult other sources (e.g., Xu Yongchang 許永昌, *Tianwen lishu baodian nongminli* 天文理數寶典農民曆 [Wugu, Taipei county: Peilin, 2003] pp. 73–74) for the views of the professional geomancers and Daoist priests to whom ordinary Taiwanese often turn to for help when needed for issues relating to the souls of the dead.

⁵⁹ For a description of the Water Repentance Ritual or “Water Penance,” see Welch, *Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, p. 188.

the same is given to the other two statues. Seven grains of rice – cooked rice at noon and uncooked rice in the early evening – are offered to the central Buddha statue “for the sake of all sentient beings” twice per day, but unlike a typical Taiwanese family ancestor, Yingmiao receives no rice himself. Finally, the fruits and flowers on the altar are collective offerings to all three images, and the oil lamps and incense burner on the table in front of Yingmiao are for Mother Lin and Mingding for the first three years after their deaths. If Yingmiao were a typical ancestor who depended on offerings for his well being, he might be quite upset and cause his descendants bad fortune.⁶⁰ However, unlike a statue, Yingmiao’s gilded body did not have a consecration (“opening of the eyes”) ritual performed for it – presumably his living presence needed no such ritual to take root within the body.⁶¹

We saw that Yingmiao has taken over some functions of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva. Yet he has by no means replaced this bodhisattva. For instance, during the Water Repentance, participating devotees transfer merit accrued from the ritual to specified recipients, whose names are written on yellow, paper soul tablets and placed on a makeshift altar on the left, back side of the main hall. On such occasions, behind and above these soul tablets is placed a statue of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva, the traditional Buddhist protector of the dead.

In fact only two special services are performed for Yingmiao. Once per year on the day before the beginning of the lunar New Year, Daoxiang removes his robes, wipes off his body with a wet rag, and puts on a new set of robes. We were told that he alternates between two sets of robes, and that only Daoxiang should do the cleaning and be present in the room when it is done, because since Yingmiao received monastic ordination he technically should not be touched by women. Since Daoxiang is also his adopted granddaughter however, an exception can be made. (In contrast, the other two statues are cleaned daily.) And once every ten years he is to undergo “maintenance and repairs,” which Daoxiang said involves applying additional gold leaf to his body.

⁶⁰ Many Taiwanese present incense and sometimes rice to the soul tablet of their collective ancestors every morning, even many years after a funeral has been held. For analysis of the semiotics of food offerings to the recently deceased, ancestors, and ghosts among Taiwanese of the same ethnic group (Minnan 閩南) as Yingmiao, see Stuart E. Thompson, “Death, Food, and Fertility,” in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, eds. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1988).

⁶¹ For such consecration rituals in Taiwanese religion, see Laurence G. Thompson, “Consecration Magic in Chinese Religion,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 19 (1991), pp. 1–12; for such rituals in a number of Buddhist traditions, including Chinese Buddhism, see Donald K. Swearer, *Becoming the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2004), chap. 8.

While a Yingmiao-centered cult has not arisen, he attracts a great deal of attention from visitors, especially casual visitors who may be hiking through the vicinity or coming for quietude. We observed many visitors enter the main hall to prostrate and pray specifically to Yingmiao; on the other hand, we have also seen a lesser number of people prostrate and pray directly to the central statue of Shakyamuni or to the statue of Guanyin to the left and ignore Yingmiao. Visitors have diverse beliefs regarding Yingmiao. Some of our informants refused to speculate about Yingmiao; they simply “don’t know” whether he is aware of his surroundings or whether he is still active in any sense. One man refused to speculate; he told us that “from a Buddhist perspective, he should still be aware and active,” but the man would not affirm or deny holding such beliefs himself. Incidentally, most of the visitors (perhaps three-fourths) and all of the residents are female, a situation which is not unusual in Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries.

But as a whole, the longer-term devotees and the monastery residents do have relatively consistent understandings of Yingmiao: they believe he is still active in a personal way and helps people in need. Two middle-aged women told me that Yingmiao helps people through sympathetic resonance (*ganying* 感應), which to them meant that if you do good and need his help, he will respond to help you.⁶² A young woman resident told us several miraculous stories others had told her of Yingmiao, but to her mild disappointment had not seen anything unusual herself; she guessed this was because “maybe I don’t need his assistance. At least that’s how I comfort myself. I must be doing spiritual practice well enough on my own, I like to think.” Most of the miraculous stories come from non-resident devotees, although one middle-aged female resident volunteer had had an unusual experience but was unwilling to tell us the details (or even reveal her name).

Several of the miraculous stories we gathered, many of which describe small incidents and were gathered indirectly and not through the person who experienced the events personally, include the following:

1. Venerable Mingding dreamed of the custom-made palanquin-like coffin needed to inter Yingmiao. When the coffin maker had delivered it, she saw that it was exactly like the one she had dreamed about.
2. A Taiwanese businesswoman working abroad had been involved in a lawsuit for many years. After coming to Anguo Monastery, buying

⁶² For more on sympathetic resonance in a Buddhist context, see Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2001), chap. 2.

- a small statue of Guanyin, and praying just one time to Yingmiao, the lawsuit ended shortly thereafter.
3. While half asleep at home, a monastery volunteer's father saw Yingmiao walk into his house and speak to him, saying: "What you do doesn't matter, no one sees – [but] I watch what every one does." Her father, who had been working to help others, reckoned that Yingmiao had come to encourage him to continue doing selfless work.
 4. Two devotees were talking in the main hall until very late at night. At around 1:00 am they saw Yingmiao step down from his seat. Frightened, they immediately ran away without looking back and went home to sleep. In recollection, they said they thought Yingmiao might have wanted to tell them it was very late and that they should go to sleep. Another version of this story has it that the two women had been "gossiping about who's right and who's wrong (or virtuous/bad) 講是非" and that, given Yingmiao's aversion to unnecessary chatter, he had risen to remind them that such chatter is not conducive to Buddhist practice.
 5. Some visitors came to Anguo Monastery and received a Dharma discourse from a resident monk. When they returned to the monastery for a second visit, they asked the whereabouts of the monk, but were told that no monks lived there. Everyone concluded that the visitors must have seen Yingmiao.
 6. A certain Chen Mingli's husband was having an extramarital affair, which was driving her to the verge of suicide. One day while she was reciting a *dharani* while kneeling before Yingmiao, a golden light emerged from Yingmiao's body, dissolving her tensions and her intention to commit suicide. Then she heard a compassionate voice say: "Come with karmic conditions, go with karmic conditions 隨緣來, 隨緣去." After reflecting on these words, she was able to stop clinging to a bad marriage and accept her husband's offer to divorce. Within a few years, she had achieved success in her career and was happily remarried. Venerable Mingding explained that miraculous events like this are nothing special, for "when the mind is sincere, then [prayers are] efficacious 心誠則靈."⁶³

While these stories may seem unusual, they are not different from similar stories that the Taiwanese tell about other spiritually potent images. To give one example from Foguangshan devotees, an Anguo

⁶³ The first five stories come from our interviews with devotees and resident nuns. Like most of his worshippers, Yingmiao spoke and continues to speak in Taiwanese. The sixth story comes from Luo, *Taiwan roushen*, pp. 163–69. Notice how the miraculous nature of the sixth story is qualified by giving it a cause, in the same way that Zhaoben (see above) qualifies Qingyan's miraculous mummification.

Monastery resident told us that many of her classmates were inspired to become ordained after seeing a Buddha statue in the main Foguangshan monastery in Gaoxiong rotating left and right on its own. Whereas many ordinary devotees pray to Yingmiao for favors, many of the monastery residents use his presence as a reminder to practice virtuous behavior. Asked how they felt in his presence, one resident told me she was reminded that “we should [do spiritual] practice – like he did.” Another said she felt embarrassed, “because I have a bad temper, and I don’t practice well enough.”

Why did Yingmiao become a flesh-body bodhisattva? Daoxiang told us that he had reached a high level of attainment and that it has to do with the vows he made. Beyond that she refused to speculate. The monastery pamphlet mentions that he had gained spiritual attainment through his many years of studying (and regularly reciting and manually copying, we were told) the *Diamond Sutra*, a sutra associated with miraculous events in the Chinese Buddhist tradition.⁶⁴ A long-term lay resident elaborated further. According to what Mingding told her, in addition to reciting the *Diamond Sutra*, Yingmiao’s other prominent virtues were filial submission 孝順 and cultivation of good verbal karma 修口業. Even after his parents had passed away and after he had become a monk, she was told that Yingmiao would kneel before a photograph of his mother every night, pay respects to her, and talk with her as if she were alive. She was also told that Yingmiao was laconic, speaking only when necessary. Daoxiang also mentioned to us that Yingmiao rarely became upset, and when he was angry with monastery residents, he would let them know by looking at them in a certain way rather than expressing it verbally.

Few visitors ventured to speculate exactly why Yingmiao had decided to stay on as a flesh-body bodhisattva and in what form he continues to exist. The general consensus among those who ventured to give any opinion at all was that he had made a vow to do so in order to help people. One visitor in her early twenties said she thought he now continued to exist “in another time and space [dimension] than ours. He wants to move our waves of consciousness toward the good.”

One resident who had studied for two years in the Foguangshan seminary in Gaoxiong County did however have concrete opinions

⁶⁴ For instance, see the various collections of miracle tales associated with the *Diamond Sutra* located in *Dai Nippon zokuzōkyō*, part 1, section 2b, case 22, v. 1. In a case similar to Yingmiao’s, Faure recounts that the Ming-dynasty monk Dantian 丹田 spent most of his time reciting the *Diamond Sutra*, died meditating, and was mummified (“Relics and Flesh Bodies,” p. 172).

and hypotheses about Yingmiao and his motivations. She was certain that his soul 靈魂 was still around and aware of his surroundings; she mentioned that “An important thing I’ve learned is that the soul is immortal: it just changes bodies [at death]. It’s just like in Christianity, you know, when they say you’ll gain eternal life.” The gist of what this graduate of a two-year Buddhist seminary had to say regarding the soul was that both Buddhism and Christianity teach us we have an immortal soul, which has always been with us but of which many people are ignorant. And for her, it is the soul of Yingmiao that has chosen to stay behind – perhaps, she hypothesized, in order to help Daoxiang before the new monastery is built. (The original Anguo Monastery is falling apart, and services are currently held in a temporary structure.)

In general, this former seminary student thinks that Yingmiao might choose to take rebirth once the new monastery is completed. However, although he has reached a high level of spiritual attainment, she believes he was just a relatively advanced human being whose life was filled with suffering and doubts, like anyone else’s; he was not a transcendent bodhisattva whose life was just a performance to inspire us.

To sum up, we answer the questions we raised above. First, while Yingmiao’s presence makes the monastery unique, he is hardly essential to the monastery’s functioning. The monastery has been incorporated into the Foguangshan network and emphasizes the same teachings as other branch monasteries do. Nor (from what we can tell) is Yingmiao as much of a “cash cow” as one might suspect: in order to build the temporary monastery in which he is now housed, funds primarily came from devotees of other Taipei Foguangshan monasteries. Second, Yingmiao helps out those who seek him and occasionally helps people unexpectedly, but unlike an ordinary ancestor he needs nothing in return. He just hopes that people will do good. Third, Yingmiao was able to stay on as a flesh-body bodhisattva due to his spiritual attainments and his particular compassionate vows 別願. While relatively pious devotees encourage themselves to emulate his virtuous qualities, and everyone is encouraged to make the vows common to all bodhisattvas 總願 in addition to purifying their minds through repentance, we found no cases of people wanting to emulate Yingmiao by themselves becoming flesh-body bodhisattvas. The abbess Daoxiang indicated she did not know exactly how or why he chose to self-mummify, and claimed she did not know of a single person who aspired to mummification. Becoming a flesh-body bodhisattva would be impossible and maybe even undesirable for most people, she claimed, since even if someone could reach this goal, one might not be able to do much for people with-

out the close connection to a monastery and institutional backing that Yingmiao had.

Instead, she told us that the emphasis at the monastery is the “socially engaged Buddhism” (*renjian Fojiao*) in the tradition of Foguangshan founder Venerable Xingyun 星雲, which she says includes developing mental purity and learning non-attachment. This term *renjian Fojiao*, which the Foguangshan organization translates into English as Humanistic Buddhism, means different things in different locales. Another translation for this term, which seems to have been popularized or even coined by the Chinese Buddhist monk Taixu (1890–1947) partially through his interaction with Christianity, Western science, anarchism, socialism, and secular humanism, is “Buddhism for the human realm.” The term was translated into Vietnamese and from Vietnamese into English, where “socially engaged Buddhism” or simply “engaged Buddhism” has been used to describe the various attempts of Buddhist communities to refocus their practices.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ According to Christopher S. Queen, “Introduction: The Shapes and Sources of Engaged Buddhism,” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, eds. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (New York: Albany State U.P., 1996), p. 36, it was Thich Nhat Hanh who first coined the expression in English, from the Vietnamese *nhap gian phat giao*, and according to two of his former students, Thich Nhat Hanh had been reading Taixu’s and Yinshun’s books in the early sixties (personal communication). Some scholars and religious figures use the term *rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教 (Buddhism for human life) as shorthand to refer to Taixu’s approach to Buddhism, whereas they use *renjian Fojiao* for Yinshun’s approach (for example, see Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, pp. 133–35). While such a distinction may be useful as a heuristic device, nevertheless Taixu clearly did use the term *renjian Fojiao*: “How to Establish Renjian Fojiao” 怎樣來建設人間佛教, in *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 (Taipei, 1956), *bian* 14, *ce* 47, no. 6. For more perspectives on *rensheng Fojiao*, *renjian Fojiao*, and how these terms are sometimes distinguished from one another, see Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu’s Reforms*. (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2001), esp. pp. 169–81 and 270; and Chandler, “Establishing a Pureland,” esp. chap. 3. Also, Jiang Canteng, *Taiwan Fojiao yu xiandai shehui* 台灣佛教與現代社會 (Taipei: Dongda, 1992), pp. 169–88, and Yang, “Dangdai Fojiao,” pp. 75–125. Despite what some scholars and Taiwanese monastics say, the founding leader of perhaps the largest Buddhist organization in Taiwan rarely mentions and in fact does not herself accept the *renjian Fojiao* label: in a rare comment on the issue, Venerable Zhengyan 證嚴 of the Ciji Merit Society 慈濟功德會 stated: “I dare not say that Ciji is ‘*renjian Fojiao*,’ I can only say that Ciji is the ‘*renjian pusa*’ 人間菩薩 (‘bodhisattva in the human realm’) Dharma gate, ...” (*Ciji* 慈濟 450 [May 2004], p. 145). However, earlier in the same interview she seems to affirm the term *renjian Fojiao* but uses it in a way devoid of its philosophical content, to mean “applied and efficacious Buddhism”: “... so-called ‘*renjian Fojiao*,’ is precisely taking the spirit of the Buddha and using it in daily life, and not just empty talk or memorization [of sutras] through silent repetition” (*Ciji* 450, p. 143). Other monastics we have spoken with apply this term (with disapproval) to label Buddhist emphasis on social reform rather than liberation from samsara, or to label (with approval) the Buddhism of all monastics who “regularly come into contact with lay devotees 接觸信徒很平凡.” Another monk used it (with slight disapproval) to mean “the Buddhism in which the goal is to come to the human realm [rather than to the Western Pure Land] in one’s next life.” In short, *renjian Fojiao* is a polysemous term, and functions both as an emic term (for Buddhist organizations and individuals) and as an etic term (for Buddhist scholars); it is not always clear to whom or what the term refers. (We are grateful to Prof. Julia Huang for showing us Zhengyan’s recent comment on *renjian Fojiao*.)

In Taiwan, *renjian Fojiao* is sometimes characterized as emphasizing (among other things) that one should seek to transform oneself through Buddhism and not treat interactions with monastics, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas merely as exchanges like business transactions, which is the way many Taiwanese regard interactions with deities. Notice that in the pamphlet translated in the appendix, the emphasis is not on worship of the whole-body relic Yingmiao, and his potential power to grant boons is not even mentioned. Rather, the pamphlet seeks to give Yingmiao's life a didactic and inspirational function, framing him as a moral exemplar for common people who live ordinary lives: "If in addition to giving their reverence and praise everyone were to immediately respond to the event by emulating his virtue, then acts of monumental merit could all be attained in no time.."

In contrast, many of the Chinese Buddhist whole-body relics we see in Buddhist histories are framed more as sources of miraculous boons. This shift to a didactic framing of a miraculous mummification happens to parallel a change in the Catholic Church's view of saints. While saints and their relics were once regarded as sources of power in and of themselves,⁶⁶ Church dogma now downplays these ideas and emphasizes the saints' roles as moral exemplars. The changes in the Buddhist attitudes toward the dead, too, were influenced by modern standards of rationality.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

How have Taiwanese Buddhist attitudes toward mummification developed over the last several decades? One way of gauging change is by looking at differences in the way Buddhist periodicals have reported on – or have neglected to report on – each whole-body relic. Cihang's mummification was widely reported in 1959, and even led to a congratulatory message from a Buddhist organization in Korea.⁶⁸ The same year Venerable Yanpei 演培 (1917–1996), a prolific author and former student of both Cihang and Yinshun 印順, wrote an article which attempted to explain Cihang's mummification vis-à-vis Buddhist doctrine, relying largely on historical precedent and purported

⁶⁶ See Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1995).

⁶⁷ For a comparative study of Christian and Buddhist relics, see Marcus Bingenheimer, "Roushen pusa and Corpus Integrum: Whole Body Relics in Buddhism and Christianity," in *The Contribution of Buddhism to World Culture*, ed. Kalpakam Sankarnarayan (Mumbai: So-maiya Publications), forthcoming, 2005.

⁶⁸ *Putishu* 菩提樹 7.8 (August 1959), p. 42.

links with doctrines that do not explicitly mention mummification. Evidently there was skepticism in the Buddhist community. He exhorted Buddhists to regard whole-body relics as follows: “with deep faith and no doubt, believe for certain that this [Buddhist mummification] is a manifestation of successful and full [karmic] merit; definitely do not, like those of ordinary/secular 俗 knowledge and views see this as something like a mummy.”⁶⁹ While Yanpei, an advocate of *renjian Fojiao*, encourages Buddhists to focus their attention on Cihang’s noble spirit and to emulate his moral and compassionate actions, and makes efforts to show how mummification accords with Buddhist doctrine and historical precedent, clearly he supports the view that mummification is proof of spiritual attainment. Thus, in general *renjian Fojiao* encourages social engagement, rationality, and empiricism (in a sense), but is not necessarily scientific. That is, in the cases described above, belief in the relationship between spiritual cultivation and mummification is not based on controlled experiments, and Buddhists have not expressed interest in conducting such experiments.

Qingyan’s mummification and death were also widely reported in Buddhist periodicals in 1976.⁷⁰ So in both Cihang’s and Qingyan’s cases, the mainstream Buddhist press as represented by these periodicals lauded monks and considered their mummification proof of spiritual attainments.

However, two years later, when the Kanjurwa’s whole-body relic was enshrined, it was not reported in these same Buddhist periodicals. The Kanjurwa – as he was not part of the Chinese Buddhist tradition – was in some sense an outsider to the Buddhist establishment. On the other hand, years before his death he had been active in the major Buddhist institution in Taiwan, the B.A.R.O.C., and had even served as a member of its five-member executive standing committee from 1960 to 1963.⁷¹ But Buddhist periodicals do not even mention his mummification or even explicitly mention his death. Instead, in 1978 they printed brief biographies of his life along with brief excerpts of

⁶⁹ Yanpei, “Cong Cihang fashi yuanji wu nian yiti bu huai shuo qi” 從慈航法師圓寂五年遺體不壞說起, *Haichaoyin* 40 (June 1959), pp. 2–3. Note the word “mummy” (Chinese: 木乃伊) in both Chinese and English can mean a dried corpse that resists decay (Cihang’s body), but it can also refer more specifically to a corpse preserved by artificial, chemical methods, and Yanpei explicitly denounces the view that Cihang was the latter.

⁷⁰ E.g., *Zhongguo Fojiao* 20.5 (February, 1976), p. 23; and 20.7 (April 1976), pp. 2, 6, 8, 22, and 50; *Haichaoyin* 56.3 (March 1976), pp. 2, 8–12; *Putishu* 281 (April 1976), p. 49; and *Shizihou* 獅子吼 15.4–5 (April/May 1976), on an unnumbered page inside the back cover.

⁷¹ See the B.A.R.O.C. website <<http://www.baroc.org.tw/outwash.htm>>.

his teachings.⁷² It appears that the establishment did not recognize his mummification as genuine, perhaps due to the controversy surrounding it as we mentioned above.

The discovery of Yingmiao's mummy in 1983 led to but one short report we are aware of, mentioned above, in the B.A.R.O.C.-affiliated magazine *Zhongguo Fojiao*, but the magazine does not promote it as a miraculous event, merely reporting that "it is believed to be a miracle" [i.e., by the people who exhumed him, not necessarily by us].⁷³ In these same magazines, Puzhao's mummy in 1983 led to no reports, nor did Gongga's in 2000.

Why the decline in interest in whole-body relics? On one hand, the first two mummies had been closely connected to the Chinese Buddhist establishment; their followers had the social capital to transform the mummies into widely recognized whole-body relics. In contrast, the later four were less influential in the Buddhist establishment. But while social capital can explain the fate of specific mummies, it does not explain why no prominent Chinese Buddhist monastics have become whole-body relics since 1976.

In the introduction we described mummification as a marginal practice. In Taiwan today it appears to be marginal in two senses: first, it is rare compared to other religious practices, and also it has fallen out of favor with the mainstream, Chinese Buddhist community.⁷⁴ How does such a marginal practice fit in with the kind of engaged Buddhism that – under the label *renjian Fojiao* – has become the most common denominator among the many of the larger Buddhist groups now operating in Taiwan? *Renjian Fojiao* is typical of engaged Buddhism movements in that it stresses social involvement and rationality and favors the exoteric over the esoteric. What does the persistence of mummification mean vis-à-vis this development?

⁷² See *Shizihou* 17.7 (July 1978), pp. 37–38; *Haichaoyin* 59.7 (July 1978), pp. 26–27; and *Zhongguo Fojiao* 22.10 (October 1978), p. 50; and 22.11 (November 1978), p. 28.

⁷³ *Zhongguo Fojiao* 27.1 (January 1983), p. 53.

⁷⁴ On the other hand, could it be that many monastics attempt mummification, but very few succeed? A reliable informant, a prominent Taiwanese scholar of Buddhism, has heard of only one or maybe two cases of failed mummification in Taiwan in the past several decades, and these cases were more than ten years ago. In fact, the one case the informant remembers clearly was some twenty or thirty years ago, and because the whole network of Taiwanese Buddhist circles is quite small, he probably would have heard about other unsuccessful attempts. Therefore, the informant believes it unlikely that numerous mummifications are attempted yet fail. If evidence of numerous recent mummifications (whether successful or not) were to emerge, we would have to revise or qualify our conclusions. Welch mentions one presumably unsuccessful attempt at mummification in Hong Kong (*Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 342–45).

No one is better suited to help us answer that question than Yinshun (1906–), the foremost scholar-monk in the Chinese Buddhist Sangha today, who is widely credited with providing the theoretical framework for today's *renjian Fojiao*. Against resistance from more conservative groups Yinshun's ideas have since the seventies become a new orthodoxy. Especially his more academic works on Buddhist history are widely acclaimed and have changed the way educated Buddhists regard their own tradition.⁷⁵ His Buddhism is sober, scholarly, and ethical. For him practices like mummification could at best pass as *upāya*, skillful means, but could never be part of Buddhism *proper*.

In a short chapter he wrote around 1989, Yinshun states he does not regard the existence of whole-body relics as extraordinary.⁷⁶ He states flatly that the bodies of plants as well as animals are sometimes preserved after their death and reminisces about a species of frog he often found dried when he was a child. He reminds his readers that mummification is a universal phenomenon and cites examples ranging from cases of mummification in South America, the Russian Orthodox Church, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Yinshun observes that the Indian *vinaya* rule that prescribes the cremation of a dead Sangha member has been "adjusted" in China, where burial, not cremation, was often the common way to dispose of the corpse. He holds the whole process of mummification to be completely natural and not the result of any kind of spiritual attainment whatsoever. He moreover clearly assumes it to be part of the relic cult. His final remarks are as follows:

The *Sutra on the Smaller Perfection of Wisdom* 小品般若波羅蜜經 (Sanskrit: *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*; fascicle 2) says it well: "I do not deny the relics (pieces, or whole-body) my veneration. They are born from *prajñā pāramitā*, they are perfumed by *prajñā pāramitā*, and therefore they receive offerings." That the relics of Buddha and his disciples receive veneration and offerings is because it was with the support of the deceased body that they practiced *prajñā* (wisdom), kindness-compassion, and other virtues, and helped themselves and sentient beings according to the correct Dharma. Do not believe that relic pieces of the body or the whole body provide any proof of attainment of virtue! [Even among] animals

⁷⁵ See Marcus Bingenheimer, *Leben und Werk des Gelehrtenmönchs Yinshun (*1906): Seine Bedeutung für die Entwicklung des chinesischen Buddhismus* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum [Würzburger Sinologische Schriften], 2004), and Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, pp. 124–35.

⁷⁶ This and the following from Yinshun, *Zhongguo Fojiao suotan* 中國佛教瑣談, in *Huayuji* 華雨集 4, pp. 195–200, as taken in 2005 from the website <www.yinshun.org.tw>.

and people – those who have never heard of Buddhism, followers of other religions – there are many non-decaying flesh-bodies!⁷⁷

Yinshun is aware that his views might offend those followers of traditional Chinese Buddhism who are involved in the worship of whole-body relics. Because of this he has not published an article that he wrote soon after Cihang's whole-body relic was found.⁷⁸ In fact he lost the manuscript and only in 1989 took up the topic again.⁷⁹ His attitude towards the veneration of flesh-body bodhisattvas is clearly disapproving, if somewhat resigned. His interpretation emphasizes the intellectual, rational side of Buddhism while downplaying devotional practices.

Venerable Shengyan 聖嚴 (1931–), another prominent scholar-monk who has consulted with Yinshun for guidance, is more reserved in his critique of flesh-body bodhisattva worship. Shengyan's books are read not only by his own disciples but also by the broader public and even by disciples of other prominent clerics who have not been such prolific writers. In the entire sixty-eight volumes included in the *Complete Collection of Dharma Drum*, which comprise most of his writings, he does not even mention the Taiwanese Buddhist mummies.⁸⁰ He does discuss the more common worship of *shelizi* (post-cremation bits of bone) but he downplays their significance, writing that whether or not one's cremated body produces *shelizi* is "not related to whether or not one is liberated.... Commonly it is said that only those who cultivate morality, concentration, and wisdom have *shelizi*. But *shelizi* themselves are the crystalization and coagulation of bodily secretions; they have some degree of sacredness and mystery, and are valued by Buddhists, but they are not necessarily important things for Buddhists; it is liberation from samsara that is the fundamental matter... The relics obtained from [cremating] bodies have from the beginning been valued by ordinary worldlings but have been ignored by the enlightened."⁸¹

So Shengyan does not outright dismiss *shelizi*, writing that they are produced through elementary stages of religious practice, but he

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 199. Insertions in parentheses by Yinshun. Sutra quotation can be found at T no. 227, vol. 8, p. 545A. Note that Yinshun changes the wording of the cited text slightly, but the changes do not affect the meaning.

⁷⁸ Yinshun writes that he wrote this article in 1958 (ibid., p. 195), but he probably means 1959, because other sources agree that Cihang's whole-body relic was not discovered until 1959.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 195. His relationship with Cihang had been slightly tense anyway. See Yinshun, *Pingfan de yisheng* 平凡的一生, in *Huayu xiangyun* 華雨香雲 (1971), pp. 53–70, online at <www.yinshun.org.tw>; and Bingenheimer, *Leben und Werk*, chap. 3.

⁸⁰ Shengyan 聖嚴, *Fagu quanji* 法鼓全集 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 1999).

⁸¹ Shengyan, *Xue Fo qunyi* 學佛群疑, 2d edn., in *Fagu quanji* 法鼓全集 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 1999) 5.3, p. 165.

gives their production a naturalistic explanation (“crystalization and coagulation of bodily secretions”). Elsewhere he mentions in passing a Buddhist whole-body relic he saw while traveling in China, and suggests that it might help some people give rise to faith, but he downplays the influence of the mummy relative to the bodhisattva Earth Treasury and exhorts those Buddhists with many sicknesses in the monastery that contains the mummy, saying “Those with heavy karmic obstacles [that produce misfortune] should do more to study in the spirit of the bodhisattva Earth Treasury, generating a mind with a great vow, and then they can dissolve karmic obstacles.”⁸² For Shengyan, *shelizi* and whole-body relics may be useful in so far as they inspire those who need them to practice the Buddhist path, but their powers and people’s fascination with their mystery should not be the final goal. Shengyan’s attitude toward the whole-body relics is probably more typical among educated, *renjian Fojiao*-oriented clerics than Yinshun’s is: they want to avoid offending others and creating divisions among Buddhists, yet at the same time they want to make sure that Buddhists do not focus on external sources of power and succor to the neglect of the project of their own moral perfection.

Probably it is just its marginality that today has spared mummification even stronger criticism. Instances of mummification are relatively rare, and worship of whole-body relics can easily be framed as a subspecies of the more general relic-worship, which of course is indisputably Buddhist. Moreover, the religious scene in Taiwan is extremely sophisticated and varied.⁸³ In the vast field of Taiwanese popular religion, six whole-body relics over a period of fifty years are not particularly exciting for those who are actively involved in the scene. Still another reason why the worship of whole-body relics is not widely discussed is probably the unspoken rule of mutual tolerance between the Buddhist communities. Though there are considerable differences in the interpretation and practice of Buddhism, criticism of personal practice is hardly ever expressed in public. Because of all this, whole-body relics are not a topic in the Buddhist discourse in Taiwan today.⁸⁴

⁸² Shengyan, *Bubu lianhua* 步步蓮花, 2d edn., in *Fagu quanji* 法鼓全集 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 1999) 6.9, p. 37.

⁸³ For a broad collection of articles on modern Taiwanese religion, see Philip Clart and Charles B. Jones, eds., *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2003).

⁸⁴ The only publication dealing exclusively with Buddhist mummies in Taiwan is the popular account by Luo, *Taiwan roushen*. Though published under a different title, this book is identical to Lü Buwen 呂不問, *Roushen pusa chuanqi* 肉身菩薩傳奇 (Taipei: Kaijin wenhua, 1993). According to our investigations, Luo Wen and Lü Buwen are the same person as Mr. Huang Xuan 黃玄 (b. 1970), a figure of some prominence in esoteric circles in Taiwan. Prob-

However, in their way, even on the margin, the newer whole-body relics clearly do reflect some important trends in Taiwanese Buddhism. The recent enshrinement of Gongga, for example, can be seen as an expression of the growing empowerment of women in the Sangha, and the increasing presence of Tibetan Buddhism on the island. Since the Kanjurwa, no member of the mainstream Buddhist establishment has been mummified and the Kanjurwa himself as a Mongolian lama is hardly representative of Chinese Buddhism. The three latest whole-body relics were outsiders: the married cleric Yingmiao, the mountain ascetic Puzhao, and the Esoteric Buddhist Gongga. This shows that mummification as a practice in Chinese Buddhism has (for now) lost some of its appeal for the majority of Sangha and lay followers alike. As the central institutions of the Sangha have assimilated modern standards of rationality, the practice of mummification has moved even further into the margins. The current orthodoxy as defined by the leaders of the large Buddhist organizations and by scholars such as Yinshun leaves less room for practitioners of Chinese Buddhism to aspire to become a *roushen pusa* or to assist in someone's mummification.

Buddhist mummification, never a central topic in the Buddhist discourse, is therefore today more marginal than ever. The recent enshrinement of Gongga, however, shows that the margin has proved remarkably resilient. The mummies are with us to stay.

ably Luo Wen is the man's real name and Lü Buwen and Huang Xuan are aliases. The presentation is detailed, but strictly non-academic. We were told by an informant closely connected to one of the whole-body relics that many of the details are wrong. The book was written with a popular audience in mind and it appears that Luo made use of artistic imagination to spice up the writing.

Appendix

The following section is a translation of the pamphlet describing Yingmiao that is available at Anguo Monastery. Many parts of this pamphlet are identical to phrases in the articles about Qingyan that originally appeared in the Buddhist periodicals *Haichaoyin* 海潮音 and *Zhongguo Fojiao*, or in the virtually identical article in the book *Chengyuan zailai* 乘願再來. In addition, many other parts of the texts closely parallel one another.⁸⁵ The numerous similarities between these accounts suggest that the author of the Yingmiao account consulted and copied liberally from the Qingyan account.

“A Record of the Flesh-Body Bodhisattva Monk Yingmiao’s Achievement of the Way”

The founding abbot of this monastery, the Old Monk Yingmiao 瀛妙老和尚, had the Dharma name Wuxin 悟心, the [Dharma] courtesy name Yingmiao, and the secular name Lin Shuilian 林水蓮. Born twenty-one years before (that is, in 1891) the founding of the Republic, his ancestral home (and place of birth) was in Jinmen County of Fujian Province. On the tenth day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar, in the sixty-second year of the Republic (1973), fully enlightened he passed away into perfect quiescence 圓寂.⁸⁶ At the age of eighty-three he was interred seated in lotus position, by which time he had been a member of the Sangha for forty-four years and a fully ordained monk for twenty-two years. Recently as we came to the tenth anniversary of his display of quiescence, his Dharma dependents and [lay] disciples decided to open his tomb to gather his bones.⁸⁷ So subsequently on January tenth of the seventy-second year of the Republic (lunar calendar date: seventy-first year, eleventh month, twenty-seventh day)⁸⁸ (that is, 1983), his tomb was opened. However, as it was opened, a strong whiff of sandalwood emerged, and his flesh-body was seen [sitting upright] in medi-

⁸⁵ *Haichaoyin* 56.3 (March 1976), p. 2; *Zhongguo Fojiao* 20.7 (April 1976), p. 2; and *Chengyuan zailai*, pp. 6–9.

⁸⁶ *Yuanji* 圓寂, a Chinese translation for total nirvana or “parinirvāṇa” (although the precise meaning of the latter in Sanskrit literature is contentious), the death of someone not subject to rebirth. *Yuanji* is now used in a looser sense as a respectful term to refer to the death of any monastic, regardless of his or her level of spiritual attainment; e.g., in *Chengyuan zailai*, to refer to Qingyan’s death, both “go toward [re]birth 往生” and “perfect quiescence 圓寂” are used within two sentences of one another (p. 29). An equivalent term is 示寂, “display of quiescence.”

⁸⁷ Strictly speaking, his only Dharma dependent 法眷 was Mingding, the only monastic whom he ordained, although Daoxiang also considers herself a Dharma dependent, in a sense, since she was his adopted granddaughter and is also a monastic. Daoxiang says that Mingding decided to remove the bones for two reasons: it is customary to remove bones for secondary burial or cremation (usually after some 5–10 years, depending on the area of Taiwan); and because her mother had just died, Mingding wanted to bury her in the same location as Yingmiao’s remains based on her belief that it was an auspicious burial site (i.e., having good geomancy 地理). This latter belief was because before he died Yingmiao had chosen it as his place of final disposition. Yingmiao himself had not actually been buried, but placed above ground in a special coffin, around which a low, doorless concrete structure was built. For more on Taiwanese beliefs regarding secondary burial and geomantic siting, see Emily M. Ahern, *Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1973), and Huang Wenbo 黃文博, *Taiwanren de shengsixue* 台灣人的生死學 (Taipei: Changmin wenhua, 2000).

⁸⁸ This parenthetical phrase is in the original.

tative absorption, his physical features whole and dignified, his body amber-colored, his beard, hair, fingernails, eyeballs, and tongue all very much intact, and his facial expression just like it had been in life. He had become the third flesh-body bodhisattva in the country to attain the Way. All the people who saw him gasped in wonder at this marvel. News of the event spread widely, causing a sensation throughout society. The Monk Yingmiao's recent achievement of the Way in his flesh body particularly inspired the four assemblies of Buddhists, who had already seen both Dharma Master Cihang of Jingxiu Court in Xizhi, Taipei County, leave behind a full-body śarīra in the forty-eighth year of the Republic, and the Monk Qingyan of Haizang Monastery, Wansheng Mountain in Xindian, Taipei County, leave behind an undecaying flesh-body.

As a child the Monk's family was poor, and following his father's instructions and serving his parents with utmost filiality, at age seven he would walk along the streets hawking wares that he carried in a basket, earning a tiny bit of profit for the family's use. At age eleven or twelve when he left home to seek work as a hired laborer, at first the foreman didn't want to hire him due to his young age and small stature, after which he put stone slabs under his feet to make himself look taller. The foreman was deeply moved and couldn't bring himself to make the boy leave. From his childhood onward he had no opportunity to study in school, but through his strong perseverance he studied on his own, establishing a deep foundation for his future study of Buddhist scriptures. So as a youth, he passed his days in this arduous and exhausting manner. By the time he reached adulthood he had achieved a modest degree of success in his career, and then he experienced a sudden awakening into Buddhist Chan Principle.⁸⁹ Then in the eighteenth year of the Republic (1929) he entered Yuanjue Monastery 圓覺寺 in Taipei County, Taiwan Province, where he left home to become a monastic under Dharma Master Juejing 覺淨法師, and in the nineteenth year of the Republic (1930) he served as abbot of Yuanjue Monastery. In the twenty-seventh year of the Republic (1938) the causes and conditions for his enlightenment achieved maturity, after which he sold off all his personal possessions and took out a loan of 2000 yen from Kangyō Bank 勸業銀行, with which he purchased this present site. Because his budget was limited, he was unable to rely entirely on hired labor for construction costs, and therefore he took part in all the arrangements for clearing out the site and in the construction work. After two years the main hall was completed and the structure named Cishan Hall 慈善堂. Subsequently, the refectory and the eastern and western side rooms were completed, followed in the thirty-second year of the Republic by the Lingguang Columbarium Tower. In the thirty-fourth year of the Republic (1945) after the retrocession of Taiwan, moved by the fact that the country had been through many hard times and earnestly wishing for peace in the country and happiness among the people, he changed the name of the structure to Anguo ("pacify/peaceful

⁸⁹ By that time, Daoxiang says, Yingmiao was living in Taiwan and owned a general store 雜貨店 on Dihua Street 迪化街 in downtown Taipei. Daoxiang likens his awakening and subsequent rejection of worldly success to the Prince Siddhartha's rejection of the royal throne to seek enlightenment. Note that, contrary to what one might expect from the use of the Republican China system for dating years, from 1895 to 1945 Taiwan was a colony of Japan.

country”) Monastery 安國寺. From then onward he devoted his energy to the study and promotion of the Buddhadharma, and in the forty-third year of the Republic (1954) he was honored to receive the gift of a wooden plaque with the inscribed characters “Anguo Monastery” from the late vice-president Mr. Chen Cheng 陳誠. In the forty-fifth year of the Republic (1956) he proceeded to Lingyun Chan Monastery 凌雲禪寺 of Guanyin Mountain in Taipei County, Taiwan Province, where he implored to receive the three categories of great precepts 三壇大戒.⁹⁰

As the Monk approached his end, he discussed nothing of arrangements after his death, seeking to let things take their natural course. After he meditated, became fully enlightened and passed away into perfect quiescence, his Dharma dependents and disciples decided to bury him as he died, seated in lotus position. They asked at many coffin shops but no one was able and willing to take on the job of making the [required but] rare palanquin-like coffin 轎棺.⁹¹ But then it happened that upon hearing the news, the wife of one shopkeeper remarked, “Three days ago I dreamed of a palanquin which was surrounded by scintillating golden light, within which there sat a monk with a golden body 金身和尙.”⁹² Everyone who heard of this dream thought it extraordinary, and subsequently the shopkeeper agreed to make the palanquin-coffin for the Monk. As for all these causes and conditions – could it be that the Old Monk foresaw all of this through mysterious knowledge?

While alive, the Monk seemed to be very ordinary; he was good and generous, paying little heed to fame or profit, passing his days taking things as they came, honest and sincere in his spiritual practice, of true and upright conduct, diligently living every day in the same manner for decades. Through reading the Prajñāpāramitā Diamond Sutra for many years he attained deep enlightenment into the purport of the sutra’s Dharma, and he reached the sagely realms in the dual practice of compassion and wisdom. Some say, “To achieve the Way in one’s flesh body, one must rely on the power of morality, concentration, and wisdom, and be carried by a vow of kindness and compassion. How could it really be that he made such a great vow? Then when he was alive, why was his name not known far and wide, and his merits not brilliant and shining?” Worldly customs are degenerate and shallow, and people rush after empty fame; while the Dharmic Way is neglected and despised, people burden themselves by [chasing after] reflected images and dust 影塵.⁹³ The Monk dwelled in a humble abode and

⁹⁰ For more on Lingyun Chan Monastery as well as mention of Venerable Juejing, see Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, pp. 44–48.

⁹¹ De Groot mentions that in the late-19th c. monks in the Xiamen 廈門 area who were to be cremated were placed sitting upright in “a large square box which has a door or a slide in front” (*Religious System of China*, p. 330). Perhaps these boxes were the same or similar to the palanquin-like coffin mentioned here? Remember that Yingmiao was born in that same period, in Jinmen, which is only kilometers away from Xiamen – and perhaps he did have a role in selecting the mode of burial.

⁹² While it may be a mere coincidence, a term very similar to *jinshen heshang*, *jinshen luohan* 金身羅漢 (“arhat with a golden body”) is actually an alternate term for a gilded, whole-body relic of a monk; e.g., chap. 39, *Journey to the West* 西遊記.

⁹³ That is, chasing after things in the ordinary, empty, impure world. “Reflected images

lived a commonplace life, appearing as a poor child – is this not a case of what Great Master Yongjia 永嘉大師 said: “The sounding of the Dharma thunder, the striking of the Dharma drum, the spreading of the clouds of kindness, the sprinkling of ambrosia”?⁹⁴ And now within thirty years in this country we have seen three cases of the Way being realized in a flesh-body; truly these are miracles of Buddhism and auspicious omens for the county. If in addition to giving their reverence and praise all our compatriots and all good men and pious women were to immediately respond to the event by emulating his virtue, then acts of monumental merit – achievements that cause heaven to spin and the earth to rotate – all could be attained in no time. Would this not be exemplary and most commendable?

and dust” translates 影塵, which if understood technically could be translated as “objects of perception which are as insubstantial as the reflections in a mirror.”

⁹⁴ That is to say, learning about Yingmiao’s noble example should shock us out of our complacency and inspire us to spiritual practice. The quotation is from *Yongjia’s Song of Realizing the Way* 永嘉證道歌, T no. 2014, vol. 48, p. 396B.