

## Article

# From Monks to Educators: Venerable Zongyue and Buddhist Charitable Educational Activities in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing

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**Abstract:** This article explores the charitable activities of Chinese Buddhists in Beijing in the first decades of the twentieth century, with a focus on Buddhists' efforts in building schools and promoting modern education. Specifically, the activities led by Venerable Zongyue 宗月 (1880–1941) are examined, in his role spearheading various Buddhist charitable activities in Beijing, including building several schools for commoners (*pingmin xuexiao* 平民學校) in the 1920s. Zongyue also established a library and a Buddhist newspaper called *Fobao Xunkan* 佛寶旬刊 to promote ideas about philanthropy. In the late 1920s, inspired by Zongyue's example, as well as under pressure from the government during the anti-superstition campaigns, many other temples in Beijing began building schools to offer educational opportunities to students. This article investigates the interactions between Buddhism, education, and the government. By examining the initiatives started by Zongyue and the role of Chinese Buddhists in promoting charitable educational activities and social change, this article sheds light on the broader impact of Buddhism on Chinese society in the early twentieth century.

**Keywords:** Zongyue; Chinese Buddhism; modern education; philanthropy



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## 1. Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Chinese reformers began to understand education as crucial for China's transformation. The Qing (1644–1911) court implemented a series of reforms, leading to the replacement of the civil service examination system with a modern education system in 1905.<sup>1</sup> Dramatic changes continued throughout the Republican period (1912–1949). After the founding of the republic, various education systems were launched but then abandoned until 1922, when the Beijing 北京 government implemented a new system.<sup>2</sup> In 1927, after the establishment of the Nationalist government in Nanjing 南京, the regime advanced nation-building programs. In the education sector, the government centralized control through the introduction of new curricula, standardizing assessments, and emphasizing nationalist content.<sup>3</sup>

While both Chinese intellectuals and the state promoted education to produce the human resources needed to build the nation, they also attacked religions for hindering the process and, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, conducted various campaigns to eliminate popular religion.<sup>4</sup> As Prasenjit Duara (1997, pp. 92–96) indicated, during the anti-superstition campaigns, the government sought to differentiate between “religion” and “superstition,” attempting to assert control over the places traditionally associated with local cults and local power-holders. These campaigns had varying regional impacts. The anti-superstition campaigns initiated by the Nationalists in 1928 and 1929 primarily targeted the Guangdong 廣東 province and the lower Yangzi regions of Jiangsu 江蘇, Zhejiang 浙江, and Anhui 安徽 (Duara 1997, pp. 92–96).

These campaigns resulted in profound changes in Buddhism. From the reforms in the late Qing to the Nationalist campaigns in the 1920s, many local officials and educators had extracted revenue from temples for financing education projects. Numerous temples were turned into public schools, and the monastics were dispelled (Duara 1997, p. 92).

Holmes Welch (1968, pp. 11–13) has described how Buddhist monks formed associations to protect the temple properties from confiscation and prevent the conversion of temples into schools. Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), Dixian 諦閑 (1858–1932), and other Buddhist leaders founded seminaries and schools to educate monastics and better prepare them for disseminating Dharma.<sup>5</sup> Many lay Buddhists organized Buddhist societies and advanced social charity.<sup>6</sup> Following the developing printed media, Buddhists established newspapers and magazines for the promotion of Buddhist ideas.<sup>7</sup> Buddhist authors also wrote apologetics to defend Buddhism against accusations of spreading superstition.<sup>8</sup>

Recent studies have highlighted the complex interactions between the state, religious groups, and other social parties in these campaigns. Goossaert and Palmer (2011, pp. 53–54) showed that the birth of anti-superstition campaigns and the intellectuals' rejection of Chinese religious heritage at the turn of the twentieth century were intertwined with the emergence of Chinese nationalism. Rebecca Nedostup (2010, pp. 28–29) demonstrated that the anti-superstition campaigns ultimately failed due to the mutability of the criteria used by the Nationalist regime to define religion and the marginalized groups' ability to evade scrutiny. Beverley Foulks McGuire (2011) described how Jiang Yiyuan 江易園 (1876–1942), an educator and lay Buddhist leader in Jiangsu, attempted to integrate Buddhist instructions into primary schools. Various other scholars have explored the regional differences in these campaigns, the differences resulting from the inconsistency in government policies, and the diversity of the local conditions and needs. For example, Stefania Travagnin (2021) reported that Venerable Changyuan 昌圓 (1879–1943) and many nuns successfully advanced education projects in Sichuan in the late 1920s and 1930s. Shuk-Wah Poon's study (Poon 2015) recounted that even in Guangdong province, a focal region of the anti-superstition campaigns, some popular cults still thrived during the 1930s.

This article examines the case of Beijing, showing that it exemplifies the inconsistent government policies and their varying regional impacts. Following the overthrow of the Beiyang government and the relocation of the capital to Nanjing in 1928, Beijing residents faced deteriorating economic conditions. These specific socio-political circumstances influenced the government's religious policies and the subsequent responses of the Buddhist temples. Instead of pursuing extreme measures to eliminate religious influence, the Beijing government sought to rally social efforts to combat poverty. The Buddhist temples in Beijing leveraged this situation to address their uncertainties about the future. Alerted by the loss of temple properties caused by the anti-superstition campaigns in the southern provinces, the Buddhist temples in Beijing tried to mitigate potential attacks. Some temples responded by actively engaging in social welfare initiatives, including building schools. As a result, from mid-1928 to early 1929, Buddhist temples in Beijing established over ten schools, a sharp increase when compared to only two schools founded between 1912 and 1928.

This article highlights the crucial role played by Venerable Zongyue 宗月 (1880–1941) in leading the monastic efforts to build schools in Beijing. Before joining the monastic order in 1925, Zongyue was a philanthropist in the city. From the 1910s to the early 1920s, he spearheaded several influential charitable organizations, prioritizing the alleviation of poverty and education. After becoming a monk, he remained dedicated to the endeavor of poverty relief and education. His prior charitable experience proved valuable to the monastic communities, when they faced pressure from the government to engage in social affairs in 1928 and 1929.

The role of emerging Buddhist-produced media in coordinating efforts to address challenges is also examined. The generation and circulation of information were pivotal to this organized endeavor. From May 1928 to August 1929, Zongyue presided over the publication of a Buddhist newspaper *Fobao Xunkan* 佛寶旬刊 (The Ten-Day Newspaper of Buddhist Jewel, hereafter abbreviated as FBXK). In FBXK, Buddhist writers discussed how Buddhism should intervene in secular life and serve the public. FBXK provided a crucial platform for the Buddhists to engage in discussions and strategize their actions. An analysis of these discussions shows that the temples deliberately engaged in the program of

building schools. In fact, inspired by Zongyue and other advocates, and under pressure from the government during the anti-superstition campaigns of the late 1920s, many temples in Beijing began to build schools to offer education to underprivileged students.

Based on an examination of the articles in FBXK, this article explores the interactions among the monks, laypeople, and the government in the temples' initiatives, and begins with an introduction to Zongyue's secular and monastic life, highlighting his philanthropic work.<sup>9</sup> Then, the changing situation in Beijing in 1928 is outlined, focusing on the challenges faced by the monastics to mitigate potential threats. Through the analysis of the articles in FBXK, this article illustrates how Zongyue and other advocates interpreted Buddhist doctrines to promote charitable initiatives. In addition, it demonstrates that by opening schools, the temples tried to align their goals with the government's urgent priorities, particularly that of poverty alleviation. The last section of this article shows that under government pressure, Buddhist temples further expanded their charitable efforts to avoid threats in 1929. Through the examination of the situation in Beijing, this study sheds light on the intricacies of the transition period, highlighting the strategies employed by Buddhists, the support networks established, and the multifaceted considerations involved. In addition, the means whereby Buddhist principles were used to navigate and support this transition are explored.

## 2. Venerable Zongyue

Venerable Zongyue's secular name was Liu Shoumian 劉壽綿, also known as Householder Shouyuan (Shouyuan jushi 守圓居士).<sup>10</sup> Born into a rich family in Beijing, Liu gained a reputation for his remarkable generosity. His ancestors were court officials in the Qing dynasty and accumulated considerable wealth.<sup>11</sup> Liu inherited many properties from his father and his uncle, including real estate consisting of over three hundred rooms and several gardens in Xizhimen 西直門 (FBXK 1928a). However, by the time he reached his forties, Liu had nearly depleted his wealth through various philanthropic causes. In the 1920s, he served as the vice president of the Beijing Relief Society for the Poor (Beijing pinmin jiuji hui 北京貧民救濟會), and was in charge of distributing winter clothing, rice, medicine, and other relief supplies; he founded the Beijing Society for Comforting Bereaved Families (Beijing xuwu hui 北京恤嫠會) to support widows and orphaned children in over eighty households and was also a director of the Enlightenment of Good Merit Society (Wushan de she 悟善德社), which donated coffins to hundreds of impoverished individuals who could not afford proper burials.<sup>12</sup> Thanks to his charitable deeds, others revered him as "the Benevolent Liu" (Liu shanren 劉善人) (Dezang 1941).

Despite depleting his wealth, Liu never regretted his generosity. In fact, in his later years, Liu expressed the immense joy and fulfillment he had derived from his charitable activities (Zongyue 1928a). He also articulated his gratitude for the support from his family and a circle of friends, who had joined him in these endeavors (Zongyue 1928a). Liu's wife, Lady Yang 楊, was the daughter of a scholar.<sup>13</sup> Together, they had a son and four daughters, all of whom assisted in the relief efforts.<sup>14</sup>

Even with his fortune and contented family life, Liu came to realize the ultimate impermanence of worldly possessions. This realization may have inspired his interest in Buddhism, which was further deepened by his pursuit of personal growth. In an article, Zongyue (1928a) recalled that when living a secular life, he had "a strong interest in cultivating body and mind, finding joy and pleasure in various practices 對於克治身心工夫, 每多喜聞樂習." Despite the offerings of the worldly life and his appreciation for the support he received from his family and friends, his concern about the impermanence of life persisted. He stated, "Seeing everything as an illusion, I often have transmundane thoughts 幻觀一切, 由此每作出世間想" (Zongyue 1928a). According to a memoir written by Venerable Daoyuan 道源 (1900–1988), in the early 1910s, Liu witnessed the suffering of the common people during his three-year-long travels to Sichuan 四川 and other places (Daoyuan 1943). After returning home, he began following Daoism, such as inner cultiva-

tion and honoring the stars, in the hope of pursuing longevity. However, unsatisfied with Daoist practices, his interest soon turned to Buddhism (Daoyuan 1943).

Liu took refuge in Buddhism, and subsequently all his family members followed in his footsteps. They embraced the faith in Pure Land Buddhism, and as part of that, their primary practice became chanting Amitābha Buddha's name. In addition to charitable activities, the Liu family actively promoted the belief in Pure Land Buddhism among their neighbors. For example, Liu would gather like-minded friends at the bedside of a dying person to collectively chant (Zongyue 1928b). Through the recitation of Amitābha Buddha's name, they helped the dying person focus their final thoughts on Amitābha Buddha, as this was believed to be essential for attaining rebirth in Amitābha's land of bliss.<sup>15</sup> Zongyue documented several miracle stories, some of which he claimed to have personally witnessed while performing deathbed chanting. In his words, the dying displayed astonishing calmness in their final moments. He detailed various miracles, such as a young boy sitting with his hands folded while reciting the Buddha's name before dying, and a woman saying she had witnessed the presence of Amitābha Buddha during her last moments (Zongyue 1928b, 1928c). These accounts reflect his faith in Pure Land Buddhism, as well as his impression of the impermanence of human life.

The death of Liu's only son, Liu Guilin 劉貴霖 (1900–1923), was possibly the impetus for his entry into monastic life. A student of the Industrial University, Guilin was said to be a kind, filially pious, and friendly young man. Following his father, Guilin not only actively participated in religious activities, but also in charitable events (Gao 1928). In the winter of 1923, Guilin helped with winter relief efforts, personally visiting over three hundred households (Quanlang 1928). In the freezing weather, he unfortunately fell ill and his health rapidly deteriorated. In November 1923, Guilin passed away peacefully, surrounded by his entire family chanting Amitābha Buddha's name (Quanlang 1928). Several miracles were reported to have taken place both during and after Guilin's death, which convinced Liu that his son had achieved rebirth in the land of bliss.<sup>16</sup> This conviction may also have prompted his decision to abandon secular life and devote himself fully to Buddhist practice.

In 1925, Liu became a monk at the Guangji Temple 廣濟寺 (Vast Salvation Temple), one of the largest temples in Beijing. He was ordained by Venerable Xianming 現明 (1880–1941), the abbot of Guangji Temple, who his family had followed for many years (Zongyue 1928a). His wife, Lady Yang, also joined the monastic order.<sup>17</sup> She became a fully ordained nun and eventually an abbess at the Xinhui Chan Nunnery 心惠禪林 (Chan Forest of Heart Benevolence) (FBXK 1928a). Their daughters received the vow of bodhisattva as lay persons, after which they continued to practice Buddhism and assist their father with relief efforts (FBXK 1928a).

After entering monastic life, Zongyue not only continued to participate in ongoing charitable endeavors, but also brought his passion to new initiatives. In 1928, under increasing pressure from the government, the Buddhist temples were compelled to more extensively engage in social welfare. In 1928 and 1929, the monks urgently initiated numerous charitable projects, including schools, food banks (*zhouchang* 粥廠), workshops, nursing homes, clinics, orphanages, and more.<sup>18</sup> Zongyue's prior experience in charity proved to be invaluable in these endeavors, and he used his enthusiasm and experience to encourage the monks to embark on social welfare activities. The next section examines the initiatives he spearheaded in Beijing during 1928 and 1929, with a particular focus on his management of a Buddhist newspaper and the building of schools.

### 3. The Buddhists in Beijing in 1928

As Madeleine Yue Dong noted in her study of Republican Beijing, the year 1928 marked a significant turning point in Beijing's history (Dong 2003, pp. 12–13, 46, 106). For centuries, Beijing had served as the capital of China, beginning with the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing imperial dynasties and continuing with the establishment of the republic in 1912. However, Beijing lost its political status as the capital in 1928. Following President Yuan

Shikai's death in 1916, warlords vied for power, and this led to conflicts and widespread suffering in the northern region. In 1926, the National Revolutionary Army, led by the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨), launched a campaign against the warlords. In June 1928, the Beiyang government in Beijing was overthrown, and the capital was relocated from Beijing to Nanjing.<sup>19</sup>

The political changes brought turmoil to the residents. By 1928, the city's landscape had undergone a dramatic transformation. Given its diminished political status and constrained government budget, many bureaucratic and wealthy Beijing families had moved to the southern provinces. The departure of government ministries, the exodus of affluent families, and the relocation of banks, factories, and other companies further worsened the economic conditions and reduced employment opportunities (Dong 2003, p. 106). In the late 1920s, poverty had become a pressing issue for the general population in Beijing. According to a 1926 survey conducted by the sociologist Tao Menghe 陶孟和 (1888–1960), over seventy-five percent of Beijing families were low- and middle-income families.<sup>20</sup> As illustrated in David Strand's study of rickshaw pullers, numerous working-class families struggled to avoid plunging into circumstances of dire poverty (Strand 1993, p. 43).

As poverty intensified after 1928, helping the poor became a driving force for Buddhist participation in charity, especially in poverty relief and school building. As we will see, the Beijing government, now under the rule of the recently empowered Nationalist Party, exerted pressure on temples to engage in such endeavors. Meanwhile, certain members of the Buddhist communities had already extended their efforts to address new challenges. They sought to integrate Buddhist ideals with practical programs to meet the needs of the local communities. Zongyue served as an apt example illustrating the Buddhists' efforts. The study of his endeavors will also help reveal the internal and external tensions within the Buddhist communities during this challenging time.

By 1928, Zongyue had become the prior (*jianyuan* 監院) of Guangji Temple. In charge of teaching the newly ordained monks, he often delivered talks about monastic disciplinary rules (Zongyue 1928d). In August 1928, he assumed the position of abbot at Jiufeng Temple 鷲峰寺 (Vulture Peak Temple) in the western district (Xicheng 西城).<sup>21</sup> Although it was a small temple with limited resources, becoming the abbot granted Zongyue greater autonomy in pursuing his desired initiatives, while fulfilling routine religious duties.<sup>22</sup> He continued his earlier service to charitable organizations from previous years; however, in 1928 and 1929, he also embarked on new endeavors, including managing the newspaper FBXK, and establishing a library, a primary school, a nursing home, and various other projects (FBXK 1929a).

FBXK, initially founded in 1927 by the lay Buddhists Xia Xiuzhi 夏秀之 and Li Furen 李輔仁, came under Zongyue's management in May 1928.<sup>23</sup> Under Zongyue's leadership, FBXK became a platform for Buddhists to discuss Buddhist situations and responses. In FBXK, the Buddhist temples published announcements, comments, and advertisements regarding their recent charitable initiatives. Readers from Beijing, Tianjin 天津, Zhejiang, Guangzhou 廣州, and many other regions subscribed to FBXK. With a particular focus on the Beijing region, Zongyue distributed complimentary copies to all the major temples in Beijing. These included the two new-style Buddhist educational institutions at Guangji Temple and Fayuan Temple 法源寺 (Dharma Origin Temple), as well as the public temples where the newly ordained monks studied, ensuring that the information reached the monastic communities on time.<sup>24</sup>

FBXK depended entirely on donations and the voluntary work of its staff (FBXK 1928d). The staff was comprised of only three individuals; Zongyue served as the director, Liu Xianliang 劉顯亮 as the editor, and Wei Zhongqing 魏中清 as the distributor (Xianliang 1929). Despite facing challenges such as lacking a stable financial revenue and a shortage of manpower, the three persevered, publishing a newspaper every ten days with contributions from Zongyue, Xianliang, and other Buddhist writers. The editor, Liu Xianliang, played an important role in collecting and reporting local Buddhist news. He interviewed the abbots and ensured the information was up to date (Xianliang 1929). Although the

publication of FBXK lasted for only approximately a year and a half, it has provided scholars with valuable insights into the thoughts and practices of Buddhists in Beijing during this period.<sup>25</sup>

An analysis of the articles in FBXK reveals the Buddhists' concerns about the future of Buddhism in 1928. On the one hand, they were aware of the anti-superstition campaigns conducted by the Nationalist government, which had caused damage to Buddhism in the southern provinces. On the other hand, with the dramatically changing political situation in Beijing, they were also worried that without adaptation, Buddhism would be marginalized in society. The next section examines Zongyue and other Buddhists' views about how to respond to these challenges, and the rationale behind their efforts to establish schools.

#### 4. Disseminating Dharma and Benefiting Sentient Beings

In addition to general lectures on Buddhist doctrines, social welfare emerged as a recurring theme in the articles published in FBXK. In Zongyue's view, engagement in charitable projects would yield numerous benefits for both the monastic community and the wider society. Sally King's research (King 2005) on engaged Buddhism has demonstrated that Asian Buddhist leaders often draw upon traditional Buddhist perspectives to explain the present human experiences. These leaders incorporate Buddhist doctrines into their discourses about social actions.<sup>26</sup> Zongyue's writings on social welfare exhibited a similar pattern, as he also cited traditional Buddhist concepts and interpreted them in relation to the present challenges. His narratives were also shaped by the realities in Beijing. As he argued, the actions he recommended would not only help address the immediate challenges for both the sangha and the vulnerable social groups, but would also embody Buddhist ideals through practical means (Zongyue 1928c). In his presentation of the issues arising from social welfare, engaging with the subject would help to highlight Buddhism as an active and supportive participant in society.

In FBXK, Zongyue shared his previous experience in charitable work and emphasized the importance of monastics' participation in this area. He highlighted that "To propagate the Dharma, we must first benefit sentient beings 要弘法必先利生" (Zongyue 1928c). Zongyue (1928c) argued that the monks should go beyond their traditional role of preaching the Dharma and cultivate connections with the general population by providing genuine care and support, rather than simply preaching doctrines. He shared a story from his days of being a layman when he took care of an elderly, sick woman for years. Moved by his assistance, she eventually accepted the Buddhist faith and passed away peacefully. Zongyue (1928c) believed that if he had not provided her with "a small act of benefit 略有好處," she would not have embraced the Buddhist faith. He wrote,

If we truly want to promote Buddhist Dharma, without starting from benefiting sentient beings, it is like a floating weed without roots, lacking reliable efficacy. To truly guide others, it is not about how many words one speaks, how many scriptures one recites, or how many rituals one performs. It all comes down to genuinely cultivating the bodhisattva mind within oneself. Only then can one truly understand the meaning of being moved and transformed 真要打算弘揚佛法，若不由利生上著手，是如同無根本的浮萍草一樣。哪有可靠的效力呢。要想度人，不在向人家說多少話，講多少經。設多少儀式。總在自己有真正菩提心現前，方能講的了感化二字。 (Zongyue 1928c)

In his view, Buddhist engagement in social welfare would help to protect Buddhism. When asked about how to safeguard Buddhism, he emphasized the importance of common people in society "experiencing the benefits of Buddhism 受了佛教的益處" and "recognizing Buddhism as an indispensable form of assistance in society 知道佛教是社會上不可少的一種幫助" (Zongyue 1929a).

In another article, Zongyue (1928f) exhorted his peers to perform social duties to uphold the principles of Buddhism. Zongyue criticized his monastic peers for their lack of dedication, and for the discrepancy between their behavior and their spiritual obligations. He specifically targeted two types of temples in Beijing and the behavior of the monks in

them. Regarding the monks in the larger public temples, he criticized their superficiality and excessive display of wealth, highlighting the contradiction between their extravagant appearances and their actual limited financial conditions (Zongyue 1928f). He also condemned them for prioritizing their livelihoods over spreading Dharma and helping others (Zongyue 1928f). In the smaller temples, Zongyue (1928f) observed a lack of discipline and commitment among the monks. He stressed the importance of leading dignified and virtuous lives and fulfilling their responsibilities as moral exemplars for the community (Zongyue 1928f).

Zongyue (1928f) emphasized that the monks should engage in social welfare and directly contribute to relieving the suffering of the people. However, why should they do this? As Holmes Welch (1968, p. 129) noted, the Buddhist monastic communities had previously taken traditional compassionate measures to help the vulnerable groups in society, such as preaching Dharma to criminals, aiding the sick, recruiting orphans and converting them to Buddhists. However, according to Welch, after 1912, the monastics were not ready to undertake the new, institutional forms of social welfare. They had neither the experience nor the enthusiasm to do so (Welch 1968, p. 130). Compared to Christianity, Buddhism lagged behind in establishing the modern forms of institutionalized charity, such as building hospitals and schools (Welch 1968, pp. 127–30). Following the treaties signed by the Qing government in the early 1840s, Christian missionaries gained permission to establish schools in five coastal cities (Bays 2012, p. 55). Subsequently, the number of Christian schools multiplied over the following decades. By 1906, more than 57,000 students were enrolled in over 2,500 Protestant schools (Bays 2012, p. 75). The number of students in mission schools increased to 170,000 by 1915 and reached a quarter of a million in the mid-1920s. Moreover, by the 1920s, mission schools operated not only primary and secondary schools, but also colleges (Bays 2012, pp. 98–99). Thus, the influence of Christianity on the development of Chinese modern education was substantial.

As shown by Welch (1968), Buddhist monks also made efforts in the field of education. Citing several examples of lay schools in Jiangsu, Shanghai 上海, and Hunan 湖南, Welch (1968, pp. 125–38) highlighted that the threat of confiscation played a significant role in motivating the construction of Buddhist schools. For example, in his study of a Buddhist school opened in Hunan in 1919, an informant reported that the primary reason for monks to construct that school was the threat of confiscation (Welch 1968, pp. 129–30). When the Nationalist troops began their campaign to take over the north in 1926, they either destroyed temples or converted them into schools, leading to fear and indignation among the Buddhists (Welch 1968, p. 148). Similarly, as this article shows, the potential threat also spurred monks to build schools in Beijing in 1928. However, unlike a purely defensive response, advocates like Zongyue, with a longstanding passion for philanthropy, saw this pressure as an opportunity to enhance the involvement of Buddhist temples in social welfare. The worsening economic situation provided further impetus for engaging the monks in social initiatives.

To encourage monastic participation, Zongyue (1928g) also contextualized his understanding of charity within the traditional Buddhist frameworks of soteriology and ethics. He aligned his argument about advancing social welfare with the Buddhist pursuit of enlightenment. For example, he referred to the Buddhist notion of giving (*bushi* 佈施) to urge the Buddhist monastics to advance social welfare.<sup>27</sup> How does giving relate to enlightenment? A reader asked Zongyue (1928h) about the famous story of the meeting of Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 with Chan master Bodhidharma. In this encounter, when Emperor Wu asked Bodhidharma if he had accumulated extensive merits through his generous donations to temples, Bodhidharma simply responded “No” (Zongyue 1928h).

In referring to the words of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng 六祖慧能, Zongyue (1928h) explained the difference between merits (*gongde* 功德) and beneficial practices (*fude* 福德). According to Zongyue (1928h), all virtuous activities serve as “fields of merit for cultivating the seeds of enlightenment 栽培菩提種子之福田.” However, Zongyue (1928h) emphasized the importance of avoiding unwholesome desires in one’s giving. Only when giving is per-

formed without a deluded mind can such a form of giving become a bodhisattva practice that leads to enlightenment (Zongyue 1928h). He explained, “The six perfections of bodhisattva start with giving as the first, for it helps eliminate craving. If craving is not eliminated, in what way does wisdom arise? If one does not practice giving, in what way does one eliminate craving? 六波羅蜜中，佈施為第一，斷貪故也。貪心不斷，智慧從何而生。如果不佈施，慳貪從何斷” (Zongyue 1928h). Hence, he advocated that giving helps develop merit and wisdom, both of which are essential for bodhisattva cultivation that leads to ultimate enlightenment (Zongyue 1928h).

Seeing the lack of educational opportunities as a key factor that contributed to poverty, Zongyue (1929c) emphasized providing education as a crucial form of giving. He argued that in addition to distributing food at food banks, Buddhists should extend their charitable efforts to imparting knowledge and skills. Through offering education and vocational training, underprivileged individuals would then have the chance to learn, secure a job, and ultimately achieve self-reliance (Zongyue 1929c).

Zongyue also referred to Buddhist soteriology to argue for participation in charitable work. In an article about Pure Land Buddhism (Zongyue 1929b), he explained why those seeking rebirth in the Pure Land should also engage in virtuous actions in this lifetime. For example, he cited a sentence from the *Amitābha Buddha Sūtra*, which describes the western Pure Land as a place where “all superbly virtuous individuals gather together 諸上善人俱會一處.”<sup>28</sup> He argued that this means a believer must strive to take virtuous actions to be qualified for rebirth in the Pure Land (Zongyue 1929b). He further explained the meaning of “bliss” (*le* 樂) in the Pure Land of Bliss (*jile jingtu* 極樂淨土), stating that Amitābha Buddha and all other Buddhas have been striving to alleviate suffering and cultivate joy (*baku yule* 拔苦與樂) in the people. Following the Buddhas’ examples, the Buddhists in this world should also strive to bring happiness to others and reduce their suffering (Zongyue 1929b).

Therefore, Zongyue’s proposals are embedded in both the ethics and the soteriological aims of Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to this perspective, motivated by the ideals of enlightenment and universal salvation, the monks should seek to alleviate the suffering of the people in worldly distress. As the next section shows, Zongyue’s charitable actions guided by this perspective also reflect the fusion of both mundane and religious ideals. In particular, he promoted the building of schools as a tangible expression of Buddhists’ dedication to social responsibility. Zongyue (1928i) tried to argue that by providing education during this time of turmoil, Buddhists would help lead the underprivileged towards a state of peace and joy. Zongyue’s enthusiasm for social welfare was shared by other Buddhists, who proposed building schools to protect the temples from possible assaults. The next section analyzes their rationale and describes Zongyue’s building of a primary school in 1928.

## 5. Building Schools

The work of previous scholars has highlighted Buddhists’ collaborative efforts in opposing the confiscation of temple properties. One development was the formation of Buddhist organizations seeking official protection, such as the establishment of the Chinese General Buddhist Association (Zhonghua fojiao zonghui 中華佛教總會) in 1912—the first national Buddhist organization in Chinese history (Welch 1968, pp. 34–40). It should be noted that beyond formal organizations, Buddhists also established informal, temporary networks through the use of the newly-emerged forms of print media. In 1928, FBXK served as an important platform for Buddhists in Beijing to discuss Buddhist situations. In the south, numerous Buddhist monasteries were facing challenges from the anti-superstition campaigners. With the confiscation of temple properties happening in provinces like Henan 河南 and Zhejiang, the monks in Beijing became worried about the uncertain fate of their properties (Xiaguang 1928). FBXK provided them with a crucial forum to express their views. This medium facilitated communication and planning, enabling the monastic communities to openly rally support. The media-based networks also



helped forge and strengthen connections within the Buddhist community, allowing the monks to gain support for their initiatives.

In May 1928, shortly after Zongyue became the director of FBXX, Venerable Xianguang 霞光 (1928) published an open letter addressed to all of the abbots in Beijing in its second issue. Xianguang was a senior monk from Nianhua Temple 拈花寺 (Picking Flower Temple). In light of the anticipated changes ahead, Xianguang (1928) suggested taking proactive measures instead of passively accepting the losses. In his view, building schools was the most feasible option. He explained that if monks could establish schools, it would eliminate any justifications for other social groups to seize their temple properties for educational purposes (Xianguang 1928). In addition, building a school was cost-effective, for it required only a portion of the temples' property. The monks could volunteer as teachers and could use existing rooms, chairs, and desks, thus reducing expenses. Moreover, Xianguang (1928) claimed that by incorporating Buddhist teachings into the curriculum, these schools could promote both general education and Buddhist ideas to a wider audience. Xianguang (1928) summarized the advantages of building schools, outlining the following seven key benefits for Buddhism: avoiding confiscation of temples' property, involving monks in society, strengthening the monastic-laypeople bond, expanding Buddhist influence, enhancing protection and support, elevating social status, and demonstrating Buddhists' compassion and patriotism.

As Xianguang (1928) suggested, one major challenge in building schools was the limited financial resources of the temples. There had been previous instances of temples establishing schools, such as that opened by the former Central Buddhist Association (Zhongyang fojiao gonghui 中央佛教公會) in 1913, and another one founded by Bailin Temple 柏林寺 (Cypress Forest Temple) in 1926. However, both attempts were abandoned due to insufficient funds (Xianliang 1928b). Nevertheless, given the anticipated challenges in 1928, many temples recognized the feasibility of building schools for their survival. The next section discusses their endeavors in detail.

Zongyue actively supported the school-building initiatives. As mentioned before, even when he was a layman in the 1910s, he had dedicated himself to helping underprivileged children. Though his early philanthropy was not well documented in the extant Buddhist literature, Laoshe 老舍 (1899–1966), a renowned novelist and one of the beneficiaries of Zongyue's charitable acts, vividly recalled his personal encounter with Zongyue in the 1910s (Laoshe 1944). In the essay "Zongyue Dashi 宗月大師" [Master Zongyue], Laoshe (1944) expressed deep gratitude to Zongyue, then known to him as "Uncle Liu" (Liu Dashu 劉大叔), who provided education to him and in so doing changed his life. Laoshe recalled that his family lapsed into poverty after his father's death, and his education was delayed until the age of nine. Despite Laoshe's mother's desire to send her son to school, financial constraints prevented her from doing so. However, a visit from Uncle Liu opened an opportunity for him. Seeing the child's situation, Liu decided to take him to school, promising to cover the expenses (Laoshe 1944). With Liu's support, Laoshe attended a reformed, private school located in a small Daoist temple. In the following years, Liu continued to show kindness, inviting Laoshe to his grand house and treating him with generosity (Laoshe 1944). When Laoshe transferred to a public school, Liu provided further assistance (Laoshe 1944).

In the 1910s and early 1920s, Zongyue continued to support education for disadvantaged children, as well as founding food banks and launching other charitable projects. Through these early endeavors, he gained a deep understanding of the needs of the impoverished, which influenced his charitable efforts after he became a monk.

For example, Zongyue had actively engaged in assisting impoverished widows and their children when he was a layman. In 1922, together with other lay Buddhists, he established a charitable society, the Xuwu Society, which provided support to more than eighty households with widowed mothers and children.<sup>29</sup> This initiative persisted until 1928, when Zongyue expanded his efforts to directly help the children by opening a school. Zongyue (1928j) argued that education is important for the development and

prosperity of both Buddhism and society. Buddhism can play a role in education, and he said: “Buddhism should cultivate talents in both monastic and secular communities 佛教應成就出家與在家之人材” (Zongyue 1928j). For that reason, while the monks embarked on building monastic schools (seng xuexiao 僧學校), he suggested they also build schools for commoners (pingmin xuexiao 平民學校) to advance general education (Zongyue 1928j). Zongyue (1928j) emphasized that thousands of boys and girls had dropped out of schools in Beijing, and it was urgent for Buddhists to build schools to support their education. He envisioned that Buddhists should strive to establish a range of schools, including universities, high schools, middle schools, and primary schools (Zongyue 1928j). These schools would offer the standard curricula found in other schools, supplemented with basic Buddhist teachings. This approach would prepare students for their professional careers while instilling in them the Buddhist ideal of benefiting all sentient beings (Zongyue 1928j).

Moreover, Zongyue (1928j) suggested that developing schools would help Buddhist temples deal with the challenges that were posed by the anti-superstition campaigns. In his view, some Buddhists who lacked a proper understanding of Buddhist teachings were more likely to succumb to blind faith, which could then reinforce critics’ perception of Buddhism as mere superstition. Therefore, he advocated promoting education to cultivate individuals who could grasp and articulate Buddhist doctrines, thus protecting Buddhism from accusations of superstition. He wrote, “Now we desire to cultivate Dharma vessels, we should begin by developing schools 今欲培植法器，自應始自興學” (Zongyue 1928j).

In June 1928, Zongyue established Cihang Primary School 慈航小學 (Compassion Voyage Primary School). This school embodied many of the proposals that Xiaguang had previously advanced (Xianliang 1928c). The school was located in the Cihang Library 慈航圖書館 (the Compassion Voyage Library), another charitable program that had been initiated by Zongyue. The school provided free education to students and supplied all educational materials without charge. The teaching staff were all recruited from FBXK, with Zongyue serving as the principal, Wei Shangqing as the head teacher, and Xianliang as the abacus teacher (Xianliang 1928c). Twenty students were enrolled.<sup>30</sup> At the opening ceremony on June 29, Principal Zongyue delivered a speech that highlighted the benefits of education, while the other two teachers preached on the significance of studying and its relevance to the family, society, and the country (Xianliang 1928c). The teachers also guided the students in a Buddhist worship ceremony (Xianliang 1928c).

In 1928, as the Beijing temples were anticipating the potential challenges ahead, some considered Zongyue and Xiaguang’s call and decided to open schools. The FBXK circulated their announcements, recruitment notices, and curricula, providing valuable information about the monastic communities’ endeavors. However, by the end of 1928, the Beijing government increased its pressure on the social engagement work of temples. The next section analyzes the efforts made by the monks and the challenges they encountered, as well as their strategies and responses in late 1928 and 1929.

## 6. Developing Charity

In 1928 and 1929, Buddhist temples set up various charitable projects in Beijing. Within a few months, they also hastily opened primary schools on their premises. Following Xiaguang’s proposal, these schools enrolled students free of charge, with monks or laymen volunteering as teachers. Some large temples could afford to independently open schools, while small temples with insufficient financial resources tended to jointly establish schools.

One example of the achievements of the large temples is that of Xinhua Temple 心華寺 (Heart Flower Temple) in Shichahai 什剎海 region. The temple established a primary school, using its front hall as the classroom (FBXK 1928e). The abbot Venerable Ji’an 寂安 served as the principal, and Venerable Xiaguang served as the director. Three other monks served as teachers, and Liu Xianliang from FBXK was the abacus teacher (FBXK 1928e). All teachers volunteered their services. The school conducted an opening ceremony on the Buddha’s Day, the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. The school received significant

interest from students, with over sixty students under the age of fifteen enrolling (FBXK 1928e). In October 1928, the enrollment had grown to over 110 students (FBXK 1928f).

Similarly, the abbot Venerable Lingyan 靈岩 of Guangshan Temple 廣善寺 (Vast Benevolence Temple) in the western district established a primary school. With classes starting on July 11, the temple aimed to “establish education and cultivate talents” (xingxue yucai 興學育才), through which they would “benefit both oneself and others” (zili lita 自利利他) (FBXK 1928g). In the summer, Venerable Quanlang 全朗, the abbot of Nianhua Temple, opened a school in the northern district (Beicheng 北城) (FBXK 1928h). In October, the primary school presided over by the abbot Venerable Qiyuan 祇園 of Jingye Temple 淨業寺 (Pure Karma Temple) enrolled thirty-eight girls and boys (FBXK 1928i). In November, the abbot Venerable Kongye 空也 of Fayuan Temple also opened a primary school (FBXK 1928j). The abbot Venerable Zeming 澤明 of Shanguo Temple 善果寺 (Good Fruit Temple) and the abbot Venerable Xiuling 秀靈 of Xizhao Temple 夕照寺 (Evening Glow Temple) both established primary schools, with each school enrolling eighty students (FBXK 1928k). The abbot Venerable Runbo 潤波 of Baochan Temple 寶禪寺 (Precious Chan Temple) also established a school in January 1929 (FBXK 1929b).

Compared to the large monasteries that could independently establish schools, many small temples had to pool their resources and work together to run a school. Notably, the nuns also participated actively in these educational initiatives, hence enlarging Buddhist women’s involvement in social welfare activities. Despite facing constraints in human resources and finances, the nuns made efforts to open schools, often through collaborations. One example was the cooperation of nine nunneries to build schools in 1928. On December 6, led by Venerable Faguang 法光 from Baiyi Nunnery 白衣庵 (White Gown Nunnery) and Venerable Hui’an 慧安 from Pilu Nunnery 毘盧庵 (Vairocana Nunnery), the nuns convened a meeting at Baiyi Nunnery to discuss the matter (FBXK 1928l). The nine nunneries issued the following collective statement,

After conducting the recent investigations on many impoverished children who had discontinued their education in Beijing, we deeply lamented their circumstances. Given [the urgency of] the situation, our monastic communities should resolve to make every effort to alleviate [their plight] and fulfill our mission of propagating the Dharma for the welfare of all sentient beings. As a result, our nun colleagues took the initiative to establish a school for commoners to help these children who had dropped out 近查北平地方因為貧困失學的兒童，指不勝屈，殊屬可惜，凡我僧界，處斯時局，宜發心勉力拯救。藉以弘法利生。我尼僧界同人發起成立平民學校，補救失學兒童。 (FBXK 1928l)

The nuns proposed building a primary school for girls (FBXK 1929c). In January 1929, they announced that they would initiate another primary school at Yuantong Nunnery 圓通庵 (Perfect Interpenetration Nunnery) (FBXK 1929c).

Towards the end of 1928, the government exerted increasing pressure on Buddhist temples to urge them to engage more actively in social matters. In October 1928, the Bureau of Society (shehui ju 社會局) documented that the number of destitute individuals (pinmin 貧民) had reached 180,000 (Zhao 1928). As part of the efforts to mobilize social power to address poverty-related issues, Director Zhao Zhengping 趙正平 of the Bureau of Society issued an instruction to all temples in Beijing. Zhao (1928) criticized the Buddhist monks for their indifference to social endeavors, and asked for their assistance in poverty relief. He warned them that many provinces had already taken actions to “ban Buddhism and Daoism” (qudi seng dao 取締僧道), which he attributed to the monks’ decadent image (Zhao 1928). Zhao asked the Buddhist monks to establish charity programs to gain people’s trust and assist the government in poverty relief and thus avoid being eliminated (Zhao 1928).

In November 1928, Zhao Zhengping summoned the abbots from thirty-four Buddhist temples for a meeting (FBXK 1928m). Zhao highlighted the urgency for the temples to contribute to social well-being and improve the image of Buddhism (FBXK 1928m). He suggested that by helping the poor, the monks would be taking actions in accord with Sun

Yat-sen's three principles of the people (sanmin zhuyi 三民主義), in particular the principle of people's welfare (minsheng zhuyi 民生主義) (FBXK 1928m). Zongyue, and the abbots from Fayuan Temple, Guanyin Temple 觀音寺 (Avalokitasvara Temple), and Guangji Temple also delivered speeches as the representatives of monks at the meeting (FBXK 1928m). They acknowledged the challenges faced by Buddhism and expressed their commitment to poverty relief projects. By referring to the Buddhist notion of "promoting Dharma and benefiting the sentient beings," the monks emphasized the shared responsibility of the monastic community in alleviating suffering and helping those in need (FBXK 1928m).

Other government officials also urged the temples to increase their involvement in social relief. For instance, in November 1928, Li Taifen 李泰棻 (1896–1972), the director of the Bureau of Education (*jiaoyu ju* 教育局), convened another meeting with the monastic representatives. Li called for the establishment of primary schools in every temple in Beijing and suggested allocating half of the temples' revenue to school funds (FBXK 1928n). He also referred to the three principles of the people to justify this demand (FBXK 1928n). However, this requirement far exceeded the temples' economic capacities. The monks responded by stating that they had already established several schools, and that their temples were facing financial difficulties due to the current economic circumstances (FBXK 1928n).

Despite the financial constraints, the monastic communities further expanded their charitable programs in 1929. In addition to establishing primary schools, they extended their educational support of underprivileged students. Some temples established vocational schools and work–study programs.<sup>31</sup> Several temples implemented new initiatives to equip their students with practical skills, aiming to increase their employment prospects upon completion of their studies (FBXK 1928o, FBXK 1929d). For example, Jingye Temple, Nianhua Temple, and Guangji Temple incorporated practical skills like knitting and weaving into their curricula (FBXK 1929e). The nuns also planned to establish a girls' work–study school (*nüzi gongdu xuexiao* 女子工讀學校) in Yongshou Temple 永壽寺 (Longevity Temple). In doing so, they expected to provide vocational training to help girls overcome their difficult circumstances and earn a livelihood (FBXK 1928p).

As shown above, in 1928 and 1929, the monastic communities established schools and other charitable projects in Beijing. To negotiate with the Bureau of Society, Zongyue and other monks submitted a report, listing the ongoing and planned projects conducted by the temples (FBXK 1929c). The report documented the monastic initiatives during this period, including schools, food banks, clinics, nursing homes, libraries, orphanages, and more (FBXK 1929c). The schools were also officially registered at the Bureau of Education (FBXK 1929c).

Through their rapid development of these social welfare projects, the monastics hoped to illustrate their commitment to alleviating the hardships endured by the residents of Beijing. However, the temples still faced challenges. In 1929, some students and teachers in Beijing organized an anti-superstition society and charged Buddhism with spreading superstitious beliefs (Wu 2021). While some temples strategically established schools to protect their properties from confiscation, not all temples were successful in safeguarding themselves from embezzlement. One example is the encroachment on Tieshan Temple 鐵山寺 (Iron Mountain Temple) of a nearby school, which resulted in the expulsion of the monks and an ensuing lawsuit.<sup>32</sup> The conflicts between the monastic communities and anti-superstition social groups eventually triggered a demonstration that involved over two thousand Buddhist and Daoist monks and nuns in Beijing in October 1929.<sup>33</sup>

Regardless of the reasons behind the temples' establishment of schools and the extent to which they achieved their intended goals, one thing is clear: they provided much-needed assistance to students and impoverished families during hard times. Therefore, while these charitable initiatives were not able to provide full protection for all temples against the challenges they were facing, the initiatives contributed to shaping a positive perception of Buddhism among those who had benefited from them, as well as in the wider community.<sup>34</sup>

Many scholars have examined “humanistic Buddhism” (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教) and its significant influence on various Buddhist movements in postwar East Asia and beyond (Pittman 2001, pp. 257–63). This concept is rooted in “Buddhism for human life” (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教), a term coined by Taixu in 1928 and later expanded by Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005) (Jiang 1992, p. 172). Taixu advocated for redirecting Buddhism from a focus on rebirth and rituals to addressing worldly concerns. He reinterpreted Buddhist doctrines to better apply them to human life, envisioning the creation of a pure land in this world (Pittman 2001, p. 180). In the case of Beijing in 1928, Zongyue and other monks shared Taixu’s desire to focus Buddhism on improving human conditions. As shown above, Zongyue invoked the belief of Pure Land Buddhism to encourage Buddhists to bring bliss to this world. Other writers have similarly cited Buddhist doctrines of giving and compassion to promote their charitable initiatives. Their ideas and practices align with various expressions of humanistic Buddhism, including their doctrinal interpretations for tackling contemporary problems, and their efforts in building schools and other charitable programs. In this regard, the actions of the Beijing monks can be seen as part of a broader global Buddhist response to modernization through the reinterpretations of traditional doctrines (Pacey 2005). Meanwhile, they adjusted their articulations to the specific circumstances they faced.

## 7. Conclusions

During the anti-superstition campaigns in the 1920s, Buddhist monks faced a crisis in protecting their properties from confiscation. This prompted many Buddhists to engage in discussions about their involvement in social welfare. Zongyue supported the development of charitable initiatives, emphasizing that Buddhist doctrines could provide guiding principles for monastic participation in these activities. To coordinate with the government and address tensions with other social groups, many temples established schools in Beijing. The advocates also aligned their actions with Buddhist doctrines, infusing these programs with religious meanings.

This article has shed light on the Buddhist endeavors in Beijing during the anti-superstition campaigns of 1928 and 1929. The previous research findings were confirmed regarding the inconsistent government policies and the varying regional impacts of the campaigns. This article has further shown that the residents of Beijing were grappling with political turmoil and worsening economic conditions during this period. Rather than resorting to radical measures to eliminate religious influence, the Beijing government had to mobilize social efforts to address the pressing issue of poverty in 1928. Therefore, the temples seized this opportunity to address the uncertainties they faced. On examining the case of the Beijing monks, we observed how the specific conditions shaped their strategies and responses. When mitigating poverty became urgent for the local government in Beijing, the temples responded by actively engaging in social welfare initiatives. These Buddhists’ efforts, despite the pressures they faced, reflected an attempt to reconcile Buddhist ideals with the social realities of the time.

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## Abbreviations

FBXK	<i>Fobao Xunkan</i> 佛寶旬刊
MFQB	<i>Minguo fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng bubian</i> 民國佛教期刊文獻集成補編

## Notes

- 1 Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909), Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916), and many senior officers of the Qing viewed the civil service examination as an obstacle to the education reform and called for its abolition at all levels (Elman 2013, pp. 314–15).
- 2 The Ministry of Education issued the “new school system reform decree 新學制系統改革令” in the fall of 1922. Inspired by the American practice, the new system defined the structure of public education. For an account of the 1922 reform, see Keenan (1974).
- 3 In the early years of the Republican era, the Beijing government adopted Japanese-style schooling. Students returning from America had an important impact on the reform in the 1920s. The new system established in 1922 consisted of schools of different levels, with primary education lasting for six years, secondary education for six years, and tertiary education for four years. See (Pepper 1996, p. 61).
- 4 For the campaigns against popular religions in the first three decades in the twentieth century, see Duara (1997, p. 92).
- 5 See Welch (1968, pp. 13–14). On the construction of Taixu’s seminary in Wuchang, see Pittman (2001, p. 96).
- 6 For example, the Shanghai lay Buddhists actively built householder spaces in Shanghai in the 1920s, see (Jessup 2016).
- 7 For the emergence of Buddhist journals and newspapers, see Scott (2016).
- 8 Taixu and other Buddhist writers tried to defend Buddhism by differentiating the Buddhist “true faith” (*zhengxin* 正信) from “deluded faith” (*mixin* 迷信) (Wu 2021).
- 9 Over five hundred articles published in FBXK were collected in *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng bubian* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成補編 (MFQB) [Supplementary Collection of Republican-era Buddhist Periodical Literature]. See Huang (2008).
- 10 Zongyue’s Dharma name (*faming* 法名) was Jiantian 鑑天. See (FBXK 1928a).
- 11 See (FBXK 1928a). Zongyue’s father was Liu Tingzuo 劉廷佐. His mother was Lady Chen 陳. He had an elder sister. Zongyue succeeded both lines (*jiantiao* 兼祧) of his father and of his uncle Liu Tingfu 劉廷輔.
- 12 See (FBXK 1928a). In some other documents, Xuwu Society is recorded as Xuwugu Society 恤嫠孤會 (Society for Comforting Bereaved Families and Orphans).
- 13 He married the daughter of Yang Quan 楊全, a provincial graduate. See (FBXK 1928a).
- 14 One of the daughters was adopted. See (FBXK 1928a).
- 15 For more on deathbed recitation of Amitābha Buddha’s name, see Jones (2020, pp. 91–93, 101–2).
- 16 Quanlang (1928) said that at the moment of Liu Guilin’s passing, the fragrance of incense filled the room, and the reciting of Buddhist scriptures could be heard up in the air. Later a family member had a dream in which Guilin said he had gained rebirth in Pure Land.
- 17 Her Dharma name was Wuyi 悟義. She was also known as Zongshang 宗尚. See (FBXK 1928a).
- 18 Welch (1968, pp. 123–26) has researched the orphanage in Longquan Temple (Longquan *si guer yuan* 龍泉寺孤兒院) in Beijing.
- 19 In June 1928, the Nanjing government changed Beijing’s name to Beiping 北平 special municipality (Dong 2003, p. 48). In this article, “Beijing” is used throughout for the sake of consistency and ease of reading.
- 20 Tao (1930, p. 71) investigated family living conditions of craft workers and primary school teachers in Beijing in 1926. He found that over sixty percent of the households had half-year income below 110 *juan* 元, while the average expenditure per household was 101.5 *juan*. Many households spent over seventy percent of that sum on food. Many male members of worker families worked as rickshaw pullers, while female members were mainly employed in the textile and garment industries.
- 21 The former abbot Venerable Ciguang 慈光 of Jiufeng Temple recommended Zongyue to be the abbot. The monks primarily practiced Pure Land Buddhism in Jiufeng Temple. It only had a few houses and was relatively small. See Xianliang 顯亮 (1928a).
- 22 With the support of Venerable Xianming, the abbot of Guangji Temple, Zongyue continued to develop relief efforts in the winters after becoming a monk. See Zongyue (1928a, 1928e).
- 23 Because Xia and Li were occupied with other responsibilities, Zongyue took charge. The FBXK office was located in Xinjiekou 新街口 No. 58. See (FBXK 1928b).
- 24 The two seminaries were Hongci Seminary 弘慈學院 (Disseminating Compassion Seminary) in Guangji Temple and the Buddhist Special School of Fayuan Temple 法源寺佛教專門學校. See (FBXK 1928c).
- 25 FBXK continued to be published until August 1929, when the National Institution of History (Guoshi guan 國史館) that Liu Xianlian served closed. He found another job and left Beijing, see (Xianliang 1929).
- 26 Sally King (2005, pp. 42–86) has shown that many Buddhist leaders draw upon concepts such as Buddha nature and other Mahāyāna doctrines to promote social engagement.

- 27 Zongyue (1928g) explained that the virtuous acts of giving include three types. The first is giving material possessions (*zicai bushi* 資財佈施), which involves utilizing personal wealth to aid the living beings. The second act of giving teachings (*fa shi* 法施) entails sharing one's wisdom and guiding others towards enlightenment. The act of fearless giving (*wuwei shi* 無畏施) involves providing others solace and protection.
- 28 About the faith of Pure Land Buddhism, see *Fo shuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 [The Scripture of Amitābha Buddha as Preached by the Buddha]. T 12, no. 366.
- 29 Zongyue founded the society with Xia Yongqing 夏用卿 and Ke Fengsun 柯鳳孫. The funding for this initiative came from Venerable Xianming and donations from lay Buddhists. A nunnery facilitated the distribution of aid, with the help of two lay Buddhist women. See Xianliang (1928c).
- 30 Xianliang (1928c) reported that the students were under the age of fifteen. Many came from the families supported by Xuwu Society.
- 31 As shown by Henrike Rudolph (2022, pp. 2–3), educators of the republican period promoted vocational schools to train professionals for the country.
- 32 The teachers from a nearby school occupied Tieshan Temple in September 1929. The monks later filed a lawsuit against them. See (Bei quzhu heshang diu miao chu mixin dangyuan cui fo 被驅逐和尚丟廟除迷信黨員催佛 [The Evicted Monks Lost the Temple, the Party Members Destroyed Buddha Statues] 1930).
- 33 For details about the demonstration, see (Beiping seng dao fan zuori lianhe youxing qingyuan 北平僧道番昨日聯合遊行請願 [Monks, Daoist Monks, and Lamas Joined the Demonstration Yesterday for Petition] 1929). About the conflicts between the monks and the anti-superstition groups in Beijing in 1929, see Wu (2021).
- 34 As noted by Laoshe (1944) in his essay commemorating Zongyue, Zongyue's charitable actions left a lasting impression on Laoshe.

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