



**REVISITING THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF BUDDHIST
MONASTERIES IN CONTEMPORARY GUANGDONG: A
SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO CHAOZHOU KAIYUAN SI**

DONGXIAO ZHENG

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN GLOBAL BUDDHISM
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE INNOVATION AND CULTURE
RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHAP
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024
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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Global Buddhism

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Academic Year	2024

ABSTRACT

Buddhist monasteries in China have historically fulfilled four main functions: spirituality, education, charity, and culture. These functions have varied significantly over time and have been influenced by changing sociopolitical contexts. While existing scholarship has explored the societal roles of these monasteries, less attention has been given to the fluid and dynamic interplay between these functions. Moreover, the extent to which certain monasteries emphasized specific roles due to their strategic location remains understudied. This study examines the contemporary functions of Buddhist monasteries in Guangdong Province, focusing on Kaiyuan Si (Monastery of the Kaiyuan Era) in Chaozhou. Fieldwork was conducted from March to May 2023, including participation in religious observances and ceremonies. Surveys of 100 laypersons attending monastery programs assessed religiosity, while in-depth interviews with five senior residential monks, two of whom oversee the monastery's charity foundation, provided further insights. Archival materials and unpublished memoirs were also reviewed. Findings indicate that Kaiyuan Si operates as more than a religious center. Its educational programs, emphasizing Buddhist philosophy and traditional Chinese arts, overshadow its spiritual role. A notable feature is a Thai Buddhist temple adjacent to Kaiyuan Si, modeled after Bangkok's Wat Benchamabophit Dusit Wanaram. Donated by Thai-Chinese tycoon Mr. Pricha Phisittkasem (Xie Huiru, 1913–1997) to honor his ancestors, this temple symbolizes Chinese-Thai cultural exchange. However, its presence also serves as a tool for China's public diplomacy with Thailand. This study argues that long-standing Buddhist monasteries in China, such as Kaiyuan Si, increasingly adopt secular roles. Their activities and architectural designs align with traditional Chinese culture, reflecting a shift from religious to cultural and diplomatic functions. These findings highlight how Buddhist monasteries in contemporary China are recontextualized within broader cultural and geopolitical frameworks.

Keywords: Buddhist monasteries, contemporary China, functions, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si, public diplomacy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Looking back on my academic journey, from setting out in 2021 with the support of the abbot to study at the Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep in Thailand to completing my doctoral dissertation, my heart is filled with profound gratitude and respect.

First and foremost, I would like to express my most profound appreciation to my advisor, Professor Liu Yaoping. Professor Liu's meticulous scholarship and tireless dedication have been invaluable to me throughout my doctoral research. From refining the topic and grasping methodologies to patiently revising the writing, Professor Liu's vast knowledge and genuine care have continually encouraged me, allowing me to truly understand the essence of academia. Under his guidance, I gained valuable knowledge and practical experience in my field of study and learned the meaning of persistence and excellence in scholarly pursuit.

I am incredibly grateful to Abbot Dachuan and the resident monks of Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou and Huiresheng Temple in Meizhou. Their support and encouragement in my academic choices allowed me to study in Thailand, broadening my horizons while integrating Buddhist wisdom into my academic research. Their care has been a source of warmth while studying abroad, continually motivating me to move forward.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends who have supported me throughout my studies in Thailand. My colleagues at the university provided valuable advice and sincere support whenever I encountered difficulties, particularly in academic discussions and exchanges that offered me significant inspiration. This friendship and support were a deep comfort and encouragement during my studies abroad. I am equally thankful to the professors and students at King Mongkut's University of Technology, whose academic and cultural exchanges have expanded my vision and enriched my research perspectives.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to my family for their understanding and support. Their quiet dedication allowed me to focus entirely on my studies and persevere in achieving my academic goals. Although the road to knowledge was sometimes challenging, their trust and love empowered me to face every obstacle without fear.

This chapter of my academic journey may be coming to a close, but the knowledge, friendships, and spiritual wealth I have gained will accompany me for a lifetime. I dedicate this acknowledgment to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have supported and helped me along the way!

Dongxiao ZHENG

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the current research and identifies the issues that previous scholarship has not resolved so far. It reveals the research's aims and the questions it aims to answer. This section then describes the methods and sources used for the research. Also presented here are the research's scope, significance, and limitations.

1.1 Research Background

As one of the five major religions in China, Buddhism has played a significant role in shaping social communities throughout history. The social functions of Buddhist monasteries have evolved to ensure their survival and acceptance in today's society. Introducing Buddhism into China has led to a distinct 'Chinese Buddhist Sangha with Chinese characteristics (Okabe Kazuma and Tanaka Yoshiaki, 2013) incorporating traditional Chinese culture. Local Buddhism in China has developed unique characteristics based on geographical factors, cultural inheritance, and regional folk life. As Chinese society transforms, Buddhism adapts to societal changes, reflecting the close connection between Buddhism and social development.

Religion's functions change with socio-historical conditions. Over time, certain functions of religion may weaken or disappear while others become more prominent and new functions emerge. As social and religious institutions, Buddhist monasteries have extended various social functions to meet the evolving needs of society. These functions mainly include spirituality, education, charity, and culture. These functions bear witness to the social relations of Buddhist monasteries within their respective regions and have gradually gained recognition from the public, developing social functions that align with contemporary society (Shang Jiuyu, 1997).

Following China's reform and opening up in the 1980s, Chinese Buddhism experienced a comprehensive revival. Buddhism has undergone significant changes to gain acceptance and recognition from the public and integrate more effectively into society. Buddhist monasteries have expanded their roles beyond traditional daily life

and practice, assuming functions related to cultural tourism, education, social welfare, and contributing to overall social development.

Religion exerts a unique dynamic effect on the social system. Like other religions, Buddhism promotes social integration, adjustment, and control within the community and positively influences other social subsystems. Modern Buddhist organizations have had to adapt to societal development to better integrate with the broader social fabric (Bai Murong, 2018).

Despite the rapid development of Buddhism in Guangdong province since the reform and opening up, research on Buddhism has primarily focused on historical, cultural, artistic, and documentary aspects. There is a relative lack of research on the social welfare activities of Buddhist monasteries and their influence on international exchanges from a holistic perspective. Individual Buddhist monasteries' social welfare and "soft power" diplomacy remain understudied.

The current research addresses these gaps by conducting a comprehensive study of Kaiyuan Si, Chaozhou, in eastern Guangdong, exploring its social welfare initiatives, and examining its impact on overseas cultural exchanges at the people-to-people level. To that end, the research primarily adopts a qualitative approach. It involves a literature review, archival research, field observations, interviews with key stakeholders (monks, devotees, local community members), and data analysis. The research focuses on documenting the social welfare programs implemented by Kaiyuan Si and assessing their effectiveness in fostering community development, promoting social harmony, and enhancing international relations.

The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the evolving social functions of Chinese Buddhist monasteries in contemporary society. It provides insights into the social welfare activities of Chinese Buddhist monasteries, revealing their impact on the local communities and their possible roles in China's state-driven cultural diplomacy. The findings inform policymakers, religious institutions, and scholars interested in Buddhism, highlighting the importance of integrating religious institutions into social development strategies.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problems

Despite the rapid development of Buddhism in Guangdong province, China, there is an academic gap regarding Buddhist monasteries' social welfare initiatives and their impact on the local community. Previous research has predominantly focused on historical, cultural, artistic, and documentary aspects, neglecting the examination of social welfare programs and their broader implications.

The existing research on Buddhism in Guangdong Province lacks an in-depth analysis of the influence of individual Buddhist monasteries on transnational cultural exchanges. While historical, cultural, and artistic dimensions have received attention, it has yet to explore the cultural diplomacy potential of Buddhist monasteries and their contribution to enhancing international relations.

While numerous studies have investigated Buddhism in Guangdong from various historical dimensions, more comprehensive research is needed on the social functions of Buddhist monasteries in contemporary Chinese society. The existing body of knowledge primarily focuses on specific aspects, such as history, people, culture, art, documentation, and chronicle compilation, without delving into the broader social implications.

Although Buddhism has experienced significant transformations in response to social changes, the precise relationship between Buddhism and social development remains understudied. The existing research lacks a comprehensive exploration of how Buddhist organizations in Guangdong have adapted and integrated with broader social transformation, hindering a profound understanding of the dynamics between Buddhism and societal changes.

Despite the growing research interest in Buddhism, Kaiyuan si, the most prominent Mahayana heritage monastery in Chaozhou, has not been extensively studied from a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective. The academic gap regarding the social welfare programs implemented by Kaiyuan si, their effectiveness in fostering community development, and their influence on China's cultural diplomacy is noticeable.

Overall, this study addresses the above research problems by investigating the dynamic social functions of Chinese Buddhist monasteries, explicitly focusing on Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si in Guangdong province.

1.3 Research Objectives

To fulfill the academic gaps noted above, the current research aims to:

Document and analyze the social functions of Kaiyuan Si in contemporary Chinese society. This objective aims to comprehensively examine the range of social functions performed by this heritage monastery, including but not limited to education, charity, and transnational cultural exchange.

Assess the effectiveness of social welfare programs implemented by Kaiyuan si: This objective focuses on evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of the social welfare initiatives carried out by this monastery.

Examine the roles of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si in China's cultural diplomacy: This objective aims to explore how Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si contributes to transnational people-to-people exchanges and enhances China's "soft power" through its engagement with Chinese overseas in Southeast Asia, particularly in Thailand.

The study provides valuable insights into Kaiyuan Si's social functions, social welfare initiatives, and transnational influence in contemporary Chinese society by achieving these research objectives.

1.4 Research Questions

The current research also seeks to answer the following questions:

What are the diverse social functions performed by Kaiyuan Si in contemporary Chinese society, and how do these functions contribute to the well-being of the local community?

To what extent are the social welfare programs implemented by Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si effective in fostering community development, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting social harmony?

How does Kaiyuan Si participate in transnational people-to-people exchanges and contribute to China's cultural diplomacy by engaging with Chinese overseas in Southeast Asia? What are the implications of this influence on intercultural understanding and international relations?

1.5 Research Methods and Sources

To answer the questions outlined above, this research utilizes the following methods and sources:

1.5.1 Methods

Literature Review: Conduct a comprehensive review of relevant literature on Buddhism and society, its social functions, and the role of Buddhist institutions in contemporary Chinese society. This provides a theoretical foundation and helps identify existing gaps in the literature.

Case Study: Adopt a qualitative case study approach focusing on Kaiyuan Si. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of the temple's social functions and impact on the local community. Data collection methods include interviews with monks, devotees, and community members and direct observations of temple activities and participation in social welfare programs.

Archival Research: Conduct archival research to gather historical documents, (un)published memoirs, and inscriptions related to Kaiyuan Si. This method provides insights into the temple's historical development, previous social functions, and any transformations it has undergone.

Questionnaire Survey: Design and administer questionnaires to collect quantitative data on the perceptions and experiences of temple visitors, local community members, and beneficiaries of social welfare programs. This method can provide statistical data to complement qualitative findings and offer a broader understanding of the temple's social impact.

Data Analysis: Employ qualitative data analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis, to analyze interview transcripts, observation notes, and archival materials. Quantitative data from surveys or questionnaires can be analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns, trends, and correlations.

1.5.2 Sources

Primary Sources: Gather primary data through interviews with key stakeholders, including monks, devotees, local community members, temple administrators, and beneficiaries of social welfare programs. Conduct on-site observations to observe temple activities and interactions within the community directly.

Secondary Sources: Access existing secondary sources such as academic journals, books, and scholarly articles related to Buddhism and society and the social functions of Buddhist monasteries. These sources provide theoretical frameworks, historical context, and comparative perspectives for the current research topic.

Archival Materials: Access historical records, documents, and artifacts from Kaiyuan Si archives. These materials can provide valuable insights into the temple's historical development, previous social functions, and transformations.

Questionnaires: Develop and administer surveys or questionnaires to collect quantitative data on visitors' perceptions, community members' experiences, and beneficiaries' feedback regarding the temple's social functions and welfare programs.

Official Reports and Documents: Refer to official reports, government documents, and publications on religious policies, cultural heritage preservation, and social welfare initiatives in Guangdong Province. These sources can provide contextual information and policy perspectives on the role of religious institutions in contemporary Chinese society.

1.6 Research Scope

The current research covers the following scopes:

Geographical Scope: The research primarily focuses on Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou, eastern Guangdong Province, China. The temple's local community and immediate surroundings are the primary geographic area of investigation.

As one of southern China's most ancient and prestigious temples, known for its architectural grandeur, religious prominence, and social contributions, Kaiyuan Si was established during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD). It has a history spanning over a thousand years. The temple underwent several renovations and expansions over time, with its current layout reflecting the Ming (1368-1644 AD) and Qing (1644-1912 AD) Dynasty architectural styles. It occupies a vast area and encompasses multiple halls, pagodas, gardens, and other structures. Kaiyuan Si holds great religious significance for followers of Buddhism, particularly those practicing the Chinese Mahayana tradition. It has been a center for centuries for Buddhist teachings, meditation, and religious ceremonies. Monks (nuns) and devotees have dedicated

themselves to pursuing spiritual enlightenment within its serene and sacred environment. (Shi DaLiang, 2012).

Beyond its religious functions, Kaiyuan Si has also played a prominent role in the social fabric of the Chaoshan region and Guangdong Province. Over the years, the temple has been actively engaged in various social welfare activities, educational initiatives, and cultural preservation efforts. It has contributed to the local community's well-being through charitable endeavors, healthcare services, and support for the less fortunate.

Due to its historical significance, architectural splendor, and cultural heritage, Kaiyuan Si attracts numerous visitors from China and worldwide. The temple's cultural tourism offerings, including ornate decorations, ancient relics, and vibrant Buddhist festivals, contribute to the region's tourism industry and facilitate intercultural exchanges.

Kaiyuan Si stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Buddhism in Chinese society and showcases the fusion of spiritual beliefs with local culture. Its significance extends beyond religious boundaries, encompassing social, historical, and artistic dimensions. The temple continues to serve as a symbol of Chaozhou's cultural identity, a site for religious devotion, and a center for social engagement and community development. (Zeng Qiutong, 1999).

Temporal Scope: The study concentrates on the contemporary period, from the post-reform and opening-up era (the 1980s) to the present. The research explores the developments and transformations of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si's social functions within this timeframe.

Social Functions: The study examines Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si's diverse social functions, including, but not limited to, education, charity, cultural tourism, and exchanges. It also investigates the temple's community development initiatives, cultural preservation, and social welfare programs.

Stakeholders: The research involves engaging with various stakeholders associated with Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si, including monks, devotees, local community members, temple administrators, beneficiaries of social welfare programs, and visitors. Their perspectives, experiences, and contributions to the temple's social functions be considered.

Methodological Approach: The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative methods such as interviews, direct observations, and archival research, along with quantitative methods like surveys or questionnaires. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the social functions of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si and their impact on the local community.

Comparative Analysis: The study incorporates comparative analysis by examining relevant literature and comparable cases of Buddhist monasteries in other regions or countries. This provides a broader perspective and facilitates a nuanced understanding of the social functions of Buddhist monasteries in contemporary Chinese society.

1.7 Significance of the Research

The current research bears the following significance:

Theoretical Contribution: Research exploring the social functions of Buddhist monasteries, with a specific focus on Kaiyuan Si, contributes to the intellectual understanding of the evolving role of religious institutions in contemporary Chinese society. It provides insights into the multifaceted functions performed by Buddhist monasteries and their impact on the local community, shedding light on the dynamics between Buddhism and social development.

Community Development: The research emphasizes the social welfare initiatives Kaiyuan Si undertook, showcasing its contributions to community development, educational services, and social harmony. Understanding the effectiveness of these programs can provide valuable insights for policymakers, temple administrators, and local communities in designing and implementing sustainable social welfare strategies.

Cultural Diplomacy: Investigating the influence of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si on international cultural exchanges and its roles in China's cultural diplomacy contributes to understanding the role of religious institutions in shaping international relations and fostering cultural diplomacy. The findings may have implications for promoting intercultural dialogue and enhancing China's global image through Buddhist institutions.

1.8 Limitations of the Research

The research also recognizes the following limitations:

Generalizability: The research focuses specifically on Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si in Guangdong Province, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other Buddhist monasteries in China or different geographical regions. The temple's specific characteristics and social functions may only partially represent the country's broader diversity of Buddhist monasteries.

Subjectivity: The study's reliance on qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, introduces the possibility of subjective interpretation. Researchers' biases and participants' perspectives may influence the data collected, potentially impacting the objectivity of the findings.

Time Constraints: The research scope is bounded by a specific temporal period, focusing on the contemporary era since the 1980s. This time constraint may limit a comprehensive understanding of the temple's historical evolution and the long-term impacts of its social functions.

Access and Availability: Limited availability or restricted access to certain archival materials, temple records, or interviews with key stakeholders may pose challenges. This restriction could potentially limit the depth of data collection and analysis.

Language Limitations: Language barriers in accessing relevant literature and primary sources and conducting interviews might affect the comprehensiveness of the research. The exclusion of non-Chinese language sources may limit a holistic understanding of the topic.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature on Buddhist monasticism in China, functionalism in religious studies, Buddhism and Chinese society, religiosity and its indexes, Buddhism and state, and religion and international relations. It also examines the methodological literature on Buddhist studies, focusing on Buddhism, politics, and society.

2.1 Buddhist Monasticism in China

From primitive Buddhism's early days to its introduction into China, the Sangha community adhered to its precepts and systems. However, varying customs and practices and the challenges of relying on begging for sustenance caused the lifestyle of Chinese Buddhist temples to undergo gradual changes.

Master Dao'an of the Eastern Jin Dynasty first drafted the "Standards for Monks and Nuns," which stipulates the code of conduct for monks in daily life. However, the regulations are rarely too one-sided (Liang) (Shi Huijiao, Tang Yongtong 1992).

During the mid-Tang Dynasty, Zen master Baizhang Huaihai (Baizhang Huaihai, 749-814) created the "Baizhang Qinggui," followed by forests worldwide. As a result, significant temples successively developed regulations to standardize daily management. The establishment of the "Baizhang Qinggui" profoundly impacted Chinese Buddhism in later generations. The Sangha completely broke away from the lifestyle of Indian Buddhism and, combined with local Chinese folk customs, evolved into a Chinese Buddhist Sangha with unique characteristics. One such characteristic is the practice of living alone. The Nong Chan thought, which advocates for monks to support themselves and obtain the necessities of life through labor, is exemplified by the saying, "If you do not work for a day, you do not eat for a day (Baizhang Huaihai 749-814)." This way of life, which combines farming and Zen work, has departed from the primitive Buddhist practice of relying on begging for sustenance. From the perspective of early Buddhism, this is not in line with the original intention of the

religion. In order to thrive and adapt to the local environment, it is necessary to make certain adjustments and assimilate into the local customs and traditions (Pu Ji,1252).

The agricultural philosophy of "one day without work, one day without food" has enabled Chinese Buddhist temples to accumulate significant land assets during their development process. These land assets were developed by monasteries, as well as rewards from the royal family, and believers donated some. As temple assets continue to grow, temples have surplus resources that can be used to benefit society. This is the foundation for developing temple social functions and supporting daily operations.

2.2 Functionalism in Religious Studies

Religion is an integral part of the social system and has a unique and dynamic effect. It is crucial in promoting social integration, regulating social behavior, and exerting social control in social relations. As a religion, Buddhism naturally serves social functions, which are directly reflected in the roles of Buddhist temples. The functions of Buddhist temples include charity, education, diplomacy, and cultural activities.

The Emergence of Buddhist Temples' Functions: On one hand, it stems from Buddhism's ethical philosophy, and on the other hand, it arises from society's need for Buddhism."The Social Functions of Kaiyuan si in Chaozhou" by Zeng Qiutong records the daily Buddhist activities of Kaiyuan si, including the celebration of the Christmas of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, disaster relief and blessing activities, and charitable activities that have been ongoing since ancient times. These activities included building nursing homes, assisting doctors and offering free consultations, supporting education and teaching activities that began in the Song Dynasty, providing relief for the poor during times of famine, and establishing rescue teams for monks and nuns during times of war (Zeng Qiutong,1999).

In "Social Functions in Modern Urban Buddhism—Centered on Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou," Master Da Liang explores the charitable activities carried out by the Anti-Japanese War and Famine Institute at Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou during modern times. These activities include disaster relief, free clinics, and "Chinese medicine

charity clinics."(Yin Shun, and Li Dahua, 2014.) Ultimate Care and Rice Merchant calibrated their measuring instruments in the Shennong Hall of the temple, promoted fair trade business ethics, and educated the public. The Kaiyuan Si in the Republic of China has a rich history of social and cultural contributions. The temple's weaving monks have participated in flood fighting and emergency rescue efforts, supported the Anti-Japanese War, and organized "monk and nun rescue teams" to benefit the community. Additionally, the temple has carried out lectures to promote the law and benefit students, opened free schools, published books and periodicals, created Buddhist music, and conducted friendly exchanges with overseas countries such as Japan and Thailand since the Tang Dynasty. The emergence of these functions is based on the needs of society. This is the unique survival mode of Chinese Buddhist temples. By contributing to and actively participating in society, individuals can gain acceptance and recognition from their community. This is partly why Buddhism has spread widely in China over time (Yin Shun and Li Dahua, 2014).

In recent years, the Guochan Si in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou, has not only achieved fruitful results in nurturing monks, studying Buddhism, and propagating traditional Chinese culture but also giving full play to the social functions of the temple, inheriting and carrying forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Various activities, including Guqin and Dongxiao classes, calligraphy and meticulous painting classes, and martial arts classes, were conducted in the environment, making a significant contribution to the development of Buddhism in the modern era and the promotion of traditional culture.

Kaiyuan Si regularly organizes charitable events every year. For instance, during the Laba Festival, the temple serves porridge at its gate, and during the Mid-Autumn Festival, it sends festive gifts to "caring households" in Chaozhou. The temple also conducts visits to nearby villages during warm winter days. Additionally, it has established the "Kaiyuan Bodhi Scholarship" to support exceptional students who face financial difficulties in completing their studies. Not only did I actively participate in the "Hanjiang Environmental Protection Campaign," but I also contributed to Chaozhou's beauty and the protection of the ecological environment (Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple Public Account, 2021).

2.3 Buddhism and Chinese Society

Cultural anthropology posits that all cultural phenomena serve specific functions. A society or a community within a society is a functional body forming part of a continuum that cooperates and coordinates with each other. This partial activity is a component of the overall social system, and the purpose of a specific social custom is to contribute to the functioning of society as a whole. Buddhism is closely intertwined with Chinese social life. Buddhism plays a significant role in the community's social activities. As a religion, Buddhism exerts a direct or indirect influence on society through its unique beliefs. It promotes the idea of "planting a field of blessings," which suggests that good deeds will be rewarded and evil deeds will be punished. This ideology can help resolve social conflicts to some extent and promote social stability.

Modern Buddhism's crisis has brought new opportunities for the transformation and development of Buddhism, according to Buddhist philosophy. The theme of Buddhism in this era is how to eliminate the deficiencies accumulated in history and adapt to the development of the times while maintaining its fine traditions. The proposal of "Humanistic Buddhism" has altered the historical tradition of Buddhism since its introduction in China. The process of transitioning from isolation to integration reflects the inclusivity and adaptability that Buddhism aims to cultivate. In order to adapt to the development of modern society and meet the needs of people, Buddhism has dedicated itself to social services, strengthened organizational management, adjusted external forms, and actively integrated into modern society.

Modern Buddhism is closely related to the fate of the country and the nation throughout the era, reflecting the characteristics of Buddhism in this period. With the transformation of the national regime from an autocratic monarchy to a democratic republic, significant changes have occurred in the monastic order system, Buddhist organizations, and Buddhist education in modern Buddhist circles. These changes reflect the characteristics of Buddhism in the new era. The resurgence of modern Chinese Buddhism is characterized by its diverse forms and integrated content, which align with cultural development and self-adjustment to meet the needs of the times. This is not a complete innovation or a complete break with history, nor is it a reconstruction. The dualistic nature of Buddhism, with its two-fold negation and value orientation, created a paradoxical foundation for the religion's involvement in society

during the late Qing Dynasty and beyond. This antinomy of function laid the theoretical groundwork for the Buddhist spirit of engagement with the world (Ma Tianxiang, 2014).

The process of transitioning from isolation to integration reflects the inclusivity and adaptability of Buddhism in the pursuit of survival and growth. In order to adapt to the development of modern society and meet the needs of people, Buddhism is actively integrating into modern society by dedicating itself to social services, strengthening organizational management, and adjusting external forms. The diversification of Buddhism in China reflects the trend towards pluralistic development in modern Chinese Buddhism (Ma Tianxiang, 2014).

The mutual integration of Buddhism and society marks the beginning of the Sinicization of Buddhism. Most contemporary Buddhism has inherited Buddhist traditions from the Ming and Qing dynasties and retains the same ideological concepts. Some Buddhist characteristics from the Ming and Qing dynasties are still evident today. The concept of preventing evil and promoting good is deeply ingrained in Buddhism and directly or indirectly impacts the development of social morality. This indicates that Buddhism became more integrated into society during the Qing Dynasty, and Buddhist temples evolved towards secularization.

The social functions of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou were derived from the development of society and the needs of the people. With the introduction of Buddhism to Chaozhou, its ideology and code of conduct have profoundly influenced the humanistic spirit of the region, leaving a significant impact on the ideology, behavioral habits, and folk culture of the Chaozhou people. The exchange between Buddhist culture and Chaoshan culture is a two-way process. On one hand, Buddhism had to adapt to the environment of Chaoshan when it was introduced to the region. Additionally, it had to make adjustments to meet the requirements of the era in order to secure space for its survival and development. On the other hand, Buddhism has played a significant role in the historical development of Chaoshan culture. Buddhism eventually became integral to Chaoshan culture, creating a unique local culture infused with Buddhist elements and characteristics (Zheng Qunhui, 2015).

2.4 Religiosity and Its Indexes

The development of Buddhist temples and the spread of beliefs are inseparable from the support and motivation of people from all walks of life. The Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou is dedicated to spreading positive energy throughout society within its sphere of influence. The temple actively encourages its followers to participate in social construction through daily religious activities. This model of spreading beliefs through religious activities is generally accepted in modern society. Religious activities manifest the social functions of Buddhist temples and are a testament to social connections.

The annual activities at Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou mainly consist of two aspects:

One: Religious Activities. Religious activities are primarily intended for religious believers, providing them spiritual comfort through religious ceremonies.

Two: Charity activities aim to provide material support and assistance to non-religious groups in need, helping them overcome their difficulties.

In 2021, the Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou will organize religious and charitable activities to provide spiritual solace and material assistance to those still struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a clear demonstration of the purpose of Chinese Buddhist temples.

Table 2.1 Religious Calendar of Kaiyuan Si Chaozhou 2021

Date	Event Name	Event Details
2021.1.5	The Complete Winter Buddhist Seven Dharma Assembly Day	Activities Practiced by Monks in a Monastery
2021.1.20	Sakyamuni Buddha's Enlightenment Day	We initiated a mass worship ceremony to pray for blessings and provided free Laba porridge to the public.
2021.2.12-2.26	Spring Lantern Prayer Ceremony	Hold a 15-day Spring Lantern Prayer Ceremony for good fortune and success in the upcoming year.

Table 2.1 Religious Calendar of Kaiyuan Si Chaozhou 2021(continued)

Date	Event Name	Event Details
2021.3.20	Kamuni Buddha Leaving Home Day	Let us pray for the well-being of humanity. May we pray for peace, favorable weather conditions, and harmony for our country and its people.
2021.3.27-3.31	"The Ching Ming Festival"	The five-day worship "Liang Huangbao Repentance" Dharma Assembly was held in the Daxiong Hall.
2021.4.29-5.5	Spring Land and Water Purdue Ceremony	Initiated a seven-day Spring Land and Water Purdue Dharma Assembly
2021.5.9	Compassionate Wisdom Torch Prayer Ceremony	All the mothers and high school entrance examination and college entrance examination students hold a compassionate, intelligent torch, blessing, and universal Dharma assembly in the Daxiong Hall.
2021.5.19	Buddha's Birthday	Commemorate Buddha's birthday by bathing Buddha
2021.5.22	Eight Guan fasting and meditation activities	Accept the eight precepts for Buddhist believers and lead them to a day of meditation.
2021.6.18	Anniversary of the death of the former abbot	It was held in the Daxiong Palace to commemorate the death of the former abbot Hongche and the old monk.
2021.5.26-8.22	Summer vacation	Three-month "summer retreat" from May 26 to August 22
2021.8.18-8.22	"Mingyang Puli Dharma Conference"	The five-day "Mingyang Puli Dharma Assembly" was established to save sentient beings in the six realms of charity.
2021.9.6	"Filial piety and gratitude" charity activities	In the morning, worship "Treasure Repentance in the Compassionate Land", and in the afternoon, hold the "filial piety and repaying kindness" charity event and distribute festival condolence materials to "caring households" in Chaozhou City.
2021.9.21	"Mid-Autumn Blessing Ceremony"	In the evening, the "Mid-Autumn Moon Prayer Ceremony" will be held
2021.11.23-11.29	Water and land Pudu wins in winter.	Held a 7-day Winter Dharma Realm Saint Fan Water and Land Purdue Lhasa Victory Meeting

Table 2.1 Religious Calendar of Kaiyuan Si Chaozhou 2021(continued)

Date	Event Name	Event Details
2021.12.4 start	Free Porridge	Every morning from 7:00 to 8:00, free porridge is offered to the public at the temple's gate.
2021.12.11-12.31	"Ksitigarbha" co-cultivation	Recite the "Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Fundamental Vow Sutra" for 21 days
2021.12.18	Warm Winter Charity Condolence Activities	Warm winter charity condolence activities were carried out in nursing homes in 16 towns in Raoping County, and cold winter materials, including rice, warm scarf hat suits, warm socks, red dates, and goji berry health-preserving gift boxes, were distributed.

2.5 Buddhism and State

Since its introduction to the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism has undergone nearly six centuries of development and has been widely accepted by both the gentry and the ordinary people. The flourishing of Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty was closely tied to the emperor's patronage. The emperors of the Tang Dynasty held varying perspectives on Buddhism. Except for Tang Wuzong (Li Yan (李炎) 814-846), most rulers utilized Buddhism to govern the populace and maintain political stability. Although they may not have strong enthusiasm for Buddhism, they still acknowledge its influence in various aspects of life and do not excessively suppress it to avoid provoking resistance from believers. During the early Tang Dynasty, the state controlled Buddhism to regulate the religion. There are restrictions within Buddhism. The Buddhist policies of the Tang Dynasty were characterized by expedient support and increasingly severe constraints (Western Stanley and Zhang Yu, 2010).

During the Song Dynasty, Buddhist culture was widely embraced by the gentry and the ordinary people. The role of Buddhism was fully reflected, leading to benefits for both the country and its people through the development of Buddhism. As a result, Buddhism was recognized and supported by the country's believers, promoting the prosperity of the religion. The temple's economy and social status have both improved. Given the historical context and societal hierarchy, Buddhism has developed social welfare functions that are more accessible to the general population, in addition to serving those in power. These functions include constructing bridges and roads,

supporting education, contributing to social relief efforts, and establishing nursing homes (Chen Zefang, 2007).

During the Song Dynasty, Buddhist charity was highly developed. Various charity facilities have emerged, including nursing homes and Anjifang for the poor and sick elderly, the Salesian Bureau for adopting abandoned babies, Juzicang for assisting underprivileged infants, and the professional funeral organization Loutzeyuan. The monastery encourages believers to cultivate various fields of blessings and practice kindness and charity to promote and reinforce the idea of karma. By establishing the concepts of good and evil, officials can recognize the important role of Buddhism in maintaining social harmony. By establishing the concept of "rewarding good and punishing evil," a moral code of conduct can be established for the people, which plays a crucial role in maintaining social stability.

During the Yuan Dynasty, the royal family and nobles donated generously to Buddhism, resulting in widespread religious support among ordinary people and local officials. In this case, the Xiang Huan Shi Tian (乡宦施田wind (Zeng Qiutong, 2000) entering the temple was formed. According to "Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si Records," the most significant land donation to Kaiyuan Si during the Yuan Dynasty was made by Yu Ying, who donated 1,500 mu of land (Shi Huiyuan, 1992). With the arrival of Yu Ying Shitian and Danba Dishu, the social status and economic strength of Chaozhou's Kaiyuan Si were further enhanced, reaching its peak during the Yuan Dynasty. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Kaiyuan Si played an active role in social development, thanks to the government's support and the temple's economic foundation. Its pivotal role links the government and the public, maintaining social stability and promoting social development. This is also the primary reason why Kaiyuan Si has been officially recognized and embraced by the people of Chaozhou.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Buddhism was entirely under official control, and its development was restricted. These control policies have diminished the influence of Buddhism among the population, leading to a lower status of religious groups and a transfer of dominance in belief to the people. With the shift in dominance from traditional beliefs to the rise of folk beliefs, Buddhism must adapt to thrive and progress. Buddhism has taken on a form that is integrated with society and meets the

needs of its people. In order to survive and develop, the Sangha must relinquish their independence and transcendent religious characteristics. The weakening of religious independence and transcendent character can be attributed to the manifestation of catering to people's religious awareness, practical interests, wishes, and prayers. This phenomenon gradually merged with Chinese folk ideas, beliefs, and customs, leading to a decline in the distinctiveness maintained before the Song Dynasty. "Folk Buddhism" has emerged as a means of ancestor worship, extending life, increasing blessings, and achieving practical benefits (Zheng Qunhui, 2015).

With the development of folk-customized Buddhism, Buddhism has gradually integrated into the fabric of society and become more involved in people's daily lives. For instance, many Buddhist folk customs in Chaozhou originated in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. These customs include Buddhist music, vegetarian cuisine, and sayings. From a national perspective, Buddhist organizations actively participate in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and take the initiative to maintain social stability. From the public's perspective, the spiritual solace provided by Buddhist organizations during critical moments is irreplaceable by any other industry, particularly during times of calamity and social unrest.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee on July 1, 1979, the government implemented new religious policies and promoted freedom of religious belief. With the implementation of the policy of freedom of religion, religious groups have received attention and support from the state. Religious venues have gradually resumed operations, and religious activities have also slowly resumed. In 1981, the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau formulated the "Trial Measures for the Management of Buddhist and Taoist Temples in Han Areas," which stated that opening several temples nationwide for Buddhist and Taoist believers was an important measure to implement the party's religious policies. The unity of all ethnic groups in our country, the consolidation of political stability and unity, the development of an international anti-hegemony united front, and the successful implementation of the four modernizations hold significant political implications (Shi Huiyuan, 1992).

In the 1990s, the Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou underwent a complete restoration with the support of the state, society, and overseas Chinese. Over nearly 30 years of

development, Kaiyuan Si has remained committed to the principles of Humanistic Buddhism and has actively served the community. Kaiyuan Si established the "Lingdong Charity Foundation" in 2015 to give back to the regional society where it is located through charitable condolences, scholarships, and condolences to orphans and widows. At the same time, Kaiyuan hired some local employees to provide job opportunities for the community. To a certain extent, this can alleviate the pressure on local society to obtain employment (The project profile of Lingdong Charity Foundation, n.d.).

2.6 Religion in International Relations

Before the introduction of Buddhism to China, the term "temple" expressly referred to institutions used for foreign receptions. With the introduction of Buddhism, the place became an exclusive religious center. With the development of Buddhism in China, monasteries have evolved from simple exclusive functions of monks living, spreading the Dharma, practicing, and translating scriptures to charitable functions such as student aid and relief. At the same time, it has brought social contributions to the local community regarding tourism, cultural dissemination, and foreign exchange. Temples have assumed certain social functions since their establishment. Temples serve as spiritual and cultural centers for communities, gathering places for national life, and belief centers for religious followers. They also reflect the customs and traditions of the community (Shi Daliang, 2014).

Monasteries also serve as a means of external communication in society. Buddhism demonstrates its unique value through its distinctive characteristics in external cultural exchanges. "Groups that share common beliefs are often easier to communicate with. Exchanges between Buddhist groups in different countries can strengthen connections, deepen understanding, and foster friendships among believers from diverse backgrounds" (Huang Yunjing, 2011). Buddhism can offer certain advantages in foreign exchange activities under specific circumstances. Because there are shared beliefs, it is easier to generate common topics. The relationship between the two sides was invisibly narrowed, reducing the sense of distance.

Due to the high population density in the Chaozhou Isthmus, a competitive environment has emerged that has fostered the Chaozhou people's creativity, pioneering spirit, and adventurous nature. As a result, many individuals have turned to seafaring to make a living. Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si is situated in the "Hometown of Overseas Chinese." Since the Tang Dynasty, China has maintained friendly relations and exchanges with overseas countries, including Japan, Thailand, and others. A copper incense burner in the temple was dedicated by "Han disciple Ren Guozuo." Shi Daliang (2014) witnessed the early foreign exchange activities of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou.

Buddhism exerts its value through its unique characteristics. "Groups with common beliefs are often easier to communicate with. Exchanges between Buddhist groups in various countries can enhance believers' connection, understanding, and friendship (Huang Yunjing, 2011). Buddhism can offer certain advantages in foreign exchange activities under specific circumstances. Because there are shared beliefs, it is easier to generate common topics. The relationship between the two sides was invisibly narrowed, reducing the sense of distance.

According to the "Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si Records," the temple officially communicated with the outside world between 1979 and 1986. There are 24 recorded locations, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, North Korea, Macau, Malaysia, and various African locations (Shi Huiyuan, 1992).

Table 2.2 Brief List of International Exchanges of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou from 1979 to 1986

Date	Region	Crew	Remark
1979.11.21-24	Hongkong	Hong Kong Teochew Sightseeing Group	
1980.12.20	Hongkong	Li Ka-shing	
1981.8.1	Thailand	Former Prime Minister Kerry Bhamo and a group of ten people	
1984.5.20	Thailand	Six members of the Sangha, the wife of the mayor of Bangkok, and more than 20 overseas Chinese believers	
1985.4.14	Thailand	A student summer camp group tour of more than 50 people	

Table 2.2 Brief List of International Exchanges of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou from 1979 to 1986 (continued)

Date	Region	Crew	Remark
1985.4.24	Penang, Malaysia	Master Yuanrui, the former abbot of Hongfu Temple	A native of the city, he became a monk at Hongfu Temple
1985.4.28	Africa Ethiopia	A group of ten people came to visit the temple	
1985.5.16	North Korea	a group of five	Accompanied by the city government
1985.5.20	Samut Prakan, Thailand	The women's volleyball team has 18 members, including Nai Chalun Chanlak and Cai Yipi.	
1985.5.21	Thailand Police Agency	Lieutenant General Shanesi Tipan, deputy director, and a group of five people	
1985.5.28	Singapore	A group of more than ten people led by Master Guangping of Pujue Temple in Guangming Mountain	
1985.6.7	Japan	six guests	
1985.7.26	Thailand	three guests	
1985.8.4	Thailand	Chen Shixian, Chairman of the Journalist Foundation	
1985.9.25	European Spain	Tourist group of more than 30 people	
1985.10.28	Hongkong	Master Chang Huai led a Buddhist youth group of 30 people	
1986.1.15	Hong Kong Christianity	Pastor Xie John, a group of nine members from the Teochew pastor group	
1986.1.29	Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong	Archbishop Hu Zhenzhong and his party of seven	
1986.4.22	Ministry of Education of Thailand	Vice Minister Kuntong (Thai monk) led a group of seven people	
1986.8.29	Kishiwada City, Japan	A delegation of ten people for a friendly visit to China	

Table 2.2 Brief List of International Exchanges of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou from 1979 to 1986 (continued)

Date	Region	Crew	Remark
1986.9.6	Thailand	Chaozhou Guild Hall and Ten Counties Association Chaoshan Visiting Group	A group of eighty-eight people
1986.12.1	Han Yu Academic Research Association line	Including American, British, French, German, and Japanese scholars and Professor Jao Tsung-I	
1986.12.26	Macau Scholars	Accompanied by Wu Nansheng, Chairman of the Provincial Political Consultative Conference	
1986.7.15-23	Japan	Abbot Shi Huiyuan served as the head of the delegation	pay a visit

According to the "Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si." According to the "Chronicle" records, on July 6, 1986, Shi Huiyuan, the abbot of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si, traveled to Guangzhou and then transferred to Beijing to participate in the "Chinese Buddhist Association's Invited Visit to Yongping Si and Zhushan Delegation" which is located on the main mountain of Rimu Caodong sect. The Buddhist Association of China visited the Eihei Temple and viewed representative paintings of Zhushan in Japan. A group of seven individuals visited Japan from July 15th to 23rd at the invitation of Eihei Temple, the primary mountain of the Caodong sect. Master Huiyuan, the abbot of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou, led the delegation (Shi Huiyuan, 265).

During the farewell party for the overseas visit and exchange, Master Huiyuan expressed, "We deeply feel that the continued development of friendly exchanges between our countries is of great significance to the promotion of the Buddhist cause and the friendly relations between our peoples." This is of great significance. This has deepened our mutual understanding and friendship, which will positively impact the development of Buddhist exchanges and cooperation between the two countries and the expansion of friendly exchanges between the two peoples." (Shi Huiyuan, 266-267)

This exchange visit marks Kaiyuan Si's first foreign trip to Chaozhou since implementing reform and opening up policies. It demonstrates the significant role of Buddhist exchanges, an "unofficial" non-governmental communication method, in promoting non-governmental exchanges between the two countries. The two sides understand that the next phase of their exchange program will build a bridge of friendship.

2.7 Qualitative Research in Buddhist Studies

Qualitative research, also called qualitative inquiry, is a fundamental research paradigm within the social sciences. Conducting scientific experiments is an essential step and method in scientific research. Researchers use various methods to gather data in natural situations, such as historical review, literature analysis, interviews, observations, participation experiences, and other non-quantitative means. They analyze the data to draw research conclusions.

Qualitative research utilizes the researcher as a tool for investigation and employs diverse data collection methods to examine social phenomena in natural settings comprehensively. This approach utilizes inductive methods to analyze data and formulate theories. It involves gathering information about behavior and constructing meaning through interaction with research subjects. Explanatory Understanding John W. Creswell's book presents five distinct approaches to qualitative research: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The book guides researchers in selecting the most suitable approach for their research questions and offers a comprehensive overview of each approach. This is a valuable resource for researchers who are interested in qualitative inquiry. It helps them to comprehend the strengths and limitations of various qualitative research designs (Creswell, John W. 2018).

This research mainly employs qualitative methods. The methodology includes case studies, archival research, questionnaires, interviews with key stakeholders such as monks, devotees, and local community members, and data analysis.

2.7.1 Case Study

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study: Methods and Applications*. The book provides a comprehensive guide to case studies. It delves into the intricacies of case study design and methodology and provides practical advice on selecting cases, collecting and analyzing data, and drawing valid conclusions. This approach is highly regarded in qualitative research and is often recommended to researchers interested in adopting a case study methodology (Yin, Robert K., 2017).

This study utilizes a qualitative case study methodology that centers on Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou. This approach will enable a comprehensive examination of the social role of the temple and its influence on the nearby community. Conduct field observations to observe the activities and interactions within the temple community directly. John Gerring's book focuses on the principles and practices of case study research. This text delves into the theoretical underpinnings of case study research and offers practical advice on conducting case studies in diverse fields (Gerring, John, 2007).

2.7.2 Archival Research

Laura Schmidt's book is a practical guide for researchers interested in utilizing archival sources. It offers step-by-step guidance on locating, accessing, and analyzing archival materials. The book covers various topics, including archival research ethics, primary source evaluation, note-taking techniques, and the interpretation of archival evidence. It is a valuable resource for researchers looking to incorporate archival research methods into their studies (Schmidt, Laura, 2011).

During archival research, this approach offers valuable insight into the historical development of the temple, its past social functions, and any changes it may have undergone. Collecting historical documents, unpublished memoirs, and inscriptions related to Kaiyuan Si. Official Reports and Documents: Please refer to the official reports, government documents, and publications of Guangdong Province regarding religious policies, cultural heritage protection, and social welfare undertakings. These resources can offer valuable insights and policy perspectives on the current role of religious institutions in modern Chinese society. This study examines historical records, documents, and artifacts from the Kaiyuan Si Archives in Chaozhou.

These sources can provide valuable insights into the historical development of the temple, its previous social functions, and any transformations it has undergone.

2.7.3 Questionnaire Survey

Design and administer questionnaires to gather quantitative data on the perceptions and experiences of visitors to the temple, members of the local community, and beneficiaries of social welfare programs. Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker's book offers a comprehensive guide to designing and conducting survey research. It covers the fundamental principles of survey research, including sampling techniques, questionnaire design, and data collection methods. The book addresses critical issues such as survey ethics, data quality, and analysis. It is a valuable resource for researchers conducting rigorous and practical survey research (Brace, Ian. Kogan Page, 2018).

This sourcebook provides a comprehensive overview of qualitative data analysis methods. It covers various techniques, including content analysis, constant comparison, coding, and memo writing. The book offers practical guidance on managing and analyzing qualitative data effectively. Researchers widely use it as a reference for qualitative data analysis. This approach could provide statistical data to complement qualitative findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the social impact of temples. Design and conduct surveys or questionnaires to collect quantitative data on visitors' perceptions of temple social events and welfare programs, community members' experiences, and feedback from beneficiaries.

2.7.4 Data Analysis

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This sourcebook provides a comprehensive overview of qualitative data analysis methods. It covers various techniques, including content analysis, constant comparison, coding, and memo writing. The book offers practical guidance on managing and analyzing qualitative data effectively. Researchers widely use it as a reference for qualitative data analysis. This study's data collection methods included

interviews with monks, devotees, and community members, as well as direct observation of temple activities and participation in social welfare programs. Primary data were collected through interviews with key stakeholders, including monks, devotees, local community members, temple administrators, and beneficiaries of social welfare programs. Qualitative data analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis, are used to analyze interview transcripts, observation notes, and archival materials to identify patterns, trends, and correlations.



CHAPTER III

CONVENTIONAL FUNCTIONS OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES: TAKING KAIYUAN SI AS AN EXAMPLE

Buddhist education is an important part of the spread of Buddhism, and public welfare and charity are among the most important ideas of Buddhism. Starting from Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou, this chapter examines the conventional functions, including education, focusing on the role of Buddhist charity in regional society and the development of Buddhist charity under contemporary policies. It also summarizes the public welfare and charity activities of Lingdong Charity Foundation in 2021.

3.1 Modern Buddhist Educational Concepts

The period from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China was a transitional stage in transitioning from traditional Buddhism to modern society. For Buddhism, the crisis faced by modern Buddhism has brought new opportunities for the transformation and development of Buddhism. Maintaining the fine traditions, getting rid of historical disadvantages, and adapting to the development of the times have become the themes of Buddhism in this era. To adapt to the social conditions at that time and cope with the invasion of Western religions, inheriting the tradition and adapting to modern society is the biggest problem Buddhism should solve for its survival and development. Under the pressure of foreign temples and schools in the Buddhist circle and the competition from Western Christianity in society, calls for reform arose within the Buddhist circle (Shi Daquan, 2011). During this period, Master Taixu proposed the Buddhist revival movement, reformed the Sangha system, and advocated active participation in social activities. The "Buddhism of Life" advocated by Master Taixu focuses on the improvement of "life" and the transformation of the "world". "Humanistic Buddhism" is the theoretical forerunner of "Humanistic Buddhism" advocated by the academic and Buddhist circles today.

The proposal of "Humanistic Buddhism" is an inevitable trend in the development of history and society, and it is the thinking and direction of the

development of Buddhism today. Whether in the past, present, or future, it has decisive practical significance for changing the perception of Buddhism in modern intellectual circles and society. "Buddhism and Buddhism in modern China, in the process of multiple development and system integration, gathered the undercurrents of Buddhism in the late Qing Dynasty to form a massive wave of social change, realized the transformation of entering the world and embarked on the road of revival (Ma Tianxiang, 2014).

The proposal of "Humanistic Buddhism" has changed the historical tradition of Buddhism since it was introduced in China. The process from avoiding the world to joining the world reflects Buddhism's inclusiveness and adaptability in seeking development. Knowing their shortcomings, Buddhist organizations actively take countermeasures to be recognized by society and the public and survive and develop in regional society.

In Buddhist reform, the cultivation of monks is the top priority. With the advancement of Buddhist reform, the cultivation of monks has become the primary task of Buddhist reform. During the Republic of China period, Master Taixu established the "Wuchang Buddhist Academy" in Wuchang to educate monks. With the success of the Wuchang Buddhist Academy, Buddhist circles all over the country heard about it. When the wind rises, monk education is promoted. Minnan Buddhist College, Jiuhua Buddhist College, Henan Buddhist College, Sichuan Buddhist College, and Sino-Tibetan Academy of Buddhism have been established successively (Shi Daquan, 2011).

3.1.1 The Establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College

The rise and fall of Buddhism are closely related to the quality of monks, and the image of monks is directly reflected in the image of Buddhism. However, since the Qing Dynasty, the quality of monks was low due to the collapse of the monk system, and the temples were reduced to shelters for people with disabilities. Since the Republic of China, the situation has been deteriorating and declining, resulting in a great crisis of belief. Buddhism lost its true meaning and became a prop for the pursuit of tangible benefits, healing illnesses, and death. Due to the lack of monks who spread the Dharma, ordinary people cannot truly understand and believe in Buddhism (Zheng Qunhui, 156). Monks had to take self-help measures at the critical moment of Buddhism's life and death. "The establishment of a Buddhist academy at Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou is a

manifestation of the self-help movement of enlightened members of the Sangha (Shi Daquan, 441).

The establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College showed the determination of Buddhism to save itself and reform. The development of Buddhism is inseparable from the propagation of monks. With the improvement of monks' literacy, faith can be re-established, people's recognition of Buddhism can be improved, and a positive image of Buddhism can be established. Buddhism's development is inseparable from society's support. Therefore, Buddhist organizations actively change traditional Buddhist ideas, carry forward the idea of "humanistic Buddhism" that focuses on "life", actively serve society, and eliminate people's previous misconceptions about Buddhism. Know.

The official establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College was made by Master Cheng Hong, who graduated from Minnan Buddhist College. After returning from graduation, Master Cheng Hong advocated the establishment of schools, educated monks, and revitalized Buddhism. With the strong approval of his comrade Congti, he discussed with monk Zhizhen, the temple abbot, monk Jingguang, Genkuan Prison, Chunji Prison, Chunmi Acharya, and agreed unanimously (Shi Daquan, 9). Following the recommendation of Monk Zhizhen and Layman Zhou Juexin to Xiamen, Master Taixu was invited to come to Chaozhou to promote the Dharma and guide the schoolwork. According to "Records of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou," In December 1932, after Master Taixu came to Chaozhou to promote Buddhism, he accepted Kaiyuan Si's request to host Lingdong Buddhist Academy. He ordered Master Renda Xing to preside over the educational affairs. Later, Master Jichen acted as an agent. After several preparations, the opening ceremony was held at Kaiyuan Si on October 9, 1933 (Shi Huiyuan, 313-314).

In the early days of Lingdong Buddhist College, there were 14 faculty members and more than 20 students divided into A and B classes. The level of class A is the same as that of junior high school, and class B is the same as that of high school. Six hours of morning and evening lectures are taught daily, and three-hour fasting meals are all fasted in the Wuguan Hall (Shi Huiyuan, 314). By June 1935, due to disagreements between the academy and the monastery and financial constraints, Lingdong Buddhist Academy was closed for only one session. There were 18 graduating monks in this class, and they published "Nan Xun Ji" when they graduated.

During their period of running the school, he successively published publications such as the semi-monthly "Renhai Lantern", "Hai Ke Ji", and "Jing Xian Complete Works" (Shi Huiyuan, 314). It was not until September 1947 that Venerable Zhicheng was enthroned that Lingdong Buddhist College was resumed. In May 1948, monk Zhicheng resigned, and the Buddhist Academy was closed again (Shi Huiyuan,326).

In May 1991, monasteries across the country were restored and opened one after another. Given the shortage of monks, Lingdong Buddhist College was re-established in October 1991 under the strong advocacy of the old monk Dingran. Since the resumption of the college, the college has gone through three deans: the old monk Dingran served as the first dean (October 1991-March 1997); the great monk Hongche served as the second dean (April 1997-March 1997) June 2006); Venerable Da Quan was appointed as the third dean (from March 2007 to present). In July 2015, "Lingdong Buddhist College" was renamed "Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong College", which is used today (Lingdong Buddhist College. internal data. 2022).

The purpose of teaching in the early days of Lingdong Buddhist College was to organize the monk system, improve the monks' quality, revitalize Buddhism, and benefit society (Shi Daquan, 9). From these aspects, it can be seen that the purpose of the establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College is to realize internal reforms, organize the Sangha system, and improve the quality of monks based on cultivating talents who propagate the Dharma—development opportunities.

3.2 Charity Project of Kaiyuan Si

Religious organizations enter the national public domain and the public's field of vision by carrying out public welfare and charity, highlighting the role of social functions and fulfilling social responsibilities. "The above-mentioned performance of the religious circles in Wenchuan earthquake relief proves that religious groups have a strong internal motivation to engage in charitable undertakings. Developing religious and charitable undertakings in contemporary China has multiple realistic values and meanings. In general, religious, charitable undertakings can satisfy the public. The unique material and spiritual needs of people are also beneficial to the development of religion itself (Li Xuan & Wei Dedong, 2009). Researcher Zheng Xiaoyun believes

that the process of religious organizations participating in disaster relief is an important opportunity for their socialization process and social role transformation, "Chinese religious charity activities have demonstrated to the society the concept of compassion and relief that Chinese religions have always advocated through their practical actions. (Zheng Xiaoyun, 2012)

Religion and charity have always had a deep relationship, especially in Buddhism, because of the idea of charity in Buddhist teachings. The idea of charity was included in Buddha's thought from the beginning. As scholars have pointed out, the fields of compassion, almsgiving, repaying kindness, and blessing in Buddhist teachings contain profound thoughts of charity (Ma Jun, 2017)—first, the thought of compassion. Compassion is one of the core concepts of Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism has a long history of being involved in public welfare undertakings, and it was well developed in the Eastern Han Dynasty (Quan Hansheng, 1986). Traditional Buddhist public welfare activities range from disaster relief for the poor to building water conservancy projects, small bridges and roads, and releasing animals and food. On the whole, these public welfare acts can be roughly divided into two categories: one is the social public welfare, such as mourning for the sick, lodging houses, digging wells and drawing springs, building bridges, and paving roads; the other is social assistance, such as disaster relief, feeding, and helping refugees.

Chinese Buddhism developed during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and pure land thought with a clear tendency to be born into the world began to prevail, and the integration of Zen and Buddhism became mainstream. The monks expected to be reborn in the Pure Land and inevitably neglected worldly affairs. Public welfare is disadvantageous. Since the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, Taixu has played the banner of "Buddhism of Life" and advocated changing "Buddhism of Mountains and Forests" and "Buddhism of Ghosts and Gods" into a Buddhism that values life and the world and shifts the pursuit of the pure land from the other side to the world. It reversed the Buddhist atmosphere since the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In the past half-century, humanistic Buddhism has become a trend of thought commonly accepted by Buddhist circles on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Against the backdrop of the Humanistic Buddhism movement, organized and large-scale Buddhist charity activities and groups gradually came into view. Based on inheriting the fine

traditions, contemporary Buddhist public welfare undertakings have extensively absorbed the management experience of foreign charitable funds, changed their development concepts and management models, and realized the modern transformation of Buddhist public welfare. As an integral part of social welfare, religious charity has begun to receive attention for its role in social construction (Ma Jun, 2017).

First, Buddhist temples provide places for monks to practice Taoism, spread Buddhism, and provide religious services for believers to carry and spread traditional culture. At the same time, temples are also the leading social charity advocates and organizers. Buddhist temples, to help the world and save people with compassion, are naturally used for social charity activities when they have a surplus in the economy.

Buddhist philanthropy is also the specific externalization of the Buddhist concept of compassion, reflecting the Buddha's spirit of valuing the human world. Under the condition of an incomplete relief mechanism in ancient society, Buddhists actively participated in social charity and relief and played a massive role in it. At the same time, Buddhist temples' charity and relief activities have gradually become an important platform to promote Buddhist cultural concepts and interact with all sectors of society by serving society. Public welfare and charity activities directly reflect the compassionate spirit of Buddhism.

3.2.1 Chaoshan Shantang - An Early Charitable Organization

Shantang culture is an important part of Chaoshan culture. It does not belong to Buddhist culture but has a deep relationship with Buddhism. The shantang culture is also an indispensable part of studying Chinese relief and folk charity history (Zheng Qunhui, 226). A shantang is both a charitable institution and a place of faith. It is both a charity organization and a place of folk beliefs, spreading the concept of charity through faith. The characteristic of Chaoshan culture lies in the unity of Confucianism and Buddhism. Influenced by the Buddhist thought of karma, there has been an intense atmosphere of doing good deeds and accumulating virtue since the Tang and Song Dynasties. Under the influence of this thought, people in the Chaoshan area are keen on public welfare and charity. Modern shantangs were mainly influenced by Patriarch Dafeng in the Southern Song Dynasty. From the perspective of Buddhism,

this can be regarded as a distant inheritance of Buddhist charity in the Chaoshan area (Zheng Qunhui, 231).

The establishment of Shantang was mainly due to factors such as frequent disasters in Chaozhou and Shantou in the early Qing Dynasty and unfavorable government agencies for relief. Under such circumstances, more civil good people participate in the relief work, but their abilities and resources are limited. If the scope of the disaster is too large, there is nothing that individuals can do, let alone carry out for a long time. Some gentries know this problem and believe a charitable institution that can operate for a long time is needed to replace short-term personal charity (Zheng Qunhui, 234). They entirely use religious belief resources, especially Buddhist resources, and vigorously advocate the Buddhist concept of cause and effect, which states that everyone should do good and pleasing to plant blessings. Shantang appears to be a non-governmental charitable organization among social organizations in this environment. The establishment of Shantang has its specific social and cultural background. Its charitable spirit and righteous deeds are based on folk religious beliefs, especially Buddhists. Put, religious belief is the foundation and root of Chaoshan Shantang (Zheng Qunhui, 241). In the early Qing Dynasty, monks participated in many charitable deeds, and the monks and laypeople supported and cooperated. These charitable deeds contained substantial Buddhist factors. These monks use Buddhist temples as their bases, call on Buddhism to plant blessings and make merit, and collect charitable funds to perform charitable acts (Zheng Qunhui, 234).

Jinghui Chuanxiu (1686-1780) served as the abbot of Kaiyuan Si in the 14th year of Qianlong (1749). Before he became the abbot of Kaiyuan Si, he was the abbot of Chaoyang Wenzhao Hall and Jingyin Hall. He did great deeds and gave porridge to save people. He is honored as a "righteous monk" (Written by Lan Dingyuan. Edited by Zheng Huanlong, 1993). During the Republic of China period, Master Genkuan (1883-1942), the abbot of Kaiyuan Si, was keen on charity and public welfare—live-saving work (Lin Xiangxiong, 1996). Because of their unique identity, monks participate in developing social public welfare and charity. Because of their beliefs, Buddhist monks can drive lay believers with faith to participate in the charity process. Coupled with the charitable function of the monastery itself and the Buddhist idea of compassion and cause and effect, the monastery has become an alternative charity

organization. This is part of why society and the people have recognized the charitable function of temples.

3.2.2 Changes in the Management of Modern Charitable Organizations

Since the reform and opening up, especially in the past 20 years, the researcher's country's philanthropy has developed rapidly, and the amount of social donations has grown from less than 10 billion yuan in 2006 to about 100 billion yuan per year. With the rapid development of philanthropy, some new situations and problems have emerged. The internal governance of philanthropic organizations is not perfect, the operation is not fully standardized, the industry self-discipline mechanism has not yet been formed, and the philanthropic atmosphere of the whole society is not strong enough. Relevant parties need to strengthen the strength of promotion. These issues need to be guided and regulated through the formulation of charity laws to promote the healthy development of charity ("Legal Daily" published on March 21, 2016). In the early days, due to the lack of legal supervision, there were many problems in charity, which led to the decline of charities' credibility and the public's distrust. There have even been harmful incidents of fraudulent activities under the cloak of charity. "

In recent years, lawbreakers have taken advantage of the public's ignorance or natural trust in public welfare and charity and frequently carried out fraud and illegal financial activities under the guise of false organization identities, charitable names, or counterfeit charitable organizations. These "fake charity, real deception" models are Like a virus; they quickly spread and replicate among illegal teams. Charity organizations and related parties also need to understand the relevant situation and build a security line of defense starting from prevention to avoid further losses to donors and public social interests (Sohu.com2023.07.24). In order to regulate religious charities, the State Administration of Religious Affairs, together with the five central departments, issued the "Opinions on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Circles to Engage in Public Welfare and Charity Activities" (Guozongfa [2012] No. 6, hereinafter referred to as "Opinions") in February 2012), supported by religious circles, and received widespread attention from all walks of life.

In order to further promote the healthy and orderly development of public welfare and charitable activities in religious circles, we have decided to carry out

"Religious Charity Week" in the national religious circles in the third week of September this year (September 17-23). Extensively carrying out the "Religious Charity Week" activities in religious circles across the country will help create an atmosphere of religious charity, create a religious charity brand, establish a religious charity image, and promote economic development, cultural prosperity, and social harmony. The positive effect is significant (State Administration of Religious Affairs, July 18, 2012).

General Secretary Hu Jintao once pointed out that qualified religious groups and places of religious activities should be encouraged to actively participate in social assistance, public welfare undertakings, and charity undertakings and play a beneficial role in poverty alleviation, relief, disaster relief, assistance to the disabled, elderly care, education support, and free clinics. Carrying out the "Religious Charity Week" activities in religious circles can further explore the methods and channels for the religious circles to participate in public welfare and charity, gradually determine a more precise scope, and form a more stable mechanism. Important move. Carrying out the "Religious Charity Week" is an important way to guide religion to play a positive role. Carrying out the "Religious Charity Week" is an important platform to establish a good image of the religious circle. Serving society and benefiting people is an important manifestation of the social value of religion, and it is also a common tradition of all religions in the researcher's country. Since the reform and opening up, various religions in China have actively participated in and carried out public welfare and charitable activities such as disaster relief, poverty relief, and donations to education, medical care, and health care, which have had a good social impact and have been widely praised and praised by all sectors of society. By holding the "Religious Charity Week" activities and carrying out various public welfare and charity activities, we can further promote the healthy development of religion, highlight the social value of religion, and establish a good image of religion. According to incomplete statistics, the researcher's country's social donations exceeded 100 billion yuan in 2014, and millions of charitable projects have been established, benefiting tens of millions of people every year (Xinhua News Agency, March 9, 2016).

On March 16, 2016, the "Charity Law of the People's Republic of China" was passed by the Fourth Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress of the

People's Republic of China and came into effect on September 1, 2016. The formulation of the Charity Law is the basic and comprehensive law for the construction of the charity system. The enactment of charity law has important practical significance. Better standardize the management planning of the researcher's country's public welfare and charity undertakings.

The Main Content of the Draft Charity Law

(1) Regarding the Adjustment Scope of the Charity Law

Charity activities mainly refer to philanthropic deeds in poverty alleviation, relief, and disaster relief. This is the charity focus in the researcher's country and includes other activities that benefit social and public interests. Based on the researcher's country's national conditions and in light of the development trend of charitable activities, the draft stipulates that charitable activities refer to natural persons, legal persons, and other organizations donating property or providing services in the form of helping the poor, the poor, the elderly, orphans, the sick, the disabled, and special care, relief of damage caused by natural disasters and other emergencies, and voluntary public welfare activities in the fields of promoting the development of education, science, culture, health, and sports, as well as protecting the environment. This definition provides a broad space for the further development of philanthropy (Article 3 of the draft).

(2) Regulations on Charitable Organizations

The requirements proposed by the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee to "focus on cultivating and giving priority to the development of industry associations, chambers of commerce, science, and technology, public welfare and charity, and urban and rural community service social organizations, and directly apply for registration by the law when they are established", the draft stipulates that charitable the organization made the following provisions:

1. Clarify the definition of charitable organizations and their establishment procedures.
2. Standardize the code of conduct and internal governance of charitable organizations.
3. Strengthen the information disclosure obligations of charitable organizations.

The guiding ideology of formulating the Charity Law is to thoroughly implement the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches, adhere to the sharing of development results based on China's national conditions and reality, innovate the charity system, give play to the leading and promoting role of charity legislation, and extensively mobilize social forces to carry out social relief Mutual aid and voluntary service activities with the society will stimulate the power of the whole society to uphold morality and do good, and provide a strong legal guarantee for promoting the healthy development of charities with Chinese characteristics (Li Jianguo, March 9, 2016).

Philanthropy best reflects human kindness and is the embodiment of human goodness. The Charity Law was enacted to protect the healthy development of charity and public welfare undertakings. This law stipulates charitable activities, charitable organizations, charitable fundraising, charitable donations, charitable property, information disclosure, and promotion measures. The basic system of the field realizes the requirement of strengthening the top-level design of the charity system.

3.2.3 The Charity Development History of Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou

In the Song Dynasty, Buddhist culture was widely accepted by the gentry and the people. Under such an era background, Buddhism has also been fully developed. Buddhist temples have accumulated a specific economic foundation through state rewards and believers. On this economic foundation, temples can intervene in local affairs. The role of Buddhism has been fully demonstrated, allowing the country and the people to benefit from the development of Buddhism. As a result, Buddhism has been recognized by the state and supported by believers, which has promoted its prosperity. Whether from the temple's economy or social status, it has been improved. Based on such an era background and social status, Buddhism, based on serving those in power, derived social welfare functions that are closer to the people, such as building bridges and paving roads, helping education, participating in social relief, setting up nursing homes (Chen Zefang, 2007). Many monks presided over the affairs of the large-scale public relief organization organized by the government during the Song Dynasty. The same applies to the Chaozhou area (Chen Zefang, 2007). In the Song Dynasty, the charity of Buddhism was significantly developed. Nursing homes and Anjifang for the

poor and sick elderly appeared, the Salesian Bureau for adopting abandoned babies, Juzicang for helping poor people's babies, and professional funeral institutions like Louzeyuan. Charity facilities (Li Jiwu, 2016). "Yangjiyuan, the abandoned nunnery after Kaiyuan Si. Qingyuan Dingsi, Chen Gonghong built it according to the regulations to deal with the sickness of the road and those who have no disease." (Chen Zefang, 2007)

It can be seen that the idea of charity in Buddhism has been popular among the people. In local relief undertakings such as elderly care, poverty relief, medical care, and other projects, there are many official guidance monastery monks responsible for daily management. In the case of incomplete social relief mechanisms in ancient times, Buddhism actively participated in social charity and relief. At the same time, it promotes Buddhist cultural concepts through charity and relief and interacts positively with all sectors of society. With the government's support, Kaiyuan si actively develops social charity undertakings to provide religious services to believers through its own social status and economic ability. Due to the social turmoil in the middle and late Ming Dynasty, there were numerous military disasters. Affected by social turmoil, the functions, status, and responsibilities of Buddhist monasteries and monks have all changed. It is mainly manifested in catering to the people's religious awareness, practical interests, wishes, and prayers. As a result, the religious independence and transcendent character that could still be maintained before the Song Dynasty weakened and gradually merged with Chinese folk ideas, beliefs, and customs.

In the Qing Dynasty, Buddhism tended to be more socialized, and Buddhist temples developed towards secularization. With the development of folk-customized Buddhism, Buddhism has gradually integrated into the bottom of society and is more involved in people's lives. For example, most of the Buddhist folk customs in Chaozhou originated in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, such as Buddhist music, vegetarian food, and common sayings. The mutual integration between Buddhism and society also began the Sinicization of Buddhism. Most contemporary Buddhism has inherited the Ming and Qing dynasties' Buddhist traditions and retains the same ideological concepts. Some Buddhist characteristics of the Ming and Qing dynasties can still be seen in contemporary times. The idea of stopping evil and promoting good in Buddhism is even

more deeply rooted in the people's hearts, directly or indirectly acting on the construction of social moralism.

3.2.4 The Modern Philanthropy Concept of Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou

After the reform and opening up, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si adhered to the tradition and devoted itself to developing charitable projects. According to "Guangdong Provincial Chronicles. Religious Chronicles", the Mingjing Ancient Temple, the lower courtyard of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si, started to run a nursing home in the temple in 1992. By the end of 1998, 104 people had been adopted—a helpless, lonely older man. After the elderly enter the temple, the temple is responsible for their medical care, birth, death, and burial. The expenses are donated by various temples and nuns in Chaozhou and disciples of the four groups. The funds of the nursing home are relatively stable. Beginning in 1997, the monastery built a merit hall and opened it to the public. Each Yansheng memorial tablet received 10,000 yuan, also used as the monastery's pension fund (Guangdong Province Chronicles. Religious Chronicles, 2002). Due to historical reasons, the elderly adopted in nursing homes are generally orphans and widows in Buddhist circles introduced by neighborhood committees and lay believers. They also adopt a small number of orphans and widows in society, as well as those who are not orphans but whose families are poor and whose children are busy with their livelihoods. Care for the elderly. During the peak period, the number of older adults cared for in the nursing home reached 65. At present, there are five older adults (all suffering from mental illness) and two nursing staff in the nursing home. According to the staff of the nursing home, due to the comfortable living environment and the thoughtful and careful work of the staff, one of the important reasons why the elderly in care can live in peace of mind is that the staff treat the elderly as their family members and talk to the elderly more often to enrich their spiritual life so that the elderly feel the warmth of the family and live comfortably. The staff regularly communicates with the elders' family members, and the elders' actual situation can be fed back to the family members in time to meet the needs of the family members. At the same time, it can reassure the family members and the elders (Source. Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple Archives).

Although there are certain limitations in the work of Buddhist nursing homes, such as:

(1) Due to limited medical conditions, it is impossible to carry out relevant medical work for the elderly with diseases.

(2) Nursing staff have limited professionalism.

(3) The supporting facilities in nursing homes are limited and cannot reach the professional level.

(4) The daily diet in the temple is vegetarian, and the nutrition of the elderly cannot keep up.

(5) Since the monastery is a place of worship, the source of income is limited, and the daily expenses are relatively large, so there is a problem with funds. (Source. Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple Archives)

However, it is irreplaceable in some respects, especially in spiritual comfort and mental health. Buddhist nursing homes are built based on faith, so there is a basis of faith in the work. In this case, when the managers and staff serve the elderly, they can make them feel warm and enrich their spiritual lives.

The monastery's funds come from society, and the monastery accumulates funds for charity through faith. The monastery gives spiritual comfort to those who have faith in the funders (praying for blessings and eliminating disasters) and uses the funds to support orphans and widows.

Lianyi Homeland

Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou has always been committed to public welfare undertakings to alleviate poverty. Since 2007, Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou has created Lianyi Homeland and received good social responses. During the Chaozhou Buddhist Cultural Festival 2013, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si applied to the relevant departments to establish the Lingdong Charity Foundation (preparatory committee). Tradition. Since the establishment of the Lingdong Charity Foundation in 2017, Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou has gradually integrated its spirit of public welfare and charity into the modern institutional framework to provide professional public welfare and charity services.

Kaiyuan Si Charity Chinese Medicine Clinic

In 2007, Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou carried forward the fine tradition of Buddhism to benefit the world, give full play to the role of religion in building a harmonious society, and contribute to building a well-off society in an all-round way. Approved by the Chaozhou Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau and the Municipal

Health Bureau, the "Chaozhou Kaiyuan Town Guochan Temple Charity (Chinese Medicine) Clinic" was opened on the right side of the temple gate. From November 19th of the lunar calendar (December 28th of the Gregorian calendar), its purpose is "helping the poor, curing diseases and saving lives", and the low-income families in the Xiangqiao area of Chaozhou City will be distributed by the neighborhood committee every month according to regulations. The medical card is a certificate to provide free general medical services.

Precautions:

1. Patients who come to receive medicines and donated medicines must have the certificate of the neighborhood committee where the household registration is located, the minimum living allowance, the five-guarantee household certificate, and a private seal.

2. Diagnosis time: 9:00 am to 11:00 am and 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm daily. (Closed on Saturday afternoon, Sunday, and statutory holidays)

3. During the initial period, 20 patients are tentatively admitted daily.

Tzu Chi Activities

Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou, in order to carry forward the Buddhist spirit of compassion, help the world, popularize all living beings, and bring more people closer to Buddhism with practical actions, has held many "Tzu Chi Activities" since 2008 and accepted offerings from believers from ten directions. All proceeds are used for charitable activities. (Source: Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple Archives)

According to the announcement issued by the Chaozhou Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau on 2014-12-02, "Kaiyuan Si has donated nearly 500,000 yuan to poor students with excellent character and learning for eight consecutive years since 2006 to go to high school and college, and Specially opened a Chinese medicine charity clinic, hired professional medical personnel, provided free medical treatment and provided medicines for the low-income people. Since 1993, the Mingjing Temple has insisted on using the temple as the foundation to improve the internal environment and provide free boarding and lodging for the elderly. In the Jiexia Charity event held in recent years, the monks walked around in their robes and bowls to experience the life of the Buddha and, at the same time, received donations from believers from all walks of life along the way. All the money raised was used to support the elderly, which was

fully recognized by the society (Chaozhou Government Website, 2017). It shows that while the public has recognized the charity of Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple, it has also been recognized by the government. Such recognition increases the credibility of Buddhist monasteries in charity and public welfare. The direct participation of monastery monks makes people with faith more willing to fund. They think that their donations are not only donated to temples and monks but also help people in need. In their view, such acts of charity are more significant and meritorious.

3.2.5 Lingdong Charity Foundation was Established

Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation is in line with the charitable activities of Kaiyuan Temple. It is also an explorer and pioneer in the formalization and legalization of Buddhist charity in Chaozhou. Through establishing foundations, charitable activities can develop healthily under the guidance of laws and regulations, benefiting the public and society and adapting charitable activities to socialism.

Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation is a prefecture-level non-public fundraising foundation initiated by Guochan Temple in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou. It was established in May 2017 with the approval of the Chaozhou Civil Affairs Bureau. The foundation's original fund of 2 million yuan comes from the donation of Guochan Temple in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou.

History of the Foundation

In 2017, the Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation was formally established. The foundation is supported by daily projects and is determined to contribute to charitable public welfare in Chaozhou. Since its establishment, the charity projects have been perfected successively, the scope of visits has increased year by year, and its footprints have increasingly covered the Chaozhou area and gradually radiated to the Liuhuang area at the junction of Chaomei, making contributions to charity in the Lingdong area.

Advantage Project Introduction: Donate for Education

"Kaiyuan Bodhi" Scholarship

The Kaiyuan·Bodhi Scholarship is a loving student aid program established in 2014 by the Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation, formerly known as the Kaiyuan Temple Student Assistance Program.

The project aims to help poor students pay their university tuition fees and fulfill their university dreams.

Source of funds: mainly donations from people from all walks of life and Tanyue of Kaiyuan Si.

Project concept: To help realize dreams, encourage and pass on, through the grant of scholarships, help outstanding poor students break through economic bottlenecks, realize their dreams of university, encourage them to grow into excellent talents who are successful in learning and learning without fear of difficulties, Give back to the country, and feedback to society.

By the end of 2020, 168 students had been sponsored, costing 948,000 yuan.

Introduction to Advantageous Projects: Poverty Alleviation

Caring household visits and condolences

Project purpose: Through cooperation with neighborhood and village committees in various subdistricts and towns, we will provide vulnerable groups with daily necessities such as rice oil noodles, help them improve their living conditions, and gradually cover the Chaoshan area.

Funding source: mainly from the donation of Tanyue of Kaiyuan Temple.

Scope of project benefits: As of 2020, the benefit areas include 9 subdistricts in Xiangqiao District, Chaozhou City, nearly 180 nearby villages in Chaozhou City, Liuan Town, Fengshun County, Meizhou City, and Chaoyang County, Shantou City. There are about 15,000 households, and the total investment by the end of 2020 is 2,0561,78.64 yuan.

Advantageous Project Introduction: Comforting the Elderly and Solving Orphans

Visiting orphans, widows, elderly and disadvantaged groups

The project aims to comfort the elderly, to accompany the lonely elderly, and to understand the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities in Mingjing Temple and nursing homes. From the vantage point of view, help them untie their knots and spend their old age peacefully. Carry out end-of-life care.

Funding source: mainly from the donation of Kaiyuan Si Tanyue.

Project concept: Regularly organize volunteers to visit the elderly in Mingjing Temple, Yixi Nursing Home, Fengtang Nursing Home, and other places and carry out services for the elderly and orphans. Through small gifts, condolences, chatting, and other forms of companionship, soothe the psychology of the elderly, relieve the emotions of the elderly, and explore the elderly care model suitable for the customs and habits of the Chaozhou area.

As of the end of 2020, the total invested capital is 1,466,686.51 yuan.
(Lingdong Charity Foundation Project Introduction)

Through their religious influence, temples bring together these scattered resources, and then through charity activities, effectively feed back the integrated and optimized resources to the society, thus realizing the integration, optimization, and improvement of social resources. Although the resources that monasteries can collect and integrate have religious limitations, the resources that monasteries can feed back to society through charitable public welfare activities break through this limitation and are extensive. That is to say, limited scattered resources, with the help of the integration and optimization of the religious platform of the temple, finally realize the circularity of resource utilization, which is conducive to the healthy development of society.

From the perspective of the monastery, they collect and integrate the power of believers through their religious influence and feedback to society through charity and public welfare activities. They practice their own religious beliefs and fulfill their social responsibilities.

From a social point of view, religious platforms like temples can help society collect and integrate scattered social resources. The integrated and optimized social resources can exert more excellent social benefits, thereby reducing social conflicts and frictions, which is conducive to social stability.

Kaiyuan Si's annual large-scale fixed charity activities include the Baochunhui charity condolence activity, Buddha's birth charity condolence activity on the eighth day of April, filial piety and gratitude charity condolence activity, Kaiyuan Scholarship activity, charity activity of begging alms, warm winter moon charity condolence activity, As well as regular visits to villages and homes to condolence activities.

This study examines project expenditures for charitable activities at Kaiyuan Si in Chaozhou in 2021.

Main charitable activities of Lingdong Charity Foundation in 2021:

1. Donate to support education: This project aims to help students in need complete their education.
2. Poverty Alleviation: This project is committed to helping people experiencing poverty improve their living conditions.
3. Relief for the Elderly: This project focuses on the welfare of the elderly and orphaned children.

Table 3.1 Lingdong Charity Foundation's 2021 Charitable Project Expenditures

Project Title	Amount of Money	Number of Beneficiaries
Donate for education	150,000.00	25 persons
Alleviating the poor	460,106.50	3900 persons (estimate)
Relief for the Elderly	27,070.60	110 persons (estimate)

Under the influence of the new crown epidemic, Kaiyuan Temple is still committed to public welfare and charity, bringing life and inner comfort to people in need during the epidemic (Religious Institutions Evaluation Self-Evaluation Report, 2022).

3.3 "Bodhi" Scholarship

The "Kaiyuan·Bodhi" scholarship is a loving student aid program established by the Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation, formerly known as the Kaiyuan Si Student Assistance Program, established in 2014. To help realize dreams, encourage, and pass on, scholarships are granted to outstanding students from low-income families to break through economic bottlenecks and realize their dreams of university. This will allow them to complete their studies smoothly and contribute their strength to the development of society.

"Kaiyuan.Bodhi" scholarship project concept:

Equality: Equality of applicants; equality of donors, recipients, and institutions.

Self-reliance: help award-winning students complete their studies and achieve self-reliance through economic rewards.

Breakthrough: break through the economic bottleneck, which is extended to break through all the "bottlenecks" that hinder growth.

Benefiting the public: One of the two core service concepts of the Foundation is the expectation for scholarship winners and the inheritance of the spirit of public welfare and charity. (Lingdong Charity Foundation Project Introduction)

Project vision:

What we hope to give is not only economic rewards but also ideological inspiration and spiritual inheritance!

Sources of funds:

It mainly comes from donations from people from all walks of life and believers in Kaiyuan Si.

Project Description:

Release the application channel through the WeChat public platform, and with the assistance of various streets, towns, and high schools, provide economic incentives for college entrance examination candidates whose families are in financial difficulties and who cannot afford college expenses and help them successfully enter higher education, complete their studies, and achieve self-reliance (Lingdong Charitable Foundation).

Review System of Bodhi Scholarship:

(1) Excellent results in the college entrance examination, able to be admitted to public undergraduate colleges (objective criteria).

(2) Home visits to verify family conditions, giving priority to applicants with financial difficulties:

A. Dibao, borderline subsistence allowances, and government-aided families such as the original filing and carding.

B. Parents, compatriots, and other immediate relatives suffer from grave illness and need to pay substantial medical expenses, which leads to financial difficulties for the family.

C. Both or one of the parents is disabled or incapacitated, resulting in financial difficulties for the family.

D. Low-income families, such as parents who are in good health but whose family income is low or unstable.

E. Parents need to pay the school fees of multiple children simultaneously, which creates excellent financial pressure.

Criteria for granting Bodhi Scholarship:

Applicants who pass the review will be rewarded with 6,000 yuan/person, and only the year of the college entrance examination will be considered.

Review and issuance of "Kaiyuan.Bodhi" Scholarship in 2021:

Since the release of the "2021 'Kaiyuan·Bodhi' Scholarship Program Details" on June 1, Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation has received applications from students one after another. Through on-site home visits, in addition to confirming the authenticity of the applicant's information, it is more important to pass on the concept of the "Kaiyuan·Bodhi" scholarship project to students in need. Like our project vision, we hope to give economic rewards, ideological inspiration, and spiritual inheritance.

In July 2021, the staff and volunteers of Chaozhou Lingdong Charity Foundation went to Tiepu Town, Yixi Town, Xiangqiao District, Fushan Town, Raoping County, Fengxi District and other places for on-the-spot home visits.

The 2021 "Kaiyuan · Bodhi" scholarship, co-organized by the Guochan Si in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou, began to screen 27 scholarship applicants, conduct field visits, and conduct evaluations in June this year. Finally, 25 applicants passed the evaluation and won the scholarship.

Table 3.2 2021 "Kaiyuan Bodhi" Scholarship Winners List

	Name		Name		Name		Name		Name
1	Jiawen Chen	6	Han Zhuang	11	Linchun Ting	16	Jiekai Huang	21	Yonghong Zhang
2	Xiaoshuo Yu	7	Xie Zhuang	12	Nijia WU	17	ZIdian Cai	22	Jiebin Cai

Table 3.2 2021 "Kaiyuan Bodhi" Scholarship Winners List (continued)

	Name		Name		Name		Name		Name
3	Zenan Wang	8	Yaoqi Chen	13	Xuhui Wu	18	Kai Chen	23	Qiushi Yu
4	Yizhan Chen	9	Xiaohua Zhang	14	Jiajian Qiu	19	Haozheng Chen	24	Gefeng Chen
5	Xueling Chen	10	Shurong Chen	15	Peijun Liu	20	Ziman Cai	25	Jie Lin
<i>2021 "Kaiyuan · Bodhi" scholarship unrewarded applicants</i>									
	Name		Name						
1	Zhehan Xu	2	Danna Lu						

Visits to Past Sponsored Students:

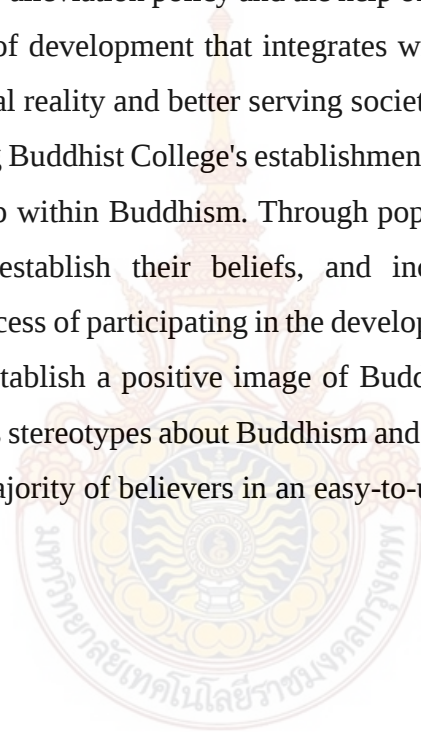
Classmate Liu, winner of the 2016 Kaiyuan·Bodhi Scholarship: *I studied at Shenzhen University as an undergraduate and am now attending Zhejiang University for a doctorate. Four years ago, I was lucky enough to receive the Bodhi Scholarship from Kaiyuan Si, which significantly reduced my financial pressure to attend college. Because of the absence of financial worries, I could devote myself to my studies, do more things, and create more possibilities during college. It can be said that without this scholarship, it would have been difficult for me to achieve what I am today. I would also like to express my sincerest thanks to Kaiyuan Si. The temple is a place for religious activities and a social organization. In the long history of monasteries, they have played various social roles and have had a particular influence on promoting social harmony.*

The Lingdong Charity Foundation Preparatory Committee was established in 2014. Before implementing the Charity Law, Kaiyuan Temple consciously explored the formalization of charity activities and consciously accepted the supervision of the public. From the early days of the establishment of the Foundation Preparatory Committee to the present, the Foundation has retained regular projects such as donations for education and poverty alleviation and has also added disaster relief projects in due course according to the needs of the country and society, such as the 2020 New Coronary Pneumonia Protection, Fund According to its resources, it will actively participate in the prevention of new coronary pneumonia by donating to the

Red Cross and donating anti-epidemic materials. In terms of donations and education, we have gradually sorted out and perfected the project concept and vision of the "Kaiyuan · Bodhi" scholarship, making the scholarship project more suitable for the needs of applicants, not only rewarding applicants financially, but also encouraging them to get out of ideological difficulties.

The Lingdong Charity Foundation is a flower that bloomed after the fusion of the Charity Law and the Buddhist charity thought of Kaiyuan Temple. It relieves the real suffering of the public and benefits the public. Under the guidance of the government's poverty alleviation policy and the help of civil affairs work, we can better embark on the road of development that integrates with the socialist society, making charity closer to social reality and better serving society.

Lingdong Buddhist College's establishment was to eliminate historical evils and embody self-help within Buddhism. Through popular education, we can improve monks' literacy, re-establish their beliefs, and increase people's recognition of Buddhism. In the process of participating in the development of society through charity, spread beliefs and establish a positive image of Buddhism through charity activities. Eliminate the public's stereotypes about Buddhism and convey the Buddhist culture and connotation to the majority of believers in an easy-to-understand manner with an open attitude.



CHAPTER IV

THE KAIYUAN THAI BUDDHIST WAT: A PIOUS MONUMENT FROM THAILAND IN CHAOZHOU

This chapter examines how a Thai Buddhist wat (or temple) found its way to the People's Republic of China, which is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, which is officially atheistic. It also explores the functions of the Kaiyuan Thai Buddhist Wat serving in China, particularly in Chaozhou, eastern Guangdong.

4.1 Buddhism in Thailand: A Brief Overview

Located at the heart of Southeast Asia continentally, Thailand (or Siam in ancient times) hosts more than 64 million Buddhists, a total population of 69.6 million, according to the U.S. government estimate for the middle of 2022 (2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Thailand). Theravada Buddhism has been deeply rooted in Thai politics and society from history to the present. Since the late 13th century, the Thai monarchy has consistently used Theravada Buddhism as its governing ideology, with the King at its core (Hosking, 2018). The Thai (or Siamese) kings of Ayutthaya in the succeeding centuries brought in a great deal of Brahmanic elements from the Angkorian realm in Today's Cambodia to further develop the divine allure of the monarchy as a blend of the god Rama (an avatar or earthly manifestation of the god Vishnu) and cakravārtin (wheel-turning universal ruler). (Edited by Ian Harris, London: Routledge, 2008)

This monarch-centered Buddhist ideology was reaffirmed by King Putthayotfa, also known as Rama I, who established the current Ratanakosin, or Bangkok court, installed monarchical authority over the Buddhist Sangha by tightening royal oversight of Sangha affairs in the name of purifying the Sangha (Tambiah, S. J. 2007). Along with his grandiose goal of standardizing Buddhist philosophy, he funded the preparation of the Golden Edition of the Tripitaka (Ishii, Y. Sangha 1986).

The first Sangha Act was passed in 1902 during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, also known as Rama V (1868–1910), to unite Buddhist temples from

all traditions into a unified hierarchical organization, the Supreme Sangha Council, which is presided over by the Sangharaja, or Supreme Patriarch (Ishii, 102). The monarch frequently had the final say when choosing the Sangharaja and the abbots of significant temples inside and outside Bangkok since he was the central defender of religion. Four Buddhist schools were mentioned under this bill: the mainstream Theravada-oriented schools, the Mahayana-oriented Jin Nikāya (Chinese Sect), the Vietnamese school Annam Nikāya, and the Mahā Nikāya and Dhammayuttika Nikāya.

Vietnamese monks who had fled the Tay Son Uprising (1770–1802) and the subsequent Nguyen royal persecution created Annam Nikāya. As early as the 1770s, Vietnamese monks had constructed temples in the Thonburi market (Dinh, M.C. et al. T. T. Nguyen and T. T. Hoang, eds. 2008). The early rulers of the Ratanakosin court acknowledged them as their authority grew. Currently, the institution houses about 300 monks and maintains twenty-one temples spread across several districts of Thailand (Buddhisaro, R. and P. Thangto. 2018).

Jin Nikāya was founded by a group of Chinese immigrant monks headed by Xu Xing in 1871-1879 when they built the first and largest Mahayana Buddhist Temple, Longlian si (also known as Wat Leng Noei Yi or Wat Mangkon Kamalawa—in Bangkok's Chinatown). Under seven generations of leaders or patriarchs, this Chinese Buddhist sect has expanded over the past 150 years. It hosts 18 temples and centers across Thailand, accommodating nearly 1,500 monks and novices as its residential monastics (Liu Yaoping, 2020).

4.2 Ethnic Chinese in Thailand/Siam

The Chinese first arrived in Southeast Asia during the Three Kingdom Period (220–280), when the Wu kingdom attempted to trade with the marine polities of the region (Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, 1–2). The maritime trade between Thailand and China became state-monopolized in the late 13th century as Thailand was included in the tribute system supported by China. That arrangement remained in effect until 1852 when Thailand unilaterally stopped paying tribute to China in response to pressure from European colonial powers, who were increasingly eager to open up the Thai market (Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, 1, 27). Many businesspeople have inherited this

lengthy history of tribute trade between the two countries from China's southern coast. Chinese traders with exceptional skills were integrated into the Thai royal court and given titles, managing commerce with China on the Thai court's behalf (Baker, C. and P. Phongpaichit. 2014). By the 1730s, over 20,000 Chinese people had lived in the Thai capital of Ayutthaya. Most of these people were Hokkien, who spoke Minnan and were originally from the modern province of Fujian, located on China's southeast coast (Roy, E. V. Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2017). However, over time, Teochew immigrants surpassed the former in size to take the lead as the predominant Chinese sub-ethnic group in Thailand, particularly following the brief Thonburi kingdom (1767–1782), which was established by the half-Teochew King Taksin the Great (Sng, J. and P. Bisalputra, 2015).

The Chinese living along the southern coast began to migrate in large numbers to Southeast Asia in the second half of the 19th century, driven by famine and socio-political upheavals in China (Suryadinata, edited by L. Leo Suryadinata, 1997). This migration was prompted by the European colonial powers' high demand for cheap labor in the region. A census carried out by the Thai court during the conclusion of King Chulalongkorn's reign in 1910 indicated that there were 400,000 Chinese living in Bangkok. These could be divided into five primary sub-ethnic groups based on the dialects they spoke: Teochew, Hokkien, Hakka, Hailam, and Cantonese. About 60% of the 400,000 Chinese people were projected to be Teochew speakers, followed by Hokkien (15%), Hakka (10%), Hailim (10%), and Cantonese 5% (Supang Chanthawanit, 1991). At the time, none of these Chinese ethnolinguistic communities adhered to a shared or standard definition of "Chinese" identity. They frequently treated one other badly in conflicts of interest before anti-Chinese sentiment and a growing Thai ethno-nationalism gained hold in the early twentieth century (Sng, 258; Baker, 101–02). The Chinese diaspora in Thailand, "akin" to those in other Southeast Asian nations, tended to establish self-organized societies for their protection and help, usually grounded in common folk customs from their respective home districts in China (Formoso, B. 1996).

Despite the greater size of the Teochew group, the Hokkien community was able to retain some political power for the first four reigns of the Ratanakosin court (1782–1782) because of their close ties to influential Thai aristocratic clans that had

their origins in the Ayutthaya period. A dozen well-known Chinese businesspeople were chosen by the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Affairs (krom phra Khlong) to serve as the director of the Eastern Trade Department (krom tha sai), whose responsibilities included the use of Thai authority over Chinese emigrants, between 1782 and 1932, as the nobility's influence began to decline after Thailand's absolute monarchy was abolished (Roy, 179, 186). However, the Thai government implemented "letting Chinese regulate Chinese" policies over a lengthy period.

At the start of King Vajiravudh's reign (Rama VI, 1910–1925), the Thai court's Chinese policies started to take a distinctly unfavorable turn. This turn of events followed the widespread strike in 1910 by the Chinese against the Thai court's effort to raise the Chinese poll tax, which caused such mayhem that Bangkok was closed for three days (Sng, 237). The Western-educated monarch openly denounced the Chinese as "Oriental Jews" who had been draining the Thai economy for a long time with no intention of assimilating after being astounded by the Chinese community's organizational skills and control over the economy, commerce, ports, transportation, and urban services in his kingdom (Wyatt, D.K. 2003). As a result, a strong anti-Chinese sentiment was sparked in Thai society. 1913, the Family Name and Nationalisation Act was passed to promote Chinese social and political integration into Thai society. Their goal was to make becoming a citizen of Thailand easier, but only if naturalization came with the requirement to take on Thai surnames. The National Education Act of 1921 expanded government supervision over Chinese schools, while the Private School Act of 1919 regulated Chinese schools in Thailand by mandating that they teach the Thai language and Thai history as required courses (Skinner, G. W, 1957). To impose stricter regulations on the formation and operations of Chinese associations and institutions, several supplementary laws and legal modifications were introduced starting in 1927–1928 (Roy, 194).

The anti-Chinese stance persisted over the ensuing decades and peaked in 1938–1944 and 1948–1957, during Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's (henceforth referred to as Phibun) two tenures as premier. In his nationalist political aspirations, Phibun attempted, during his first term, to align Thai nationalism with Japanese imperialism as a regional hegemonic power. To do this, he supported campaigns to abolish Chinese-language societies, publications, schools, and remittance

agencies (Sng, 344). Following this, some political activists and leaders of the Chinese community were detained and deported. In response, China was subject to highly stringent immigration limits, and Thai nationals were the only ones allowed to work in a range of semi-skilled positions. In addition, several state-owned trading enterprises with competitive advantages were set up to challenge Chinese economic hegemony in the import-export, food processing, and domestic wholesale markets (Chanthawanit, 240–243). The only choices available for Chinese who refused to become citizens of Thailand in this repressive socio-political environment were to either face more socioeconomic marginalization or leave the nation entirely. After accepting naturalization, the Chinese were compelled to give up studying Chinese to integrate into the Thai school system completely and faced discrimination based on artificial criteria. Their descendants eventually forgot their ethnic tongue.

The post-Phibun Thai governments somewhat loosened the anti-Chinese policy. However, Thailand was warned against communist ideological promotion in Southeast Asia because it was a significant ally and recipient of the US-led anti-communist effort in the region (Stuart-Fox, M. A., 2003). The nation's most revered institutions, especially the monarchy, as well as Thailand's Buddhist doctrinal roots, were seen as being threatened by communism's anti-religious position, according to the country's successive military leaders (Jackson, P. A. Buddhādāsa, 2003). They pursued cases against suspected leftists in a severe manner. It is thought that the main reason the Sangha Act of 1962 was created was to stop communists from radicalizing and infiltrating the Sangha and its monasteries. Many well-educated Thai monks were recruited under this statute to serve as "Dharma ambassadors" and spread anti-communist political ideas throughout Thailand's rural districts (Suksamran, S. 1982).

Despite Thailand's increasing economic dependence on China over the past 20 years, an existential mistrust in Thai-Sino relations has persisted. This mistrust results from the long-lasting anti-communist socio-political environment to differing degrees. In general, Chinese people in Thailand were fearful of being seen as having interaction contacts with China because they believed they could be suspected of being affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thus, the Chinese who had immigrated to Thailand generations earlier, or even more recently, have made a point of fervently networking with the Thai ruling elites and engaging in local customs, like

materially supporting the Sangha for merit-making, in order to demonstrate their integration into Thai politics and society (Liu, Yaoping, 2021).

Chinese governments have never shown much concern for their citizens living abroad. It was not until the late 1800s, when the Chinese government realized how valuable the money and technology Chinese people had amassed in colonial-ruled Southeast Asia and other areas could be, that it decided to use Chinese people living abroad to support its modernization program at home (Godley, M. R. 1981). To counter the Kuomintang-ruled Taiwan and win over the Chinese diaspora, the CCP-ruled China established a ministerial-level Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in 1949 to consolidate its political and economic authority over domestic and overseas Chinese populations. By the late 1970s, China's drive for economic reform had grown increasingly reliant on the economic potential of the Chinese diaspora, especially in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia (Thuno, M. Bernard P. Wong and Tan Chee-Beng, 2018). Interestingly, Thailand's Charoen Pokphand Group, or CP, was the first foreign investor that China welcomed in 1981.

4.3 Pricha Phisittkasem (or XIE Huiru) and the Kaiyuan Thai Wat

Emigrating to Siam in 1927 at 14, Pricha Phisittasem (1913-1997) was one of the exemplary Chinese self-made from rags to rich in Thailand. Born in 1913, Pricha Phisittasem set out on a transformative adventure at 14 when he left his home country of China in search of a new life in Siam, now known as Thailand. The year was 1927, when many Chinese emigrants ventured to Southeast Asia, hoping for better prospects and the chance to escape the poverty and turmoil that had gripped China. With only the clothing on his back and an unwavering will to succeed, Pricha arrived in Siam. His story is about a well-known self-made guy who, in a strange country, turned around his life with pure determination and fortitude. He started his new life by taking on menial employment, frequently under challenging circumstances, picking up the language, and gradually assimilating into Thai society, including picking up a Thai name by giving up his Chinese name, XIE Huiru, and converting the Thai tradition of Theravada Buddhism (Luo, Junxin, 1996).

Pricha's diligence and business sense started to pay off as the years passed. He quit his job as a worker to launch a tiny company. He entered various thriving trades at the time because of Thailand's economic expansion, all while keeping a keen eye out for chances. Pricha encountered many obstacles in his pursuits, but he met them head-on, driven by the same tenacity that initially took him to Siam. He was established as a businessman in the middle of the 20th century. Through his successful portfolio construction, including real estate and agriculture, he established himself as a pioneer in several fields. His accomplishments inspired other immigrant business owners and greatly affected the local economy (Yang, Ximing, 2015).

The story of Pricha, who went from being a destitute teenager to a well-respected tycoon, exemplifies the opportunities that Siam provided to those willing to work for them. His legacy also mirrors the story of Chinese immigrants in Thailand, many of whom were instrumental in the nation's economic development. In addition to being a tale of personal prosperity, Pricha's life story also involves cultural assimilation, economic contribution, and the creation of a transnational identity that connected his adopted Siamese homeland with his Chinese ancestry (Luo, 121-130).

As Prachi stepped into his 70s in 1982, the chapter of his life dedicated to tireless work and business achievements gave way to a period of philanthropy. He directed his wealth and efforts towards benevolent causes in Thailand and his ancestral land of China (Yang, 2015). Despite his enormous wealth, his giving spirit truly defined his legacy. In Thailand, he became a well-known patron of education, especially for those of Chinese descent, keenly aware of the importance of preserving one's cultural roots. His enthusiasm for promoting Chinese culture went beyond mere financial support; he actively engaged in cultural exchange initiatives, sponsored events, and even facilitated the construction of educational institutions focused on Chinese language and cultural studies. This support bridged his two worlds, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese heritage among the Thai population. One of his flagship donations in China is Kaiyuan Thai Wat in Chaozhou, Pricha's hometown.

4.3.1 Construction of the Kaiyuan Thai Wat

Proponents of the project started to envision the Kaiyuan Thai Wat in 1984, envisioning an ambitious project to create a site of spiritual and pious significance (Interview with Pricha's grandson, 2023.7.23). However, turning this idea into a reality

was an enormous undertaking, including layers of bureaucratic red tape and the need for agreement from multiple levels of government. Even though China was gradually opening up to the outside world at this time as part of its reform and opening-up program, the licensing procedure for a foreign-funded religion remained rigorous and complicated (Potter, Pitman B.2003). Careful consideration and attitude were necessary to ensure that the complex web of communist power reflected local and national laws and regulations (see Appendix I). Obtaining the approval of the upper levels of the Central Government was equally important as winning over the local officials in Chaoyzhou Prefecture, now a municipality. Those who supported the temple's cause had to work diplomatically and tenaciously because every rung of the communist hierarchy had its own set of requirements.

In 1992, the construction of the majestic Kaiyuan Thai Wat was completed, a milestone that marked the end of a long and arduous journey that had begun eight years prior. The temple complex, an expansive structure sprawling across 12,666.67 square meters on the mountainous terrain, stood as a testament to the dedication and the cultural communion between Thailand and China. On the lunar 15th of January, the temple complex was inaugurated amidst much fanfare (see Appendix 1 Fig.1). The grand opening ceremony was a spectacle of Thailand and China's cultural and spiritual unity, a fitting tribute to the temple's inspiration and significance. It was not merely an addition to the religious landscape but a bridge that linked disparate cultures through the universal language of spirituality and artistry. Among all the functional and decorative buildings, the great shrine was more than just a place of worship; it was an architectural and artistic homage to Wat Ratchawornwihan, the esteemed temple of King Rama V located near the Thai Royal Palace, Bangkok. The designers and architects tasked with bringing the Kaiyuan Thai Wat to life painstakingly replicated the intricate details and grandeur of Wat Ratchawornwihan, ensuring that every element from the ornate carvings to the sweeping arches resonated with the essence of the original temple (see Appendix 1 Fig.2). According to Monk Ding Ran (1915-1997), the then abbot of Kaiyuan si, who coordinated with Pricha during the thorough construction of this Thai Wat, Pricha was willing to display the rich and magnificence of Thai Buddhist arts (Wu, Jing). The grandeur of Kaiyuan Thai Wat might also display Pricha's successes in Thailand before the mass public of his hometown.

4.3.2 Instrumentation of Kaiyuan Thai Wat by Chaozhou Municipal Government

After Pricha passed away in 1997, there was no longer any direct family connection to Kaiyuan Thai Wat since his descendants were too busy in Thailand to make frequent trips to the temple complex (According to the interview with Pricha's grandson in Bangkok on 23 June 2023). Despite this, the Wat became a beloved local icon, admired by practicing Buddhists and non-Buddhists for its magnificent architecture and the peace of its surrounding mountains.

The Wat's potential to improve cultural exchange and international connections was recognized, and the Chaozhou Municipal Government wisely converted the entire complex into a public park. This calculated action maintained the site and established it as a focal point for engagement and cultural diplomacy. The Wat's stunning architecture and tranquil surroundings make it the perfect venue for diplomatic visits and a symbol of China's dedication to global friendship and cultural diversity.

The visit of Thai Royal Princess Sirindhorn brought to light the importance of Kaiyuan Thai Wat in China's cultural diplomacy. She visited the Wat on June 27, 1997, and participated in a ritualistic incense burning in front of the Buddha sculptures, which were exact duplicates of those in Thailand (Appendix 1 Fig. 3). This was more than just a formality; it was a sign of deep respect and recognition for Thailand and China's common spiritual heritage. The Wat's significance as a representation of Chinese-Thai cultural interchange was highlighted by the presence of the Thai monarchy there. Beyond the site's visual appeal, it provided a story of cultural reverence and connectedness that showed how Buddhism—and the places where it is practiced—could work as soft power conduits. Using the Kaiyuan Thai Wat, the Chinese government portrayed itself as a country that respects and upholds its foreign visitors' religious and cultural customs.

Instrumentalizing Buddhism for the sake of its cultural diplomacy has become a standard practice in China. Doing so demonstrates the nation's strategic use of cultural and religious resources to fortify its international ties (Ashiwa, Yoshiko, and David L. Wank, 2023; online, Oxford Academic, August 24). In addition to being a place of spiritual retreat, the temple conveys China's diplomatic message by highlighting the country's respect for cultural plurality and its ability to incorporate

many cultural aspects into the country's social fabric. As a result, the Kaiyuan Thai Wat has outlived its intended use and developed into a vibrant symbol of China's participation in and influence over worldwide cultural ties.

4.4 Summary

A complicated interaction between international diplomacy, cultural identity, and governance may be seen in China's careful approach to regulating foreign-originated religious influences, even during the height of its "opening up" policy. This exercise in caution is typical of a kind of administration strongly associated with the "politics first" philosophy, according to which all aspects of society—including religion—are viewed through the prism of political control and repercussions.

The complex connection with the Chinese diaspora further illustrates this delicate balance. The interactions between the government and the Chinese diaspora are complicated by the international factors involved, even though they are frequently perceived as an extension of the government's domestic policy. China can project its soft power through the cultural linkages with Chinese populations abroad, but each engagement must consider the political factors that must be considered. In this situation, religion takes on the role of a double-edged sword, acting as a bridge across cultures and having the capacity to spread influence that needs to be carefully controlled.

How religion is framed within cultural boundaries makes deliberate use of religious symbols and figures possible. Accordingly, ephemeral religious icons and monuments serve as tools for the state to build and tell its story to local and foreign audiences rather than just being spiritual or cultural relics. The Chinese government may preserve its secular position while utilizing the potent emotional resonance and unifying force of religious imagery and emotions by appropriating religious symbols within the cultural sphere, as seen in the case of Kaiyuan Thai Wat.

This deft use of religious symbols as a soft power tool demonstrates a keen awareness of the force they possess. Statecraft enables the Party-state to continue interacting with the religious and cultural zeitgeist that appeals to people in China and abroad while upholding its secular governance paradigm. In the instance of Kaiyuan Thai Wat, the temple serves as a symbol of China's respectful recognition of its

historical and cultural ties to Buddhism, as well as a diplomatic hub and a well-curated cultural display, if not at all, at least in China's narrative as seen in the well-versed inscription of this Wat (See Fig.4). Therefore, the strategic utilization of religious spaces and tenets indicates a more extensive approach where diplomacy, politics, and culture meet. This concept demonstrates how China may combine political expediency, religious recognition, and cultural veneration to create a complex tapestry of soft power that overtly and covertly expands its influence. However, the Thai government might play Kayuan Thai Wat in reverse because of its soft power over China (See appendix for details).



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasizes the significant role of Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou in both spiritual and social welfare aspects. By providing shelter, food, medical care, spiritual guidance, and solace, Kaiyuan Temple fulfills its followers' religious needs and actively engages in social charity endeavors, positively contributing to the community and society (Journal of Hanshan Normal University, 1999.3). Additionally, Kaiyuan Temple has played an important role in international exchanges; establishing the Thai Pagoda has facilitated friendly exchanges between China and Thailand, serving as a bridge and witness to the friendship between the two countries (Shi Daliang, 2014).

Furthermore, the article proposes several suggestions, including strengthening support and management of Buddhist temples, encouraging cooperation with local communities and governments, and establishing international exchange platforms to promote the dissemination of Chinese Buddhist culture. These suggestions aim to contribute to the common development of humanity. These suggestions help ensure that temples fulfill their spiritual and social responsibilities, contributing to societal welfare and development. They provide valuable references and guidance for Buddhist temples' development and social roles.

5.1 Buddhist Temples as Providers of Spiritual and Social Welfare

Buddhist temples have a long-standing tradition in China as providers of both spiritual and social welfare, rooted in the core values of Buddhism, namely compassion, equality, and benefiting sentient beings (Ma Jun, 2017). Besides offering religious ceremonies and places for practice, Buddhist temples undertake various social responsibilities, providing services and support to surrounding communities and people, reflecting the charitable spirit inherent in Buddhism (Quan Hansheng, 1986).

Firstly, Buddhist temples provide shelter. In ancient times, temples often provided shelter for pilgrims, wandering monks, and people experiencing homelessness (Li Baiyao, 1972). Regarding providing food, dining halls or places for food

distribution in temples have assisted impoverished individuals and those in need. This charitable act, known as "dana" (Huiyuan Mahayana Chapter, 2011) in Buddhism, is considered part of spiritual practice and is a practical response to poverty and hunger in society. By providing free vegetarian meals, temples offer essential support to vulnerable groups, such as impoverished families, people experiencing homelessness, the elderly, people with disabilities, or others needing assistance. They can find sustenance in temples, alleviating their life pressures and helping them through difficult times (Chen Zefang, 2007). The food provided by temples is often vegetarian, in line with Buddhist precepts and dietary restrictions, and it also promotes environmental conservation and health. This practice of offering vegetarian food not only aids the impoverished but also respects animal life and protects the environment. Providing food is part of Buddhist practice while also being a practical response to poverty and hunger in society. Moreover, Buddhist temples offer medical care. Some prominent temples have medical facilities or collaborate with hospitals to provide patients free or low-cost medical services and medications (Ma Jun, 2017).

This medical assistance is not only aimed at treating illnesses but also embodies the compassion and concern for the suffering of others inherent in Buddhism.

Providing spiritual guidance and solace is another important role that Buddhist temples play in society. Monks often serve as spiritual mentors, offering support and comfort to believers and community members. Whether facing life difficulties or spiritual distress, temples become places where people seek solace and guidance. All levels of society have recognized the function of "healing the mind" in Buddhism since ancient times; even rulers acknowledged it, as summarized by Emperor Xiaozong of the Song Dynasty: "Buddhism is for cultivating the mind, Taoism is for governing the body, and Confucianism is for governing the world." (Deng Zimei, 2002)

The function of "healing the mind" in Chinese Buddhism generally manifests in two aspects:

In terms of cultivation, it supplements the inadequacies of Confucianism and Taoism and transforms people's attitudes.

Regarding pacification, it dissipates social discontent and stabilizes society (Deng Zimei, 2002).

In temples, monks receive believers and visitors, listen to their concerns, and provide spiritual guidance and comfort. They may share wisdom from Buddhist stories or scriptures or listen to the other person's thoughts, helping them find liberation and tranquility from distress and suffering. Whether facing difficulties in life or spiritual troubles, temples are safe havens where people can express their thoughts and seek support and guidance. The presence and guidance of monks provide people with spiritual reliance and comfort, helping them through difficult times. Through the spiritual guidance and care monks provide, temples become places where people seek solace and guidance in times of difficulty, providing spiritual support for their mental well-being.

As providers of spiritual and social welfare, Buddhist temples have played an indispensable role in Chinese history. They are not just religious places but also pillars of communities and integral parts of charitable endeavors. They provide assistance and support to the public through various means, carrying forward the tradition of Buddhist compassion and charity. The concepts of compassion, giving, gratitude, and merit in Buddhist doctrine embody profound charitable thoughts. Historically, Buddhism in every era has engaged in many charitable activities such as public assistance and social relief.

On the other hand, Buddhism and charity maintain a mutually reinforcing historical association. Traditional Buddhism nurtures the embryo of modern charity, while public welfare charity helps Buddhism achieve significant development in a mutually beneficial pattern. Promoting Buddhism's compassionate spirit, following modern charity's operating laws, and seeking the modernization, standardization, scale, and globalization of Buddhist charity are important ways to thrive in modern charitable endeavors (Ma Jun, 2017).

Based on surveys and interviews with visitors to the temple, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding Kaiyuan Temple's charitable activities and their impact on the local community:

Activity Frequency and Funding Sources: Kaiyuan Temple conducts multiple charity events annually, with recurring activities including the Chunhui Charity Assistance event, the Buddha's Birthday Charity Assistance event, and the Filial Piety and Gratitude Charity Assistance event. The funds for these activities

primarily come from donations by devotees, contributions from philanthropists, and savings from expenditures.

Impact and Contribution: Kaiyuan Temple's charitable activities positively impact and contribute to the local community. They provide material assistance, such as distributing oil and rice and granting scholarships, convey positive energy and belief in blessings, and bring spiritual comfort to people.

Community Engagement: Based on the results of random surveys, Kaiyuan Temple's activities garner attention and participation from community residents. They understand the temple's activities and are willing to participate because they believe these activities help to pray for peace and deliverance of the deceased.

Personal Influence: Participants generally evaluate these activities positively. They believe participating in the activities can enhance their abilities and positive energy and contribute to the community's harmonious development.

5.2 Buddhist Temples as Contributors to Cultural Diplomacy

Buddhist temples contribute to cultural diplomacy, spreading Buddhist culture and values and promoting friendly relations between countries.

Dissemination of Buddhist Culture and Values: As symbols of Buddhist faith and culture, temples disseminate core Buddhist values such as compassion, wisdom, equality, and patience to the world through hosting Buddhist events, organizing lectures on Buddhism, exhibitions, and other means. These values help promote human peace, mutual respect, and understanding.

Buddhism is one of the world's largest religions, and temples are important places of worship that attract believers and tourists worldwide. Through this attraction, temples become bridges for exchanges and interactions between nations, facilitating international friendly relations and cultural exchanges.

Buddhism is a cross-cultural religion with broad influence. Since its inception in India, spread to China, and globalization into a world religion, Buddhism has consistently displayed strong cultural characteristics of tolerance, universality, and cross-ethnicity. In contrast to other major monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam, which have strong exclusivity and assertiveness, Buddhism does not exhibit

strong exclusivity and aggressiveness. Therefore, in the process of cross-cultural dissemination, the assertiveness and exclusivity of monotheistic religions determine that they only have the trait of transforming heterogeneous cultures without integrating into heterogeneous cultures; Buddhism, however, is different. It can not only transform heterogeneous cultures but also integrate itself into heterogeneous cultures. The essence of cross-cultural dissemination lies in the attitude of mutual respect and understanding between two cultures, regardless of which culture takes the initiative to transmit to the other. Only through mutual adaptation and penetration can integration and harmony be achieved, thereby contributing to the dissemination and exchange of human culture (Zhu Fengjun, 2005).

With the continuous advancement of globalization, cultural exchanges between countries, ethnic groups, and regions are becoming increasingly frequent. Along with this trend, conflicts between heterogeneous cultures are also escalating. Therefore, how to resolve conflicts and achieve the diverse development of cultures in cross-cultural communication activities has become a common concern in today's world. In this context, when we re-examine the history of Buddhist cross-cultural dissemination in China, we can gain many valuable insights. The spread of Buddhism in China is undoubtedly a history of conflicts and integration, ultimately achieving the dissemination effect of cultural value enhancement (Yu Fei, 2012).

Buddhist temples often host international Buddhist events and academic seminars, attracting worldwide experts, scholars, and believers to participate. This international cooperation platform facilitates religious, cultural, and educational exchanges, promoting mutually beneficial cooperation between countries.

Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou promotes exchanges with overseas compatriots through foreign exchange activities, contributing to the hometown construction of overseas compatriots returning home. These exchange activities also help enhance the country's image and showcase China's religious freedom policy to the international community. In the early days of reform and opening up, Kaiyuan Temple had frequent foreign exchanges involving multiple countries and regions, such as Hong Kong, Thailand, and Japan, in various forms, such as hosting visitors and participating in exchange conferences (Shi Huiyuan, 249-267). These exchange activities have shortened the distance between Chaozhou and overseas regions, promoting mutual

understanding and cooperation in culture, religion, and other aspects, thus bridging the gap for the exchange of Buddhist culture between China and the rest of the world.

In constructing the "Belt and Road" initiative, people-to-people connectivity is the foundation and enduring communication channel. Religious exchanges can contribute to this, leveraging the affinity role of religions through foreign exchange activities to promote cooperation between regions. Professor Zhao Kejin, Vice Dean of the School of International Relations at Tsinghua University, pointed out that among the "Five Connectivity" pillars of the Belt and Road initiative, people-to-people connectivity is the most fundamental and enduring, yet also the most challenging, with religious issues being central to people-to-people connectivity (Zou Lei, Tu Yichao, 2018). Shared religious beliefs can bring countries closer, generating common topics among the populace, fostering friendship and understanding, and building a strong social environment and a foundation for popular sentiment. "Groups with shared beliefs often find it easier to communicate, and the exchanges between Buddhist groups from various countries can enhance the connection, understanding, and friendship among believers from different countries." (Huang Yunjing, 2011). Both Thailand and China have Buddhist traditions, with Buddhism deeply rooted in both nations' historical and cultural heritage. Establishing the Thai Buddha Pavilion at Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou, China, showcases the essence of Thai Buddhist culture and promotes cultural exchanges and understanding between China and Thailand. This cultural exchange helps deepen the understanding and respect for each other's cultures among the people of both countries, thereby enhancing bilateral relations.

Furthermore, establishing the Thai Buddha Pavilion also reflects the friendly relations between the governments and peoples of China and Thailand. As a temple, the construction of the Thai Buddha Pavilion relies on the support and cooperation of the two countries' governments and peoples. This collaboration is not only in the religious field but also reflects exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in culture, humanities, and other areas. Through this cooperation, the friendly relations between China and Thailand are deepened and consolidated, laying a solid foundation for long-term friendship between the two countries. Therefore, establishing the Thai Buddha Pavilion at Kaiyuan Temple is not just the construction of a temple; it embodies cultural exchanges and understanding between the two countries' peoples and

reflects the friendly cooperative relations between the two governments and peoples. Establishing the Thai Buddha Pavilion at Kaiyuan Temple can testify to the friendship between China and Thailand, further exemplifying the sentiment that "Thailand and China are one family."

In conclusion, as contributors to soft power diplomacy, Buddhist temples strengthen friendly relations between countries, promote cultural exchanges and understanding, and positively contribute to peace and development in the international community by disseminating Buddhist culture and values.

5.3 The Important Role of Kaiyuan Temple in These Two Functions

In contemporary China, institutional changes in Buddhist temples and their social construction hold significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it helps expand research fields and broaden perspectives, extending Buddhist studies from philosophical, historical, ethical, and literary realms to sociology and social sciences. Practically, considering religious organizations as a social structure and delving into the institutional changes and social construction of temples can provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the direction of contemporary and future Chinese Buddhism, temple and monastic management, and how Buddhism can integrate resources into society to contribute to the construction of a harmonious and civic society (Li Xiangping & Gao Hong, 2010).

The crucial role of Kaiyuan Temple in spiritual and social welfare cannot be overlooked. Buddhist temples adhere to the principle of compassionately benefiting society, integrating the concept of compassion into their activities. With surplus economic resources, temples often allocate part of their funds to charitable causes such as alleviating poverty, sponsoring schools, establishing medical facilities, reflecting Buddhism's compassion and relief for worldly suffering. Additionally, due to incomplete social relief mechanisms in ancient society, Buddhist temples became crucial destinations for social relief, providing material and spiritual support to vulnerable groups, alleviating social difficulties and conflicts, and promoting social stability and harmony.

Buddhist temples serve as platforms for propagating Buddhist cultural ideals, conveying the spirit of compassion, kindness, and selflessness through charitable activities to society. This helps establish a positive image of Buddhism in society, promoting the dissemination and acceptance of Buddhist culture. Additionally, the charitable activities of Buddhist temples serve not only as unilateral donations and relief efforts but also as a concrete form of mobilizing social resources and promoting resource redistribution. By organizing and participating in various charitable activities, more social resources are mobilized, fostering positive social interaction and cooperation and contributing collectively to the welfare and development of society. In October 2019, the Second China-US-Canada Buddhist Forum was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA. Ven. Yanjue, then Vice President of the Chinese Buddhist Association, stated in his opening speech, "Actively conducting friendly exchanges and cooperation among the Buddhist communities of the three countries, practicing the compassionate aspiration of Buddhist practitioners to uphold world peace, promote exchanges and mutual learning of human civilizations, and enhance the well-being of all beings, are of great significance for promoting religious and cultural exchanges, enhancing people's understanding, mutual trust, and friendship, and even for strengthening exchanges and mutual learning between Eastern and Western civilizations and building a community with a shared future for mankind" (Wu Yan, 2022).

As for Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou, one of the most famous temples in the region, it plays an important role in providing religious rituals and places for practice. Local believers can engage in religious activities such as worshipping, chanting scriptures, repentance, and meditation, meeting their spiritual needs while inheriting and preserving the traditions of Buddhism. Additionally, Kaiyuan Temple actively participates in charitable activities, providing various services to the community, including providing food, medical assistance, and educational support to people experiencing poverty, thereby improving the welfare of the community, alleviating the burden on vulnerable groups in society, and embodying the compassion and charitable ideals of Buddhism. Moreover, due to its long history and cultural heritage, Kaiyuan Temple has become an important venue for international cultural exchanges, attracting tourists and scholars worldwide, promoting cultural exchange and

understanding, and enhancing friendly relations in the international community. This fully demonstrates the mission and responsibility of Buddhist temples, not only providing religious venues and spiritual solace to believers but actively participating in social charity work, making positive contributions to the community and the international society.

5.4 Kaiyuan Temple's Approach Can Serve as an Inspiring Example for Other Buddhist Temples in Contemporary China

By focusing on spiritual solace and social welfare and actively engaging in international exchanges, Kaiyuan Temple can make more significant contributions to society and establish a better image on the international stage.

Here are some specific measures and benefits:

Focus on spiritual and social welfare: Make spiritual solace and social welfare one of the key priorities. This includes providing shelter, food, medical care, spiritual guidance and comfort. Through these services, Buddhist temples can better meet society's needs, improve community welfare, and enhance people's sense of identification and support for the temple.

Kaiyuan Temple's international exchanges serve as a good example for other temples. Establishing the Thai-Buddhist Hall promotes international Buddhist activities and cultural exchanges between China and Thailand, building a bridge for communication between the two countries. It also attracts international tourists, which helps promote Chinese Buddhist culture and enhance international friendly exchanges and understanding. Additionally, it boosts the local cultural tourism industry, contributing to the economic development of the Chaozhou region.

Buddhist temples can establish a better image by focusing on spiritual and social welfare and participating in international exchanges. This helps elevate the status and influence of Buddhist temples in society, increase respect and recognition for Buddhist culture, and promote social harmony and stability. It further advances the dissemination of Chinese Buddhist culture domestically and internationally, allowing more people to understand and identify with the core values of Chinese Buddhism.

The practices of Kaiyuan Temple set an example for other Chinese Buddhist temples by focusing on spiritual solace and social welfare, actively engaging in international exchanges, contributing to social development, and establishing a better image on the international stage. This promotes the dissemination of Buddhist culture, enhances social harmony, and fosters international friendly exchanges.

5.5 Recommendations

In order to fully leverage their unique characteristics and make more significant contributions to social harmony, world peace, and the well-being of people, the following recommendations are proposed for the future development of Chinese Buddhist temples:

1 : Strengthening Support and Management for Buddhist Temples is crucial for them to better fulfill their spiritual and social responsibilities. This includes several aspects:

Economic Support: The government can provide financial assistance to help temples maintain their infrastructure, conduct religious activities, and promote the inheritance and development of Buddhist culture. These funds can be used to restore historical sites, improve facility facilities, launch charity initiatives, and enhance temples' functionality and influence.

Cultural Protection Policies: The government can enact more relevant cultural protection policies (such as addressing cultural appropriation and misuse) to safeguard Buddhist temples' historical and cultural heritage. This helps prevent malicious individuals from unlawfully using Buddhist culture, distortion of the true meaning of Buddhism, and the spread of misunderstandings about Buddhist culture among the public.

Provision of Professional Management Guidance and Training: The government can organize training courses and activities to provide temple administrators and monks with management knowledge and professional skills. This includes training in financial management, personnel management, and social service management to assist them in better managing the temples and effectively leveraging their social functions.

Through these measures, practical support and management of Buddhist temples can be achieved, promoting their fulfillment of spiritual and social responsibilities and increasing their contributions and influence on society. This is of significant importance for advancing social harmony and stability.

2 : Encouraging Buddhist Temples to Collaborate with Local Communities is a practical approach to enhancing community well-being. Through this collaboration, several benefits can be realized:

Better Understanding of Community Needs: By partnering with local communities, Buddhist temples can gain deeper insights into the community's needs and issues. This helps temples conduct more targeted charity and social service activities, meeting the community's needs and enhancing community well-being.

Provision of Targeted Services: With a better understanding of community needs, temples can more purposefully conduct various charity and social service activities, such as providing food, medical services, and educational support. These services will align more with the community's needs, effectively assisting vulnerable groups.

Collaborative Problem Solving: Encouraging Buddhist temples to collaborate with local communities is vital to improving community well-being. This collaboration helps better understand community needs, provide targeted services, foster cooperation between the community and temples, and collectively address societal issues.

3 : Establishing an international exchange platform is crucial for promoting communication and cooperation between Chinese Buddhist temples and the international community while also playing a significant role in advancing cultural diversity and understanding.

Through establishing international exchange platforms, Chinese Buddhist temples can engage in exchanges and collaborations with other religious institutions, cultural organizations, and relevant entities worldwide, thereby fostering the development of cultural diversity. On these international exchange platforms, Chinese Buddhist temples can showcase the unique culture, history, and art of Chinese Buddhism, introducing the essence and values of Chinese Buddhism to the international community. Moreover, they can interact and exchange ideas with religious

organizations and cultural institutions from other countries and regions, sharing their respective cultural traditions and religious beliefs to enhance mutual understanding and respect.

Through such international exchanges and collaborations, Chinese Buddhism can enhance its influence and status on the international stage and positively promote cultural diversity and understanding among countries worldwide.

These international exchange platforms facilitate communication and cooperation between Chinese Buddhist temples and the international community, fostering greater global understanding and recognition of Chinese Buddhist culture while facilitating dialogue and interaction among different cultures. Additionally, they enhance Chinese Buddhism's reputation and influence internationally and promote friendly exchanges and cooperation among informal diplomacy initiatives worldwide.

5.6 Conclusion

We have delved into the significant roles played by Buddhist temples as providers of spiritual and social welfare and contributors to soft power diplomacy, using Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple as an example for analysis. We recognize that temples offer religious rituals and places for spiritual practices, address social welfare concerns, actively engage in charitable activities, and promote cultural understanding and friendly relations through international exchanges. The practices of Kaiyuan Temple serve as a model for other Buddhist temples, encouraging them to focus on spiritual and social welfare, actively participate in international exchanges, and make more significant contributions to society.

However, ensuring that Buddhist temples can better fulfill their spiritual and social responsibilities requires the support and cooperation of the government and society. Governments can provide necessary resources and management guidance, encourage temples to collaborate with local communities and authorities to address social issues, and enhance community welfare. Meanwhile, establishing international exchange platforms to facilitate communication and cooperation between Chinese Buddhist temples and the international community can enhance cultural diversity and understanding, promoting interaction and integration of world cultures.

Buddhist temples play an indispensable role in Chinese society. Their provision of spiritual and social welfare and contributions to soft power diplomacy are significant in promoting social harmony and development and enhancing international friendly relations. We should value and support the work of Buddhist temples, jointly promote cultural exchanges and understanding, and work towards world peace and prosperity.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Data Pictures of Taifo Hall

**All pictures come from the Kaiyuan Temple Archives
All images are from the Kaiyuan Temple Archives**

Fig 1.1: The completion ceremony of the Taifo Hall was held on the 15th day of the first lunar month (Lantern Festival) in 1992



Fig 1.2: Panoramic View of Thai Buddha Hall



Fig 1.3: In 1997, Princess Sirindhorn of Thailand was Invited to Visit China and Made a Memorable Trip to Worship at the Thai Buddha Hall on June 27



Fig 1.4: Constructing a monument to the Thai Buddhist Hall
(Bilingual in Chinese and Thai)





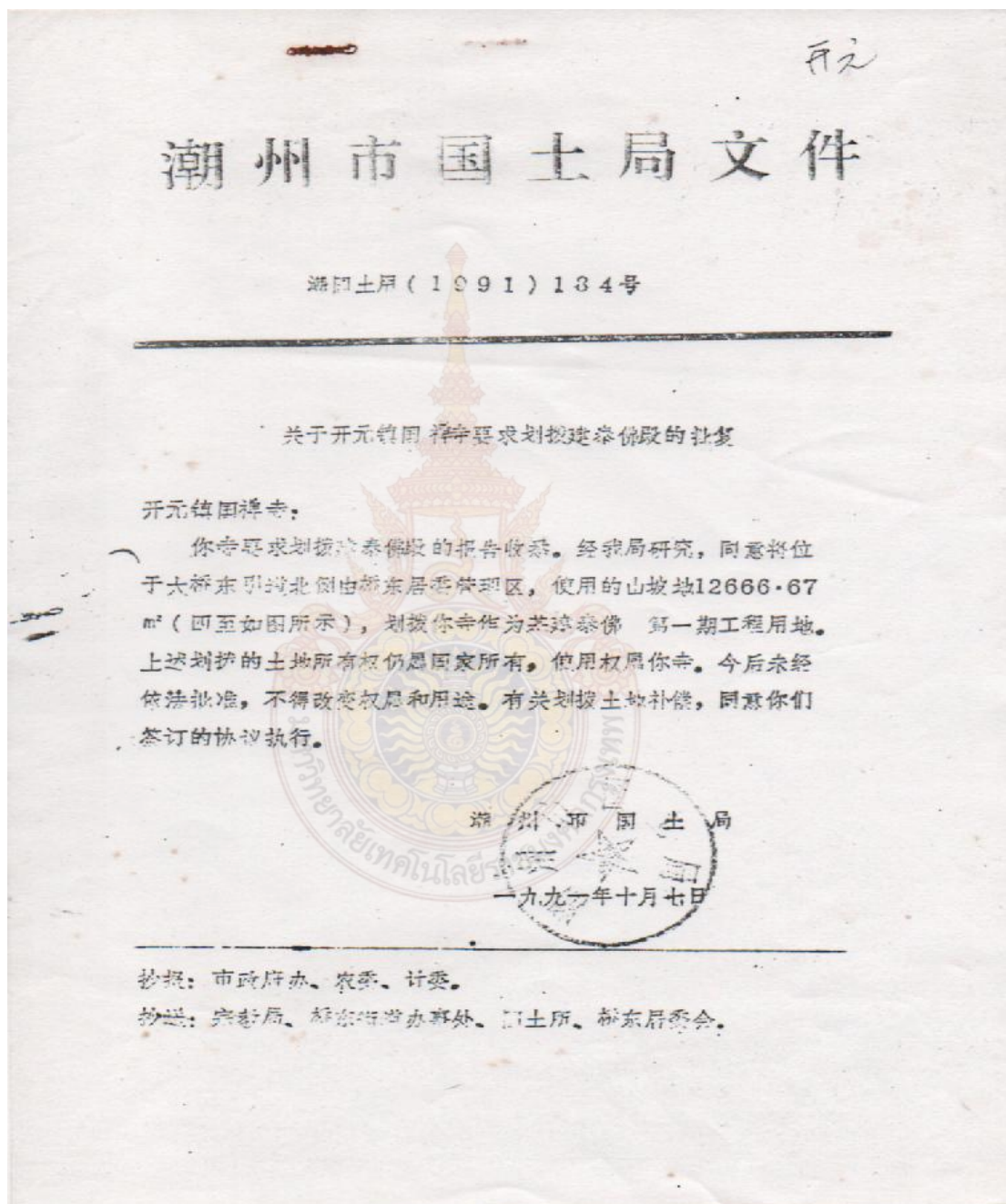
Appendix 2

Government Document Approving the Establishment of a Thai Buddhist Temple

All information comes from the Kaiyuan Temple Archives.

Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2:

Approval Document from Chaozhou Municipal Land and Resources Bureau



申请单位	潮州开元镇国祥寺		建设项目	泰国式佛殿
征地数量	6.53 亩	建筑总面积:	M ² , 其中底基总面积:	M ²
建设性质	新建、 扩一建、 改一建、 技一改			
征地理由	经旅泰侨领谢慧如老先生, 同志选址于潮州桥东老洋村征用山坡地, 建造泰国式佛殿			
批准建设计划机关、文号	经市计委经于1991年9月27日批复同意征用山坡地6.53亩	投资总额(万元)	人民币壹佰万元	
资金来源	由旅泰侨领谢慧如老先生独资兴建。			
上级主管部门	经市计委同意征用山坡地6.53亩, 建造佛殿。			
审查意见	1991年10月4日			
当地村意见	同意			
乡、(镇)意见	同意征用			
县(市)、区国土管理部门审查意见	同意			
市审批意见	P1.11.1P			

Figure 2.3: Approval document from the Guangdong Provincial People's Religious Affairs Bureau

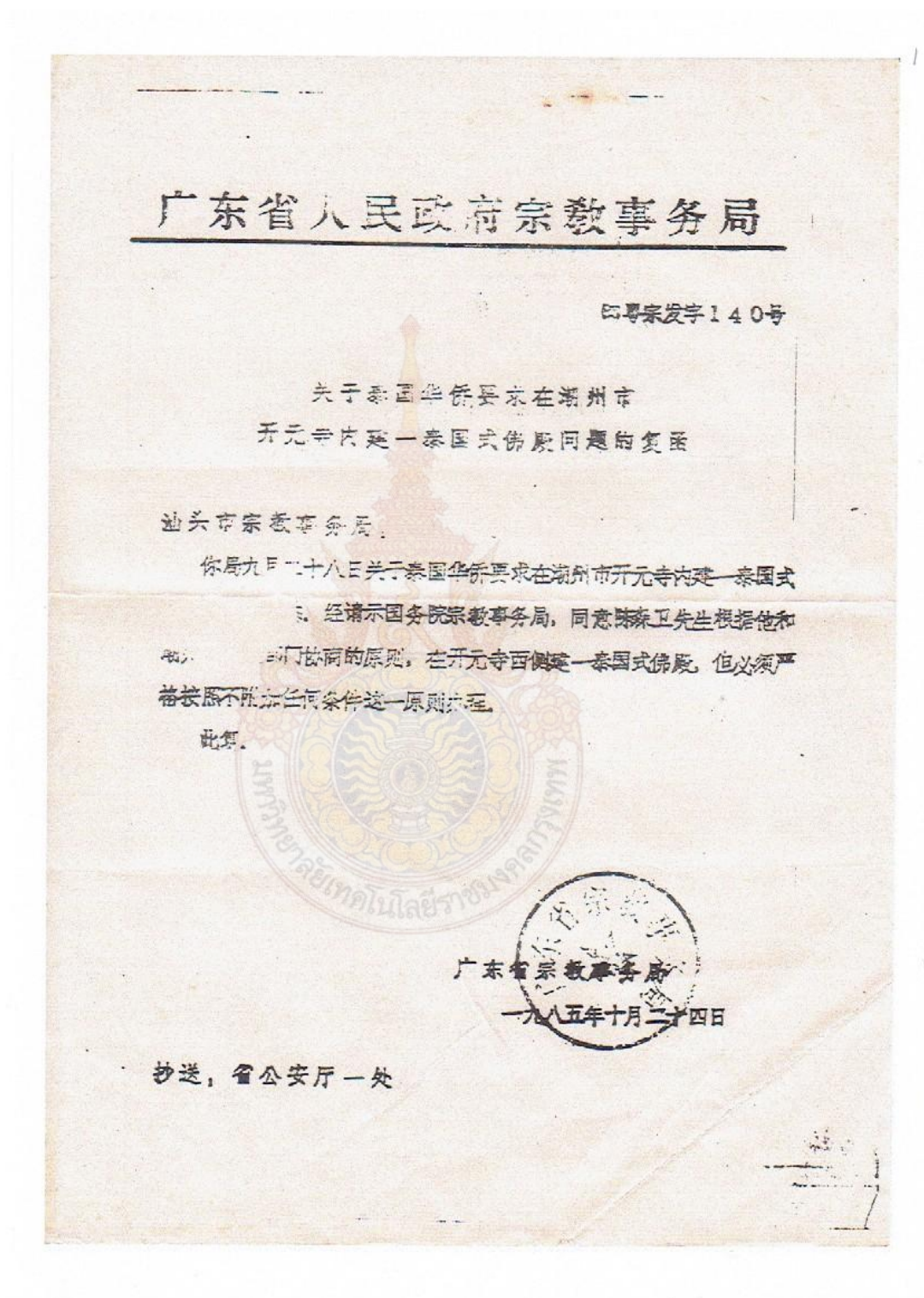
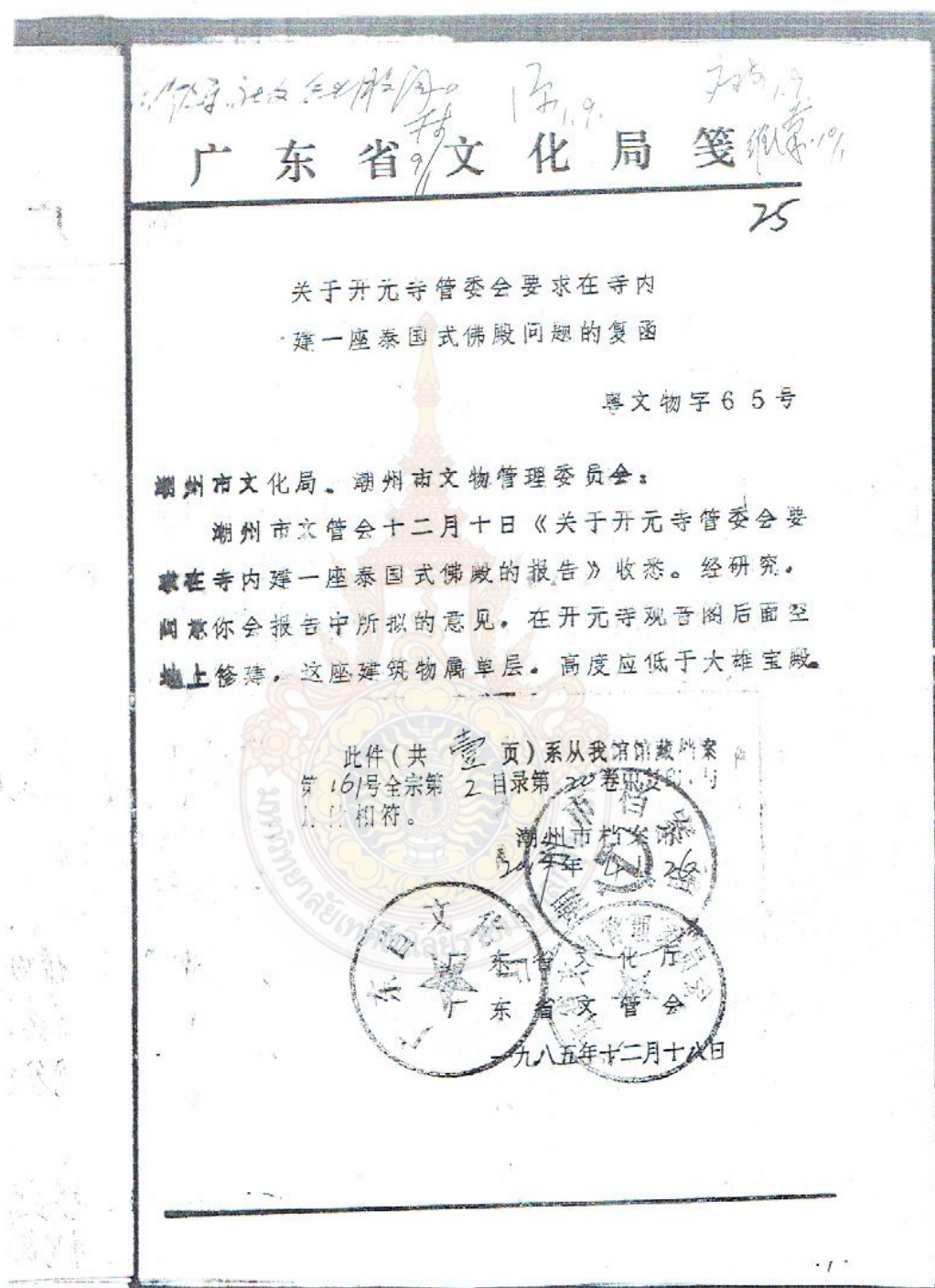


Figure 2.4: Approval document from the Guangdong Provincial Cultural Bureau



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