



**BUDDHIST MONASTIC EDUCATION IN GUANGDONG 2012-
2022: TRANSFORMATIVE CONCEPTS AND ROLES IN
CHINA'S NEW ERA**

KEMING TIAN



**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION AND SOCIETY
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE INNOVATION AND CULTURE
RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHEP
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024
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 Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education and Society

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ABSTRACT

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Chinese society has entered a new phase focused on comprehensively constructing a moderately prosperous society. Concurrently, the ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era was officially introduced, leading to significant reforms across various sectors, including the sinicization of religions. This context presents an opportune moment for advancing educational reform within Buddhist temples. This study examines the development and transformation of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province over the past decade. Employing a mixed-methods approach grounded in social cognitive theory, the research incorporates historical analysis, literature review, participant observation, and interviews with key stakeholders. Primary data sources include archival records from Guangdong Buddhist College, policy documents, media reports, and academic publications. The research aims to (1) explore the evolving educational concepts and roles within Buddhist temples in Guangdong; (2) analyze how temple education balances traditional values with modern educational demands; (3) identify challenges faced and strategies adopted for institutional management reform; (4) assess the influence of temple education on contemporary Chinese society; and (5) offer insights for the future development of Buddhist education in China. Findings indicate that Buddhist temple education in Guangdong is a vital platform for cultural preservation, social adaptation, and the cultivation of politically aware, ethically grounded, and academically competent monks. Despite significant progress, the system faces ongoing challenges such as declining monastic enrollment, employment difficulties for graduates, and navigating modern societal expectations. Recommendations and future research directions are proposed to support sustainable development.

Keywords: Guangdong, China, Buddhist Colleges, Pedagogic Reforms

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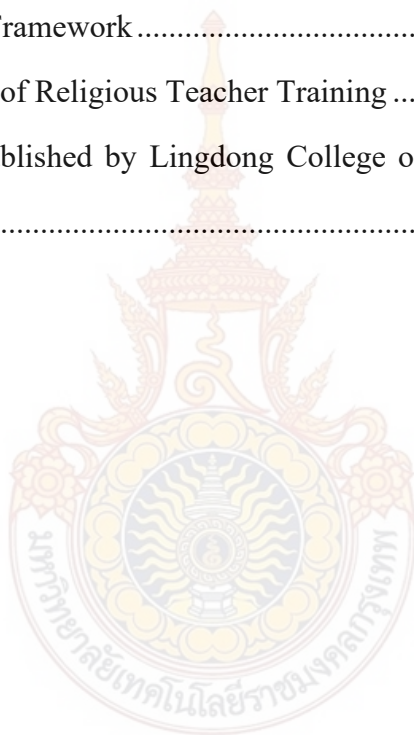
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the current research context, identifying unresolved issues from previous studies related to the reform of Buddhist education. It offers a detailed description of the research questions and intentions. The chapter also provides an in-depth introduction to the methods and sources employed in this study. It further highlights the significance of the research while acknowledging its limitations.

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 The Unique Social Environment and Development of Guangdong in Ancient and Modern Times

According to data from the Chinese government website, Guangdong Province is located at the southernmost tip of mainland China, bordered to the east by Fujian Province, to the north by Jiangxi and Hunan Provinces, to the west by Guangxi Province, and to the south by the South China Sea. It shares boundaries with Hong Kong and Macau on both sides of the Pearl River Estuary. At the same time, the southwestern part of the Leizhou Peninsula faces Hainan Province across the Qiongzhou Strait. Guangdong holds a crucial position in the country due to its unique geographical location, with a land area of 179,700 square kilometers and an island area of 1,448 square kilometers. Boasting the longest mainland coastline in China at 4,114.3 kilometers, it serves as a vital maritime transportation hub, connecting both coastal and inland regions, thus forming a significant transportation junction.

Guangdong Province is one of the most diverse regions in China, with a total of 56 ethnic groups and a population of 1.07 billion, steadily increasing. Among

these, the ethnic minority population is approximately 3.35 million, constituting 2.9% of the total population. Major ethnic minorities include the Zhuang, Yao, She, Hui, and Manchu. This diverse ethnic background contributes to a rich tapestry of religious beliefs, making Guangdong one of the most religiously diverse provinces. From an economic perspective, in 2021, Guangdong's GDP reached 12.4 trillion yuan, equivalent to the levels of Canada and Russia. Whether in education (ASEAN Expo, 2022), livelihood, or the economy, Guangdong has consistently been a leading province in China.

Guangdong Province has a long and illustrious history of development. As early as the Qin Dynasty, Zhao Tuo established the Kingdom of Nanyue, setting its capital in Guangzhou and making it the political, cultural, and economic center of the Lingnan region. During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Guangzhou emerged as a crucial port city along the Maritime Silk Road, serving as an open city and a vital hub for cultural exchange between the East and the West. The city attracted merchants, facilitating the export of Chinese goods such as silk, porcelain, and tea to various parts of the world. This activity contributed to the prosperity of the Maritime Silk Road, introducing Buddhist culture and commercial vitality. By the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Guangzhou had evolved into a city with a rich cultural heritage, and by the Ming Dynasty, it had become one of China's largest ports. Guangzhou has played a pivotal role throughout history, and from a global trade and cultural perspective, Guangdong Province has consistently been one of China's most important provinces.

In 1912, following the establishment of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen founded the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou and established a new governmental system, promoting modern education and gradually phasing out traditional private tutoring. During the relatively politically stable period from 1928 to 1936, Guangdong's economy and educational standards experienced significant growth. The development of social education also influenced Buddhist education, leading to the

formal establishment of the Lingdong Buddhist Academy in Chaozhou during this period. However, with the outbreak of war, Guangdong province suffered severe setbacks, experiencing a significant decline in its economy and culture.

Until the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1978, Guangdong was declared the pioneer of reform and opening up, regaining its status as the largest province in China. In 1984 and 1992, Comrade Deng Xiaoping visited Guangdong twice, contributing to the province's development. Subsequently, Presidents Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping have visited Guangdong multiple times, emphasizing its crucial role as a leader in China's development. Entering a new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping (2020) has bestowed upon the Guangdong Economic Special Zone a new historical mission, explicitly demanding it to be an important window, experimental platform, pioneer, and practitioner in the new era.

Guangdong has consistently maintained its status as a leading province due to its rich historical and cultural heritage, diverse ethnicities and beliefs, economic prosperity, educational culture, and global influence. This positions Guangdong as a key player in China's overall development. This study will focus on the development trajectory of Buddhism in Guangdong Province in the new era, offering insights into the overall status of Buddhist temple education in China. This choice is motivated by the pivotal role Guangdong plays in the broader context of China's development.

1.1.2 Buddhism Development Landscape in Guangdong

Buddhism was introduced to China through two main routes, namely the northern and southern routes. The northern route traversed through northern India, Central Asia, and the Hexi Corridor along the Silk Road, entering China through Gansu and reaching the then capital, Chang'an. It extended its influence across the Central Plains. The southern route, on the other hand, originated from Sri Lanka, traversed the Indian Ocean, the Malay Archipelago, and the South China Sea. It entered China

through Jiaozhou and the Guangdong region, then proceeded northward from Guangdong. Guangdong Province served as the eastern starting point of the Maritime Silk Road, making it one of the earliest provinces to embrace Buddhism in China.

Guangdong Province has a long history of propagating Buddhism. Looking back in history, during the Three Kingdoms period, monks from India and other regions came to Guangdong to preach and expound Buddhist teachings. Throughout the subsequent dynasties, elite monks have consistently propagated Buddhism in this region, educating the populace. One of the most renowned figures is Huineng, acknowledged as the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, who, in the Tang Dynasty, shaved his head and became a monk at Guangxiao Temple in Guangzhou. This marked the peak of Chan Buddhism education in the Tang Dynasty, with the "Southern School's Sudden Enlightenment Chan" spreading widely and influencing the entire country, establishing a new chapter in Guangdong's Buddhist education. Since then, the monks in the Lingnan region have almost universally embraced Southern School Chan as their foundation. Adapting to the circumstances of different times, they have continually innovated, creating flexible, diverse, and vibrant educational methods.

In the introduction of "Lectures on the Philosophy of History", Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Wihelm Friedrich Hegel, 1770-1831) proposed a famous proposition: "The history of philosophy should itself be philosophy." According to this proposition, the history of Buddhism should itself be the evolution of Buddhist thought. Furthermore, discussing the history of Buddhist education is the historical aspect of Buddhist pedagogical thought, and simultaneously, it is the history of Buddhist pedagogical thought. Therefore, in analyzing the inherent relationship, a profound study of Buddhist pedagogical thought should be accompanied by a strong sense of historical mission.

The history of Buddhist pedagogy particularly highlights the distinctive teaching models within Buddhism. The pedagogical theories of Buddhism represent the accumulated achievements in the history of Buddhist education. This is because "the

purpose of pedagogical theory is to understand the personalized meaning and spirit of teaching. Teaching phenomena or behaviors are the 'texts' that pedagogical theory seeks to explain. The research process for pedagogical theory is a prominent fusion process of the subject's foresight and intersubjective perspectives. The outcomes of pedagogical theory research constitute a knowledge system of teaching within the linguistic paradigm" (Zhao, 2021).

The spread of Buddhism in China has had profound and lasting implications. During the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, China experienced invasions from powerful nations, and continuous years of resistance during wartime led to the loss of historical records. The destruction was not only a human tragedy but also a cultural loss. Although Buddhist faith was restored and historical records gradually supplemented after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the literature destroyed in the war remains irreparable. This has resulted in a lack of interest in disciplines such as religious history, with the developmental history of Buddhist education receiving even less attention.

According to existing historical records, following the "Temples to Promote Education" movement in the late Qing Dynasty, Sun Ke, who served as the mayor of Guangzhou during the Republic of China from 1922 to 1927, initiated an auction of temples. This auction resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of Buddhist temples. Taking Guangzhou as an example, the total number of temples in the city was 848 in 1922. After the auction in 1923, only 442 temples remained. In 1928, there were 307 temples left, 266 temples in 1931, 270 temples in 1935, and 262 temples in 1936. Despite efforts by Buddhist disciples to raise funds and purchase temples, they were unable to prevent the decline of Buddhism in Guangdong province. Refer to the chart in Appendix Figure 23 for the detailed changes in the number of temples.

Faced with such challenges, some insightful individuals within Guangdong Buddhism initiated a Buddhist revival movement. Eminent Buddhist monks, led by

Master Taixu and Master Xuyun, advocated for the protection of Buddhist properties and the revitalization of temples in southern Guangdong. They launched campaigns to rejuvenate Buddhism through lectures, restructuring of the monastic community, and other efforts.

In 1932, Master Taixu went to Chaozhou to propagate Buddhism. Upon the invitation of Master Fulaai, the abbot of Kaiyuan Town Guo Chan Monastery in Chaozhou, he established the preparatory department for Lingdong Buddhist College within the monastery. In October of the following year, 1933, Lingdong Buddhist College was officially founded, marking the beginning of a new era for Buddhist education in Guangdong.

In 1946, Master Xuyun presided over the "Memorial Service for the Departed Souls of Anti-Japanese Martyrs and Compatriots Who Died Tragically" at the Liurong Temple in Guangzhou. The participants in the ceremony exceeded 100,000 people, with several thousand individuals taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

Through the efforts of Buddhist monks, Buddhism in Guangdong showed signs of revival. By the end of 1949, there were 870 temples and 3,700 monks and Nizhongs in Guangdong province.

Since the beginning of the reform and opening-up policy in China, the revival and development of Buddhism in Guangdong have truly taken place. The distribution of Buddhist beliefs in Guangdong province is widespread among different ethnic groups. According to the public data from the "Ethnic and Religious Chronicles of Guangdong Province" (2009) and the "Guangdong Statistical Yearbook" (2009), Buddhism has become widely practiced among the population of Guangdong. Among the three cultural systems, Buddhism has the largest proportion of followers. Additionally, the number of Buddhist temples in Guangdong is second only to that in Fujian province, which indicates the flourishing development of Buddhism in

Guangdong. As of 2015, there were approximately 1,300 Buddhist temples in Guangdong province, according to statistical data, as the picture shows:



Figure 1.1 Buddhist Temples in Guangdong Province

The prosperity of Buddhist education reflects the revival of Buddhism. Starting from the establishment of the first Buddhist higher education institution in Guangdong Province in 1933 at the Chaozhou City Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple, the focus of educational reforms has always been centered around students. Due to the principle of equality in Buddhist teachings, education has emphasized equality and compulsory education. Currently, there are four Buddhist higher education institutions in Guangdong Province. They are the Lingdong Buddhist College, founded in 1933; the Guangdong Yunmen Buddhist College, established in 1992; the Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College, founded in 1996; and the Guangdong Caodong Buddhist College, established in 2000 (based on the 1985 Nanhua Monastery monastic training program). In 2011, these four Buddhist higher education institutions were led by the Guangdong Buddhist Association and organized to establish the Guangdong Buddhist College, with its headquarters located at the Guangdong Buddhist Association. The

president of the college is held by the Chairman of the Guangdong Buddhist Association, and it is divided into four branches: Lingdong, Caodong, Yunmen, and Nizhong Buddhist Colleges.

Lingdong Buddhist College: In the 17th year of the Republic of China (1928), Venerable Zhizhen founded Juese Elementary School in Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple in Chao'an County (predecessor of Chaozhou City), marking the beginning of Buddhist education in Guangdong. Lingdong College was formally established in October of the 22nd year of the Republic of China (1933) at Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple, with the recruitment of venerables such as Jichen and Jingxian, who had previously taught at Minnan Buddhist College, seeking the support of various Buddhist communities. The abbot, Venerable Taixu, served as the president, and since its establishment (1933-2023), the college has a history of 90 years. In the early years of its establishment, Venerable Taixu initiated the publication of the college journal "Ren Hai Deng" (People's Sea Lantern) on a bimonthly basis. In the 23rd year of the Republic of China (1934), the college published "Hai Ou Ji" (Collection of Sea Mud), and in June of the 24th year of the Republic of China (1935), the graduating monastic students published "Nan Xun Ji" (Collection of Southern Inquiries), which consisted of eighteen graduation theses from the graduating monastic students of that year. However, due to financial difficulties at the college in the same year, it was forced to suspend its operations.

In September 1947, Venerable Zhicheng assumed the position, and the college was reopened. However, in May 1948, Venerable Zhicheng resigned, and the Buddhist college was once again suspended.

On May 18, 1951, in response to the government's call for the popularization of cultural education, Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple established a night school in the abbot's hall, employing eight students from Hanshan Normal School and two temple monks as volunteer teachers. It enrolled more than 120 students,

including monastics, laypeople, and members of the community. The government provided some funding, while Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple and the students themselves supplemented the rest. The night school operated until January 1952. In the same year, every Sunday evening, the Buddhist community of Chao'an County (predecessor of Chaozhou City) gathered at Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple to study "Current Affairs in Politics" and "Modern Buddhist Studies".

On April 5, 1988, the first training class for monastics in Shantou City began at the building west of the abbot's hall in Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple. The Nizhong College conducted its classes and accommodations at Huiqing An in Fangjin Lane in the city. The class concluded on April 29, 1989. The second and third classes were held from October 1989 to May 1991, with the venue for classes and accommodations relocated to Nan Yan Temple in Xihu Mountain.

It was not until 1991, under the strong advocacy of Venerable Dingran, that the college was reopened based on the monastic training class in Shantou City. The college remained located at Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple in Chaozhou, and it revived the publication of the college journal "Ren Hai Deng". It officially resumed classes in October 1991 (Shi, 1992).

After the college was reopened, there have been three abbots serving as the college's president: the first president, Venerable Dingran; the second president, Venerable Hongche; and the current president, Venerable Daquan. Venerable Dingran served as the first president from October 1991 to March 1997. Venerable Hongche, the former abbot of Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple, served as the second president from April 1997 to June 2006. In March 2007, Venerable Daquan, the abbot of Kaiyuan Zhen Guo Chan Temple and the president of the Buddhist Association of Chaozhou City, became the third president and continues to hold the position.

The current campus of the college covers an area of 3,300 square meters and is equipped with complete hardware facilities. It includes a four-storey multi-

functional teaching building, a four-storey monk dormitory building, a two-storey courtyard-style student dormitory building, a two-storey library, and a VIP building. The green space and activity areas cover approximately 1,000 square meters. Teaching equipment, such as computers, typewriters, photocopiers, projectors, and audiovisual equipment, is readily available. The college offers a four-year undergraduate program. Currently, the college has 24 full-time monks and 17 part-time teachers, and over 400 student monks have graduated from the college.

Caotxi Buddhist College: Located within the Nanhua Temple in Qujiang County, Shaoguan, Guangdong Province, it was initially established as the Nanhua Vinaya College by Venerable Master Xuyun in 1948 but was suspended in 1949. In 1983, Venerable Master Xuyun reopened the Guangdong Province Nanhua Temple Monastic Training Class. In 2000, Venerable Master Chuanzheng restored the college on the foundation of the monastic training class and officially named it "Guangdong Caotxi Buddhist College". In 2015, it was renamed "Guangdong Buddhist College Caotxi Academy" (Nanhua Temple, 2022).

The main building complex of Caotxi Academy occupies a total area of 117,402.57 square meters, including teaching buildings, monk dormitories, a library, student dormitories, playgrounds, basketball courts, badminton courts, and table tennis courts. Student activities such as morning and evening classes, religious rituals, and vegetarian meals are conducted within the main building complex along the central axis of the temple. The temple is equipped with a police station, medical room, security facilities, and fire protection measures.

Caotxi Academy has also established its journal called "Caotxi Water". It currently has 26 full-time monastic teachers and 9 part-time lay teachers. The academy offers a three-year graduate program, a four-year undergraduate program, and a two-year preparatory program, with enrollment taking place every two years. The number of graduates has exceeded 500.

Yunmen Buddhist College is located within Yunmen Temple in Ruyuan Yao Autonomous County, Guangdong Province. Its predecessor was the Yunmen Temple Monastic Training Class, established in 1989 by Venerable Foyuan. In 1992 (Yunmen Temple, 2023), it was officially designated as Yunmen Buddhist College. In 2011, it was renamed as Guangdong Buddhist College, Yunmen College. The campus of the college is set in an elegant environment, with a garden-like layout. It has a library, reading room, multimedia classrooms, and a multi-functional teaching building that can accommodate hundreds of students for lectures and meditation. The college is well-equipped with teaching facilities, making it an ideal place for study and practice.

The main academic programs offered by Yunmen College are full-time undergraduate education, with a four-year duration for the undergraduate program and a three-year duration for the teacher training program. There is also a two-year preparatory program. Yunmen College has a division for female monastics called "Xiaoxitian Nizhongs Division" and another one called "Meizhou Qianfota Nizhongs Division". Currently, there are approximately 150 monastic students and 45 full-time teachers, with 8 part-time teachers. The number of graduated monastic students has exceeded 1,000. The current abbot is Venerable Mingxiang (明向).

Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College is located within Dingguang Temple on Qingyun Mountain in Lufeng City, Guangdong Province. It was established in 1995 under the name "Dingguang Temple Monastic Training Class" (Nizhong Temple, 2023). It was approved by the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Guangdong Buddhist Association and founded by Venerable Honghui, the abbot of Dingguang Temple at that time, and Venerable Miao-zhan, the dean of Minnan Buddhist College. In April 1996, it was upgraded to a Buddhist college and renamed "Lufeng City Dingguang Temple Buddhist College" with the approval of the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Religious Affairs and the provincial Buddhist association. In June 1998, it was further upgraded to "Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist

College" with the approval of the relevant authorities. In 2003, the college introduced a teacher training program with the approval of the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee and the provincial Buddhist association. In July 2015, it was renamed "Guangdong Buddhist College Nizhong College" with the approval of the National Religious Affairs Administration.

The college covers an area of 29,600 square meters. It consists of five teaching buildings, seven student dormitory buildings, and three monk buildings (including a four-storey building for elderly monks), as well as administrative buildings, a scripture library, a library, a reading room, a Buddha hall, a meditation hall, a guesthouse for new students and alumni, and a comprehensive building for teacher training. The teaching facilities are fully equipped, with each classroom equipped with electronic teaching equipment. There is a multi-purpose conference hall that can accommodate up to 300 people, equipped with a large high-definition electronic screen. A dedicated computer room with 60 computers is available for students to access information. The college also has high-end, modern research and conference rooms for academic exchanges, preparing lessons collectively, and online learning for teachers.

The college has complete hardware facilities, including teaching buildings, student dormitories, a clinic, and the Honghui Library, which can hold more than 100,000 books. There are also computer classrooms, administrative buildings, dining halls, Buddha halls, and scripture libraries. The college has a strong team of teachers with rigorous academic standards, and it publishes a school journal called "Qingyun Fayu." It has 31 full-time monks and employs 30 part-time teachers from universities. Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College offers full-time education with a two-year preparatory program, a four-year undergraduate program, and a three-year graduate program. Currently, there are eight classes with a total of 172 students from various parts of the country. Since its establishment, under the leadership of the first abbot, Honghui, and the current abbot, Dalifu, the college has trained over 1,400 graduates.

The main campus of Guangdong Buddhist College is located within Guangxiao Temple in Guangzhou (People's Government of Guangdong Province, 2023), which is also the headquarters of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. It was established in 2011 to strengthen the faculty of Guangdong Buddhist College, address the teaching deficiencies of various colleges, enhance the continuing education of staff, and improve the professional level of in-service teachers. Guangdong Buddhist College accepts the guidance and supervision of the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee. The college is led by one president, who also serves as the president of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. There are five vice presidents, four of whom are also the presidents of the respective branch colleges, and one is either the vice president or secretary-general of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. The college also has several members of the college affairs committee. The main campus of the Buddhist College and the four branch colleges each have their own organizational and management structures.

In 2014, Guangdong Buddhist College admitted its first undergraduate and graduate classes, totaling 98 students. The undergraduate program primarily adopts online and correspondence teaching methods, supplemented by intensive training sessions. The program consists of three years of vocational education and two years of undergraduate education. Students who pass the examinations conducted by the Distance Education College of Renmin University of China can obtain a vocational or undergraduate degree in general education. Students who pass the graduation examinations of Guangdong Buddhist College and complete the required credits are awarded a diploma in Buddhist studies at the vocational or undergraduate level.

The graduate program consists of 10 students who have already obtained a bachelor's degree from a recognized university. The Buddhist studies program is a full-time three-year study program, while the sociology program is designed for working professionals. Students who pass the examinations are awarded a master's degree from

Guangdong Buddhist College and a master's degree conferred by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

Guangdong Buddhist College follows the correct direction in its educational approach. Its goal is to cultivate outstanding young Buddhist students who are "politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, able to win the trust of the public, and capable of making a difference in critical moments". The college emphasizes ideological and educational development and adheres to the educational principles of "integrating the college with the monastery" and "integrating study and practice". It emphasizes developing students' comprehensive qualities and has produced a large number of outstanding Buddhist talents for Guangdong and the entire country.

Over the years, Guangdong Buddhist College has trained over 3,000 graduates, with approximately 900 outstanding graduates who hold important positions in Buddhist institutions, including colleges and organizations, across the country. Since their establishment, the colleges have hosted numerous academic exchanges and seminars, such as the National Buddhist Sermon Exchange Conference, Cross-Strait Exchange Base and Zen Cultural Exchange activities, the "Madhyamaka" Summit Forum, and "Mahayana Buddhism and Contemporary Society" seminars. They have also established cooperative teaching and research bases with institutions such as Renmin University of China, Sun Yat-sen University, and the Guangdong Provincial Institute of National and Religious Studies. The colleges engage in the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines and regulations, as well as academic research, by adhering to the sinicization of Buddhism. The faculty members actively participate in scientific research activities, including publishing monographs, presenting papers, compiling teaching materials, and engaging in academic exchanges, resulting in significant academic achievements. Eight teachers have been honored with the title of Outstanding Teacher in Buddhist Colleges nationwide. The colleges have achieved remarkable

results in their educational endeavors and enjoy a particular reputation within the academic and social spheres.

The Buddhist higher education institutions in Guangdong have always upheld the student-centered approach and the principles of educational fairness and compulsory education. These institutions have undergone systematic reforms in teaching methods, curriculum selection, and faculty training. They also provide students with more practical opportunities to facilitate their comprehensive development.

Although Buddhist education in Guangdong started relatively late, it has benefited from the historical heritage of Zen meditation practice and the practical experiences of modern Buddhist education. With strong support from various sectors of society, the four Buddhist colleges have, in just over a decade, trained and produced nearly two thousand talented monks, making significant contributions to reversing the shortage of Buddhist monastic talent and promoting the healthy development of the Buddhist cause. As the main body of Buddhist education in Guangdong, they have also accumulated valuable experience in running educational institutions.

1.1.3 Transformation of Traditional Buddhist Education and Modern Buddhist Education

Social, economic, cultural, and other factors influence the transformation from traditional Buddhist education to modern Buddhist education. Starting with the Opium War in 1840, China entered a tragic period of losing national sovereignty and independence. This severe setback significantly damaged the confidence and self-awareness of Chinese culture, and its repercussions continue to affect contemporary China.

The Opium War brought the invasion of foreign cultures, introducing some advanced scientific, technological, and cultural ideas directly or indirectly into China. The Opium War also challenged many traditional Chinese cultures and concepts.

Due to significant cultural differences between the East and the West, there were numerous disputes and misunderstandings, leading to conflicts during the early stages of missionary activities. To facilitate the dissemination of doctrines, colonizers chose to rely on scientific methods, enlighten the public, establish schools, and promote charitable activities. While this approach was undoubtedly correct, it also proved fatal. For Buddhism, the rapid loss of followers and outdated missionary methods forced it onto the path of reform. The decisive factor that triggered Buddhist reform was the movement to revitalize temples and promote education (Oriental Magazine, 1910). Governor-General Zhang Zhidong of Huguang wrote the "Encouragement to Study" and submitted it to the imperial court, strongly advocating the use of national temple assets as funding for educational development. After approval from Emperor Dezong, the policy of utilizing temple assets for education was implemented during the Hundred Days' Reform. Under the influence of such policies, Buddhism plunged into a dark abyss. However, this moment also served as an opportunity for the revival and transformation of Buddhism. Buddhism itself did not lack knowledge and logical thinking. Long-term entanglement with erroneous ideologies hindered its proper development. The missionary methods of Christianity provided Buddhism with usable resources, such as establishing schools and publishing materials. Christianity laid the groundwork for the development of Buddhism.

In 1903, Ven. Li Yun established the first modern-style Buddhist academy known as Xingfu Temple in Changsha, Hunan Province (Dapu Culture, 2012). The establishment of this academy spread like wildfire across China. In 1904, Ven. Jing'an and Ven. Songfeng organized a Buddhist academy in Hangzhou. In 1908, Ven. Jing'an, along with Ven. Qiyun, Ven. Yuanying and others founded the Ningbo Buddhist Education Society, establishing monk schools and public schools. In 1909, Governor-General Duan Fang, at the Sanchang Hall in Nanjing, founded the Monk Normal School, an officially sponsored Buddhist teacher training institute. It appointed top Buddhist

scholars as principals and supervisors. Notable figures such as Ven. Renshan, Ven. Taixu, Ven. Guantong and Ven. Zhiguang attended. During this period, numerous schools were established, but in the face of the broader social environment, they struggled to articulate a distinctive voice for Chinese Buddhism. Nonetheless, these efforts laid the groundwork for the self-renewal of Buddhism in the Republic of China era.

After the Xinhai Revolution, the provisional government of the Republic of China abolished practices venerating Confucius and took measures to open pathways for modern education. Drawing from the experiences of Yang Renshan in establishing Buddhist institutions, modern Buddhist academies flourished across China. From the 11th year to the 24th year of the Republic of China, a total of 45 Buddhist academies were established (Appendix Table 1).

In 1937, China was engulfed in the flames of Japanese aggression, as the War of Resistance against Japan erupted. Buddhist monastic education suffered severe disruption during this period, with high dropout rates and a collapse of faith, becoming a new challenge faced during that era. Despite the ravages of war, some individuals continued to forge ahead, establishing six new Buddhist schools during this period (Appendix Table 2).

It was not until the era of reform and opening-up that Buddhist education began to develop steadily. Chinese Buddhist institutions actively responded to the transformative policy of "Buddhism in the Human Realm" proposed by Master Tai Xu, continuously adjusting the internal dynamics of Buddhism and fully cooperating with the country's strategic plans. This allowed Buddhism to develop healthily. The development of Buddhist institutions in Guangdong played a leading role in the overall development of Buddhist education. In addition to emphasizing theory and practice, these institutions have organized numerous international Buddhist seminars, high-level forums for master's and doctoral students, and other activities that broaden the academic

horizons of Buddhism. Simultaneously, they have participated in the development of social services and public welfare initiatives—something unprecedented in traditional Buddhist models. This represents a new educational approach for the new era.

1.1.4 Religious Policies Since the Founding of New China

With the changing world order and the progress of the scientific era, as the country dealt with internal affairs, there has been a continuous adjustment and improvement of relevant regulations based on the characteristics of different periods. Looking at the history of how China understands religion, formulates religious policies, and handles religious issues, according to the development process of the Communist Party of China, it can be roughly divided into four stages: the initial establishment of the Communist Party's religious policy before liberation; in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, while continuing to implement the Party's religious policy, there was a deepening understanding of religious issues; during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, the Party made serious mistakes in implementing religious policies; since the reform and opening-up era, there has been a continuous improvement of the Party's religious policy.

The establishment of the Communist Party's religious policy can be traced back to November 5, 1931, when the First National Congress of the Chinese Soviet Republic passed the "Outline of the Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic" (Selected Works of the CPC Central Committee, 1992). Article 13 of this constitution outlined that the Chinese Soviet political power aims to ensure genuine freedom of religious belief for the toiling masses. This provision clearly defined the ruling ideology of the Chinese Communist Party and established its policy stance of implementing freedom of religious belief.

In 1934, on the eve of the victory in the Anti-Japanese War, Chairman Mao Zedong, in his work "On the United Front", stated during the 7th National Congress: "According to the principle of religious freedom, various religions are allowed to exist

in the liberated areas of China. Whether it is Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, or other religions, as long as the followers abide by the laws of the people's government, they will be protected. Both believers and non-believers have their freedom and should not be compelled or discriminated against" (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 1991). As the first generation of leaders in New China, Chairman Mao Zedong's summary and conclusion also reflect the Communist Party's attitude towards the management of religions.

China's approach to religion is different from that of other countries in that it practices the separation of politics and religion and the separation of religion and education. This is also in line with the principles advocated by Marx and Engels in "The Demands of the Communist Party in Germany", where they state, "Thoroughly implement the separation of politics and religion." The salaries of clergy from various denominations should be paid by the religious organizations formed voluntarily by the respective denominations (Marx/Engels Collected Works, 2016). This stance has established the basic principles of political and religious separation and the separation of religion and education in China after the establishment of the New China.

In September 1949, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was held in Beijing, and representatives from the religious community, such as Wu Yaozong and Zhao Puchu, participated in the conference. The conference earnestly discussed the "Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference" (referred to as the "Common Program"), which included the provision that "citizens of the People's Republic of China have the freedom of thought, speech, publication, assembly, association, communication, residence, migration, and religious belief, and the right to demonstrate and parade." In Article 53, it was explicitly stipulated that "all ethnic minorities have the freedom to develop their languages and scripts and to maintain or change their customs, habits, and religious beliefs." The ethnic and religious policies outlined in the "Common Program" quickly gained support

from various ethnic groups in New China, enabling the Chinese people to unite, cooperate, and promote the construction of New China.

The Chinese Buddhist Association was officially established in June 1953, marking the entry of Buddhism into a phase of development. In September 1954, the first National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China passed the country's first constitution, and Article 88 explicitly stated, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the freedom of religious belief."

However, the good times did not last long. The year 1957 marked a turning point in the political history of New China and also in the history of religion and religious work in the country. It was a year when "leftist" ideologies began to rise. On February 27, Chairman Mao Zedong, in his speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," proposed the concept of two types of contradictions with different natures. He stated that religion was a "problem of ideological nature" and "belonged to the internal disputes among the people". This notion led to the promotion of anti-religious sentiments.

During the third plenary session of the second National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held in March of the same year to discuss the implementation of religious policies, Zhao Puchu, the Vice President of the Chinese Buddhist Association, mentioned in his speech titled "Stopping Evil and Doing Good, Leaving Suffering for Happiness": "We appreciate the significant efforts the government has made in implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief recently. However, there are still violations of religious policies and disruptions to religious life in various places, and some individual incidents are quite grave." It can be said that during this period, Buddhism, like other religions, faced difficulties in promotion and development in China.

In 1961, the Party's guiding ideology underwent a significant shift due to the serious imbalance in the national economic structure caused by the "Great Leap

Forward" and the resulting severe difficulties. By adjusting the basic principles, the formal cessation of the "Great Leap Forward" was announced, and in terms of religious policies, emphasis was placed on preventing "leftist" and hasty actions. Li Weihaan reiterated at the National Work Conference that "personal beliefs can only be free, not forced. People's religious beliefs can only be abandoned by themselves after they have become enlightened. If administrative orders are used to force abandonment, it will not only be useless but also stimulate their religious feelings, only benefiting the religious forces."

Starting in 1964, the Four Cleanups Movement was launched in rural areas, and religious policies faced challenges once again. The extremely "leftist" ideology escalated, and the legitimate rights and interests of the religious community were continuously violated. In 1966, the "Cultural Revolution" erupted, leading to the closure of almost all religious activity sites nationwide. The government abolished religious management institutions, dissolved religious groups, and virtually halted religious activities.

It was not until after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee that the Party's correct principles and policies regarding religion gradually began to be restored. In 1979, the State Council decided to reestablish the State Council's Bureau of Religious Affairs. On September 13 of the same year, the "Guidelines and Tasks for the United Front in the New Historical Period" passed at the National United Front Work Conference stated, "The policy of religious freedom is a fundamental policy of our Party in correctly handling the religious beliefs of the masses." It emphasized the need to overcome various difficulties with a firm attitude and earnestly implement the central guidelines and policies to quickly resolve the need for places, supplies, and clergy for the religious activities of the religious masses. The resolution was aimed at ensuring the right to religious freedom for the believers and implementing policies for the religious community. It called for uniting the broad

masses of believers and religious figures around the government and contributing to the four modernizations under the party's leadership (Feng, 2020).

On March 31, 1982, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the document titled "Basic Viewpoints and Basic Policies on the Religious Question during the Socialist Period in Our Country". It stated the importance of uniting all believers and non-believers, concentrating their will and strength on the common goal of building a modern socialist country. This is the fundamental starting point and foothold for implementing the policy of religious freedom and addressing all religious issues. In order to further normalize religious activities, the state will also, following legal procedures, formulate practical and feasible religious regulations through extensive consultations with representatives of the religious community. This marks the beginning of the rule of law in the management of religious affairs in our country (United Front News, 2022).

On December 4, 1982, Article 36 of the Constitution, adopted in the form of the fundamental law of the country, explicitly affirmed the principle of religious freedom, laying a solid foundation for the rule of law in religious affairs in our country. Article 34 stipulates that the right to vote is a fundamental right of religious believers. In addition, various laws, such as Article 3 of the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses Election Law, Article 8 of the Urban Residents' Committee Organization Law, Article 13 of the Village Committee Organization Law, Article 11 and 53 of the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, Article 3 of the Conscription Law, Article 251 of the Criminal Law, Article 12 of the Labor Law, Article 77 of the General Principles of Civil Law, and Article 9 of the Education Law, have made principal provisions regarding the political rights, property rights, employment rights, right to education, and the right to be free from discrimination of religious believers.

In 1986, the State Administration for Religious Affairs of the State Council proposed in its working points that provinces with certain conditions should, based on

local circumstances, develop local religious regulations to be promulgated and implemented at the local level. As a result, provinces successively enacted comprehensive or specific regulations concerning religious affairs or religious venues to address the specific situations in each province.

In 1987, the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) put forward the goal of strengthening the construction of the legal system, which included the important aspect of political system reform. Subsequently, the State Administration for Religious Affairs formed a working group and, with the approval of the State Council, included religious legislation in the legislative work plan. Efforts were made to draft relevant laws and engage in discussions on related issues (Wei Yan Religion, 2019).

In December 1990, the State Council convened the National Conference on Religious Work to discuss and revise the "Notice of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Further Improving Religious Work". The notice emphasized the need to manage religious affairs in accordance with the law. It proposed, "Efforts should be made to strengthen religious legislation." The state administration for religious affairs of the state council should promptly draft administrative regulations on religious affairs. Provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government may also formulate local administrative regulations on religious affairs per relevant national laws and regulations and local conditions. The notice explicitly introduced the concept of managing religious affairs in accordance with the law, which refers to the government's supervision and implementation of laws, regulations, and policies related to religion.

From 1991 to 2004, China promulgated the "Implementation Measures for the Registration and Management of Religious Social Organizations", the "Regulations on the Management of Religious Activity Sites", the "Regulations on the Administration of Religious Activities of Foreigners within the Territory of the People's

Republic of China", and the "Measures for the Registration of Religious Activity Sites". Simultaneously, several provinces successively enacted local religious regulations or local government rules. The "Regulations on Religious Affairs" were also promulgated during this period (China National News, 2015).

In March 1998, the State Council decided to rename the State Administration for Religious Affairs to the National Bureau of Religious Affairs¹.

On March 15, 2017, the Fifth Session of the 12th National People's Congress officially passed the "General Provisions of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China", which came into effect on October 1, 2017. On September 7, the revised "Regulations on Religious Affairs" were announced, and they came into effect on February 1, 2018. The introduction and enforcement of these two important laws and regulations are key steps to fully carry out the strategy of governing the country by law since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, to adjust to the new circumstances in religious work, and to follow the central government's major decisions about religious matters. They have improved the legal framework for religious affairs, strengthened the management of religious affairs through legislation, and provided stronger legal guarantees for the freedom of religious belief for citizens. It represents a milestone in the legal transformation of religious work in our country.

On May 1, 2021, the State Administration for Religious Affairs issued Order No. 16, which promulgated "management measures for religious schools." It consists of nine chapters and eighty-three articles, clarifying nature, establishment conditions and standards, application procedures, and related requirements for the establishment of religious schools. It also specifies the organizational principles,

¹ The National Bureau of Religious Affairs, abbreviated as the Religious Bureau, is now a national agency under the external affiliation of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee (a single institution with two signs). On March 21, 2018, the CPC Central Committee issued the "Program for Deepening the Reform of Party and State Institutions," which merged the United Front Work Department with the National Bureau of Religious Affairs and retained the sign of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, no longer maintaining it as a separate national agency.

responsibilities, and scope of the heads of religious schools, as well as the requirements for education, curriculum, enrollment, and training in religious schools. The rights and obligations of teachers and students in religious schools are also clearly defined. The management responsibilities of government departments, religious groups, and religious schools are also specified. The implementation of the "Management Measures for Religious Schools" (State Administration of Religious Affairs Order No. 16, 2021) standardizes the management of religious schools, improves the quality of education and teaching, protects the legitimate rights and interests of religious schools, and strengthens the construction of religious personnel, marking a milestone in religious education.

Entering the 21st century, with the rapid development of the economy and diverse societal needs, the reform of higher education in Buddhist colleges has been further advanced. It has gradually formed a system for cultivating Buddhist talents that aligns with societal demands, emphasizing the construction of information technology and exploring diversified teaching areas to enhance teaching quality and efficiency.

Throughout the process of societal changes, the reform of Buddhist higher education in Guangdong Province has been influenced at different stages of social development. However, fundamentally, Buddhism has consistently adhered to the inheritance and promotion of traditional Buddhist culture and humanistic spirit. This ethos has actively contributed to the cause of Buddhist education in Guangdong Province and even across China.

1.1.5 The Importance of Studying the Changes in Buddhist Temple Education in the New Era

Based on the background information provided earlier, it is evident that studying the changes in Buddhist temple education from the perspective of social transformation is crucial. It can be affirmed that social transformation is a significant force driving these changes. During the process of societal transformation, there are

substantial changes in social structure, values, educational demands, and more. This transformation may involve changes in various fields, including politics, economy, technology, culture, etc., posing new challenges and demands for the teaching systems and methods of Buddhist colleges.

Firstly, social transformation has led to new expectations and demands for education. Buddhist temple education has evolved towards new directions, not merely emphasizing knowledge transmission but also focusing on fostering students' comprehensive qualities, innovation skills, and social responsibility. This shift necessitates adjusting and providing diverse teaching content and methods according to the needs of the transformation and the diverse backgrounds and interests of students. Only through such adjustments can Buddhist colleges better cultivate professional talents in line with the requirements of the times. The process of enhancing students' personalized learning needs in this context is worth studying and contemplating.

Furthermore, societal transformation has brought about new educational philosophies and technological means. With the continuous development of social civilization and advancements in science and technology, the nation has placed "science and education" (Zhang, 2022) as the foundation for national rejuvenation. The progress in science and technology, as well as the development of information technology, has led to revolutionary changes in educational methods and tools. How to respond to the changing times and present authentic Buddhism in the face of the new century has become an important topic for contemplation in Buddhist academies. Many prominent temples now employ high technology as a means to promote Buddhism, such as technologically advanced temples, online Buddhist media platforms, digitized Tripitaka, paperless offices, and more. These are active responses to societal transformation. However, some smaller temples, constrained by economic pressures, may struggle to advance technologically and adapt to the modern era. From the perspective of scientific development, they may risk being left behind the times. Therefore, it is necessary to

analyze the development trajectory of these smaller Buddhist temples or Buddhist academies in light of societal transformation.

Moreover, social transformation will impose new requirements on the social roles and missions of Buddhist colleges. This is particularly crucial in the development of "humanistic Buddhism," where Buddhist colleges are expected not only to inherit Buddhist doctrines and culture but also to actively engage with society, engaging in social services and societal transformations. Analyzing the educational reforms of Buddhist colleges from the perspective of social transformation is essential to understanding the contributions that Buddhist colleges can offer to society. It also raises questions about whether these institutions can, in turn, drive societal development and progress.

In all these aspects, the current research is relatively sparse. Existing studies on Buddhist temple education primarily focus on the educational practices during the Republic of China period. For instance, Li Ming's study, "A Study of Monastic Education in the Republic of China Period", primarily explores the early stages of educational initiatives in temples during the Republic of China era. There are also works like scholar Pei Shi'e's "A Study of Buddhist Education in Vietnam: 1975 - 2022", which delves into the research on Buddhist temple education in Vietnam. However, there is a notable gap in comprehensive research on Buddhist temple education in contemporary China.

In conclusion, by studying the impact of societal transformation on the educational reforms of Buddhist colleges, it becomes evident that societal transformation serves as a significant driving force for Buddhist education. Examining educational transformations in Buddhist colleges from the perspective of societal transformation allows for a clearer understanding of societal needs and expectations regarding education. This approach enables the adaptation to the requirements of contemporary changes, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Ultimately,

it empowers Buddhist colleges to play a more proactive role in the ongoing societal transformation.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problems

This thesis aims to delve into the educational reforms of Buddhist colleges in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022. In 2012, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China put forward the thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era and the scientific outlook on development. As Buddhism is an integral part of China's development, it is bound to respond to this development strategy. It was not until 2017, during the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, that the direction of "Sinicization of Religion" was officially proposed. "Sinicization of Religion" gradually became a hot research topic in Chinese politics, academia, and religious circles, forming a significant new path for the reform of temple education.

In light of this background, the first step is to study the transformative concepts and roles played by Buddhist education in Guangdong's temples. It aims to explore the measures taken during the transformation to adapt to the demands of the times, including strategies promoting the modernization, socialization, and sinicization of Buddhist education. The research explored the cultural inheritance and development aspect, examining the aspects of Buddhist temple education that are inherited and the new content that is introduced or developed. Following this, the focus shifted to the social interaction aspect, understanding the interactive behaviors in society exhibited by students nurtured through temple education. Additionally, the study investigated adjustments in talent cultivation strategies and explored the role positioning and functions in cultural dissemination.

Moreover, the socioeconomic advancement has had a tremendous impact on Buddhist education. From a historical perspective, the decade from 2012 to 2022

marks a new era for China in terms of national economy, culture, science, and education, coinciding with the period of the fifth generation of leadership (2012 to present). During this time, there have been significant changes in educational methods and approaches. Traditional and rigorous Buddhist education has faced intensified challenges, especially since 2012. The comprehensive knowledge base of the Chinese population has significantly increased, as evidenced by the statistics on higher education enrollment. In 1996, the annual enrollment was less than one million, while in 2022, it reached approximately ten million. The result is a substantial increase, with around 4.5 million graduates in science and engineering disciplines, approximately 790,000 master's degree graduates, and around 80,000 doctoral graduates. Looking at the enrollment and graduation numbers, universities in society actively respond to the pace of social transformation.

In contrast, Buddhist education typically admits students who have completed junior or senior high school. This creates a cultural misalignment, especially considering the considerable cultural and educational advancements in the broader society. Given this scenario, it is evident that traditional Buddhist education, with its characteristics reminiscent of private schools, needs to undergo significant changes. Therefore, researching and exploring how temple education can balance traditional and modern education in this context becomes relevant.

Currently, the academies established by temples feature a younger teaching team, a more clearly defined educational entity, and classrooms that integrate technology and religion. These are outcomes that have emerged through successive reforms. Examining how these educational institutions align with the times, how teaching staff is allocated, and how curricula are designed becomes a crucial research topic. Based on this information, an attempt can be made to summarize the challenges faced by Guangdong Buddhist temple education in the new era and its inherent resilience.

Finally, it is essential to conduct more research on the goals and outcomes of education. Guangdong Buddhist education is designed to cultivate talent for the new era of monks. Whether it can meet societal needs can be analyzed through various aspects, including education quality, student development, resource allocation, and teaching staff strength. Exploring and researching the challenges in these areas will shed light on the impact of temple education on social development and its future directions.

This study is based on the analysis and exploration of the research questions mentioned above. The main focus of the questions lies in understanding how the educational reforms have evolved in Guangdong Buddhist academies. What are the primary driving forces behind these reforms? Are they economic, political, cultural, technological, or some other elements? By researching these influencing factors, we can gain an in-depth understanding of the motives and driving forces behind the transformation of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the above statements regarding the research questions, the summarized research questions are as follows:

a. To explore the transformative concepts and roles played by Guangdong Buddhist temple education:

1. Investigation into cultural inheritance and development.
2. Examination of social interactivity.
3. Analysis of talent cultivation strategies.
4. Exploration of the role, positioning, and impact in cultural dissemination.

b. To balance traditional and modern education in the Guangdong Buddhist temple education:

(1) Understanding how the Guangdong Buddhist temple education manages to balance traditional and modern educational settings.

c. Challenges faced by Guangdong Buddhist temple education in the new era and strategic adjustments:

(1) Identification of challenges that Guangdong Buddhist temple education faces in the new era.

(2) Examination of strategies adopted by these institutions to adjust their educational policies.

d. To explore the influence and future development directions of Buddhist temple education in modern China:

(1) Investigation into the impact of Buddhist temple education in modern China.

(2) Exploration of potential future development directions for Buddhist temple education.

Through in-depth research into the educational reforms of Guangdong Buddhist academies amid societal transformation, this study aims to comprehensively grasp the historical progress and modern development of Buddhist education. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the development landscape of religious academies in China and provide valuable insights for the future development of Buddhist education. The research outcomes are expected to deepen our understanding of the role and significance of Buddhist education in the context of societal transformation, offering reference and guidance for Buddhist academies and educational institutions in other regions and promoting the quality and sustainable development of Buddhist education.

1.4 Research Objectives

To address the aforementioned issues, the research objectives can be divided into the following five points:

1. To explore the transformative concepts and roles played by Guangdong Buddhist temple education:

Specifically focus on cultural inheritance and development, social interactivity, talent cultivation strategies, and role positioning and impact in cultural dissemination. Evaluate the influence of temple education on students, believers, and other societal levels, studying its contributions and impacts on values, cultural heritage, and social harmony.

2. To analyze how Guangdong Buddhist temple education balances traditional and modern educational settings:

Investigate how the education at Guangdong Buddhist temples achieves a balance between traditional values and modern educational settings. Examine the outcomes and impacts of temple education on curriculum design, teacher training, admission standards, and social interaction to understand how it navigates between traditional values and modern societal demands.

3. This section will examine the challenges faced by Guangdong Buddhist temple education in the new era, as well as the adjustments made in educational policies.:

Explore the challenges faced by Guangdong Buddhist temple education in the new era. Through detailed analysis of the educational system, curriculum content, student enrollment, etc., gain a comprehensive understanding of the development trajectory and transformation trends of Guangdong Buddhist temple education. Provide profound insights into formulating adaptive educational strategies for Buddhist temple education in the modern era.

4. To explore the impact of Buddhist temple education on modern Chinese society:

Analyze the shaping influence of temple education on beliefs, values, and social harmony. Gain an in-depth understanding of the lasting impact of Buddhist temple education on Chinese society, providing a profound insight into the role of religion in societal transformation.

5. To provide insights and inspiration for the future development of Buddhist education:

Ultimately, the goal is to provide valuable insights and inspiration for the future development of Buddhist education through in-depth research into the education of Buddhist temples in Guangdong. Summarize experiences and lessons learnt to offer reference points for other Buddhist academies and educational institutions in different regions, promoting the quality and sustainable development of Buddhist education.

In general, researching the development of religious education is a relatively niche topic in the history of education. However, from the perspective of historical development, religion holds a crucial position in human life. The most elucidating aspect of religious development is undoubtedly the positioning of religious education in different periods and the educational ideologies prevalent during those times. Various factors inevitably influence such positioning. UNESCO emphasizes the need to “teach history faithfully, giving due importance to human historical processes, whether it is a period of prosperity or decline, progress or despair, harmony or conflict” (Learning to Survive, 1996). Through the statement from UNESCO, it is not difficult to conclude that education is synonymous with the history of education, and the history of education is essentially the history of human development. The influence of education is embedded in the progress of humanity, and religious education, being part of education, undoubtedly affects the trajectory of human development. It is equally subject to the influences of human development processes.

In the course of history, the dissemination of Han Buddhism is not merely about religious beliefs; rather, it entails the transmission of cultural and educational systems. Viewing it through the lens of social changes, one can discern the profound impact of Buddhism on the inheritance of national culture, historical choices, and the framework of culture. For instance, the early Han Buddhist temples in Thailand were funded mainly and constructed by Chinese immigrants from regions such as Chaozhou in Guangdong and Fujian. Therefore, in this thesis, the research focus will be more concentrated on Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College, located in Chaozhou, Guangdong province.

1.5 Research Methods and Sources

To address the aforementioned research questions and achieve the research objectives, the research methodology employed historical research methods. This involved systematically reviewing and analyzing the history of educational reforms in Buddhist institutions in Guangdong province, elucidating the developmental trajectory of Buddhist education in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022. Additionally, empirical research, comparative analysis, interviews, and participant observation methods were employed to investigate the role and contributions of Buddhist education in the context of social transformations. These research methods aim to provide subsequent researchers with academic reliability and practical value.

1.5.1 Archives and Documentation Collection

In the preliminary stage of the research, extensive primary literature, literature reviews, and data collection were required. Various channels were utilized, including Buddhist institutions, CNKI, libraries, museums, archives, the internet, campus publications, Google Scholar, Bing Scholar, ResearchGate, and others, to collect a large amount of historical data on Buddhist institutions, relevant figures,

former presidents, teaching history, political and legal documents, and classic literature. Through literature organization and archival research, important milestones, policies and regulations, cultural and institutional changes, and societal developments in the history of Buddhist education were obtained, ensuring the scientific and practical nature of the research.

1.5.2 Combining the Context of Historical Development

The article systematically presents the historical context and trends of Buddhist education institutions in Guangdong province by examining the history of teaching and education in these institutions. It covers aspects such as the origin, historical evolution, academic endowment, teaching environment, educational system, and educational objectives of Buddhist institutions. Furthermore, the paper deeply explores the structure, developmental trends, and societal significance of curriculum content and teaching methods in Buddhist institutions from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This historical trajectory-based argumentation provides detailed support for the role of Buddhist education and teaching in the context of social transformations. It comprehensively and thoroughly investigates the relationship between Buddhist education and teaching and social change. It is hoped that such a perspective can highlight the significant role of Buddhist education and teaching in cultural heritage, emphasize the connection between Buddhist education and cultural traditions, and offer valuable insights for future researchers exploring this topic.

1.5.3 Historical Analysis and Participant Observation

Through empirical research on the educational characteristics and outcomes of Buddhist educational institutions before and after the reforms, a comparative analysis was conducted on the relationship between Buddhist education and teaching and social change. This deepened the understanding of the societal benefits brought about by the process of Buddhist education reform, with specific emphasis on firsthand participant observation. This observation aimed to grasp the

transformation of ideological concepts, changes in talent development models, enhancement of overall quality, and the promotion of social and cultural values.

In summary, this article employs diverse historical research methods, including the analysis of historical materials. By combining specific educational reforms and historical literature, it reveals the development trends, teaching methods, and outcomes in Buddhist educational institutions. The article provides an in-depth analysis of the role of Buddhist education and teaching in the context of social change and offers insights into future development trends.

1.6 Significance of the Research

Religious education has always been a subject of study for religious practitioners or scholars engaged in religious-related work. In past research, there has been considerable focus on the establishment of Buddhist education during the Republican era, mostly centered around the pioneering figure in Buddhist reform, Master Taixu. However, in the forty years since China's reform and opening-up, while Buddhism has achieved certain academic accomplishments, the research has largely been confined to the doctrinal aspects of Buddhism. There has been limited exploration of topics such as Buddhist education, educational reforms, institutional development, and the relationship between society and Buddhist development. In recent years, the decreasing number of Buddhist monastics, enrollment challenges in Buddhist institutions, and the challenges of effectively educating Buddhism in the new era have become new challenges, with relatively fewer researchers delving into these areas.

Whether the revitalization of Buddhist education will occur or not will determine the direction, fate, and prospects of Chinese Buddhism (Ruyi, 2012). Therefore, the current state of Buddhism is facing an imminent wave of new-generation reforms. Reform is not a product of mere speculation; it requires an analysis of the

cause-and-effect relationships involved. Therefore, the best research perspective for understanding Buddhist reform is through the lens of social transformation. This perspective allows for a precise analysis of the relationship between societal changes and Buddhist education. Only by comprehending this relationship can Buddhist institutions stay abreast of the upcoming reforms in Buddhist education.

Through the perspective of social changes in the new era, this study will examine the development of Buddhist education in Guangdong. It will categorize and process significant societal changes or educational reforms from 2012 to 2022, identify nodes of interaction and mutual influence, and conduct an analysis. The study will also review policies and regulations related to religious education over the past decade, which, as per previous literature searches, have not been explored by scholars. This research aims to fill the gap in existing studies on this aspect.

China adheres to the freedom of religious belief, and in education, it explicitly stipulates the principle of separating religious education from national education. This is aimed at safeguarding the purity of religious education while ensuring the freedom of individuals to follow a religion. Despite the separation, religious education is based on higher education, built upon compulsory education. This implies that attending a Buddhist undergraduate institution requires having a degree in social or religious studies. Regarding the target audience, all students possess a solid cultural foundation. As the level of the personnel involved increases, changes are occurring in the reform of Buddhist education. This study aims to refine the developmental history of Buddhist education, providing convenience for future scholars researching related topics.

While researching the reform of Buddhist education in Guangdong, this study will also clarify the relationship between society and Buddhism. Historically, the contributions of Guangdong Buddhism to society have been primarily focused on charity and uniting believers. However, its contribution to cultural output and creation

has not been clearly defined. This research will analyze the teaching achievements of Guangdong Buddhist College, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the crucial role Buddhism plays in social development. This information holds significant importance for scholars researching social sciences and religious studies.

1.7 Limitations of the Research

This study focuses on higher education institutions of Buddhism in Guangdong province. Although Guangdong is one of China's leading provinces, its Buddhist higher education institutions are considered to be at a moderate level when compared to top-tier institutions like Beijing Buddhist College and Hangzhou Buddhist College. Therefore, from an objective standpoint, the research is subject to regional limitations and specific characteristics. It is primarily suitable for studying the educational characteristics of regional institutions, reflecting the constraints in data collection.

Additionally, due to constraints such as time, resources, and budget, many essential materials could not be comprehensively collected. For instance, among the four Buddhist colleges under Guangdong Buddhist College, historical records for Yumen College, Caoxi College, and Bhikkhuni College are not fully available, leading to a research focus on Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College.

The period from 2012 to 2022 is relatively short in the context of the long-term evolution of Buddhist education. With limited time, the focus is on highlighting significant events. Consequently, for the research, a comprehensive understanding of its development and changes might be challenging.

The Guangdong society is undergoing a series of changes, and a large portion of research is concentrated on economic aspects, with insufficient focus on the documentation and study of Buddhism. Challenges have been encountered in accessing

relevant information, prompting this study to rely on a substantial amount of officially released data and archive materials to ensure accuracy. However, opulent research materials cannot be guaranteed.

In the research on Buddhist education in Guangdong's colleges, the diversity of Buddhist education is influenced by the various Buddhist sects, leading to significant differences in the depth and breadth of the curriculum. Evaluating the professional level of teachers using index standards would be challenging, which would impact the assessment of teaching quality and textbook selection. The study can only compare religious and non-religious courses across different periods to examine changes in course selection.

Due to limitations in my understanding of postmodern historical perspectives, regional history, sociological theories, and local knowledge, there may be constraints in my ability to analyze and articulate specific issues effectively. This could also affect the choice of research methods and study design.

Future scholars can extend their research beyond my study by investigating the developmental history of religious colleges in other provinces. They may also offer complementary perspectives from a societal angle to address the shortcomings I mentioned. Exploring the intrinsic driving forces for Buddhist internal transformation, examining the development of Buddhist colleges nationwide since the reform and opening-up, focusing on Buddhist education in the greater bay area of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, conducting comparative studies on Buddhist education policies during different periods, or exploring post-pandemic era paths and possibilities for Buddhist education are all potential research topics. The researcher hopes that this study will broaden the research methods and perspectives for future Buddhist scholars and researchers, and the researcher looks forward to seeing more related studies in the future.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review, which begins by explaining the collection of relevant literature for the research. It summarizes the research achievements in Chinese Buddhist education, highlights the current research limitations, and concludes with an overview of the research directions in Buddhist education. Lastly, it outlines the methods commonly employed in similar studies and specifies the research methods this study will employ.

2.1 Related Literature Background Introduction

Buddhism was introduced into China around the time of the Han Dynasty, around AD (State Administration of Religious Affairs, 2005). There are three major systems in Buddhism: Han Buddhism (Chinese language-based), Tibetan Buddhism (Tibetan language-based), and Theravada Buddhism (Pali language-based). As of now, there are approximately 33,000 open Buddhist activity sites in mainland China, including over 3,600 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and over 1,700 Theravada Buddhist monasteries. The total number of Buddhist clergy nationwide is about 222,000, including approximately 148,000 in Tibetan Buddhism, 72,000 in Han Buddhism, and 2,000 in Theravada Buddhism. There are a total of 38 Buddhist religious colleges and universities in the country (State Administration of Religious Affairs, 2005). Apart from the clergy, there is a large number of ordinary people who practice Buddhism, making it difficult to obtain accurate statistics. Based on the available data, Han Chinese Buddhist monks constitute a relatively small population, which consequently restricts the development trends and prospects of Buddhist education due to the shortage of talent. This limitation has major implications for the advancement of the Buddhist

education sector. By organizing and analyzing the research results on the development of Buddhist colleges and universities from 2012 to 2022, it is evident that there are shortcomings in the research on Buddhist education. Therefore, it is important to clarify the future research direction, with a primary focus on Guangdong, the largest province in China. Both the study of regional Buddhist education history and the overall development of Buddhist education hold significant practical importance.

Since the Chinese constitution contains the principle that religion should be kept away from politics, Buddhist education research has its independence, and scholars engaged in related research mainly focus on the educational content, with few articles studying the educational system. Such an approach has resulted in a lack of systematic research on Buddhist education. If one searches for literature specifically on "Buddhist education", the collection of relevant articles is not optimistic. Therefore, in the process of literature collection, keywords such as "religious education", "Buddhism in Guangdong", "Buddhist colleges and universities", and "religious colleges and universities" were also included.

A search using the keyword "Buddhist education" in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database yielded 387 publications, including 283 journal articles and 26 dissertations. The search for "Buddhism in Guangdong" yielded only two articles, both from academic journals. Searching with the keyword "Buddhist colleges and universities" resulted in only 1 academic journal article. Further searches using the keywords "religious education" and "religious colleges and universities" yielded a total of 833 publications, including 642 journal articles and 79 dissertations. After reviewing the literature and excluding irrelevant publications related to Guangdong Buddhist education and education in the new era, a total of 119 relevant research articles were selected.

According to the search results for "religious education" from 1983 to 2022, as shown in the graph, the first research article related to "religious education" was

published in 1983. However, the research progress has been relatively stagnant and has not received widespread attention in society. There was a significant increase in related literature from 2007 to 2018, but recently, there has been a decline in research output.

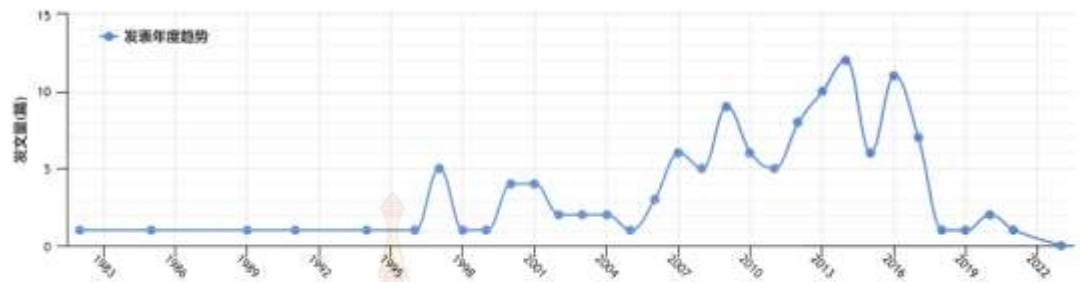


Figure 2.2 Research on Religious Education from 1983 to 2022

When searching for the topic "Buddhist temple education", as shown in the graph, it was revealed that only a few articles have been conducted on this subject from 2001 to 2022.

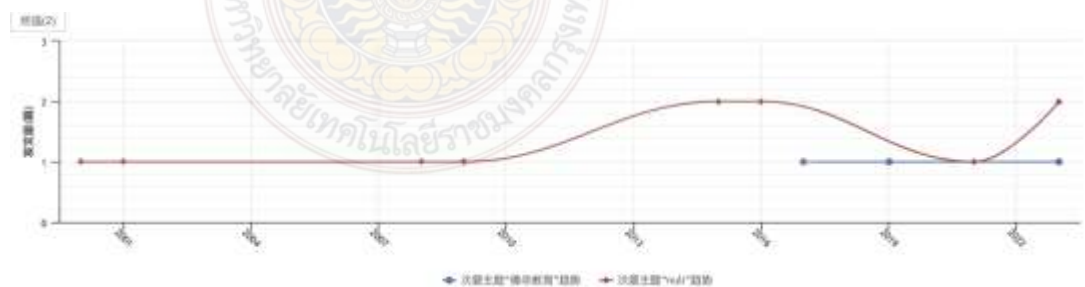


Figure 2.3 Research on Buddhist Temple Education from 2001 to 2022

When searching for "Buddhist education," the data shows a relatively objective trend, as shown in the graph. There is an apparent increase in the number of articles related to this topic from 2006 to 2018. The increase indicates that research on Buddhist education experienced a peak during this period.

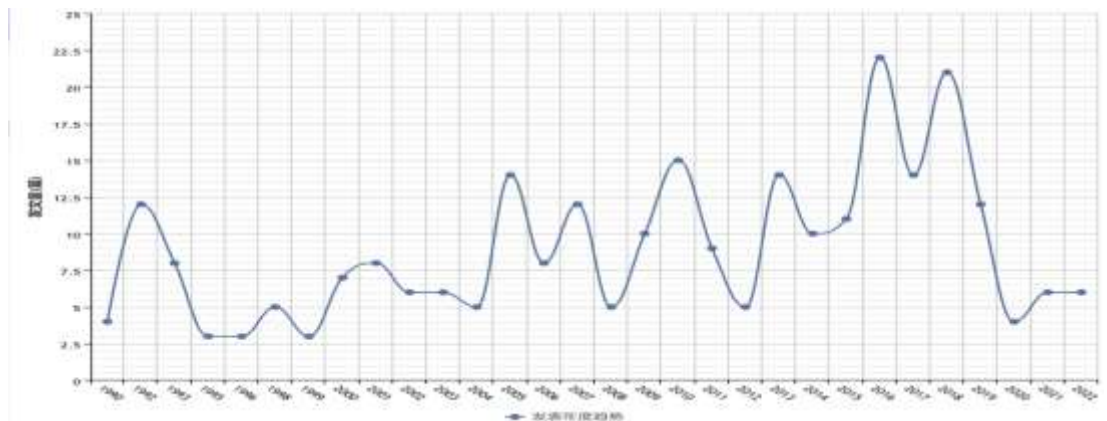


Figure 2.4 Research on Buddhist Education

Although there are not many studies specifically focused on Buddhist education, there is a considerable amount of data available on Buddhist research. Searching for the topic "Buddhist studies" yields the results shown in the graph. From the graph, we can observe that the period from 2006 to 2015 was a peak time for Buddhist research, while there was a relative decline in Buddhist research from 2015 to 2022.



Figure 2.5 Research on Buddhist Studies

Comparing the above graphs and indexing information, it is evident that there are relatively fewer scholars researching Buddhist education or the educational

models of Buddhist institutions, while there is a significant number of researchers focusing on the content of Buddhism itself. Particularly, there has been a noticeable increase in Buddhist research since 2006. This trend indicates the occurrence of reforms in Buddhist education. However, since 2018, there has been an apparent decline in research across various themes, reflecting issues in Buddhist education or Buddhist academia. To address this problem, further exploration is needed to understand the underlying reasons and develop strategies for resolution. The limited publication of literature also suggests a less optimistic outlook for the development of domestic Buddhist education. While the impact of the pandemic cannot be ignored, the limited research volume indicates that further development is necessary in the field of Buddhist studies.

2.1.1 Background of Buddhist Monastic Education in Guangdong

Buddhist education underwent a transition from traditional to modern educational reforms during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republican era. During this time, China faced the challenges of Western aggression and the influence of religious introductions, which posed a serious threat to traditional Buddhist educational ideologies. In the face of such circumstances, the scientific development of Buddhist education became an urgent issue for the monastic community and laypeople at that time. While external forces and the powerful dissemination of religion exerted their influence, bringing the millennia-old traditions of Chinese Buddhism to the world stage required enormous courage and determination. Compared to the situation when Buddhism was first introduced to China centuries ago, spreading the beliefs and values of Chinese Buddhism in the face of the dominant scientific development of the Western world posed even greater challenges. As a result, a transformation occurred in the educational perspective of Chinese Buddhism, integrating scientific development principles. This transformation was exemplified by the establishment of Buddhist institutions by Master Taixu.

Master Taixu, as a renowned Buddhist theorist, created a comprehensive theoretical system of humanistic Buddhism. He actively established Buddhist institutions, organized Buddhist associations, and published books and magazines, thus promoting important initiatives such as educational reform, property reform, and the popularization of Buddhist doctrines. As a great practitioner of Buddhism, he dedicated himself to nurturing monastic talents, uniting the Buddhist community, and promoting Buddhist culture, demonstrating sublime values in his life. Moreover, Master Taixu was a religious leader with a global vision. He traveled worldwide to propagate the Dharma, contributing to the dissemination and development of Buddhism on an international scale. He made significant contributions to the global development of Buddhist culture. Although Master Taixu has passed away, his spirit of reform has permeated throughout China, and his disciples, such as Master Fapang and Master Liaocan, have inherited his ideas, contributing further to the reform of Buddhist education.

Wang's (2022) research article "The Academic Forms of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Buddhism" states that many Chinese students chose to study in Japan before the Sino-Japanese War. Figures such as Master Taixu, Master Zhifeng, and Master Chisong regarded studying and researching Japanese Buddhism as an important means for the reform and revival of Chinese Buddhism. They, to varying degrees, embraced certain concepts or methods of Japanese Buddhism, and these had a crucial role in the emergence of Buddhist institutes.

At the same time, influenced by internationalization, numerous Buddhist scriptures that originated in China were transmitted to countries such as Japan. Through the efforts of Chinese students studying abroad and lay practitioners, a large number of these scriptures were brought back to China. For example, the Nanshan Vinaya School reintroduced its Vinaya texts, which had been lost in China for hundreds of years. Additionally, there were the Taishō Tripitaka and the Xuzangjing, as well as the 283 Chinese and Tibetan scriptures gifted by Nanshō Bun'yū to Yang Renshan and the

Ōbaku Tripitaka presented by Mizuno Baikō. These scriptures, including those from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, were preserved in Japan during periods of iconoclasm and the decline of Buddhism in China. Therefore, the return of these scriptures became the most influential driving force for the intellectual and scholarly development of Chinese Buddhism historically.

Master Taixu also initiated Buddhist education in Guangdong province. In 1932, Lingdong Buddhist College was officially established in Guoyuan Temple, Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou City, Guangdong Province. Master Taixu served as the president of the college. The college officially opened on October 9, 1933, and also launched its journal, "Ren Hai Deng" (Ocean of People's Wisdom). The establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College marked the beginning of new-style Buddhist education in Guangdong (Daliang, 2012). In June 1935, 18 students graduated from the college, and subsequently, the college suspended its operations. It was resumed in September 1947 but suspended again in May 1948. Lingdong Buddhist College was officially reopened in October 1991 with the assistance of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. In September 1992, Yunmen Buddhist College was established, and in September 1996, Dingguang Monastery Buddhist College (now renamed Guangdong Bhikkhuni Buddhist College) was founded (Hongming, 1999). In 2000, Caoxi Buddhist College was reopened. In 2011, the State Administration for Religious Affairs approved the establishment of Guangdong Buddhist College, which consisted of four branch campuses. Since then, the four Buddhist colleges have merged to become Guangdong Buddhist College. The four branch campuses are renamed as follows: Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College, Yunmen College of Guangdong Buddhist College, Bhikkhuni College of Guangdong Buddhist College, and Caoxi College.

2.1.2 The Significance of Chinese Buddhist Temple Education in the New Era

According to the meeting held in Beijing in 1952 by the leaders of the Buddhist community (Jinling Sutra Carving Office, 2003), which initiated the establishment of the Buddhist Association of China, Minister Li Weihan of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, in his interpretation of the common program and the policy of religious freedom by the Central People's Government, defined the role of Buddhism in the new China. He proposed that Chinese Buddhists should unite with the people of the whole country to form a solid united front, assist the government in implementing the policy of religious freedom, and strive for the construction of the motherland and the defense of world peace. At the beginning of the establishment of the New China, the people of the whole country urgently desired national peace and healthy development after the baptism of the War of Resistance against Japan. Therefore, in such a context, the primary task of Buddhism was to work together with the Party Central Committee to safeguard the stability and peace of China.

In 1993, Mr. Zhao Puchu, the president of the Buddhist Association of China at the time, put forward the idea that "in order to focus on the future construction and development of the Buddhist cause, all levels of Buddhist associations and the Buddhist community nationwide must shift their attention and work priorities to strengthening their development and improving the qualities of the four groups. "Strengthening the self-development of Buddhism means strengthening faith, moral conduct, institutional development, talent cultivation, and organizational development." (Buddhist Association of China, 2019).

In the 2015 Central United Front Work Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping first proposed actively guiding religions to adapt to socialist society and emphasized the need to adhere to the sinicization of religions in China. In the 2016 National Religious Work Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping further elaborated

on the sinicization of religions in China, providing clear guidance for various religions in China, including Buddhism, to adhere to the direction of sinicization in the new era. In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping once again emphasized the need to fully implement the Party's basic principles on religious work, adhere to the sinicization of religions in China, and actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society.

In the context of comprehensive development in the new era, scholars Cui and Zhang (2018) discuss in their article "Buddhist Culture and the Cultivation of Values for Ecological Citizens in the New Era" the contributions of Buddhist education to the development of citizens' basic qualities and culture. They suggest that the key idea of "dependence arising from the non-dual nature of reality" in Buddhist culture can help promote ecological values that encourage harmony between humans and nature. The cultivation of Buddhist education contributes to the healthy development of social civilization and ecology. It provides important intellectual support for promoting the development of ecological civilization in the new era and achieving a new pattern of harmonious development between humans and nature in modern construction.

According to Venerable Dao Ci (2022), Vice President of the Chinese Buddhist Association (2021), in the article "Thoroughly Study and Implement the Spirit of the National Conference on Religious Work, Strive to Create a New Situation in Buddhist Undertakings in the New Era", he emphasizes that in addition to improving its political position and adhering to the sinicization of Buddhism, Buddhist education in the new era also needs to embrace the concept of "shared prosperity". It should be applied at the grassroots level and actively participate in various social charity and public welfare activities, such as disaster relief, poverty alleviation, assistance, and acts of compassion.

In Venerable Yan Jue's (2022) article "Deepen the Practice of Thrift and Abstinence Education to Promote the Sinicization of Buddhism in the New Era", he

advocates that Buddhist education should emphasize diligence, thrift, and frugality. It should uphold the spiritual practice of contentment and minimal desires in Buddhism.

In Venerable Minghai's (2022) article, "Guided by the Spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: Promote the Healthy Inheritance of Buddhist Culture in the New Era," he proposes to carry forward the fine tradition of Chinese Buddhism's emphasis on international exchanges. By engaging in exchanges and mutual learning with foreign civilizations, we can construct a discourse system for Chinese Buddhist culture that is oriented towards the world. This will enhance the influence and impact of Chinese civilization and promote a better integration of Chinese culture with the world.

In scholar Wen Xinrui's article "The Important Enlightenment of Master Juzan's Patriotism and Love for Religion on the Sinicization of Buddhism in the New Era" (2023), he further elaborates on the development of Buddhist practitioners in the new era. It is emphasized that the development of Buddhism in the new era relies on a deep understanding of Buddhist doctrines. In addition to enhancing the political consciousness and scholarly literacy of Buddhist practitioners, it is necessary to integrate the Buddhist methods of "repentance" and "self-restraint" with the criticism and self-criticism methods developed by the Communist Party in self-improvement. This promotes the sinicization of religion, guiding Chinese religions to adapt to a socialist society. Furthermore, it is important to cultivate scholar-monks who have a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist doctrines and can promote Buddhist culture. Lastly, strengthening international academic and cultural exchanges is also emphasized.

Based on the multifaceted discussions in the above literature, we can analyze the important role of Buddhism in the new era. At the same time, it can be observed that Buddhist education in the new era will face new difficulties and challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on the development of Buddhist education in the new era and explore how to achieve these results.

2.1.3 Purpose Statement of Literature Review

The literature review selected for this study revolves around the education of Buddhist colleges in the new era. It aims to evaluate, summarize, and analyze past literature related to Buddhist education to provide support for the background and theoretical foundation of this research.

Survey and Understanding of the Research Field: Through the literature review, a thorough understanding of research and literature related to Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region from 2012 to 2022 will be gained. This includes key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and the scope of research in this field. Additionally, considering the limited availability of research literature specific to the Guangdong region, relevant studies and literature on religious education will be incorporated to compensate for the regional research gap.

Assessing the Quality and Methods of Existing Research: Through a comprehensive literature review, the existing studies on Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region will be evaluated. This evaluation will encompass a review of research design, sample selection, data collection, and analysis methods. This process aids in identifying reliable studies and potential limitations. We will determine the research design, sample selection, data collection, and analysis methods for this study based on the assessment results.

Background and History of the Research Topic: By delving into relevant literature, a comprehensive understanding of the historical background and evolution of Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region before the transformation in China's new era will be obtained. This exploration will shed light on the significance and status of this field within Chinese society and culture.

Identifying Research Gaps and Opportunities: A thorough literature review will assist in identifying knowledge gaps and unresolved issues in the research domain

of Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region. This identification provides opportunities and directions for the development of this study.

Establishing the Uniqueness and Significance of the Research: Building on past research, the novelty and importance of Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region will be clarified. With insights from previous studies, a research framework and theory will be constructed to emphasize the uniqueness and significance of the study.

2.2 Historical Overview of Buddhist Monastic Education in Guangdong

2.2.1 Evolution and Development of Buddhist Monastic Education in Guangdong

In the early 1980s, the China Buddhist Association recognized the importance of Buddhist education and took advantage of the favorable climate of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up policy. The teaching at the China Buddhist Institute resumed in September 1980. From 1980 to 1992, the China Buddhist Association, in response to social needs, held the second meeting of the China Buddhist Association's fourth council in 1983. During the meeting, they proposed the idea of building a hierarchical system of Buddhist institutions at the elementary, middle, and advanced levels. In the following years, two national symposiums on Buddhist education in the Chinese language were held, which summarized the development history and vision of Buddhist education. These symposiums are important references for this study.

From August 6th to 12th, 1986, the China Buddhist Association held a national symposium on the work of Chinese-language Buddhist institutions in Beijing. The attendees included representatives from eight institutions: China Buddhist Institute, Qixia Mountain Branch of China Buddhist Institute, Lingyan Mountain Branch of

China Buddhist Institute, Shanghai Buddhist Institute, Minnan Buddhist Institute, Sichuan Nizhong Buddhist Institute, and the Monastic Training Class at Jiuhua Mountain in Anhui Province. Officials from the China Buddhist Association and the State Administration for Religious Affairs of the State Council also participated in the meeting.

At that time, the overall development of Buddhist education was remarkable, with many interrupted Buddhist institutions being restored. However, certain issues were identified, with the most significant being the considerable gap between the level of Buddhist education and the established goal of cultivating talents in religious institutions. The existing education system was far from meeting the needs of the Buddhist cause. The proposed solution was to "establish an overall task of creating a Buddhist education system that includes high-level, intermediate-level, and elementary-level education, with each level having its focus while being interconnected. "Moreover, it was proposed that "China Buddhist College would establish a graduate program when conditions are ripe." This education system was accepted by all Buddhist colleges and played a crucial role in the subsequent development of teaching content in these colleges. During the conference, the basic textbooks for Buddhist studies were also selected. Based on the training objectives at different levels, the basic textbooks for elementary, intermediate, and advanced Buddhist studies were proposed as preliminary materials before the formal compilation of Buddhist textbooks. According to the excerpts of the meeting minutes, the textbook catalog is as follows :

Serial Number	初级佛学教材 (Primary Level Buddhist Textbooks)	中级佛学教材 (Intermediate Level Buddhist Textbooks)	高级佛学教材 (Advanced Level Buddhist Textbooks)
1	释迦牟尼佛传 (Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha)	《中国佛教简史》（黄忏华著）(A Concise History of Chinese Buddhism) by Huang Chanhua	《中国佛教史》（黄忏华著） (History of Chinese Buddhism) by Huang Chanhua
2	朝暮课诵及《二课合解》（选讲） (Morning and Evening Chants and "Interpretation of Two Lessons" - selected readings)	《佛学概论》（黄忏华著）(Introduction to Buddhist Studies) by Huang Chanhua	《世界佛教通史》(A General History of World Buddhism)
3	《佛教常识问答》（赵朴初著） (Questions and Answers on Buddhist Common Knowledge) by Zhao Puchu	《印度佛教史略》（吕澂著）(Brief History of Indian Buddhism) by Lü Cheng	《高僧传》（历代僧传选读选讲） (Biographies of Eminent Monks) - selected readings
4	《法苑谈丛》（周叔迦著） (Collections of Dharma Talks) by Zhou Shujia	《佛学》（经论选注，选读）(Buddhist Studies) - selected readings from scriptures and commentaries	《佛教研究法》（吕澂著） (Methods of Buddhist Studies) by Lü Cheng
5	《沙弥律仪》 (Rules and Rituals for Novice Monks)	《四分戒本》(Fourfold Vinaya)	《佛典泛论》（吕澂著）(General Introduction to Buddhist Scriptures) by Lü Cheng
6	《遗教三经》 (Three Sutras of Last Teachings)	《八识规矩颂》(Verses on the Eight Consciousnesses)	《摄大乘论》(Mahayana-saṃgraha)
7	佛教文物常识 (Basic Knowledge of Buddhist Cultural Relics)	《二十唯识颂》(Verses on the Twenty Verses on Cognition-only)	《辩中边论》(Madhyāntavibhāga) 《普贤行愿品》(Chapter on the Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva)
8		佛教应用文 (Buddhist Applied Literature)	《因明入正理论》(Theory of Entering the Realm of Proper Principles)

Serial Number	初级佛学教材 (Primary Level Buddhist Textbooks)	中级佛学教材 (Intermediate Level Buddhist Textbooks)	高级佛学教材 (Advanced Level Buddhist Textbooks)
9		大藏经的历史及分类 (History and Classification of the Tripitaka)	《成唯识论》 (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra)
10		佛教文物知识 (Knowledge of Buddhist Cultural Relics)	《三论玄义》 (Treatise on the Three Treatises)
11		国际佛教概况 (Overview of International Buddhism)	《十二门论》 (Twelve Gate Treatise)
12		《俱舍论》 (Kusha Prakarana)	《中观论》 (Madhyamaka-karika)
13			《大乘起信论》 (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana)
14			《教观纲宗》 (Outline of the Teachings and Views)
15			《贤首五教仪》 (Five Precepts and Rituals of the Wise)
16			《六祖坛经》 (Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch)
17			《传心法要》 (Essentials of Transmitting Mind)
18			《顿悟入道要门》 (Essentials of Sudden Enlightenment and Entering the Path)
19			《观经四帖疏》 (Commentaries on the Four Treatises on Contemplation)
20			《弥陀要解》 (Explanation of the Essential Teachings of Amitabha)
21			《戒律学概论》 (Introduction to Vinaya Studies)
22			《密宗纲要》 (Outline of Esoteric Buddhism)
23			《梵网经》 (Brahma Net Sutra)
24			《瑜伽菩萨戒经》 (Sutra of the Bodhisattva's Discipline of Yoga)

This curriculum design had a significant impact on the curriculum designs of Buddhist colleges during the same period, and Lingdong Institute adjusted its curriculum based on this schedule. Analyzing the structure of this curriculum reveals the initial overall educational planning of Buddhist education, making it a crucial reference document for educational development. Regarding the training of Sangha talents, it emphasizes cultivating the characteristics of religious morality, religious sentiments, and religious knowledge, enabling learners at different levels to possess capabilities in temple management, Buddhist studies, and teaching. The emphasis is on both learning and practice, adherence to discipline, and strict observance of monastic rules. These courses became widely adopted in Buddhist colleges of that time. However, they also faced new challenges, such as a shortage of religious talents and difficulties in securing an adequate number of qualified teachers for instruction.

From January 7th to 12th, 1992, the Chinese Buddhist Association held a national symposium on Chinese-language Buddhist education in Shanghai. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Chinese Buddhist Academy, local Buddhist colleges, and relevant officials from provincial and municipal religious affairs bureaus and Buddhist associations. Officials from the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Administration for Religious Affairs were also invited to attend. Some invited representatives from the academic community, including Buddhist scholars and experts, participated in the meeting. A total of 66 people attended the conference (China Buddhist Association, 1992). Compared to the first meeting, there was a significant increase in the number of participants and organizations, indicating significant progress in the development of Buddhist education during this period.

According to the research summary by scholar Deng (1999) in "A Review of Buddhist Education in 20th Century China", in the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Buddhist associations and famous temples in various provinces and cities across the

country resumed or established several Buddhist colleges. In Guangdong province, for example, Lingdong Buddhist College was restored in Kaigen Temple in Chaozhou, Yunmen Buddhist College was established in Yunmen Temple in Ruyuan, and Nizhong Buddhist College was founded in Dingguang Temple in Lufeng. In addition to these three institutions, there is also Caoxi Buddhist College, which was reopened in Nanhua Temple in Shaoguan in 2000, and Benhuan College, established in Hongfa Temple in Shenzhen in 2010. These are all medium-sized Buddhist colleges, and there are also several Buddhist colleges in the trial or preparatory stage. Buddhist associations and temples have organized numerous monastic training classes and Buddhist training classes throughout the country, and they have made significant contributions to social education, the "Hope Project", and the donation of funds and goods to impoverished students.

Relevant documents on the founding of Guangdong Buddhist Academy include the scholar Jing's (1991) "Reestablishment of Lingdong Buddhist Academy at Guochan Temple in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou". The social magazine "Dharma Realm Spring and Autumn", published by Fayin Magazine (1991); "Yunmen Buddhist Academy Opens Meditation Class and Nizhong Vinaya Class" in Fayin Magazine (1997); "Provincial Ethnic Religion Classes" in Guangdong Buddhist Magazine (2000); a speech by Huang Decai, Deputy Director of the Affairs Committee, at the First Opening Ceremony of Caoxi Buddhist College"; scholar Yibing (2000); "Shanwei Buddhist Association is committed to supporting the running of Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College"; and "Chaozhou Kaiyuan", published by Master Da Liang (2012). There are relevant records in documents such as "Shenzhen Hongfa Temple Holds the Unveiling Ceremony of Benhuan College" published by Fayin Magazine (2015).

In 2011, the State Administration for Religious Affairs approved the establishment of Guangdong Buddhist College, which includes four branch colleges. In 2015, it was officially renamed as Guangdong Buddhist College with the following

branch colleges: Caoxi College, Nizhong College, Lingdong College, and Yunmen College.

Guangdong Buddhist College receives operational guidance and supervisory management from the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee. The college is headed by a president, who also serves as the chairman of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. There are five vice presidents, with four of them serving as deans of the branch colleges and one being a vice chairman or secretary-general of the Guangdong Buddhist Association. The college also has several members of the college affairs committee. The main campus of the Buddhist College and each of the four branch colleges has its organizational management structures.

Guangdong Buddhist College offers a rich range of academic programs, including a two-year preparatory program, a four-year undergraduate program, and a three-year teacher training program. The college focuses on Buddhist studies as its core discipline, with specialized research areas covering Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, Vinaya (monastic discipline), Tiantai Buddhism, Madhyamaka, and Abhidharma, among others. Each branch college has its peculiar emphasis and distinctive features in talent cultivation. Currently, there are 451 full-time students and 146 full-time teachers, as well as 51 adjunct faculty members at the college.

Guangdong Buddhist College covers a total area of over 560,000 square meters, with approximately 45,000 square meters dedicated to teaching facilities. The library houses a collection of over 200,000 volumes. The college is well-equipped with various hardware facilities, including teaching buildings, libraries, meditation halls, chanting halls, and Buddhist halls for teaching and practice. There are also dormitory buildings, Yunshuilou (a place for spiritual practice), a clinic, and a multifunctional conference hall for daily living and administrative purposes. These facilities provide excellent support for teaching and student life. In 2021, the college implemented a

campus management system, realizing the network information management of teaching.

Guangdong Buddhist College has pursued the correct direction of education, aiming to cultivate outstanding young Buddhist students who are "politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, morally influential, and capable of playing a key role" in society. The college emphasizes ideological education and adheres to the educational principles of "integration of college and monastery" and "integration of learning and practice". It emphasizes developing students' comprehensive qualities and has provided a large number of excellent talents to Guangdong Province and even the whole country.

Over the years, the college has trained approximately 3,000 graduates, including around 900 outstanding graduates, many of whom have assumed important positions in Buddhist institutions, including venues, colleges, and organizations nationwide. The college has hosted various academic exchanges and seminars, such as the National Buddhist Scripture Recitation Exchange Conference, Cross-Strait Exchange Base and Zen Culture Exchange Activities, "Madhyamaka" Summit Forum, and "Mahayana Buddhism and Contemporary Society" Symposium. It has also established cooperative teaching and research bases with institutions such as Renmin University of China, Sun Yat-sen University, and Guangdong Provincial Institute of Ethnic and Religious Studies. The colleges engage in the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines and rules and academic research in accordance with the direction of Buddhist Sinicization. The college's faculty actively participates in research activities such as publishing monographs, presenting papers, developing textbooks, and engaging in academic exchanges, resulting in abundant academic achievements. Eight teachers have been awarded the honorary title of Outstanding Teacher in National Buddhist Colleges. The colleges have achieved remarkable educational outcomes and enjoy a particular reputation within the Buddhist community and society at large.

2.2.2 Key Characteristics and Practices of Buddhist Monastic Education

The main characteristic of Buddhist temple education is that its organizational structure is different from that of mainstream social and national education. From a societal perspective, Buddhist education can be categorized as religious education, which is part of the educational system in Western countries. In a broader sense, religious education refers to all educational systems and activities related to religion. In a narrower sense, religious education refers specifically to the educational systems directly undertaken by religious organizations to train religious clergy and focus on religious and theological knowledge.

According to the regulations on the administration of religious schools in the People's Republic of China, Religious schools are not part of the national education system. The academic qualifications obtained from religious education apply only within the religious community. This distinction is based on the provisions in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which uphold and protect the freedom of religious belief. China is a country with diverse religious development. When educational administrative authorities interact with schools and religious groups, promoting specific religious beliefs exclusively would create inequality. The introduction of religious teaching materials may also lead to conflicts within families of different faith backgrounds, and it may give students and parents the false impression that their freedom of belief is being infringed upon. Therefore, due to these reasons, religious education and national education maintain a respectful and independent relationship in their collaboration.

According to Article 9 of the Regulations on the Administration of Religious Schools, higher religious schools require applicants to have at least a diploma from a secondary religious school, a general senior high school, or an equivalent qualification. Article 10 states that applicants for admission should have at least a

diploma from a general junior high school. From the perspective of comprehensive education, this means that after completing basic national education, the next step is to pursue specialized studies in religious education. With the improvement of the overall cultural literacy of the population, there can be better transmission of religious ideologies, thus facilitating the proper development of religions.

2.2.3 Role of Buddhist Monastic Education in Society and Its Impact

From a historical perspective, Buddhist practices have become an important component of cultural exchange among people from various countries. Whether in the fields of philosophy, literature, art, ethics, or the natural sciences such as medicine, chemistry, astronomy, and biology, Buddhism has left behind a rich cultural heritage. These cultural legacies are a manifestation of religious education.

Buddhist temple education plays a crucial role in modern national education and social university education. In Western countries, religious education has long been included as part of school education. This approach is not related to the separation of church and state but purely regards religion as an essential part of cultivating national identity. Even though the dominant religious belief in the Western world is Christianity, based on the spirit of religious freedom, campus religious education is not limited to Christian education alone. Students are allowed to choose different religious courses according to their own beliefs. For example, in Australia, there are many descendants of Asian immigrants who believe in Buddhism. In terms of grouping for religious courses, they can choose the Buddhist group, and local Buddhist organizations appoint the teachers. This educational measure demonstrates the government's emphasis on religion, but it does not provide opportunities for different religions to learn about and respect each other within this curriculum. In the experience of religious education in Singaporean schools, some religions even exhibit a tense relationship of rivalry. The programme is undoubtedly inadequate in fostering a collective consciousness of mutual tolerance among citizens.

Buddhist temple education represents a distinct social phenomenon and a unique culture that exerts specific social influence. Therefore, Buddhist education should take into account people's correct understanding of Buddhist principles. It should not only consider the needs within institutions such as Buddhist temples and Buddhist colleges, but also cultivate a proper understanding of Buddhism among the general public through popular education of Buddhist knowledge. The primary focus and objective should be to serve the construction of social ethics and culture.

Wang (2014) offers distinctive viewpoints regarding the contributions of Zen Buddhism to the development of education in Guangdong in his article "A Brief Discussion on the Unique Value of Zen Buddhism in Influencing the Development of Education in Guangdong". He believes that if we can develop students' creative thinking and shape their worldview through the profound and discerning thoughts of Huineng, it would be a beneficial strategy to cultivate wise individuals. He (2001) discusses the current situation, characteristics, and issues of Buddhist development in Guangdong in his article. He introduces the contributions of Buddhist education in promoting and propagating public welfare. He presents data showing that from 1991 to 1995, the Buddhist community in Guangdong donated a total of 12 million yuan to support public welfare, bridge construction, road repair, poverty alleviation, and disaster relief. From 1996 to 2000, the total amount of various donations reached 53 million yuan. Buddhism made the largest donation of any of the five major religions. This is not due to the large number of Buddhist believers but rather the spiritual practice of the Bodhisattva path, which has always emphasized self-benefit and benefiting others, making it more outstanding in the field of public welfare. In their article "A Literature Review on the Application of Mindfulness in Psychological Education for College Students," Yan et al. (2023) compiled additional research articles on the concept of mindfulness in Buddhism. Their work indirectly demonstrates the influence

of Buddhist education on university education and confirms its practical and profound value.

Other scholars who explore Buddhist temple education, its educational content, and conceptual values include academics Cui and Zhang (2018) in their article "Buddhist Culture and the Cultivation of Values for Ecological Citizens in the New Era." This article elucidates Buddhist education from concepts such as "dependence on the correct, non-dualistic view", "compassion and inherent nature", and "no-self", highlighting the significance of Buddhist education for the construction of ecological civilization in the new era.

2.3 The Policy Background of Chinese Buddhist Temple Education in the New Era

At the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it was solemnly declared that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, marking a profound historical turning point in China's development. This declaration covers various aspects of the party's leadership and construction, as well as the economy, politics, rule of law, science and technology, culture, education, people's well-being, ethnic affairs, religion, society, ecological civilization, national security, defense, and the military. It has sparked extensive research and discussion, particularly in the field of education. Scholars such as Zhou (2019) in "Research on the Implementation of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education in the New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" Lu and Tian (2022) in "Exploration of the Methodology for Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era into Classroom Teaching: A Linear System Theory Course as an Example," and Tan (2023) in "Research on Education Cost Accounting in Higher Education under the Background of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era: A Case Study

in Northeastern Sichuan Province," have conducted discussions on the development of higher education in the new era, summarizing the achievements and future development trends of education since its inception.

Scholars in the field of Buddhist education have also extensively discussed this topic. For example, scholar Wu (2018) in "The Practice of Socialist Religious Thought with Chinese Characteristics in Zhoushan: An Analysis of the Reasons for Buddhist Conversion and the Current State of Belief" examines the reasons for Buddhist conversion and the current state of belief. Based on this, the author proposes suggestions and strategies to guide Buddhist values to align with a socialist society, emphasizing the importance of inheriting tradition while embracing innovative development. This signifies the need for the Buddhist education sector to advance to a new level.

In another example, Liu (2018) reports on the "Symposium on the Path and Practice of Upholding the Sinicization of Buddhism in the New Era" held in Beijing, which explores how Buddhism should develop in the new era. Similarly, scholar Yu (2021) discusses in "Research on Guiding Tibetan Buddhism to Adapt to Socialist Society in the Context of the New Era" how to guide Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to the socialist society in the new era. The article emphasizes the need for effective guidance to safeguard religious interests and contribute to national unity, social progress, and development. It also highlights the importance of allowing religious beliefs to keep pace with the times and meet new challenges while ensuring freedom of religion.

2.3.1 An Overview of Religious School Policy and Its Impact on Religion in China

Religious issues are important social problems that can impact national security and social stability. Religious institutions need to grasp religious theories and promote the positive aspects of religion. Since their establishment, significant religious associations in China have consistently upheld the responsibility of safeguarding

national interests and actively developing their unique characteristics. As part of these efforts, they have established religious institutions and colleges.

As religious institutions and colleges increase, each religious community has begun discussing how to improve the correctness of religious politics and construct institutions that are compatible with society. In the field of social education, scholar Wang (2001) emphasized in his article "Religious Institutions Should Focus on the Teaching of 'Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics Theory'" the rapid development and growth of the religious sector with the support of the Party and government since the reform and opening-up era, affirming the scientific and practical nature of religious policies. Dai (2014) published "The Characteristics and Functions of Religious Studies Teaching in Chinese Public Security Colleges" and argued that learning and mastering religious theoretical knowledge is not only necessary for public security work but also an effective way to cultivate the humanistic qualities of police officers. Deng (2020) wrote "Strategic Analysis for Enhancing the Capability of Vocational Colleges in Preventing Religious Infiltration" and believed that studying religious education requires establishing a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values, being aware of the potential influence of illegal organizations' religious infiltration, and having a proper understanding of religion.

China's religious policy originated from the "Common Program", and Jiang (2023) states in her article "Contributions and Enlightenment of the 'Common Program' to the Construction of the Chinese National Community" that the "Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference" (referred to as the "Common Program") was the first temporary constitution of New China. It mainly proposed the equality of all ethnic groups, the respect for the customs and religious freedom of all ethnic groups, and the assistance in the development of various constructions in ethnic regions. Since the formulation of these policies, they have played a decisive role in the

implementation of religious policies, and the development of religious institutions is also included in the scope of these guidelines.

The specific documents specifically addressing the development of religious institutions were not initially issued independently. However, related literature may contain or briefly mention the requirements for talent cultivation in these institutions. The earliest document is the "Implementation Measures for the Registration and Management of Religious Social Groups" issued by the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 1991. It was mainly framed to address the social chaos at that time.

According to Yu (2002) in his article "Review and Prospect of Religious Policy and Religious Work," at that time, underground seminaries were established by Christianity, and the Catholic Church was manipulated by the Vatican, openly confronting the Party and the government, which led to a policy crisis. Islam incited large-scale armed conflicts among the Muslim masses, posing a threat to national security. To address these issues, corresponding management measures were formulated, and detailed policies on how to establish religious institutions legally were also specified.

In 1994, the State Council issued the "Regulations on the Management of Religious Activity Sites" and the "Regulations on the Administration of Religious Activities by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China". In 1998, the State Council renamed the State Administration for Religious Affairs to the National Administration for Religious Affairs. In 2004, the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" were issued, replacing the 1994 "Regulations on the Management of Religious Activity Sites". In 2007, the "Measures for the Establishment of Religious Colleges" were issued, which is a landmark law and regulation in terms of legalizing religious education. In 2013, the "Methods for the Qualification Assessment and Title Evaluation and Appointment of Teachers in Religious Colleges (Trial)" were promulgated. This method significantly

strengthened the construction of teaching staff in religious colleges and improved the standardization and management level of religious colleges.

In 2017, the revised "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and the "General Provisions of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China" were promulgated. These two laws and regulations were formulated to implement the new situation and requirements of religious work after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

The 2017 "Regulations on Religious Affairs" established three types of legal entities: religious colleges, religious groups, and religious activity sites, and it defined the system of religious legal persons. It can be seen as a significant transformative force in promoting the transformation of religious colleges from private schools to regular institutions. In 2018, the White Paper titled "China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief" was published, which mainly includes basic policies for protecting freedom of religious belief, legal guarantees for the right to freedom of religious belief, orderly conduct of religious activities, full play of the role of the religious community, and positive and healthy religious relations.

In 2021, the "Administrative Measures for Religious Colleges" were officially promulgated, marking the formal path of legal governance for religious colleges. This "measure" further refines the development directions of religious colleges based on the "Regulations on Religious Affairs." It actively promotes the alignment of religious colleges with mainstream universities, covering various aspects such as organizational structure, building safety, fire safety, food safety, and hygiene. It can be said that it comprehensively accelerates the development of religious colleges, which have been relatively slow, and provides positive guidance for their prospects. The announcement is an important reform event in the context of the new era.

Based on the timeline of the aforementioned policy announcements, it can be seen that China adopts a lenient approach to the management of religions. Under the

premise of ensuring the healthy development of religions, corresponding regulations are formulated, especially during critical periods of national transformation. China has a long history and, influenced by various schools of thought such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, possesses a distinctive cultural heritage. However, outdated ideologies may not play the most effective role on the world stage today, which requires correct guidance and assistance. The implementation of religious policies aims to address the shortcomings in the self-development of religions and present their positive aspects to the world. China adheres to the principle of "religious freedom" in handling religious issues. Therefore, the legal governance of religions appears to be managing religions, but in reality, it promotes their development. This is in line with the guiding ideology, strategic goals, key tasks, and policy measures proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping to adhere to the sinicization of religions and carry out effective religious work in the new era.

2.3.2 Specific Policies and Regulations Affecting Guangdong Buddhist Temple Education

For Guangdong's Buddhist temple education, the most influential policy and regulation is the "Regulations on the Establishment of Religious Colleges" issued in 2007. The operation of Buddhist colleges in Guangdong Province has always been aligned with mainstream universities. Although there are still shortcomings in terms of economy, conditions, faculty, and student resources, efforts have been made to address these shortcomings. The "Regulations on the Establishment of Religious Colleges" clearly indicate the direction and goals of education and set requirements for the qualifications of religious organizations in operating schools. At the same time, the government's religious affairs departments supervise, inspect, and guide religious colleges under the law.

In 2014, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission and the Quality Supervision Bureau of Guangdong Province issued a notice regarding the application

for organizational code certificates for religious activity venues and religious colleges. This notice strengthened the management of religious activity venues and religious colleges, promoting their healthy development. By obtaining the organizational code certificate of the People's Republic of China, religious colleges have obtained formal identification, assuring the selection of reputable Buddhist colleges by the monastic community.

In 2016, Guangdong Province completed the first national qualification assessment for teachers in Chinese Buddhist colleges. This assessment was conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations and requirements of the State Administration for Religious Affairs' "Provisional Measures for the Qualification Assessment and Title Evaluation of Teachers in Religious Colleges", the "Implementation Rules for the Qualification Assessment of Teachers in Chinese Buddhist Colleges", and the "Notice of the Buddhist Association of China on the Qualification Assessment of Teachers in Chinese Buddhist Colleges" (BFAC [2016] No. 392). The assessment was completed on November 26-27, 2016, for the first 101 applicants from Guangdong Buddhist College.

In 2017, the "Notice of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province on Further Regulating the Work of Religious Colleges in Our Province" was issued. It stipulates the regular submission of materials related to the daily work of religious colleges, including the annual work plan and work summary, the staffing situation of teachers in religious colleges and the basic information of full-time/part-time teachers, the admission information of new students, the summary of graduates and their assessment, and relevant management systems for education and teaching. It also includes an overview of annual financial income and expenditure, important issues or suggestions that need to be reported to the provincial ethnic and religious affairs commission, and other aspects. In terms of ideological and political work, it requires the formulation of annual special work plans and work summaries for

ideological and political education, the employment situation of full-time/part-time teachers of ideological and political courses, a comprehensive assessment of ideological and political education for each batch of graduates, materials analyzing the ideological dynamics of faculty and students, and political review by the provincial ethnic and religious affairs commission for the list of prospective admitted students, with the political review opinion as the primary basis for admission. It also includes the scheduling and content arrangement of ideological and political education courses.

In December 2018, Comrade Huang Zhongxing, a member of the Party Leadership Group and Deputy Director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province, led a team to conduct research at Caoxi College and Yunmen College of Guangdong Buddhist College. They held discussions with the leaders of the two colleges and the local religious departments on implementing the spirit of the "Notice of the General Office of the Central United Front Work Department on Strengthening the Teaching of Public Courses in Religious Colleges". The team also developed guidelines to enhance the teaching of public courses in religious colleges, with a particular focus on ideological and political education. It was emphasized that the teaching hours for ideological and political theory courses should not be less than 10% of the total teaching hours, and the teaching hours for Chinese culture and society courses should not be less than 20% of the total teaching hours. The arrangement of public course teaching work was emphasized.

In 2019, the Provincial Academic Affairs Meeting for Religious Colleges in Guangdong was officially held, which focused on implementing the "Notice of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province on Further Regulating the Work of Religious Colleges in our Province" (Yueminzongfa [2015] No. 69), as well as strengthening the management and utilization of special subsidies for religious colleges.

In 2019, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province attached enormous importance to the symposium for ideological and political theory course teachers that General Secretary Xi Jinping presided over. They immediately issued a notice to religious colleges in the province titled "Notice of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province on Studying General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Speech at the Symposium for Ideological and Political Theory Course Teachers in Schools." The notice required religious colleges to improve their understanding and implement the directives from the Central United Front Work Department and the State Administration for Religious Affairs concerning the development of religious colleges and the enhancement of public course instruction within these institutions. It emphasized the direction of sinicizing religions and vigorously cultivating talents who are "politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, morally influential, and able to play a key role" in patriotism and religious affairs. This notice also guided the training of talents in religious colleges.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Due to the large population in Guangdong Province, strict control measures were implemented for epidemic prevention and control. Regarding religious colleges, two notices were issued titled "Notice on the Work Plan for Responding to the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia Epidemic" and "Notice on Further Strengthening the Epidemic Prevention and Control Work in Religious Colleges". The notices emphasized "five adherence": coordinating deployment, strictly implementing prevention and control responsibilities, strictly implementing closed management measures, strictly implementing the daily reporting system for epidemic situations, reducing the impact of the epidemic on teaching by suspending classes but not stopping learning, and making preparations for resumption of classes. These measures significantly ensured the health of students and teachers in Buddhist colleges and stimulated the development of online teaching.

In 2021, the State Administration for Religious Affairs officially released "Management Measures for Religious Colleges," which marked the formal transition of religious colleges to a legal framework. This provided new ideas and policy guidance for the development of religious colleges. In the same year, the "Detailed Rules for the Management of Per Capita Subsidies for Religious Colleges in Guangdong Province" were issued. Since Buddhist colleges have been economically dependent on temples, the per capita subsidies in Guangdong Province helped alleviate the financial pressure on temple-based education.

In 2022, the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China issued a notice to conduct evaluations of religious colleges. The purpose of this evaluation was to improve the quality of education in religious colleges, clarify educational objectives, and carry out a nationwide assessment of religious colleges.

2.3.3 Guangdong Government's Support and Assistance to Buddhist Monastery Educational Institutions

The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province has released government updates that include more than 60 relevant articles. In 2014, Zhang Lebin, the Deputy Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, conducted research on the situation of religious colleges in Shaoguan City and gave positive recognition. He acknowledged that the two higher Buddhist colleges in Shaoguan have provided a large number of Buddhist talents who possess both virtue and knowledge, emphasizing both theoretical study and practical cultivation. These colleges have made positive contributions to the development of Chinese Buddhism, especially the Chan sect, and enjoy a high reputation both domestically and internationally.

In 2016, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province organized a joint meeting on ideological and political education in religious colleges across the province (Wang, 2016). Deputy Director Huang Zhongxing summarized the achievements of various religious colleges in ideological and political

education and emphasized the need to enhance the effectiveness of such education continuously. The meeting emphasized the roles of government religious departments, religious organizations, and religious colleges in this regard. Clear guidelines were set for the curriculum of ideological and political education in religious colleges. In the same year, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province organized a study tour for the leaders of religious colleges in the province to Beijing, promoting communication and exchanges among Buddhist colleges with the assistance of the government.

In preparation for the successful organization of the joint meeting on ideological and political education in religious colleges in Guangdong Province, Yang Zhenggen, Deputy Secretary of the Party Group and Deputy Director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of the province, conducted research on religious college work in Shaoguan and Chaozhou from November 14 to 16 (Wang, 2017).

On the occasion of the 34th Teachers' Day in 2018, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangdong Province issued condolence letters and distributed financial aid to express greetings and respect to the faculty and staff of religious colleges throughout the province. At the same time, Huang Zhongxing, a member of the Party Group and Deputy Director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of the province, along with his delegation, visited and extended their condolences to all the teachers at Guangdong Union Theological Seminary and held discussions with teacher representatives (Wu, 2018). During the meeting, it was proposed to address the issue of single-source funding for religious colleges by establishing a funding mechanism that combines government investment, self-funding from the religious community, and social fundraising. Additionally, efforts were made to explore solutions to enrollment challenges, such as combining full-time and part-time education models in religious colleges, strengthening training for existing faculty members, and alleviating the long-term shortage of students in the colleges.

In the same year, the "Symposium on Religious Colleges in Guangdong Province and Joint Meeting on Ideological and Political Education" was held. The meeting summarized the experiences and practices since the first religious college conference in Guangdong in 2014 (Wu, 2018). It analyzed the situation, tasks, and existing problems faced by religious colleges in our province under the new circumstances. It made arrangements for further strengthening and improving the work of religious colleges.

In 2019, in order to address the shortage of teachers in religious colleges, Guangdong province vigorously promoted the "delivery of courses to schools" to standardize the teaching of public courses in religious colleges (Wu, 2019). In principle, the ideological and political courses were set to 54 class hours per semester, and other public courses were set to a minimum of 36 class hours per semester. Each teacher should not teach at more than two schools, and centralized teaching sessions should be held approximately once a month on average.

In the same year, Guangdong province also organized training courses for academic affairs directors and teachers of public courses in religious colleges (Wu, 2019). Excellent university teachers were hired to teach courses on topics such as "The Historical Process of Religious Sinicization", "Educational Psychology", "Classroom Teaching Practices", and "Introduction to Academic Affairs Management". The main focus was to improve the educational level of religious colleges in Guangdong province and guide teachers and students in religious colleges to prioritize diligence, virtue, discernment, and practicality.

In August of the same year, Guangdong organized a study and research activity on ideological and political education in religious colleges, focusing on the exchange and discussion of strengthening ideological and political courses and public courses in religious colleges. Participants discussed the challenges in strengthening

ideological and political courses and public courses, provided suggestions and recommendations, and made plans for future development of these courses.

In 2020, Guangdong province organized training courses for religious college administrators and teachers of public courses (Wu, 2020). Associate Professor Ding Dechao from Hanshan Normal University was invited to give a special lecture on "Never Forget the Initial Aspiration, Always Remember the Mission-The First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the Spirit of the Red Boat." The heads of various religious colleges expressed their commitment to the correct direction of education and efforts to cultivate outstanding religious educators who are politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, influential in character, and capable of playing a key role when needed.

In 2021, the Guangdong Province Religious College Joint Conference on Ideological and Political Education was held in Huizhou. Discussions were held on the "Management Regulations for Per Capita Subsidies for Religious Colleges in Guangdong Province (Draft for Comments)" and the delegation of certain responsibilities to the municipal ethnic and religious affairs bureaus for the management of local religious colleges. The conference also included an observation of the achievements in ideological and political education at Guangdong Taoist College (Gao, 2021).

In 2022, the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission held a symposium on the evaluation of religious colleges in the province (Gao, 2022). The meeting discussed and deliberated on the evaluation work plan and indicator system for religious colleges and deployed measures to promote the evaluation work of religious colleges. In the same year, the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission established a mechanism for the administrative delegation of religious colleges (Gao, 2022). Based on the discussions at the 2021 Provincial Joint Conference on Ideological and Political Education in

Religious Colleges, the mechanism was revised and improved. After legal scrutiny by the commission's legal advisors, a final set of 10 delegated management matters was determined. These matters mainly involve entrusting local religious departments to assist in the management of religious colleges.

In 2022, the Central United Front Work Department issued a notice on evaluations of religious colleges. The Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission attached great importance to this and conducted a comprehensive review, summary, and analysis of the overall development, institutional construction, talent cultivation, fund management and utilization, and teacher team building of the colleges since their establishment. They also standardized the writing of self-evaluation reports for religious college evaluations. This initiative effectively trained the faculty and students, enhanced their abilities and qualities, and achieved the goal of "promoting construction, improvement, and strengthening through evaluations" (Gao, 2022).

2.4 Current Situation of Education in Buddhist Temples in Guangdong

The history of Buddhist colleges in Guangdong dates back to 1933. At that time, Venerable Taixu established the Lingdong Buddhist College during his propagation period at Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou. In 1943, Master Xu Yun founded the Nanhua Vinaya College at Nanhua Temple. Between 1983 and 1995, monastic training classes were successively established at Nanhua Temple, Yunmen Temple, and Dingguang Temple. With the approval of the Guangdong Buddhist Association and the Guangdong Provincial Religious Affairs Bureau, these classes were upgraded to Buddhist colleges. In 2011, the State Administration for Religious Affairs approved the establishment of Guangdong Buddhist College, which consists of four branch colleges.

In 2015, it was officially renamed as Caoxi College, Nizhong College, Lingdong College, and Yunmen College of Guangdong Buddhist College.

2.4.1 An Overview of the Existing Educational Institutions of Buddhist Monasteries in Guangdong

However, with the progress of social development, the comprehensive quality of the monastic community has undergone significant changes, and Guangdong Buddhist College has also experienced rapid development and growth in this context. The earliest research on Buddhist education in Guangdong is discussed in Hongming's (1999) "A Discussion on Guangdong Buddhist Education". This article is one of the early studies on Buddhist colleges in Guangdong. However, at the time of its publication, Guangdong Caoxi Buddhist College and Benhuan College were not yet established. Due to its limited timeliness, the research can only serve as a reference for early studies on the development of Buddhist colleges. Nevertheless, it provides a comprehensive and valuable exploration of the subject.

Scholars conducted subsequent research on the topic. Chang (2000) conducted interviews with Ven. Honghui, a prominent monk from Qingyunshan Dingguang Temple in Lufeng City, Guangdong, published "Education Comes First, School Comes First, Talents Come First: An Interview Record with Ven. Honghui." Through these interviews, the entire process of temple-based education was explored. In the same year, there was also a study on "Sangha Education", which examined the talent cultivation and educational quality of Caoxi Buddhist College and Nizhong Buddhist College.

Scholars such as Lei and Ma (2007) have conducted detailed research on the development of religious institutions in Guangdong in their book "A Brief History of Religion in Guangdong". However, their studies may lack in-depth analysis.

In the article "A Review and Prospect of Guangdong Buddhist Studies since the Reform and Opening-up" by Li (2020), it is mentioned that since the reform

and opening-up, Buddhist studies in Guangdong have made significant progress. More than 20 research institutions focusing on Buddhist studies have been established in the province. Several universities have also established master's and doctoral programs in the field of religious studies. The number of researchers engaged in Buddhist studies has continued to grow, and there has been an increase in external exchanges. Overall, the academic achievements in the field have shown a trend of in-depth exploration and multidimensional expansion, indicating a broader development prospect.

In Tan's (2023) work, "The Development Status and Path Selection of Buddhist Education in Guangdong," detailed historical explanations of Guangdong Buddhist Academy and its four affiliated colleges are provided, along with an analysis of the existing issues.

In addition, the official platforms of the four Buddhist colleges have released information explaining their current status. Based on the aforementioned literature, it can be seen that, although Buddhist education in Guangdong started relatively late, it has benefited from the historical heritage of Zen Buddhist practice and the practical experiences of modern Buddhist education. With strong support from various sectors of society, the four Buddhist colleges have trained and supplied nearly two thousand monks in Guangdong Province and even across the country in just over a decade. They have made contributions to reversing the shortage of talented monks and promoting the healthy development of Buddhism. As the mainstay of Buddhist education in Guangdong, they have also accumulated valuable experience in running educational institutions.

2.4.2 Buddhist Monastic Education Curriculum and Teaching Methods

Guangdong Buddhist Academy offers undergraduate education, teacher training programs, and layperson education. Prior to that, it also provided

correspondence education. Information can be gathered from the enrollment brochures and official WeChat platforms of the four Buddhist colleges.

Since 1995, with the issuance of the "Decision on Accelerating Scientific and Technological Progress" by the Central Committee and the State Council of China, Buddhism has also accelerated the use of scientific means to disseminate Buddhist education.

In 2002, Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong started enrolling students for correspondence education, as documented in the "Enrollment Brochure of the Correspondence Department of Lingdong Buddhist College, Guangdong Province". The correspondence program continued until 2016, with a total of eight sessions. In the "Enrollment Brochure of the Correspondence Program for the 2016 Class of Lingdong Buddhist College, Guangdong Buddhist Academy", it is mentioned: "Since 2002, Lingdong Buddhist College of Guangdong Buddhist Academy has primarily provided distance education to lay disciples through correspondence and online teaching methods. Distance education teaching methods include mailing textbooks and instructional materials, as well as utilizing magazines, newspapers, and the internet."

In 2011, Guangdong Buddhist Academy was officially established, merging the four Buddhist colleges into one institution. The organizational structure of the school also became standardized. This can be observed from the enrollment brochures of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong in 2007 and the enrollment brochure of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong Buddhist Academy.

The "2007 Enrollment Brochure of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong" offered a two-year preparatory class and a two-year regular class, admitting 30 students each. In the description of the "2015 Autumn Enrollment Brochure of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong Province", it is mentioned that Lingdong Buddhist College is a higher Buddhist institution that focuses on Buddhist studies as the core discipline in the Chinese language department. Currently, there are

three types of education: monastic education, layperson education, and distance education, with the authority to confer diplomas for preparatory and undergraduate programs. The college has a strong faculty, including five holders of master's degrees, eight holders of undergraduate degrees, and two holders of associate degrees (excluding adjunct professors and lecturers).

In the "2018 Enrollment Brochure for the First Intermediate Studies Graduate Class of Lingdong Buddhist College, Guangdong Buddhist Academy", it is stated that the undergraduate program is four years and the graduate program is two years. This indicates that adjustments were made to the existing teaching structure and enrollment goals starting from 2018.

With the reformation of policies and regulations, the development of Buddhist colleges has taken a new direction since 2007, when the State Administration for Religious Affairs issued the "Regulations on the Establishment of Religious Colleges." This regulation was influenced by the popularization of nine-year compulsory education in society, leading to the reclassification of Buddhist colleges into higher and secondary Buddhist colleges. Following the model of secular universities, the regulation stipulates that the duration of study in higher religious colleges should be at least four years, and graduates should obtain a bachelor's degree or higher. The duration of study in secondary religious schools is set at 2 to 3 years, and graduates obtain diplomas at the vocational or associate degree level. This document signifies the recognition of religious education by the state. It greatly promotes the new journey of religious colleges to operate in accordance with the law and with scientific management.

In 2015, the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee issued the "Notice on Further Regulating the Work of Religious Colleges in Guangdong Province", which further improved the qualifications for Buddhist colleges in Guangdong Province. It emphasized the need for better communication and

understanding with the colleges, as well as supervision to ensure the implementation of ideological and political education, the regular submission of materials related to the daily work of religious colleges, and the production and distribution of graduation certificates. Additionally, the utilization of online platforms was encouraged, and the Office of Institutional Affairs at Guangdong Buddhist Academy was responsible for promptly uploading the summary table of each graduating class to the official website of Guangdong Buddhist Association for online access.

Guangdong Buddhist Academy offers a diverse range of academic programs, including a two-year preparatory class, a four-year undergraduate program, and a three-year teacher training program. The academy's core discipline is Buddhist studies, covering various specializations such as Chan Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, Vinaya studies, Tiantai Buddhism, Madhyamaka, and Abhidharma. Each college within the academy focuses on different aspects and features of talent cultivation.

Based on its characteristics, Guangdong Buddhist Academy has developed a scientific and comprehensive "Education and Training Program" that establishes a well-structured curriculum system, including compulsory courses, elective courses, and practical courses. The academy ensures the rationality and clarity of the training process, which is implemented throughout the teaching process. The academy offers a two-year preparatory class, a four-year undergraduate program, and a three-year teacher training program, all of which are full-time programs. The distribution of course hours strictly follows the 7:2:1 ratio, with professional courses accounting for 70% of the total, Chinese culture and social courses accounting for 20%, and ideological and political courses accounting for 10%.

The professional courses at Guangdong Buddhist Academy are reasonably categorized and proportionally distributed, including categories such as "Buddhist history", "Buddhist doctrine", and "Buddhist scriptures". In the past five years, the

proportions of these three categories of Buddhist courses have been approximately 91% for Buddhist doctrine, 6% for Buddhist history, and 3% for Buddhist scriptures.

Each college within Guangdong Buddhist Academy emphasizes different aspects based on its characteristics. The specialized courses focus on areas such as Chan Buddhism, Madhyamaka, Abhidharma, Tiantai Buddhism, and Vinaya studies, reflecting the latest advancements in religious studies. Courses such as Buddhist thesis writing and meditation practice incorporate the latest theoretical and practical achievements, enabling students to develop a well-rounded knowledge, skills, and quality structure.

2.4.3 Enrollment and Student Situation of Buddhist Monastery Education

The official data from Guangdong Buddhist Academy and its four branch campuses indicate that there are currently 451 full-time students enrolled at the academy.

The academy has cumulatively trained approximately 3,000 graduates, including around 900 outstanding graduates who hold important positions in various Buddhist venues, Buddhist colleges, and Buddhist organizations across the country. Since their establishment, the colleges have organized numerous academic exchanges and seminars, such as the National Buddhist Scripture Exposition Exchange Conference, the Cross-Strait Exchange Base and Zen Cultural Exchange Activities, the "Madhyamaka" Summit Forum (Lei Yutia, 2017), and the Seminar on Mahayana Buddhism and Contemporary Society. They have also established cooperative teaching and research bases with institutions such as Renmin University of China, Sun Yat-sen University (Hanqinxuan, 2002), and Guangdong Provincial Institute of Ethnic and Religious Studies.

The colleges are committed to the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines and rules, as well as academic research, in line with the promotion of the sinicization of

Buddhism. The faculty members actively participate in research activities, including publishing monographs, presenting papers, compiling teaching materials, and engaging in academic exchanges, and have achieved rich academic results. Buddhist Colleges nationwide have awarded eight teachers the title of Excellent Teacher (Miaojie, 2018). The colleges have made significant achievements in their educational endeavors and enjoy a particular reputation within the academic community and society at large.

The academic performance of the students of Guangdong Buddhist College in the past five years is summarized, and the relevant statistics of the pass rate, excellent rate, graduation rate, and drop-out rate of students are as follows:

Table 2.1 Summary of Evaluation Indicators for Students of Guangdong Buddhist College

College Name	Passing Rate	Excellent Rate	Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate
Caoxi College	95%	20%	95%	15%
Nizhong College	97%	35%	100%	3%
Lingdong College	90%	25%	100%	16.40%
Cloud Gate Academy	95%	20%	97%	15%

According to the information provided by Guangdong Buddhist College, the current number and situation of students are as follows:

	Headquarters	Four Colleges			
	Guangdong Buddhist College	Caoxi College	Nizhong College	Lingdong College	Cloud Gate Academy
Student	474	55	173	95	151

2.5 Challenges and Problems of Buddhist Monastic Education

Buddhist colleges have faced different challenges at different times, and these challenges have come from various sources. The following overview will summarize relevant literature from three aspects: policies, secularization development, and the economy.

2.5.1 The Influence of Policies and Regulations on Buddhist Monastery Education

Guangdong Buddhist College has established comprehensive and standardized college regulations, management systems, and norms based on the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and the "Management Measures for Religious Colleges". The implementation and operation of these regulations and systems have been effective.

Guangdong Buddhist College is guided by Xi Jinping's thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, according to field investigations conducted at its four Buddhist colleges and available public information. It follows the theories and educational policies of the Communist Party of China's religious work in the new era and formulates the college's regulations based on its specific circumstances. The college has developed regulations in various aspects, such as teacher management, student management, teaching management, library management, logistical management, and financial management, with the college's regulations as the core. These regulations cover various aspects of school management and incorporate elements unique to Buddhist colleges. The rules and management systems have been continuously improved and perfected as the college develops.

Sun (2021) conducted field investigations and explorations on the implementation of religious colleges under the new policy background in his work "Creating the Main Front for Cultivating Religious Talents: The Guiding Significance of the 'Management Measures for Religious Colleges' in Doing Well in the Work of

Religious Colleges." The study summarizes the promulgation and implementation of the "Measures". It highlights its significant importance in regulating the management of religious colleges, improving the quality of religious education and teaching, safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of religious colleges, strengthening the construction of religious talent teams, and promoting the sinicization of religion in China.

In addition, there are other research articles, such as "The Third in the Series of 'Creating a New Chapter and Opening a New Chapter for Guangdong's Religious Work: Taking the Right Direction, Implementing Comprehensive Measures, and Strengthening and Improving the Work of Religious Colleges in Guangdong'" in *China Religion* (2022) and "Religious Colleges and Their Management Measures" in *China Religion* (2023). Besides interpreting policies, these two articles also discuss the development prospects of religious colleges in the new era.

2.5.2 The Secularization and Modernization of Buddhist Monastic Education

According to Bryan R. Wilson, a sociology tutor at the University of Oxford, the definition of religious secularization is when "religious consciousness, activities, and organizations lose their social significance." Since the introduction of Buddhism to China, it has also been transforming the process of secularization. It needs to maintain its spiritual practices and beliefs while adapting to modern development and playing a role in today's society. Therefore, the development of secularization in Buddhist education has become a topic of discussion among scholars.

For example, in Yu's (2006) "A Brief Discussion on the Secularization of Chinese Buddhism and 'Humanistic Buddhism'," the author explores the relationship between transcendence and immanence, highlighting the challenges and contemporary issues faced by Buddhist education in the new century. Wang (2007) analyzes the development of Buddhist education from the perspective of folk customs in "An

Analysis of Folk Buddhism—Discussing the Understanding of Secularization and Popularization." Chen (2007) takes a critical perspective in "Secularization, Vulgarization, and Issues in the Development of Contemporary Chinese Buddhism," examining the dual nature of excellence and vulgarity in Buddhist secularization. In Cheng's (2007) "Secularization and Worldliness of Buddhism," the article studies and analyzes the "worldliness" and "secularization" of Buddhism from the perspective of the cultural background of traditional Chinese Confucianism and the increasing emphasis on worldliness under internal and external pressures. Furthermore, Cui (2013) discusses the integration of Buddhism with traditional Chinese culture and the formation of a new Chinese tradition in "Examining Marxism's Popularization from the Secularization of Buddhism," exploring the essence of secularized Buddhist education. Tang (2013) clarifies the historical background and different discursive contexts of the term "secularization", providing a detailed analysis and clarification of the issues related to secularization in the development of Humanistic Buddhism. Liu (2015) approaches the impact of Buddhist education from an architectural perspective in "The Sinicization of Buddhism and the Secularization of Buddhist Architecture". Based on the analysis of these literature sources, it can be seen that Buddhist education maintains distinct characteristics in various fields. Due to Buddhism's atheistic nature, its moral cultivation aligns well with China's national conditions and contemporary features, making the secularization and modernization of Buddhist education widely recognized.

2.5.3 Funding and Resource Constraints Faced by Buddhist Monastic Educational Institutions

The economic resources of Buddhist temples primarily come from social donations. As mentioned in the teachings given by Master Dachuan (2019) to the recipients of the Kaiyuan Bodhi Scholarship: "Temples represent the overall image of a city, and the overall environment of a city can be seen through its temples, including its economy, culture, and quality." According to the literature, the economy of temples

reflects the development of a city. Therefore, in the case of Buddhist colleges and universities associated with temple construction, their funding is also influenced by the social and regional economy.

Ye (1999), in his work "The Appeal of 'Buddhist Economics'," conducted the earliest research on temple economy. The author believes that the essence of Buddhist economics lies in the purity of character rather than increasing demands. However, with significant economic advancement, society has witnessed an increase in demand for funds. The development of Buddhism cannot be detached from social construction. Therefore, in her work "An Exploration of Buddhist Economic Ethics", Tan (2005) emphasizes the importance of ethics in Buddhist economics. Zhou (2007) admires this viewpoint and, in the article "The 'New Buddhist Movement', Tourism Economy, and Non-Profit Sectors: A Review of Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism and Its Social Relations", believes that Buddhism has transitioned from traditional mountains and temples to integrating into urban society and participating in the development of the secular economy as a response to the structural changes brought about by modernization and urbanization. However, this transformation also poses potential risks to society.

This topic has long been of concern in religious and social circles. Li discusses the development of the Buddhist economy in the work "The 'Sociality' of Contemporary Buddhist Economy in China" (2008). In the work "The Relationship between Contemporary Chinese Buddhist Culture and Economic Development" by Sun and Pulin (2019), it is argued that achieving a positive interaction and symbiosis between Buddhist culture and economic development is not only beneficial for the great rejuvenation of Chinese civilization but also has the potential to lead to a "harmonious development" of the world economy. This process is also considered the "Chinese experiment" and "Chinese expansion" of Buddhist economics.

Stable sources of income are essential for the steady and positive development of education. Therefore, the economic foundation of Buddhist colleges and universities relies on the economic basis of temples, which has become a characteristic feature of Buddhist education in China. With the publication of the "Regulations on Subsidies for Religious Colleges and Universities in Guangdong Province (Draft for Soliciting Opinions)" in 2021, the government is also providing certain assistance to religious colleges and universities in terms of funding.

2.6 Response and Adjustment of Buddhist Monastery Education

The changes in times drive scientific development, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has put forward the concept of scientific development, actively advocating adaptation to the new era and constructing a path for the Sinicization of Buddhism. This poses a new challenge to Buddhist education, and therefore, Buddhist education is exploring diversified development paths. The following is an overview of the literature on strategies for addressing challenges, the integration of tradition and modernity, and educational interconnectivity.

2.6.1 Strategies for Buddhist Monastic Educational Institutions to Address Challenges

The core purpose of Buddhist colleges is to cultivate religious talents. In the 1990s, President Zhao Puchu of the Chinese Buddhist Association emphasized the future tasks of Chinese Buddhism in a national symposium on Chinese Buddhist education. The three tasks he mentioned were first, talent cultivation; second, talent cultivation; and third, talent cultivation. This event highlights the importance and expectations of talent cultivation in the Buddhist community at that time. According to the article "Cultivating Buddhist Talents in the New Era and Building the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation" in the magazine *Fayin* (2020), Buddhist education

should first cultivate talents who are politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, morally exemplary, and capable of playing a key role in critical moments. Only in this way can the enthusiasm and creativity of Buddhist talents in the new era be brought into full play, contributing to the high-quality development of society and jointly building the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.

How to build such a talent allocation, Zhiguang (2023) "Side Notes on the 'Double Link' Talent Training Class in the Religious Circles of Zhejiang Province", it is considered to start from three aspects: digital empowerment, to make cultural relics come alive; to promote tradition, to highlight the spirit of the times; to keep the integrity and innovate, to interpret the times. Dingguang (2023) believes that the inheritance of Buddhist culture requires understanding the trade-offs, choosing the good from the bad, and keeping up with the pace of the times to carry out creative transformation and innovative development of the essence.

2.6.2 Fusion of Tradition and Modernity in Buddhist Monastery Education

Buddhist education has gradually integrated with modern society as it follows the development of society and the expansion of modern education. As modern monks, individual cultivation and the propagation of the Dharma cannot be separated from society. Therefore, Buddhist academies have absorbed traditional experiences and adapted to the requirements of modern development.

In terms of teaching content, they adhere to the principles of "compatibility of large and small, inclusiveness of the eight sects, integration of internal and external, and correspondence between study and practice." Buddhist courses make up around 60% of the curriculum, while social courses such as traditional culture, computer science, and foreign languages typically account for about 30%. Additionally, practical courses such as labor and meditation, which account for approximately 10%, are also offered.

Undergraduate programs mainly focus on an introduction to Buddhism, while graduate programs place more emphasis on the study of Buddhist scriptures.

Specifically, each Buddhist academy has its focus in terms of subject offerings, but they all revolve around the process of modernization in society.

According to the information released by Guangdong Buddhist College, the total area of the college is over 560,000 square meters, with teaching facilities covering approximately 45,000 square meters. The library houses a collection of over 200,000 volumes. The hardware facilities of each college are well-equipped, including teaching buildings, libraries, meditation halls, chanting halls, and Buddha halls, which provide excellent support for teaching and practice. There are also dormitories, Yunshuilou (a place for meditation and retreat), medical rooms, and multifunctional conference halls for living and administrative purposes, ensuring a decent environment for daily teaching and living.

In 2021, the college management system of Guangdong Buddhist College was officially put into operation, realizing the network-based management of teaching. In recent years, the college has organized and participated in various research and academic exchange activities, such as the "First Madhyamaka Summit Forum" (Miao, 2017), "Madhyamaka Summit Academic Forum" (Ding, 2018), "Internal Academic Exchange Conference on Madhyamaka" video conference (2021), the second Cuifeng Huayan Forum (Yin, 2018), "East Asian Culture International Study Program and Youth Scholars Forum" (Hidao, 2020), "Religious and Cultural Exchange Research in Guangxi-ASEAN Humanistic Circle under the Belt and Road Initiative" (Pan, 2020), and Hangzhou's "Daxiong Temple Seven-day Insight Retreat" (2022). The college also has a dedicated column on its official WeChat account to showcase the results of these activities, broaden horizons, and enhance knowledge.

2.6.3 Collaborations and Partnerships with Other Educational Institutions

Buddhist colleges actively cooperate with mainstream universities in the field of education because there is a lack of diverse talent within Buddhism. For example, Nanjing University collaborates with Jiangsu Nizhongs Institute of Buddhist Studies (Nanjing Rooster, 2020), Shaanxi Academy of Social Sciences collaborates with Xi'an Famen Temple Buddhist College (Institute of Religion, 2023), and Hongfa Temple Buddhist College is a national higher Buddhist college jointly established by the State Administration for Religious Affairs and Peking University (Hongfa Temple, 2021). In 2011, Hongfa Temple Buddhist College in Shenzhen signed a cooperation agreement with Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Thailand at the Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand. In 2013, Guangdong Buddhist College collaborated with Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong, hiring outstanding experts to teach students at the college (Guangdong Buddhist Association, 2013). In the same year, Minnan Buddhist Institute and Yuan Guang Buddhist College in Taiwan signed an agreement for educational cooperation and exchange in Xiamen (Phoenix Buddhism, 2013), marking a substantial step forward in Buddhist education exchanges across the Taiwan Strait.

In 2023, Zhejiang Buddhist College hosted the unveiling ceremony of the Teaching Practice Base of the Philosophy School of Fudan University (Ifeng.com Buddhist Culture, 2023). This base is jointly established by Fudan University and Zhejiang Buddhist College, serving as a pilot project for the integration of the three teams proposed at the National Conference on Religious Work. It is relatively rare nationwide and signifies significant cooperation in the new era.

Buddhist colleges often engage in teaching collaborations with mainstream universities, focusing on joint research projects, organizing academic conferences, textbook development, and co-hosting training and further education activities aimed

at improving the comprehensive qualities of monks and strengthening the monastic community. These collaborations enrich the curriculum content, enhance teaching quality, and actively adapt to the education provided by mainstream universities.

2.7 Social Cognition and Attitude Towards Buddhist Monastery Education

Traditional Buddhist education has two main modes. The first is the apprenticeship model, which is similar to traditional private tutoring. The second is the classroom-based knowledge transmission model, which emerged after the educational reforms during the Republican era. Buddhist education is primarily conducted through classroom teaching in Buddhist colleges in contemporary China, which has yielded numerous achievements and produced many talented individuals. However, there are still significant differences in the understanding of Buddhist education. The following literature will provide an overview of social discourse, practical significance, values, and other aspects related to this topic.

2.7.1 Public Opinion and Attitudes of Buddhist Temple Education in Guangdong

Xiang (1995), in his article "Reflections on Buddhist Education", argues that although Buddhism has cultivated a large number of talents, there is a scarcity of monastic talents that are in sync with the times. Therefore, he suggests incorporating layperson education in Buddhist education. This article had a significant impact on the subsequent development of Buddhist education, and Buddhist colleges across the country began offering education for laypersons. In the article "Discussion on Buddhist Education in Guangdong" by Master Hongming (1999), he believes that the primary responsibility of promoting Buddhism lies with the monastic community. Therefore,

more investment should be focused on monastic education. These two studies clearly express the internal focus and attitude of temple education.

However, as times have changed, Buddhism has actively adjusted its educational methods, leading to new developments in social discourse and attitudes. Liu's (2005) article "Analysis of Current Issues in Buddhist Education and Suggestions for Shanghai Buddhist Education" concludes that Buddhist education in China has never been incorporated into the national education system. Moreover, the Buddhist community itself has not established its education system, resulting in issues such as high student mobility and low enrollment numbers. These problems have significantly affected the quality and effectiveness of Buddhist education. Liu suggests changes in mindset as well as strengthening the teaching staff, issues that are commonly present in Buddhist colleges nationwide. Bao's (2013) article, "A Portrait of Successful Cases in Distance Education for the General Public," argues that distance education in Buddhist education needs to include multiple elements, such as the beliefs of educators, the sequence of learning content, and flexible yet rigorous teaching management. This work has had a significant impact on distance education in Guangdong's Buddhist education. Chang (2018), in his article "Reflections on Buddhist Education in China: Between Rationality and 'Faith'," discusses the commonalities and differences between Buddhist and non-Buddhist education. He suggests that as Buddhism integrates into the process of social change, it should value the role of academia. However, he also warns against excessive academicization and emphasizes that academic scholarship, centered on logic, should adapt to the development of Buddhism itself. Yang (2018), in his article "On the Combination of Monk's Discipline Cultivation, Monastic Education, and Modern Buddhist Education", argues that Buddhist colleges are the result of Western-style higher education infiltrating and influencing Buddhism in modern times. Liu (2019), in his article "Practical Characteristics of Modern Chinese Buddhist Education", proposes several significant characteristics of modern Buddhist education, including a

shift in educational concepts from passive and conservative to active and open, a transition in educational models from traditional monastic settings to modern Buddhist institutions, and a shift in educational subjects from a monastic-centered approach to one that includes both monastics and laypersons.

2.7.2 The Practical Significance of Chinese Buddhist Temple Education in the New Era

Chen (1999), in his article "Promoting Buddhism through Education and Promoting the Nation through Education", proposes that Buddhism contributes to national stability and unity, and reviving Buddhism through education is the only means to achieve this. Zhang's (2002) article, "Yunmen Chan and the Reconstruction of Contemporary Social Morality," explains the practical benefits of Buddhist practice on society and suggests that the integration of Chan meditation and Yogacara philosophy is closely related to the reconstruction of contemporary morality.

Hui (2016), in his article "On the Construction of Digital Archives and Libraries in Buddhist Temples", argues that Buddhist culture is an integral part of Chinese traditional culture, and temples, as carriers of Buddhist culture, play an important role in cultural education and inheritance. She elaborates on the significance of Buddhist temple education from the perspective of cultural carriers. Liu (2019), in his article "Practical Characteristics of Modern Chinese Buddhist Education", states that Buddhism constantly adapts to social and cultural changes and actively participates in various cultural dialogues, international exchanges, and cooperation. It breaks through regional and ethnic constraints, responds to various social and cultural trends, and develops along the path of tradition, modernization, nationalization, and globalization.

Neng's (2016) article, "An Analysis of the Influence of the Internet on the Spread of Buddhism", argues that the essence of the Buddha's teachings is to enrich people's lives, improve their livelihoods, and purify their minds. The Internet era allows

Buddhist education to enter people's lives quickly, and Buddhism gradually becomes more important among the people. It plays a crucial role in social stability and people's psychological well-being.

2.7.3 The Role of Buddhist Monastic Education in Promoting Social Harmony and Values

In 2007, the Minnan Buddhist College of Nanputuo in Xiamen, Fujian, organized the "Harmonious Society and Ethical Conduct Construction: China's Buddhist Public Image Forum" (Buddhist Studies, 2007). The forum deeply explored the current state of Chinese Buddhism. It emphasized that Chinese Buddhism has entered its best era in history, marking the beginning of a new era for the Buddhist community. However, it stressed the importance of adapting to society.

From the perspective of social diversity, Jia and Zeng (2011), in their article "Unknown Taste of Tea and Zen: Because We Are in the World", used tea to illustrate the concept of harmony in Buddhism. They summarized the cultural symposium "Understanding Zen and Tea for Promoting Social Harmony" jointly organized by the Shaanxi Tea Association and the Xi'an Great Amitabha Temple in 2011. This interdisciplinary collaboration further demonstrates the integration and adaptation of Buddhist education to society.

Wen (2014), in his article "The Characteristics of Zhao Puchu's Humanistic Buddhism and Its Social Practice: A Discussion on Its Unique Contributions to Contemporary Social Development", analyzed the harmony and role of Buddhist education in society from the perspective of "Humanistic Buddhism". He discussed the unique characteristics of "humanistic Buddhism" based on Chinese traditional culture, the revitalization of Buddhist organization-based education, the harmonious integration of Mahayana spirit and monastic community, a perfect life based on socialism, and the Pure Land on Earth based on world peace.

Lei (2017), in his article "On the Path of Ideological and Political Education in Fujian Buddhist College", pointed out that in the new era, Buddhist colleges can guide believers to study Buddhist knowledge, foster a deeper understanding, and emphasize the practice of ideological and political education. Integrating love for the country, accepting the leadership of the Party and the government, adhering to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and upholding national unity and ethnic solidarity in the education of Buddhist colleges play a significant role in promoting social harmony and values.

Regarding achievements, Nanhua Buddhist College (2022) further illustrates this viewpoint in its article "Chinese Buddhist Cultural Highland: A Bridge of Friendship along the Belt and Road." The article states that the mission of Nanhua Buddhist College is to cooperate with the grand vision of peaceful development in the South China Sea, allowing Chinese Buddhism to integrate and coexist with the Buddhist countries surrounding the South China Sea, making the South China Sea a sea of compassion, auspiciousness, and peace.

2.8 Related Research Gaps

Based on the literature analysis conducted earlier, there is a relative scarcity of in-depth research concerning the policies of religious institutions and their impact on religion. Existing studies mostly focus on the influence of religious education on social education and how to enhance religious and political education. At the same time, there is comparatively less research on the effects of religious policies on religion itself and its associated educational systems. Although attempts can be made to analyze their influence based on religious policies and documents released over the years, there is a lack of more practical and in-depth research-oriented literature.

Taking Guangdong Province as an example, there have been some studies on the implementation of religious policies, which detailed the interactions between religious management departments and religious groups from 2011 to 2021. However, there is still insufficient research on specific impacts of policies, such as the extent to which they promote the development of Buddhist school education. Additionally, existing literature on Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province primarily focuses on doctrinal discussions, with a lack of specific research on the temple education system.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research on the impact of religious institution policies on religion and its education, particularly in terms of the specific effects of policy implementation, promoting the development of religious education, and constructing religious education systems. Such research will contribute to a better understanding of the influence of Chinese religious policies on society and religious education and provide theoretical support and reference for the future implementation of religious policies in religious institutions.

In addition to the aforementioned deficiencies in research on religious policies, there is also a lack of studies on the responses and adjustments of Buddhist temple education in the new era. Currently, information regarding this aspect is typically fragmented across different types of articles in the literature, lacking integrative research. This defect constitutes a research gap because it is particularly crucial in addressing the challenges faced by Buddhist temple education in the new era.

Firstly, innovation and adjustment in educational content and methods are paramount. This involves adapting to the demands of modern society while ensuring the interpretation and understanding of traditional doctrines, the application of educational technology, and adjustments in teaching methods that are compatible with societal and cultural changes.

Secondly, strategies for cultivating modern talent are essential. This entails offering courses relevant to contemporary societal needs and fostering students' sense of social responsibility and innovation.

Thirdly, there needs to be close interaction between temple affairs and various sectors of society. This may include active participation in social welfare activities, as mentioned in the literature.

Lastly, Buddhist temple education must strike a balance between preserving traditional culture and embracing modernity, reconciling traditional values with technological advancements.

Therefore, the lack of research in this area has failed to organize this content effectively. Hence, it is imperative to conduct comprehensive research, integrating various pieces of information, conducting an in-depth analysis of the current situation and issues, and proposing corresponding recommendations and strategies. Such research will help guide the development of Buddhist temple education, promote interaction and integration between Buddhist education and society, and propel the inheritance and innovation of Buddhism in contemporary society.

2.9 Research Methods for Research on Buddhist Monastic Education

According to past research articles on Buddhist temples, there are relatively few articles, but there are sufficient articles on regional history and interdisciplinary research. Here, the same type of literature will be selected for the literature review.

2.9.1 The Research Approaches and Methods Used in the Literature

The following articles represent the same type of research literature:

In Li's (2009) article, "Research on Monastic Education during the Republican Era", a historical research method was employed to collect relevant historical materials for analysis and explanation of the research content.

In Qi's (2011) doctoral dissertation titled "Research on the Spatial Patterns of Modern Buddhist Temples in China under the Concept of Learning and Cultivation System", the combination of learning and architecture was explored. Although it is a study in the field of architecture, it still holds specific reference value. The researcher used methods such as literature review, interviews, and interdisciplinary approaches. The literature review involved analyzing, summarizing, studying, and organizing relevant documents, as well as conducting visits to relevant cases and individuals. Interviews were conducted with scholars, abbots, and masters from dozens of key Han Chinese Buddhist temples. The interdisciplinary approach incorporated theories from religious studies, education, management, sociology, history, and other disciplines. This article presents a relatively comprehensive research methodology framework.

In Shi's (2011) master's thesis, titled "Buddhist Education Thought and Contemporary Value", the research method employed was a literature review. The study explored the theoretical connotations of Buddhist education by collecting relevant content from classical texts. However, this research lacks empirical studies on contemporary values.

In Wang's (2014) article, titled "Qualitative Research and Quantitative Analysis on the Comprehensive Development of College Students," both qualitative and quantitative methods were chosen for the research topic. The author believed that the world is entering the era of big data, and using comprehensive and complex data to explore the relationships between various research objects represents a profound change in our thinking. Qualitative and quantitative methods need to work together in this research. Since the author's research topic focuses on a large sample of college students, using both methods has advantages. However, using both methods also poses challenges in handling the extensive amount of data.

In Lu's (2016) article titled "The Dual Rhythm of Social Change and Transformation in Ideological and Political Education", the research method used was

historical research. The study conducted research from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

In Qin's (2017) article titled "Research on Educational Transformation in Heilongjiang during the Late Qing Dynasty and Early Republic of China", the methods employed were literature review, historical research, and case study. In the literature review, the collected historical materials on Heilongjiang education were classified and analyzed to restore their originality and authenticity. The historical research method was used to organize and elaborate on the educational status. The case study involved an in-depth analysis of representative schools, individuals, and educational materials.

These are the summaries of research methods used in related or similar literature to this study.

2.9.2 Sampling Techniques and Data Collection Methods Employed

Based on the research methods employed in the aforementioned literature, a comparative analysis reveals that the commonly used research methods are literature review and historical research. These two methods are also the primary technical means chosen for this study.

Yao, in his 2017 article titled "Is 'Literature Review' a Research Method? - A Discussion on Research Integration Methodology," explains that educational research paradigms are research norms or models developed from corresponding methodologies. The commonly used paradigms in research are speculative research and empirical research. Speculative research emphasizes the application of dialectics to analyze phenomena and articulate ideas or theories. On the other hand, empirical research focuses on the role of experience, emphasizing observation, experimentation, or investigation of the research subject, as well as systematic analysis and interpretation of collected information and data. The relationship between the two paradigms should be complementary, with empirical research relying on speculative research and speculative research requiring empirical research for verification.

Therefore, conducting research solely from the perspective of empirical research in the context of "literature review" is not comprehensive enough. "Literature review" cannot be considered a valid research method in the strict sense because it lacks the characteristics of practical research, such as systematic norms and operational procedures. It cannot meet the requirements for research methods and tool utilization. Therefore, to ensure the accuracy of sampling techniques and data collection, additional research methods are needed.

In the article "Analysis and Reflection on Research Methods in Chinese Education in the Past Decade" by Yao and Wang (2013), it is mentioned that qualitative research primarily includes case studies and ethnography. Researchers engage in in-depth, detailed, and long-term experiences through interactions with the subjects of study. This approach allows for a comprehensive interpretive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative research methods include narrative research, case studies, and field investigations. However, pure qualitative research also faces challenges, such as the accumulation of data without theoretical advancements.

Xie (1999) explains in his article, "Historical Research Method and Its Application in Library and Information Science," that the historical research method is a qualitative interpretive approach that clarifies causal relationships by analysing changes. This method not only validates theories but also contributes to their development. Therefore, in this study, a combination of qualitative and empirical research sampling techniques will be employed, using both "literature review" and "historical research method" for the research.

Although the above sampling method and data collection approach can provide a relatively accurate understanding of the development trend of Guangdong Buddhist temple education from 2012 to 2022, there is still a lack of precision in the information. Therefore, in this study, the author actively participated and observed the

work of Guangdong Buddhist College in 2014. Through direct involvement and communication with relevant individuals, more precise information was obtained.

2.9.3 Analytical Frameworks and Tools Used for Data Analysis

According to Yang's (2008) article "The Application of Content Analysis in the Study of Educational History" and the summary of the aforementioned articles, this study will adopt the following data analysis framework and data acquisition tools.

The focus of this research is on the study of educational history, starting from the development process of Guangdong Buddhist Academy in the past decade, summarizing issues, exploring development trends, etc. In the first stage, the source of data "A" will be determined. This includes papers, literature, newspapers, audio recordings, etc., obtained through academic forums such as CNKI and the archives of Guangdong Buddhist Academy. After screening relevant literature, the identified data "A" will be organized.

In the second stage, the variables "X" brought by the content will be determined. Representative transformative events, sources of influence, or categories of development, such as curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching methods, will be classified. This part of the content represents the variable "X" in the literature.

The third stage involves sampling according to different periods. Key transformative nodes between 2012 and 2022 will be determined for different stages. Content analysis samples will be extracted, and the samples obtained in period T1 will be denoted as AT1, while samples from period T2 will be denoted as AT2.

The fourth stage involves quantitative processing of the samples. Following the process of content analysis, the same content variable X will be used to conduct content analysis on the samples AT1 and AT2. Quantitative results will be obtained and represented as XAT1 and XAT2, respectively.

The fifth stage involves statistical comparison. The quantitative results obtained through content analysis of samples from different periods will be compared

and analyzed. The focus on changing trends of content variables, as well as the relationship between events and their occurrences, will be identified. Finally, the development patterns and characteristics of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong, as well as the possible future trends and outcomes, will be summarized.

2.10 Research Gaps and Future Directions

The current state of the literature on research related to Buddhist education is not optimistic. There are a few articles published and content. The research on Buddhist education is generally backward. This is also the focus of this study.

2.10.1 Gaps in the Existing Literature on Buddhist Temple Education in Guangdong

Based on the collection of past literature, it is found that there are not many research articles specifically focused on Buddhist temple education in Guangdong. The earliest publication is "The Spread and Development of Buddhism in Guangdong" by Wang and Wang (1999), which conducted extensive research on historical development. Another relevant article is "A Discussion on Buddhist Education in Guangdong" by Hongming (1999), which examined the Buddhist educational institutions and challenges in Guangdong prior to 1999. Although it provided some suggestions, it was not comprehensive enough. In addition, there is "The Current Situation, Characteristics, and Issues of Buddhism in Guangdong" by He (2001), which explores the topic from the perspective of "Humanistic Buddhism."

The article "A Brief Discussion on the Spread and Development of Buddhism in Guangdong during the Yuan Dynasty" by Chen (2008) discusses the history of Buddhist education in Guangdong during the Yuan Dynasty, which can provide insights in terms of research approach and perspective.

Ming's (2009) article "Deeply Remembering Venerable Foyuan" analyzes Buddhist education from the perspective of exemplary figures in Buddhist academies. Dai's (2011) "My 'Ideal Country: Letting the Buddha's Light Illuminate Every Corner of Society - A Dialogue with Venerable Yinshun, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association and Abbot of Shenzhen Hongfa Temple" involves interviews and research with the president of the Buddhist academy at Hongfa Temple to understand the development prospects and goals of Buddhist education. Tan's (2011) "Analysis of the Development of Buddhist Social Welfare in the Transitional Period: A Survey of Monastics in Seven Key Temples in Guangdong Province" analyzes Buddhist welfare activities from the perspective of funding sources and expenditures. Yue et al. (2011) conducted an initial exploration of the cultural landscapes and regional differences of Buddhist culture in Guangdong, focusing on both material and intangible cultural landscapes. He's (2012) "An Analysis of the Social Functions and Social Roles of Urban Buddhist Temples: A Focus on the Practice Activities of the Guangdong Buddhist Community" identifies issues in temple education from the perspective of the social functions and roles of urban Buddhist temples. Zhang et al. (2012) explored the "Guangdong Model" of religious affairs management, discussing new directions for Buddhist education from a political management perspective.

Master Mingsheng's (2014) "Buddhist Charity in Contemporary China" explores the contribution of Buddhist educational thought to society through its educational achievements. Faying's (2014) article "The Grand Opening of the 2014 Chaozhou Buddhist Culture Festival" discusses the social impact of Buddhist education. Fang's (2022) article "A Distinctive Book on Buddhist Propagation Research: Reading Li Hui's 'A History of Modern and Contemporary Buddhist Newspapers and Periodicals in China'" mentions that there are only a few articles specifically focused on Guangdong Buddhism, and they are not comprehensive. Venerable Mingsheng, the president of Guangdong Buddhist College (2022), explains the direction of Buddhist development

in the new era from the perspective of policies promoting Buddhist development. Additionally, there are recent research articles on Buddhist education, such as Li's (2022) "Reflections on Strengthening the Cultivation of Buddhist Talents in Guangdong from the Perspective of Religious Sinicization," Venerable Dalang's (2022) "Buddhist Sinicization and the Construction of Dharma Conduct from the Perspective of Vinaya: A Focus on Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple," Venerable Changlian's (2022) "Discussion on Guangdong Buddhist Education, Monastic Talent Cultivation, and the Development of Buddhist Colleges," Venerable Dean's (2022) "On the Cultivation of Research-oriented Talents in Buddhism," Venerable Yaolin's (2022) "A Brief Discussion on the Meaning of 'Following the Dharma' in Buddhist Education," Venerable Mingqing's (2022) "An Initial Exploration of Talent Cultivation Programs," and Pu's (2022) "A Few Words on Han Buddhist Monastic Education," among others.

In literature searches, it can be seen that there has been a resurgence of interest in research on Buddhist education in recent years. However, there are still limited studies on Buddhist colleges or scattered discussions that focus on specific issues. Therefore, there is a need for further exploration of the inherent development patterns of Buddhist colleges founded by Guangdong Buddhist temples.

2.10.2 Areas for Further Research and Exploration in this Field

Based on the analysis above, there is a growing trend of interest in Buddhist education topics in modern or new times. However, there is an evident lack of research on Buddhist colleges. Among them, Li's (2022) "Reflections on Strengthening the Cultivation of Buddhist Talents in Guangdong from the Perspective of Religious Sinicization" and Venerable Dalang's (2022) "Buddhist Sinicization and the Construction of Dharma Conduct from the Perspective of Vinaya: A Focus on Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple" open up new perspectives on the study of Buddhist colleges. However, there is still insufficient research on the overall development trends of Buddhist colleges.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the various transformations related to the establishment of Buddhist colleges in Guangdong Buddhist temples. It aims to summarize the experiences of these transformations and provide a reference resource for scholars who will further research this relevant content.

2.10.3 Methodological Recommendations and Considerations

In this study, it is advisable to draw upon the experience of secular educational institutions in researching institutional development, adopt an objective perspective on the topic of Buddhist temple education, reduce reliance on religious doctrines, and evaluate Buddhist temple education objectively by considering aspects such as the mode of operation, methods, and teaching conditions. It is essential to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of Buddhist temple education and provide an impartial assessment.

Given the distinctive features of religious institutions, issues tend to be clear-cut. For example, in the aspect of student enrollment, the population choosing Buddhist education is at a disadvantage compared to mainstream universities. Therefore, in the research methodology, it is recommended to incorporate insights from the experience of secular institutions to propose relevant improvements.

2.11 Summary

2.11.1 Review of the Main Findings of the Literature Review

Based on the research conducted in previous literature, Buddhist education has faced consistent challenges across different periods, particularly regarding talent cultivation from Ven. Hongming's "An Analysis of Buddhist Education in Guangdong" in 1999 to Pucheng Zhong's "Remarks on Buddhist Monastic Education in Han Buddhism" in 2022, these two articles, separated by 23 years, still address similar issues

related to talent cultivation. This raises questions about whether Buddhist education has experienced long-standing stagnation or if the requirements for talent standards have varied over time, indicating a prolonged period of educational development lag in Buddhism.

Regarding curriculum design, it is crucial to investigate whether Buddhist colleges in Guangdong province effectively cultivate students who meet the expected goals based on their respective curriculum offerings. This aspect will be examined through interviews with academic administrators and students.

In terms of admissions, the fact that the number of enrollments in Guangdong Buddhist colleges, as stated in their admission brochures, has not increased significantly, or even remained stagnant for a decade, warrants a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons.

2.11.2 A Summary of the Importance of Chinese Buddhist Temple Education Research in the New Era

In the new era, Buddhist temple education in China needs to keep pace with the times. With the guidance of religious policies in different periods, the advancement of Buddhist colleges has been accelerated. As stated by Ven. Mingsheng, in "Adhering to the Sinicization of Buddhism and Jointly Building the New Era" in 2022, since the 19th National Congress, the entire Party and the Chinese people have been vigorously promoting the Chinese-style modernization and continuously achieving new victories in building socialism with Chinese characteristics. From a historical perspective, this marks a new milestone. The disciples of the four Buddhist communities in Guangdong should firmly maintain ideological, political, and practical unity with the Party Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on Buddhist education in light of the new era. As mentioned in the article by Chen et al. in "Harnessing the Positive Role of Buddhism and Taoism in the Construction of the Guangdong-Hong

Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" in 2022, Guangdong's Buddhism can not only deepen the exchanges and interactions among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, serving the construction of the Greater Bay Area, but also serve as a window for Hong Kong and Macao to tell China's religious stories to the world and enhance the exchange of Buddhist culture with the world.

2.11.3 Research Significance and Potential Contributions

Through the above literature analysis, the impact of China's broader societal environment and educational development on the local level is significant, especially considering the social development of Guangdong Province, which holds a leading position in various aspects of the national economy and culture and has been at the forefront of reform efforts. In this context, Buddhist education continually enhances its overall capabilities. Through the exploration and analysis of various projects by previous scholars, it is evident that societal changes have had corresponding effects on Buddhist education. Exploring the intrinsic characteristics and patterns of reform in Buddhist education is, therefore, worthy of further investigation.

With the recent development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the significance of Buddhism is immense. How to catch up with this development becomes a focal point of current research. However, this research is not a ground-up endeavor; it necessitates a summary of past reforms, an induction of the development trends in Buddhist education, and consequently, it contributes valuable research insights into the further development of Buddhist education in Guangdong. This study fills a research gap in this area.

From a practical standpoint, the study of the transformation and roles of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong holds significant guiding implications for practical work in the field of education. This research can offer valuable insights and recommendations for Buddhist temple education managers, educators, and policymakers. Simultaneously, it can analyze the substantial social influence of

Buddhist temple education in Chinese society and culture. Examining the transformation and roles of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong provides a new perspective for societal understanding of Buddhist education, fostering increased attention and comprehension.

In conclusion, this study systematically analyzes and explores the transformation and roles of Buddhist temple education, providing comprehensive information and data specific to Guangdong. This holds crucial academic value for scholars in the field of Buddhist studies, serving as a reference and foundation for future research.

2.11.4 Research Theoretical Framework Description

This study is based on social cognitive theory, utilizing cognitive interviews with students, teachers, and community groups to investigate the transformation of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022. The aim is to analyze the impact of the social environment on Buddhist temple education and how individual institutions adapt to the societal and cultural context of contemporary China. Social cognitive theory offers a rich analytical perspective for examining roles, identity construction, knowledge transmission, and cultural shifts involved in this transformation. Based on similar studies employing this theory, it proves to be a valuable tool for gaining in-depth insights into the evolution of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong.

Over the past decade, Buddhist temple education in Guangdong has undergone significant changes in the new era, influenced by various factors such as social background, policy reforms, and cultural exchanges. This research aims to conduct an in-depth study of this transformation using social cognitive theory, examining how institutions, students, and teachers have perceived and adapted to these changes during this period.

Social cognitive theory, developed by American psychologist Bandura in the late 1970s and experiencing rapid development in the 1990s, integrates cognitive components into traditional behavioral personality theories, forming its framework (Shi, 2011). The theory's key aspect is the triadic reciprocal determinism, emphasizing the dynamic interactions and mutual influences among individual factors, environmental factors, and behavioral factors.

According to social cognitive theory, individuals are not just passive observers of their environment; they are active agents who shape their experiences and are shaped by them. The core features of human agency in this theory include intentionality, foresight, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection. When studying the development of Buddhist sects in Guangdong, it is essential to consider the three core elements of reciprocal determinism in social cognitive theory. The interactions among individuals, behavior, and the environment collectively shape an individual's thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Individuals are not merely adapting passively to their surroundings; instead, they actively engage and shape their relationships with the environment. The theory emphasizes the subjectivity and agency of individuals, as well as the mediating role of individual behavior between the individual and the environment. Therefore, when studying aspects such as educational development, educational reforms, and social relationships, social cognitive theory is particularly suitable, as it provides valuable insights into the dynamic interactions between individuals and their environment, influencing their thoughts, actions, and overall development.

This study employed methods such as historical research, literature review, and participant observation. The focus of the research was on Guangdong Buddhist temple schools and their four affiliated branches, with students, teachers, and administrative staff selected as the subjects of the study. By collecting and analyzing events within the temples, along with the perspectives, experiences, and behaviors of

individuals involved, the aim is to explore the social cognitive processes and role constructions in the context of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong.

Historical research methods delved into the developments and changes that have occurred within these institutions over time. Literature review will help understand the current state of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong and draw upon existing knowledge and theories related to social cognitive processes and role construction. Finally, the method of in-depth interviews enabled researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the social cognitive dynamics and role constructions within these temple school education systems.

By combining these research methods, this study seeks to uncover insights into the social cognitive aspects of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong, providing valuable perspectives on how individuals within these institutions perceive and adapt to the evolving educational landscape and roles.

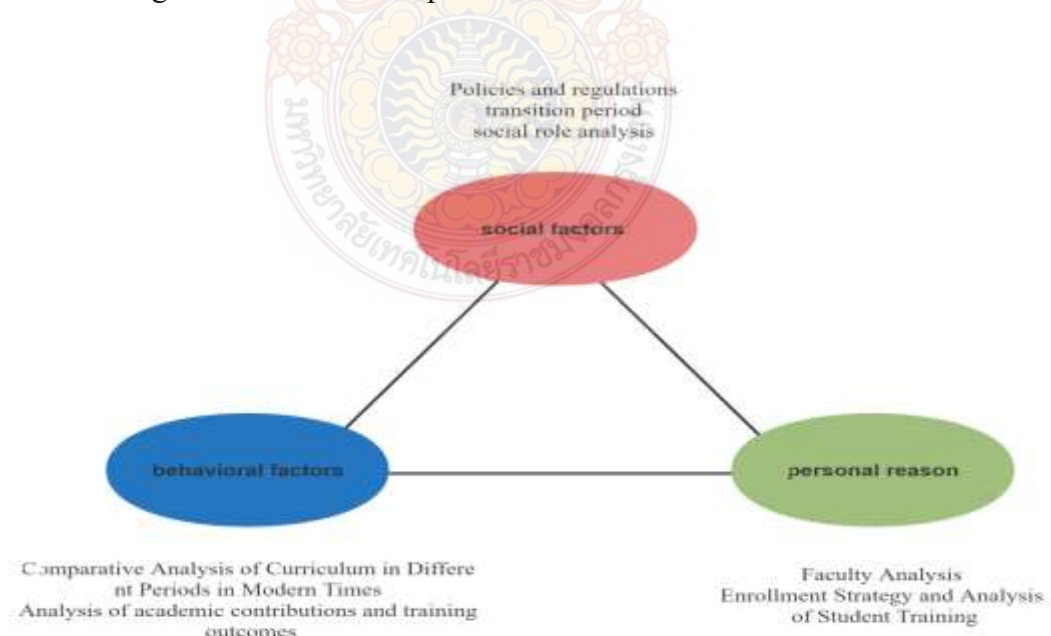


Figure 2.6 Research Framework

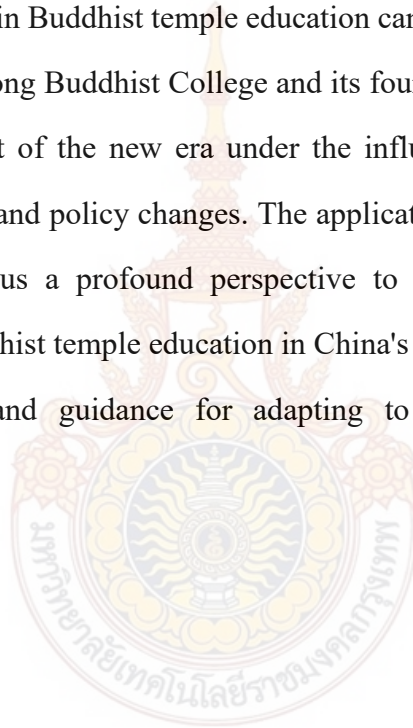
According to social cognitive theory, individuals understand their roles and identities in society by observing others and the social environment. In the context of the transformation of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong, the perceptions of managers, teachers, and students regarding their roles and identities may have changed. On one hand, the traditional roles of monks may face challenges, and monks in the new era may need to take on more social responsibilities. On the other hand, students' roles in the educational process may shift from passive recipients to active participants, engaging more in temple affairs and community activities. In the evolving landscape of Buddhist temple education, these changes in role perception, driven by social and cultural transformations, align with the principles of social cognitive theory. The theory emphasizes how individuals actively integrate into their environment, adapt to new surroundings, and construct their roles and identities based on observation and experience. Therefore, studying these role transformations in the context of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong can provide valuable insights into the interactions among individuals, their perspectives, and the evolving roles in a changing society.

Liang et al. (2022) argued in their article "A Study on Influencing Factors of 'Fundamental' Online Course Construction in Higher Vocational Education from the Perspective of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism" that when designing curricula, it is essential to take into account both human and environmental factors. Therefore, when researching the development of Guangdong Buddhist temple schools, these three aspects also need to be considered.

In their article "Realizing the Path of Knowledge Sharing among Library Subject Service Teams in the New Media Environment," Li et al. (2022) propose that, according to the social cognitive theory, knowledge transmission occurs through observation, imitation, and communication. In Buddhist temple education, the methods and approaches of knowledge transmission may change in response to shifts in the social environment. In the new era, educators might place greater emphasis on

cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, encouraging them to engage in more critical thinking and interaction during the process of knowledge transmission, rather than relying solely on traditional didactic methods of education.

Social cognitive theory provides a crucial explanatory framework for studying the transformation of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022. By delving into the cognitive processes of managers, teachers, and students, a comprehensive understanding of role construction, knowledge transmission, and cultural changes within Buddhist temple education can be achieved. Simultaneously, it unveils how Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated institutes adapt to the socio-cultural context of the new era under the influences of societal backgrounds, cultural interactions, and policy changes. The application of social cognitive theory in this research offers us a profound perspective to comprehend the evolution and development of Buddhist temple education in China's new era. This insight serves as a valuable reference and guidance for adapting to the socio-cultural context of contemporary China.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methodology employed in the current study, providing an explanation of the research design, elucidating specific reasons for the chosen design, and detailing the strengths and limitations of the research methods. It outlines the data collection methods and sampling strategies used in this study, describes how the collected data will be analyzed, and addresses ethical considerations related to the privacy of interviewees and participants. The chapter concludes by summarizing the limitations and reliability of the research and explaining how the study results will be effectively presented and conveyed.

3.1 Research Design

Based on the experience gained from previous literature reviews, this study employed a combination of historical research, literature review, and participant observation methods. Historical research, being a qualitative research method, is deemed suitable for investigating the relationship between the reform of Buddhist temple education in the new era and societal development. Given the diverse and complex nature of this relationship, a detailed analysis of historical events, figures, culture, and social contexts is essential. The study also considered the political, economic, and social educational development progress during the occurrence of events, better to understand the development and impact of Buddhist education reform.

While qualitative research can address these aspects, it alone cannot perform statistical analyses on historical events and phenomena. To complement this limitation, the researcher employed literature review and participant observation methods. This triangulation of research methods is a key strategy of this study. The

researcher developed the research design framework, as depicted in the diagram below, after discussions with the advisor.

Prepare	1. Refer to the advisor's opinions. 2. Collect materials. 3. Develop a completion schedule. 4. Define research objectives.
Process	1. Participate in observations and collect relevant documents, media, meeting records, and other literature related to the research. 2. Filter out irrelevant content for the study. 3. Categorize literature based on time. 4. Explore elements such as research, development trends, and the impact of policies and regulations on Buddhist temple education. 5. Align the research perspective and direction with the research goals and questions, and make adjustments accordingly.
Deal with	1. Based on observational results and literature review, explore and conduct descriptive and comparative analysis that aligns with the research question content. 2. Organize the research results. 3. Present the research results and provide recommendations. 4. Complete the writing of the thesis.

Preparation Stage: After multiple discussions with the supervisor, this study has identified a general research direction and started collecting relevant preparatory materials. However, we encountered some challenges during the preparation period. Most research on Buddhist temple education tends to focus on the Republican era. At the same time, contemporary studies often concentrate on specific doctrinal aspects, which creates challenges for conducting comprehensive research on macroscopic education. While this outcome has added significant challenges to this study, it has also strengthened the determination to complete the research.

During the Development Stage: In 2014, the author participated in the educational work of Lingdong College at Guangdong Buddhist College and observed the institution's long-term development changes. While collecting data, it was found that early archives were incomplete, with a significant amount missing. To compensate

for this deficiency, a comparative analysis was conducted using publicly available information on the internet, policy documents, and other sources. The developments over the past decade were compiled and organized, and the collected literature was sifted through. We retained documents related to curriculum design, teacher training, student recruitment and education, social interactions, and policy regulations. The literature was categorized based on the publication year. Further adjustments to the research objectives and questions were made based on these documents. The literature used in this study has been cited in the literature review, with the most frequently referenced sources being Master Huiyuan's "Chaozhou Buddhist Chronicle: Guoqing Temple in Chaozhou", Master Daliang's publication "Guangdong Buddhist Education Discussion", Master Hongming's "Discussion on Guangdong Buddhist Education", Mr He Fangyao's "Current Status, Characteristics, and Issues of Buddhist Development in Guangdong", Ms Li Langning's "Retrospect and Prospect of Guangdong Buddhist Research Since the Reform and Opening Up", and official documentation from the website of the People's Republic of China government.

Processing Stage: Based on the selected literature, appropriate analytical methods were employed. By analyzing and organizing the information, research results and recommendations were formulated. After completing each chapter, discussions were held with the supervisor, and the article was modified based on the supervisor's guidance and suggestions. The conclusion of the thesis followed this iterative process.

3.2 Research Methods

This study primarily employed literature review, historical research, and interview research methods to comprehensively understand the entire process of educational development in Buddhist temples during the new era. Therefore, the following three methods were adopted:

3.2.1 Literature Analysis Method

This is a research method that involves consulting, analyzing, organizing, and identifying the essential attributes of things through the examination of literature (Yuan, 2000). It is also one of the most fundamental methods used in educational scientific research. Historical materials form the foundation of historical research. Without a sufficient amount of historical materials, research becomes like "cooking without rice"—impossible (Qin, 2017). In this study, a wide range of literature from 2012 to 2022 related to social development, social education reforms, policies related to religion in Guangdong, and literature specifically about the education of Buddhist institutions in Guangdong was extensively collected. Special attention was given to literature related to the development of Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist Institute during the new era. Through the analysis of historical materials and by categorizing and distinguishing relevant materials related to this study, efforts were made to ensure the originality and authenticity of historical materials. Additionally, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the development process of the education sector, educational institutions, and historical documents related to the educational achievements of Guangdong Buddhist Institute in the context of social change, a literature survey was conducted based on the actual situation. The primary methods of literature survey include checking literature catalogs, querying library collections, and conducting internet searches.

3.2.2 Historical Research Method

According to the definition proposed by Mr Liang Qichao, the discipline of history possesses unique historical theories and methodologies. Throughout history, many historians have continuously explored and expanded historical theories, proposing practical historical methodologies (Zhou, 2022). To examine and elucidate the status of religious education from 2012 to 2022, a historical research method was implemented in this study. By identifying issues within this context, the study aims to

uncover underlying patterns and analyze the impact of educational reforms and developments in Buddhist institutions during the new era. Selected typical transformative events of the Guangdong Buddhist Institute were deeply analyzed. For instance, specific cases related to modifications in teaching plans and updates to course materials were chosen to investigate the role played by the Buddhist Institute in the social changes of Guangdong Province. Utilizing relevant data, such as educational quality assessment data for Buddhist institutions, academic paper publication status, etc., a data analysis and statistical evaluation were conducted to illustrate further the developmental trends and impact of Guangdong Buddhist Institute on Guangdong society during the new era, particularly in the context of educational and teaching reforms.

3.2.3 Participant Observation Method

Participant observation is a research method in the field of social sciences. Wang's (2015) paper, "A Brief Discussion on the Understanding of Research Methods in Social Sciences—Taking Participant Observation as an Example," concludes that participant observation does not start with concepts determined by existing theories and hypotheses. Instead, it prioritizes the positioning of everyday life, representing a flexible and open research logic and process. Therefore, in this study, considering the specific circumstances of the researcher, this method is chosen for conducting the research.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods employed in this study include literature analysis and in-depth interviews.

Literature Analysis Method

Given that the research period of this study spans from 2012 to 2022, an exploratory approach is taken from a historical perspective to investigate the educational reforms in Buddhist temple schools in Guangdong Province. The scope of data collection focuses on three main aspects: the timing and events of government policy issuance, as well as literature or media reports related to the background of social development. Although the data collection scope is broad, it is well-defined in categories. Therefore, the primary sources of data collection are from the following institutions or websites:

Guangdong Buddhist College's public information database, the archives of Kaixuan Chan Temple in Chaoshan, and the archives of Lingdong Buddhist College store historical materials from the 1980s onwards, with a primary focus on collecting various public documents of the institution since 2011.

Since this portion of materials may not fully support all the requirements of the thesis, an analysis of the educational situation of the institution in the new era was also conducted through document and image archives in the college journals "Guangdong Buddhism," "Ren Hai Deng," and "Caoxi Shui." Through these channels of literature collection, a comprehensive display of the teaching reform information on both the main campus and branch campuses of Guangdong Buddhist College can be achieved.

In terms of policy guidance in the new era, historical research was conducted. Information related to the social background, government decrees, policies and regulations, religious regulations, and the development of social education in Guangdong Province from 2012 to 2022 was collected through the Guangdong provincial government website and offline provincial and municipal libraries.

Regarding the information on the operation of Buddhist temples and schools in Guangdong Province from 2012 to 2022, the current collection has revealed

relatively complete data. This data extraction may include, but is not limited to, document archives, audio archives, academic paper collections, news media, images, historical documents, letters, literary works, publications, etc.

In the data collection of previous studies, channels such as CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), Baidu Scholar, and Buddhist academic forum proceedings were used to gather information from past research.

After collecting the above content, a selection and analysis process was carried out to extract relevant information related to the social changes in Guangdong Province and the educational development of Guangdong Buddhist College. The data were categorized based on years, using every two years as a division point, resulting in a total of 5 developmental milestones. The researcher carried out a year-by-year comparison and analysis of literature data. Thus, providing insights into the causes, processes, and outcomes of the transformations. The data is sourced from primary materials, maintaining the rigor of historical research standards in literature.

Data processing mainly involved qualitative data analysis in qualitative research. The collected data were organized and categorized according to the research objectives, and irrelevant or duplicate information was filtered out. Based on the collected information, an analysis of the specificity of Buddhist education in Guangdong within the historical events or cultural phenomena of social change was conducted. This involves a thorough exploration of the intrinsic motives behind historical events and phenomena, analyzing their historical background, social environment, and cultural context, ultimately gaining profound historical insights.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

After completing the data collection process, the following steps were taken for data sampling and analysis in this study.

1. Preliminary Classification: Based on the research theme and objectives, a detailed classification of relevant laws and regulations, significant events, key figures, and social backgrounds related to the religious development in Guangdong Province was conducted. This includes documents from government and party authorities, campus publications, internal information from academic committees, etc.

2. Literature Evaluation: The reliability, academic value, relevance, and publication time of the collected literature were assessed to ensure the credibility of the data sources.

3. Literature Classification Adjustment: A more detailed adjustment of literature types was performed, categorizing them based on time, theme, region, key figures, etc. Highly correlated literature was integrated to comprehensively observe the developmental trends of Buddhist temple education over time.

4. Analysis and Interpretation: Through the analysis and interpretation of literature, as well as the intuitive impressions from participant observation, mutual comparisons and contrasts were made to ensure that the analysis and interpretation are objective and rigorous.

5. Writing the Research Paper: Based on the results of the analysis and understanding, the research report and the content of the first three chapters were written.

6. Analysis and Presentation of Research Results: After the progress of the preliminary research, research conclusions were presented based on the results of data analysis. The emphasis was on the reliability and authority of data sources, as well as the effectiveness of the background and content of the data.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed statistical analysis, comparative analysis of historical data, text mining, qualitative data coding, and network analysis.

1. Statistical Analysis Techniques: By collecting historical data related to the social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education and applying statistical methods to analyze this data, charts and timelines were designed to display the occurrence time and trends of historical events. Statistical analysis techniques were used to reveal and validate the relationship between social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education.

2. Historical Data Comparison: Collecting historical data at different time points and conducting comparative analysis. By comparing data from different years, the evolution and trends of social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education can be observed. This comparative analysis can reveal differences in change, the speed of change, and potential influencing factors.

3. Text Mining: Research and analysis of a large amount of relevant literature was conducted. To better utilize this literature data, text mining techniques were applied to discover keywords and topics within the literature, providing in-depth insights into the content related to social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education.

4. Qualitative Data Coding: Data obtained through interviews were subjected to systematic analysis using coding techniques. Interview data were segmented into different themes, categories, or concepts, with keywords or labels assigned to each code, facilitating better organization and analysis of the data to uncover patterns and correlations in social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education.

5. Network Analysis: Social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education involve a network of relationships among various individuals,

events, and institutions. Network analysis can visualize this information to understand these complex relationships better. Constructing a network diagram can reveal crucial connections between key individuals and events.

These techniques comprehensively refined the interactive relationship between social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process of information collection, data organization, writing, and interviews, the protection of collected personal information and sensitive data was ensured. For sensitive information, measures were taken to anonymize and de-personalize the data. Especially during participant observation or interview interactions, efforts were made to ensure that research participants had a complete understanding of the interview content and the intended use of the information.

3.7 Limitations of Research Methods

Based on the current information collected, the following limitations have been identified:

1. Data Acquisition: The data obtained through historical research is limited and incomplete. Therefore, when studying the reform of Buddhist education in Guangdong, researchers face a situation where historical documents are either not comprehensive or incomplete, which may lead to an inadequate representation of specific periods of study.

2. Selection Bias: Due to the limited period and scope involved in the study, it may not cover all relevant events and figures. This could lead to selection bias, and the research results may not fully represent the entirety of social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist education.

3. **Memory Bias:** Respondents may be influenced by personal biases, time gaps, and factors such as forgetfulness, leading to incomplete or biased descriptions of events and situations.

4. **Subjectivity Issues:** Despite efforts to maintain objectivity in the research, subjective viewpoints and interpretations may still introduce biases. Personal biases and subjective judgments could impact the analysis and conclusions of the study.

3.8 Research Reliability and Validity

This research project focused on the study of temple education in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022. It extensively utilizes literature and incorporates participant observation. To ensure the reliability of the information used, an explanation of the research's reliability and validity was provided.

3.8.1 Research Reliability

This study analyzed the development of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong during the new era, with data covering the early stages of education, pre-new era and post-new era developments in curriculum design, enrollment and training, policies and regulations, teacher training, and social interactions. To ensure the rationality, authenticity, and criticality of the research, the materials selected for the study are based on publicly available data from the media, published books, official websites, and campus archival information.

In the process of data collection, a large amount of information is sourced from Chinese academic journals, temple-printed books, internal documents of the academy, and meeting minutes. Unfortunately, many internal documents are not made public. Since the researcher participated in the investigation, these contents were presented in conjunction with publicly disclosed data or discussed with colleagues. The content discussed can be corresponded to publicly available data from the temple's

external media. This approach ensures the objectivity and rigor of the information, providing future researchers with reliable, recognizable, and critically usable material. Therefore, completing this part of the data ensured a high degree of credibility.

Due to the potential involvement of personal copyrights in the study of Guangdong temple education from 2012 to 2022, only excerpts from official websites such as the Guangdong Provincial Religious Affairs Bureau, Guangdong Buddhist Association, and Guangdong Buddhist College, as well as publicly available content from WeChat media, are used. Literature journals also use publicly available data from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). Thus, the researcher ensures the authority, honesty, and objectivity of the research materials used, demonstrating the legal reliability of the analysis after data collection.

3.8.2 Validity of Data Processing

Initially, data and archival documents were collected, and then the data were processed and analyzed. Since this research falls under regional history and focuses on the history of Buddhist education in China, the collected materials are predominantly in Chinese, with only a few theoretical viewpoints supported by English materials. The collected data primarily covers three main areas: temple education, social policies, and social development. The research materials include monographs, historical documents, academic papers, journal articles, government and college official websites, WeChat public platforms, and campus internal meeting records. The focus is on extracting key information from the materials through the research questions.

Firstly, the researcher enlisted colleagues and friends to assist in providing and extracting the core content of the materials. The research direction of the paper was conceptualized through their help. Subsequently, using the identity of the college staff, access to archival materials and library borrowing rights are obtained, and core materials are downloaded. Official website data is also utilized for research. Currently, the collected materials for this study cover both the core content and similar studies.

Drawing on the research methods of others enhanced the validity of the processing and analysis in this study.

Hard drives and cloud storage were used to store all the materials used in this study for convenient and secure retrieval at any time. Each content is archived individually for the quickest retrieval and usage efficiency. Physical books are labeled accordingly and scanned into PDF versions for easy access, contributing to improved validity and security.

3.9 Data Interpretation and Presentation

The classification of data mainly included policies and regulations, teacher training, enrollment situations, social interactions, and academic contributions. To illustrate the sources and content of the data, examples were provided below.

Firstly, concerning literature materials, the majority were derived from official websites, including but not limited to the official websites of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, and the Guangdong Buddhist Association. For instance, when querying policies related to teacher training, such as the "Measures for the Qualification Recognition and Title Appraisal and Appointment of Teachers in Religious Schools (Trial)" (Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2012), information published on the official website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China is utilized. The content states, "Personnel engaged in educational and teaching work in religious schools should possess the qualifications of teachers." This resource provides policy-based reference material for the study of religious teacher training. As shown in the figure:



Figure 3.1 The Study of Religious Teacher Training

To better understand the temple's educational hardware and materials, information obtained from the Guangdong Buddhist College archives reveals that from 2012 to 2022, the college has focused on hardware construction to cultivate talent among the clergy. There has been increased investment in practical teaching, library resources, network development, sports facilities, and other aspects to meet the needs of teaching. In addition to the construction of a modern library, multifunctional supporting facilities for modern teaching and teaching aids are also becoming increasingly sophisticated. Classrooms equipped with multimedia teaching equipment account for as much as 90%, and the utilization rate of modern teaching facilities has steadily increased year by year, maintaining a high level of over 85% for an extended period. This can be analyzed from the table below:

Table 3.1 Statistical Table for Modern Teaching Equipment in Guangdong Buddhist College

College	Computer Classroom (Room)	Computer	Teaching Aids (Sets)	Student (Person)	Man-machine Ratio
Caoxi College	1	40	16	53	1.33
Nizhong College	2	107	23	173	1.62
Lingdong College	6	12	20	74	6.17
Cloud Gate Academy	4	119	63	151	1.27
Total	13	278	122	451	

Note: Teaching auxiliary equipment includes servers, projectors, scanners, printers, cameras, and other recording equipment.

In terms of student cultivation, also through archival materials, it is understood that Guangdong Buddhist College has a large and stable teaching staff. Currently, the total number of students in the college is 451, and there are 197 teachers. According to the standard algorithm of the evaluation index system, the overall student-teacher ratio of the college is 2.6, which is better than the qualified standard for Buddhist colleges in the index.

Table 3.2 Statistical Table of Student-Teacher Ratios at Guangdong Buddhist College

	Headquarters Guangdong Buddhist College	Caoxi College	Nizhong College	Lingdong College	Cloud Gate Academy
Full-time Teachers	146	26	60	15	45
External Teachers	51	9	19	15	8
Student	474	55	173	95	151
Student-Teacher ratio	2.6	1.7	2.4	3.7	3

Analyzing the data related to research outcomes through organizing and querying physical documents and official dispersed data, it is found that in the past five years, full-time teachers at various colleges in Guangdong have achieved rich academic results. Among them, they have participated in 7 projects, published 7 monographs, a series of 1 set (9 books), published 7 papers, and served as the chief editor for 5 textbooks.

Table 3.3 Guangdong Buddhist College Teacher Participation Project Form

Legal Name	College	Subject Name	Time	Project Unit
Zhenchen	Caoxi	Modern English Translation of Chan Master's Poems in Northern Guangdong Research	2018	Research Office of Guangdong Provincial Department of Education
		Investigating ancient stone carvings in northern Guangdong	2019	Propaganda Department of Shaoguan Municipal Party Committee
		Investigating Danxia's ancient stone carvings	2020	Propaganda Department of Shaoguan Municipal Party Committee
		Danxia Rock Painting	2020	Propaganda Department of Shaoguan Municipal Party Committee
Changle	Caoxi	Liang Shiyi Shinto Monument	2020	Sanshui Propaganda Department
		Inscriptions and Prefaces of Dongling Cave and Valley Opening at Zhenyang Guoye Temple	2020	Propaganda Department of Yingde Municipal Party Committee
		Investigating ancient stone carvings in Shaoguan	2021	Propaganda Department of Shaoguan Municipal Party Committee

The above examples illustrate the sources and selection of data, provide explanations, and present findings.

3.10 Summary

This research adopts the historical research method to explore the relationship between social changes in Guangdong and the reform of Buddhist

education. Through an in-depth analysis of the literature content, background, and historical data from 2012 to 2022, as well as interviews with relevant personnel in Buddhist education at Guangdong Buddhist College, the study aims to deepen understanding of the impact and trends of social changes on Buddhist education in Guangdong. This research provides important reference points for further promoting the development and reform of Buddhist education.



CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

This chapter of data analysis will begin by summarizing the data collection process. Afterward, to illustrate the concepts of educational reform in Buddhist temples during specific periods, descriptive analysis will be conducted. The exploration will focus on the role of temple education in the context of the new era and Chinese characteristics, comparing the philosophies and functions of temple education in different periods in Guangdong Province, China. The study integrates and analyzes the survey results, discusses the effectiveness and reliability of the data analysis process, and finally provides a summary and explanation of the corresponding analytical results about the research objectives.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The period from 2012 to 2022 marks the transformative decade when Chinese socialism with distinctive characteristics entered a new era. During these ten years, various aspects such as society, livelihood, religion, education, and science have undergone significant transformation. China, adhering to the principles of religious freedom, has long respected the autonomous development of religions. However, from the perspective of national unity, religions cannot lag behind the pace of societal development. With the introduction of new policies, the development of religious education has become an important topic in this era.

Buddhist education is closely tied to the future development of Buddhism. Therefore, researching the current changes in Buddhist education, exploring the trends in temple education, and investigating the specific manifestations and influences of these changes in Buddhist temples in Guangdong are crucial aspects of this study. This

effort includes comparative research on curriculum design, student situations, teaching staff, training modes, and training effectiveness.

The study explores the challenges and opportunities faced by Buddhist temple education in Guangdong from 2012 to 2022, as well as the impact of these changes on Buddhist temples and Chinese society. The primary focus is on the transformation trends of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province during the new era in China, the emergence of new concepts and roles in temple education, and the interrelationship between Buddhist temple education and social changes.

By conducting a detailed comparative analysis of the changing trends and related concepts in Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province, the researcher aims to reveal the transformation process of Buddhist temple education in the new era of China. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of Buddhist temple education and offer an expanded perspective on the role of Buddhist temples in Chinese society.

4.2 Data Collection

The history of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province dates back a long time. In the early days, a shortage of talent and unclear administrative structures led to the loss of materials, including documents and historical archives. However, recently, with the advancement of the times, the construction of Buddhist temples has gradually caught up. In particular, there has been an improvement in areas such as temple archive management and the public availability of information on online platforms. Therefore, the difficulty in data collection has reduced significantly.

4.2.1 Data Sources and Collection Methods

The data for this study primarily come from the Lingdong College Archives of Guangdong Buddhist College, the official WeChat public platforms of Guangdong

Buddhist College and its four branch campuses, online media, government official websites, and other channels. To ensure the privacy of information, the study primarily referenced publicly available content during the collection process. The main contents collected include:

1. Admission brochures of the four branch campuses of Guangdong Buddhist College, covering the years 2012 to 2022. The focus is on information such as the school's situation, admission requirements, recommended courses, etc. By examining changes in admissions over different periods, a deep exploration of the school's operations was conducted.

2. Official websites of the four branch campuses of Guangdong Buddhist College, covering the years 2012 to 2022. Information was compiled on current events related to courses offered by the college, including admission details, course offerings, social interactions, teaching achievements, etc.

3. Official website of the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee, covering the years 2012 to 2022. This included policy documents and news reports related to religious colleges, with a focus on periods of policy implementation and development requirements relevant to the colleges.

4. Buddhist forums and publications hosted by the four branch campuses of Guangdong Buddhist College, covering the years 2012 to 2022. Emphasis was placed on forum content, research achievements, and social influence.

5. Buddhist news websites, covering the years 2012 to 2022. Key information to be collected includes relevant reports featuring teachers and students of Guangdong Buddhist College, including competitions, honors, and other details. Summaries were made regarding different periods, evaluating standards, and academic output.

6. Academic websites, covering the years 2012 to 2022. Articles related to Guangdong Buddhist education were collected to provide a diverse perspective for later analysis of the role of Buddhist education in Guangdong.

7. Participant observation information collection, covering the years 2012 to 2022. Since the author works at Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College, publicly available information within Lingdong College can be accessed. In the process of participation and observation, communication and exchange were conducted with colleagues at Guangdong Buddhist College, including but not limited to the college president, faculty, current students, and leaders of the Chaozhou Buddhist Association. This helped clarify the challenges and responses of Buddhist temple education at different times. The list of communication targets is as follows:

Participating Units	Position	Name
Headquarters of Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong College	Academic Affairs Office	M Venerable Monk
	President of a university	D Venerable Monk
	Provost	T Venerable Monk
	Teacher	X Venerable Monk
	Student	Y Venerable Monk
	Provost	B Venerable Monk
Nizhong College	Provost	C Venerable Monk
Participating Units	Position	Name
Caoxi College	Provost	C Venerable Monk
Chaozhou Buddhist Association	Office Manager	Mrs. Z
Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple	Volunteer Team	Mr. C
		Mr. D
		Mr. Z
		Mr. L
		Mrs. C

In addition to communicating with the aforementioned colleagues and relevant authorities, the author personally participated in academic meetings and social interaction conferences. Through these channels, the author gained insights into the training and development of students at the Buddhist College, the interaction between the college and society, the effectiveness of social welfare activities, the characteristics of educational methods, and the overall satisfaction with the educational work over the past five years. For on-site photos of the mentioned activities and outcomes, please refer to the appendix photos². Furthermore, the author also explored students' academic performance, employment prospects, the impact of policies on teachers and the college, and the influence of non-professional educational initiatives. The aim is to determine the most impactful educational programs and activities undertaken by the Buddhist College.

4.2.2 Challenges and Limitations in Data Collection

During the process of data collection, some information was unclear, particularly regarding detailed data about the college. Due to the dispersed nature of report-type articles, the collection process faced some difficulties. The author focused on researching Buddhist temple education with the aim of comprehensively and accurately discussing the role and characteristics of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong in the new era. Despite facing these challenges, given the current development status of Buddhist temple education, the author actively explored development changes and committed to offering guidance for future research. By focusing on and collecting relevant literature, books, news, and other materials, the author gradually developed the research concept, hoping to gain an in-depth understanding and analysis of key issues in this field.

² Appendix Photos: Including on-site pictures of campus activities, competitions, academic meetings, alms charity events, government working meetings, teaching sessions, etc. These photos serve to validate the content of the thesis material.

The new style of Buddhist education led by Master Taixu broke away from the traditional educational model and began comprehensive reform during the Republic of China period. After long-term development, Buddhist education has gradually presented a more diverse appearance, including the evolution of historical development, educational models, educational content, educational philosophy, and educational targets. In terms of educational content, Han Buddhism covers eight sects, and it also involves exchanges of ideas with Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. Due to the diversity of Han Buddhist education, this study can only provide a macroscopic overview, and there are certain limitations in the detailed elaboration of educational content. It is necessary for future research to further probe into this issue to gain a deeper understanding and present the content characteristics of Han Buddhist education.

4.2.3 Data Research and Classification Planning

In the process of organizing, structuring, and analyzing data, this study employed a method of classifying relevant literature from the years 2012 to 2022. The research literature was categorized based on aspects such as policy and regulations, teaching content, teacher demographics, student situations, and cultivation effectiveness, aiming to identify data variables under different contexts. To learn about the motivations, processes, and outcomes of these variables, the study divided the ten years of data into groups of two years each, selecting five sets of data from within this decade and considering background information related to variable generation.

Through the analysis of data, this study focused on various aspects of this process. Firstly, it integrated and compared data variables under different contexts to reveal the trends in changes in Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong region. Secondly, it analyzed the motivations behind the variables, such as driving factors leading to changes in Buddhist temple education, including policy changes and societal demands. Next, it explored the processes of the variables surrounding the implementation of Buddhist temple education, role changes for teachers and students,

among other aspects. Finally, by examining the outcomes of the variables, namely the cultivation effectiveness of Buddhist temple education, it assessed the impact of these changes on Buddhist temples and Chinese society.

Through the analysis of this process, this study aims to ultimately derive a comprehensive understanding and conclusions regarding the collected data. This provided important reference and insights for understanding the conceptual and role transformations of Buddhist temple education in Guangdong during the new era in China.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Based on the organization and structuring of the collected data, the analysis covered the following aspects: policy and regulations, teaching content, teacher demographics, student situations, etc. These sample contents include relevant data on Buddhist temple education in Guangdong Province.

4.3.1 Analysis of Religious Policies and Regulations

Due to China's vast territory and its status as an agricultural giant, it maintains a centralized management model. Therefore, religious policies in Guangdong must align with central policies. China's attitude towards religion follows the principle of "political unity and cooperation, mutual respect in beliefs", handling relations with the religious community based on this principle and continuously consolidating the patriotic united front with the religious community. China has a deep historical and cultural tradition of respecting religious freedom, advocating harmony, seeking common ground while preserving differences, and maintaining a tolerant attitude toward religion in society.

In policy implementation, the Chinese religious community adheres to the direction of sinicizing religion, practicing the core socialist values, promoting the fine

traditions of the Chinese nation, and actively exploring religious thoughts that conform to China's national conditions. Each religion interprets its doctrines and rules to align with the national context and contemporary requirements. This has also contributed to the promulgation and standardization of religious laws and regulations.

From 2012 to 2022, the Chinese government issued relatively few policies and regulations related to religion, especially in the context of religious education. According to publicly available data, there are a total of 6 departmental regulations, 6 normative documents, and 3 government information topics related to religious education, indicating the limited number of policies and regulations enacted during this period.

Table 4.1 From 2012 to 2022, the Chinese Government Policies and Regulations Related to Religion

Years	Departmental Rules	Normative Documents	Government Information Topics
2012	"Measures for Conferring Degrees in Religious Colleges and Universities" (Trial Implementation), "Measures for Religious College Teachers' Qualification Certification and Professional Title Evaluation and Appointment Measures" (Trial Implementation).	"Notice on Further Resolving Social Security Issues for Religious Clerics" and "Opinions on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Circles to Engage in Public Welfare and Charity Activities".	"2012 National Religious Work Conference", "The Third World Buddhist Forum", "Religious Policies and Regulations Learning Month".
2013		Implement the "Opinions on Properly Solving the Social Security Issues of Religious Clerics".	
2016		"Suggestions on In-depth Training and Practice of Socialist Core Values Activities in Religious Circles"; Notice on Printing and Distributing "The Seventh Five-Year Plan for Legal Publicity and Education in the National Religious Work System".	
2017	Regulations on Religious Affairs		

Years	Departmental Rules	Normative Documents	Government Information Topics
2019		Issued the "Notice of the General Office of the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee on Strengthening the Teaching of Public Courses in Religious Colleges"; Guangdong Province formulated the "Work Plan on Organizing Ideological and Political Education and Other Public Classes in Religious Colleges" based on this notice and carried out the "sending classes to schools" activity.	
2021	Measures for the Administration of Religious Clerics: "Administrative Measures for Religious Colleges and Schools". The Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Committee, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the "Measures", establishes an administrative entrusted management mechanism for religious colleges and universities and explores and innovates the management model of religious colleges and universities.		
2022	Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services		

The "Internet Religious Information Services Management Measures" introduced in 2022 do not specifically target Buddhist temple education. However, it has had a certain impact on the online dissemination of education, eliminating non-standard evangelistic groups and preventing the spread of cults. Notably, after the regulations came into effect, they required temples to obtain permission for disseminating information, thereby protecting the legitimate channels for the propagation of orthodox religions.

As policies are implemented, religious sites and religious schools, by policy requirements, undergo internal optimization and structural adjustments. This has also

stimulated variables in the reform of religious education itself. Analyzing the changes brought about by each policy based on the time of publication is crucial to understanding the transformation dynamics.

In 2012, the trial implementation of the Teacher Qualification Certification Measures was initiated. Guangdong Province completed the first national examination for the teacher qualification certification of Han Buddhism in Guangdong Buddhist College from November 26 to 27, 2016. The examination included 101 applicants (Zhou, 2016). Five examination centers were set up at the main campus of Guangdong Buddhist College, Caoxi College, Nizhong College, Lingdong College, and Yunmen College. Each center had one cadre from the Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission and one cadre from the local Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau, where Guangdong Buddhist College is located, participating in the inspection. The Guangdong Provincial Buddhist Association dispatched two staff members to supervise the examination. Each examination center was composed of five interview examiners, including one cadre from the religious affairs department, two monks, and two expert scholars.

The completion of this task signifies the affirmation of the teaching level of Buddhist temples in Guangdong. By examining whether applicants possess professional ethics, basic qualities, teaching abilities, and the potential for professional development, a solid foundation has been laid for subsequent talent cultivation.

In the same year, the issuance of two other documents, namely the "Notice on Further Solving Social Security Issues for Religious Personnel" and the "Opinions on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Organizations Engaging in Public Welfare and Charity Activities", addressed the livelihood issues of religious individuals, including retirement and healthcare. In response to the release of these documents, Guo Chan Temple in Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou City, Guangdong Province, actively responded by purchasing social insurance and medical insurance for resident monks

and Buddhist college teachers. Simultaneously, in line with the spirit of the second document, the Lingdong Charity Foundation was established to effectively carry out the mission of propagating Buddhism and benefiting sentient beings.

In accordance with the initiative of the "Religious Policy and Regulation Study Month," the promotion of collective learning about relevant laws and regulations among all teachers and students in Guangdong Buddhist schools has enhanced their recognition of religious identity and religious life. Given the distinctive nature of religious identity in Buddhist education, studying religious policies and regulations has contributed to a better understanding and acknowledgment of religious identity and practices.

In 2017, the new "Regulations on Religious Affairs" were promulgated, marking a milestone in the new era of religious regulations and serving as a significant driving force for religious reform. These regulations provide specific provisions for the management of religious groups, religious schools, religious activity venues, religious personnel, religious activities, and religious properties. Particularly noteworthy are the provisions related to religious schools, which laid the groundwork for the improvement of the "Management Measures for Religious Schools" issued in 2021. This set of measures represents the first specific regulations introduced in China for religious schools. Therefore, it also signifies a major variable in the policy landscape for Buddhist temple education in the new era.

4.3.2 Comparative Analysis of Buddhist Curriculum in Different Periods

The selection of modern Buddhist professional courses continues to follow the doctrinal traditions of China and India prior to the Qing Dynasty. It is rooted in the advantages of the content of Buddhism itself, undergoing continuous adjustments and optimizations. Modern education builds upon ancient Buddhist education and has undergone three curriculum reforms. Firstly, it acknowledges the fundamental

differences in teaching content between Chinese and Indian Buddhism. These differences are not only institutional but also ideological (Zhang, 1968).

When Indian Buddhism entered China, it initially underwent an analysis from the perspective of Daoist philosophy, leading to a misunderstanding of Buddhism as Daoism. A distinctive feature was the debate between "emptiness" and "existence." Buddhism rapidly departed from its Indian roots and transformed into Sinicized Buddhism. While the institutional and spiritual aspects could change with the times, corrections from scholars such as Zhufa Ya of the Gé Yì school, Kang Falang, Zhī Dàolín of the Xuánxué school, Shì Dào'ān, Sēngzhào, and Dàoshēng of the semi-Xuánxué school formed a new style. Therefore, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, numerous Buddhist sects emerged. Initially influenced by Jīmóluóshī's Madhyamaka philosophy, the Three Treatise School and Tiantai School were officially formed. Subsequently, the Huayan School and Nanshan Vinaya School developed, with Zen Buddhism being the most distinctive. The Zen School abandoned the Indian scriptural origins, delving directly into the depths of the mind and encountering the Buddha. From the perspective of the teaching model in Buddhism, it departed from traditional scripture-based arguments and, instead, focused on guidelines, kōans, and Zen thoughts. This gave rise to a trend of Zen practice without reliance on doctrinal teachings, making Zen Buddhism distinct from other sects as it moved toward a different extreme.

With the rise of the Chan school, Chinese Buddhism took on a new appearance characterized by the rules established by patriarchs. Combining with Chinese culture, it formed a new Buddhist monastic structure that incorporated the concepts of the Vinaya School internally and resembled ancient imperial institutions externally. This proves that the ideological framework of Chinese culture cannot fully accept the original spirit from India. Foreign ideas must undergo assimilation and transformation to take root in social life. Therefore, the process of Sinicization of Buddhism began from the moment Buddhism was introduced to China.

The education model of this sect, which involves teachers guiding disciples, was a common form in ancient Chinese society. Confucianism also observed this pattern, which was not unique to Chinese Buddhism. Over time, it gradually evolved into a system centered around private academies, using temples as units. Monks with both practice and moral conduct served as teachers, and disciples from various backgrounds gathered at a temple to study Buddhist teachings and engage in meditation. These arrangements formed a distinctive educational model in ancient China. This educational approach persisted through successive feudal dynasties until the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China period. The courses offered during this time also maintained the doctrinal continuity of specific sects, with few temples integrating teachings from various sects into a comprehensive curriculum. Instead, most temples focused on one sect or one school as the primary content of study.

In 1903, Ven. Lǐ Yún (释笠云) established the first modern-style monk academy at Kaifu Temple in Changsha (Liming, 2009). This marked the beginning of modern education in China and opened the curtain for modern Buddhist education. In 1907, Zhang Taiyan and Ven. Man Shu published "Warnings to Buddhist Disciples Everywhere" and "A Message to Secular Authorities", respectively. Yang Renshan wrote "Revitalization Strategies for Chinese Buddhism," and Ven. Jing'an submitted a petition to the Qing government. Eventually, the Qing government officially permitted temples to establish their schools, leading to the widespread establishment of modern monk academies across different regions.

In 1907, Yang Renshan founded the "Zhihuan Jing She" (祇洹精舍) at the Jingjing Printing House in Nanjing. Although the school initially enrolled only about twenty students, its educational objectives and style became a model for modern monk education. Graduates, such as Taixu and Renshan, played leadership roles in the subsequent reform of Buddhism. The Jingjing Printing House's educational endeavors had distinct advantages. As a printing house, it provided numerous Buddhist textbooks,

and it had excellent teacher resources and facilities. Graduates had employment options, and engaging in sutra printing allowed for further research in Buddhist studies. This well-established structure effectively addressed concerns about the future of monastic education.

In 1933, Ven. Taixu established the Lingdong Buddhist Academy within the Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou, Guangdong, marking the beginning of modern Buddhist education in Guangdong. Ven led the academy. Taixu's disciples and followers, such as Zhifeng, Tongyi, and Jichen, held key positions in the administration of the Lingdong Buddhist Academy. The school's publication "Ren Hai Deng" (人海灯) featured numerous articles on Buddhist reforms and monastic education, characterized by sharp language and clear viewpoints, which often hit the mark and demonstrated the vitality of the new generation of Buddhist disciples. Some notable articles included "Our Life in the Classroom" (Jue, 1934) and "A Review of Monastic Education" (Ji, 1934).

The following will provide a horizontal comparison of the courses offered at the beginning of the Lingdong Buddhist College during the early years of the Republic of China, the courses arranged during its reestablishment, and the curriculum in the contemporary era. Through an examination of Buddhist and societal courses, an attempt will be made to illustrate the changes and developments over time. The courses offered were as follows:

Table 4.2 A Horizontal Comparison Chart Of Lingtung College's Buddhist Major Courses

Course Period	Initial Period	Resumption Period	New Era Period
Type of study system	Class A (junior high school), Class B (senior elementary school), Research Department	Undergraduate	Undergraduate, postgraduate
Curriculum	The curriculum includes the Hundred Dharmas Illuminated School, Novice Precepts, Introduction to Buddhist Studies, and Practicing Virtue. Dharmalakṣaṇa-Vijñaptimātratā School, Prajñā Series on Dharmata, Theravada Abhidharma Series, Chinese Buddhist Studies, Integrated Applied Studies, and Studies on the Five Buddhist Schools.	Foundations of Pure Land Buddhism, History of Indian Buddhism, Texts on Cultivating the Bodhi Mind, Novice Precepts and Rituals, Foundations of Buddhist Studies, Universal Door Chapter (from the Avatamsaka Sutra), Basics of Pure Land Studies, Samyutta Agama Sutras, History of Chinese Buddhism, Exposition of the Profound Secrets Sutra, Teaching History of Tiantai School, and Commentary on the Four-Fold Method of Contemplation Sutra.	Overview of Eight Buddhist Schools, History of Indian Buddhism, Novice Precepts and Rituals, Path to Buddhahood, A Brief Discussion on the Stages of Practice, Foundations of Buddhist Studies, Zen Meditation, Vedic Chants, Mahayana Doctrine of the Five Aggregates, Monastic Codes, Yogacara, Madhyamaka Commentary by Qingmu, Pure Land Religious Practices, Treatise on Gathering Mahayana Teachings, Selected Readings from Agama Sutras, Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana, Basics of Buddhist Studies in Management, Thirty Verses on Yogacara, Lay Buddhist Practices, Brahma Net Sutra, Exposition of the Profound Secrets Sutra, Vinaya Studies, Selected Readings from Tanjing (Platform Sutra), Miscellaneous Treatises, and Religious Ethics.

Table 4.3 Lingdong College's Buddhist Social Studies Curriculum Cross-Comparison Chart

Course Period	Initial Period	Resumption Period	New Era Period
Course period	Class A (junior high school), Class B (senior elementary school), Department (Zhicheng, 1934).	Research (Zhicheng, 1934) Undergraduate	Undergraduate, postgraduate
Type of study system	Moral Education, Geography, Civics, Physical Education, Composition, Arts, Mathematics, Local History, Chinese Language, National Language, Reflective Conversations, Ethical Conduct, History, and National Language Conversations.	English, History, and college-level Language Arts.	Chinese United Front Theory and Practice, Situation and Policies, Mao Zedong Thought and the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, English, Physical Education, College-level Language Arts, Computer Theory and Practice, Introduction to Chinese Culture, Public Speaking and Eloquence, Patriotic Religious Practices in China, Overview of Contemporary Chinese and World Religions, Thesis Guidance, Psychology, Outline of Modern Chinese History, Selection of Religious Literature in Modern and Contemporary China.

According to the chart analysis, the initial core curriculum of Lingdong Buddhist College placed a significant emphasis on social courses, mainly in the category of cultural literacy. This suggests that, at that time, the overall cultural proficiency of monks was generally low. The educational goal of the Buddhist college was to provide young monks with basic cultural knowledge while enhancing their understanding of Buddhist doctrines. It was not until 1935 that Lingdong Buddhist College established a research department, hiring cutting-edge scholars to teach in every department. The research department can be considered a specialized talent development initiative focused on pure Buddhist curriculum content.

However, due to factors such as social unrest, economic difficulties, and other challenges, the Buddhist college had to cease operations. It was only in 1992 that Lingdong Buddhist College was re-established, with Venerable Dingran again taking the initiative. Unfortunately, the course schedule for this period has not been found. For reference, the Chinese Buddhist Association proposed the basic textbooks for Buddhist courses at three levels—elementary, intermediate, and advanced—in 1986, which can be considered the curriculum for Buddhist studies during that time, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Basic Textbooks for Buddhist Courses at Three Levels

Serial Number	初级佛学教材 (Primary Level Buddhist Textbooks)	中级佛学教材 (Intermediate Level Buddhist Textbooks)	高级佛学教材 (Advanced Level Buddhist Textbooks)
1	释迦牟尼佛传 (Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha)	《中国佛教简史》 (黄忏华著) (A Concise History of Chinese Buddhism) by Huang Chanhua	《中国佛教史》 (黄忏华著) (History of Chinese Buddhism) by Huang Chanhua
2	朝暮课诵及《二课合解》 (选讲) (Morning and Evening Chants and "Interpretation of Two Lessons" - selected readings)	《佛学概论》 (黄忏华著) (Introduction to Buddhist Studies) by Huang Chanhua	《世界佛教通史》 (A General History of World Buddhism)
3	《佛教常识答问》 (赵朴初著) (Questions and Answers on Buddhist Common Knowledge) by Zhao Puchu	《印度佛教史略》 (吕澂著) (Brief History of Indian Buddhism) by Lü Cheng	《高僧传》 (历代僧传选读选讲) (Biographies of Eminent Monks) - selected readings
4	《法苑谈丛》 (周叔迦著) (Collections of Dharma Talks) by Zhou Shujia	《佛学》 (经论选注, 选读) (Buddhist Studies) - selected readings from scriptures and commentaries	《佛教研究法》 (吕澂著) (Methods of Buddhist Studies) by Lü Cheng
5	《沙弥律仪》 (Rules and Rituals for Novice Monks)	《四分戒本》 (Fourfold Vinaya)	《佛典泛论》 (吕澂著) (General Introduction to Buddhist Scriptures) by Lü Cheng
6	《遗教三经》 (Three Sutras of Last Teachings)	《八识规矩颂》 (Verses on the Eight Consciousnesses)	《摄大乘论》 (Mahayana-saṃgraha)

Serial Number	初级佛学教材 (Primary Level Buddhist Textbooks)	中级佛学教材 (Intermediate Level Buddhist Textbooks)	高级佛学教材 (Advanced Level Buddhist Textbooks)
7	佛教文物常识 (Basic Knowledge of Buddhist Cultural Relics)	《二十唯识颂》 (Verses on the Twenty Verses on Cognition-only)	《辩中边论》 (Madhyāntavibhāga) 《普贤行愿品》 (Chapter on the Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva)
8		佛教应用文 (Buddhist Applied Literature)	《因明入正理论》 (Theory of Entering the Realm of Proper Principles)
9		大藏经的历史及分类 (History and Classification of the Tripitaka)	《成唯识论》 (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra)
10		佛教文物知识 (Knowledge of Buddhist Cultural Relics)	《三论玄义》 (Treatise on the Three Treatises)
11		国际佛教概况 (Overview of International Buddhism)	《十二门论》 (Twelve Gate Treatise)
12		《俱舍论》 (Kusha Prakarana)	《中观论》 (Madhyamaka-karika)
13			《大乘起信论》 (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana)
14			《教观纲宗》 (Outline of the Teachings and Views)
15			《贤首五教仪》 (Five Precepts and Rituals of the Wise)
16			《六祖坛经》 (Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch)
17			《传心法要》 (Essentials of Transmitting Mind)
18			《顿悟入道要门》 (Essentials of Sudden Enlightenment and Entering the Path)

Serial Number	初级佛学教材 (Primary Level Buddhist Textbooks)	中级佛学教材 (Intermediate Level Buddhist Textbooks)	高级佛学教材 (Advanced Level Buddhist Textbooks)
19			《观经四帖疏》 (Commentaries on the Four Treatises on Contemplation)
20			《弥陀要解》 (Explanation of the Essential Teachings of Amitabha)
21			《戒律学概论》 (Introduction to Vinaya Studies)
22			《密宗纲要》 (Outline of Esoteric Buddhism)
23			《梵网经》 (Brahma Net Sutra)
24			《瑜伽菩萨戒经》 (Sutra of the Bodhisattva's Discipline of Yoga)

In the early stages of its re-establishment, the training curriculum and direction of Lingdong Buddhist College indicate a significant increase in the proportion of Buddhist education courses. From a societal perspective, the overall cultural proficiency of the population has improved, allowing for greater acceptance of more specialized Buddhist course studies. From the standpoint of Buddhist education, the inception of the People's Republic of China saw a severe shortage of individuals who were well-versed in Buddhist doctrines. Consequently, a diverse range of courses was offered, breaking traditional sectarian boundaries and eventually forming an academically oriented Buddhist education system.

According to the literature review detailing the establishment of Lingdong Buddhist College, by 2012, the college was formed by integrating four Buddhist colleges and six primary training centers initially located in different regions of Guangdong, such as Shaoguan, Chaozhou, and Lufeng. The headquarters of Lingdong Buddhist College is situated at Guangxiao Temple in Guangzhou, and the four original Buddhist colleges in Guangdong – Caoxi, Nizhong, Lingdong, and Yunmen – were

transformed into four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College. This consolidation marked the formal initiation of a new era in the educational endeavors of Buddhist temples.

In the new era, the Lingdong Buddhist College is still in the exploratory phase regarding course offerings. Taking the courses offered to the undergraduate class of 2013 as an example:

Table 4.5 Courses Offered to the Undergraduate Class of 2013

Years	Religious Lessons	Social Courses
2013 Undergraduate Courses	净土基础 (Foundation of Pure Land Buddhism)、 印度佛教史 (History of Indian Buddhism)、劝发菩 提心文 (Texts on Exhorting the Awakening Mind (Bodhicitta))、沙弥律仪 (Vinaya Rules for Novices)、 佛学基础 (Fundamentals of Buddhist Studies)、普 门品 (Universal Door Chapter)、净土学基础 (Foundation of Pure Land Studies)、杂阿含经 (Samyutta Nikaya)、中国佛教史 (History of Chinese Buddhism)、解深密经 (Exegesis on the Profound and Secret Mantras)、天台教学史 (History of Tiantai Teachings)、观经四贴疏 (Four Commentaries on the Contemplation Sutra)	英语 (English)、历 史 (History)、大学 语 文 (College Chinese)

According to the course arrangement, during this period, the proportion of Buddhist courses exceeded that of social courses. Analyzing the course content, one can still observe a reflection of the Chinese Buddhist Association's three-level course framework. The changes in course offerings during this period are not very significant.

However, adjustments in course content have been made, starting with the courses offered to the undergraduate first-year class in 2018. As shown in the previous comparative chart, there is a noticeable enrichment in the variety of courses. There is an increased proportion of ideological and political courses. In terms of Buddhist professional courses, more specialized courses have been selected, laying the foundation for the cultivation of talents in the new era.

In 2021, it became necessary to provide students with a systematic and planned education that takes into account the adjustments made to the strategy for talent cultivation in the new era. The Lingdong College's Academic Affairs Office organized the monastic teachers and established a teaching research team to restructure the course schedule as follows:

Table 4.6 Restructured Course Schedule

Years	Religious Lessons	Social Courses
The first semester of the first year of undergraduate	八宗概要 (Summary of the Eight Schools)、印度佛教史 (History of Indian Buddhism)、沙弥律仪 (śrāmaṇera precepts)、清净之道 (The Path of Purity)、菩提道次第略论 (Brief Discussion on the Stages of Bodhi)、佛学基础 (Foundation of Buddhist Studies)、禅修 (Chan Meditation)、梵呗 (Chanting)	中国统战理论与实践 (Theory and Practice of China's United Front Work)、形势与政策 (Current Situation and Policies)、毛泽东思想和中国特色社会主义理论 (Mao Zedong Thought and Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics)、英语 (English)、体育 (Martial Arts)
The second semester of the first year of undergraduate	八宗概要 (Summary of the Eight Schools)、大乘广五蕴论 (Mahayana Comprehensive Treatise on the Five Aggregates)、印度佛教史 (History of Indian	大学语文 (University Chinese)、英语 (English)、宗教学 (Religious

Years	Religious Lessons	Social Courses
The first semester of the third year of undergraduate	Buddhism)、清淨之道 (The Path of Purity)、菩提道次第略论 (Brief Discussion on the Stages of Bodhi)、丛林规约 (Monastic Rules and Guidelines)、梵呗 (Chanting)、禅修 (Chan Meditation)	Studies)、毛泽东思想和中国特色社会主义理论 (Mao Zedong Thought and Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics)、体育 (Martial Arts)、形势与政策 (Current Situation and Policies)
	因明 (Yogācāra School)、中论青目释 (Prasangika Madhyamaka (Middle Way) with Bhāvaviveka's Commentary)、清淨之道 (The Path of Purity (Visuddhimagga))、佛教文献学 (Buddhist Philology)、净土宗教程 (Pure Land Tradition Teachings)、摄大乘论 (Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa))、梵呗 (Chanting)	中国文化概论 (Introduction to Chinese Culture)、演讲与口才 (Public Speaking and Rhetoric)、形势与政策 (Current Situation and Policies)、中国宗教爱国主义 (Chinese Religious Patriotism)、英语 (English)、体育 (Martial Arts)
The second semester of the third year of undergraduate	梵呗 (Chanting)、阿含选读 (Selections from Agamas)、大乘起信论 (Treatise on Awakening Mahayana Faith)、摄大乘论 (Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa))、佛学基础管理学 (Buddhist Fundamentals and Management)、唯识三十颂 (Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only)、中论青目释 (Prasangika Madhyamaka (Middle Way) with Bhāvaviveka's Commentary)、因明 (Yogācāra School)、在家备览 (Layman's Guide)、禅修 (Chan Meditation)	体育 (Martial Arts) ; 中国宗教爱国主义 (Chinese Religious Patriotism) ; 当代中国与世界宗教概况 (Overview of Contemporary China and World Religions) ;

Years	Religious Lessons	Social Courses
The first semester of the fourth grade of undergraduate	梵网经 (Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra)、中论青目释 (Prasangika Madhyamaka (Middle Way) with Bhāvaviveka's Commentary)、解深密经 (Exegesis on the Profound and Secret Teaching)、毗昙学 (Abhidharma Studies)、梵呗 (Chanting)	論文指導 (Thesis Guidance)、心理学 (Psychology)、中国近代史纲要 (Outline of Modern Chinese History)、形势与政策 (Current Situation and Policies)、近代以来中国宗教文献选 (Selected Religious Texts in Modern Chinese History)、体育 (Martial Arts)
The second semester of the fourth grade of undergraduate	坛经选读 (Selected Readings from the Avataṃsaka Sūtra)、杂集论 (Mādhyasāndha Śāstra (Treatise on the Middle Way))、宗教伦理学 (Religious Ethics)、梵呗 (Chanting)、禅修 (Chan Meditation)	形势与政策 (Current Situation and Policies)、心理学 (Psychology)、中国近代史纲要 (Outline of Modern Chinese History)、体育 (Martial Arts)

Through the comparison of course offerings at different periods, it is evident that the proportion of courses has gradually increased, and the demands on students have continuously grown. From the initial singularity to the present richness, courses now have a more hierarchical structure. Particularly noticeable is the emphasis on religious and social courses. Over the years, in addition to the gradual enrichment of religious courses, there has been an increased focus on social education, encompassing students' political ideologies, physical training, and more. With the increase in the variety of courses, the gaps between them can demonstrate the improvement in teachers' comprehensive qualities.

During the Republic of China era, the primary purpose of setting up curricula in Buddhist institutions was to elevate the cultural standards of monks, with basic Buddhist principles as supplementary content. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Buddhist temple education became more specialized,

focusing on targeted training in Buddhist education, albeit with relatively fewer choices in social and cultural aspects. With the advent of the new era, there has been a noticeable enrichment in course content, with an increased proportion of courses in ideological and cultural studies. While Buddhist specialized courses remain predominant, the objectives of talent cultivation have become more precise.

For example, in the new era, courses have been added in Madhyamaka and Abhidharma, among other specialized subjects, which have had a significant impact on Chinese Buddhism from ancient times to the present. Madhyamaka studies play an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhism, and the formation of China's eight major Buddhist schools can be traced back to Nagarjuna's "Madhyamaka Shastra." Offering these courses now is also a perfect continuation of traditional religious teachings, aiming to cultivate new-era monks who possess knowledge in religious, political, and cultural domains. This cultivation objective aims to help monks better adapt to the needs of contemporary society and contribute to the inheritance and development of Buddhism.

4.3.3 Teacher Team Analysis

The teacher team is the core of a school, and the construction of the teacher team determines the school's educational quality, the level of teaching and nurturing of students, and the societal recognition of students after graduation.

In contrast to mainstream education in China, Buddhist education in traditional Buddhist temples lacks standardized teacher training and teacher assessment criteria. Buddhist temple education primarily assesses the comprehensive levels of practitioners themselves. For example, for Zen masters, proficiency in meditation and attainment of meditative states are evaluated. For Vinaya masters, proficiency in the precepts, observance, and adherence to disciplinary rules are assessed. In sects with a stronger doctrinal orientation, such as the Tiantai school, assessments are more extensive, including both theoretical knowledge and practical application. The ultimate

assessment in Buddhism is liberation from the cycle of birth and death, with the quantity of afflictions eradicated serving as a standard. This makes it challenging to establish standardized criteria for teacher assessment in modern education.

At the commencement of Buddhist temple education in China, teachers were mainly selected from outstanding monks recognized by society at that time. They were either capable of leading a group of disciples in learning or possessed unique insights, forming an idealized learning model centered around a prominent monk. As the number of Buddhist colleges increased, the shortage of exemplary monks with exceptional talent became apparent. Therefore, after the establishment of the Chinese Buddhist Association, Mr. Zhao Puchu proposed that the three most crucial matters in the current Buddhist community all revolve around talent development.

With the prosperity of the national economy and the continuous investment in education, the country has implemented a compulsory education system for children and adolescents of appropriate age according to legal regulations. The compulsory education system has a duration of nine years, as explained by the National People's Congress website (Xiong, 2000): Compulsory education is also known as compulsory and free compulsory education. Compulsory education is characterized by its mandatory nature, free provision, universality, and secularism.

The compulsory nature of education ensures that the religious population has a basic cultural foundation, and Buddhist education has actively increased educational requirements and improved the curriculum. In the new era, Buddhist temple education has intensified the cultivation of research-oriented talents. We have raised the standards for teacher recruitment to attract young monks with graduate-level qualifications.

In addition to recruiting young monks, collaboration with mainstream universities has led to the hiring of visiting professors who teach at the Buddhist colleges. These visiting professors are often renowned scholars from mainstream

universities, and their inclusion significantly enhances the academic qualifications of Buddhist education.

According to the optimized structure of the teaching staff at Guangdong Buddhist College, there is a gradient in age, reasonable educational levels, and a diverse range of research directions. The overall quality meets the positioning and talent development goals of the college. The teaching staff includes 146 full-time teachers and 51 part-time teachers, with a ratio of approximately 1:3 between part-time and full-time teachers. In terms of academic qualifications, there are 9 doctoral degree holders and 100 master's degree holders, accounting for 55% of the total teaching staff. Regarding age structure, individuals aged 35 and below make up 23%, those between 35 and 55 account for 71%, and those aged 55 and above make up 6%. The ratio forms a reasonable gradient with a predominant representation of middle-aged and young teachers, along with a combination of senior, middle-aged, and young generations.

Teachers' research directions cover various fields in Buddhist studies, including Chan Buddhism, Yogachara, Tiantai, Vinaya, Avatamsaka, Madhyamaka, Abhidharma, and the foundational theories of Buddhism. Additionally, there are other directions such as calligraphy, inscriptions, tea ceremony, and traditional Chinese studies.

Although the Buddhist college system and the level of faculty expertise are in a positive state, currently, there is no establishment of a religious education department within the college system. Therefore, while teacher assessments operate according to relevant laws and regulations, they still cannot fully match the professional and technical title assessment system of regular universities. However, the college has established its internal teacher system, as evident from the requirements and changes outlined in the five-year teaching plan.

Table 4.7 Five-Year Plan for the Teaching Work of Guangdong Buddhist College

Years	Development Objectives	Logistical Support
2009-2013	In the teaching of specialized courses, we aim to infuse professional spirit, integrating the cultivation of professional qualities with specialized education. We enhance the professional competence of the teaching faculty, ensuring a qualified faculty team to guarantee the development of students' professional qualities. We emphasize the importance of both theoretical understanding and practical application in educating students.	Establish a two-tier management mechanism with a main level and a deputy level. Establish a teaching incentive mechanism. Establish a mechanism to ensure the quality of teaching.
2014-2018	Establish specialized programs with Buddhist characteristics; Develop high-quality courses; Offer public elective courses; Compile teaching materials and syllabi; Innovate talent development models; Develop digital teaching resources. Integrate professional spirit into specialized courses, combining the cultivation of professional qualities with professional education; Enhance the professional competence of the teaching faculty, providing a guarantee for the cultivation of professional qualities among student monks.	Establish a mechanism to ensure sufficient investment in teaching funds. Implement incentives for teaching excellence. Establish a mechanism to ensure the quality of teaching.

Years	Development Objectives	Logistical Support
2019-2023	Introduce more courses on patriotism to foster a stronger sense of patriotism among students. Establish specialized Buddhist programs such as Madhyamaka and Abhidharma to build a reserve of talent for Lingdong College's teaching staff. Develop high-quality courses, represented by "Madhyamaka", "The Profound Secrets", "Abhidharma", and others. Create high-level open online courses. Enhance the professionalism of each course by developing more specialized syllabi and teaching plans. Continue innovating the talent development model based on the previous five-year plan. Introduce additional courses on patriotism. Strengthen the cultivation of professional qualities.	Improve the rewarding distribution mechanism based on course offerings, number of students, faculty structure, and resource utilization efficiency. Further strengthen the cultivation of professional ethics and recognize teachers who have made outstanding contributions to teaching and talent development. Actively promote the "evaluation of teaching, learning, courses, and management", forming a multi-level, three-dimensional mechanism for coordinated and comprehensive teaching management.

This table extracts important variables related to teacher management and safeguards. From the richness of the 5-year plan, it is evident that, starting from the 2014 five-year plan, there has been a noticeable increase in systematic and rigorous planning, reflecting the transformation in line with the development of the new era.

In the revised "Teaching Normative System of Guangdong Buddhist College" in 2019, it is explicitly stated that the assessment of the teaching work of monks and teachers is to be conducted through the recognition of monk and teacher qualifications. Monks and teachers are also required to participate in various teaching competence activities organized by the school. These two standards, especially the recognition of teacher qualifications, were incorporated into the new five-year plan after Guangdong Province completed the "Measures for the Recognition and Title Evaluation and Appointment of Teachers in Religious Schools" issued by the State Administration of Religious Affairs in 2012. This provision establishes the legal

qualifications for teachers in religious schools, aligning the educational standards with those of mainstream institutions.

Ven. M: As of now, we have granted the religious college teacher qualifications to 115 individuals. All the teachers meet the requirement of holding a bachelor's degree, and among them, 53 individuals have a postgraduate degree. Teachers who have obtained the religious college qualification account for about 50% of the total teaching staff. Some other monastics who have not yet acquired the teacher qualification are actively preparing and studying for the subsequent examination to be ready for the next round of assessment. Meanwhile³, the college has introduced various teacher norms and enhancement systems to improve the teaching proficiency of teachers and guide their development. These include the "Teacher Teaching Norms", "Basic Norms for Teaching Work", "Research and Management of Teaching and Research in the College", and "Teacher Teaching and Research Rewards and Punishment System", among others.

The college regularly organizes collective lesson preparation, observation, and evaluation activities. It invites renowned professors from prestigious universities such as Renmin University of China, Nanjing University, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to demonstrate exemplary lectures. The college also conducts regular training sessions for teachers and implements rewards for outstanding teachers.

The well-established systems ensure the display of teachers' research achievements. Guangdong Buddhist College places great emphasis on enhancing teachers' research capabilities. It encourages teachers to conduct interpretations and academic research on Buddhist teachings, doctrines, and rules, in order to promote Chinese Buddhism. To support and reward teachers engaged in research activities, the

³ Interview Date: July 1, 2023, 17:00

Interviewee: Ven. M, Dean of Academic Affairs, Guangdong Buddhist Academy

Interviewer: How is the current situation regarding the recognition of academic qualifications for teachers at Guangdong Buddhist Academy?

college has formulated regulations such as "Research and Management of Teaching and Research in the College" and the "Teacher Teaching and Research Rewards and Punishment System". Teachers are provided with comprehensive support and incentives for engaging in research activities. In recent years, each academy has organized ideological and political training annually. The academy also actively selects teachers to participate in training courses related to professional knowledge, teaching skills, and other aspects to enhance their teaching and management capabilities.

Table 4.8 Teacher Training of Guangdong Buddhist College

Type	Training Content	Time	Join Personnel	College	Place
Political	"Regulations on Religious Affairs" (宗教事务条例)	2018	all	Colleges	Colleges
	"Religious Policies and Regulations" (宗教政策法规)	2019	all	Colleges	Colleges
	"Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups" (宗教团体管理办法)	2020	all	Colleges	Colleges
	"Administrative Measures for Religious Schools" (宗教院校管理办法)	2021	all	Colleges	Colleges
Professional and Teaching Skills	Buddhist Lectures and Seminars	2017	Zhenchen (振晨)	Chaoxi	Hangzhou Buddhist College
	Education, Educational Psychology	2019	Longzhao (隆照)	Chaoxi	South China Normal University
		2019	Guogang (果刚)		Hangzhou Buddhist College
	Library Classification Cataloging	2019	Hongliang (宏量)	Chaoxi	Chengdu
	National Buddhist Ancient Book Restoration Technology Training Course	2017	Changle (常乐)	Chaoxi	Guangzhou society School of Doctrine
	Heads of Schools and Teachers	2017	Hongliang (宏量)	Chaoxi	Guangzhou
	Religious school management system training course	2021	Changhao (常浩)	Chaoxi	Guangzhou

Recently, Guangdong Buddhist College has hosted several national-level sutra exchange conferences, with a total of 20 teachers from various colleges participating as speakers. The college has also organized multiple thematic seminars, such as the "First Summit Forum on Madhyamaka" in 2017, the internal "Madhyamaka Summit Academic Forum" in 2018, and the "Madhyamaka Academic Internal Exchange Conference" held online in 2021, where experts and scholars from universities like Zhejiang University and Liaoning University were invited to participate in the exchange.

The college has also selected several teachers to visit and study at international universities such as the International Buddhist University of Thailand and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Additionally, Guangdong Buddhist College has established cooperation and research bases with institutions such as Renmin University of China, Sun Yat-sen University, and Guangdong Provincial Institute of Ethnic and Religious Studies.

4.3.4 Enrollment Strategy and Analysis of Student Training

In both social education and religious education, the most crucial aspect, in addition to good policy guidance and teacher development, is the presence of excellent student groups. Without outstanding students, even the best teachers will be unable to ensure the school's healthy development.

With the rapid increase in talent development requirements in the new era, the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College have gradually made different adjustments in their admissions. The following will compare the changes and transformations of each school's admission requirements in different years.

The enrollment situation of Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College is as follows:

Table 4.9 Enrollment Situation of Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2012	Undergraduate studies take four years, and preparatory studies take two years.	Applicants should have completed at least junior high school or possess an equivalent educational background. The age requirement is between eighteen and twenty-eight years old.	There are 30 student monks in the undergraduate program and 30 student monks in the preparatory program.	The subjects include Buddhist knowledge, current affairs and politics, Chinese language, history and geography, English, and chanting courses. The assessment methods consist of both written exams and oral exams.
2015		The requirements for novice monks include being ordained for at least one year, having a minimum of junior high school education, and being between the ages of 18 and 30.		The selection process involves a written test covering subjects like Buddhism, Chinese language, and current affairs/politics, followed by a face-to-face interview.
2016		The age requirement for candidates is between 18 and 32 years old, and they should not be in any romantic relationships (exceptions may apply for candidates with special expertise). Those who possess special talents in areas such as arts, architecture, foreign languages, vocal music, or sports will receive priority in the selection process.		
2017	The undergraduate program lasts four years.	Memorize the morning and evening Buddhist scriptures (newly added).	30 student monks.	

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2018	Three-year graduate program for the Middle Way Studies.	The age requirement is between 22 and 35 years old; for special cases, it can be extended to 40 years old. Applicants should hold a bachelor's degree from Guangdong Buddhist College or other recognized universities.	There are 10 spots available for students (both male and female).	I understand you need to submit an academic paper, with a focus on Buddhist studies, that adheres to academic standards, is at least 5000 words long, and is not plagiarized. Along with the other materials, you should mail it to the Buddhist Academy.
2021	Four-year undergraduate program. Three-year Abhidharma teacher training program. Three-year Middle Way teacher training program.	Age requirement: 18 to 35 years old (with possible relaxation for candidates with special expertise) and no romantic relationships.	Understood. The undergraduate program will admit 30 students, and the teacher training class will admit 30 candidates.	Understood. The written exam will cover the basics of Buddhism, and the interview will assess the candidate's proficiency in morning and evening practices as well as daily etiquette.

Table 4.10 The Enrollment Changes of Guangdong Buddhist University Caoxi College

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2012	Undergraduate classes preparatory class nursing class	To apply for the undergraduate program, candidates should have completed high school or hold an equivalent qualification (graduates from intermediate Buddhist colleges are eligible). For the preparatory class, candidates should have completed junior high school. Candidates should be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five and must not be married or involved in romantic relationships.	Undergraduate program: 45 students Preparatory class: 45 students	Examination subjects: Buddhism, Politics, Chinese Language, History and Geography, and English. Interview content: Recitation of Morning and Evening Services (二时课诵), Daily Etiquette, etc.
2016	Undergraduate program: 4 years Preparatory program: 2 years Research program: 3 years	This year's fresh graduates or previous graduates of Caoxi Buddhist College with an undergraduate degree, other monastics with an undergraduate degree from other Buddhist colleges, or other monastics with an undergraduate degree or higher from social universities need to have studied for at least three years in an intermediate Buddhist college and possess research abilities in Buddhist studies. Age should be 35 years old or below (including 35 years old).	Enrolling 10 students in the research class.	Examination subjects: Buddhist Studies, Chinese Language, English (for reference) Examination methods: written test and interview.
2022		Ages between 18 and 35 years old (ages between 23 and 40 for graduate students), and must be unmarried and not in a romantic relationship.		

Table 4.11 The Enrollment Changes of Yunmen College of Guangdong Buddhist College

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2012	Meditation Research Class (3-year program) Meditation Undergraduate Class (4-year program) Preparatory Class (2-year program)	Monastic experience of at least one year; Ages between 18 and 35 years old, with no romantic relationship.	Chan Meditation Research Class - 10 students Chan Meditation Undergraduate Class - 35 students Chan Meditation Preparatory Class - 30 students	Subjects for the Main Examination: Buddhism, Chinese Language, and Recitation of Morning and Evening Buddhist Texts. Topics for Assessment: Performance during temple ceremonies, procession, ascending and descending the dais, incense offering, and daily etiquette.
2014	Undergraduate Program in Buddhist Teachings (Four-Year Program) Preparatory Program (Two-Year Program)	Ages between 18 and 35 years old, without marriage or romantic relationships.	Bachelor's Degree in Doctrines: 35 students Preparatory Class: 35 students	Subjects for the examination: Buddhist Studies, Chinese Language, and Recitation of the Morning and Evening Lessons.

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2018		Applicants must provide a physical examination report from a county-level or above county-level public hospital (including an HIV test, liver function test, and chest X-ray). Qualified candidates who meet the admission requirements should carefully fill out the registration form after reviewing the admission brochure, and it must be signed by the monastery, Buddhist association, or preceptor where the applicant resides.	15 students for the Doctrinal Studies Research Class; 35 students for the Doctrinal Studies Undergraduate Class; 30 students for the preparatory class.	
2020	Doctrinal Studies Research Class (3-year program) Canonical Studies Research Class (3-year program) Doctrinal Studies Undergraduate Class (4-year program) Preparatory Class (2-year program)	Scriptural Studies Research Class: Graduates from the undergraduate program of the Buddhist College or graduates from regular higher education institutions. Meditation Research Class: Graduates from this year or previous years' undergraduate program of the Buddhist College; graduates from other Buddhist colleges with an undergraduate degree; monks who graduated from other social universities with an undergraduate degree and possess research capabilities in Buddhism.	Meditation Research Class: 15 students; Scriptural Studies Research Class: 24 students Meditation Undergraduate Class: 35 students Preparatory Class: 30 students	
2022			Ages between 18 and 35 years old. (For Scriptural Studies Research Class, ages are between 23 and 45 years old).	Admission will be based on the candidates' exam scores, health condition, and religious devotion, and priority will be given to those who excel in these aspects.

Table 4.12 The Enrollment Changes of the Nizhong College of Guangdong Buddhist University

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2012	The preparatory course lasts two years, and the undergraduate course lasts four years.	The age range for the preparatory course is between 18 and 35 years old, and for the undergraduate course, it is between 18 and 32 years old. Applicants should have no marital history or romantic relationships. For the preparatory course, candidates should have completed junior high school. For the undergraduate course, candidates should have graduated from senior high school or have completed the preparatory course at a Buddhist college.	The preparatory course will enroll 55 students, and the undergraduate course will enroll 45 students.	Examination subjects: Morning and Evening Recitations, Buddhist Studies, Chinese Language, English, and History and Politics.
2016			The preparatory class enrolls 50 students; The undergraduate class enrolls 45 students.	
2018	The preparatory class lasts two years. An undergraduate class lasts four years. The preparatory class for legal studies lasts four years.	Familiar with the Vinaya rules for Bhikkhunis (Nizhongs) and Bodhisattva Precepts, and the Five Daily Practices for Bhikkhunis. Ages between 20 and 38 years old. No history of marriage or romantic relationships. Possess a high school diploma or equivalent degree from a Buddhist institute.	The preparatory class enrolls 40 students; The undergraduate class enrolls 40 students; the Bhikkhuni class enrolls 45 students.	Examination subjects: Fundamental knowledge of Vinaya and Chinese language.

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
2021	Preparatory Program: 2 years Undergraduate Program: 4 years Vinaya Study Program: 4 years Tiantai Research Program: 5 years Pure Land Practice Program: 7 years	Preparatory and Undergraduate Programs: - Age: 18 to 36 years old. - Marital Status: No marriage or romantic relationship. - Preparatory Program: Completion of junior high school education. - Undergraduate Program: Completion of high school education or equivalent qualification from a Buddhist college. Vinaya Study Program: - Age: 20 to 38 years old. - Marital Status: No marriage history or romantic relationship. - Education: Completion of high school education or equivalent qualification from a Buddhist college. Tiantai Research Program: - Age: 22 to 36 years old. - Marital Status: Female Buddhist monastics (比丘尼) with the sincere aspiration to specialize in Tiantai and promote Buddhist teachings. Pure Land Practice Program: - Age: 20 to 45 years old. - Marital Status: No marriage or romantic	Preparatory Program: 30 students Undergraduate Program: 30 students Vinaya Study Program: 30 students Tiantai Research Program: 15 students Pure Land Practice Program: 20 students	For those who wish to apply as monastic students, they are required to submit a recommendation letter and an 800-word personal statement (including personal background and motivation for pursuing Buddhist studies). Examination subjects for undergraduate and preparatory programs: Written Exam: Buddhist Studies, Chinese Language, English, History, Politics. Interview: Conduct, Overall Quality Assessment. Examination subjects for the Vinaya Study Program: Written Exam: Vinaya Studies, Chinese Language (High School Level). Interview: Overall Quality Assessment. Examination subjects for the Tiantai Research Program: Written Exam: Submit a 3000-word to 5000-word essay (about understanding Tiantai teachings). Interview: Overall Quality Assessment. Examination subjects for the Pure Land Practice Program: Interview: Assessment of Conduct and Overall Quality.

Year	Class	Admission Requirements	Number of People	Entrance Exam
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relationship.

- Education: Completion of junior high school education or equivalent qualification from a Buddhist college.



Based on the changes in the enrollment situation of the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College, it can be observed that with the increasing requirements for talent development in the new era, the school has gradually expanded the offerings of different disciplines, such as the Middle Way Research Class, Vinaya Class, Tiantai Research Class, Pure Land Study Class, etc., to meet the diverse needs of students and enhance the professionalism in Buddhist studies.

From the perspective of changes, Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong Institute has maintained a relatively stable enrollment number, consistently admitting 30 students each year. In 2017, the Preparatory Class was discontinued, and in 2018, the Middle Way Research Class was introduced, attracting a significant number of research-oriented students. In order to broaden the scope of enrollment, some colleges gradually relaxed the age restrictions for students, aiming to attract applicants from a wider age range and increase the diversity of student choices.

In terms of professional specialties, all four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College have emphasized students' non-Buddhist talents, such as arts, architecture, foreign languages, vocal music, sports, etc. They have also increased the admission requirements for postgraduate students by requiring the submission of academic papers, highlighting students' abilities in academic research.

In particular, Yunmen College and Nizhong College focus on students' backgrounds and practical experiences in Zen meditation. They require students to have at least one year of experience in monastic life at temples and practical experience in Zen meditation and Buddhist studies. This emphasis aligns with the distinctive characteristics of Buddhist education in their enrollment criteria.

Regarding the admission examinations, each college has gradually increased the emphasis on interviews and comprehensive quality assessments. This means that students not only need to demonstrate their academic proficiency in written exams but also showcase their attitudes and qualities suited for studying and practicing Buddhism during interviews. This development corresponds to the earlier discussion

about changes in curriculum arrangements, indicating that high admission standards ensure the mastery and output of teaching quality.

In the process of facing the development of the new era, the adjustments made in college admissions are related to both societal needs and the individual demands of students. For instance, Yunmen College and Nizhong College emphasize students' abilities in Zen meditation and temple management, while Lingdong College and Caoxi College focus more on academic research and teaching capabilities. As a result, each college has developed its own distinctive features in education, such as promoting the Tiantai teachings, inheriting the study of Vinaya (Buddhist monastic rules), and emphasizing Pure Land practices. These characteristics also influence the requirements for student admissions and the direction of their education.

Li (2009) reflected on the failure of Buddhist education during the Republican era in his research "A Study of Buddhist Education during the Republican Period"⁴. He concluded that Buddhist education should still emphasize that monastic communities not only understand the essence of Buddhism but also acquire some of the latest Western scientific knowledge and philosophical ideas to remain relevant to the times. Based on this principle, Guangdong Buddhist College still needs to adjust its teaching strategies further. The change includes enhancing the diverse appearance of Buddhist education while better aligning with societal demands and the practical situation of students. Moreover, it also involves finding ways to improve students' learning and practical achievements.

Teacher X: *Currently, the focus of cultivating students at Guangdong Buddhist College is to align with the core development direction of the new era and strengthen contemporary political education. Our goal in educating students is to foster patriotism, love for Buddhism, and support for the leadership of the Communist Party*

⁴ Li Ming (李明). A Study on Monastic Education during the Republican Period [D]. Shandong Normal University, 2009

of China. Our educational mission is to cultivate monastic talents with a certain level of Buddhist expertise and moral and intellectual competence.

Teacher Y: Patriotism education is integrated into our ideological and political education curriculum. Our school offers courses such as "Theories and Practices of China's United Front", "Mao Zedong Thought and the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", "Ideological and Ethical Cultivation and Legal Basis", "Outline of Modern Chinese History", "Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Party's Nationality Policy", "Religious Policies and Regulations", "Chinese Religious Patriotism", "Situations and Policies", and "Current Affairs Reports (College Student Edition)" as part of our ideological and political education. In addition to classroom courses, we also organize students to participate in activities centered around "love, care, and devotion" and "knowledge, practice, innovation, and dedication" to foster their patriotic sentiments. We also hold theme-based educational and campus cultural activities, innovate the ideological and political education construction model, and strive to establish a comprehensive ideological and political education pattern⁵.

According to the data compiled by the Guangdong Buddhist Association (2012) on "Guangdong Buddhist Association Organized a Survey of Buddhist Activity Sites in the Region", in the years 2021-2022, several activities were organized for ideological and political education. The selected content is summarized in the table below:

⁵ Interview Date: April 12, 2023

Interviewees: Teachers X and Y from Guangdong Buddhist College

Interviewer: Venerable, what measures do you think have been taken to integrate the core development direction of the new era in cultivating students? What is the school's educational mission? And what curriculum models and activities does the college adopt to promote students' comprehensive qualities and patriotism education?

Table 4.13 "Three Loves" and "Four Entrances" Activities of Guangdong Buddhist College

College Name	Time	Activities
Guangdong Buddhist College		On important national holidays such as the Party's founding anniversary and National Day, the entire faculty and students of the college are organized to raise the national flag and sing the national anthem. These activities aim to deepen students' patriotic ideals and guide them towards the right political direction.
	2021.4	Visiting the Red Army's Long March Memorial Hall in northern Guangdong to pay tribute to the martyrs.
Caoxi College	2021.6	Organizing a series of special activities themed "Studying Party History, Grateful for the Party's Benevolence, and Celebrating Party Anniversary".
	2021.9	Inviting the leaders from the United Front Work Department to hold a special lecture on legal regulations and knowledge.
	2021.6	Organizing a special lecture on "Learning Party History, Gratitude to the Party, and Following the Party's Path".
Nizhong College	2021.7	Watching the live broadcast of the "Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China".
	2022.5	Holding a themed speech competition on "Adhering to the Sinicization of Buddhism and Telling Buddhist Stories".
	2021.3	Studying the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech at the symposium of ideological and political theory teachers in schools.
Lingdong College	2021.3	Studying the spirit of the National "Two Sessions" and organizing students to visit red revolutionary education bases to trace the footsteps of the revolutionary history.
	2021.6	Organizing a special lecture and presentation on the study of Party history and education.
	2020.9	Provincial religious "Four Entries" activity promotion conference.
Yunmen College	2021.5	Visit the Red Army Long March Memorial Museum in northern Guangdong, the Nangong Shuikou Battle Memorial Park, and the Meiling Ancient Road in Nangong to pay tribute to the martyrs.
	2021.12	Organize collective study sessions on the National Conference on Religious Work and the Communiqué of the Sixth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee.

According to the above table, it can be observed that although there is a deficiency in courses related to science, culture, and other aspects in the curriculum of the Buddhist College, the distinctive feature of Buddhist education lies in the practical application of learnt knowledge. The emphasis is on embodying and verifying the acquired knowledge through practical experience, examining whether the learnt truths are indeed reliable. This is a characteristic feature of Buddhist education.

Discussion Date: June 18, 2023, at 9:00 AM

Discussion Participants: Ven. X from the Academic Affairs Office of Lingdong College, Teacher C

Author: What do you think are the characteristics of Buddhist education?

Ven. X: *The primary purpose of the Buddhist College is to strengthen students' comprehensive understanding of the fundamental theories, doctrines, and rules of Buddhism. The curriculum covers the three major theoretical systems of Madhyamaka, Yogacara, and Tathagatagarbha, encompassing the theories of the eight Buddhist schools while integrating the doctrines of the Theravada tradition.*

Teacher C: *Each college at Guangdong Buddhist College can independently develop and establish distinctive platforms, continuously summarize experiences, innovate models, and cultivate Buddhist talents. Only through continuous experimentation and innovation can we consistently drive Buddhist studies to new dimensions and depths in the new era.*

Discussion Date: April 1, 2023, at 3:00 PM

Discussion Participant: Ven. D, Vice President of Guangdong Buddhist College

Author: Ven. D, What do you think are the practical aspects of student development at the Buddhist College?

Ven. D: *While delving into the Buddhist scriptures, the college aims to equip students with preliminary abilities for conducting religious research, interpreting doctrines, and engaging in religious affairs. This includes the management of religious*

venues and the basic ability to guide believers. After graduation, students should be able to lead daily activities in temples, participate in the regular operations of monasteries, adhere to monastic rules, conduct summer retreats, chant sutras, and teach practices such as the Three Refuges to believers.

Discussion Date: May 2, 2023, at 9:00 AM

Discussion Participant: M, Dean of Academic Affairs at Guangdong Buddhist College

Author: Dean M How satisfied are you with the education and teaching work at the main campus and its four branch campuses of Guangdong Buddhist College over the past five years?

Ven. M: *Last year, Guangdong Buddhist College conducted a satisfaction survey on the education and teaching work at the main campus and its four branch campuses over the past five years. Each college was entrusted to anonymously survey students through online questionnaires covering aspects such as ideological and political direction, teachers' teaching abilities, teaching methods, teaching attitude, teaching management, and personal cultivation. A total of 375 individuals from the four colleges participated, with a satisfaction rate of 89.25%. Additionally, we organized a satisfaction survey for teachers regarding students, with 115 participants and a satisfaction rate of 88.25%. The overall evaluation is good.*

The most significant indicators reflecting student performance include the pass rate, the excellent rate, the graduation rate, and the dropout rate. According to the archival data of Guangdong Buddhist College, this table has been prepared:

Table 4.14 Summary of Evaluation Indicators for Students of Guangdong Buddhist College

College Name	Passing Rate	Excellent Rate	Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate
Chaoxi College	95%	20%	95%	15%
Nizhong College	97%	35%	100%	3%
Lingdong College	90%	25%	100%	16.40%
Yunmen College	95%	20%	97%	15%
Total	94.25%	25%	98%	12.35%

Ven. Y: *The pass rate at Guangdong Buddhist College is 94.25%, with 98% smoothly graduating. From these two data points, it can be affirmed that Guangdong Buddhist College is doing well in education. The dropout rates at the three male colleges are all 15% or higher, while the female dropout rate is 3%. Based on this data, we can analyze that currently, there are more male students in Buddhist colleges, providing diversity in student choices.*

Discussion Date: May 2, 2023, 2:00 PM

Discussion Participant: Ven. Y, Teaching Monk at Guangdong Buddhist College

Interviewer: Why do you think the dropout rate is relatively high? What factors do you believe lead students to choose to drop out?

Ven. Y: *The cultural system of Buddhism itself still adheres to traditional ideas of monastic education. When students choose Buddhist colleges, it is essentially a process of monastic participation. If the education provided by the Buddhist college does not meet the students' needs, they will inevitably choose another institution to continue their studies.*

Interviewer: What impact does student attrition have on Buddhist colleges?

Ven. Y: *There is an impact. Firstly, the college's education model still needs optimization, and there should be more concern for the students. The teaching*

content should also be more adaptable to young people. Each student has their cultural background, and teaching strategies need to be adjusted based on their actual situations.

Regarding the post-graduation destinations of students, our research found that Guangdong Buddhist College, apart from selecting and retaining outstanding students for residency and Buddhist studies, does not provide other employment options. However, a graduation management and feedback system has been established for graduates, with real-time statistics and attention to their employment situations.

Discussion Date: May 2, 2023, 10:00 AM

Discussion Participant: Ven. M, Dean of Academic Affairs at Guangdong Buddhist College

Interviewer: What is the current situation of Guangdong graduates? Do you have any understanding of their post-graduation destinations?

Ven. M: *Since 2012, Guangdong Buddhist College has trained approximately 3,000 graduates. Judging from the annual awards given to outstanding graduates, about 900 of them have received prizes. In terms of post-graduation employment, most of the outstanding graduates are retained by various colleges or engaged in educational work. Some have also taken up important positions in temples, Buddhist colleges, and Buddhist organizations in other provinces.*

In summary, in terms of student cultivation, Guangdong Buddhist College, especially with its distinctive features of the times, has performed remarkably well overall. The pass rate among students is 94.25%, with 98% graduating smoothly. However, the dropout rate is high, with the three male colleges having rates of 15% or above, and the female dropout rate is 3%. Students show diversity in their choices, possibly because Buddhism itself still adheres to traditional monastic participation concepts. When students choose Buddhist colleges, they are essentially engaged in a process of monastic participation. If the education provided by the Buddhist college

cannot meet the students' needs, they may choose to transfer to other colleges for further studies.

A high dropout rate indicates that the education model of the Buddhist college needs further optimization. It should pay more attention to students, adapt to the needs of young people in the new era, adjust teaching strategies, and continually monitor and care about the employment situation of graduates. From the data, the employment situation of Guangdong Buddhist College is good, with a high rate of outstanding graduates receiving awards. Most outstanding students are retained by the college or other Buddhist colleges and organizations, engaging in educational work. Guangdong Buddhist College has achieved significant results in education. However, it needs to focus on the dropout rate, continuously optimize the education model, and better meet the needs of students to improve overall satisfaction and the quality of education at the college.

4.3.5 Analysis of Academic Contributions and Training Results

In terms of student cultivation, Guangdong Buddhist College actively encourages and organizes students to participate in various levels of sutra recitation and exchange meetings, where they can receive awards of different levels. The college also organizes students to participate in various research activities to enhance their academic level and publicly recognizes students who achieve outstanding results in their research work.

In recent years, Guangdong Buddhist College has collaborated with and shared resources from the National Social Science Fund major project "Social History of Han Buddhism Monastics", implementing the special research program "Chinese Buddhist Institutions and Practices".

Furthermore, in recent years, the college has organized and participated in various research and academic exchange activities, such as the "First Madhyamaka Summit Forum" (2017), "Madhyamaka Academic Forum" (2018), "Madhyamaka Academic Internal Exchange Video Conference" (2021), the Second Cui Feng Huayan

Forum (2018), "East Asian Culture International Study Program and Youth Scholars Forum" (2019), "Research on Religious and Cultural Exchange in the Guangxi-ASEAN Humanistic Circle under the 'Belt and Road' and Overseas United Front Significance" (2020), and "Daxiong Lecture on Samatha-Vipasyana Seven" in Hangzhou (2022). The college has also established a column on its public WeChat account to showcase the outcomes of these activities, broaden horizons, and expand knowledge.

During the period from 2018 to 2022, the full-time teachers at the academy achieved abundant academic accomplishments. Among them, they participated in 7 projects, published 7 monographs, a series of 1 set (9 volumes), published 7 research papers, and acted as the chief editors for 5 textbooks.

Table 4.15 Representative Works of Teachers of Guangdong Buddhist College

Legal Name	College	Name	Publishing House	Time
Chuanzheng (传正)	Chaoxi	"Caoxi Tongzhi" (曹溪通志)	Guangdong People's Publishing House	2021
Changle (常乐)	Chaoxi	"Tea Story in Ancient Shao" (古韶茶事)	Guangdong Province Newspaper Articles	2018
Changle (常乐)	Chaoxi	Lóng Kān Dào chǎng Míng Bǐng Xù 《龙龕道场铭並序》	Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House	2019
Changle (常乐)	Chaoxi	Kǎishū Xuéxí 《楷书学习》	Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House	2021
Zhijue (智觉)	Nizhong	Dà Fó Dǐng Shǒu Léng Yán Jīng Yìjiě 《大佛顶首楞严经译解》	Taiwan Poshashan Publishing House	2005
Zhijue (智觉)	Nizhong	Léng Yán Jīng Yìjiě 《楞严经译解》	Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House	2021
Zhijue (智觉)	Nizhong	Liù dào Lún huí Xiāng Zhuàng Gài lùn 《六道轮回相状概论》	Religious Culture Publishing House	2019
Mingxiang (明向)	Yunmen	"Ten Volumes of the Yunmen Sect Series", which includes: 《云门天子—佛源妙心禅师的禅法及其宗风》 《嘉泰普灯录》 《佛源妙心禅师广录》 《鐔津文集》《慈受怀深禅师广录》 《雪窦重显禅师集》《楞伽经集注》 《云门山志》 《云门匡真禅师广录》 《参寥子诗集》	Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House	2016—2022

Table 4.16 Papers of Representative Teachers of Guangdong Buddhist College

Legal Name	College	Article Title	Publication Name, Seminar	Time
Huixian (慧贤)	Chaoxi	"On the Connotation of Jiwei Dharma Wheel"论吉藏“枝末法轮”的内涵	Internal Academic Seminar of Lingdong College	2021
Zhongyue (宗岳)	Chaoxi	"A Brief Introduction to the Spirit of Teacher and Learning in the Inheritance of Zen Buddhism" 浅述禅宗传承中的师、学精神	Seminar on "Shaolin Temple and Zen Ancestral Court"	2019
Changle (常乐)	Chaoxi	"Gushao Tea Event" 古韶茶事	Guangdong Province Newspaper Articles	2018
Quanxi (诠喜)	Nizhogn	"A Brief Analysis of the Thought of Pure Land in Chinese Buddhism" 中国佛教唯心净土思想浅析	The Fifth World Buddhist Forum	2018
Zhongcheng (宗澄)	Lingdong	"Responding to the Characteristics of the Dependent Origination of the Madhyamaka School—Taking the Thirteenth Verse of Tsongkhapa's "Three Main Paths" as an Example" 应成中观学派缘起之特色——以宗喀巴<三主要道>第十三颂为例	The Eighth International Buddhist Forum	2018.8
		"A Few Reflections on the Consciousness-Only Sect's Advocacy of Qualitative Sravakas" 对唯识宗主张定性声闻种说提几点反思	"Guangdong Buddhism" Issue 198	2020
Yongrui (雍瑞)	Lingdong	"Talking about Some Misunderstandings of Buddhism by the World" 谈谈世人对佛教的几点误解	"Guangdong Buddhism" Issue 28	2020

In addition, Guangdong Buddhist College has also intensified efforts in teacher development, adopting a comprehensive and multi-channel approach to expand teacher training. As an example of published papers, focusing on Lingdong College:

- In 2017, Ven. Daquan published 2 papers, Ven. Zongcheng published 1 paper, and Ven. Benxing published 1 paper.

- In 2018, Ven. Zongcheng published 5 papers.

- In 2019, Ven. Puji published 1 paper, and Ven. Minghan published 1 paper.

The presence of venerable monks as role models has greatly inspired students. In undergraduate theses from 2017 to 2021, students have covered a wide range of topics, including Pure Land Buddhism, Vinaya, and Zen Buddhism. In the first graduate (2021) thesis class, students demonstrated a high level of professionalism in completing their theses. Furthermore, five student monks from the college have published articles in "Ren Hai Deng", "Guangdong Buddhism", and "Humanistic Buddhism" from 2019 to 2021. They actively engage in academic exchange activities with other institutions. Since 2008, Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College has conducted over forty academic exchange activities with other institutions.

From 2017 to 2020, Guangdong Buddhist College has achieved a considerable number of paper publications, with a continuous stream of excellent papers. From the perspective of educational achievements, there are indeed positive aspects to highlight.

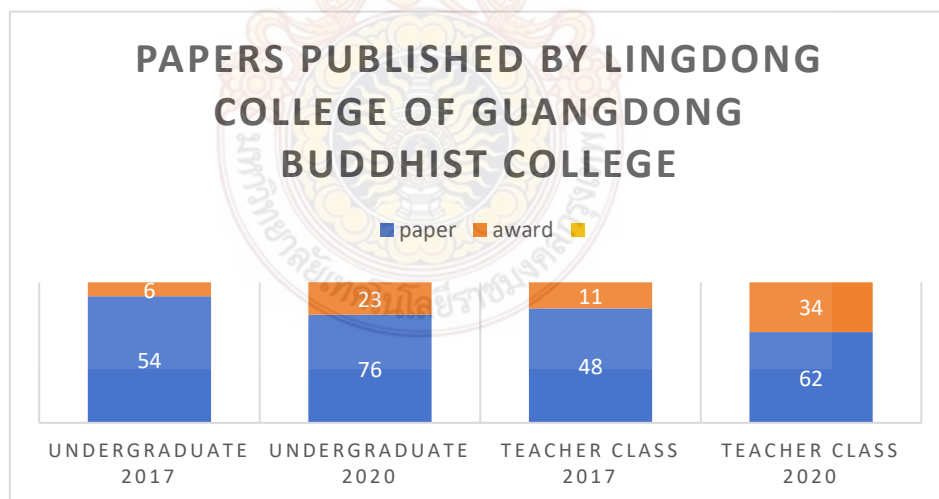


Figure 4.1 Papers Published by Lingdong College of Guangdong Buddhist College

In addition to research paper publications, Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong Academy achieved a third prize in the Buddhist Debate Competition in 2018, earning the reputation of being the dark horse of the debate competition.

Guangdong Buddhist College has actively participated in the Chinese Buddhist Scripture Teaching and Exchange Conference since its inception in Beijing in 2008. In 2013, Venerable Zhankong from the main campus of Guangdong Buddhist College won the first prize of the "Golden Lotus Award". In 2014, Venerable Xingli, a student from Guangdong Buddhist College, won the third prize at the "Golden Lotus Award". In 2015, Venerable Kuande from the main campus of Guangdong Buddhist College won the third prize of the "Golden Lotus Award". In 2017, student Shengxuan from Lingdong Academy of Guangdong Buddhist College won the second prize of the "Golden Lotus Award". In 2019, Venerable Puzhi from Lingdong Academy of Guangdong Buddhist College won the second prize of the "Golden Lotus Award".

The Chinese Buddhist Scripture Teaching and Exchange Conference has gradually become an important platform for the construction of Buddhism itself, an effective way for cultivating talents in Buddhist propagation, a driving force for contemporary Buddhist classic interpretation and promotion, and a significant platform for friendly exchanges among the Buddhist community nationwide. Therefore, students showcasing their learning on this platform is an excellent presentation of their educational achievements.

Overall, in the context of the new era, Buddhist education in Guangdong is gradually moving towards a standardized and healthy development path. Buddhism has a profound history and cultural tradition in the Guangdong region, and educational institutions and organizations are committed to inheriting and promoting Buddhist teachings, providing better educational services.

On the one hand, the Buddhist education in Guangdong is becoming more standardized. In the past, Buddhist education was often centered around temples, scattered and disorganized, lacking unified management and a standardized teaching system. However, with the progress and development of society, social education has also influenced the development of Buddhism. Guangdong Buddhist Institute has begun to emphasize system construction and standardized management. They have

developed educational plans and syllabi and established a standardized teaching management system, providing students with systematic Buddhist and social education.

On the other hand, the Buddhist education in Guangdong also emphasizes healthy development. Notably, at Guangdong Buddhist Institute's Lingdong College, they have clarified the inclusion of martial arts and physical education courses in their curriculum, which reflects the practical implementation of Buddhist education's focus on the comprehensive development of individuals. Additionally, the institute pays attention to the professional development and training of teachers to improve the quality of teaching and the level of education.

In the Guangdong region, the government's support for Buddhist education is continuously increasing. The government encourages collaboration between Buddhist educational institutions and higher education institutions, research institutions, etc., to promote research and innovation in Buddhist education. The government also strengthens the management and supervision of Buddhist educational institutions to ensure the legitimacy and standardization of the educational endeavors.

Overall, the Buddhist education in Guangdong is moving towards a standardized and healthy development path. Through standardized management and healthy development, it provides students with a better educational environment and opportunities, promoting the inheritance and development of Buddhist teachings.

4.4 Analysis of the Strategic Transformation of Guangdong Buddhist Education Development in the New Era

The years from 2012 to 2022 mark the beginning of the construction of the ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Over the past decade, the level of general education in society has reached the upper-middle level globally, and the gross enrollment rate in universities has significantly increased. In 2020, China's gross enrollment rate in universities reached 58.4%, an increase of 29.7

percentage points from 2012. This surpassed the average level of upper-middle-income countries for the first time, being 20.4 percentage points higher than the average level of middle-income countries (China Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022). During this decade, Buddhist education has continuously adjusted its development strategy. The development of Buddhist colleges can be divided into two periods: the period of practicing the new development philosophy from 2012 to 2017, and the period of the transformation of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era from 2018 to 2022.

4.4.1 Period of Practicing the New Development Philosophy

The years 2012 to 2013 marked the transition of leadership. During this period, Guangdong Buddhist College continued to uphold the recommendations on talent development in religion made by the General Secretary of the Central Political Bureau in 2007. The college intensified efforts in cultivating, selecting, and employing religious professionals, aiming to cultivate a reliable, knowledgeable, and morally upright workforce. Therefore, with the promulgation of the "Measures for Awarding Degrees in Religious Colleges" (trial) and the "Measures for the Qualification Recognition, Title Evaluation, and Appointment of Teachers in Religious Colleges" (trial) in 2012, the college strengthened the assessment of internal teachers. Teachers were required to update their teaching content, fully leverage traditional expertise with new teaching methods, enhance their overall competence, and benefit from experienced teachers guiding newer ones. This period aimed to increase interaction among teachers and capitalize on the abundant teaching resources, continuously enhance and transform traditional specialties, and achieve the new development of traditional disciplines.

During discussions with the monks teaching at the Buddhist College in this period [Discussion Time: March 24, 2023, 17:10; Discussion Subject: Ven. Y from Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist College; Discussion Question: How do you view the changes at Guangdong Buddhist College since 2012?] It was revealed that 2012 was a year of significant reform at the Buddhist College. The academic affairs

committee emphasized the goal of building a more rational and high-level teaching and research faculty that could effectively achieve the purpose of vocational education. For monks engaged in traditional teaching methods, this posed a challenge. Particularly in the case of teacher qualification assessments, many monks were not sure about meeting the requirements of the new standards. Consequently, they dedicated more effort to lesson preparations, and in their free time, they observed the teaching methods of other monks. The period saw an increased enthusiasm for self-learning within the teacher community at the Buddhist College.

In terms of internal management, new teaching approaches were proposed, taking into account the actual proficiency and interests of each group of students. There were appropriate adjustments made to the scientific courses. Simultaneously, close attention was paid to the needs of temples and practitioners, and the curriculum planning of the Buddhist College was adjusted promptly to ensure that the course content could better serve the religious community. Different goals were reasonably set for each year based on the specific circumstances of each grade.

Table 4.17 Objectives of Undergraduate Curriculum

First year	To establish a devout and firm religious belief as the cornerstone, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the fundamentals of Buddhism and cultural knowledge.
Second year	To be proficient in the monastic regulations and the practice of meditation in seclusion, and to master the basic knowledge of Buddhism and fundamental cultural knowledge.
Third year	To delve deeply into the study of specialized courses in Buddhism, especially Pure Land studies, Vinaya (monastic rules) studies, and distinctive language courses, and to acquire a certain level of self-learning ability.
Fourth year	It is necessary to master the specialized courses in Buddhism and distinctive language courses, as well as to understand and apply the Vinaya precepts in daily life skillfully. A deeper understanding of the Pure Land thought is also required. Additionally, the ability to conduct independent teaching and guide the faithful should be developed.

At the same time, to ensure the implementation of a positive learning atmosphere, teachers were required to adopt flexible and diverse teaching methods, combining study with practice. Various scholarships were established to motivate students' enthusiasm for learning. The college aimed to create a favorable environment for practice, enhance the modernization of teaching equipment, and cultivate a learning attitude and patriotism among student monks. A rich and colorful campus culture was promoted through organizing various activities. Additionally, efforts were made to popularize legal knowledge and instill a sense of law-abiding consciousness.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping has put forward the important guiding ideology and governing concept of the "Chinese Dream" (Wangying, 2017). In an article by Xinhua News (2021), titled "Xi Jinping Attends National Religious Work Conference and Delivers Important Speech" (Xinhua News Agency, 2021). It was emphasized that China should promote the sinicization of religion, guide and support religious practices in line with socialist core values, and carry out education on patriotism, collectivism, and socialism within the religious community. The article further called for targeted education on party history, the history of New China, the history of reform and opening up, and the history of socialist development, aiming to guide religious figures and believers in cultivating and practicing socialist core values and promoting Chinese culture.

In response to this direction from the General Secretary, Guangdong Buddhist College adjusted its focus on talent cultivation to highlight the theme of Chinese excellent traditional culture and patriotism (Wang, 2017), aiming to integrate individual interests with national and ethnic interests.

Discussion Time: May 4, 2023, 15:20

Discussant: Ven. B, Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist College

Author: How has the Sinicization of religion influenced Guangdong Buddhist College?

Ven. B: *In our college, we mainly conduct concentrated study sessions on policies and regulations, both monthly and as part of our regular courses. Additionally, I have noticed the establishment of cultural landscapes on campus promoting patriotism and devotion to Buddhism, featuring some propaganda signs conveying cultural ideas.*

Based on the discussion, it is evident that in response to the methods of religious Sinicization, the Buddhist College has implemented various innovative measures. Upon reviewing the public platforms and official websites of the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College, it is found that, in addition to monastic education, each of the four branches has been offering cultural interest classes to the broader community. These classes cover the following topics:

Table 4.18 Cultural Interest Classes

School Name	Class	Activity
Headquarters of Guangdong Buddhist College	2012 Layman Advanced Study Class	2012 Guangdong Zen Sixth Ancestor Cultural Festival
Lingdong College	2012 Lingdong Calligraphy and Painting Studio; 2013 Martial Arts Class	2013 "Journey of Prajna" Summer Camp
Yunmen College	2012 Chan Buddhism Layman Class	Farm Zen Summer Camp

Guangdong Buddhist College has broken away from traditional teaching models by introducing high-quality cultural events and interactive cultural experience projects. The innovative forms of cultural activities are increasingly accepted by society. Through a combination of instructional visits and distributed learning arrangements, the college aims to enhance students' understanding of traditional culture and promote a sense of national loyalty. Additionally, to elevate the cultural taste of the younger demographic, Lingdong College at Guangdong Buddhist College has established the

Lingdong Calligraphy and Painting Studio, providing a space for students to engage in calligraphy, painting, and artistic creation. Such platforms contribute to cultivating students' aesthetic awareness and artistic cultivation.

From this glimpse of changes, it is evident that the introduction of these cultural activities and experiential platforms has enriched Guangdong Buddhist College's cultural education resources. This initiative is instrumental in developing students' overall qualities and enhancing the overall educational standards.

Discussion Time: May 8, 2023, 16:07

Discussants: Master Z from the Academic Affairs Office, Master K

Author: Could you please share if Guangdong Buddhist College has any methods to enhance the quality of education?

Master Z: *Guangdong Buddhist College has been addressing this since 2014. At that time, following the merger of the four Buddhist colleges, the courses still retained their characteristics. Encouragement was given to adjust the course proportions in each branch of Guangdong Buddhist College. This adjustment is reflected in the enrollment brochures, where there is now an emphasis on increasing the proportion of teaching in political and ideological courses. For instance, courses such as Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought, Current Affairs Politics, Legal Knowledge, and Religious Regulations have been strengthened. Cultural and artistic courses include College Chinese, Calligraphy, Music, Chinese General History, History of Philosophy, Introduction to Culture, Religious Studies, Management, Philology, Psychology, English, and Computer Applications. Practical courses involve meditation and martial arts.*

According to Master Z, alongside Buddhist education, there has been optimization of the curriculum, with a particular focus on cultivating a positive academic atmosphere. The goal is to nurture qualified monks who love their country, love their religion, and can engage in Buddhist studies.

Master K: *Each college has formulated a work plan for cultivating an academic atmosphere that aligns with its educational objectives. This includes conducting surveys on academic situations, analyzing the efficiency of classroom observations, and assessing attendance in both classrooms and temples. This is reflected in various institutional frameworks of the school, primarily aiming to encourage diverse teaching methods and the parallel cultivation of learning and practice. Teachers and students have access to scholarships in order to promote a proactive learning environment. Each college has also undertaken campus renovations and expansions, striving to create a more conducive environment for practice, and has introduced modern teaching equipment. Various cultural activities are organized on campus, along with the promotion of legal knowledge and the cultivation of a sense of lawfulness.*

Summarizing the statements from the two masters, Guangdong Buddhist College has taken comprehensive measures internally and externally to enhance the quality of education. In terms of curriculum design, there is an increased focus on political and ideological courses, alongside the optimization of cultural and artistic as well as practical courses. In cultivating the academic atmosphere, the emphasis is on nurturing qualified monks with a love for their country and religion and the ability to engage in Buddhist research. Each college has devised plans for cultivating an academic atmosphere and conducting analyses on academic situations, classroom efficiency, and attendance. This involves encouraging teachers to adopt diverse teaching methods and promoting the parallel cultivation of learning and practice for students. The establishment of scholarships aims to incentivize active learning. The schools are also investing in campus renovations, organizing cultural activities, promoting legal knowledge, and fostering a sense of lawfulness. These initiatives collectively contribute to continuously improving the educational quality and learning outcomes of the school.

The Guangdong Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission (2019) introduced in the article "Guangdong holds training courses for deans of

religious schools and teachers of public courses", by Wu (2019), highlights that in terms of curriculum and teaching materials, Buddhist colleges are encouraged to make use of information networks and encourage various sects of monks to supplement characteristic and auxiliary teaching materials according to the practical needs of the colleges. The academic affairs office of the Buddhist colleges has established a special group to inspect and supervise the implementation of the teaching material construction plan, organize the selection and recommendation of excellent teaching materials, conduct evaluations by teachers and students, and carry out tracking and feedback on the quality of teaching materials. They also aim to strengthen the management level of teaching material construction, make full use of modern technology for management, increase investment in teaching material construction funds, and ensure the smooth progress of teaching material construction work.

During this period, Buddhist colleges maintained a high level of development in structural construction, utilizing information technology to establish new Buddhist colleges and bringing existing Buddhist colleges closer to mainstream universities. This marked a new direction for the modernization of monastic education. From 2012 to 2017, Buddhist education revolved around the concept of the "Chinese Dream", focusing on teacher development with an emphasis on moral education, religious ideal education, and enhancing teachers' political awareness, moral education capacity, and abilities. Notably, in comparing the teacher structure in 2012 to 2018, the proportion of teachers with postgraduate qualifications accounted for two-thirds of the full-time faculty in the college. This figure objectively reflects the high standard of hiring teachers.

Master D: *During the period from 2012 to 2018, the Buddhist College has consistently adhered to the principle of "love the country and love the religion", to cultivate outstanding talents for society and Buddhist organizations. In the reforms of education and teaching, the institution has maintained a people-oriented value orientation and followed the educational principle of adapting teaching methods to*

individual differences. The college has established the concept of "cultivating everyone, promoting comprehensive development, and providing systematic education". Based on the advantages and characteristics of the college, innovative talent development models have been introduced, emphasizing the cultivation of innovative spirit and practical abilities among students, encouraging personalized development, and continuously improving the level of education and the quality of talent cultivation. The institution has been committed to nurturing high-quality, applied, innovative talents who possess harmonious development in "knowledge, skills, and character", catering to the needs of society, and establishing a brand for undergraduate education.

The promulgation of the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" in 2017 marked the beginning of a new era of transformation and development for religious education.

4.4.2 The Transition Period of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era

In 2017, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) passed the resolution on the amendment to the "Constitution of the Communist Party of China", and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era was enshrined in the Party's Constitution. This thought serves as the "action guide" for the entire Party and the people of the country in their efforts to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Xinhua News Agency, 2021).

On March 11, 2018, during the first session of the 13th National People's Congress, the amendment to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China was passed. Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, along with the Scientific Outlook on Development, was incorporated into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Xinhua News Agency, 2018). General Secretary Xi Jinping's proposal of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the guiding ideology for the Communist Party of China to lead the whole party, the whole army, and people of all ethnic groups to uphold and develop socialism with Chinese

characteristics in the new era. It is an important component of the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In the "Resolution on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party in the Past Century" (People's Daily, 2022), the important thesis of "Two Definitives" was put forward: to establish Comrade Xi Jinping as the core of the Party central committee and the whole Party and to establish the guiding position of Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era. The "Ten Clarifications", "Fourteen Upholds", and "Thirteen Achievements" put forward at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee summarize the main content of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Among the "Ten Clarifications," the main points related to religion are as follows: to clarify the adherence and development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, with the overall task of realizing socialist modernization and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation; to clarify the overall layout of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which includes the Five-sphere Integrated Plan of economic development, political advancement, cultural enrichment, social harmony, and ecological conservation, and the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy of building a modern socialist country, deepening reform, governing the country according to law, and governing the Party strictly; to combine the "Five Identifications" proposed in the "Regulations of the Communist Party of China on United Front Work (Trial)" (Central Compilation Press, 2015), which refers to the identification with the great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics; and to form new forms of religious practice, with temples also making different adjustments accordingly.

During the interviews, it was revealed that both the temples and the Buddhist colleges have put up numerous propaganda slogans. These slogans include messages advocating resistance against commercialization, promoting environmental

protection, and displaying slogans related to the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics proposed by the country.

Based on the interview, we can analyze that temples have taken measures such as resisting the influence of commercialization, promoting detachment from fame and wealth and the purity and solemnity of the ancestors, building eco-friendly temples, enhancing talent cultivation, actively serving society, and promoting the deeper implementation of Sinicization of Buddhism. They are closely united around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core and work together with Buddhist monks and laypeople nationwide to contribute to the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country and the realization of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. These efforts to promote China-style modernization are not contradictory to Buddhist education; on the contrary, the proposal of this ideology has strengthened the development of religious education.

Table 4.19 Practices in Different Orientations

Features	Practice
Political orientation	Guided by Xi Jinping's thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, we implement relevant systems for ideological and political education. We vigorously strengthen the work of ideological and political education, continuously optimize the curriculum system, and offer ideological and political theory courses and Chinese culture and society courses as required. We ensure that ideological and political education runs through the entire educational process.
Norm-oriented	We abide by relevant laws and regulations, establish sound rules and regulations, and ensure that all work is conducted by the law and follows established procedures.
Quality orientation	To enhance the level of religious colleges and universities, we will strategically plan for their medium and long-term development. We will adapt to the changing times, construct new management and service models, and build a high-caliber faculty. Additionally, we will strengthen the evaluation and supervision of educational quality, continuously improving the overall quality and level of religious college education.

Features	Practice
Responsibility orientation	Religious affairs departments, religious organizations, religious colleges and universities, and the religious activity venues associated with these educational institutions will collaboratively innovate and promote standardized management in the academic settings. ⁶

Guangdong Buddhist College and its affiliated colleges have unified their educational philosophy based on the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and the "Management Measures for Religious Colleges". The specific manifestations are as follows:

In terms of education, Guangdong Buddhist College has established teacher training programs for Madhyamaka and Abhidharma studies. The focus of educational reforms has been on three main aspects:

1. Hiring specialized teachers from other universities and adopting a cooperative teaching model with these universities. This approach helps improve students' knowledge of Buddhism and their overall cultural awareness.

2. Establishing a translation team to cultivate translation talents and translate more important Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This aims to promote the exchange and inheritance of Buddhist teachings between Sanskrit and Chinese, contributing to the promotion and development of Chinese traditional culture.

3. Cultivating talents for delivering Buddhist teachings. In recent years, Guangdong Buddhist College and its various branches actively participated in provincial and national Buddhist preaching exchange meetings and debates. Through these competitions, the college strengthened its educational development and injected

⁶ Article 6 of the Regulations on the Management of Religious Colleges and Universities: The State Administration for Religious Affairs is responsible for the work of religious colleges and universities, including the approval of their establishment and the management of national religious colleges and universities. The State Administration for Religious Affairs may entrust the religious affairs departments of provincial-level people's governments to exercise some of its responsibilities in managing national religious colleges and universities. The religious affairs departments of provincial-level people's governments manage local religious colleges and universities within their administrative regions. The religious affairs departments of provincial-level people's governments may entrust the religious affairs departments of prefecture-level city governments to exercise some of its responsibilities in managing local religious colleges and universities.

vitality and enthusiasm into student learning. At the same time, the college achieved fruitful results in promoting the fine tradition of Buddhist preaching and cultivating talented monks devoted to spreading the Dharma.

In terms of curriculum design, since ideological and political courses are part of social education, Guangdong Buddhist College follows a 7:2:1 curriculum arrangement. This means that 7 represents Buddhist professional courses, 2 represents cultural courses, and 1 represents ideological and political courses. Although the proportion of ideological and political courses is not extensive in the curriculum, it is sufficient to enable students to understand national policies, religious policies, and relevant laws. This helps cultivate students who will abide by laws and regulations and become talented in Buddhist temple management with a sense of historical mission and social responsibility in their future work.

In terms of institutional development, discussions with Ms. C from the Lingdong College Archives revealed that since its consolidation in 2012, the college has introduced a series of reform measures. An earlier initiative was the "Compilation of Regulations and System of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong", issued in September 2003. Based on the information provided by Ms. C, the author found the 2003 edition of the "Compilation of Regulations and System of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong" (2003), which includes the following systems:

Table 4.20 Compilation of Regulations and System of Lingdong Buddhist College in Guangdong

Teaching Management System	Responsibilities of Teaching, Administration and Management Staff	Measures for the Management of Student Status	Code of Conduct for Monks	Lay Buddhist Class Management Measures and Rules and Regulations
Institutional Settings	Responsibilities of the Dean			
Academic System	Office of Academic Affairs Job Functions			
Curriculum Principles	Teacher code Financial system File management system Data room system Infirmary system Library system			

In 2012, Guangdong Buddhist College was officially established through a merger, and in response to the development requirements of the new era, Lingdong College made supplementary additions to its institutional framework.

According to the "Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong College System Manual", the following management systems are organized:

Table 4.21 Management System in Guangdong Buddhist College

School Management System	Teacher Management System	Student Management System
"Standard Teaching Management System"	"Practice Teaching System"	"Student Monk Evaluation System"
"Teaching Improvement System"	"Teacher Work and Behavior Manual"	"Student Handbook"
"Research Management System"	"Lecture Evaluation System"	"Responsibilities of the head teacher"

School Management System	Teacher Management System	Student Management System
"Guangdong Buddhist College Lingdong College Examination and Evaluation System"	"Teacher Post Evaluation System"	"Examination Room Rules" "Proctor System"

Through a series of institutional developments, starting with daily management, Guangdong Buddhist College has strengthened the management of teacher instruction. The improvement of these systems is a process of scientific management. For small-scale Buddhist colleges, the abundance of these systems provides clear guidelines for both teaching monks and students in their learning and daily lives. Traditional Chinese education upholds the belief that success is impossible without rules. A sound and scientific institutional establishment can ensure the healthy operation of an institution and will continue to be further improved as it develops.

Analyzing the specific period of transformation, we can summarize that from 2012 to 2022, Guangdong Buddhist College has been committed to cultivating four types of talents: reliable talents in politics, talents with profound knowledge of Buddhism, talents with excellent moral character, and talents who can play a crucial role in critical moments.

The overall development of the school is guided by clear principles that focus on cultivating Buddhist professional knowledge as well as ideological and political education, following the regulations of religious school management. In Dai's (2009) article "On the Relationship between Religion and Politics", he states, "Religion and politics are both important social phenomena that profoundly influence human production and life." From the perspective of cultivation, only talents who grasp both areas of knowledge can genuinely contribute to society.

4.5 The Four Branches of Guangdong Buddhist College: The Development of Inheritance and Innovation in the New Era

In the "Initiation of the Chinese Buddhist Association" in 1952 (Buddhist Association of China, 2005), it was proposed that the purpose of organizing the Buddhist Association is to unite Buddhists in participating in the movements of cherishing the motherland and defending world peace under the leadership of the people's government. It aims to assist the government in implementing policies of religious freedom and to collaborate with Buddhists from all regions to promote the cause of propagating the Dharma and benefiting sentient beings. This outline established the core vision of Chinese Buddhism and also clearly defined the direction of talent cultivation in Buddhism.

In 2012, with the General Secretary singing the "Chinese Dream", provinces and cities across the country formulated their plans to realize this dream. The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Chaozhou City, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple, and Lingdong Academy of Guangdong Buddhist College jointly organized the "Harmonious Era, Realizing the Chaozhou Dream" Chaozhou Buddhist Cultural Festival in 2014 (Qingxin & Junfu, 2014). This Chaozhou Buddhist Cultural Festival further promoted the ideas of equality, harmony, compassion, benevolence, generosity, and benefitting society, as well as the spirit of pragmatism, openness, inclusiveness, and innovation within Chaozhou's Buddhist culture. It played a positive role in promoting scientific development, involving the Buddhist community and religious believers.

In addition, since 2008, every mid-July in the lunar calendar, the monks from Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou and the teachers and students from Lingdong Academy of Guangdong Buddhist College participate in the alms-round charity event. In an interview with the president of the college, he explained, "The alms-round tradition reenacts the life of the Bhikkhu Sangha during the time of Buddha, and

through this practice, we can connect with laypeople and offer them opportunities for almsgiving and Dharma teachings. By engaging in the alms-round, we can also go deep into society and understand the needs of the people."

Every year, during the alms-round, they walk along Kaiyuan Road, Xinqiao Road, Yonghu Road, and Xirong Road, covering a journey of more than two hours, until they reach Mingjing Ancient Temple. There, the funds received are donated to the temple, providing a certain level of support for the livelihood and medical care of dozens of elderly and lonely people living within it. The temple also uses a small portion of the funds to provide charitable assistance to the impoverished in society and to support education. During the discussion with the financial staff of Kaiyuan Temple regarding the amount of donations received, he explained:

Table 4.22 Donations Received in Kaiyuan Temple

Years	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
Charity	111039	142832	298475	401232	498329	532981	332232	358232
Charity expenditure	120000	150000	300000	400000	500000	540000	550000	500000

According to his introduction, as the alms-round activity continued, many people from nearby cities heard about it. They would wait by the roadside in their cars to offer alms to the monks, contributing to the charitable cause. However, in 2020, due to the impact of the pandemic, the monks were unable to go on the alms-round, leading to a decrease in the corresponding donation income. Nevertheless, to give back to society, both Kaiyuan Temple and Lingdong Buddhist College donated masks and other medical supplies. Despite the reduced income, they maintained the original level of charitable expenses.

When discussing this event with the students, they shared their feelings about the alms-bowl activity, expressing, "*This is a significant activity. It is a concrete*

way to present the 'Buddhist teachings' up close to the believers and visitors through the practice of alms-round. Believers and visitors, through the act of generosity, create a special connection with the Triple Gem, providing them with an opportunity to approach the Triple Gem and thus have the chance to learn Buddhism."

In response to this inquiry, the Kaiyuan Temple held discussions with the volunteers involved in the activity. They stated, *"I have been a volunteer for seven consecutive years. This year, seeing many new faces join our volunteer team makes me thrilled. It shows that our voluntary work and the spread of kindness have been continuously inspiring people. When I see the selfless contributions of the followers along the route and the serene and dignified demeanor of the monks, they propagate the Mahayana spirit of 'Great Compassion without Boundaries, Shared Bodhisattva Mind'. It is truly moving. This sentiment reflects the unspoken wisdom expressed through alms-bowl activities."* Buddhist disciples from all walks of life need to actively keep pace with the new era, adapt to the times, and tirelessly work for the well-being of sentient beings. The students and resident monks at Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist Institute, are taking practical action through the alms-bowl charity event to spread the benevolent teachings of Buddhism. They contribute to the country's development, unity, and stability, exerting efforts for the welfare of sentient beings. This event has also inspired many individuals to willingly participate in charitable activities, making a positive contribution to poverty alleviation efforts in impoverished areas of Guangdong Province.

The Guangdong Buddhist Institute, or Cloud Gate College, is currently the only Buddhist institution in China that operates based on the philosophy of "focusing on both agriculture and Zen." When discussing Master M from Guangdong Buddhist Institute, he mentioned, "Without the wise decisions of the Party and the government, without the restoration and implementation of the policy of religious freedom since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Cloud Gate Buddhist College would not have come into existence. It can be said

that from its establishment, Cloud Gate Buddhist College has been closely connected to the destiny of the nation and the people, firmly upholding the belief in loving the country and loving the religion. This belief is the foundation of our school and the basis for our development." Today, in talent cultivation, they also advocate considering love for the country and love for religion as a prerequisite for their development. In actual teaching, they shape the character and monastic qualities of student monks, guiding and inspiring them to establish the correct understanding of Mahayana Buddhism. The emphasis is on internal cultivation and external propagation, benefiting society and serving all sentient beings as their mission.

The Yunmen Da Jue Chan Temple in Shaoguan, Guangdong, is the birthplace of Chan Buddhism and the Yunmen School. As a result, Yunmen College preserves the traditions of its patriarchs, with a primary emphasis on Zen practice. It combines silent meditation with agricultural work, allowing the students' study and daily life to truly integrate with the monastic lifestyle, fostering a religious temperament through their daily practices.

Venerable Foyuan (佛源), the founder of Yunmen Buddhist College, adhered to a strict practice of fasting for one day without fail, even in his old age. His teachings and personal example profoundly influenced the teachers and students of the college. Since its inception, the college has followed the traditional monastic practice of considering agricultural work as a form of Buddhist practice. Currently, Yunmen Temple owns approximately 100 mu (about 6.7 hectares) of land, including paddy fields and vegetable plots, with a portion of it designated for the labor of the college's students, thus adhering to the principle of "combining agriculture and Zen" in the spirit of the patriarchs.

From a societal perspective, there has been a perception that monastics spend their days only in rituals, praying for the nation, and meditating, with little contribution to society, leading to misconceptions and criticism. To address this, Yunmen College at Guangdong Buddhist Academy emphasizes the integration of Zen

practice and agriculture, enabling students to be self-sufficient in their daily lives and showcasing a different aspect of Buddhist living to society. This approach helps to reduce misunderstandings and criticism of Buddhism, as students incorporate Zen practice into their labor, following an effective method practiced by ancient Zen masters.

China's society fundamentally remains an agricultural giant. With the rise of the commodity economy as a hallmark of the new era, the interaction between monastic temples and various segments of society has become increasingly intimate. There is also an increasing number of exchanges with world religions. Consequently, the trends of modernization, urbanization, commercialization, and regionalization have become more evident in the monastic community.

This further demands that modern monasticism align with the world and respond to the times. However, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in his speech during the inspection tour of Guangdong (2012) that we must never abandon the outstanding cultural traditions of the Chinese nation. We must promote them as they are our nation's "roots" and "soul." Losing these "roots" and "soul" would leave us without a foundation (Xi, 2014).

Therefore, when establishing colleges affiliated with Buddhist monasteries, it is crucial to preserve the distinctive characteristics of Buddhism and maintain its inherent uniqueness. Only by doing so can Buddhism continue to stand firm and thrive in the development of the new era.

Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College is the only Nizhong institution in Guangdong Province, renowned both domestically and internationally. The college boasts well-established hardware and software facilities and excellent faculty and is widely recognized for its rigorous academic standards. Graduates receive commendations from both within and outside the religious community. On the 19th day of the second lunar month in 2014, the celebration of Guanyin Bodhisattva's birthday included an auspicious event featuring a three-step, one-bow pilgrimage at Dingguang Temple in Lufeng, Shanwei City, Guangdong Province. Participants included all monks

from Dingguang Temple and all teachers and monks from Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College, totaling over three hundred individuals. They performed the pilgrimage with three steps and one bow, chanting praises and expressing sincere reverence as they walked towards the Guanyin Bodhisattva's hall in the Purple Bamboo Grove of Dingguang Temple. The entire pilgrimage took about an hour and a half. In the end, the participants collectively dedicated their merits and virtues to the stability of the nation, the well-being of the people, social harmony, and world peace. They also wished for increased blessings and wisdom for those present, progress and unity for the monastic community, and extended blessings and longevity for all beings in the Dharma realm. In discussions with administrators from the Nizhong college, it was revealed that lay practitioners who participated did so voluntarily, joining the monks and Nizhongs in the pilgrimage. For the followers, the three steps and one bow represent a form of spiritual practice, signifying the abandonment of pride. Although it involves bowing to the Buddha, the most important aspect is using the Buddha's image to address one's afflictions. By humbly interacting with others, individuals can approach life with equanimity, reducing restlessness, fostering solemnity, and minimizing complaints. This approach contributes significantly to social stability and world peace.

In 2019, Guangdong Nizhong Buddhist College held a photography public welfare training program at the Huizhou branch of the Beijing Correspondence Photography College. Buddhism cannot confine itself to traditional promotional methods in the new era of technological development. Therefore, we conducted the training seminars to provide teachers and students with targeted lectures on the fundamentals of photography. The courses covered topics such as lighting, composition, post-processing of images, mobile photography, photojournalism, and artistic photography, among others. Through this training, the participants' photography skills were improved, which will play a positive role in the future promotion of Buddhist teachings and reporting at the Nizhong Buddhist College. Additionally, it enriched the students' cultural knowledge and enhanced their social interaction.

Nanhua Temple founded the Caodong College of Guangdong Buddhist College, which is the dojo of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng. "Caodong Chan" has become the essence of Chinese Chan Buddhism, and to this day, Nanhua Temple still enshrines the physical relics of the three patriarchs. Every year, countless pilgrims visit the temple. Guangdong Buddhist College, Caodong College, focuses on improving one's understanding of Buddhist teachings and cultivating high-level monastic talents. Together with Yunmen College in Shaoguan, they jointly contribute to the training of a large number of Buddhist Chan talents in the Lingnan region and even across the country.

In 2013, Nanhua Temple's Caodong College organized the "Nanhua Weekend Purification Retreat". This program was designed for the general public and offered courses such as "Three Refuges, Five Precepts, and Ten Virtuous Actions", "The Source of Chan: The Life of the Buddha and Chan Buddhism", "Overview of Zen History", and "Dharma Chan". The aim was to provide a unique opportunity for individuals in society to cultivate their physical and mental well-being, foster family happiness, achieve success in their careers, improve their quality of life, and elevate their spiritual realm.

In 2014, the "Nanhua Weekend Purification Retreat" included a spring tree-planting activity. This tree-planting initiative not only provided an opportunity for the Sangha and lay followers to support the temple, connect with nature, and care for the environment, but it also allowed participants to experience the principles of Buddhism.

In the same year, Caodong College also launched the "Chinese Temple Digital Communication Wisdom Camp", which utilized technology to propagate Buddhist teachings. During the event, internet communication experts and experienced monks jointly delivered lectures. Participants were provided with free accommodation and meals at Nanhua Temple. The camp also organized activities such as incense appreciation, tea ceremony, cultural tours, and Buddhist exchanges. The Wisdom Camp awarded those who completed the program a certificate of completion.

In 2015, the "Chan Joy Summer Camp" was held, with nearly 800 people registering online. After the selection process, over 300 campers were admitted. The participants came from all over the country, including provinces and regions from Heilongjiang and Jilin in the north to Hainan and Hong Kong in the south, and from Shaanxi and Gansu in the west, covering 27 provinces, regions, and municipalities. Among them, more than 70% were college students, and some students studying abroad in countries like the UK, USA, and Japan also returned to China to participate in this summer camp.

Every year on the third day of the eighth lunar month, Nanhua Temple, in collaboration with all faculty and students from the Caodong College of Guangdong Buddhist College, holds the "Sixth Patriarch's Birthday" celebration. According to the discussion, the "Sixth Patriarch's Birthday" ceremony is a millennium-old tradition inherited by Nanhua Chan Temple. The temple fair, also known as the "Nanhua Birthday" fair, originated in the Tang Dynasty. The temple fair has a long history, rich content, and a grand scale, which holds significant value. Over the years, participants in the "Nanhua Birthday" temple fair have come from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea, and many other countries worldwide. This event plays an important role in spreading the Buddhist Chan culture of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, further strengthening Nanhua Chan Temple's position as the ancestral home of Chinese Chan Buddhism. The "Nanhua Birthday" temple fair has been included in the first batch of intangible cultural heritage lists in Guangdong Province.

In 2016, the first and second sessions of the "Chan-Prajna" Book Club were jointly organized by China Chan Buddhism Network. In addition to the personnel from the college and temples, the event was attended by the editor-in-chief of China Chan Buddhism Network, Cao Sheng, and 50 students.

In 2018, Caodong College organized the "Caodong Orthodoxy" Chan Meditation Class. In comparison to the first session, this edition added two core topics:

firstly, alongside mastering Buddhist knowledge, participants were encouraged to study relevant laws and regulations, especially the new "Regulations on Religious Affairs", the spirit of the 19th National Congress, and the remarks from President Xi Jinping at the National Religious Work Conference. Secondly, participants were urged to promote the Dharma through practical actions, guide everyone on the path of orthodoxy and righteousness, and fulfill the responsibilities and duties that Buddhists should undertake for the prosperity of the country and social harmony.

The four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College actively developed their unique characteristics, either maintaining traditional practices or adapting to the trends of the times. For instance, Yunmen College maintains a focus on both agriculture and Chan Buddhism, influencing society through lifestyle and innovation based on its foundations. Lingdong College actively engages in public welfare, encouraging social participation. During the pandemic, they persisted in alms-bowl activities and provided medical support to society. The Nizhong College contributes to society by using new media platforms to propagate Buddhist teachings and provide contributions to social psychology. Caodong College, based at Nanhua Temple, as the ancestral home of Chan Buddhism, plays a leading role in Chan meditation's effectiveness in contemporary development. They have expanded the culture of the Sixth Patriarch to the world, enhancing China's diverse diplomatic reputation.

4.6 A Comparative Analysis of the Four Colleges of Guangdong Buddhist College

From 2012 to 2022, the four colleges of Guangdong Buddhist College underwent different transformations. In Guangdong province, there are two colleges in Shaoguan city, namely Caoxi College and Yunmen College; one college in Chaozhou city, which is Lingdong College; and one college in Shanwei city, which is Nizhong College.

Among these three cities, based on the 2022 GDP rankings of the 21 cities in Guangdong province, as shown in the table.

Table 4.23 2022 GDP Ranking of Three Cities

Ranking	City	GDP (100 million Yuan)
15	Shaoguan	1563.93
19	Chaozhou	1312.98
17	Shanwei	1322.02

From an economic perspective, the three cities where the three Buddhist colleges are located in Guangdong province are considered relatively mid- to lower-tier cities. Among them, only Lingdong College in Chaozhou is situated within the city area, while the other three colleges are located either in mountainous regions or in the outskirts. Due to geographical constraints, Lingdong College has the smallest land area, as shown in the table.

Table 4.24 Land Area of 4 Colleges

College Name	Monastery History	Construction Area	Geographic Location
Lingdong College	Tang Dynasty	1527.5 m ²	Xiangqiao District, Chaozhou
Yunmen College	Tang Dynasty	25461 m ²	Ruyuan Yao Autonomous County
Chaoxi College	Tang Dynasty	117402.57 m ²	Maba Town, Qujiang District, Shaoguan City
Nizhong College	Ming Dynasty	111259 m ²	Qingyun Mountain, Hexi Town, Lufeng City

Lingdong College, Yunmen College, and Caoxi College are all based on temples constructed during the Tang Dynasty, making them rich in cultural heritage. Caoxi College holds the enshrined physical remains of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, a treasure for the world. Yunmen College also has Master Wenyan, the founder of the Yunmen School, as its spiritual support. Although both temples are located in towns

within the Shaoguan region, they play a crucial role in the Buddhist community of southern China and have a significant impact on Chinese Buddhist culture.

In modern times, the establishment of Buddhist colleges was marked by the guidance and support of eminent monks such as Master Taixu, Master Xuyun, and Master Tanxu, among others, who actively participated in their construction. Their contributions to the development of Chinese Buddhist colleges are remarkable.

Guangdong Buddhist College officially established itself through a merger between 2012 and 2022. The four Buddhist colleges reached a unified consensus on their construction goals, focusing on cultivating Buddhist talents with a Bodhisattva spirit that serves the country, society, and the public and embodies the characteristics of the new era.

Due to its location within a city temple, Lingdong College emphasizes the practice of the Bodhisattva path. Besides academic studies, students are encouraged to engage in social services and actively participate in organizing charitable activities, including almsgiving events.

In contrast, Yunmen College adopts a different approach by focusing on students' life-oriented characteristics and emphasizing the teaching principle of "integrating agriculture and Zen". Therefore, in addition to regular courses, students also participate in agricultural activities and engage in Zen meditation practices.

Caoxi College itself has international influence, so in addition to inheriting the Zen meditation teachings of its ancestors, it actively promotes international influence by organizing international forums and activities. It seeks to reform the development of the Buddhist college from a high-end perspective and play a positive role in popularizing Chinese Buddhist culture to the world.

Located in Qingyun Mountain, Shanwei, the Nizhong College enjoys a beautiful environment. Students rely on the picturesque scenery of the mountains for their spiritual practice and leverage their characteristics to propagate Buddhism through media and audiovisual means. Apart from regular classes, students also actively study

professional knowledge in this area and, together with teachers, lead activities such as pilgrimages to the mountains.

Regarding educational philosophy, the four colleges have reached a consensus due to policy guidance and the unified structure of Guangdong Buddhist College. They are committed to inheriting and promoting Buddhist thoughts, nurturing students' moral cultivation and spiritual growth. This commitment is based on the recognition of the value of Buddhist education, the emphasis on students' comprehensive development, and the importance placed on traditional culture and humanities.

Due to different historical, geographical, and cultural backgrounds, each Buddhist college may have its unique strengths in its educational methods. These distinctive features mainly manifest in the following aspects:

Teaching Characteristics: Each Buddhist college may have its unique teaching characteristics. For example, Yunmen College and Caoxi College focus on the research and inheritance of Buddhist Zen sects, while Lingdong College highlights specific Buddhist philosophical systems like Madhyamaka and Abhidharma. These characteristics are reflected in the curriculum design, textbook selection, and faculty training.

Cultural Heritage: The cultural traditions of the different regions where the Buddhist colleges are located also influence their teaching content and methods. Buddhist colleges pay more attention to the integration of local traditional culture with Buddhist education to better inherit local culture.

Teaching Methods: Each Buddhist college innovates in its teaching methods. They have established their official websites or WeChat platforms, and they use modern technology such as Douyin (TikTok) and WeChat videos to disseminate Buddhism. They also enhance the selection of teaching practices and social internships in classrooms and actively participate in charity activities. These efforts contribute to improved teaching effectiveness and students' comprehensive abilities.

In summary, the four Buddhist colleges of Guangdong Buddhist College have reached a consensus in their educational philosophy. However, their distinctive features and outstanding teaching methods stem from their unique historical, geographical, and cultural differences. Such diversity and complementarity contribute to the comprehensive development of the Buddhist education ethos.

4.7 The Transformation and Challenges Survey Results of Guangdong Buddhist College

Based on the analysis of the above data, the period from 2012 to 2022 saw the closest relationship between the development of the Buddhist colleges and policy guidance and promotion. Although the Buddhist colleges already had their distinctive features in terms of curriculum arrangement, faculty training, and other aspects, they still faced some shortcomings. In 2012, the year when the concept of the "Chinese Dream" was proposed, Buddhist monastic institutions began to contemplate how to contribute to the realization of the "Chinese Dream" and maintain the distinctive characteristics of Buddhist education while adapting to the trends of the times and ensuring growth.

During this period, five Buddhist colleges in Guangdong Province underwent structural adjustments. Except for Shenzhen Hongfa Temple Buddhist College, the other four Buddhist colleges merged with Guangdong Buddhist College to jointly establish an educational system. They introduced a three-tier system, including a two-year preparatory class, a four-year undergraduate class, and a three-year teacher training class. The college focuses on Buddhist studies as its fundamental discipline, and its specialized research covers various directions such as Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, Vinaya, Tiantai, Madhyamaka, and Abhidharma.

In terms of talent cultivation, all four Buddhist colleges adhere to the standard of "politically reliable, knowledgeable in religion, morally convincing, and

effective in critical situations" for talent cultivation. In addition to the Buddhist curriculum, they have increased investment in ideological and political education. Each college allocates an annual average of more than 100,000 yuan for various activities, including study tours, special events, course instruction, faculty development, and library construction.

Regarding curriculum design, they have enriched the system of ideological and political education courses, organized diverse activities in this area, established a system for assigning public course teachers, and strengthened the construction of the faculty's ideological and political education.

The four colleges in Guangdong Buddhist College attach great importance to students' daily political performance. They have formulated and improved the "Code of Conduct for Monastic Students" and the "Management Measures for Monastic Students' Registration", making students' daily political performance an important indicator for their evaluation and implementing corresponding measures. Daily political performance is also taken as the primary condition for student awards and honors. Under the dedicated efforts of the colleges, students' political consciousness has significantly improved.

After the promulgation of relevant policies and regulations, such as the "Regulations on Religious Affairs", "Management Measures for Religious Schools", and "Management Measures for Religious Personnel" in 2018 and beyond, each of the four colleges invited experts from the provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission to provide focused lectures. In terms of cultivation positioning, Guangdong Buddhist College has clearly defined its role as a key base for nurturing patriotic religious reserve talents, interpreting Buddhist teachings correctly, and providing training for in-service Buddhist religious personnel. It adheres to the direction of sinicizing Buddhism, guided by the core socialist values, and follows the path of Chinese characteristic Buddhist education.

Policy implementation has been the main driving force behind the reforms at Guangdong Buddhist College. However, based on the data presented, the current number of full-time students is 451, with 146 full-time teachers and 51 external teachers. While 451 students may seem substantial for a single college, when divided among four colleges, the student population per institution is not large. Moreover, considering the division of school systems, the annual enrollment for each college does not appear to be high. In response to this situation, Guangdong Buddhist College and its four colleges have devised solutions, leveraging local characteristics and creating distinctive Buddhist education models. For example, Yunmen College emphasizes the balance of agricultural work and Zen practice, allowing students to experience the ancestral masters' path of cultivation. Lingdong College engages in charity-based alms-giving activities, offering students the opportunity to experience the walking practices of Buddha's time and bring the teachings into real-life situations. Nizhong College encourages students to participate in mountain worship and offers photography training to enrich their extracurricular time and professional abilities, thus providing conditions for future employment. Caoxi College promotes the culture of the Sixth Patriarch, organizes cultural festivals, and enhances the influence of Zen propagation work on a global level.

All four colleges of Guangdong Buddhist College are actively leveraging their unique characteristics. However, from the current enrollment situation, the reforms cannot be deemed entirely successful. While the decline in the population of monastic students is related to objective factors, it is also necessary to reevaluate whether this slow-paced reform can keep up with the pace of development in the modern era.

In the face of this situation, Guangdong Buddhist College has made efforts to address the issue. All four colleges have established layperson classes and summer camps, attracting a large number of young people to participate in learning. The diverse curriculum includes various subjects such as illustration, calligraphy, guqin (a

traditional Chinese musical instrument), Zen meditation, and copying sutras. This curriculum encompasses both traditional Chinese culture and Buddhist knowledge. Suppose the measure of success is whether participants in layperson classes or summer camps later choose to become monastic. In that case, this approach may be considered unsuccessful, as more lay devotees are likely to choose to embrace cultural teachings rather than seeking ordination.

However, if we consider it from the perspective of promoting traditional culture and contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, it can be considered successful. Through layperson classes and summer camps, students gain a profound understanding of Chinese culture and the profoundness of Buddhist culture, which enhances the appeal of Buddhist culture to the general public.

Guangdong Buddhist College officially launched its institutional management system in 2021, paving the way for network-based information management in teaching. At the same time, a nationwide network system for religious colleges was also established, enabling student records to be accessible in both the nationwide religious college network system and Guangdong Buddhist College's institutional management system. The system includes information related to student admissions, transfers, academic performance, and graduation, ensuring accurate data entry and improving the overall management of Buddhist colleges across the country. This progress has provided students with the assurance of an information-based system, preventing issues such as the loss of graduation certificates or campus records that might hinder obtaining replacements. The advancement in information management enhances the level of efficiency in Buddhist colleges and provides students with a more secure information guarantee.

This convenience is a result of technology's contribution to the management of Buddhist colleges. In addition to this, in 2021, the "Administrative Measures for Internet Religious Information Services" were issued, which effectively curbed the dissemination of illegal organizations using Buddhism and other religions

for propaganda. Immediately upon issuance, legal temples and Buddhist colleges were granted Internet religious information service licenses, safeguarding the core rights of Buddhism and other religions. This measure significantly combated unlawful individuals exploiting religious contexts and preserved religious freedom while ensuring the expression of religious beliefs. Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated colleges, in accordance with the requirements of relevant documents, obtained Internet religious information service licenses through qualification examinations, allowing them to legally use websites, Douyin, Weibo, public accounts, and other platforms for disseminating Buddhist teachings, thereby ensuring that followers have access to authentic and reliable Buddhist doctrines.

In the new era of Chinese socialism with distinctive characteristics, Buddhist education plays a crucial role, assisting in the widespread dissemination of the administrative policies of the Communist Party of China. Guangdong Buddhist College has strengthened and improved its ideological and political work, contributing to the long-term stability of the country and promoting national unity and cohesion.

4.8 Results Validation and Credibility

Through participant observation at Guangdong Buddhist College and literature review, it is evident that the college has implemented a series of reform measures in areas such as institutional development, curriculum reform, and the research levels of teachers and students. In discussions with colleagues or relevant individuals from the Buddhist College, the following questions were addressed, and the specific chat contents are presented in the full article. The summarized discussion topics are as follows:

1. What are the main focuses and requirements for cultivating students at the Buddhist College?

2. How does the Buddhist College promote interaction between students and society?

3. What are the gains and outcomes of participating in social welfare projects?

4. What are the distinctive features of the Buddhist college established by Buddhist temples?

5. What practical measures have you implemented during the teaching process?

6. How satisfied are you with the educational and teaching work at the college over the past five years?

7. How do you perceive the current status of students at the Buddhist college, including graduation rates and attrition?

8. What are the employment prospects for students after graduation?

9. Which policies have had a significant impact on teachers and the college? What impact has this had on relevant individuals?

10. What measures have been taken for the education of non-professionals?

11. Which educational programs or activities at the Buddhist College have had the most significant impact?

Before 2012, although Buddhist colleges in Guangdong Province combined their historical advantages and vigorously developed their institutional characteristics, analysis from data, literature, and discussions reveals various shortcomings at that time. Discussions also uncovered challenges faced by Lingdong College's archives, where documents from before 2012, except for particularly important ones, were either lost or unaccounted for. The remaining materials span a wide range of years.

However, since 2012, the richness of archival documents has gradually increased. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the merger of Guangdong Buddhist

College has been beneficial for the college's development and has brought research value to this study.

By comparing the changes in policies and regulations related to religious colleges after 2012 and analyzing aspects such as teaching content, faculty, student situations, enrollment strategies, student cultivation, academic contributions, and training achievements at Guangdong Buddhist College, the collected literature and information provided by the faculty and students during discussions can be cross-referenced. This process validates the efforts made by the college in various aspects. It also reveals the new developments and challenges faced by Guangdong Buddhist College in the context of the new era, demonstrating the significant impact of China's revolutionary social ideas on Buddhism. It further underscores the enormous potential and social value of the Buddhist education sector in the changing landscape of Chinese society.

The information for the article is derived from various sources, including the public platforms and websites of Guangdong Buddhist College. Policy and regulatory information is obtained from official government websites. Participants in the discussions include members of Guangdong Buddhist College's academic administration, faculty, students, and staff. To address any information gaps, discussions were also conducted with staff from the Chaozhou City Buddhist Association office and lay Buddhist groups in the city. By combining their discussion information with literature materials, the timing and topics of the discussions are specified, enhancing credibility.

In summary, this study employs historical research methods, literature review methods, and in-depth discussions to validate the literature. Therefore, the results obtained are considered credible.

4.9 Summary

Data analysis indicates that various factors in educational reform have influenced Guangdong Buddhist College and its four branches. The merger of the four Buddhist colleges in 2012 to form Guangdong Buddhist College created new development opportunities. The introduction of policies and the proposition of the concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era provided a clear direction for the college's development, leading to the organization of the "Chinese Dream" series of activities and a significant expansion of religious influence. The educational reforms in Guangdong Province have gained recognition both internally and externally, with the college actively promoting the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines and regulations and engaging in academic research.

The college has gradually developed its distinctive features in teaching content, adjusting its curriculum to allow students and faculty to choose courses based on their academic intentions and sectarian preferences. The four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College leverage their characteristics to integrate with the local economy and society through various activities. In terms of research, the college has achieved rich academic results, and its faculty has made outstanding contributions to the academic field. In summary, the educational reforms in Guangdong Province have profoundly influenced the development of the Buddhist college, producing outstanding achievements among the students and promoting the dissemination of Buddhist culture through academic exchanges and discussions.

However, challenges exist. The Buddhist college faces difficulties such as insufficient student enrollment, early-stage faculty education, and employment issues. The college needs to keep pace with the development of the times, cultivating Buddhist talents with Chinese characteristics for the new era. Finding new ways of survival and providing more choices for graduates are essential to ensure that they can deeply study Buddhism and contribute to society.

In conclusion, the education and research at the Buddhist college not only inherit Buddhist doctrines but also contribute to the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture, contributing wisdom and strength to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In the future, the Buddhist college will continue to adhere to the direction of sinicization, expanding its research areas, enhancing its reputation and influence, and addressing challenges to make greater contributions to the development of Buddhist education.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the author will clearly outline and explain the research goals and questions. The focus will be on Buddhist temple education in the Guangdong area from 2012 to 2022, examining its evolution and the new roles it has assumed. By analyzing theories and conducting research, the author will thoroughly investigate the new features of Buddhist temple education and highlight its important role in China's current era. Finally, the author will share thoughts and recommendations for future growth.

5.1 Changes in Educational Philosophy and Role of Buddhist Temples in the New Era in Guangdong

This study employs historical research methods, literature review, and participant observation, primarily aiming to elucidate Buddhist college education in the context of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To adapt to the demands of the times, the study explores the development strategies that promote the modernization, socialization, and sinicization of Buddhist education. The goal is to cultivate Buddhist talents with modern literacy and social responsibility while inheriting and promoting traditional Chinese culture.

According to the analysis of empirical data, Buddhist temple education in Guangdong emerged during the period of the Republic of China. The reformist faction led by Master Taixu served as the primary force promoting the new style of Buddhist education, breaking away from the traditional private school system that had persisted for centuries. Today, it remains a vital tool at the forefront of Buddhist education reform.

In the past decade, Guangdong has undergone continuous changes in various aspects such as policies, economy, culture, education, and science and technology, all against the backdrop of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Regardless of whether it is in terms of policies, economy, culture, education, or science and technology, Guangdong has consistently been at the forefront of China's development. The role of temples has transformed; they are no longer solely focused on cultivating religious talents but are now more aligned with national development strategies that meet the needs of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. By comparing different periods of religious policies, curriculum design, enrollment, teacher training, and social interactions, we can gain a deep understanding of the evolving philosophy and role of Buddhist temple education in this process of transformation. The following comparative chart summarizes and illustrates these changes:

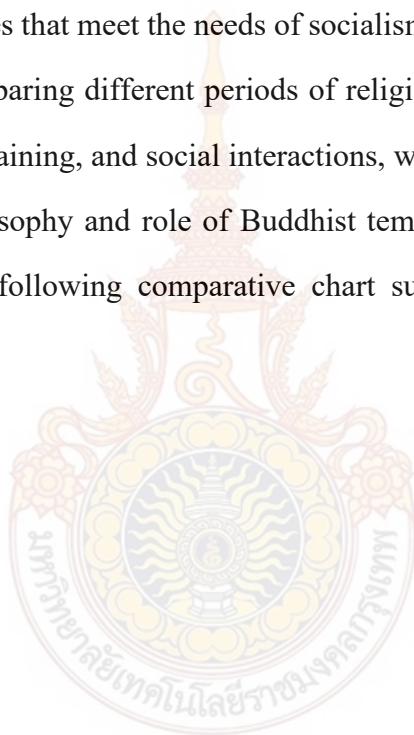


Table 5.1 Evolution of Differences in Emphasis and Ideology in Religious Policies at Different Times

The Republic of China Period	Early Years of the People's Republic of China	The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
Sun Ke, the mayor of Guangzhou under the government of the Republic of China, initiated a movement to auction off temples, leading to the imminent destruction of the Buddhist community in Guangdong. It was not until 1932, when the government's approach to religious policies eased slightly, that efforts were made to establish modern Buddhist temple education in Guangdong province.	The Communist Party of China put forward the concept of "freedom of religious belief." However, during the initial stage, the ten years of the Cultural Revolution led to the persecution of Buddhist temple education, resulting in its suspension. It was only after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee that the Party's correct guidelines and policies on religious issues were gradually restored. The re-establishment of the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the emphasis on uniting the vast religious masses and religious figures around the government under the Party's leadership to contribute to the Four Modernizations became the guiding ideology. In 1991, Chaozhou Lingdong Buddhist College was officially reopened, marking the stable development of Buddhist education. The government successively improved and issued more policies and laws to protect the development of religion. From 1991 to 2004, regulations such as the "Implementation Measures for the Registration and Management of Religious Social Organizations", the "Regulations on the Management of Religious Activity Sites", the "Regulations on the Management of Religious Activities by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China", and the "Methods for the Registration of Religious Activity Sites" were issued. Meanwhile, several provinces also promulgated local religious regulations or local government rules. The "Regulations on Religious Affairs" were promulgated as well.	In 2011, Guangdong Buddhist College was officially established, merging the original four Buddhist colleges into one institution. The institutional structure of the school also moved towards standardization. China adopts the principle of "political unity and cooperation, as well as mutual respect for different beliefs" about religion. In the implementation of policies, the Chinese religious community adheres to the direction of sinicizing religions, practices the core socialist values, promotes the fine traditions of the Chinese nation, and actively explores religious ideologies that align with China's national conditions. Therefore, each religion provides interpretations of its religious doctrines and rules that are in accordance with the national situation and contemporary requirements.

Table 5.2 Differences in Emphasis and Concepts of Course Design in Different Periods

The Republic of China Period	Early Years of the People's Republic of China	The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
In 1933, Master Taixu established the Lingdong Buddhist College within the Kaiyuan Temple in Chaozhou, marking the beginning of a new era for modern Buddhist education in Guangdong. At that time, the overall level of national education was low. Therefore, in curriculum design, there was a significant focus on courses aimed at cultural dissemination. The key emphasis in curriculum design was to cultivate talent with a solid foundation in culture and doctrinal knowledge. For students with higher academic qualifications at that time, a research department was established, and distinguished scholars were invited to deliver lectures in each discipline.	In 1986, the Chinese Buddhist Association proposed the basic textbooks for Buddhist courses at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced, serving as the foundation for Buddhist curriculum development. All Buddhist colleges followed suit, adjusting the courses based on their own educational and faculty conditions. However, the overall framework adhered to the three-level course structure for cultivation.	At the beginning of the new era, various branches of Guangdong Buddhist College gradually explored and adapted their courses to the demands of the new era. From 2013 to 2015, Buddhist courses accounted for more than social courses, reflecting a miniature of the three-level course structure formulated by the Chinese Buddhist Association. From 2018 to 2021, the proportion of ideological and political courses increased in the curriculum. After 2021, the course design adopted a 7:2:1 structure, where 7 represents religious courses, 2 represents social courses, and 1 represents ideological and political courses.

Table 5.3 Evolution of Differences in Emphasis on Teacher Training Focus at Different Times

The Republic of China Period	Early years of the People's Republic of China	The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
At the beginning of the establishment of Buddhist temple education in China, most of the teachers were outstanding monks recognized by society. They were either capable of leading a group of disciples in learning or had unique insights. The teaching model was centered around the worship and learning of a prominent monk.	After the establishment of the Chinese Buddhist Association, Mr. Zhao Puchu proposed three priorities in the current Buddhist community, all related to talent cultivation. However, the slow development of the country's overall education level led to the recruitment of teachers primarily from outstanding graduates of Buddhist academies.	After the year 2000, with the popularization of social compulsory education and the improvement of the overall cultural quality of the population, Buddhist temple education increased its focus on cultivating research-oriented talents. In the recruitment of teachers, the standards were raised to the level of postgraduates, and young monks with professional knowledge reserves were actively sought. In the new era, there was an increase in strategies for teacher training, including the addition of qualification exams, the selection of outstanding teachers nationwide, and welfare benefits such as the "four insurances and one fund" ⁷.

⁷ The "four insurances" include pension insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and work injury insurance. The "one fund" refers to the housing provident fund.

Table 5.4 Evolution of Enrollment and Training Focus Concepts at Different Periods

Republic of China Period	Early Years of the People's Republic of China	The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.
The establishment of the Buddhist Academy initially enrolled a limited number of students, including those from Lingdong Academy, where the first graduating class consisted of eighteen monk students from various regions across the country. Despite the small enrollment, the outcomes were excellent. In the early stages, the academy initiated the publication of the semi-monthly magazine "Ren Hai Deng" (Human Sea Lamp). In the 23rd year of the Republic of China (1934), the academy published "Hai Ou Ji", and in June of the 24th year (1935), the monk students graduated and published "Nan Xun Ji". This collection compiled the graduation theses of the eighteen monk students, each presenting one thesis.	In 1991, under the vigorous advocacy of Ven. Dingran, the academy was re-established based on the Sangha training class in Shantou City. The campus remained in Guosi, Kaiyuan Town, Chaozhou, and the academy resumed the publication of the magazine "Ren Hai Deng." It officially started classes in October 1991 (Shi Huiyuan, 1992). Due to the lack of documentation, the researcher was unable to access the number of applicants but managed to obtain a few student records, as seen in the attached photos 3 and 4. According to teacher comments and student transcripts, the average score reached 80 points, indicating significant educational achievements.	The changes in enrollment situations at the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College indicate that, with the increasing demands of the new era for talent development, the school has gradually expanded the offerings of different disciplines, such as the Middle Way Research Class, Vinaya Class, Tiantai Research Class, Pure Land Retreat Class, etc., to meet the diverse needs of students and enhance the professionalism of Buddhist studies. However, the number of enrolled students has not changed. The admission criteria for postgraduate students have been relaxed.

Table 5.5 The Focus and Concept of Social Interaction have Evolved Over Different Periods

The Republic of China Period	Early Years of the People's Republic of China	The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
During this period, Buddhist academies placed greater emphasis on independence, and temple education remained primarily focused on preaching. Teachers and students mostly interacted within the confines of the monastic community. Only limited interactions with the broader society occurred, primarily centered around traditional Buddhist ceremonies such as ordination rituals, water and land rituals, and other rites that are characteristic of traditional Buddhist blessings and memorial services. Overall, the social interaction was relatively limited, and there was a noticeable detachment from broader societal engagement.	In a context where the overall education level of the country was relatively low, the social interaction of Buddhist academies remained relatively limited. Temples primarily focused on religious transmission, and the Caodong Institute continued to adhere to traditional religious ceremonies, such as the celebration of the "Birth of the Sixth Patriarch," engaging in mutual exchanges with society. By strengthening the understanding of the Sixth Patriarch among the followers, the Caodong Institute made significant contributions to promoting Chinese Chan Buddhism on the global stage, concurrently expanding the influence of Chinese culture in the world of religions.	During this period of vibrant socio-economic development, Buddhist academies gradually expanded their scope of social interaction, actively participating in social development. They established charitable foundations, engaged in philanthropic activities, and simultaneously promoted projects such as university student summer camps, Buddhist forums, and Buddhist music festivals. These initiatives brought positive impacts to society and expanded the influence of Buddhism in the community. They demonstrated a more modern and socially responsible approach.

Overall, although the development of Buddhism is closely related to the country's construction, the early stages and the level of cooperation were not as pronounced as in the previous decade. Especially under the backdrop of the new era, the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist Academy have actively responded in terms of educational methods, curriculum arrangements, and social interaction. They have organized a series of activities related to the "Chinese Dream", integrating Buddhist

educational ideas and philosophical concepts with the core socialist values. Such action has propelled the dissemination and influence of Buddhist culture in society.

The role played by Guangdong Buddhist Academy in the education of Buddhist temples in the new era of socialist China can be elaborated on more specifically through five aspects.

5.1.1 Contribution to the Inheritance of Traditional Culture

Since the introduction of Buddhism to China in the Han Dynasty, it has been deeply integrated with traditional Chinese culture, giving rise to the two major Buddhist systems present today: Han Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. Mainly through Han Buddhism, it spread to East Asia, Southeast Asia, and other countries, forming Japanese Buddhism, Korean Buddhism, Vietnamese Buddhism, etc. After the decline of Buddhism in India, Chinese Buddhism became the center of world Buddhist culture.

In a speech at the headquarters of UNESCO in 2014, President Xi Jinping pointed out, "Buddhism, through integration and development with Chinese Confucian and Taoist cultures, ultimately formed Buddhist culture with Chinese characteristics, leaving a profound impact on the religious beliefs, philosophical concepts, literature and art, rituals, and customs of the Chinese people" (Qian, 2014). Therefore, based on this statement, it can be analyzed that Buddhism plays a crucial role in inheriting and developing traditional Chinese culture.

In the empirical data of curriculum design, it can be observed that since its establishment in the Republic of China, Buddhist education has emphasized the popularization of cultural courses. During the Republic of China period, the curriculum included a significant number of social courses. The ratio of Buddhist courses to social courses was 4:10, with subjects such as Chinese language, arithmetic, and Mandarin conversation classified as basic courses for cultural dissemination. However, after the revival of Lingdong Buddhist Academy by Venerable Dingran in 1992, as the national implementation of compulsory education progressed, Buddhist temple school

education underwent an upgrade in cultural education. New courses such as English, history, and university Chinese language emerged. This development reflects the elevation of the country's status on the world stage, especially the inclusion of English and the study of minor languages in the curriculum of Buddhist temple education.

Since 2018, Guangdong Buddhist College has introduced courses such as Mao Zedong Thought and the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, Party Ethnic Theory and Practice, Chinese United Front Theory and Practice, etc. The proportion of courses has entered a new developmental sequence, with a ratio of 7:2:1 for religious courses, cultural courses, and ideological and political courses. This ratio demonstrates a shift towards enhancing the comprehensive qualities and levels of talent development from both the teacher and student perspectives. Although the curriculum is still primarily focused on Buddhist professional courses, the training goals for talents in the new era have become more explicit, aiming to cultivate monks well-versed in religion, politics, and culture as the core objectives.

Through the analysis of the curriculum, it can be concluded that Guangdong Buddhist College and its four branch campuses have been dedicated to integrating Buddhist culture with traditional Chinese culture in various aspects, including educational goals, since their establishment. The efforts aim to equip monks to adapt to the development needs of the new era. Beyond promoting Buddhism, they also aim to inherit and promote the contributions of figures like Master Taixu and his disciples during the Republic of China period, contributing to the dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture and providing wisdom and strength for the lasting rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

5.1.2 Contribution of Guangdong Buddhist College Education to Society

Buddhist college education actively engages in social welfare through activities such as charity events and community service, embodying Buddhist principles and contributing to social harmony and stability. Since the merger of

Guangdong Buddhist College in 2012, the college has continuously adjusted itself in response to societal needs. Its social role has transformed from traditional Buddhist monastery education to becoming an integral part of social development. It has taken on social responsibilities, showcasing a new image of Buddhist temple education in the new era.

Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated colleges actively promote the cultural spirit of compassion and benefiting all beings by organizing charity events, encouraging students and believers to participate. They engage in various charitable activities covering multiple areas, including aiding impoverished groups, caring for vulnerable populations, and supporting regions affected by natural disasters. According to available data, for example, Lingdong College alone incurred expenses of 3,060,000 RMB for the project focused on caring for vulnerable groups from 2008 to 2022.

Teachers and students of Buddhist colleges, through their active involvement in charitable endeavors, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have taken concrete actions to align Buddhism with socialist society and play a positive role in promoting economic and social development. In the article "Charitable Winds and Rain in Lingnan: An Investigation of Charity Practices in Guangdong's Buddhist Community" by Wen (2009), it is mentioned that religious charitable initiatives consistently remain a recognized and beneficial model of interaction with various sectors of society. The author believes that charity is the path for Buddhism to propagate its teachings and a means of outreach, serving as a gateway for it to connect with society.

The philanthropic endeavors of Guangdong Buddhist charity have long held profound real-world significance and a sense of contemporary responsibility. Charity work has a positive impact on showcasing the image of Buddhism, making the public more accepting of it, and bringing the image of "worldly, high-minded individuals" into everyday life. This exemplary influence encourages laypeople to respond to charitable appeals.

In his work "Building Humanistic Buddhism" (Taixu, 2004), Master Taixu encourages Buddhist disciples to engage in charity after understanding the true principles of Buddhism. According to discussions with volunteers, they praised the purity and dignity of the masters, who actively participate in charity work. Not only does Buddhism move them, but it also instills in them the Mahayana spirit. Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated colleges, through their social practices in promoting Buddhist education, align with Master Taixu's advocacy of "humanistic Buddhism". This approach is more in line with the responsibilities and development directions of contemporary monks, contributing to social harmony and stability.

In addition to charitable activities, the faculty and students of Guangdong Buddhist College also integrate Buddhist teachings into daily life and social practices. A typical example is Yunmen College, which combines the Buddhist concept of "Zen" with the practical aspects of "farming" in daily life. By changing their lifestyle, Yunmen College has successfully altered societal perceptions of monastic communities. They demonstrate that monks can be self-sufficient and adapt to the new developments in society. Through self-reliance and labor practices, Yunmen College not only sustains a thriving temple economy but also actively contributes to the survival and independent development of Buddhism. The emphasis on "farming and Zen" gradually propels and establishes the sinicization of Buddhism, providing significant insights into the development of "Humanistic Buddhism".

Furthermore, Guangdong Buddhist College, through organizing cultural activities, lectures, and exhibitions, blends Buddhist culture with societal culture, offering diverse cultural resources to society. These activities not only enrich people's spiritual and cultural lives but also contribute to the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture. They enhance societal cultural confidence and identity, laying a solid cultural foundation for social harmony and stability.

Guangdong Buddhist College actively practices the Buddhist spirit through various means such as charitable activities, social practices, and cultural exchanges,

making positive contributions to social harmony and stability. In the process of transformation, the college is dedicated to cultivating outstanding talents and fulfilling social responsibilities, contributing wisdom and strength to the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The commitment to this role highlights the significant position and profound impact of Buddhist college education in contemporary Chinese society.

5.1.3 Talent Cultivation at Guangdong Buddhist College

Based on empirical evidence, General Secretary Xi Jinping highlighted during the 2016 National Conference on Religious Work that religious organizations serve as bridges and ties between the Party, government, religious figures, and the broader religious community. This sentiment was further solidified in the 2021 "Regulations on the Management of Religious Colleges", which explicitly defines religious colleges as essential establishments for cultivating patriotic religious reserve talents, accurately interpreting religious doctrines, and providing training for active religious clergy. Combining these two aspects with data from Guangdong Buddhist College's 2012 research report titled "Survey of Buddhist Activity Places in Affiliated Areas of Guangdong Buddhist Association", it is evident that the college has consistently prioritized ideological and political education. While initially encountering challenges due to inadequate teaching staff, Guangdong's Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee initiated a "classroom delivery" program in March 2019, which garnered widespread approval and acclaim from religious college administrators, faculty, and students alike.

In an article by Tu (2019) titled "Guangdong Vigorously Promotes 'Bringing Courses to Campuses' to Standardize Religious College Public Curriculum Teaching", the author expresses her viewpoint on this matter. The author believes that the implementation of the "classroom delivery" program is a significant step taken by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of Guangdong Province to enhance the teaching of public curriculum courses, particularly ideological and political courses, in

religious colleges. The aim is to strengthen the education of patriotism, socialism, collectivism, legal awareness, civic morality, outstanding Chinese traditional culture, and contemporary Chinese social conditions in religious colleges within Guangdong Province.

The "classroom delivery" initiative is designed to continuously enhance the national consciousness, civic awareness, and legal awareness of teachers and students in religious colleges. Its goal is to cultivate religious talents who are patriotic and devoted to their faith.

Based on the empirical investigation of Guangdong Buddhist College, it is evident that ideological and political education is essential for monastic education within Buddhist temples. Prolonged religious-centric living may inadvertently lead to detachment from broader society. This disconnection, coupled with a lack of familiarity with relevant religious regulations, could leave individuals vulnerable to potential harm and unable to seek legal protection for their interests. Therefore, to avoid legal ignorance and to safeguard their rights effectively, the implementation of ideological and political education becomes necessary. This educational approach effectively nurtures new-era monks who possess political awareness, religious integrity, spiritual accomplishment, moral qualities, and societal influence.

This approach aligns with the requirements of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics. It fulfills the criteria of cultivating "doubly proficient" talents, ensuring that these monks are both well-versed in religious doctrines and politically aware, ultimately contributing to the society's harmony and stability.

5.1.4 Spreaders of Buddhist Culture

Over the past decade, Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated institutions have made significant efforts to enhance their infrastructure, incorporating the application of electronic classrooms, libraries, and online platforms. In 2021, the college's management system was officially implemented, enabling networked teaching management. During the same period, a nationwide networked system for religious

colleges was also put into operation. Student records, which individual institutions previously kept, are now accessible in the cloud. From student enrollment to graduation, all relevant information can be accessed on these platforms. This arrangement ensures the dual interests of both the school and students, particularly concerning matters such as student transfers and post-graduation employment. Other Buddhist colleges or temples can inquire about students' academic records to gather information for employment purposes when considering hiring them.

In addition to the institutional systems, Guangdong Buddhist College and its affiliated institutions also utilize platforms such as WeChat official accounts and Douyin (TikTok) videos to disseminate information about fundamental Buddhist knowledge and updates from the college. In 2021, the "Regulations on the Management of Religious Information Services on the Internet" were enacted, cracking down on the illegal dissemination of cult organizations. This regulation requires assessment of the individuals responsible for internet-based religious information of temples and Buddhist colleges, ultimately leading to the issuance of licenses for internet-based religious information services. The introduction of such legal regulations safeguards the interests of Buddhism itself. It upholds religious freedom, while also allowing legitimate religious organizations and religious colleges to propagate authentic and reliable Buddhist teachings. From the perspectives of promoting Buddhist culture and preserving the core values of religion, this regulatory framework proves highly advantageous.

In the article "Establishing a New Era Buddhist Education Concept" by Guo (2010), the author asserts that the propagation of Buddhism should be attuned to the era and utilize the most accessible methods for modern people to learn Buddhist doctrines. The author emphasizes the importance of leveraging all achievements of modern technology to serve the cause of Buddhist education.

The researchers generally agree with this viewpoint. However, it is believed that there should be additional considerations. It is necessary to enhance contemporary

monks' education in information technology. For instance, the Nizhongs' Academy, despite providing photography training, lacks sufficient follow-up support.

The academy should formulate long-term development plans that address how to adapt Buddhist teachings to the evolving times. Specifically, the hiring of more specialized teachers in various disciplines should be pursued to educate students in a targeted manner. In addition to religious courses, we should expose students to a broader variety of modern-day technological applications. We can only achieve the proper dissemination of Buddhist doctrines through such comprehensive education.

5.1.5 Voices of Buddhist Education in Society

Guangdong Buddhist College and its four affiliated institutes have distinct educational features, encompassing specialized fields such as Middle Way studies, Yogācāra studies, Tiantai studies, Chan Buddhism studies, and Pure Land studies. With the encouragement and promotion of the new era, Buddhist forums have become significant platforms for Guangdong Buddhist College to communicate its academic research and engage in scholarly exchanges. The college actively organizes scholars from around the world and the nation to participate in these forums, where they discuss current hot topics in Buddhist doctrines, publish related articles, and have garnered a positive reputation.

Based on empirical data from 2018 to 2022, Guangdong Buddhist College's full-time teachers participated in 7 research projects, published 7 monographs, a series of 1 set (9 volumes), published 7 articles, and edited 5 textbooks. As for the forum, over 500 articles from scholars across different regions were presented and published. Regrettably, a significant number of outstanding papers continue to circulate internally and remain uncompiled for publication.

Beyond organizing forums and publishing articles, Guangdong Buddhist College has also nurtured a group of exceptional teachers and students. Since 2013, teachers and students from the college have been participating in the annual national Buddhist preaching exchange competition, consistently achieving top-three rankings.

This achievement vividly demonstrates the strength of the teaching staff at Guangdong Buddhist College.

In 2018, students from the Lingdong Institute of Guangdong Buddhist College participated in the National Buddhist College Debate Tournament, advancing to the semi-finals and emerging as a dark horse in the competition. This accomplishment underscores that Lingdong Institute remains faithful to Master Taixu's ideals and principles, allowing their arguments to hit the mark, showcasing their well-honed logical and analytical thinking. The accolades from judges and on-site practitioners confirmed their success.

In summary, through academic research and scholarly exchanges, Guangdong Buddhist College actively engages in discussions about current societal issues, offering perspectives with deep thoughts and academic value. This involvement enhances the influence and dissemination of Buddhist ideology in society.

Amid ongoing transformations, the education at Guangdong Buddhist College presents a new concept guided by the principles of Chinese socialism with distinctive characteristics. Its developmental trajectory not only focuses on the inheritance and evolution of traditional Buddhist culture but also plays multiple roles in the context of the new era, contributing positively and profoundly to societal stability, the preservation of Chinese culture, and the cultivation of talents. Like a gentle spring breeze sweeping over the land, Buddhist college education infuses new vitality and spirit into the advancement of the path of Chinese socialism with distinct characteristics.

The transformation and development of Buddhist college education no longer remain confined to traditional Buddhist doctrines and scholarly research. Instead, it is continuously assuming new roles within the currents of the era. The primary mission of Buddhist colleges is to inherit and promote Buddhist culture by integrating the wisdom of Buddhism with the distinctive principles of Chinese socialism, thereby actively contributing to societal stability and harmony. Simultaneously, Buddhist colleges also serve as custodians of Chinese cultural heritage. Through organizing

cultural activities, lectures, exhibitions, and more, they closely fuse Buddhist culture with societal culture, infusing new elements into the spiritual fabric of the Chinese nation. In the realm of talent cultivation, education at Guangdong Buddhist College not only emphasizes academic achievements but also places a strong emphasis on nurturing students' sense of social responsibility and civic literacy. The college encourages students to engage in charitable activities, social practice, and more, using the compassion and virtuous actions of Buddhism to guide them towards actively participating in society and contributing to the construction of a harmonious society. This comprehensive mode of education helps cultivate individuals who possess both outstanding academic qualities and a strong sense of social responsibility, creating a new generation of Buddhist professionals for the modern era.

In summary, the educational reforms at Guangdong Buddhist College not only reflect the dissemination and influence of Buddhist culture within Chinese society but also highlight the new mission and value of Buddhist culture within the context of China's socialist development. As a proactive institution that embraces social responsibility, the education at the Buddhist college, through inheritance and innovation, continuously embodies a China-specific Buddhist education rooted in Buddhist wisdom. The college plays an indispensable role in contributing to the construction of a harmonious society, the preservation of Chinese culture, and the cultivation of talents for the new era.

5.2 Integrating Modern Teaching Methods into Traditional Temple Education

In the new era of socialist development, Guangdong Buddhist College has actively explored and successfully achieved a balance between tradition and modernity. Through comprehensive reforms, the college has not only upheld the inheritance and

promotion of traditional Buddhist culture but also integrated the demands of modern societal development, resulting in significant achievements.

Within its educational framework, Guangdong Buddhist College has maintained the core of traditional Buddhist teachings, emphasizing values of compassion, wisdom, and harmony inherent in Buddhism. However, the college has not remained confined to tradition alone. Instead, it has combined the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics, blending Buddhist philosophy with contemporary social ethics. This approach has nurtured Buddhist scholars who possess a high sense of social responsibility and modern sensibilities.

The outcomes of talent cultivation reflect these qualities. Various Buddhist colleges across Guangdong have established classes for calligraphy, martial arts, Zen studies, and the practical application of Buddhist principles. These classes use new methods to disseminate traditional Buddhist culture. In addition to these classes, events like the Sixth Patriarch Cultural Festival, the "Journey of Prajna" summer camp, the Farm-Chan summer camp, and college student Zen meditation camps have been organized. These summer camp formats have made Buddhism more accessible to younger generations, aligning with their interests and facilitating their understanding of Buddhism. Through the study of Buddhist teachings, an appreciation of Chinese traditional culture, and the incorporation of knowledge from social education, individuals' perspectives on life and values are enriched.

Zhang (2013) wrote in his article "How much do you know about Buddhist summer camps" that "Buddhist summer camps express the teachings and teachings that people think are esoteric and difficult to understand in a lively way, so it is easy for Buddhist lovers and modern people in busy cities." Accept it so that Buddhism can participate in the construction of social spiritual civilization with a new look." This also proved this point in this study.

In addition, Guangdong Buddhist College's curriculum not only retains the teachings of classical doctrines but also emphasizes the expansion of diverse courses

such as cultural studies, ideological and political education, and social practices. This approach allows students to not only analyse the fundamental teachings of Buddhism but also acquire a broader range of knowledge and skills, enabling them to meet the multifaceted demands of modern society for talent. The richness of the curriculum poses a challenge to traditional Chinese Buddhist perspectives. In the application of Buddhist education within tradition, an emphasis is placed on the gradual cultivation of talents through a progressive approach, aimed at gradually establishing individuals' correct faith in Buddhism. As articulated in "Thematic Illustration of Vimalakirti's Inquiry into Illness" by the eminent Chan Master Xiaoyin Da Xian: "The Buddha's teachings are tailored to circumstances. Initially, I revealed the lesser vehicle, like showing a hoof print. Gradually entering, moment by moment, I arrived at the ultimate round." (CBETA, 2023).

With the advancement of time, education has transformed into fragmented learning, adapting to the demands of modern society. Consequently, to cater to the needs of the new era, the variety of courses for students to study Buddhism and diverse knowledge has expanded. However, the depth of this learning appears to be lacking. Furthermore, Guangdong Buddhist College integrates traditional Buddhist ideologies with contemporary academic research in its research endeavors. It encourages both faculty and students to actively engage in academic exchanges within the Buddhist community and the broader society, thus contributing wisdom to the dissemination of Buddhist thought and the progress of modern society. Simultaneously, the college fully leverages modern technological means to promote the spread of Buddhist culture, employing online information management and social media platforms like WeChat and TikTok.

In terms of social engagement, Guangdong Buddhist College contributes to social harmony and stability by practicing the compassionate spirit of Buddhism through activities like charity work and social initiatives. This proactive involvement

not only upholds the Buddhist values of cultivating compassion and humanistic care but also aligns with modern society's demand for philanthropic endeavors.

In conclusion, Guangdong Buddhist College has successfully achieved a balance between tradition and modernity in the era of new socialist development. By preserving and passing down the essence of traditional Buddhist culture while integrating it with contemporary societal values, the college demonstrates the vitality and influence of modern Buddhist education in areas such as academics, research, and societal engagement. This practice not only contains important lessons for the development of the college itself but also provides insightful guidance for the advancement of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

5.3 Challenges and Countermeasures Faced by Guangdong Buddhist College in the New Era

In the context of the socialist society of the new era, Guangdong Buddhist College has achieved considerable success. However, it still confronts a series of challenges. In the face of these challenges, the college has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, actively addressing the difficulties.

Firstly, the weak annual increase in undergraduate enrollment indicates a persistent shortage of student resources over the past decade. This situation suggests that Guangdong Buddhist College has consistently grappled with a scarcity of enrollees. Factors such as the impact of China's socio-economic and cultural conditions, as well as the decline in the population of individuals choosing monastic life, contribute to a reduced number of students choosing Guangdong Buddhist College. Although the curriculum undergoes continuous innovation, attracting an adequate number of students remains a significant challenge. The limited student pool results in various pressures on teaching and research. In response to this situation, Guangdong Buddhist College has expanded its courses, introduced layman classes, organized summer camps, and

conducted diverse training activities. The college concentrates its educational objectives on young people and retirees, aiming to attract more individuals from these demographics to study Buddhist doctrines and address the issue of insufficient student enrollment.

Secondly, Guangdong Buddhist College encounters challenges in talent cultivation and employment. From traditional perspectives, a majority of students choose to return to monastic temples and engage in temple-related work upon graduation. This trend leads to some graduates not wanting to study Buddhist doctrines further. In response, Guangdong Buddhist College selects outstanding graduates to remain at the institution as teachers, providing them with opportunities for further study and work. This approach also offers post-graduation learning opportunities for students.

Additionally, Guangdong Buddhist College must contend with the impact of educational and societal changes on Buddhist education. Traditional Buddhist education needs to integrate with the contemporary knowledge system, necessitating individuals proficient in Buddhist doctrines and possessing modern scientific and cultural literacy. Faced with a shortage of such talents, the college actively encourages teachers to innovate in curriculum and course design, aligning with the educational requirements of the new era.

In summary, Guangdong Buddhist College has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. Through innovation and reform, the college actively addresses challenges such as a decrease in student enrollment, talent cultivation, and employment. The efforts of the college not only contribute to its development but also provide valuable experiences and insights for the development of Buddhist education in the new era.

5.4 Impact and Future Directions

It can be affirmed that over the millennia since Buddhism was introduced to China, its influence on Chinese culture has become deeply rooted. In the context of the new era of socialism, Guangdong Buddhist College has undergone educational reforms, leading to innovative developments and more significant impacts. Several aspects primarily manifest these impacts, offering valuable insights into potential future directions. Firstly, the educational reforms at Guangdong Buddhist College have exerted a significant influence on the inheritance and development of Buddhist culture. By diversifying curriculum offerings and teaching methods, the college has facilitated a better integration of Buddhist philosophy with contemporary society, promoting the dissemination and continuity of Buddhist culture. This initiative enriches students' knowledge systems and serves as an exemplary model for the propagation of Buddhism in modern society. Therefore, it is anticipated that in the future, new courses will emerge, fostering further interaction between Buddhist education and contemporary society, transitioning from small-group education to broader societal education.

Next is Guangdong Buddhist College, actively engaging in social welfare activities, embodying the compassionate spirit of Buddhism, and making positive contributions to social harmony and stability. Through organizing charity events and participating in social practices, the college aligns with the Mahayana Buddhism principle of "self-benefit and benefiting others" in its cultivation. Guangdong Buddhist College has not only expanded the social influence of Buddhism but also contributed wisdom and strength to societal construction and development. Buddhist charity cannot be separated from the propagation of Buddhist teachings; otherwise, it would be no different from other societal charitable organizations. This aspect is evident in the current outcomes, demonstrating the positive aspects and allowing for the identification of the practical value of continuous development of Buddhist charity in the future.

In the future, Guangdong Buddhist College will continue to adhere to the principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics, actively exploring a Buddhist

education system that adapts to the new era. According to the information in the five-year plan of Guangdong Buddhist College, there will be a focus on integrating traditional Buddhist culture with modern society. The emphasis will be on nurturing more young monks who possess both the qualities of Buddhist practice and a knowledge base in modern science. These young monks can be regarded as valuable contributors to contemporary Buddhism. Additionally, in consideration of the international influence of the "Sixth Patriarch's Day" and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Guangdong Buddhist College will further strengthen international exchanges and cooperation. The institution aims to promote the dissemination and exchange of Buddhist culture internationally, contributing to the greater role of Chinese Buddhism on the world stage.

In conclusion, the educational impact of Guangdong Buddhist College is not only reflected in the inheritance and development of Buddhist culture but also the practical implementation of social welfare activities. Striking a balance between tradition and modernity, the college has given new meaning to Buddhist education, providing clear direction for the development of Chinese Buddhism in the new era. In the future, the college will continue to explore and innovate, advancing consistently to make outstanding contributions to the inheritance of Buddhist culture, social harmony, and talent cultivation.

5.5 Reflections and Recommendations

In the context of the new era of socialism, education at Guangdong Buddhist College continues to face multiple challenges. Based on research findings, the author will focus on how Buddhist temple education in Guangdong can adapt to social changes and cultivate individuals with comprehensive capabilities. The following reflections and development recommendations are summarized:

Firstly, there should be a further strengthening of the integration between traditional Buddhist courses and modern curricula. Buddhist temple education in Guangdong should not be confined to traditional educational models; instead, there should be a strong push for educational reforms that incorporate more modern knowledge and skills. In the practical lives of Buddhist monks, it is no longer just about the traditional "life by the lamp with ancient Buddha" but rather an interaction with a more highly educated population. If students are unable to answer challenging questions or resort to evasive responses, it can lead to a decline in the credibility of Buddhism, creating negative impressions in society. Therefore, in education, there should be a diversification of the curriculum, including subjects such as science, architecture, medicine, physics, education, and psychology. This approach aims to genuinely cultivate comprehensive talents by providing a core foundation in Buddhist education alongside diverse learning opportunities.

Buddhist institutions should not stagnate within a purely Buddhist educational context. Sects should undergo in-depth exploration, and undergraduate studies should incorporate planned professional training. If conditions permit, diverse majors can be introduced to train students. While emphasizing the inheritance of Buddhist culture, students should also be equipped with a cultural foundation to navigate modern society, preparing them for a balance between tradition and modernity.

Secondly, there should be active efforts to expand university exchanges and collaborations. Guangdong Buddhist College should actively explore partnerships with outstanding domestic universities, engaging in academic exchanges and collaborative research projects to enrich educational resources, enhance the college's social influence, and provide support for nurturing talents with an international perspective. Additionally, collaboration and coordination among the four branches of Guangdong Buddhist College should be strengthened, organizing collective activities and exchanges to contribute to mutual educational improvement.

Advancing the integration of technology and education is another important consideration. Guangdong Buddhist College and its four branches can leverage advanced technology to provide online learning platforms and resources, catering to the diverse learning needs of students. These initiatives will help cultivate students' self-directed learning abilities, thereby improving the efficiency and impact of education.

Certainly, the most crucial aspect is to strengthen the development of the teaching faculty. Traditional thinking heavily influences Buddhist education, making it challenging to assess the competence of teachers physically. While the government actively assists in organizing exams and evaluations for religious teaching qualifications, it still falls short of aligning with the standards used for secular teachers. Moreover, Buddhism lacks specialized teacher training colleges. As all teachers are recent graduates, their proficiency directly influences their students' knowledge levels. Guangdong Buddhist College should place a significant emphasis on cultivating the qualifications of its teaching staff. One approach is to recruit excellent teachers from established teacher training programs to deliver lectures at the Buddhist college, thereby raising the overall educational standards of the teaching staff. Simultaneously, it is crucial to encourage continuous self-improvement among teachers, focusing on their ideological and political education. This strategy ensures that when teaching and guiding students, teachers can effectively convey Buddhist culture and moral values.

Lastly, the issue of student employment is crucial. Applying knowledge in practice is the fundamental motivation for student learning. If the focus is solely on studying Buddhist doctrines for personal cultivation, the contribution to society may be limited. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a research center based on the foundation of the Buddhist college. This center can publish research findings and provide opportunities for students to pursue their aspirations. It can also offer internships and training for recent graduates. Moreover, students should be encouraged to participate in social welfare activities actively, integrating Buddhist principles into

practical societal engagement and nurturing individuals with a sense of responsibility toward society.

In conclusion, Guangdong Buddhist College should continuously reflect on how to balance tradition and modernity, providing better education for cultivating well-rounded individuals. In the context of the new era, the college should strive for innovative development, emphasize international exchanges and collaborations, integrate technology with education, strengthen the development of the teaching faculty, and address student employment and social responsibility. These efforts will contribute more effectively to the inheritance of Buddhist culture, societal harmony and stability, and talent cultivation.



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APPENDICES

Founding Period	School Name
In the 11th year of the Republic of China (1922), two schools were established.	1. Chinese Academy of Internal Medicine (Nanjing) 2. Wuchang Buddhist College (Wuchang)
In the 12th year of the Republic of China (1923), 3 schools were established.	1. Yingjiang Temple Buddhist School (Anhui) 2. Xinyang Buddhist Formation School (Xinyang) 3. Shagou Monastic Academy (Yancheng)
In the 13th year of the Republic of China (1924), 6 schools were established.	1. Guiyang Accelerated Shurangama College (Guiyang) 2. Beijing Hongci Buddhist College (Beijing) 3. Sichuan Buddhist College (Chengdu) 4. Ordinary Monk School (Shaanxi) 5. Yangzhou Huayan School (Yangzhou) 6. Institute of Tibetan Studies (Beijing)
In the 14th year of the Republic of China (1925), 3 schools were established	1. Minnan Buddhist College (Fuzhou) 2. Faxiang University (Nanjing) 3. Yushan Buddhist College (Nanjing)
In the 15th year of the Republic of China (1926), a school was established	1. Qingliang College (Changzhou)
In the 16th year of the Republic of China (1927), a school was established.	1. Trinity Society (Peking)
In the 17th year of the Republic of China (1928), 7 schools were established.	1. Wuhan Huayan School (Wuchang) 2. China Buddhist College (Peking) 3. Buddhist Association of China Training Class (Nanjing) 4. Longchishan Buddhist College (Yixing) 5. Guanzong Temple Propaganda Research Institute (Ningbo) 6. Zhulin Buddhist College (Zhenjiang) 7. Hangzhou Monk Academy (Hangzhou)

Founding Period	School Name
In the 18th year of the Republic of China (1929), 3 schools were established.	1. Jiuhua Buddhist College (Jiuhua Mountain) 2. Nanshan Buddhist Elementary School (the second branch of Minnan Buddhist College in Zhangzhou) 3. Huaian Shurangama School (Huai'an)
In the 19th year of the Republic of China (1930), 3 schools were established.	1. Berlin Institute of Buddhist Studies (Berlin Academy of Sciences) 2. Nianhua Temple Buddhist College (Wuchang) 3. Hengyang Buddhist College (Hengyang)
In the 20th year of the Republic of China (1931), 5 schools were established.	1. Gushan Buddhist College 2. Tianning Buddhist College 3. Guangxiao Temple Buddhist Academy 4. Nanhai Buddhist College 5. Jinling Monk Academy
In the 21st year of the Republic of China (1932), 3 schools were established.	1. Sino-Tibetan Academy 2. Henan Buddhist Academy 3. Ningbo White Lake Lecture House
In the 22nd year of the Republic of China (1933), 2 schools were established.	1. Lingdong Buddhist College 2. Shanxi Buddhist College
In the 23rd year of the Republic of China (1934), 2 schools were established.	1. Jiaoshan Buddhist College 2. Poh Kong Buddhist Society
In the 24th year of the Republic of China (1935), 4 schools were established.	1. Kaifeng Buddhist Academy 2. Juejin Buddhist College 3. Qixia Buddhist College 4. Zhengding Longxing Temple Buddhist Academy

Founding Period	School Name
1937	1. Jing'an Buddhist College 2. Jade Buddha Temple Buddhist College
1940	1. Dajue Buddhist Academy
1941	1. Nanhua Buddhist College
1942	1. Shanghai Buddhist College



Observation and Research Site Photos

Photo 1	Photo 2
	
Related Instructions: 2014 Chaozhou Lingdong College Charity Alms Collection Site Photos.	Related Instructions: 2015 Lingdong College organized a university student summer camp, "Prajna Journey" site photos.
Photo 3	Photo 4
	
Related instructions: Academic transcript of Lingdong Buddhist College students.	Related instructions: Comprehensive grades and teachers' comments for Guangdong Buddhist College students.

Photo 5	Photo 6
	
Related instructions: On-site photo (1) of the Dean Dachuan Venerable lecturing students at Lingdong Buddhist College.	Related instructions: On-site photo (2) of the Dean Dachuan Venerable lecturing students at Lingdong Buddhist College.
Photo 7	Photo 8
	
Related instructions: In the social interactive activity, teachers and students of Lingdong College write "福" (good fortune) for the public.	Related instructions: Followers and tourists receiving "福" (good fortune) characters, on-site photos.

Photo 9	Photo 10
	
Related instructions: Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist College hosts the "Middle Way Summit Forum".	Related instructions: Photos of the "Middle Way Summit Forum" sub-venue.
Photo 11	Photo 12
	
Related instructions: On-site photos of the meeting of the President of Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist College.	Related instructions: On-site photos of the Academic Affairs Meeting at Lingdong College, Guangdong Buddhist College.

Photo 13	Photo 14
	
Related instructions: Scene of the Guangdong Buddhist Lecture and Exchange Conference.	Related instructions: Award-winning photos of Lingdong Buddhist College, Guangdong Buddhist College.
Photo 15	Photo 16
	
Related instructions: Daily classroom photos at Lingdong Buddhist College, Guangdong Buddhist College.	Related instructions: Graduation ceremony photos.

Photo 17	Photo 18
	
Related instructions: Student's graduation thesis defense scene.	Related instructions: Student's graduation thesis defense scene.
Photo 19	Photo 20
	
Related instructions: Awarding scholarships to impoverished students.	Related instructions: Upholding the sinicization direction of Buddhism - Scene photos from the Guangdong Buddhist outreach preaching tour.

Photo 21



Related instructions: Scene photos from participants in the South China Sea Buddhist Roundtable Conference.

Photo 22



Related instructions: YUMEN College of Guangdong Buddhist College engages in collective farming, advocating the concept of "both farming and Chan cultivation".

Photo 23

年代 事项及资料	1921 年	1923 年	1928 年 4 月	1931 年 12 月	1935 年 8 月	1936 年 12 月
寺庙总数 (户)	848	442	307	266	270	262
每万户拥 有的寺庙 数(户)	49.4		17.38	14.32	12.51	11.1
每万人拥 有的寺庙 数(户)			3.78	2.94	2.36	2.14
资料来源	《广州市公安局警察局区域户类区表》(1921年),广州市政厅编:《广州市市政概要》(1922年)	《广州市警察局区域寺庙分类表》(1923年),《广州市市政公报》第142号。	《广州市户口总表》(1928年4月),广州市档案馆,全宗号:第3卷,案卷号:2044。	《广东省公安厅统计股编:《民国二十年广东省会户口概况》,《警察杂志》第3卷,第10、11、12期合刊。	《广东省省会现住户口统计》(1935年8月调查)	《各分局辖内现住户口统计表》(1936年12月),梁洁之编:《广东省会警察局统计汇刊》,1937年出版。

Translation: Source of the referenced chart: Zhao Chunchen, Guo Huaqing, Wu Yuxi. Religion and Modern Guangdong Society [M]. Religious Culture Press, 2008. P. 32.

Photo 24



Translation: Source of the referenced chart: Zhao Chunchen, Guo Huaqing, Wu Yuxi. Religion and Modern Guangdong Society [M]. Religious Culture Press, 2008. P. 32.

Photo 25



Translation: Discussion with Buddhist Master B



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