SAVING THE CHINESE GHOSTS OVERSEAS: A STUDY OF YOGACARA ULKĀ-MUKHA RITUAL IN THAILAND

WENCHEN DU

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL BUDDHISM
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of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

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ABSTRACT

Chinese migration to Southeast Asia dates back to the 4th century and peaked in the late 19th century. Chinese immigrants brought various folk beliefs to their new homes, manifesting in colorful temples and diverse rituals within Chinese communities. In Thailand/Siam, where Theravada Buddhism has dominated since the 13th century, these religious imports have been integrated into Thai-Chinese cultural and artistic traditions. Despite extensive scholarly studies on Chinese folk beliefs in Southeast Asia, the specific rituals brought from China have received less attention, even though they remain popular among the Chinese in Thailand, particularly in Bangkok. This study focuses on the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, a sophisticated ritual inherited by various Chinese Buddhist schools, and its prevalence among the Chinese in Thailand, especially in Bangkok. Through three months of fieldwork in Bangkok's Chinatown, which involved assessing religious calendars of Chinese temples and interviewing ritual performers, sponsors, and attendees, it was found that the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual is annually organized by Jin Nikāya, a local Chinese sect of Thai Buddhism, and Chinese lay Buddhist societies. The ritual typically occurs around the 15th day of July, during the Ghost Festival, with collective sponsorship from the Chinese faithful. Wealthier Chinese families also occasionally sponsor the ritual at funerals. The average cost of the ritual is 50,000 Thai Baht (approximately 1,600 USD), covering material offerings, payments to monk performers, lay associates, and decorative expenses. Interestingly, the performers, mostly local monks from Jin Nikāya, do not speak Chinese and recite prayers based on Thai sound marks. This raises questions about the ritual's religious validity due to the lack of deep understanding of the Chinese verses and mantras. Despite this, the study argues that the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual remains a well-preserved cultural heritage within Thai-Chinese communities. Its persistence highlights the continued influence of Chinese ghosts and ritualistic salvation beliefs. The study explores Chinese Mahayana Buddhism's historical and doctrinal dimensions in Thailand, emphasizing the balance between religious practice and cultural adaptation within the Thai-Chinese Buddhist milieu.

Keywords: Chinese ghosts, Thailand, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, symbols, and performers

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Thailand, where 94% of the population adheres to Theravada Buddhism, is also home to the second-largest ethnic Chinese community in Southeast Asia, surpassed only by Indonesia.[1] This diverse demographic landscape is enriched by the contributions of Chinese migrants who have introduced a range of popular beliefs and sophisticated rituals from their native regions in China. These traditions, deeply rooted in their cultural heritage, have been integrated into Thai society, fostering communal bonds and offering spiritual blessings.

1.1 Research Background

Thailand, renowned for its rich cultural heritage and steadfast adherence to Theravada Buddhism, offers a captivating tapestry of religious diversity and spiritual traditions. Amidst the serene temples and monastic communities that grace this Southeast Asian landscape, there exists a lesser-known yet profoundly significant facet of Mahayana Buddhism – the presence of Chinese Buddhist societies emphasizing the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. These societies, founded by descendants of Chinese immigrants who arrived on Thai shores over a century ago, represent a distinctive thread within the country's intricate religious fabric. This thesis embarks on a compelling journey through time and tradition, seeking to unravel the enigma of these Chinese Buddhist societies in Thailand, delving deep into their historical evolution, multifaceted functions, and contemporary relevance within the unique socio-religious context of Thailand.

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[1] Phuwadol Songprasert. *Chin Phon Thale Samai Mai*. (*The Overseas Chinese Today*). Bangkok: Higher Press, 2004.

To comprehend the significance of Chinese Buddhist societies in Thailand, it is essential to trace their historical roots. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they witnessed an unprecedented influx of Chinese migrants into the Kingdom of Thailand.[2] Driven by a quest for religious blessings and a desire to foster communal bonds, these immigrants brought a treasure trove of deities, rituals, and spiritual practices from their diverse regions in China.[3] This migration wave, while profoundly altering the demographic landscape of Thailand, also played a pivotal role in disseminating Chinese folk religion and the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism across Southeast Asia. The religious and cultural fusion that emerged from this crossroads became the foundation upon which Chinese Buddhist societies would later flourish.

A significant milestone in these societies' evolution occurred with the establishment the Dragon-lotus Temple (Wat Mangkon Kamalawa) in Bangkok's Chinatown. It marked the first Mahayana temple in the city and set in motion the recognition of Chinese settler monks in Thailand.[4] This pivotal event consolidated the Chinese Sangha as one of the four Buddhist nikayas (or schools) in Thailand, known as the Jin Nikaya (Jin school, or Chinese Sect), "Jin" being the Thai term for "Chinese". Another Mahayana school, the Annam Nikaya, originated with Vietnamese settler monks in the 1790s and shared a diverse religious terrain. The turn of the twentieth century, marked by the Angyi Act against Chinese secret societies in 1898, witnessed the proliferation of various Chinese associations and guilds.[5] A remarkable trend emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in this evolving landscape. Chinese lay Buddhists from

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[2] Sng and Bisalputra, *A History of the Thai-Chinese*, 156-209.

[3] Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, 57.

[4] Liu, "Jin Nikaya," 27-28.

[5] Sng and Bisalputra, *A History of the Thai-Chinese*, 236—237.

different dialect groups began self-organizing into societies dedicated to doctrinal studies, ritual observance, and acts of merit, including charitable endeavors.[6]

In light of this intricate historical backdrop, our research problem unfolds. Within the complicated tapestry of Thai religious life, characterized predominantly by Theravada Buddhism, how have Chinese Buddhist communities evolved with an emphasis on the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual historically and adapted to the changing socio-religious landscape in Thailand? What role does the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual play in preserving Mahayana Buddhist traditions and fostering a sense of cultural and spiritual identity among Chinese descendants in Thailand?

While Thai Buddhism is deeply rooted in Theravada tradition, the presence of Mahayana practices, notably the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, provides a unique window into the coexistence and adaptation of diverse Buddhist traditions within Thailand's cultural milieu. This ritual, also known as the Yogacara Burning-Mouth Service (瑜伽焰口法会), serves as a portal to understand the interplay of faith, compassion, and ritualistic practices. Originating from the Mahayana school of Buddhism, it finds its roots in the *Dharani Sutra* for *Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts* (*Pretamukhāgnivālāyaśarakāra-dhāraṇī*; Chi: 佛说救拔焰口饿鬼陀罗尼经),[7] a sacred text recounting the encounter between Venerable Ananda and the terrifying Burning Mouth Hungry Ghost. This ghost, perpetually hungry and tormented by unfulfilled desires, symbolizes a central theme in Buddhist cosmology.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual responds to this suffering by offering food to the hungry ghosts, addressing their physical hunger and spiritual liberation. By reciting mantras, performing intricate rituals, and collectively focusing their intentions, practitioners aim to bridge the gap between the living and the hungry ghosts, providing

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[6] Liu, "Chinese Lay Buddhist Societies in Thailand," 78.

[7] CBETA 2023.Q3, X57, no. 961.

solace and a path to liberation. Importantly, this ritual has found a home within the broader landscape of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Thailand, further enriching the nation's religious diversity. The presence of Chinese lay Buddhist societies, particularly the Jin Nikaya, adds a layer of complexity to the Thai Buddhist milieu. Historically, Chinese migrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought their deities, rituals, and devotion to Mahayana Buddhism. The establishment of the Dragon-lotus Temple in Bangkok's Chinatown marked the inception of this school, culminating in the recognition of Chinese settler monks in Thailand.[8]

This study endeavors to unearth the multifaceted history of Chinese Buddhist societies in Thailand and the development, functions, and symbolism of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, offering a deeper understanding of its compassionate response to the suffering symbolized by the hungry ghosts – a haunting embodiment of unfulfilled desires in Buddhist cosmology. Moreover, this study sheds light on the intricate coexistence of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in Thailand, with a particular focus on the Jin Nikaya tradition. By delving into historical evolution, functional analysis, and symbolic interpretation, this thesis aims to illuminate the multifaceted tapestry of religious practices and cultural adaptations within the Thai-Chinese Buddhist milieu.

1.2 Research Problem

The extensive body of scholarly research focusing on Chinese folk beliefs in Thailand, as well as in other Southeast Asian countries, has significantly deepened our understanding of the intricate cultural and religious dynamics within the region. This academic exploration has illuminated how these beliefs intersect and interact with

[8] Liu, "A Study of Chinese Lay Buddhist Societies in Thailand: History and Current State," 76-77.

local practices, shaping a unique cultural landscape. However, despite this wealth of knowledge, there is still a considerable gap in comprehending the specific rituals that were brought from China and have been meticulously preserved and actively practiced among the Chinese community in Thailand. These rituals, steeped in rich symbolism and historical significance, offer a fascinating perspective into how diaspora communities sustain and adapt cultural traditions.

These Chinese rituals in Thailand serve as a living tapestry of history and tradition, bridging the past with the present. They represent a continuity of heritage, a tangible connection to the ancestral lands left behind. Each ritual, whether a festival, a religious ceremony, or a family tradition, is a vibrant thread in the cultural fabric of the Thai-Chinese community. They are not merely remnants of a bygone era but are dynamic practices, evolving and adapting to the contemporary Thai context while retaining their quintessentially Chinese essence.

Unfortunately, the underrepresentation of these rituals in academic discourse has led to insufficient scholarly attention. This oversight is not just a gap in the academic literature; it represents a missed opportunity to understand immigrant communities' complex cultural preservation, adaptation, and transformation processes. A more in-depth exploration of these rituals would reveal how they negotiate identity, heritage, and belonging in a multicultural context. It would also shed light on the subtle nuances of intercultural exchanges within such communities, often leading to unique syncretic practices.

Moreover, studying these rituals can provide insights into how diaspora communities maintain a sense of community and continuity in a foreign land. These practices often function as communal anchors, fostering a sense of solidarity and belonging among diaspora members. They are cultural expressions and serve as social mechanisms that help sustain the community's identity and cohesion in the face of external influences and the challenges of integration into a different cultural milieu.

Given all these premises, a detailed examination of these rituals and their role in the lives of the Thai-Chinese community would enormously enrich our understanding of the dynamics of cultural transmission and adaptation. It would contribute to cultural and religious studies and broader discussions on migration, identity, and the formation of diaspora communities. This area of study beckons scholars to delve deeper into the lived experiences and cultural expressions of the Thai-Chinese community, offering a more holistic and nuanced understanding of their unique place in the tapestry of Southeast Asian culture.

1.3 Research Objectives

This paper aims to unveil the intricate interplay of religious practices and cultural adaptations within Thailand, specifically focusing on the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual. To accomplish this, the research objectives are structured as follows:

1. To Trace the Historical Evolution and Integration of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha Ritual in Thailand. This objective aims to map out the historical trajectory of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual from its origins to its present-day form within the Chinese communities in Thailand. It examines historical documents, religious texts, and oral histories to understand the socio-political and cultural dynamics that facilitated its permeation and adaptation within Thailand's religious landscape.

2. To Examine the Practices and Variations of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual Among Chinese Communities in Thailand. This objective focuses on documenting and analyzing the contemporary practices of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual across Chinese communities in Thailand. It involves conducting ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and interviews, to gather detailed accounts of ritual practices. This objective seeks to uncover the diversity of ritual observances,

explore the underlying reasons for variations, and understand how these practices reflect and reinforce community identities, values, and beliefs.

3. To Assess the Cultural and Religious Significance of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha Ritual in Contemporary Thai-Chinese Society. This objective explores the multifaceted roles of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual in the religious lives of Thai-Chinese individuals and communities today.

This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual in Thailand by addressing these research objectives. It seeks to unravel the historical threads, decode the symbolism, and illuminate the living traditions that contribute to the rich religious tapestry of the nation. Moreover, it offers insights into the broader context of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and its coexistence with Theravada Buddhism in Thailand.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the ritual, this research seeks to answer the following key questions:

1) What historical, social, or political factors have influenced the integration and adaptation of the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual in the Theravada-dominated Thailand?

2) In what ways do the practices and observances of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual among the Chinese communities in Thailand?

3) What roles does the Yogacara Ulkā-mukha ritual play in the contemporary cultural and religious identities of Chinese communities in Thailand?

These research questions form the basis for an investigation and analysis conducted throughout the thesis, contributing to a deeper understanding of the

Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual and its cultural significance within Thailand's Chinese Mahayana Buddhist communities.

1.5 Source and Methods

This thesis employs a variety of sources and research methods, as outlined in Table 1:

	Research Method
Chapter II	Textual analysis, historical exploration
Chapter III	Interviews and textual analysis
Chapter IV	Fieldwork, participant observation, and interviews

Table 1: Research Methods

The research methods utilized in Chapter II include historical exploration, functional analysis, contextualization, and symbolic interpretation. These methods aim to provide insights into the ritual tradition of Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha in Chinese Buddhism, mainly focusing on textual tradition, liturgy tradition, functions, proceedings, and ritual symbols.

Moving on to Chapter III, the research methods utilized involve textual analysis and interviews. These methods are employed to gather detailed accounts of ritual practices among Chinese Mahayana Buddhists in Thailand. The research aims to uncover the historical spread of Chinese Buddhism into Thailand, the significance of the Jin Nikaya tradition, and the presence of Chinese lay Buddhist societies in Thailand.

In Chapter IV, the research delves into the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual of the Jin Nikaya tradition. Here, the research methods involved conducting comprehensive field research over three months in Bangkok's Chinatown, a vibrant hub

of the Chinese community in Thailand. It includes participant observation and interviews. The objective was to explore the settings, instruments, performers, occasions, and prices related to the ritual to understand the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual better as it is practiced among the Chinese in this locale.

A key aspect of this approach involved assessing the religious calendars of various Chinese temples in Chinatown. This assessment provided insights into the scheduling and frequency of the ritual, highlighting its significance within the community's religious observances. By analyzing these calendars, we identified specific periods of heightened ritual activity, which guided the timing of our field observations and interviews. In addition to calendar analysis, the fieldwork focused on engaging directly with the individuals most intimately involved in the ritual. This included interviews with performers responsible for the ritual's ceremonial aspects, sponsors who fund and organize these events, and attendees who participate and observe the ritual practices. These interviews were designed to gather qualitative data on their experiences, perceptions, and the ritual's impact on their religious and cultural identity.

The combination of temple calendar analysis and stakeholder interviews provided a rich and multifaceted perspective on the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual. This approach enabled us to gather quantitative data regarding the ritual's occurrence and qualitative insights into its personal and communal significance within the Thai-Chinese community.

These research methods are strategically chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual in Thailand, unravel historical threads, decode symbolism to illuminate the living traditions, and study the presence and influence of Chinese Mahayana Buddhists within the Thai cultural milieu. By employing a mix of historical analysis, fieldwork, and interviews, the research aims to offer nuanced insights into the multifaceted roles of the ritual in contemporary Thai-

Chinese society while shedding light on the integration and adaptation of Buddhist traditions within Thailand's religious landscape.

1.6 Research Scope

This research intricately investigates the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the realm of Chinese Buddhism, particularly its practice within the Jin Nikaya tradition. Furthermore, it delves into the broader context of Chinese Mahayana Buddhists in Thailand, shedding light on their historical spread, the establishment of Chinese lay Buddhist societies, and their diverse observations of various rituals. By focusing on the interplay between the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual and the Jin Nikāya (hereafter JN), his study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how this ritual has found its place and evolved within the predominantly Theravada Buddhist landscape of Thailand. This research illuminates the multifaceted tapestry of religious practices and cultural adaptations within the Thai-Chinese Buddhist milieu through historical exploration, functional analysis, contextualization, and symbolic interpretation.

1.7 Significance of the Research

This research holds profound significance in several dimensions. Firstly, it uncovers a relatively obscured facet of Mahayana Buddhism embodied in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within Thailand's predominantly Theravada Buddhist landscape. By exploring this ritual's historical development, functions, and symbolism, the research illuminates the compassionate response to the suffering symbolized by the "Burning Mouth Hungry Ghosts." This adds to our understanding of how religious practices address individuals' spiritual and existential needs, including the salvation of departed souls.

Furthermore, the research delves into the coexistence and adaptation of diverse Buddhist traditions within Thailand's cultural milieu. It underscores the dynamic interplay between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, enhancing our comprehension of religious pluralism and cross-cultural integration. Specifically, the focus on the Jin Nikaya tradition within Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and its intricate relationship with the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual provides a comprehensive perspective on the presence and influence of Chinese Mahayana Buddhists in Thailand.

The study's significance extends to deciphering the symbolic elements and spiritual significance of the Ritu, and the research offers insights into its role in addressing practitioners' spiritual needs and its broader place in the religious mosaic of Thailand. Ultimately, this study not only enriches academic understanding of Buddhism and cultural adaptation but also fosters a greater appreciation for the compassionate dimension of Buddhism.

1.8 Limitations of the Research

While this study delves into the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the context of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand, it focuses primarily on the Jin Nikaya tradition. Other variations or interpretations of the ritual within different Chinese Buddhist sects or communities may not be fully explored, limiting the generalizability of the findings to the broader spectrum of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Thailand.

The study relies on interviews, fieldwork, and textual analysis conducted within the Thai-Chinese community, which may encounter language barriers or cultural differences between the researcher and participants. These barriers could potentially hinder the accurate interpretation of rituals, symbols, or cultural practices, leading to limitations in the depth of understanding or representation of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual.

Furthermore, conducting the research over a limited time frame in Bangkok’s Chinatown may have implications for capturing the full spectrum of ritual practices, community dynamics, or historical developments related to Chinese Buddhist societies in Thailand. Changes or developments occurring before or after the research period may not be fully accounted for, potentially affecting the study's comprehensiveness.

Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, inherent biases or subjectivities, whether from the researcher or participants, may influence the interpretation of findings. Conscious efforts were made to mitigate biases, but it is essential to acknowledge the potential for subjective interpretations in qualitative research methodologies.

CHAPTER II
RITUAL TRADITION OF YOGACARA ULKĀ-MUKHA IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

One of the distinctive features of Mahayana Buddhism, also known as the Great Vehicle (Chinese: 大乘), is its strong emphasis on cultivating the compassion of bodhisattvas and working for the well-being of not just individuals but all sentient beings. A practice that exemplifies this compassionate approach is the act of offering food. The primary purpose behind offering food is to extend the teachings of the Dharma to those in need, providing them with sustenance and alleviating their suffering. By doing so, they can connect with the Dharma and potentially attain a more auspicious rebirth. In this study, the researcher explores one of the most renowned food offering ceremonies popular in Chinese Buddhism: the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual.

2.1 Textual Tradition

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, also known as the Yogacara Burning-Mouth service (Chinese: 瑜伽焰口法会), is a Dharma ritual that involves providing food to beings in the hungry ghost realm (Chinese: 饿鬼). Yogacara (Sanskrit: Yogācāra; Chinese: 瑜伽) is the name of a Buddhist school, and in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), it was interpreted by Master Deji (Chinese: 德基, 1634-1700) as "the forming of gestures (*mudra*), together with the chanting of dharanis and mantras, and the mind in contemplation. When the body, mouth, and mind are connected, it is the Yogacara." The term Burning-Mouth describes the appearance of hungry ghosts. According to the Venerable Tzu Chiang's *Faxiang*, ten negative behaviors lead beings to be reborn as hungry ghosts. These include minor acts of negative physical, verbal,

and mental karma, excessive desires, ill-intentioned desires, jealousy, holding wrong views, dying while still attached to the necessities of life, dying from hunger, and dying from thirst. Negative karma results in three ways that hungry ghosts cannot consume food: water turns into blood, which they cannot ingest; their narrow throats and burning mouths prevent swallowing; and anything they attempt to eat turns into charcoal. Only by relying on the Dharma (or breaking the cycle of suffering) can these beings be saved and leave this realm.[9]

The origin of this offering can be traced back to the *Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts* (Sanskrit: *Pretamukhāgnivālāyaśarakāra-dhāranī*; Chinese:佛说救拔焰口饿鬼陀罗尼经). According to this sutra, there is a significant tale involving Ananda, who, aside from being one of the Buddha's ten great disciples, also happened to be his cousin. Ananda, while meditating in the forest one day, had an unexpected encounter with a grotesque and horrifying hungry ghost known as the "Burning Mouth" or "Flaming Mouth" (Chinese: 焰口). The ghost's appearance was as unsettling as it was ghastly – his countenance was haggard, hair disheveled, neck as thin as a needle, belly distended like a mountain, and his mouth perpetually engulfed in flames. Understandably, this sight sent shivers down Ananda's spine, leaving him utterly shocked and bewildered.

Flaming Mouth approached Ananda and delivered an ominous prophecy: "*You shall meet your demise in three days, and your next destination will be the realm of hungry ghosts. This is a karmic consequence of your past life's afflictions of miserliness and insatiable greed*." Ananda, now filled with astonishment and dread, found himself at a loss, now knowing how to avert this dire fate. Consequently, he hurriedly sought the Buddha's guidance. In response to Ananda's plea, the Buddha

[9] Chuang, Tzu, and Robert, Smitheram, 2012, *Faxiang: A Buddhist Practitioner's Encyclopedia*.

imparted a powerful mantra known as the Food Conversion Mantra. He instructed Ananda to recite this Dharani seven times. Each recitation miraculously transformed ordinary food into abundant nectar, enough to fill the entire expanse of dharma realms. As a result, countless hungry ghosts, as numerous as the sands in the sacred Ganges River, were instantly nourished and liberated from their torment.[10]

In Chinese Buddhism, the Yogacara Burning-Mouth service represents a sacred ritual centered on offering sustenance to all beings dwelling in the realm of hungry ghosts. This rite is rooted in profound Buddhist traditions and encompasses a rich tapestry of sacred mantras. This practice draws its spiritual sustenance from two primary sources: the *Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts* and the Amrosia Sutra (Chinese: 甘露经). The latter was meticulously translated into Chinese by Master Śkisānanda (Shicha nantuo 实叉难陀) during the Tang dynasty. Nonetheless, the evolution of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, like any profound spiritual practice, was influenced by myriad factors. Among these, the turbulence of society and the burgeoning of diverse Buddhist schools played pivotal roles. As a result, the codification of more standardized procedures for this ritual primarily occurred during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). This period witnessed the emergence of detailed commentaries provided by various influential branches of Buddhism, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2 Literature on Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, also known as the Yogacara Burning-Mouth service, is deeply rooted in the Mahayana tradition. This ceremony specifically targets beings in the hungry ghost realm, believed to endure great suffering. Their

[10] CBETA 2023.Q3, X57, no. 961.

existence is marked by insatiable hunger and thirst, making them unable to sustain or find relief. The key objective of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is to aid these beings in transcending their suffering, a compassionate act grounded in the core teachings of Mahayana Buddhism.

The literature sources for the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual in this study are primarily divided into two main categories: original canonical texts and contemporary research findings. Canonical texts related to this ritual including a compilation of relevant scriptures from the Tang, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties: 1. Zhu Hong (袾宏): *Ritual for Setting Up the Yogacara Food Offering Altar* (Chinese: 修设瑜伽集要施食坛仪). It was compiled and annotated by Master Zhu Hong (1535-1615) during the Ming dynasty. It was recorded based on the practices during that time, reflecting how the service was sometimes held as a lively event, similar to a competitive performance, lacking clarity in terms of the Buddhist insights, the recitation of mantras, and the types of mudras. Zhu Hong provided annotations based on relevant Buddhist doctrines to address these issues. This ritual is found in the Taishō Canon.[11] 2. Ji Xian (寂暹): *Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual Annotated Compilation* (Chinese: 瑜伽焰口注集纂要仪轨). This ritual was compiled by Master Ji Xian in July of the fourteenth year of the Kangxi era (1675) and is cataloged as No. 1084 in the Taishō Canon.[12] It consists of two volumes and addresses the procedure variations in various practices. 3. Fa Zang (法藏): *Ritual for Practicing the Yogacara Food Offering Alta* (Chinese: 修习瑜伽集要施食坛仪). This version, reprinted during the Qing dynasty in the twenty-second

[11] CBETA, X59, no.1081.

[12] CBETA, X59, no. 1084.

year of the Kangxi era (1683), provides crucial information about the content and procedures of the Burning-Mouth service.[13]

As for contemporary research, forty-eight papers on the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual have been published from 2010 to 2020. The scope of research has expanded over the years, focusing on areas such as ritual music, the origin and doctrinal content of the rituals, and the practice sequences of Mahayana Bodhisattvas.[14] Shengshen Chen's research covers many topics related to the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, including historical versions, development, and doctrinal content. Furthermore, he conducts field interviews and investigations, providing an in-depth understanding of the proceedings of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. Qi'an Di's research primarily focuses on the origin, mantra recitation styles, sound elements in the ritual, and comparative analysis of ritual music in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. His work contributes to our understanding of the Burning Mouth service's musical nature and cultural background. At the same time, the *Life - Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual* published by Dharma Drum emphasizes the significance of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha in contemporary society and discusses how the values of this ritual can be applied to daily life and spiritual practices.

In conclusion, in the academic exploration of Buddhist rituals and practices, scholars have delved into the rich tapestry of Mahayana Buddhism and the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual traditions. They have offered valuable insights into these practices' historical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions, shedding light on their development and contemporary relevance. These studies not only help us gain a more profound understanding of this ritual's origin, evolvement, and contemporary influence but also

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[13] CBETA, X59, no.1083.

[14] Chen Jiahui, *A Study on the Ritual Practice of Yogacara Ulkā-mukha: A Case Study of Fo Guang Shan Monastery*, 8.

reflect the ongoing scholarly interest and in-depth research on the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual.

2.3 Liturgy Tradition

Buddhist liturgy is a fundamental and structured form of veneration and worship practiced within Buddhist communities across various denominations and sects. This ritual holds immense significance in Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana traditions. It is often conducted daily, although the specific practices and frequency can vary among these sects. The essence of Buddhist liturgy typically involves chanting or reciting sutras or passages from these sacred texts, repeating mantras, and the recital of Gathas or verses. The practitioner may choose to perform these rituals at a Buddhist temple or in the sacred space of their own home. The liturgy is almost invariably conducted in the presence of objects of veneration, which may include images or representations of the Buddha, and a variety of offerings such as light, incense, water, and food accompany it.

In the grand tapestry of Buddhist liturgical practices, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual stands out as a unique thread deeply rooted in the Mahayana tradition. This ritual is a profound expression of compassion and a solemn commitment to alleviating the suffering of beings in the hungry ghost realm. The liturgy tradition of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a spiritual journey that weaves together ancient texts, profound symbolism, and intricate practices, reflecting the core principles of Mahayana Buddhism.

We must first delve into its historical and textual origins to appreciate the depth of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual's liturgy tradition. This sacred practice finds its roots in two primary sources: the Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts and the Amrosia Sutra. The former sutra narrates the tale of Ananda,

one of the Buddha's ten great disciples, who had a profound encounter with a ghastly hungry ghost known as the "Burning Mouth." This encounter revealed the immense suffering of hungry ghosts. It led to the revelation of the Food Conversion Mantra, a powerful tool for transmuting ordinary food into nourishment for these beings. This mantra is at the heart of the ritual, symbolizing the transformative potential of Buddhist practice. It feeds the hungry ghosts and serves as a conduit for profound teachings. The historical context and the development of various Buddhist schools influenced the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual's evolution. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), comprehensive procedures for this ritual began to take shape. Influential masters like Tianji and Zhuhong made significant contributions, documenting and refining the practice. Their efforts culminated in creating foundational texts that continue to guide practitioners today.

As Buddhism developed and different schools emerged, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual experienced variations and refinements. The liturgy tradition was enriched by influential Buddhist masters who sought to align the ritual more closely with the teachings of their respective schools. For example, during the early Qing dynasty, Master Deji played a pivotal role in refining the concept of "Yoga" within the ritual. His teachings emphasized the harmonious convergence of body, speech, and mind, drawing from the core pillars of Buddhism: precepts, concentration, and wisdom. These teachings led to the creation of the Huashan Burning Mouth service, a version that streamlined specific sections of the ritual while staying true to its compassionate essence. The Ming and Qing dynasties saw the emergence of comprehensive commentaries and texts that provided detailed instructions for practitioners. The Tianji and Huashan versions, imbued with centuries of wisdom and reverence, serve as primary sources, offering guidance to contemporary practitioners.

The liturgy tradition of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual encompasses several core practices. These practices guide participants through a spiritual journey of

compassion and liberation. The key components include: 1. Purification of the altar (is 净) begins with purifying the ceremonial space, ensuring a sanctified environment where the Dharma can effectively flow. 2. Invoking the Triple Gem (奉请三宝) – Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – as the foundation of guidance and wisdom. 3. Opening the gates to hell (破地狱), including the eighteen hells, is pivotal in connecting with beings in these realms. 4. Summoning (召请): the ritual then summons hungry ghosts and spirits after obtaining permission from Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and the Ten Kings of hell. 5. The opening of their throat (开咽喉) facilitates their ability to partake in the offerings. 6. Encouraging the Bodhi mind (发菩提心): an integral aspect is encouraging the Bodhi mind, nurturing a mindset dedicated to awakening and compassion. 7. Completion and sending off (圆满奉送): the ritual concludes with a phase of completion and sending off, reminding participants to seek refuge in the Triple Gem (皈依三宝) and dedication of merits (回向) to all sentient beings, emphasizing compassion and universal well-being.

Throughout the liturgy tradition, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is replete with profound symbolism and sacred elements. Symbolically, food, incense, and light offerings represent nourishment, purification, and illumination, respectively. The mantras and dharanis recited during the ritual serve as powerful tools for transformation and liberation. The Mudras, hand gestures, and visualizations employed by the presiding master and participants are physical expressions of devotion and focus. The core significance of the ritual lies in its capacity to alleviate the suffering of beings in the hungry ghost realm. These beings are tormented by hunger and afflictions, and they are unable to consume ordinary food due to karmic consequences. At the heart of the

ritual, the Food Conversion Mantra symbolizes the transformation of suffering into nourishment, offering hope and liberation to countless beings.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha liturgy tradition is a profound testament to the compassionate spirit of Buddhism. It bridges the realms of compassion and liberation, offering nourishment and spiritual solace to those in need. The ritual serves as a poignant reminder of the Buddhist principle of alleviating suffering and nurturing the Bodhi mind, a commitment to awakening and universal well-being. In conclusion, the liturgy tradition of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a sacred journey through time and spirituality. It is a harmonious convergence of history, texts, practices, and profound compassion. This ritual remains a testament to the enduring legacy of Buddhist rituals that offer solace and liberation to beings in the realm of hungry ghosts and all beings in need.

2.4. Functions of Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a profound, meaningful practice within Buddhism, with its roots deep in Buddhist principles and teachings. This ritual serves several essential functions, each with significant spiritual and moral implications. In this comprehensive study, we will explore the rich tapestry of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, delving into its functions, significance, and profound impact on practitioners and the greater spiritual community.

At the core of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is the profound Buddhist principle of compassion, also known as “Karuna.” With its origin in Buddhism, this ritual places compassion at the forefront of its purpose and functions. Buddhism teaches the importance of alleviating suffering, particularly the profound suffering experienced by sentient beings in different realms of existence. The ritual primarily targets the realm of hungry ghosts, where beings endure insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst. To

alleviate the suffering of beings is one of the primary and most significant functions of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. The realm of hungry ghosts, or “Pretas,” is characterized by intense physical and psychological suffering. Beings in this realm cannot satisfy their hunger or thirst, leading to excruciating torment. This ritual aims to mitigate this suffering by providing offerings and heartfelt prayers. By doing so, it embodies the fundamental Buddhist principle of compassion, which encourages all sentient beings to work toward the welfare and happiness of others, transcending self-centered interests.

In Buddhist belief, negative karma can lead to unfavorable rebirths in lower realms, including the realm of hungry ghosts. The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual serves as an opportunity for redemption and liberation, allowing beings who may have accumulated negative karma throughout their existence to find a path to liberation and more auspicious rebirths. In some interpretations, this ritual represents a way to break free from the cycle of samsara (or rebirth), ultimately achieving liberation. The aim is to alleviate suffering and provide an avenue for spiritual growth and liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

As mentioned above, compassion and altruism are the cornerstones of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. The practice emphasizes the mechanical aspects of the ritual and the deep emotional and spiritual connection it fosters. Practitioners are encouraged to generate genuine compassion as they engage in the ritual, transcending their needs and desires to empathize with those suffering. This process is a spiritual exercise that nurtures the altruistic aspect of the human heart, leading individuals to act selflessly for the benefit of others. The ritual underscores the universal Buddhist principle of interconnectedness, where the suffering of one is the suffering of all. This shared suffering obliges all sentient beings to work towards its alleviation, following the path of compassion and altruism. Through this ritual, participants acknowledge their

shared humanity and recognize the importance of selflessness in the journey toward enlightenment and liberation.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual also emphasizes the concept of merit, a fundamental aspect of Chinese Buddhist belief. Merit represents the accumulation of good karma through virtuous acts, including generosity, compassion, and selflessness. By engaging in the ritual, participants can accumulate merit, a form of spiritual currency. This merit can lead to blessings and positive outcomes, including improved life circumstances, inner peace, and spiritual growth. Moreover, participants can dedicate the merit they accumulate to the well-being and liberation of other sentient beings, exemplifying the interconnected nature of compassion and spiritual development.

In addition, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a profound means of connecting with the divine. The practice involves reciting mantras, making offerings, and invoking the blessings and guidance of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other enlightened beings. This connection with the divine is not merely an act of prayer but a profound acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of all life. It signifies the reliance on spiritual guidance and support in navigating the cycle of samsara and karma. Participants express their deep reverence for the spiritual guidance vital in their journey toward enlightenment and liberation by seeking divine assistance.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual encourages participants to practice the six paramitas, fundamental virtues in Mahayana Buddhism. These virtues include: 1. Dana (generosity): the ritual fosters generosity by encouraging participants to make offerings to relieve suffering and alleviate the plight of others selflessly. 2. Sila (ethical conduct): maintaining moral and ethical principles is central to the ritual's guidelines and practices. 3. Ksanti (patience): patience is cultivated during the ritual's often lengthy and intricate proceedings. 4. Virya (effort): diligent effort is required to devote oneself to alleviating suffering through the ritual. 5. Dhyana (concentration): concentration is developed as participants make offerings, recite mantras, and engage in various rituals.

6. Prajna (wisdom): practitioners deepen their understanding of the nature of suffering and the interconnectedness of all life, cultivating wisdom in the process. The ritual thus acts as a comprehensive practice encompassing these six paramitas, making it a holistic endeavor that allows participants to embody the core teachings of Mahayana Buddhism. It provides a tangible opportunity to live out these virtues and develop spiritually through compassionate action.

In sum, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual represents an enduring practice that resonates with Buddhist teachings and cultural traditions. A deeper understanding of the ritual reveals its multifaceted nature. It is not merely a set of actions or words but a profound expression of Buddhist compassion and wisdom. Through this ritual, practitioners seek to alleviate the suffering of hungry ghosts and fulfill the core teachings of Mahayana Buddhism. The practice exemplifies the interconnectedness of all beings, the importance of compassion and altruism, and the pursuit of merit and wisdom. The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a testament to the power of compassionate action and the profound depth of Buddhist practice. It is a reminder that, in the face of suffering and the cyclical nature of existence, acts of compassion and selflessness can be a source of solace and transformation for all sentient beings, transcending the boundaries of time and culture.

2.5 Proceedings

The proceedings of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual encompass a rich tapestry of meticulously designed stages, each holding profound spiritual significance and playing a unique role in the compassionate act of offering sustenance and salvation to beings in the hungry ghost realm. This complex and transformative ceremony has evolved throughout history, with contributions from various Buddhist practitioners during different dynasties, including the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods.

Traditionally, the time chosen for performing the "Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha food offering" ritual is from 7 PM to 11 PM, as it is believed that beyond this time, spirits and ghosts cannot partake of the offerings. This ritual primarily serves the purpose of providing food to beings in the hungry ghost realm, a central theme in Buddhist cosmology. Simultaneously, it is a profound Buddhist ceremony for dedicating merit to the deceased and blessing the living.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual unfolds through a sequence of intricately designed steps, with the overarching objective of delivering teachings to the deceased and encouraging them to take refuge in the Triple Gem, practice Buddhist teachings, and liberate themselves from the suffering of the hungry ghost realm, eventually reaching the Pure Land. The proceedings of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual can be categorized into the following steps:

Purification of the Altar (洒净): The initiation of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual necessitates the purification of the ritual space, which is often conducted in a specially designated area. The purification serves to cleanse the environment of negative energies and establish a sacred space conducive to transmitting the Dharma. This phase can also demarcate boundaries, ensuring only invited participants can access this consecrated area. Creating this pure space is fundamental to the ritual's success, providing a spiritually charged environment for all subsequent activities.

Invoking the Triple Gem (奉请三宝): The ceremony commences with the invocatory stage of the "Triple Gem," consisting of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. These three aspects form the cornerstone of Buddhist practice. The Buddha represents the guiding light, the Dharma is the vehicle for disseminating core teachings, and the Sangha embodies the living spiritual community. Invoking the Triple Gem is a fundamental step in aligning the ritual with the core principles of Buddhism, seeking guidance from these sacred sources.

Opening the Gates to Hell (破地狱): In Buddhism, the concept of suffering extends to eighteen hells, each characterized by its unique forms of torment. The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual takes the audacious step of opening the gates to these realms of suffering. Traditionally, this act is the prerogative of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as only they possess the spiritual authority to approach these boundaries. By opening these gates, the ritual establishes a connection between the human realm and the realms of suffering, allowing communication and aid to flow between them.

Summoning (召请): A pivotal phase in the ritual involves summoning hungry ghosts and various spirits. However, this is no simple matter, as permission is first sought from Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and the Ten Kings of hell. These guardians of the afterlife play a critical role in authorizing the connection between the realms. Upon receiving their consent, the ritual can proceed to welcome these beings to the sacred altar.

Opening the Throat (开咽喉): For hungry ghosts to partake in the offerings, it is essential to facilitate the ingestion of food. Without this step, they could not consume the nourishment provided during the ritual. This symbolic action represents removing the obstacles that prevent these beings from receiving spiritual sustenance, allowing them to take in the offerings.

Encouraging the Bodhi Mind (发菩提心): The core objective of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual is addressed in this phase. After the material is offered, the Venerables guide the hungry ghosts to cultivate their Bodhi mind. The Bodhi mind is a mindset dedicated to awakening and compassion, the very essence of liberation from the cycle of suffering. Through this teaching, the ritual aspires to lead the suffering beings toward their own spiritual awakening and eventual release from their torment.

Completion and Sending Off (圆满奉送): This phase signals the culmination of the ritual. It is a moment of transition, prompting all participants, including the invited spirits, to return to their respective realms. The sending-off part of the ceremony emphasizes that this interaction between the living and the deceased is temporary, and all beings must return to their designated paths.

Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem (皈依三宝): Amidst the proceedings, there is a reminder to seek refuge in the Triple Gem—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This reaffirmed the spiritual path to enlightenment that all beings must follow. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is a guiding principle in Buddhism, symbolizing the source of guidance and protection in the profound ocean of existence.

Dedication of Merits (回向): In Buddhism, practitioners accumulate merit through spiritual practice. However, this merit is not considered personal property but is to be dedicated to the welfare and liberation of all sentient beings. During this part of the ritual, participants extend the merit they have accumulated to all beings, emphasizing the universal aspect of compassion and spiritual well-being. The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual recognizes that liberation and salvation should not be limited to a select few but extended to all in need.

Throughout the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, the officiating master engages in a range of practices, including chanting, recitation, singing, visualization, and the performance of mudras. This multi-dimensional approach facilitates various stages of the ritual, aligning the body, speech, and mind with the ceremony's profound teachings and compassionate purpose. The ultimate goal is to bring relief and spiritual liberation to beings in the hungry ghost realm and offer guidance to both the living and the deceased on their path to enlightenment and liberation.

2.6 Symbols

Chinese rituals are a fascinating subject of study, marked by rich symbolic elements and a strong performative nature. This chapter explores the relationship between Chinese ritual practices, symbolism, and performance. It considers the late 19th-century Symbolism movement in art and the use of Buddhist symbolism to represent the values of the Buddhist faith, providing a broader context for understanding the symbolism and performative aspects of Chinese rituals.

The intertwined relationship between Chinese rituals and the performing arts, with a focus on symbolism, has been a subject of great interest in scholarship. Joshua Capitanio and numerous scholars have highlighted symbolism's central role in these rituals, serving as a conduit for the complex tapestry of ancient Chinese traditions. Capitanio suggests that the term “Ru” may have initially meant “Dance Master,” highlighting the significance of dance in ritual performances. Furthermore, the term “Wu,” signifying “Dance,” was associated with ritual specialists, indicating an intimate connection between dance and religious symbolism. This analysis emphasizes the cultural and symbolic richness of the performing arts in Chinese rituals.

Scholars have delved into the importance of music and dance within Chinese rituals. These artistic elements were not mere analogies for rituals but integral components of the ceremonies. The Confucian and Buddhist traditions, as explored by Capitanio, both emphasize the use of music in expressing emotional sentiments and regulating those expressions to shape moral attitudes and compassion for saving all beings. This use of music as a symbol for emotional expression resonates with the Symbolist movement’s use of metaphorical images to convey deeper meanings. It underscores the profound symbolism and significance of music and dance in the context of Chinese rituals.

The performative nature of Chinese rituals is a recurrent theme in scholarship, aligning with the performative aspects of the Symbolism movement.

Capitanio's work parallels Stanley Tambiah's concept of ritual as performative. Chinese rituals, like Symbolist art, are believed to have real effects. They communicate self-referential and canonical messages, where self-referential messages express the participants' attitudes, and canonical messages encode the authority of tradition and history, much like Symbolist works communicate deeper, often abstract, truths through metaphorical images and language. This performative aspect is central to the efficacy of Chinese rituals and mirrors the performative nature of symbolism in the arts.

Incorporating Buddhist symbolism in Chinese rituals adds another layer of meaning to the study. Early Buddhist symbols, such as the Dharma wheel and the Bodhi tree, are integrated into these rituals to represent key values of the Buddhist faith. Research has shown that the aesthetic perception of Buddhist gesture symbols positively influences perceived happiness and life satisfaction. This incorporation of Buddhist symbolism further highlights the performative and symbolic nature of Chinese rituals, as they serve as a conduit for conveying the values and teachings of Buddhism through symbolic representations, much like the symbolists aimed to describe deeper truths symbolically in their art.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, rooted in the compassionate principles of Mahayana Buddhism, is a profound symbolic and spiritually meaningful ceremony designed to alleviate the suffering of beings in the hungry ghost realm. The ritual's intricate tapestry of elements is rich with profound symbolic significance. Each of these elements weaves a narrative that resonates with the ultimate purpose of the ritual – to provide teachings, relief, and blessings to those in need.

Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts: One of the most significant symbols in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual is the sacred text known as the *Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts*. While not a physical symbol, this sutra serves as the foundational source of the ritual. It is a spiritual guide that symbolizes the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha. The text contains

teachings and practices specifically intended to alleviate the suffering of beings in the hungry ghost realm. It serves as a reminder of the Buddha's benevolence and teaching's power to relieve those in need. This sacred text is a symbol of hope and salvation.

The Mandala (曼荼罗): the mandala plays a pivotal role in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual. The term "Mandala" translates to "Altar," "Gathering," or "Assembly." In the context of Indian esoteric practices, it refers to creating circular or square areas to prevent intrusion by malevolent forces. Therefore, a round or square area is generally called a mandala. Within this space, Buddhists believe the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas abounds. In the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, the mandala used is a silver-colored round basin inscribed with the Buddhist cosmic world of Mount Sumeru and the four continents of the four directions. During the ceremony, rice is placed on each mountain, symbolizing the rise of the palaces and various treasures to offer to the Triple Gem. This offering is prayed to be accepted by the Buddha, granting the donors the fortune they wish for and freeing all solitary ghosts from suffering.

Vajra Crown (毗卢帽): The Vajra crown is an exquisite piece of regalia worn by the chief monk during the ritual. It is composed of five segments, forming a lotus petal-shaped crown. Each petal bears an image of a Buddha, collectively representing the Five Direction Buddhas. The Vajra crown symbolizes enlightenment and signifies the presence of the Buddhas during the ritual. It stands as an emblem of divine wisdom and spiritual authority.

Vajra (金刚杵): The vajra, a sacred symbol of tantric Buddhism, holds profound meaning. It signifies the unshakable and indestructible nature of enlightenment. In the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, the vajra creates protective boundaries, guarding against negativity and symbolizing the power to overcome afflictions. It is a tangible representation of the indomitable spirit of enlightenment and the strength of the practitioner's resolve.

Rice: while seemingly humble, rice is a fundamental element in the ritual. It serves as the central offering, capable of transforming into sacred food through reciting mantras. Beyond its physical presence, it symbolizes the seeds of enlightenment, expressing the potential to generate an abundance of offerings and merit.

Mantras are sacred sounds or phrases used in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual for various purposes. These powerful vocalizations include the *Great Compassion Dharani* and *Six Offering Mantras*. The latter is recited when presenting incense, flowers, lamps, fragrant water, fruit, and music to the Five Buddhas. These mantras, both in their recitation and meaning, are believed to possess transformative and liberating power. They resonate with the core intent of the ritual – to offer teachings, relief, and blessings to hungry ghosts and all beings.

Hand Mudras (手印): mudras, or symbolic hand gestures, are significant in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual. They are specific and meaningful gestures performed by the presiding Vajra master. For instance, the mudra for summoning spirits signifies the invitation and gathering of hungry ghosts. Another mudra, accompanied by a mantra, is employed to purify the Vajra Guru's body, mind, and mandala. There is another "Ten Paramitas Mudra," representing the ten methods to guide beings to the shore of liberation from suffering, and the Avalokitesvara Dhyana Mudra, which helps eliminate disasters. Each mudra bridges the physical and the spiritual, embodying the idea that the body, speech, and mind are in unison during the practice.

Cundi Mantra and Cundi Mudra: The Cundi mantra, an essential component of the ritual, has the power to eradicate all severe offenses, accomplish virtuous deeds, and bestow swift enlightenment upon those who maintain pure precepts. Reciting the Cundi mantra or dharani can bring forth the Buddha's light and eliminate sins and disasters. When laypeople recite this mantra, they gain longevity, enhance their blessings and wisdom, and are protected by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In the Yogacara

Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, this mantra is recited to purify the offenses of the host monks and participants, allowing the ritual to proceed smoothly and conclude successfully.

Candles and Incense: Using candles and incense in the ritual is laden with symbolic meaning. Lit candles symbolize the illumination of wisdom and the purification of the environment during the ceremony. The light dispels darkness and represents the clarity of understanding and insight. With its fragrant smoke, incense purifies the ritual space and creates an atmosphere conducive to spiritual practice. The combined presence of candles and incense is a sensory reminder of the spiritual purpose of the ritual and the eradication of darkness and ignorance.

In the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual, each element intertwines with spiritual significance, collectively weaving a tapestry of meaning beyond the physical ceremony. These symbols convey a message of compassion, hope, enlightenment, and the alleviation of suffering, ultimately serving as a spiritual beacon for both participants and recipients alike.

2.7 Summary

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha Ritual is a profound and spiritually significant ceremony deeply rooted in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. It carries a rich textual tradition, primarily drawing inspiration from the Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts. It is a sacred text emphasizing compassion and relief for beings in the hungry ghost realm. The liturgy tradition is a comprehensive spiritual journey, skilfully weaving ancient texts, profound symbolism, and intricate practices to deliver teachings and salvation to those in need. The ritual serves multiple vital functions, including alleviating suffering for beings in the hungry ghost realm, redemption from negative karma, fostering compassion and altruism, merit accumulation, connecting with the divine, and practicing the six paramitas. The proceedings of the ritual follow a

meticulously designed sequence that encompasses purifying the ritual space, invoking the Triple Gem, opening the gates to the hells, summoning hungry ghosts, opening their throats, encouraging the Bodhi mind, and concluding with taking refuge in the Triple Gem and dedicating merits. The ritual is rich in symbolism, featuring elements like sacred texts, mandalas, the Vajra Crown, vajras, rice, mantras, hand mudras, and candles and incense, each conveying deep meaning related to compassion, hope, enlightenment, and the alleviation of suffering, serving as a spiritual beacon for participants and recipients alike.

CHAPTER III
CHINESE MAHAYANA BUDDHISTS IN THAILAND

Buddhism has profoundly shaped Southeast Asia's religious and cultural landscape, and Thailand, with its Theravada Buddhist tradition, is no exception. However, beyond the indigenous Theravada Buddhism that has deep historical roots in the region, there is another facet to Thailand's Buddhist tapestry: the influence of Chinese Buddhism. This influence, particularly pronounced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflects a fascinating chapter in Southeast Asia's history of religion and migration.

3.1 Literature on Chinese Buddhist Ritual

Buddhism in China has significantly transformed the religious landscape, ushering in diverse practices and rituals. This transformation encompasses individual and communal activities that profoundly affect spiritual goals. Family units form the foundation of religious practice, while monasteries serve as hubs for communities of practice and host large-scale rituals. A rich tapestry of practices prevails, including meditation, oral recitation, ritual performances like confession and vow-making, and merit-making activities. Meditation, a central element, encompasses diverse techniques such as breath-following and mental visualization, often interwoven with liturgical sequences comprising confession, vows, and merit dedication. The ultimate objectives of these practices range from personal spiritual development to the transference of merit, benefitting others, particularly the deceased. These foundational components of Buddhist practice are rooted deeply in the tradition's history in China. They evolve and adapt to changing objects of devotion, with the four major bodhisattvas, including

Mañjuśrī (Wenshu 文殊), Samantabhadra (Puxian 普贤), Ksitigarbha (Dizang 地藏), and Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 观音), emerging as central objects of veneration.

The practices and rituals of Chinese Buddhism have been subject to extensive scholarly investigation and analysis, contributing to a nuanced understanding of their historical development and contemporary significance. Scholars of Chinese Buddhism have approached these practices and rituals from various angles, shedding light on their religious and cultural significance. Chinese Buddhism teems with various rituals and practices emphasizing the generation of karmic merit, promising positive outcomes in this life or the nest. As highlighted by Mario Poceski, these expressions of piety find channels through popular modes of worship and ritual observance.[15] Worship services encompass a variety of practices, such as offering to altars, ceremonial bowing, and extensive liturgies. One of contemporary Chinese Buddhism's most widely performed rituals is the Great Compassion of Repentance associated with Guanyin. Ethical precepts, including the classic five precepts and the "Bodhisattva precepts," are central to Buddhist practice, often taken up in ceremonies that also entail taking refuge in the Triple Gems (三宝). Acts of charity and social service play a pivotal role in Chinese Buddhist ethics. Meditation practices occupy a central role, with the changing of the Buddha's name and seated meditation forming the core of Pure Land Buddhism and the Chan tradition, respectively. These practices are often performed in group settings and during intensive retreats, which may span several days and encompass activities like chanting sutras, observing the eight precepts, silent meditation, and Dharma lectures.

Textual practices, including printing, copying, propagating, reciting scriptures, studying Buddhist texts, and attending lectures, are prevalent among monks

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[15] Poceski, Mario, Chinese Buddhism, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, 197-218.

and laypersons. Buddhist temples have elements associated with sacred texts, such as lecture halls, libraries, and scripture platforms. Rituals related to death hold a special place in Chinese Buddhism, as they guide individuals toward a favorable rebirth in the pure land of a Buddha, particularly Amitabha. These rituals ensure the dying person's focus remains undistracted, allowing them to concentrate on Amitabha Buddha by repeating its name. Examining Buddhist texts and scriptures has been central to understanding the textual practices within Chinese Buddhism. The research by individuals like Stephen Teiser and Robert Buswell has explored the transmission, interpretation, and significance of Buddhist texts within Chinese Buddhism, emphasizing the role of textual practices in shaping religious identities.[16]

Studies of Buddhist pilgrimage, a significant aspect of Chinese Buddhist practice, have been conducted by scholars such as Susan Naquin; these investigations have focused on the motivations behind pilgrimages, the impact of pilgrimage on religious communities, and the interaction between pilgrimage and broader cultural practices.[17]

Another critical area of scholarship has focused on the historical evolution of Buddhist practices in China. Researchers have explored how these practices underwent adaptation and innovation within the Chinese context. The interaction between Buddhism and indigenous Chinese religious traditions and the integration of Buddhist practices into Chinese society have been examined in depth. Studies by scholars like Erik Zürcher and John Kieschnick have offered insights into these historical processes.[18] [19]

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[16] Teiser, Stephen, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*.

[17] Susan Naquin, and Chun-fang Yu, eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*.

[18] Zürcher, Eric, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*.

[19] Kieschnick, John, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*.

3.2 The Spread of Chinese Buddhism into Thailand

In the 19th century, Chinese immigrants began arriving in the ports of Southeast Asia in search of improved trade opportunities and employment. They came from diverse backgrounds, representing various Chinese sub-ethnicities and bringing a mélange of religious beliefs and practices. Among these beliefs were elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, forming the spiritual foundation for the Chinese diaspora communities in their new host countries.

These immigrants were drawn to Southeast Asia by the promise of economic advancement. The region's growing trade networks, including the well-known ports in Ayutthaya, presented opportunities for commerce and prosperity. As the Chinese diaspora communities took root in their new homes, they felt the need for spiritual blessings and the establishment of venues for community gatherings, which led to the creation of temples and shrines dedicated to various deities, including Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Confucius, Daoist figures, and local spirits.

While the exact date of the earliest arrival of Chinese Buddhist monks in Thailand remains uncertain, historical records indicate that Chinese immigrants were actively engaged in religious practices in the 18th century. For example, a Guanyin shrine in Ayutthaya, a historical city of great importance, traced its founding back to a Hokkien Chinese group active in the 1750s. This shrine served as an early religious anchor for the burgeoning Chinese community in Thailand.

The pivotal point in the spread of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand was marked by the leadership of the monk Xuxing, regarded as the founding patriarch of the Jin Nikaya tradition. Xuxing's journey to Thailand and his influence played a central role in forming a distinct Chinese Buddhist school in the country.

Xuxing's origins were humble; he was born into a Hakka family with the surname Hou in Meizhou County of eastern Guangdong. Around 1862, he arrived in Thailand, bringing with him the Dharma of the Linji Chan lineage, a prominent Chan

Buddhist tradition that profoundly impacted the development of Chinese Buddhism. Initially, Xuxing took up residence at the Yongfu an, a shrine dedicated to Guanyin, situated on Yaowarat Road in Bangkok's Chinatown. Over time, this shrine expanded into a fully-fledged Buddhist temple in 1879, at which point Xuxing renamed it Yongfu si, or the Temple of Everlasting Fortune.

One of the distinguishing features of Xuxing was his expertise in various Chinese traditions, including geomancy, divination, and herbal healing. His proficiency in these practices endeared him to the growing Chinese community, particularly among the Hakka Chinese. It is important to note that the Hakka Chinese community played a significant role in supporting and shaping the development of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand. Xuxing's influence extended to people from various backgrounds, including prominent figures like Khianhin, a powerful Hakka merchant appointed by King Chulalongkorn in 1879 as the Director of the Eastern Trade Department.

Khianhin's patronage was instrumental in supporting Xuxing's religious endeavors. Under Khianhin's political influence, King Chulalongkorn ordered the allocation of approximately 6,500 square meters of land along Charoen Krung Road to construct the Longlian Si (龙莲寺), the first Chinese Buddhist temple. This significant endorsement from the Thai king demonstrated the state's patronage of Chinese Buddhism, particularly JN, under Xuxing's leadership.

In recognition of the temple's importance, King Chulalongkorn accorded it the Thai royal name of Wat Mangkorn Kalayawat, meaning "the Dragon and Lotus Temple." Xuxing was officially appointed as the first abbot and the head of the Chinese Sangha in Thailand. JN, under Xuxing, had become a well-established Buddhist school with state patronage and recognition. It is worth mentioning that the temple built during this period, the Longlian Si, remains an enduring symbol of Chinese heritage in Thailand, drawing visitors from across the country and around the world.

Xuxing's contributions extended beyond the realm of religion. His influence and support in mitigating internal conflicts within the Chinese community, especially among the Hakka Chinese, played a crucial role in fostering social stability. Competition among different Chinese groups for economic and political advantages has often led to tensions and sometimes violence, necessitating government intervention.

Xuxing's efforts to resolve these internal conflicts within the Chinese community secured JN's ongoing state patronage through Khianhin's political influence at the Thai court. This collaboration underlines JN's integration into Thai politics and society despite its monastic community being composed entirely of monks from China. One of the notable aspects of this period was the close relationship between JN and the Thai royal court. JN's affiliation with the state was solidified by King Chulalongkorn, who recognized the significance of the Chinese Buddhist school and its role in managing internal conflicts within the Chinese community. As a result, JN was listed in the 1902 Sangha Act as one of Thailand's four legally recognized Buddhist schools, further cementing its legitimacy and place within the country's religious landscape.

The legacy of Xuxing and his influence on the spread of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand is a testament to the power of religious leaders in shaping cultural landscapes. Under Xuxing's leadership, JN not only became a legal, state-patronized Buddhist school but also successfully established a network of temples, focusing on constructing two additional "Long" temples—Longfu Si and Longhua Si.

The dynamic spread of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand continued to gain momentum. Xuxing and his trusted disciple, Guowu, meticulously managed the construction and expansion of temples and the religious community. Upon Xuxing's passing in 1888, Guowu succeeded him as the second-generation abbot of the Longlian Si. The formal Dharma transmission underscored Guowu's legitimacy as a spiritual leader. He received from Xuxing a symbolic tradition of passing on the teachings from one patriarch to another.

The Thai monarchy recognized Guowu's leadership over JN in 1891, further highlighting the strong relationship between the Buddhist school and the state. Guowu's reign marked a period of growth and consolidation for JN as a prominent Buddhist institution.

In addition to the spiritual aspects, the spread of Chinese Buddhism also witnessed competition and tensions, as exemplified by the annexation of the Ganlu si, the Temple of Ambrosia, in 1909. The Vietnamese-based Annam Nikāya had long controlled this temple, and Guowu's actions to assert JN's control highlight the complexities and sometimes competition between Buddhist traditions in the region. However, the rapid royal endorsement of JN's annexation of Ganlu Si in 1910 illustrated the recognition of JN's growing influence.

The development and spread of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand did not occur in isolation. It was deeply intertwined with the broader socio-political landscape of the region. Under King Chulalongkorn, the Thai monarchy welcomed Chinese immigrants to support the country's infrastructural modernization efforts. This influx of Chinese labor contributed significantly to the social complexity of Thailand. It necessitated the Thai court to address the material and religious needs of the growing Chinese community to ensure social stability.

This openness to Chinese immigration and culture allowed the diaspora to generate income, contributing to state revenue. It also facilitated the propagation and persistence of Chinese religious beliefs and practices. While maintaining social stability, this inclusive approach also strengthened the bonds between the Thai state and the Chinese communities. As a result, JN and Chinese Buddhism played a crucial role in supporting the spiritual needs of the Chinese diaspora in Thailand and facilitating their incorporation into local politics and society.

The 19th-century spread of Chinese Buddhism into Thailand showcases a captivating cultural exchange and integration story. Chinese immigrants brought their

rich religious traditions, leading to the establishment of the JN tradition. This exemplifies the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, spirituality, and cultural identity. Notably, under leaders like Xuxing and Guowu, Chinese Buddhism adeptly adapted to the Thai socio-political landscape, becoming an integral part of Thai society. This highlights the profound impact of religion when combined with political support and social cohesion, leaving a lasting legacy in Thailand and emphasizing the enduring power of faith to connect communities across borders.[20]

3.3 Jin Nikaya

The Jin Nikaya (hereafter JN), meaning the "Chinese School," was established by a community of Chinese monks who arrived in Thailand (then known as Siam) during the 1870s. as one of four Buddhist schools officially recognized by the unified Thai Sangha, JN has been actively engaged within and outside the Thai-Chinese community for nearly a century and a half. Presently, this school provides residence and spiritual guidance to approximately one thousand monks and novices across its network of eighteen temples in various regions of Thailand.

The formation of the JN is closely linked to the arrival influence of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand. The tradition took shape under the leadership of the monk Xuxing, its founding patriarch. Xuxian, originally from a humble Hakka family in eastern Guangdong, arrived in Thailand around 1862, bringing the Dharma of the Linji Chan lineage with him. As discussed in the previous chapter, he played a central role in establishing Chinese Buddhism in Thailand.

Xuxing's influence extended to the construction of the first Chinese Buddhist temple, the Longlian temple, which gained royal patronage and recognition

[20] Liu, "The History of Jin Nikāya in Thailand: A Preliminary Study from a Socio-political Perspective," 121-170.

under the Thai King Chulalongkorn. This connection with the Thai monarchy solidified the JN tradition as a legitimate, state-patronized Buddhist school. Under Xunxing's guidance, JN attracted support from various Chinese communities, particularly the Hakka Chinese. This support helped mitigate internal conflicts within the Chinese community and ensured continued state patronage for JN. The tradition's incorporation into Thai politics was further underscored when it was listed as one of Thailand's legally recognized Buddhist schools in the 1902 Sangha Act. The legacy of Xuxing and his successors, like Guowu, played a crucial role in the development and spread of Chinese Buddhism in Thailand, leaving a lasting impact on the religious and cultural landscape of the country.

The decline of the JN tradition between 1920 and 1954 was attributed to internal and external factors. Internally, the leadership of monks such as Luqing and his immediate successors, Furen and Yongbin, played a role in the decline. Growing disputes among Chinese monks in Bangkok led to disunity within the Sangha, weakening the school's position. Many monks sought worldly gains through ritual performances and did not necessarily belong to JN. This competition for ritual authority with local Theravada monks and independent Chinese monks further strained JN's influence. Externally, the anti-Chinese sentiment in Thailand, particularly during Phibun's rule, resulted in the suspension of state patronage for JN and challenges to its legitimacy. However, the political loyalty of JN from Yongbin's leadership onwards helped it maintain state patronage, especially when Phibun tried to emphasize his support for Buddhism. Changyi and Pujing's leadership helped restore the Linji Dharma lineage within JN and marked a shift from Hakka dominance to Teochew dominance in its leadership.

The revival of the JN took place from 1954 to 1986 and was primarily orchestrated by the charismatic leadership of Pujing. Pujing's biography, published in 1971, reveals his humble beginnings in a Teochew family and his conscription into the

Kuomintang Nationalist army before emigrating to Thailand in his early twenties. Under the tutelage of Changji at Qingshui Chan monastery (清水禅寺), he became a monk and quickly gained a following in the Chinese community. In the late 1940s, Pujing sent his disciples to China for full ordination, and in 1949, he conducted the first Chinese traditional ordination ceremony in Thailand. This was a significant step in reestablishing JN's traditional Chinese monastic lineage.

Pujing made clever moves to ensure the recognition of the Chinese ordination tradition in Thailand. He requested royal boundary stones for his ordination hall, conforming to Thai conventions that granted legitimacy to recognized temples. He also invited influential Theravada monks to consecrate the hall, demonstrating his intention to integrate fully into the Thai Sangha. Furthermore, Pujing instructed JN monks to wear bright yellow robes similar to the Thai Mahā Nikāya monastics, consolidating JN's legitimacy. His close relationship with the Thai Sangha and collaboration with influential monks helped him attain several prestigious royal ecclesiastical titles. By 1958, JN, under Pujing's leadership, was restored to the list of participants in state religious ceremonies. In 1962, Pujing initiated the construction of Pumen Bao'en si (普门报恩寺), officially established as the new JN headquarters, thereby ending the dominance of Longlian si. This development further solidified JN's place in the Thai Buddhist landscape.

Pujing's diplomatic endeavors extended to Taiwan, further enhancing JN's status and political recognition. JN's position within the Thai context reinforced his dedication to Thai political mobilization and the monarchy's appreciation. Pujing's successful revitalization of JN shows how the popularity of a religious leader can significantly impact social and political support for the institution they leads. However, the internal unity of JN was challenged as the authority he established began to overshadow his successors, leading to factionalism among his able disciples.

Under the leadership of Rende, the seventh patriarch of JN, the sustainable development of this Mahayana Buddhist school has been characterized by a blend of cultural adaptation, political acumen, and response to modern challenges. Rende, born into a Teochew family in Thailand's Kanchanaburi province, uniquely identifies more as a Thai of Chinese descent rather than strictly Chinese, speaking Mandarin and various dialects fluently. His leadership has been pivotal in maintaining JN's growth and influence.

Leveraging the groundwork laid by his predecessor, Pujing, Rende initiated the construction of two new temples in 1987, one in Chiang Rai (Wanfo Ci'en si 万佛慈恩寺) and another in Korat (Fo'en chansi 佛恩禅寺). These temples were built for royal merit and to fortify Rende's authority within JN. A notable addition was the worship of Maitreya Buddha, potentially to attract local followers. Rende's adept alignment with the Thai monarchy secured vital royal patronage for JN, enhancing its significance in the Thai Buddhist landscape.

As Thailand experienced rapid economic growth during his leadership, JN faced a dilemma. Its temples, primarily in commercial centers, had to navigate the rising culture of materialism and the commodification of religious services while preserving Buddhist values. Internal factionalism, primarily from the Longlian temple, was another challenge. Disciples of Renchao, a brilliant monk under Pujing, sought to elevate his authority, potentially undermining Rende's leadership. To address this, Rende appointed Renyi as the acting abbot of Longlian temple, ensuring unity within the school. Externally, JN encountered challenges from Taiwanese-backed Buddhist institutions and Mainland Chinese monks and nuns visiting Thailand. Rende publicly questioned the legitimacy of these institutions, with limited success due to their strong connections with Thai elites. Rende also expressed distrust of China, particularly regarding their pursuit of ecclesiastical titles and awards in Thailand.

Despite these challenges, Rende has focused on maintaining internal unity and stability and preserving JN's prominence and popularity within the Thai-Chinese community. JN's development under Rende's leadership demonstrates resilience and adaptability despite modern influences and changes.

In conclusion, JN has exhibited remarkable adaptability throughout its history, closely intertwined with the ever-shifting sociopolitical context of Thailand and its relationship with the Thai-Chinese community. JN's survival has hinged on its ability to deeply integrate into Thai society and politics while retaining certain aspects of its Chinese identity. This school's success in securing legitimacy within Thailand has been achieved through a deliberate strategy of harmonizing with local authorities, including the Thai monarchy. JN has thrived in a Theravada-dominated Thai Sangha despite its foreign origin by positioning itself as a humble and non-threatening religious entity.

The Thai-Chinese community has played a pivotal role in JN's journey. Economic fluctuations within this community have influenced JN's prosperity, highlighting the importance of preserving this support. However, new challenges have emerged, particularly the growing number of ethnic Thai monks within JN, many lacking fluency in Chinese and comprehensive knowledge of Chinese Buddhism. As JN faces an impending leadership transition, selecting a successor among the current patriarch's Dharma peers becomes pivotal. While the school has moved away from selecting successors based solely on shared sub-ethnicity, the priority remains on leaders capable of serving the Chinese religious needs of the Thai-Chinese community, thus ensuring JN's continued relevance in the ever-evolving Thai religious landscape.[21]

[21] Liu, "The History of Jin Nikāya in Thailand: A Preliminary Study from a Socio-political Perspective," 121-170.

3.4 Chinese Lay Buddhist Societies in Thailand

In Theravada-majority Thailand, several lay Buddhist societies have emerged, self-organized by Chinese migrants since the early twentieth century. While these societies remain dedicated to Mahayana doctrine and practice, they have also established extensive trans-regional religious networks with diverse Buddhist communities throughout Southeast Asia, notably from the 1950s to the 1970s. The exact number of Chinese lay Buddhist societies in Thailand remains uncertain, with an estimated fourteen in Bangkok. However, many have become untraceable due to the city's extensive redevelopment. While some experts speculate that the number may be much higher, only a few remain active today. This paper will focus on two such lay Buddhist societies, namely, the Chinese Buddhist Research Society of Thailand (CBRST) and the Dragon-flower Buddhist Society of Siam (DBSS), both categorized as "Learning" or "Research societies" (xue 学 or yanjiu she 研究社).

The Chinese Buddhist Research Society of Thailand - CBRST

The CBRST, located at 215/1 Mitreejit Road in Bangkok, was founded in 1930 by Du Shaoting 杜少亭, a Teochew Chinese. He migrated to Bangkok in 1920 and achieved financial success while deeply interested in Mahayana Buddhism. With the support of Teochew Chinese business families, the CBRST was registered in 1931, and it gathered members for Mahayana doctrinal studies and rituals. After Du Shaoting's passing in 1937, the leadership of BCRST was taken over by representatives from the Chen 陈 and Li 李 families. Chen Muchan 陈幕禅 and Chen Mingde 陈明德 served as presidents, while Li Yiheng (Upāsaka 青林) and Li Shuliang 李叔亮 managed key roles. These leaders were well-educated and joined the society due to their shared interest in Mahayana doctrines.

Chen Kewen 陈克文, who became president in 1943, played a pivotal role in the CBRST's growth. He secured a new location, initiated Dharma seminars, and expanded trans-regional networks with Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka and Penang, Malaysia. The construction of a new CBRST office was completed in 1951, incorporating elements of Theravada Buddhist temples. Under Chen Kewen's leadership, the CBRST organized regular weekend study seminars on various sutras, bridging different Chinese Buddhist traditions. These seminars featured Chan, Pure Land, and Tiantai traditions, as well as lectures by senior members. The CBRST has also maintained its Mahayana bodhisattva ideology and Chinese customs, such as ancestor worship. The CBRST continues to hold occasional seminars today, mainly conducted in Thai by local-born monks from the Vietnamese Mahāyāna section (Annam Nikaya). Despite these changes, the society retains its strong sense of community and cultural integration within Thai Buddhism.

Upon Chen Kewen's leadership, the CBRST established a self-help liturgical team to serve its members' ritual needs. This team mainly consisted of female members and conducted routine rituals at the Chinese Buddhist festival. Monks with ritual expertise from the JN were often invited to preside over complex rituals for significant events. The CBRST maintained its liturgical team, whose enthusiastic members, all in their seventies, continue to serve the community's religious needs.

During the early 1950s, under Kewen's leadership, the CBRST built strong transregional connections with Buddhist individuals and institutions across Southeast Asia. It developed a particularly close relationship with the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) based in Sri Lanka, an organization founded by Dr. Malalasekrea in 1950; the CBRST also extended its religious networks to the Malay Peninsula, with the Buddhist Association of Penang sending a delegation to congratulate their Thai counterparts' success.

Chen Kewen passed away in 1968, passing the presidency to Li Shuliang, who struggled to maintain Kewen's legacy. By 1976, CBRST's membership had significantly decreased.

In 1977, Kachana Chuenpanichayakul, Kewen's daughter, took over the presidency, intending to restore the CBRST's former prosperity. She introduced Thai-language seminars but faced challenges in finding qualified lectures. Consequently, the CBRST approached Thai-speaking Annam Nikaya monks educated in Taiwan. Over time, the CBRST seminars became sporadic and eventually ceased. Kachana has been the CBRST's president for over forty years, but the membership has declined to 534. Some members have turned to Taiwanese missionary temples for spiritual guidance. The CBRST mainly consists of those who joined in the 1970s and 1980s and maintain strong emotional ties to society.

In summary, the CBRST was founded in 1930 for Buddhist doctrinal studies and became renowned for its Buddhist seminars through the 1970s. However, its traditional family-based leadership approach hindered innovation. The CBRST maintained its focus on Mahāyāna doctrinal studies, distancing itself from profit-driven activities common among other Buddhist institutions in Thailand.

The Dragon-flower Buddhist Society of Siam

The Dragon Flower Buddhist Society of Siam (DBSS) is in Bangkok. Founded in 1934, this society was established by a group of Teochew-speaking Chinese Buddhists, with leadership provided by Deng Yucheng 邓玉成, a prosperous goldsmith. Deng Yucheng, whose exact birth and death dates are unknown, emigrated from China to Thailand in 1925, where he eventually achieved financial success through years of hard work.

The DBSS, like its counterpart, the CBRST, focused on studying and propagating Mahayana Buddhist doctrine within the Chinese community of Bangkok.

Initially, the society operated from a wooden shed on Yaowarat Road in Bangkok's Chinatown. Over fifteen years, spanning seven generations of leaders from 1934 to 1949, the DBSS undertook considerable efforts to construct its current official complex. This complex includes a two-storied main hall and two single-storied attached halls constructed from concrete.

By 1951, under the guidance of its seventh president, Lin Derun 林德润, another Teochew Chinese hailing from an established business family, the DBSS boasted a membership of approximately two thousand, comparable to the contemporary CBRST. However, in more recent times, the membership of the DBSS has dwindled to around four hundred members. To sustain its operations, the DBSS had to adapt by converting its spacious front yard into a parking lot to generate income.

One of the distinctive features of the DBSS's religious practices is the veneration of Guanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion. The society's Grand Compassion Hall houses a remarkable gilded Guanyin statue, claimed to be modeled after the popular style of the Xuande reign (1426-1435) of the Ming Dynasty. This statue sits alone in a full lotus position, symbolizing Guanyin's compassion. In the practice of worshiping Guanyin, the DBSS conducts rituals like the recitation of the Universal Gate Chapter (Pumen pin 普门品) and the Grand Compassion Repentance (Dabei chan 大悲忏), both of which are closely associated with Guanyin.

Under the leadership of Lin Derun in the early 1950s, the DBSS expanded its trans-regional communications and exchanges with Buddhist individuals and institutions across the broader Southeast Asian region. A significant development during this period was the DBSS's import of bone relics of Taixu from the Hong Kong Buddhist community in 1954, commemorating its twentieth anniversary. Notably, Taixu had never visited Thailand during his travel through Southeast Asian countries in 1939, primarily due to the growing anti-Chinese sentiment in Thailand. Nevertheless,

he was highly revered by Chinese Buddhists in Thailand, particularly those affiliated with the DBSS. To honor Taixu, the DBSS constructed a memorial hall named after him in 1951.

Furthermore, in 1954, the DBSS dispatched Chen Maolia 陈茂廉, its then financial director, to Hong Kong to obtain permission to install and worship the bone relics of Taixu in Thailand. This event was marked by a large ceremony held on April 17, 1954, at the DBSS. The ceremony included the consecration of a Thai-styled stupa housing the relics, with the participation of the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Sangha.

The DBSS also maintained connections with the Seventh Changkya Hutukhut, a prominent Buddhist monk of the Tibetan tradition with Mongolian origins. His handwritten six-syllabled mantra in Tibetan and Mongolian characters attested to their close ties.

In Summary, the DBSS, like the CBRST, initially aimed to promote Mahayana doctrinal studies among Chinese Buddhists in Thailand, and although its early seminars were held only sporadically, its emphasis on Guanyin worship attracted a significant following from the local Chinese community. The DBSS established extensive trans-regional networks of Chinese Buddhism within and outside China, particularly through its connections with Taixu and his associates, who had fled mainland China to Hong Kong and other parts of the region after the Chinese Communist Party's takeover in 1949. Additionally, the DBSS's connections with the Seventh Changkya Hutukhtu contributed to a broader network of Chinese Buddhism encompassing various regions and traditions.

3.5 Humanistic Buddhism Branches in Thailand

Humanistic Buddhism, a term coined by Venerable Tai Xu (1889-1947), represents a branch of Buddhism that aims to effect social transformation and advance human well-being. Notably, Humanistic Buddhism characterizes the Fo Guang Shan (hereafter FGS) Buddhist Order and its affiliated monastery in Gaoxiong, Taiwan, along with over 200 temples and monasteries worldwide, including those in Thailand. Despite misconceptions about it being a recent innovation, Grand Master Xing Yun, the founder of the FGS, has consistently emphasized that it is not a later literation of Buddhism but rather, in his words, "the Buddhism of the Buddha himself." This form of Buddhism is grounded in the Mahayana tradition, precisely the Bodhisattva path, Encapsulating what is known as "practical Dharma."

Based in Taiwan, FGS has actively promoted humanistic Buddhism and set up branches globally, including in downtown Bangkok, Thailand. The objective is to foster exchanges between China and Thailand. In 1994, FGS established the Bangkok Cultural and Education Centre, a facility capable of accommodating 800 people for religious gatherings. FGS has also signed a bilateral agreement with the Dharma Sangha in Bangkok, which encompasses exchanging publications, protecting human rights and religious freedom, preserving Buddhist traditions, and promoting cultural and educational collaborations among Buddhist groups.

Taihua Si (泰华寺), built under the guidance of Xing Yun, the founding master and former abbot of FGS in Taiwan, follows the architectural model of a Chinese Buddhist temple. Taihua Si is committed to promoting humanistic Buddhism in the region, guided by the principles of "Respect and Inclusion" and the spirit of "The Four Elements" proposed by the Founding Master of FGS. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, with the assistance of the Vice Governor of Bangkok, has organized Taihau Si as a recommended tourist attraction in Bangkok. In acknowledgment of his

contributions, Xing Yun was awarded an honorary doctorate in "Educational Management" from the Mahabharat Chulalongkorn Buddhist University in Thailand and a doctorate in religion from Dhammapada Magud Buddhist University in Thailand in 2004.

As an ardent promoter of Humanistic Buddhism, Xing Yun and his followers have worked to foster harmony between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, particularly in Theravada Buddhist countries like Thailand. They have tried attracting local Chinese immigrants, naming their second Buddhist sanctuary Taihua Si, symbolizing the unity of Thai and Chinese communities. FGS has gained prominence in Thailand since establishing the Buddha Light Cultural and Educational Center in 1994, extending its influence beyond the local Chinese community to Thai society. Unofficial reports suggest that the number of FGS followers in Thailand now exceeds 250,000.[22] However, FGS's expansion in Thailand poses challenges, particularly to the local Chinese Buddhist school, Jin Nikaya, as they both vie for the same religious market among Thai-Chinese communities.[23]

FGS enjoys an advantage as its teachings, rooted in Humanistic Buddhism, align with Theravada Buddhism in Thailand, making them accessible and acceptable to Thai Chinese and even Thais. FGS conducts various religious activities and runs sophisticated art programs, such as meditation sessions, the New Year Festival of Light and Peace, and Buddha's Birthday Celebrations. Although registered as a civil foundation rather than a Buddhist temple in Thailand, FGS has cultivated strong relationships with the Thai Sangha, including influential Buddhist leaders and local

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[22] Hujiang Li, "The Way of Management of Contemporary Buddhist Organizations – An Example of the Buddha's Light Mountain Order and the Dharma Body Temple Order," *Journal of Qinghai University for Nationalisties: social science*, no. 42 (2016): 9-32.

[23] Liu, "the History of Jin Nikāya in Thailand," 123-124.

political figures, for protection. This unique status necessitates FGS and its representatives to establish more supportive networks for sustainability and expansion. Given Thailand's significant Chinese population, FGS is well-positioned to secure a substantial share of the local religious market.

Nonetheless, FGS encounters challenges in Thailand. Theravada teachings and practices have long influenced Chinese immigrants in Thailand, making it a gradual process for FGS's Humanistic Buddhism to gain wider recognition. Moreover, FGS faces difficulties recruiting Thai-speaking monastics to organize religious and philosophical activities for local Chinese communities, many of whom may not speak Chinese Mandarin or southern Chinese dialects. Maintaining extensive facilities in Thailand is costly, pressuring FGS branches to attract donations and intensifying competition with local-born Chinese schools. Additionally, the local-grown JN has questioned FGS's legitimacy as a Buddhist temple in Thailand. As one of the four legally recognized traditions under the Thai Sangha, JN holds substantial influence within and outside Thai-Chinese communities, especially among local-born Chinese due to its deep historical roots in Thai society. Although disputes between FGS and JN are not openly hostile, they are known and may pose future challenges.

In summary, FGS's promotion of Humanistic Buddhism in Thailand, a country historically dominated by Theravada Buddhism, presents challenges and threats from local competitors. Despite its strengths and opportunities, weaknesses such as the lack of Thai-speaking monastics and questions regarding its status as a Buddhist temple have become evident during its efforts to gain wider recognition in the Thai religious landscape.

3.6 Ritual Observations of Chinese Buddhists in Thailand

In the 19th century, as Chinese émigrés embarked on Southeast Asian ports in search of enhanced trade and employment prospects, they brought a rich tapestry of religious beliefs and practices. This melange encompassed elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Fueled by a desire for religious blessings and community cohesion, these immigrants constructed temples and shrines dedicated to various deities, including buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Confucius, Daoist figures, and spirits assimilated from local animist traditions. To address their burgeoning religious needs, Chinese Buddhist monks and Daoist priests were invited, marking the beginning of a cultural and religious fusion in the region.

The JN tradition is central to this narrative, attributing its origin to Xuxing, who is acknowledged as its founding patriarch. Xuxing was pivotal in constructing the first Chinese Buddhist temple, Longlian si 龙莲寺(also known as Wat Leng Noei Yi or Wat Mangkon Kamalawa), in Bangkok between 1871 and 1879. This temple emerged as a focal point for the Chinese community, serving as a spiritual hub and a center for indigenous medical care. Xuxing's herbal healing practices contributed significantly to his charisma. The Medicine Buddha, a diminutive image believed to possess magical healing powers, accompanied Xuxing and eventually found its way into royal possession. The annual ritual on the Medicine Buddha's birthday, conducted in Longlian Si, underscores the Chinese community's historical demand for medical blessings.

However, beneath this veneer of religious harmony, tensions and disruptions lurked within the Chinese Buddhist community in Thailand. Insights from an interview with the patriarch of JN and senior monks unveiled a period of turmoil under leaders like Luqing, Furen, and Yongbin. The Sangha became divided, and monks were drawn into ritual performances outside JN for material gains. Yang

Wenyin's observations in the early 20th century highlighted a landscape of disputes among Chinese monks in Bangkok. Many monks, unaffiliated with Longlian si, dispersed to perform rituals for various Chinese temples, giving rise to conflicts over opportunities for financial support. The presiding abbot of Longlian Si sought royal intervention to prohibit these monks from donning the same robes as JN monks, but the court refused to intervene.

Reports from Chinese Buddhist lay societies accentuated the competition for ritual authority among JN monks, local Theravāda monks, and Chinese monks from other orders. These competitions involved intricate rituals such as worshiping and releasing the dead from hellish suffering. Lay societies organized routine gatherings for self-cultivation, often without monk participation, signaling a preference for monks who understood and could expound on Chinese Buddhist doctrine. While few JN monks could teach seminars on the Buddha's teachings, their expertise lay in ritual performance. The existence of non-JN groups of Chinese monks was not uncommon, challenging JN's ritual interests and diverting support from the Chinese community. The conflicts between the JN Sangha and freelance ritual monks, like Luqing, who succeeded Guowu in 1919, added to the disunity. Questions arose about how Luqing, a carrier of Caodong Dharma, infiltrated the Linji Dharma stronghold of JN and why Guowu chose him over his disciples. In 1932, Luqing left for China, marking a period of disunity and reduced material donations from the Chinese community, reflecting a decline in faith in JN.

This intricate tapestry of ritual observations among Chinese Buddhists in Thailand reveals a complex interplay of religious practices, competition for ritual authority, and internal disunity within the Sangha. The historical context sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Chinese Buddhism in Southeast Asia, influenced by diverse traditions, and underscores the delicate balance between cooperation and internal conflicts. It serves as a testament to the resilience of these religious communities in

adapting to new environments while navigating the intricate dynamics of faith, ritual, and community cohesion.

CHAPTER IV
YOGACARA ULKĀ-MUKHA RITUAL OF JIN NIKAYA TRADITION

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual's introduction to Thailand is intricately tied to historical Chinese migration, cultural assimilation, and integration into Thai-Chinese religious practices. Rooted in JN tradition, the ritual is a meticulous orchestration featuring the Vajra Master at its core, serving as the main officiator. Beyond the Vajra Master, key figures like the precentor and succentor ensure ritual harmony. The performers usually are local monks from JN, reflecting the widespread practice in Thai-Chinese communities. Occurring annually during the Ghost Festival, its occasional extension to funerals adds personal significance. Financial sustenance relies on lay disciples, with an average cost of 50,000 Thai bahts. This chapter unravels the historical, cultural, and religious threads contributing to the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual's enduring significance in Thai Buddhism.

4.1 Settings

The spread of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual into Thailand is a fascinating journey rooted in the historical context of Chinese migration to Southeast Asian countries. Dating back to the fourth century, Chinese migration, both maritime and continental, played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of the region. This migration reached its zenith in the second half of the nineteenth century, marking the arrival of Chinese immigrants in Thailand, where the rich tapestry of beliefs began to intertwine with the host country's dominant cultural and religious fabric.

Chinese immigrants brought a diverse array of folk beliefs deeply ingrained in their home districts. These beliefs served not just as cultural markers but as vehicles

for spiritual blessings and the forgoing of communal bonds. As Chinese communities took root in Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, the expression of these beliefs found a vibrant manifestation in the form of colorful temples and myriad rituals that reflected the religious affiliations of the Chinese diaspora.

In the specific case of Thailand, a nation where Theravada Buddhism has held sway over social and political ideology since the thirteenth century, the assimilation of these imported religious elements was a nuanced process. The influx of Chinese beliefs was not seen as a threat but as an opportunity to enrich the cultural and spiritual landscape of the host country. Thai-Chinese communities, therefore, undertook the task of embracing and processing these religious imports, transforming them into distinctive Thai-Chinese expressions of spirituality, culture, and art. Against this backdrop, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, deeply rooted in Chinese Buddhism, found its way into the Thai-Chinese communities in Thailand. The ritual, considered one of the most sophisticated schools of Chinese Buddhism, was transmitted across generations through a complex network of cultural and religious inheritance.

The Ghost Festival celebrated on the fifteenth day of every lunar July, became a significant occasion for the annual Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual. This festival, known for its cultural and religious significance in Chinese communities, provided the ideal backdrop for the ritual to take root in Thailand. The collective sponsorship of the ritual by the Chinese faithful during this festival further emphasized its communal and spiritual importance.

One notable aspect of the ritual's spread is its association with Jin Nikāya, a locally grown Chinese sect of Thai Buddhism. The ritual found a home in the temples of Jin Nikāya, becoming an integral part of their religious calendar. The sponsorship and organization of the ritual by this sect added a layer of cultural and religious specificity to its practice in Thailand. The performers of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual in Thailand, usually numbering nine and primarily consisting of monks from Jin

Nikāya, highlighted an interesting aspect of its spread. Despite its Chinese roots, the performers lacked proficiency in Chinese, and their understanding of the verses and mantras written in classical Chinese was limited. This linguistic and cultural gap raised questions about the ritual's religious validity, emphasizing a form of preservation that retained ritual patterns and settings but lacked a deep understanding of the original language and meanings.

In conclusion, the spread of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual into Thailand can be traced through the historical currents of Chinese migration, the assimilation of Chinese beliefs into the Thai cultural milieu, and the ritual's integration into the religious practices of Thai-Chinese communities. The ritual's annual occurrence during the Ghost Festival, its association with Jin Nikāya, and its occasional extension to funeral ceremonies all contribute to the rich tapestry of its spread.

4.2 Instruments

Instruments used in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual of JN follow Chinese tradition, except for the aforementioned vajra crown, mandala, vajra, and rice; the following Dharma instruments are also employed in the ritual.

The Precious Cross, also known as the vajra rod, holds the significance of subduing demons and presenting offerings. During the ceremony, the two iron rods are crossed, giving rise to the term "Baocuo," where "cuo" denotes the action of crossing or intersecting. In its use, the performer envisions the emergence of boundless heavenly precious treasures within the elongated iron rod for offering.

Ghantā 金刚铃: this instrument is played during the chanting of sutras in front of the Buddha. The Ghantā, also known as the Golden or Vajra bell, is crafted from bronze or red copper materials. It takes the shape of a bowl with a diameter of approximately ten centimeters. Initially used in Chan Buddhism, the bell features

copper beads inside and a handle at the top, with varying forms. In Vajrayana practices, it is rung during rituals to avoid disturbing or to delight enlightened beings. The bell's ringing serves three purposes: awakening, delighting, and expounding the teachings. “Ringing the bell” is the act of offering it to enlightened beings, inviting their presence to the Yogacara Ulkhā-Mukha ritual. Ringing the bell is a form of musical offering, symbolizing hospitality. The Vajra bell used for ringing comes in various forms, such as five-pronged, three-pronged, single-pronged, and nine-pronged bells, with different names corresponding to the number of prongs and the shape of the handle. The method of ringing the Ghantā varies among different schools of Vajrayana due to their diverse practices. Generally, the significance of ringing the bell lies in awakening, offering, delighting, expounding the teachings, and sending them off. Conventionally, it expresses the intention of providing or delighting. At the same time, in the ultimate spiritual terms, it serves as the sound of the Buddha’s teachings, awakening beings from the deep slumber of delusion.

Percept ruler 戒尺: used in various rituals such as taking refuge, ordination, preaching Dharma, and Yogacara food offering ritual, it is an instrument employed to either awaken the assembly or to stabilize the order of the ceremony. The precept ruler is approximately fifteen centimeters long, with a wooden block measuring about 3.5 centimeters in width and thickness. The precept ruler is unique to Chinese Buddhism and is also used in the Yogacara Flame Offering ritual by the JN tradition in Thailand.

Handle Incense Burners 柄香炉: also known as a hand-held incense burner, handle burner, or portable burner. It is a metal incense burner with a handle, typically measuring 7 inches or even more than a foot in length. It comes in various shapes, with ancient styles featuring a lion-shaped design at the end. Crafted from materials such as bronze and gold-plated brass, the presiding officiant holds the handle

incense burner during the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual to invite the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

4.3 Performers

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the Jin Nikaya in Thailand, deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions, involves a meticulous orchestration of various roles performed by skilled monks, each contributing to the rich tapestry of the ritual. As we delve into the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual of JN tradition, we encounter key figures who serve as the ritual performers.

Vajra Master: The living bridge. At the heart of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual stands the Vajra Master, a figure of utmost reverence and spiritual authority. The title "Vajra Master," echoing the Sanskrit term "Guru," is an ancient honorific that denotes a spiritual teacher. However, in the context of this ritual, the Vajra Master serves as the main officiator, orchestrating the intricate symphony of the ceremony.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, deeply rooted in Vajrayana practice, designates the Vajra Master as the living bridge between the mortal realm, heavenly beings, and hungry ghosts. Contemporary Vajra Masters leading this ritual often do not strictly adhere to traditional Vajrayana lineages. Instead, they attain the title during the ritual by reciting specific mantras. This title is exclusive to the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual and is transitory, fading away as the ritual concludes. The Vajra Master, once adorned with spiritual eminence, returns to the humble role of an ordinary monk, showcasing the fluidity and adaptability that have facilitated the ritual's widespread practice in both Chinese Buddhism and the JN tradition.

Each Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual typically features one Vajra Master per altar, though variations may occur with three, five, seven, or nine Vajra Masters based on contributions or temple requests. Different compositions, such as the Three-Master

Flame Offering (三大士焰口), the Five-Master Flame Offering (五大士焰口), or even the Nine-Master Flame Offering (九大士焰口), cater to specific ceremonial requirements. The role of the Vajra Master is pivotal, demanding an intricate understanding of ritual components and sutras. They must immerse themselves in the performance, skillfully executing hand mudras, reciting mantras, chanting scriptures, and maintaining focused visualizations. The Vajra Master acts as the primary medium, connecting worshippers with celestial beings and departed spirits, thus facilitating seamless communication between realms.

Precentor, Successor, and Other Masters: In the grand orchestration of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, the precentor, succentor, and other masters play crucial roles in ensuring the harmonious flow of the performing of the ritual. The precentor (Weinuo 维那) takes on the responsibility of leading the chanting of sutras, acting as a vital assistant in the ritual. A precentor is chosen for their cloud and clear voice, a vessel through which the ritual's message resounds throughout the sacred space. Supporting the precentor, the succentor (Yuezhong 悦众) aids in reciting scriptures and acts as the second assistant in the ceremony. Both the precentor and succentor guide the intricate hand mudras and recite mantras, contributing to the rich tapestry of the ritual. Yinli shi (引礼师) are monks entrusted with maintaining ritual order. They play a vital role in assisting the Vajra Master in conducting the ceremony and guiding worshippers through the intricate steps of prostrations. Yinli shi also contributes to the overall orderliness of the ritual altar. Beyond the vocal aspects, other monks in the ensemble play the role of instrumentalists, playing Dharma instruments and assisting in the chanting. Their collective efforts create a symphony of sound, enveloping the ritual space in a sacred ambiance.

In the JN tradition in Thailand, the performers, usually numbering nine, consist mainly of monks from Jin Nikāya. Surprisingly, all performers are local, with very few of Chinese ethnicity, none of whom speak the Chinese language or understand the deep meanings of verses and mantras written in classical Chinese. Instead, they intone the prayers based on the sound marks written in Thai.

4.4 Occasions and Prices

In the realm of JN in Thailand, financial sustenance predominantly hinges on the generosity of lay disciples. Beyond routine offerings, a noteworthy revenue stream is forged through the orchestration of diverse rituals aimed at salvaging departed souls or invoking blessings for the longevity of the living. Central to this financial dynamic is the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, a vital element in the repertoire of JN temples. This chapter delves into the two primary occasions that prompted the organization of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual.

The Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual finds a recurring and central place within the religious calendars of various Chinese temples in Bangkok Chinatown. Notably, the ritual is organized and hosted annually by Jin Nikāya, a locally grown Chinese sect of Thai Buddhism, demonstrating a fusion of Chinese and Thai religious influences. Through an exhaustive three-month fieldwork expedition in Bangkok Chinatown, where the religious calendars of various Chinese temples were meticulously examined, and insightful interviews were conducted with the performers, sponsors, and attendees, a comprehensive understanding of the ritual's occasions and associated costs emerged.

Organized and hosted with utmost reverence, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a significant undertaking of JN, a local-grown Chinese sect of Thai Buddhism. This annual event takes place at both the sect's headquarters and its branch temples and in collaboration with Chinese lay Buddhist societies. The ritual is a powerful

embodiment of the intricate fusion of Chinese and Thai cultural and religious influences within the local Buddhist context.

The timing of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is intricately linked to the lunar calendar, explicitly coinciding with the fifteenth day of every lunar July. This date aligns with the Ghost Festival, a momentous occasion in Chinese folklore and Buddhist tradition when the realms of the living and the dead are believed to draw closer. The ritual, orchestrated with meticulous detail, becomes a collective endeavor under the sponsorship of devoted Chinese faithful.

Notably, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual occasionally finds sponsorship on a more personal level. Well-off Chinese families, as an expression of reverence and remembrance for their departed loved ones, choose to sponsor the ritual on the last day of the funeral rites. This timing reflects a profound cultural and spiritual connection, adding a layer of personal significance to the broader communal observance.

The final aspects of orchestrating such a monumental ritual are substantial. On average, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual incurs costs totaling 50,000 Thai bahts, equivalent to approximately 1,600 USD. This financial commitment encompasses various aspects, including material offerings dedicated to the monk performers who play a central role in the ritual, remunerations for their lay associates, and the expenses associated with creating an aesthetically rich and spiritually charged setting.

4.5 Summary

In conclusion, the spread of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual into Thailand unfolds as a fascinating narrative woven through historical currents of Chinese migration, the assimilation of Chinese beliefs into the Thai cultural milieu, and its seamless integration into the religious practices of Thai-Chinese communities. The ritual's annual occurrence during the Ghost Festival, its association with JN, and its

occasional extension to funeral ceremonies collectively contribute to the rich tapestry of its dissemination.

As we immerse ourselves in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the JN in Thailand, it becomes evident that this deeply rooted tradition involves a meticulous orchestration of various roles performed by skilled monks. At the heart of this elaborate ceremony stands the Vajra Master, a figure of utmost reverence and spiritual authority. The Vajra Mater serves as the main officiator and a living bridge between the mortal realm and heavenly beings, showcasing fluidity and adaptability underpinning the ritual's widespread practice in Chinese Buddhism and the JN tradition. Accompanied by other crucial figures such as the precentor, succentor, and instrumentalists, the ritual becomes a symphony of sound and spirituality. The financial sustenance of JN in Thailand, particularly the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, relies on the generosity of lay disciples. This comprehensive exploration illuminates the occasions and economic dynamics that shape the enduring presence of the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the rich cultural landscape of Thai-Chinese Buddism.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, exploring the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the context of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Thailand unveils a profound intersection of religious traditions, providing insights into the intricate tapestry of Buddhist liturgical practices. Deeply rooted in Mahayana Buddhism, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual emerges as a unique thread woven into the grand fabric of Buddhist ceremonies. Originating from the Dharani Sutra and the Amrita Sutra, this ritual's liturgical tradition intricately weaves together ancient texts, symbolism, and practices, finding comprehensive procedures during the Ming dynasty under influential masters like Tianji and Zhuhong. The liturgy symbolically offers compassion and liberation to beings in the hungry ghost realm, serving as a spiritual journey that harmoniously converges history, texts, practices, and profound compassion — a testament to the enduring legacy of Buddhist rituals in alleviating suffering and nurturing universal well-being.

At its core, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual fulfills essential functions deeply rooted in Buddhist principles. Embodying the principle of compassion (karuna), the ritual addresses the profound suffering of beings in the hungry ghost realm. It provides an opportunity for redemption and liberation from negative karma, emphasizing spiritual growth and breaking free from the cycle of rebirth. Encouraging genuine compassion in practitioners and acknowledging the interconnected nature of suffering, the ritual allows participants to accumulate merit through virtuous acts, dedicating it to the well-being of sentient beings. Additionally, the ritual serves as a means of connecting with the divine, seeking spiritual guidance, and practicing the six paramitas — fundamental virtues in Mahayana Buddhism. In essence, the Yogacara

Ulkā-Mukha ritual becomes a profound expression of Buddhist compassion and wisdom, embodying the core teachings of Mahayana Buddhism and transcending cultural boundaries.

The proceedings of this ritual, evolving through various dynasties, serve a dual purpose — offering sustenance to beings in the hungry ghost realm and bestowing blessings upon the living while dedicating merit to the deceased. From the purification of the altar to the dedication of merits, each stage holds profound spiritual significance, guiding participants on a transformative journey of compassion and liberation. The ritual's symbolic tapestry, rich with intricate elements, adds meaning to its compassionate mission. The Dharani Sutra embodies the Buddha's benevolence and the power of his teachings. The mandala, Vajra crown, and vajra symbolize enlightenment, wisdom, and the unshakable nature of spiritual resolve. Rice, seemingly humble, becomes a transformative offering symbolizing the seeds of enlightenment. Mantras and mudras resonate with transformative and liberating power, bridging the physical and the spiritual. Candles and incense, with their symbolic illumination and purification, dispel darkness and ignorance, embodying the clarity of understanding and insight. Each element in this profound ceremony intertwines with spiritual significance, weaving a tapestry of compassion, hope, and enlightenment. These symbols serve as a spiritual beacon, conveying a message of alleviating suffering and offering a path to liberation.

Chinese immigrants in the 19th century brought diverse religious beliefs, leading to the establishment of the JN, a unique Chinese Buddhist tradition. Under leaders like Xuxing and Guowu, JN gained state patronage and played a crucial role in managing internal conflicts within the Chinese community. The decline of JN (1920-1954) faced internal disputes and external challenges, but charismatic leadership, particularly under Pujing (1954-1986), led to a revival. Pujing's diplomatic efforts and integration into Thai society secured JN's place in the Thai Buddhist landscape. The

current era showcases JN's adaptability and resilience. JN's success lies in harmonizing with local authorities while preserving its Chinese identity.

The study meticulously examines the ritual observations among Chinese Buddhists in Thailand, highlighting the historical development of the JN tradition. Starting with the founding patriarch Xuxing and the establishment of the first Chinese Buddhist temple, Longlian Si, in Bangkok, the study sheds light on tensions and disruptions within the Chinese Buddhist community. Conflicts over ritual authority, competition for financial support, and internal disunity within the Sangha underscore the complex dynamics of faith, ritual, and community cohesion within Chinese Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

Finally, the paper investigates the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual within the JN tradition in Thailand. Typically occurring in Buddhist temples, the ritual unfolds with specific settings, instruments, performers, and occasions contributing to its grandeur. The arrangement of altars, each serving distinct purposes, sets the ritual stage. Following Chinese tradition, instruments include notable items such as the Precious Cross (宝错), Ghantā, Percept ruler, and Handle Incense Burners, each playing a significant role and adding layers of symbolism and meaning to the ritual, enriching the overall spiritual experience. Key figures in the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual, including the Vajra Master, precentor, succentor, Yinli shi, and instrumentalists, contribute to the harmonious flow of the ceremony. Notably, the ritual is occasionally sponsored by well-off Chinese families as a final tribute on the last day of funeral ceremonies.

While the ritual is well-preserved in terms of its patterns and settings within the Chinese communities in Thailand, its pervasion is constrained by its high cost, limiting access to the well-off Chinese demographic. The study also highlights a potential challenge to the ritual's religious validity, as local performers lack a deep understanding of the Chinese-language ritual manual.

Despite these challenges, the Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha ritual is a living cultural heritage with distinct religious features, persisting in Thailand due to the transmission of ghosts and ritualistic salvation beliefs from China. The study contributes to the scholarly understanding of the dynamics of Chinese religious practices in Southeast Asia, shedding light on preserving and adapting rituals within specific socio-economic contexts.

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GLOSSARY

瑜伽集要焰口施食儀 (T1320) Yujia Jiyao Yankou Shi Shi Yi Yoga Ritual for Offering Food to Flaming Mouth

瑜伽密教 Yujia Mijiao Esoteric teachings of yoga

瑜伽燄口 Yujia Yan ku Yogacara Ulkā-Mukha

金剛智瑜伽施食儀軌 Jingang zhi Yujia Shi Shi Yi Gui Vajrabodhi Yoga Ritual for Offering Food

佛說救拔焰口餓鬼陀羅尼經 (T1313) Fo Shuo Jiuba Yan Kou E Gui Tuoluoni Jing Pretamukhāgnijvālayaśarakāra Dhāraṇī Sūtra

正法念處經 (T721) Zhengfa nianchu jing Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra; Sutra of the Right Mindfulness of Dharma

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