Introduction to the Translation

> During that period, Tibet convened multiple meetings of the National Assembly to discuss the option of capitulating to either the Communists or the British. The final assessment indicated that both choices would result in the downfall of the nation. Nevertheless, surrendering to the British could enable Tibet to maintain its religion, an outcome that was much more desirable than facing an invasion from the Communist bandits, which would result in the loss of life and property, along with the certain devastation of its sacred institutions.[1]
>
> Fazun, 1937

In Lhasa's Potala Palace, a small chapel houses a sandalwood statue known as Phakpa Lokeśvara,[2] meaning "Noble Lord of the World". This form of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, has long drawn pilgrims to Tibet. The standing figure is enshrined in a chapel that, according to Tibetan chronicles, dates back to the seventh century of the Common Era. The chapel lies on Marpori, or "Red Hill", one of three rocky hills that rise from the center of the Lhasa valley. Long before the construction of the Potala Palace by the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617-1682), in the seventeenth century, Marpori already contained a cave sanctuary, and a small temple associated with this holy treasure.[3]

1 Fazun 1937b, 34. All translations from Chinese and Tibetan are by the author.

2 C. Shengguan zizai pusa 聖觀自在菩薩; T. 'Phags pa 'jig rten dbang phyug. The statue is often referred to by the Tibetan-Sanskrit hybrid, Phakpa Lokeśvara, rather than the full Sanskrit name, Ārya Lokeśvara.

3 On Phakpa Lokeśvara, cf. Alsop 1990; 2000; Debreczeny 2012, 302, fn. 537; Decleer 2006; Erhard 2004; 2014; Sørensen 2007; 2019; Qvarnström, Sørensen 2015.

Maestri, testi e fonti d'Oriente | Masters, Texts and Sources of the East 7
DOI 10.30687/979-12-5742-024-6/001

According to legend, the statue of Phakpa Lokeśvara originated in a sandalwood forest near the Buddha's birthplace, situated along the border of India and Nepal.[4] King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet (r. ca. 605-650), who revered Avalokiteśvara as his guardian deity, hoped the bodhisattva would guide his effort to convert Tibet to the teachings of the Buddha. Through prayer, the king sought a sign. In a vision, Avalokiteśvara revealed that one tree in the forest was filled with life. In response, the king performed an extraordinary feat. He emitted a beam of light from the tuft of hair placed right between his eyebrows. The light transformed into a monk named Akaramatiśīla.[5] "Search for the tree", Songtsen Gampo told him, "and bring me its heart".

Crossing the Himalayas, Akaramatiśīla reached the forest. Just as his axe touched the tree, a voice from within it told the monk, "Cut slowly". When the blade made contact with the bark, the tree continued, "I am going to be the tutelary deity of king Songtsen Gampo in the Snow-capped realm of Tibet!".[6] From the tree's core, the monk carved three statues. The one destined for Tibet came to life and declared, "I am Phakpa Lokeśvara". Akaramatiśīla brought the statue to Lhasa, placed it atop Marpori, and enshrined it there. Having fulfilled his mission, he turned back into light and reabsorbed into the king's brow.

Centuries later, during the life of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso (1876-1933), pilgrims from Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Mongolia still came to Lhasa to pay homage to the statue of Phakpa Lokeśvara. In the early twentieth century, among those pilgrims was a young monk from China. His name would come to matter in the encounter between China and Tibet, yet his voice would soon be forgotten. In 1925, he left Beijing as part of an overland mission to Tibet, hoping to retrieve the teachings of Buddhist tantra which, many believed at the time, had long been lost in China. Four years later, the mission failed in the borderlands. Still, the young monk continued his journey. In 1930, he entered Lhasa with his main teacher, an incarnated lama renowned across traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The pilgrim studied for four years at one of Tibet's major monasteries and later returned to China.

A Chinese Pilgrimage to the Heart of Tibet presents, for the first time in English, the full account of that journey. In writing its history, this introduction traces the route of Fazun's early life, from the modernist project of a Buddhist mission to revive tantra in Tibet, to the encounter with a form of Buddhism that proved entirely foreign to China. The pages ahead are meant to guide the reader through the pilgrim's account, charting his entry into the mission in Beijing, the rigor of Tibetan scholastic training, and the later recognition, attained through the work of translation, that absence, not loss, defined the object he had gone to seek. At the end of this introduction, Phakpa Lokeśvara once again stands before the reader. The bodhisattva, enshrined as the Potala's main icon to this day, bears witness to the Chinese pilgrim's search, a quest transformed not by what he found, but by what he did not.

4 For a full account of how Songtsen Gampo brought Phakpa Lokeśvara to Tibet, cf. Sørensen 1994, 187-95.

5 T. A ka ra ma ti. Toni Huber characterizes Akaramatiśīla as a 'phantom monk traveler'. Cf. Huber 2008, 169-70.

6 Sørensen 1994, 195.

In 1911, the Xinhai 辛亥 Revolution brought the Qing dynasty 清朝 (1644-1911) to an end. What followed were decades of fragmentation. The Republic of China,[7] formally established on January 1, 1912, faced massive challenges from the start. Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916), a Qing general and first President of the Republic, seized power and declared himself emperor in 1915. After his death the following year, military cliques known as warlords split the Chinese mainland into rival territories. By the 1920s, regional strongmen held control over most Chinese provinces. Beijing 北京 in the north and Nanjing 南京 in the south each claimed central authority. Still, governance remained fractured. New political ideals and religious visions began to take shape.

Two major political forces emerged at this time. The first was the Nationalist Party (KMT),[8] founded in 1919 and reorganized by Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866-1925) – a former medical doctor and native of Guangzhou 廣州, known as the father of modern China – to promote national unification. The second was the Chinese Communist Party (CCP),[9] founded in 1921 in Shanghai 上海 and attended, among others, by the young leader Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893-1976). At the outset, the two parties joined forces under Soviet guidance through the First United Front (1923-1927).[10] In 1926, the Nationalist Party launched the military campaign known as *beifa* 北伐, a "northern expedition" to reunify China. By 1928, they had reclaimed much of the country and moved the national capital to Nanjing 南京. But cooperation soon turned into violence. In 1927, the Nationalist Party purged members of the Communist Party from its ranks. This divide would escalate into a Civil War (1927-1949) that shaped not only China's politics, but also its religious institutions.

Amid revolution and war, Buddhism was imagined as a world religion.[11] Chinese reformers of the Republican era began to think of Buddhism both as an international movement and as a source of national unity. They imagined a shared Buddhist world capable of uniting Asian nations against European imperialism. This Buddhist transnational movement was not unified.[12] Yet, it informed local attempts to envision distinct Buddhist traditions not only as national forms of the religion, but also to articulate those same forms as stemming from one Pan-Asian tradition that extended from India to China and Japan, and from Tibet to Śrī Laṅka.[13]

Tibet held a singular place in this imagination.[14] In 1913, after the fall of the Qing dynasty, the thirteenth Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence.[15] The Nationalist Party never recognized the Dalai Lama's claim and, in

7 C. Zhonghua minguo 中華民國.

8 C. Guomin dang 國民黨.

9 C. Gongchan dang 共產黨.

10 C. Diyici guogong hezuo 第一次國共合作.

11 Xue 2013, 23-30. For the ways in which Buddhist reformers of the late Qing and early Republican period envisioned Buddhism, and especially, Tibetan Buddhism, as a "world religion", cf. Wu 2024, 13-14, 23; for the European discourse of "world religions", cf. Masuzawa 2005.

12 Cf. Lopez 2002, xx-xxii.

13 On Buddhism as a Pan-Asian religion between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Tuttle 2005, 68-102.

14 Sperling 2004, 6-9.

15 On the thirteenth Dalai Lama's declaration of Tibetan independence, cf. Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008, 39-44.

official discourse, continued to include Tibet within the national borders of the Republic. During the 1910s and 1920s, several Chinese missions to Tibet were proposed or launched, seeking both political reconciliation and religious engagement.[16] Some aimed to assert sovereignty, others to restore contact with Buddhist teachers and leaders in Tibet. These endeavors reflected a broader desire to establish new ties between Tibetan Buddhism and the modern Chinese state.[17]

It was against this backdrop that the young Chinese monk, Fazun, came to offer alms in the Phakpa Lokeśvara chapel. His presence in Lhasa was part of a larger historical movement. Still, his was, most of all, a pilgrim's journey, shaped by sacrifice, devotion, insight, and the cultivation of significant relationships with his Tibetan teachers. He entered Tibet as a simple Buddhist monk. He returned to China with stories that no official mission could ever tell.

In May 1937, just months after returning to China, Fazun published a written account of his journey. The book, titled *Modern Tibet*, recorded what he saw and heard during nearly ten years he spent in Tibet. The author composed the book as an introduction to readers in the Republic of China. His account included details of the sandalwood statue at the Potala Palace, along with notes on the cultural and religious ties between Phakpa Lokeśvara, Songtsen Gampo, and the Dalai Lama. Many of those tales, unheard of in China, spanned centuries of Tibet's history, from the Tibetan Empire (618-842) to the independent polity of the early twentieth century (1912-1951).

A month later in June 1937, Fazun released a second volume, *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through*.[18] Where *Modern Tibet* offered a survey of various aspects of Tibet's religion, culture, and institutions, the second book turned to the national and international politics of Tibet between the administrations of the thirteenth and fourteenth Dalai Lamas. It explored British involvement in Tibetan affairs, the legacy of the Qing empire in modern Tibet, and the growing Communist threat along the Tibetan frontier during the Long March (1934-35), when the Chinese Red Army, together with the Chinese Communist Party, retreated from southwestern to northwestern China as Nationalist forces advanced. The pilgrim published both volumes in Chongqing 重慶, the city in Western China that would soon become the wartime capital of the Republic. In that moment, his voice remained untouched by the Nationalist Party's ideology. Yet, not for long.

In July 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident prompted Japan's full-scale invasion of the Chinese mainland, drawing China into the Second World War. As fighting spread, the Nationalist government moved its headquarters to Sichuan, the province of western China characterized by its broad basin and plains, which serves as a natural divide between Chongqing and eastern Tibet. Chongqing became a sanctuary for many who fled the Japanese occupation. There, cultural production continued amid airstrikes, displacement, and national crisis. During this time, Fazun revised his earlier work. By 1943, two years before the war's end, he published a new edition of *Modern Tibet* in Sichuan's capital, Chengdu 成都. This edition combined

16 Tuttle 2005, 34-59.

17 Wu 2024, 18-22, 48-72.

18 Fazun 1937b.

Modern Tibet and *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through* into a single volume. The book shifted away from its earlier focus on pilgrimage to a formal study of Tibet's national institutions and international politics, seen now through the challenges of wartime China.

In 1949, after the Nationalists' defeat in the Civil War, the Republic of China retreated to Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) advanced west into Sichuan. The pilgrim left Chongqing and returned to Beijing. In the capital, Fazun was invited to join the newly founded People's Republic of China (PRC) as a Tibetan language expert. As Chairman Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party prepared for the invasion of Tibet, the monk was assigned a specific task. He would translate Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist, and Maoist texts, including Chairman Mao's *The Little Red Book*, into Tibetan. These works were intended to instruct Tibet's future leaders in the logic of the Communist Revolution.

During the 1950s, in his role as an official translator from Tibetan, Fazun contributed to shaping Tibetan Studies in the People's Republic. By the early 1960s, as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences gained traction in Beijing, scholars in Tibetan Studies were drawn into the effort to fit Tibet into the Party's colonial narrative of relations between China and Tibet. At the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the pilgrim, now an elderly man, was denounced by the Red Guards as a criminal. From 1966 to 1972, he was held in a labor camp, where an injury left him disabled for life. Decades earlier, while reporting on Tibetan debates over national security, he had written of his political enemies of the time as "Communist bandits". Now, those forces had turned against him.

A Chinese Pilgrimage to the Heart of Tibet offers an English translation of *Modern Tibet* from its original 1937 edition. In Republican China, public debate allowed critical reflection on religion, politics, and the nation. Fazun's book captured the hopes and tensions of its age. During the Japanese occupation, he revised it to reflect the shifting priorities of China. That new version remained a reliable source on Tibet into the 1950s. After the Communist victory and China's occupation of Tibet, his voice fell silent. What had belonged to an age of plurality, had no home in the new order of things.

Ten days after his death on December 14, 1980, Fazun was reborn. He reincarnated as a culture hero. On December 24, 1980, Zhao Puchu 趙樸初 (1907-2000),[19] serving as the secretary general of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC),[20] offered incense, flowers, and lamps at a funeral ceremony held in Beijing in honor of Fazun. In his eulogy, Zhao praised the pilgrim's sacrifice and placed him in a lineage that traced back to China's earliest encounters with Buddhism:

> Tracing back to the envoys of Emperor Ming 明帝 of Han 漢 who journeyed West, and the white horse that came east, men of virtue such as Faxian 法顯, Xuanzang 玄奘, and Yijing 義淨 were all willing to risk their lives, forgetting their bodies in pursuit of the dharma. Their lofty spirit and exemplary conduct have been admired for generations. As for this dharma

19 Active in charitable and political associations during the Republican era, Zhao Puchu was the most prominent Buddhist layman in the PRC.

20 On Zhao Puchu as president of the Buddhist Association of China (C. Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中國佛教協會), cf. Xue 2016; cf. also Fang and Krause 2020.

> master, he may truly be said to follow in the footsteps of the sages and stand shoulder to shoulder with the worthies of old.[21]

Zhao placed Fazun in a mythical lineage, one that traced back to the legend of how Buddhism first came to China during the Eastern Han 東漢 dynasty (25-220 CE). In this tale, the Emperor Ming 明帝 (r. 58-75 CE) dreamed of a golden figure soaring above the palace courtyard. Interpreting the vision as an auspicious sign, he dispatched two envoys, Cai Yin 蔡愔 (d.u.) and Qin Jing 秦景 (d.u.), to search for its origins beyond the frontiers of China, in the Xiyu 西域 'Western Regions', a term that often included India. They returned with two Buddhist monks, Kāśyapa Mātaṅga[22] and Dharmaratna,[23] along with a white horse laden with Buddhist scriptures. To honor their arrival, the emperor commissioned the construction of the Baima Si 白馬寺 'White Horse Temple' just outside the western gate of the imperial capital, Luoyang 洛陽. There, the two monks were said to have translated the *Sishi'er zhang jing* 四十二章經 (Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections), long believed to be the first Buddhist scripture rendered into Chinese.[24]

By drawing on this origin story, Zhao placed Fazun among China's earliest translators of Buddhism. He linked him to the Jin 東 dynasty (266-420 CE) and the Tang dynasty, to masters like Faxian (ca. 337-422 CE), Xuanzang (600-664 CE), and Yijing (635-713 CE). These Chinese pilgrims had crossed deserts, mountains, and oceans in search of Buddhist scriptures. Like them, continued Zhao, China's modern pilgrim had "forgotten his body for the dharma".[25] The sacrifice of his life rekindled a memory that began at the gate of Luoyang, where a white horse once carried sūtras across imperial frontiers into the Chinese heartland. In honoring Fazun as heir to this mythic lineage, Zhao did more than praise his sacrifice to bring Tibet's dharma to China. He affirmed his place in a tradition defined less by personal biography, and more by the work of translation and transmission, a work that was traditionally mapped onto China's Western Regions.

Still, something uncanny was happening in the speech of the BAC secretary general at Fazun's funeral. In his discourse, a shift occurred regarding China's geography of Buddhist pilgrimage. India, where Buddhism had vanished at least eight centuries earlier, was no longer the destination of pilgrimage. It no longer served as the holy land that once attracted Chinese pilgrims. In Zhao's imagination, Tibet had silently taken its place. Unlike India, no European power colonized Tibet. Now, under Chinese occupation, it was envisioned as a sacred realm within the nation's frontiers, a lofty and mystical place where modern pilgrims could still find the Buddha's teachings

21 Zhao 1981, 25.

22 C. She Moteng 攝摩騰.

23 C. Zhu Falan 竺法蘭.

24 Modern scholarship questions nearly all elements of the tale. The *Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections* is now widely regarded as an apocryphal text, likely composed in China rather than translated from an Indian original. Its format, that is, a sequence of concise moral aphorisms attributed to the Buddha, resembles native Chinese wisdom literature more than Indian sūtras. Similarly, Kāśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna are best understood as legendary figures. Their names appear in later sources, and no contemporary evidence confirms their historical presence. Even the chronology is doubtful. Buddhism had likely begun to circulate in China decades before Emperor Ming's dream. Cf. Nattier 2008.

25 In Zhao's words, *weifa wangshen* 为法忘身. Cf. Zhao 1981, 25.

alive. The journey to the Western Regions was no longer defined by the crossing of empires, a feature of the Tang dynasty, or by different emerging nations, as seen in the Republican era. Pilgrimage now implied traveling inside a vast, unified, multiethnic nation-state: the People's Republic of China. In this retelling, pilgrimage thus ceased to denote the crossing of frontiers. By contrast, pilgrimage to the Western Regions evolved into a story of national belonging. Indeed, during Fazun's journey, Tibet was still a remote, dangerous, and foreign country. Four decades later, in Zhao Puchu's eulogy, the realm of Tibetan religion was turned into a subregion within China's Buddhist landscape.

In Zhao's telling, Tibet had ceased to exist on the map. It was not so during the Republican period, when Fazun regarded Tibet as a thriving reservoir of wisdom, embodied in the teachers who trained him and passed down their texts to him. As we will discover, Fazun traveled across the Himalayas in 1936, bringing with him a complete copy of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, in addition to the collected works of Tsongkhapa and his closest disciples. Fazun's encounters with his Tibetan teachers became the basis for his future translations. Still, Zhao told a different story. He portrayed Fazun as a modern pilgrim in China's ancient lineage, a solitary translator who brought Tibet's dharma into China's keeping. By doing so, he obscured the relationships, the transmissions, and the earnest study of literary works that had laid the groundwork for Fazun's later achievements. In Fazun's *Modern Tibet*, Tibet is a place of learning and debate. It was in that place that translation emerged from encounter. Still, after Fazun's death, Tibet was no longer that place of encounter. In Zhao's mind, it became a new holy land of Buddhism, seamlessly integrated into China's sacred geography. Having emerged as Communist China's Western Regions, Tibet offered a mirror for the nation's historical subconscious.

In the span of forty years, Zhao Puchu's ideas about Fazun traveled beyond religious and political institutions. They quickly migrated into academic discourse and popular imagination. In 1990, Fazun's biographers Lü Tiegang 呂鐵鋼 and Hu Heping 胡和平 praised the monk with a singular epithet: *dangdai Xuanzang* 當代玄奘, the 'Xuanzang of the contemporary age'.[26] In 2000, historians of religion Chen Bing 陳兵 and Deng Zimei 鄧子美 remarked that "His contributions to bridging Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist studies were outstanding, earning him recognition as one of the great Buddhist translators since the Tang and Song dynasties".[27] In 2000, in a seminal essay where she cites Zhao, Lü and Hu, French Tibetologist Françoise Wang-Toutain introduced Fazun into the Western academy as *le Xuanzang des temps modernes*, 'the Xuanzang of modern times'.[28] Unlike Zhao, who invoked a broader tradition of pilgrim-translators from the Han to the Tang, Wang-Toutain drew inspiration from the writings of Lü and Hu. In coining their epithet, Fazun's Chinese biographers invoked the spirit of Xuanzang only.[29] By contrast, Wang-Toutain's naming in French drew power from the

26 Lü, Hu 2002, 503.

27 Chen, Deng 2000, 360.

28 Wang-Toutain 2000, 707-27. Wang-Toutain incorrectly attributes Fazun's epithet *dangdai Xuanzang* 'the Xuanzang of the contemporary age' to Zhao Puchu.

29 In citing Zhao, Cheng and Deng, as well as Wang-Toutain, Ester Bianchi claims, "Just as Faxian and Xuanzang had done more than 10 centuries earlier, they were ready to travel the most impervious roads to the roof of the world or to cross the see with the goal of finding scriptures

mythic lineage that Zhao had created, beginning from the legend of the White Horse Temple. Indeed, Xuanzang had long been celebrated in Chinese Buddhist circles for the polish of his translations from Sanskrit. He was widely known in Chinese literature and popular culture for his legendary journey to the West.[30] By being called 'Xuanzang', the modern pilgrim began to be portrayed as the most accomplished translator of Tibetan Buddhist texts in Chinese history.[31] In a blend of old and new, Fazun emerges today as a solitary genius, celebrated as a lone translator in China's long lineage of pilgrims.

The comparison of Fazun with China's great premodern pilgrims arrived at a timely moment. At the turn of the present millennium, the image of a modern Xuanzang stirred nostalgic longings for an earlier age, when Chinese monks crossed imperial frontiers in search of the dharma.[32] In the Republican period, as in the Tang dynasty, no trains or planes linked China to Tibet. Fazun's journey, made on foot and by mule, across frozen terrain and through regions plagued by bandits, reignited the imagination of readers who were already familiar with similar tropes from Xuanzang's journey to India.[33] This time, however, Xuanzang's Western Regions gave way to Xizang 西藏 'Western Treasury', that is, China's term for Tibet. In literature, music, and visual culture, Tibet once again appeared as a Western realm of endless discovery.

Still, both the popular and the scholarly imagination overlooked one fact. Fazun's original mission to Tibet, unfolding during the Chinese Civil War, had ended in disappointment. Hence, what survived the Cultural Revolution was not an account of his life, but a compelling story to tell about the books he left behind. After his death, Fazun was no longer remembered as a pilgrim who traveled to Tibet to retrieve China's lost tantra, in a mission of thirty monks that resulted in failure. By contrast, his sacrifice for the dharma was now envisioned as a solitary endeavor in service of the Chinese people. This tale, crafted months after his death, transformed his translations into objects to offer on the altar of the nation. Having forsaken his body for

and receiving teachings". Citing Wang-Toutain, Bianchi also incorrectly attributes the coining of the expression *dangdai Xuanzang* to Zhao Puchu. Cf. Bianchi 2004, 32 fn. 1.

30 On the modern reception of Xuanzang, cf. Brose 2021 and 2023.

31 In what is the most recent biography of Fazun, published in 2019 in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Ester Bianchi condenses four decades of reflection on the construction of Fazun's lineage with the following train of thought: "Like his prominent predecessors and models Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing, he devoted himself to translating the Buddhist scriptures he gathered in his travels. He stands out as the most prolific Chinese translator of Tibetan texts in modern times and, probably, in the entire history of Chinese Buddhism" (2019, 662). Here, Bianchi writes that the primary sources on Fazun's life are "Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo" 著者入藏的經過 (The Author's Experiences Entering Tibet), published in 1937, and his autobiography "Fazun fashi zishu" 法尊法師自述 from 1979 (2019, 662). The claim is only partly correct. The autobiographical essay "Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo" was not issued under that title, nor in that form, in 1937. Instead, it appeared as an appendix of the 1943 edition of *Modern Tibet*. The original text, which differs in some details, had first been published as Chapter One of *Modern Tibet* in the 1937 edition translated in the present volume. Both "Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo" and "Fazun fashi zishu" were reprinted in Lü Tiegang and Hu Heping's *Fazun fashi lunwen ji* in 1990. Lü and Hu correctly note that Fazun's "Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo" comes from the appendix of *Modern Tibet*. This demonstrates that they, too, had no access to the 1937 edition of *Modern Tibet*, for they fail to say that "Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo" exists only in the appendix of the 1943 edition. The first edition of *Modern Tibet* from 1937 contained no appendixes.

32 Cf. Brose 2021, especially Chapter 24, "Xuanzang's Relics".

33 Lü and Hu, in their first collection of Fazun's essays, are the earliest exemplars in this trend.

the dharma, he now seemed to provide a novel way of imagining Chinese Buddhism, one in which Tibetan Buddhism could be studied through his translations and understood through previously unknown materials.

Yet, something was lost in the making of those objects. In recasting Fazun's mission as a solitary, patriotic sacrifice, this tale neglects the relations that Fazun had with his teachers, friends, and informants in Tibet. Their guidance had made both his pilgrimage into the heart of Tibet and his translations possible. In the new telling, the agency of those teachers, friends, and informers has disappeared. What remains is the image of a lone Chinese pilgrim who carried their wisdom back across the frontier to the heart of the nation.

Fazun's translations from Tibetan, together with his original works, amount to nearly fifty titles. They range from monastic discipline to Buddhist logic, pass through Abhidharma, Yogācāra, and Madhyamaka treatises, and reach into the domain of Buddhist tantra. He wrote on the social and political history of Tibet, produced the first modern Chinese textbooks for studying the Tibetan language, and helped compile the first modern Tibetan-Chinese dictionary. Today, in both the PRC and Taiwan, his translations have become popular and valuable objects and remain in print and in use. Book series on Tibetan Buddhism bearing the names of both Tsongkhapa and Fazun line library shelves in major cities. Still, Fazun's original writings hide in the shadow. To this day, most accounts of his life turn to the second edition of *Modern Tibet*[34] or to his 1979 autobiography, composed a year before his death.[35] His reflections on empire, history, and the nation have yet to receive sustained attention. A full monograph would be required to do justice to the scope and depth of his thought. The present study can only offer a set of entry points into future research.

Who, then, was Fazun? Who was this Buddhist pilgrim whose voice was reshaped by war, shackled by ideology, and later remembered as the voice of a culture hero? A monk who failed in his initial mission, Fazun walked on Tibet's roads. He shared meals with its families and played with its children. He lived in Tibet's monasteries and learned directly from their masters. He sought to make sense of a country, Tibet, which he found trapped between the forces of empire, nationalism, and modernity. Fazun's writings do not answer many of the questions that shape, and still trouble, relations between China and Tibet.[36] Those questions persist, especially in the history of the religious encounter. But his writings preserve something rare. They offer traces of an encounter framed by an ethics of care. Those traces once lived in the libraries of Republican China, later fading in the shadow of the Cultural Revolution. Perhaps due to or in spite of his abilities as a translator, Fazun relied on a distinct, older way of knowing Tibet and its people. That particular way of knowing, modern by its own standards, still speaks through the pages of *Modern Tibet*, to whose genesis we now turn.

Between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Buddhists in China kept returning to one question. What had become of Mijiao 密教,

34 Cf. Sullivan 2014. In his excellent essay, "Blood and Teardrop", Sullivan translated a selection of five passages from Fazun's account of his time spent in Tibet.

35 Cf. Wang-Toutain 2000; Bianchi 2004; Tuttle 2005; Wei 2024.

36 For scholarly responses to key questions in China-Tibet relations, see the essays collected in Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008.

that is, tantra, since the fall of the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE)?[37] That question marked the birth of the study of Tibetan Buddhism in modern China. It also marked the rise of a discursive colonization of Tibet in the Chinese imagination that persists into the present. Through this process, Chinese Buddhists began to project their historical anxieties and existential aspirations onto Tibetan religion. At the time, many believed that tantra had vanished from China for more than a thousand years. Yet, in the early twentieth century it reappeared. From where? In short, through Japan and Tibet. How so? In response to the demands of modernity. Such famous figures as Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947), the leading Buddhist reformer of Republican China, greeted the *Mijiao chongxing* 密教重興 'revival of tantra' with optimism.[38] At first, he believed that tantra, if properly understood, could renew Chinese Buddhism from within. That hope, however, did not stand the test of history. To understand how Chinese monks and scholars imagined Tibetan Buddhism before Fazun began his journey, we must turn to another voice from Taixu's generation. Around the fall of the Qing dynasty, a young scholar of Buddhism helped shape the very language through which China's lost tantra came to be tied with Tibet.

In the early years of the Republic, a former student of Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837-1911), regarded by many as the father of the revival of Buddhism in China, opened a new field of inquiry: the academic study of Tibetan Buddhism.[39] His name was Li Yizhuo 李翊灼 (1881-1952).[40] Born in Jiangxi 江西 and trained in the Confucian classics, Li turned to the study of Buddhism around 1900. Two of his fellow Jiangxi natives, Ouyang Jian 歐陽漸 (1871-1943) and Gui Bohua 桂柏華 (1861-1915), introduced him to Yang Wenhui's vision to reinvent Chinese Buddhism for the modern age and to the broader revival it inspired.[41] In 1911, the year of Yang's death, Li was invited to Beijing to catalog the manuscripts from the Dunhuang 敦煌 cave libraries that were housed at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing. The following year, he published a groundbreaking study, titled *Dunhuang shishi jingjuanzhong weiru zangjinglun zhushu mulu* 敦煌釋氏經卷中未入藏經論著述目錄 (Complete Catalogue of the Sūtras and Śāstras from the Dunhuang Cave Manuscripts Not Included in the Tripiṭaka). In it, Li identified 159 Buddhist texts among the Dunhuang manuscripts that were absent in the Chinese Buddhist canon. That discovery established Li as one of the first Chinese scholars

37 Portions of this section are drawn from the author's doctoral research at the University of Michigan. See Dibeltulo Concu 2015; 2021.

38 The Republican Buddhist reformer Taixu analyzed the trends of the revival of Tantrism during his era, incorporating in his own work many of the findings on Tibetan Buddhism by the scholars of his time. He did so to better understand the history of tantra in India and the various ways in which tantra had taken root in China, Japan, and Tibet. On the revival of tantra in modern China, see in particular Welch 1968; Dongchu 東初 1974; Bianchi 2004; Tuttle 2005; the various contributions in Esposito 2008, especially Chen Bing's article; and Dibeltulo Concu 2015.

39 On Yang Wenhui's engagements with Tibetan Buddhism, see Dibeltulo Concu 2021,178-82. Yang first noticed that Tibetan Buddhism was the same as Japan's tantra in a volume that Nanjō Bunyu 南條文雄 (1849-1927), Japan's foremost scholar of Sanskrit, had sent him to China. The volume's title was *Hasshū-kōyō* 八宗綱要 (The Essentials of the Eight Traditions) by the Japanese historian Gyōnen 凝然 (1240-1321). On Yang Wenhui, see Welch 1968, 2-10, 18-19, 23, 29; Yu Lingbo 于凌波 1995; Gabriele Goldfuss 2001; and Chin Keitō (Chen, Jidong) 陳繼東 2003. For the posthumous collection of his works, see Yang Wenhui 1973.

40 For a biography of Li Yizhuo, see Yu Lingbo 1995a, 499-500; see also Chen, Deng 2000, 446. On Li Yizhuo's work about Tibetan Buddhism, see also Dibeltulo Concu 2021, 191-200.

41 On Gui Bohua and Ou Yangjian, see Xue 2013, 17-19.

of Buddhist philology and laid the groundwork for his later inquiries into Tibetan Buddhism. To be sure, when he began writing on the subject, Li had never set foot on Tibetan soil, nor had he studied the Tibetan language. His knowledge came instead through Japanese sources and earlier cataloging work. Even without access to Tibetan teachers or texts, Li regarded Tibet as a place where, through speculation and the tools of philology, traces of China's tantra might still be found.

Between 1912 and 1913, Li Yizhuo published a series of essays in *Foxue congbao* 佛學叢報 (Buddhist Miscellany), the short-lived periodical of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China that was established in 1911 in Shanghai. The journal encouraged the study of Buddhism among the *wu da minzu* 五大民族, the "five great nations" that the Republican leaders had identified in the regions of the former Qing Empire: China, Manchuria, Mongolia, East Turkestan, and Tibet.[42] In his essays, titled *Xizang Fojiao lüeshi* 西藏佛教略史 (A Concise History of Tibetan Buddhism), Li offered the first study to cover *Xizang Fojiao* 西藏佛教, that is, Republican China's term for 'Tibetan Buddhism', as a distinct subject of historical and doctrinal inquiry. Li adapted his work from the *Ramakyō engaku* 喇嘛教沿革 (History of Lamaism).[43] Published in Tōkyō in 1877, the *Ramakyō engaku* was a work by Ogurusu Kōchō 小栗栖香頂 (1831-1905), the first Japanese Buddhist missionary in early modern China. In turn, Ogurusu had drawn on Qing and European sources to argue that *Lamajiao* 喇嘛教 'Lamaism', an obsolete term that had served as a referent for Tibetan Buddhism during the Qing dynasty, was essentially the same as Mikkyō 密教, Japan's term for tantra.[44] Li followed Ogurusu in many ways, but his own Chinese translation introduced significant changes. Unlike his Japanese source, Li did not employ the term *Lamajiao*. Instead, he chose 'Xizang Fojiao', rendering Ogurusu's Japanese expression 'Seizō bukkyō 西蔵仏教' for the first time into Chinese. He did so to define his object of study in the language of modern philology. Indeed, Li regarded Tibetan Buddhism as Tibet's national form of Buddhism. Hence, in his work, he discarded the Qing dynasty's *Lamajiao*. Most important, at the heart of Li's argument was his belief that Tibetan Buddhism was much more than a form of Buddhism that had been disseminated to Tibet from India. In Li's opinion, Tibetan Buddhism was a modern relic of what tantra had also been in ancient China.

Li Yizhuo discussed his history of Tibetan Buddhism in three essays, each devoted to a distinct theme. The first explored the bond between Buddhism and the Tibetan nation, tracing the religion's role in shaping Tibet's governance and the structure of its doctrinal system. Li portrayed the Tibetan nation as noble and peaceful, their national character molded by centuries of Buddhist devotion.[45] He classified Tibetan Buddhism within the Mahāyāna 'Great Vehicle'. Specifically, he identified Tibetan

42 For the ethnic rhetoric of the Republican leaders in relation to Buddhism, see Tuttle 2025, 128-55; cf. also Dikötter 1997, and especially 2015, 61-78.

43 Cf. Ogurusu 1877. For an annotated edition and photographic reproduction of the text, cf. Ogurusu 1982.

44 For the term lama in Japan in the early nineteenth century, see Shinjō Kawasaki 川崎信定 1986. For the reception of 'Lamajiao' in contemporary Tibet, including a Tibetan perspective on the Chinese names for the Buddhist traditions of Tibet, see Tseten 1986, 43-4. On Ogurusu's Qing sources, see Dibeltulo Concu 2021, 186-91.

45 Li 2006, 1: 447.

Buddhism with the *Mimi zong* 祕密宗 'Secret Mantra Sect'.[46] He argued that Tibet had received the teachings of tantra from India long before their transmission to China. Among these, he singled out the teachings of the *lianhua bu* 蓮華部 'Lotus Family', one of the three *rulai bu* 如來部 'Tathāgata Families' taught by Mahāvairocana, the Buddha's tantric form, in the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sūtra* (Sūtra of the Enlightenment of Mahāvairocana),[47] a scripture that had been brought to China by the Indian monk Śubhākarasiṃha (637-735)[48] during the Tang dynasty. Li remarked that the heart of these teachings lay in the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, that is, the aspiration to attain awakening for the benefit of all beings. To prove that Tibetan Buddhism was essentially a form of Secret Mantra, Li also emphasized the recitation, in Tibet, of Avalokiteśvara's six-syllable mantra: *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. In Li's opinion, this mantra, together with the practices of the *lianhua bu*, formed the doctrinal core of Tibetan Buddhism.

In the second and third essays, Li traced the development of Tibetan Buddhism in two main historical periods. First, he focused on the *hongyi pai* 紅衣派 'Red-Robed Sect', associated with Padmasambhava's early transmission of tantra to Tibet.[49] Then, he described the *huangyi pai* 黃衣派 'Yellow-Robed Sect', founded by Tsongkhapa in later ages. Drawing on Ogurusu's work, Li proposed a lineage for the transmission of tantra to Tibet. This lineage began with Mahāvairocana. It then passed through the great Indian scholars Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi to Padmasambhava, and from Padmasambhava into Tibet.[50] According to Li, the Red-Robed Sect employed this transmission to shape both its pantheon of deities and its meditative practices. Tsongkhapa, in Li's opinion, did not break from this earlier lineage of the Lotus Family.[51] Rather, Li continued, Tsongkhapa reformed it. He reinforced the transmission of tantra to Tibet by placing greater emphasis on moral discipline and by correcting earlier ritual excesses. For Li, these reforms had preserved the purity of tantra in Tibetan Buddhism. That purity, he argued, declined only later. And in discussing this decline, Li departed from both his Chinese and Japanese sources. He traced the decline of tantra in Tibet to Tsongkhapa's sixth tulku,[52] the Tibetan term for 'incarnation', referred to in Mongolian as a *xubilgan*. Indeed, a tulku lineage exists for Tsongkhapa's father: Akya *hothogthu*.[53] However, although Tsongkhapa had one tulku, he did not have a lineage himself. More precisely, Tsongkhapa's

46 Li 2006, 1, 448-9.

47 The Sanskrit version from which the Chinese and Tibetan translations were made was lost, but the original title preserved in the Tibetan translation is: *Mahāvairocana abhisaṃbodhi vikurvitādhiṣṭhāna vaipulya sūtrendrarāja nāma dharmaparyāya* (Dharma Discourse Called Mahāvairocana's Enlightenment, Miracles, and Empowerment, King of the Best of the Extensive Scriptures). In Chinese, the full title is: *Da Piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (Scripture of the Enlightenment, Miracles, Supernatural Transformations, and Empowerment of Mahāvairocana).

48 C. Shanwuwei 善無畏.

49 Li 2006, 2: 65.

50 Li 2006, 2: 70.

51 Li 2006, 1: 449.

52 T. sprul sku.

53 T. A kyā ho thog thu.

tulku was Shantipa Lodrö Gyaltsen (1487-1567),[54] a Geluk[55] master from the kingdom of Guge in western Tibet.[56] The lineage never reached the sixth incarnation, but Li needed a twofold timeline to accommodate a second period of decline for Tibet's tantra. This error likely reflected Li's attempt to explain Tibetan religious history in terms that were familiar to late Qing and early Republican narratives of dynastic decline.

Despite its many errors, Li Yizhuo's account left a lasting mark on how Tibetan Buddhism was imagined in Republican China. In 1929, he republished the three essays as a single volume. In 1933, while Fazun studied in Lhasa's great monasteries, Li revised the work under a new title: *Xizang Fojiao shi* 西藏佛教史 (History of Tibetan Buddhism). His adaptation of Ogurusu's *Ramakyō engaku* was the most widely read book about Tibet's *Mijiao* during the Republican period. Li Yizhuo's simple and familiar language appealed to Taixu, who had followed the developments of what, in the early 1920s, came to be known as revival of tantra. This revival was first led by a group of Cantonese converts to Japan's Shingon who sought to revive China's lost tantra through the Japanese tradition, and they were soon followed by those who sought to revive it through the Tibetan Tradition. And so, in the late 1920s, when Fazun began to read sources in the Tibetan language, Li's account of the history of the Vajrayāna in Tibet, an account that incorrectly traced the entire history of Tibetan Buddhism to the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi sūtra*, still conveyed the sense of the new Chinese term *Xizang Fojiao*.

To be sure, Fazun's scholarship would eclipse Li's in scope, method, and fidelity to Tibetan sources. Still, Fazun retained much of Li's language in the early study of Tibetan Buddhism. Like Li, Fazun regarded Tibetan Buddhism as the form of Buddhism that had taken root in the *Xizang minzu* 西藏民族, Republican China's term for the 'Tibetan nation'. Fazun not only moved beyond the categories he had inherited, but also beyond earlier scholarly methods. Li wrote from afar, relying on Chinese and Japanese sources. Fazun made the pilgrimage to Tibet, read his sources in Tibetan, and lived inside the tradition he aimed to introduce to Chinese Buddhists. Through revolution, war, and persecution, he sustained the most ambitious effort of the twentieth century to render the Tibetan scholastic tradition into Chinese. In so doing, Fazun offered his own answer to the question that haunted many Chinese Buddhists of his time: What had become of *Mijiao*?

Fazun's answer to that question was not articulated by mystifying Chinese and Japanese secondary sources. Unlike Li's, it emerged from the careful work of translation. In the field, and among Tibetan texts, Fazun relinquished an earlier generation's nostalgic search for China's tantra. What he uncovered in Tibet was something else entirely. Before we turn to his discoveries, we must first look to the origins of the mission in the years leading to 1925, when Fazun left Beijing for Tibet.

In 1925, Taixu published a seminal essay on *Haichao yin* 海潮音 (Sound of the Sea Tide), one of China's leading Buddhist periodicals of the time. The essay, titled "Zhongguo xianshi Mizong fuxing zhi qushi

54 T. Shanti pa blo gros rgyal mtshan.

55 T. Dge lugs; C. Gelu 格魯.

56 Cf. Vitali 2012, 159-64. This is an obscure tulku born sixty-eight years after the death of Tsongkhapa. In this light, Li may have possibly meant the sixth Dalai Lama. Still, this is unclear in his text.

中國現時密宗復興之趨勢" (Trends in the Contemporary Revival of Tantra in China),[57] reflected on a recent, unexpected phenomenon. The practice of tantra, long thought lost in China, seemed to have been emerging again in provinces like Guangdong 廣東, Hubei 湖北, Sichuan, Zhejiang 浙江, and Jiangsu 江蘇. Tantra seemed to have returned, observed Taixu, like a lost gem restored to its rightful owner. It was a treasure that stirred students of Buddhism across the country. Still, Taixu reflected on the nature of tantra. The tantra of his day, returning through Japan and Tibet, was surely not the same as the tradition that once flourished in China. Alongside his teacher Yang Wenhui, Taixu affirmed that tantra had held a prestigious place at the imperial court during the Tang dynasty. The story was drawn from the essays of Li Yizhuo, where the Chinese Buddhologist identified Tibetan Buddhism with both China's and Japan's tantra. In the early eighth century, observed Taixu, Indian and Central Asian masters like Śubhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi (671-741), and Amoghavajra (705-774) had brought tantra to the Tang imperial court. Under their guidance, it had reached unparalleled heights. Still, that legacy did not last, for it vanished during the persecution of Buddhism under Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840-846).[58]

In his essay, Taixu lamented that after this rupture, tantra had left only traces in China. In the centuries that followed, he continued, only fragments of tantra had survived in China. For example, the *yankou* 焰口, a ritual performed for the release of hungry ghosts, persisted in Chinese monasteries. Still tantra must have disappeared in both doctrine and practice. Later, says Taixu, a Tibetan exponent of tantra, that is, Pakpa[59] (1235-1280), arrived in China under Mongol patronage. His teaching, however, also faded from the scene. Eventually, during the Ming dynasty, the Hongwu 洪武 Emperor (r. 1368-1398) banned all tantric rituals. In contrast, Taixu concluded in his essay, the lamas of Tibet had preserved those teachings. There, he observed, Tsongkhapa had "reformed" the monastic system by reconciling tantra with the practice of morality.[60] Based on the work of Li Yizhuo, Taixu came to believe that, without Tsongkhapa's reforms, Tibet's tantra would have met the same end as China's.

57 Taixu 1970b, 2877.

58 Notably, in his writings Taixu uses the sinograph Mizong 密宗 (J. Misshū) as a synonym of Mijiao (J. Mikkyō) 密教. During the Republican period, both terms designate tantra in Buddhist Chinese in the sense that Li Youyi intended. In translating *Mizong* or *Mijiao* as "tantra", rather than "Esoteric Buddhism", the present study situates its analysis within the discourse on tantra of the Republican period, when China, Japan, and Tibet were believed to have inherited the same Vajrayāna from India. Recent scholarship has examined how China's *Mizong* or *Mijiao* was imagined in Japanese scholarship to have existed as a distinct "sect" or "school" of Chinese Buddhism. By contrast, recent studies of Chinese sources have shown a very different picture, one in which the scriptures, rituals, and practices later grouped under *Mijiao* or *Mizong* in East Asia were linked to the Indian tantras only in the modern period, largely through the lens of Japanese sectarian scholarship. See, for example, Orzech 2006 and 2012; McBride 2004; 2005; Sharf 2002; Shinohara 2014; Gimello 2006; and, with reference to the Republican period, Dibeltulo Concu 2021. For a different approach to the translation of *Mizong* or *Mijiao*, one that treats "Esoteric Buddhism" not as a construct of modern discourse but as a historical reality tracing to Tang China, cf. Shahar and Bentor 2017; Goble 2019; Wu 2024.

59 T. 'Phags pa; C. Basiba 發思巴.

60 It must be noticed here that 'reform' (C. chongxin 重新) reflects Taixu's preoccupations with the reforms of the Buddhist monastic system in China during the Republican period, as Tsongkhapa's reforms do not emerge in Tibetan sources.

Still, the return of tantra in modern China did not amount to a mere revival of lost elements. According to Taixu, the causes for the rise of tantra in his time had to be sought in Japan's imperial ambitions. In 1915, during the First World War, the Japanese government had issued the Twenty-One Demands to Yuan Shikai. The Twenty-One Demands included a clause that granted Japanese Buddhists the right to carry out missionary activities in China. According to Taixu, this clause amounted to cultural imperialism disguised as religious outreach. While teaching on Chinese soil, Japanese monks claimed they were merely returning the dharma that China had once given them. Their claim carried weight especially in the case of tantra, for Japanese missionaries maintained that tantra, after its decline in China, had flourished in Japan instead.

Ten years earlier, in 1915, Taixu had already addressed the revival of tantra in a famous essay titled "Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun 整理僧伽制度論" (On the Reorganization of the Saṃgha Institutions). In response to the spread of Japanese missionary activity in China, he had suggested to send Chinese monks to Japan to study and retrieve the lost traces of tantra from there.[61] Within five years, *Haichao yin* had become a platform to support this project. In 1920, the journal devoted a special issue to tantra. Among the contributions was *Manchaluo tongjie* 曼荼罗通解, a Chinese translation of *Mandara tsūkai* 曼荼羅通解 (An Explanation of the Maṇḍalas) by Gonda Raifu 權田雷斧 (1846-1934), a scholar in Japan's Shingon Sect 真言宗. The Chinese translator was Wang Hongyuan 王弘願 (1876-1937),[62] a Cantonese convert to Gonda Raifu's Shingon. His translation introduced Chinese readers to the *taizōkai* 胎藏界 and *kongōkai* 金剛界, a set of two maṇḍalas that are central to Japan's Shingon and Tendai 天台 sects. In it, Wang also described the *abhiṣeka*s,[63] or empowerments, performed in ceremonies involving these maṇḍalas. In so doing, he offered Chinese Buddhists a rare and detailed view into tantric rituals from Japan.[64] Wang Hongyuan had earlier translated Gonda Raifu's *Mikkyō kōyō* 密宗綱要 (Essentials of Tantra), a work first published in Tokyo in 1916, into Chinese. In 1924, at Wang's invitation, Gonda Raifu had also traveled to Chaozhou 潮州, where he conferred a series of empowerments. Wang continued his studies in Japan, then returned to confer *abhiṣeka*s in Guangzhou and Hong Kong. There, he also founded a center to promote tantra in China and publicized these efforts in his *Mijiao jiangxi lu* 密教講習錄 (Records of Conferences in the Study of Tantra), a Buddhist periodical devoted to Japan's esoteric traditions.

Despite his interest in tantra, Taixu remained cautious. In 1922, he had sent his disciple Dayong 大勇 (1893-1929) on a mission to Mount Kōya 高野山 in Japan to verify Wang's claims.[65] Dayong, a fully ordained monk, returned to China and began to confer *abhiṣeka*s himself. This raised a question: could non-ordained Japanese teachers validly bestow empowerments on Chinese monks? Taixu became skeptical. He began to doubt that tantra, as practiced in Japan and shaped by its cultural norms, could be reconciled with the Buddhist code of monastic discipline. Around this time, having read

61 Cf. Bianchi 2004, 32-9.

62 On Wang Hongyuan, cf. Schicketanz 2014.

63 T. dbang; C. guanding 灌頂.

64 On the *taizōkai* and *kongōkai* cf. Orzech, Sørensen, Payne 2011.

65 On Dayong, cf. Bianchi 2004, 36.

Li Yizhuo's essays on the history of Tibetan Buddhism, he turned to Tibet. That which Taixu regarded as Tsongkhapa's synthesis of sūtra and tantra, rooted in the practice of morality, appeared to offer a more suitable model for Chinese Buddhists.

By 1925, Taixu was perplexed about Japan's tantra. That year, he commissioned Dayong to lead a new mission, this time not to Japan, but to Tibet. Within months, Dayong assembled a group of thirty young monks and departed from Beijing. Yet the mission, as Taixu envisioned it, never reached Lhasa. In 1929, Dayong died tragically in eastern Tibet. Twenty-seven years earlier, as Li Yizhuo first turned to Buddhism, one of those monks had already begun to climb his own inner mountain.[66] His journey started in rural northern China, passed through years of struggle, and led him to a Chinese mountain where Tibetan Buddhism had long taken root.

Fazun's secular name was Wen Miaogui 溫妙貴. He was born on December 14, 1902, in Shen County 深縣, Hebei Province 河北省. After three years of primary school, his formal education came to an abrupt end. In 1919, faced with family hardship, he took up a shoemaking apprenticeship in Baoding 保定, about 160 kilometers south of Beijing. The labor was grueling. Sores broke out on his hands and his future looked hopeless. So, he left the shoe factory, fearing that his parents would force him into marriage before allowing him to see the world. Wandering on foot, he traveled West. In Fuping County 阜平县, Shanxi Province 山西省, a fateful encounter changed his path. "One evening at a small inn, an old man with white hair entered the door. He asked me, 'Young man, where are you going?' Before I could answer, he said, 'Mount Wutai in Shanxi is the *bodhimaṇḍa* of Mañjuśrī. There are many monasteries there, with monks in black robes and yellow robes. You could go there and become a monk'".[67] Taking these words to heart, Wen Miaogui set out in 1920 for Mount Wutai 五台山. Known as the "Five-Terraced Mountain", Mount Wutai, located in Shanxi Province, is one of East Asia's most revered sites of pilgrimage. Consecrated to Mañjuśrī,[68] the embodiment of the wisdom of all buddhas, it had long served as a meeting ground for Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists.[69] At Wutai's Yuhuang Temple 玉皇廟, he received novice ordination and the dharma name Fazun. There, in the sacred realm of Mañjuśrī, he met Dayong for the first time, in an encounter that would shape the course of his life.

In 1921, Fazun joined a weeklong retreat led by Dayong. It was his first sustained encounter with Buddhist doctrine. The retreat laid the foundation for his literacy in Buddhist *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s. Later that year, Dayong left Mount Wutai for Beijing in order to attend Taixu's lectures on the *Lotus Sūtra*.[70] Fazun followed him there. He hoped to continue his training and to receive full ordination as a Buddhist monk. In Beijing, Fazun met Taixu for the first time at Fayuan Temple 法源寺. The meeting left a lasting impression

66 Brenton Sullivan (2014, 298) writes: "Fazun rose to lofty heights from a rather typical or even disadvantaged position, and he did so at the price of much toil and suffering".

67 Cf. Hu Jiou 胡繼歐 (unpublished). Dr. Li Shenghai kindly provided me with this unpublished essay of Ms. Hu Jiou, one of Fazun's students at the Bodhi Studies Association in the early 1950s.

68 T. 'Jam dpal dbyangs; C. Wenshushili 文殊師利.

69 Cf. Tuttle 2006; 1-35; Charleux 2017.

70 S. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*; C. *Fahua jing* 法華經; T. *Dam pa'i chos pad ma dkar po'i mdo*. On the *Lotus Sūtra*, see Lopez 2016.

on him. Taixu was preparing to open the World Buddhist Institute[71] in Wuchang 武昌. His aim was to modernize China's Buddhist monastic system and raise its standards of learning. That winter, Fazun took the *bhikṣu* vows of full ordination. Soon after, he traveled to the Longchang lüsi 隆昌律寺, a major Vinaya center on Mount Baohua 寶華山 in Jiangsu Province 江蘇省. There, he studied the codes of monastic discipline and the teachings of the Tiantai 天台 school of Chinese Buddhism, including the *Tiantai sijiaoyi* 天台四教儀 (The Meaning of the Fourfold Teachings of Tiantai) by the Goryeo monk Chegwan 諦觀 (d. 970) and the *Jiaoguan gangzong* 教觀綱宗 (Essentials of Scriptural and Contemplative Approaches) by Zhixu 智旭 (1599-1655), a leading thinker of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

In 1922, Fazun returned to Wuchang. News had spread that Taixu's World Buddhist Institute was finally opening its doors there. Fazun joined its first class. The first year, he studied Abhidharma, Buddhist logic, and the history of Buddhism. By 1923, he had trained in the texts of the Sanlun zong 三論宗 'Three Treatises Sect', forming the Chinese Mādhyamika school. He also received instruction on Mahāyāna scriptures and Yogācāra texts: the *Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經 (Sūtra Unraveling the Thought),[72] the *Wenshushili suoshuo boreboluomi jing* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若波羅蜜經 (Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī),[73] and Xuanzang's *Cheng Weishi Lun* 成唯識論 (Demonstration of Consciousness Only).[74] These texts provided Fazun with a foundational understanding of Mahāyāna philosophy.

That same year, Fazun turned to Japan's tantra. He studied the *Mizong Gangyao* 密宗綱要 (Essentials of Tantra), that is, Gonda Raifu's manual on Shingon ritual that Wang Hongyuan had translated from Japanese. With this text, Fazun completed his basic training in both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, across the full spectrum of sūtra and tantra, as taught at the Wuchang Institute. Later that year, Dayong returned from Japan. In his hands were more ritual manuals, maṇḍala diagrams, and materials related to the *abhiṣeka* rites of Shingon. In Wuchang, Dayong began teaching the foundations of Japan's traditions of tantra. Under Dayong's guidance, Fazun encountered his first *sādhana*:[75] the practice of Yellow Mañjuśrī.

In 1924, Fazun completed his formal studies at the Wuchang Institute and moved to Beijing. There, at Ciyin Temple 慈因寺, Dayong had just launched a new initiative, the "Buddhist and Tibetan Language Institute".[76] Its aim was ambitious. Dayong hoped to train Chinese monks to read Buddhist texts in Tibetan and, eventually, to be able to receive teachings directly from Tibetan masters. The institute marked a turning point in the study of Tibetan Buddhism in modern China. For the first time, Tibetan language training was framed not just as textual recovery, but as a form of religious encounter.

71 C. Wuchang Shijie foxue yuan 武昌世界佛學苑. On the World Buddhist Institute, cf. Pittman 2001, 99, 118-19, 121-3, 125-30. Cf. also Lai 2017.

72 S. *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*; T. *Dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa'i mdo.*

73 C. *Wenshushili suoshuo boreboluomi jing* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若波羅蜜經.

74 S. **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi śāstra*.

75 The Sanskrit term *sādhana* (C. xiufa 修法; T. grub thabs) refers to methods of attainment performed by a practitioner in relation to a specific meditation deity (C. benzun 本尊; S. iṣṭadevatā; T. yi dam).

76 C. Fojiao zangwen xueyuan 佛教藏文學院.

But Dayong's vision was already evolving. That same year, he visited the Yonghe Gong 雍和宮, the imperial temple that had long served as the center of Tibetan Buddhism in Beijing. There, Dayong studied tantric ritual with Bai Puren 白普仁 (1870-1927),[77] a Mongolian lama of the Geluk order who had served at the Yonghe Gong since the final years of the Qing dynasty. Bai Puren had become renowned for a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai, where he was said to have received a direct vision of Mañjuśrī. Stories of miracles surrounded him. Yet, his reputation rested especially on his performance of *śāntika* rituals for national protection, often involving recitations of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra* (Sublime Golden Light Sūtra).[78] Earlier in 1924, Bai Puren had met the ninth Panchen Lama, Thupten Chökyi Nyima (1883-1937), during the latter's visit to Beijing. The Panchen Lama bestowed on him the Tibetan honorific title of *khenpo* 'abbot'.[79] The encounter left a deep impression on Dayong. Under Bai Puren's guidance, he studied the *homa*, that is, the tantric "fire" ritual as practiced in the Geluk tradition.

By early 1925, on the advice of Taixu, Dayong renamed the institute as "Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet".[80] The new name reflected a shift in direction. Language was no longer the endpoint. The institute had become a means towards pilgrimage. Dayong now planned lead his students westward, beyond the Tibetan borderlands, to learn directly from Tibetan masters. The language institute had become a religious mission.

The Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet left Beijing on June 4, 1925. The route carried them through the heart of China. They moved from Wuhan 武漢 to Yichang 宜昌, and then onward to Chongqing. Eventually, they arrived in Jiading 嘉定, in eastern Sichuan. From there, the monks climbed to Mount Emei 峨眉山, the mountain consecrated to Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva of extensive practice. In its forested heights, they entered retreat. That autumn, while descending a steep slope, Fazun injured his leg. The fall left him immobilized for several weeks. But stillness offered an opportunity. During his recovery, he discovered volumes of the Chinese Buddhist Canon and devoted himself to the Vinaya, the scriptural division concerning monastic discipline. At Wulong Temple 烏龍寺 in Jiading, Fazun borrowed a copy of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*,[81] the monastic ordination lineage followed in Tibet. Alongside it, he borrowed two lexicons and copied the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist terms from both of them by hand. One was a four-volume Chinese-Manchu-Mongolian-Tibetan lexicon of colloquial terms,[82] the other a four-volume Chinese-Manchu-Mongolian-Tibetan glossary of Buddhist terminology.[83] In so doing, Fazun created his own bilingual reference tools, preparing himself for the work of translation that lay ahead.

77 On Bai Puren, cf. Bianchi 2004, 40; Tuttle 2005, 79-81; and especially Wu 2024, 48-62.

78 C. *Jinguangming zuishengwang jing* 金光明最勝王經.

79 C. kanbu 堪布; T. mkhan po; S. upādhyāya; P. upajjhāya. The *khenpo* is a senior monk authorized to confer both novice and full ordinations.

80 C. Liu zang xuefa tuan 留藏學法團.

81 C. *Genben shuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶.

82 C. *Siti hebi* 四體合璧.

83 C. *Siti hebi fanyi mingyi* 四體合璧翻譯名義.

By the end of 1925, the group had crossed into Kham,[84] Tibet's eastern region. After reaching Dartsedo,[85] they settled at Nga Chö Monastery,[86] where they focused on improving their spoken Tibetan. At Nga Chö Monastery, Fazun reconnected with Chong Baolin 充寶林 (d.u.), his former teacher of Tibetan in Beijing who had returned home for the Tibetan New Year. Fazun soon learned that Mr. Chong was a disciple of Jangpa Mönlam Rinpoche (d.u.),[87] a lama renowned for both his scholarship and meditation practice, who lived and taught at Lhamotse Monastery,[88] on nearby Mount Paoma 跑馬山. In 1926, Fazun led Dayong and other members of the group on Mount Paoma to study under the Tibetan master. There, he studied some of the most important works of the Geluk scholastic tradition. To begin, he read Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikākārikā* (Thirty Verses)[89] and improved his language skills with several Tibetan language primers, opening the door for Tibetan philosophical literature. Later, under Jangpa Mönlam's guidance, Fazun studied several of Tsongkhapa's works, such as the *Gelong gi Lapja Namtse Dengmar Drakpa* (A Commentary on the Rules for Fully Ordained Monks),[90] the *Jangchub Shunglam* (Main Path for Bodhisattvas),[91] and the *Lamrim Düdön* (Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path).[92] These texts shaped the course of Fazun's later studies in Lhasa.

By 1927, Dayong decided that he would lead several members of the group into Ü-Tsang,[93] Tibet's central provinces. The Republican government approved the plan and pledged financial support. Officials hoped that the mission might strengthen ties between China and Tibet at a time of mounting uncertainty. The route west, however, proved treacherous. In Kham, political unrest and constant threat of banditry made group travel dangerous. Fazun chose a different path. Rather than wait, he set off alone, joining a mule caravan of merchants and making his way through the mountains. Eventually, he reunited with Dayong in Karze,[94] just north of Dartsedo. But in Karze, the mission stalled. Tibetan authorities refused to let them continue. Chinese citizens, they explained, could not proceed into Ü-Tsang if traveling with

84 T. Khams; C. Kang 康.

85 T. Dar rtse mdo; C. Dajianlü 打箭鑪, also Kangding 康定.

86 T. Lnga mchod; C. Anque si 安却寺.

87 T. Byams pa smon lam; C. Ciyuan dashi 慈願大師.

88 C. Lamo 拉摩; T. Lha mo rtse.

89 T. *Sum cu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*; C. *Weishi sanshi lun* 唯識三十論.

90 T. *Dge slong gi bslab bya gnam lce ldeng mar grags pa*; C. *Bichujie shi* 必芻戒釋. The *Bichujie shi*, also known in Chinese as *Bichuxue chu* 苾芻學處, is based on an oral commentary given by Lama Tsongkhapa in 1401 at Namche Deng Monastery. The text explains the vows of fully ordained *bhikṣu*s. It is especially important to understand Tsongkhapa's sustained efforts to reform and renew the study and practice of monastic discipline (C. jie 戒; S. śīla; T. tshul khrims), which he saw as having declined in Tibet during his time.

91 T. *Byang chub gzhung lam*; C. *Pusajiepin shi* 菩薩戒品釋. The "Main Path for Bodhisattvas" records the oral commentary given by Tsongkhapa in 1399 on the section dealing with bodhisattva discipline (S. bodhisattvaśīlaparivarta) in Asaṅga's "Stages of the Bodhisattva" chapter (C. Pusa di 菩薩地; S. Bodhisattva bhūmi; T. Byang chub sems dpa'i sa) of Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* (C. *Yuqieshidi lun* 瑜伽師地論).

92 C. *Putidao cidi lüe lun* 菩提道次第略論; T. *Lam rim bsdus don*; "Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path". The *Lam rim bsdus don* is also known as *Lam rim chung ngu*, "Brief Stages of the Path".

93 T. Dbus-Gtsang; C. Wei-Zang 衛藏.

94 T. Dkar mdzes; C. Ganzi 甘孜. Karze is an important city in eastern Tibet.

official escorts. With no option but to pause their journey, Fazun and Dayong took refuge at Drakar Monastery.[95] There, they came under the guidance of Drakar Tulku, Losang Tenzin Nyendrak (1866-1928),[96] the respected lineage holder who served as the monastery's abbot.

Drakar Rinpoché and his senior students welcomed Fazun into a rigorous course of study. The curriculum included two of Tsongkhapa's most influential works, the *Lamrim Chenmo* (Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path)[97] and the *Drangné Lekshe Nyingpo* (Essence of Eloquence on the Definitive and Provisional).[98] Fazun also studied the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Ornament of Realization),[99] attributed to Maitreyanātha (ca. 350),[100] alongside classical Indian and Tibetan commentaries to the text, as well as core treatises in Buddhist logic known as *Dü Dra* (Collected Topics).[101] In addition to Buddhist doctrine, he also read widely from the collected biographies of Geluk masters. This period also marked a turning point in Fazun's work. He began translating from Tibetan into Chinese for the first time. This early effort included Tsongkhapa's brief poem *Tendrel Töpa* (In Praise of Dependent Origination),[102] which he rendered into Chinese with a short commentary. He also translated the lives of Tsongkhapa[103] and the Bengali master Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982-1054),[104] whose work inspired Tsongkhapa to compose the *Lamrim Chenmo*. Both would be later published in *Haichao yin*.[105] During his stay in Karze, Fazun also took notes of Drakar Tulku's oral teachings, although most of these would later be lost.

In 1928, Drakar Tulku introduced Fazun to Jampel Rölpai Lodrö (1888-1936),[106] the lama he would revere as his lifelong teacher. Known as Amdo Géshé,[107] Jampel Rölpai Lodrö was born in Tsongkha, in the Amdo

95 T. Brag dkar dgon pa; Zhaga si 札噶寺.

96 T. Brag dkar sprul sku Blo bzang bstan 'dzin snyan grags; C. Zhaga zhugu 札噶諸古.

97 T. *Lam rim chen mo*; C. *Putidao cidi guanglun* 菩提道次第廣論.

98 T. *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*; C. *Bian liaoyi buliaoyi lun* 辨了義不了義論; completed by Tsongkhapa in Lhasa in 1408.

99 T. *Mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan*; C. *Xianguan zhuangyan lun* 現觀莊嚴論.

100 Maitreya (T. Byams pa; C. Mile 彌勒) is the bodhisattva who will become the next buddha (hence also called the buddha of the future), following the disappearance of the teachings of Buddha Śākyamuni from the human world in the Age of Final Dharma. According to tradition, he is the author of several texts that clarify aspects of the *prajñāpāramitā sūtra*s. Some of these works, transmitted to Asaṅga in the fourth century, form the foundation of the thought of the Cittamātra school. Later identified as the future buddha, Maitreya is regarded modern scholarship as a historical figure named Maitreyanātha, Asaṅga's predecessor and the actual founder of the school.

101 T. *Bsdus grwa*; C. *Yinming chuji rumen* 因明初機入門.

102 T. *Rten 'brel bstod pa*. The full Tibetan title is *Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la zab mo rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba gsung ba'i sgo nas bstod pa legs par bshad pa'i snying po*. Fazun usually refers to the text as *Yuanqi zan* 緣起贊, but his full translation of the extended Tibetan title is: *You shuo shenshen yuanqi men zhong chengzan wushang dashi shizun shuo xinzang, lüe ming "Yuanqi Zan"* 由說甚深緣起門中稱讚無上大師世尊說心臟，略名"緣起讚". This text is known as the *Brief Essence of the Eloquence*.

103 C. *Zongkaba Dashi Zhuan* 宗喀巴大師傳.

104 T. A ti sha; C. Adixia 阿底峽.

105 C. *Adixia zunzhe zhuan* 阿底峽尊者傳.

106 T. 'Jam dpal rol pa'i blo gros.

107 T. A mdo dge bshes; C. Andong enshi 安東恩師.

region of northeastern Tibet.[108] Orphaned at the age of six, he took novice vows early and began his training at Kumbum Monastery,[109] where he distinguished himself in the Geluk curriculum. He received full ordination and advanced tantric empowerments from several leading masters of his time. Among these were transmissions of Yoganiruttaratantra practices such as Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajrabhairava. His education also included instruction from the fourth Amdo Zhamarpa, Gendün Tenzin Gyatso (1852-1912),[110] a teacher of the thirteenth Dalai Lama. Beyond training in the Geluk sect, Jampel Rölpai Lodrö received extensive teachings across all traditions. In the Nyingma sect, he studied under Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (1820-1892)[111] and Tertön Sögyal (1856-1926).[112] From Khamnyön Darma Senggé (1865-1953),[113] a celebrated 'mad yogin' from Kham, he learned the Longchen Nyingtik (Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse)[114] cycle, rooted in the visionary writings of Jikmé Lingpa (1730-1798),[115] a central figure in Dzokchen (Great Perfection).[116] Recognized by several teachers as an incarnation of Patrül Rinpoché (1808-1887),[117] one of the most important Tibetan masters of the nineteenth century, Amdo Géshé taught widely in Golok,[118] Derge,[119] and Chamdo[120] throughout the 1910s and 1920s. In Chamdo, he would accept Fazun as a disciple and, together with Dayong, he would prepare them for study in Lhasa's great monastic colleges.

In August 1929, Dayong died at Drakar Monastery. Years of travel and the harsh effects of the high altitude of the Tibetan plateau had worn him down. His death marked the end of the mission to Tibet as originally envisioned by Taixu. Fazun, its most accomplished survivor, inherited the intellectual and institutional aims that Dayong had carried to that moment. After Dayong's funeral, he stayed in Karze through the winter. Then, in early 1930, he set out for central Tibet with three companions. Their first destination was Chamdo, the easternmost stronghold of the Ganden Phodrang[121] government (1655-1959), which ruled central and western Tibet and parts of the east. In Chamdo, Fazun entered a new phase of learning with Jampel Rölpai Lodrö. Under his guidance, Fazun received more than forty empowerments into

108 On Amdo Géshé, cf. Roger Jackson 2019, 309. For a biography of Amdo Géshé, cf. Pearcey 2012.

109 T. Sku 'bum; C. Taer si 塔兒寺. The Kumbum Monastery, meaning "Hundred Thousand Images", is a Geluk institution in the Kokonor region of Amdo, southwest of Siling in modern-day Qinghai province. Officially known as Kumbum Jampaling (T. Sku 'bum byams pa gling), it was founded in 1583 by the Third Dalai Lama, Sönam Gyatso at the site of Tsongkhapa's birth.

110 T. A mdo zhwa dmar pa dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho.

111 T. 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.

112 T. Gter ston bsod rgyal.

113 T. Khams smyon d+har+ma seng ge.

114 T. Klong chen snying thig.

115 T. 'Jigs med gling pa.

116 T. Rdzogs chen.

117 T. Dpal sprul rin po che.

118 T. Mgo log.

119 T. Sde dge.

120 T. Chab mdo.

121 T. Dga' ldan pho brang.

the maṇḍalas of the Vajrayāna[122] and began to explore the central texts in the Geluk scholastic curriculum. That summer, he also attended lectures in Tibetan language. He then followed Amdo Géshé on a journey into Ü-Tsang.

Tibetan master and Chinese disciple arrived in Lhasa at the end of October 1930. Fazun enrolled at Drepung Monastery,[123] the largest of the three great Geluk monasteries near Lhasa. He remained there for the next four years. Under the supervision of Amdo Géshé, he read widely in the Indian and Tibetan commentarial traditions. He began with primers in logic and epistemology, essential for engaging the core commentaries, and continued with the *Lamrim Chenmo*. He then turned to others of Tsongkhapa's major works, including the *Lekshe Sertreng* (Golden Garland of Eloquence),[124] the *Ngakrim Chenmo* (Great Exposition of the Stages of Mantra),[125] and the *Rimnga Rabtu Salwé Drönmé* (Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp of the Five Stages).[126] Over time, Fazun received empowerments for more than three hundred deities. Among them were Yamāntaka[127] and Vajrayoginī.[128] Beyond Amdo Géshé, he also studied with other leading Geluk masters of his time. He trained in the Abhidharma[129] with the Ganden Tripa,[130] in the Vinaya with the Jangtsé Chöjé Jampa Chödrak (1876-1937),[131] and received the empowerment of Heruka[132] from Pabongka Rinpoché (1878-1941).[133] It was during these years at Drepung as a protégé of Amdo Géshé, that Fazun began his first major translation project: rendering Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* into Chinese. It was a project that he would pursue for years to come.

122 T. Rdo rje theg pa; C. Jingang sheng 金剛乘; 'Diamond Vehicle' or 'Thunderbolt Vehicle'.

123 T. 'Bras spungs dgon pa; C. Biebang si 別邦寺. The author was unable to trace in the literature the name of the college in which Fazun was enrolled at Drepung.

124 T. *Legs bshad gser phreng*; C. *Xianguan zhuangyan lun jinman lun* 現觀莊嚴論金鬘論.

125 T. *Sngags rim chen mo*; C. *Mizong dao cidi guanglun* 密宗道次第廣論.

126 T. *Rim lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*; C. *Shengji mijiao wang wu cidi jiaoshou shanxiandeng lun* 勝集密教王五次第教授善顯燈論; in Fazun's Chinese, "Great Treatise on the Five Stages".

127 T. Gshin rje gshed; C. Daweide 大威德; the "Destroyer of Death" tantra.

128 T. Rdo rje rnal 'byor ma; C. Kongxing fomu 空行佛母.

129 T. Chos mngon pa; C. Jushe 俱舍.

130 T. Dga' ldan khri pa; C. Gedeng chiba 格登持巴; in Tibetan, the "Throneholder of Ganden Monastery". It remains unclear whether Fazun studied with the ninety-first or the ninety-second Ganden Tripa. The ninety-first Ganden Tripa was Losang Gyaltsen (T. Blo bzang rgyal mtshan, d. 1932), who held the position from 1927 to 1932. He was succeeded by Thupten Nyinje (T. Thub bstan nyin byed, d. 1933?), the ninety-second Ganden Tripa.

131 T. Byang rtse chos rje; C. Jiangze fawang 絳則法王. By the title Jangtsé Chöjé 'Dharma King of Byang rtse', Fazun is referring to the ninetieth Ganden Tripa, Jampa Chödrak (T. Byams pa chos grags; 1876-1937). Jangtsé is one of the monastic colleges at Ganden.

132 T. 'Khor lo bde mchog; C. Shengle jingang 勝樂金剛; the "Binding of the Wheel" tantra.

133 T. Pha bong ka Byams pa bstan'dzin 'phrin las rgya mtsho; C. Pozhangka dashi 頗章喀大師. Referred to in Chinese by Fazun as Pozhangka dashi and also known as Pabengka renboqie 帕繃喀仁波伽, Pabongka Rinpoché was one of the most influential Tibetan lamas of the twentieth century. As the teacher of the tutors of Tenzin Gyatso (T. Bstan' dzin rgya mtsho; b. 1935), the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Pabongka Rinpoche was a renowned scholar with a remarkable ability to guide disciples. He was especially gifted in expounding the *Lamrim*, while in the realm of Buddhist tantra, he was widely regarded among Tibetans as a great *yogin* – so much so that many believed he was a living embodiment of the *yidam* Heruka Cakrasaṃvara (Tib. 'Khor lo bde mchog; C. Shengle Jingang 勝樂金剛). Fazun received the empowerment of this deity directly from Pabongka Rinpoche.

Meanwhile, back in Sichuan, Taixu's plans for Tibetan Buddhism were entering a new phase. In 1930, he accepted an invitation from lay followers to come teach the dharma in Sichuan province. He already knew well Liu Xiang 劉湘 (1890-1938), the most influential of Sichuan's warlords of the Republican period. The two met to discuss rising tensions between Tibetans and Chinese. Taixu believed the Buddha's teachings could serve as a bridge to ease those tensions. He urged Liu Xiang to establish an institution that would foster mutual understanding through study and dialogue. Two years later, in 1932, a Buddhist college was opened in Beibei 北碚, a town nestled in the hills above Chongqing. Conceived by Taixu and supported by Liu Xiang, the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine[134] was established at Jinyun Temple 缙云寺. It was planned as a branch of the Wuchang Institute, where Taixu had previously set forth his vision of Buddhist reform. To be sure, eight years earlier, Taixu and Dayong had launched the Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet, hoping to send Chinese monks into Lhasa. But after Dayong's untimely death, authorities in Sichuan advanced a different approach. Rather than sending monks into Tibet, the new mission was to train them at home. With a command of the Tibetan language, Chinese monks could study and translate the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism without the dangers of actually going into Tibet. The College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine quickly became the model of a new Republican-era endeavor. It aimed to incorporate the scriptural treasures of Tibetan Buddhism into a reformed Chinese Buddhism. Around this time, Taixu began writing regular letters to Fazun in Lhasa. He asked him to return to China and take a leadership role at the new College as a teacher and educational director. Fazun hesitated. Staying in Lhasa meant continuing his advanced studies with Amdo Géshé at Drepung. Returning meant becoming an institutional leader. Despite years of hardship to reach the Tibetan capital, he made the difficult choice. He would go back to China.

At the beginning of winter 1933, Fazun left Lhasa on muleback, beginning a long journey through Nepal and India. He visited the major pilgrimage sites of Śākyamuni Buddha, including Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kuśinagar, before reaching Rangoon, the capital of Myanmar, in the spring of 1934. He arrived at the port of Shanghai that summer. He then reunited with Taixu at Xuedou Temple 雪竇寺, a temple in the Chan Tradition 禪宗 near Ningbo 寧波 in Zhejiang province. The two had not seen each other since the early 1920s, when Dayong had founded the Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Institute in Beijing. Fazun shared a detailed account of his years in Tibet, from the grief over Dayong's death and the hardships of travel, to his mastery of the Tibetan language, and on to the teaching he had received from several eminent lamas of his time in Lhasa.

After his visit to Taixu in Ningbo, Fazun went to Nanjing. There, he was invited to serve as a translator for Losang Tenzin Jikmé Wangchuk (1884-1947),[135] known also as Ngakchen Rinpoché.[136] Losang Tenzin Jikmé

134 C. Hanzang jiaoli yuan 漢藏教理院. To date, the most detailed accounts of the Hanzang jiaoli yuan in European languages remain Gray Tuttle's monograph *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (2005) and Brenton Sullivan's essay "Venerable Fazun at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (1932-50) and Tibetan Geluk Buddhism in China" (2008).

135 T. Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 'jigs med dbang phyug.

136 T. Sngags chen rin po che; C. Anqin dashi 安欽大師.

Wangchuk was a leading Geluk lama from Tashi Lhünpo Monastery[137] in Shigatsé,[138] Tibet's second largest city about 200 kilometers west of Lhasa. Ngakchen Rinpoché had come to China a decade earlier in the entourage of the ninth Panchen Lama, Thupten Chökyi Nyima.[139] In Nanjing, Fazun served as a translator during a Palden Lhamo[140] empowerment transmitted by Ngakchen Rinpoché. Shortly after, he traveled to Hebei for a brief reunion with his family, the first since he had left for Tibet. That summer, he remained in Beijing, where he joined a growing circle of scholars and monks drawn to the ninth Panchen Lama's religious and diplomatic mission in Republican China.[141] The collaboration with Ngakchen Rinpoché brought Fazun into the heart of a new institutional landscape that was taking shape in the capital. In October 1932, the Panchen Lama conferred a public *Kālacakra* tantra empowerment within the gates of the Forbidden City.[142] It reportedly attracted more than 100,000 attendees. The following year, in 1933, he founded the College for Tantric Scriptures,[143] dedicated to the transmission and study of Buddhist tantra. In 1934, the Panchen Lama also established the Bodhi Study Association,[144] focused on the translation and dissemination of Tibetan Buddhist texts and teachings, especially from the Geluk tradition. That same summer, Fazun served again as a translator for Ngakchen Rinpoché at the College for Tantric Scriptures.

In the autumn of 1934, Fazun arrived in Chongqing and stepped into his new role at the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine. Soon after his arrival, he was formally appointed director. His teaching drew from a decade of experience in Lhasa. Tibetan language, Buddhist philosophy, and direct experience all converged in his classroom. While teaching, he resumed translating the *Lamrim Chenmo*. Alongside, he began to work on two additional texts by Lama Tsongkhapa that he had studied years earlier in Kham: the *Gelong gi Lapja Namtse Dengmar Drakpa* and the *Jangchub Shunglam*. Again, Taixu hoped this model could include Tibetan Buddhism in the revival of Chinese Buddhism. Hence, in 1935, Taixu secured fresh funding for the College through Liu Xiang. With these resources, the College gained recognition as a branch of the Wuchang Institute. Fazun, endowed with extensive training and a growing personal library of Tibetan texts, was appointed head of translation and academic director. That year, he trained

137 T. Bkra shis lhun po; C. Zhaxi lunbu si 扎什倫布寺.

138 T. Gzhis ka rtse; C. Yijiaze 亦迦則.

139 On the activities of the ninth Panchen Lama in Beijing, cf. Tuttle 2008, 303-27; Jagou 2011, 73-84.

140 T. Dpal ldan lha mo; C. Jixiang Tiannü 吉祥天女; "Glorious Goddess".

141 On the institutions established during this period in Beijing, cf. Tuttle 2009.

142 Cf. Jagou 2011, 75-6.

143 T. Gsang ngags chos mdzod gling; C. Mi Zang Yuan 密藏院 (active 1931-1951). Gray Tuttle renders the name of Beijing's Mi Zang Yuan as "Esoteric Treasury Institute". In this work, I avoid translating the dyad of sūtra-tantra dyad of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon as Esoteric and Essoteric, whether referring to traditions and institutions in China and Japan or Tibet, Nepal, and India. By the early twentieth century in East Asia, the Sinograph Mi 密 was used to translate *Gsang ngags*, that is, Secret Mantra, as understood in Tibet, that is, as a synonym of the scriptural division of tantra (T. Rgyud) of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Here, I translate Mi Zang Yuan as "College for Tantric Scriptures". Cf. Tuttle 2009, 255-9.

144 C. Puti Xuehui 菩提學會 (active 1938-51). Here, I follow Gray Tuttle's translation of the association's name, "Bodhi Study Association". Cf. Tuttle 2009, 255, 267-9, 275 fn.

the first cohort of students and wove into the College's curriculum the oral instructions he had received at Drepung Monastery.

At this time, Fazun outlined a vision for the College's future. He wanted to bring his teacher, Amdo Géshé, to China. First, he hoped to receive the teachings he had missed before returning from Tibet. Second, he believed that Amdo Géshé could serve as a teacher of Buddhist philosophy at the College. But funds were tight. Fazun's plan stalled. An opportunity then arose with Ngawang Namgyal (1894-1968).[145] Known also as Khenpo Ngawang,[146] Ngawang Namgyal was a direct disciple of Pabongka Rinpoche. He was in Chengdu at the time in order to raise money for Sera Monastery,[147] one of the three great Geluk seats near Lhasa. He encouraged Fazun to accompany him and translate a series of teachings he planned to give there. The work, he said, would be paid. Around the same time, Fazun's lay supporter Hu Youzhang 胡有章 (d.u.) visited the College. He too urged Fazun to accept the offer, pointing out that the earnings could support his vision: the journey back to Tibet and his root teacher's arrival in China. Later that year, Fazun accepted Khenpo Ngawang's invitation and traveled to Chengdu. There, he translated two sets of teachings on a devotional prayer composed by Pabongka Rinpoche[148] and on Tsongkhapa's *Tendrel Töpa*. The funds he received were enough to make the long trip to Lhasa and return with Amdo Géshé.

In the autumn of 1935, Fazun departed once again for Tibet. This time, he planned to cross the Himalayas and enter Tibet from British India.

In February 1936, Fazun arrived in Lhasa. Tragic news met him in Tibet's capital. Just days before his return, Amdo Géshé had died. The loss devastated him. Years of planning unraveled in a single moment. Fazun traveled to Chamdo to serve as the principal officiant at his teacher's funeral rites. Then, he returned to Lhasa, where he remained for the next six months. He refused to let grief waste the journey, resuming his Vinaya studies with the Jangtsé Chöjé of Ganden Monastery,[149] the great Geluk monastery outside Lhasa. Together, they read several commentaries, including the *Vinayasūtra* (Aphorisms on the Vinaya)[150] by the Indian scholar Guṇaprabha (c. seventh century).[151] Distilling the essential points of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, the *Vinayasūtra* too is one of the classics included in the Geluk curriculum. Alongside, Fazun returned to translation. Here, in Lhasa, he rendered Tsongkhapa's *Drangné Lekshe Nyingpo* into Chinese. He also paired it with a commentary, the *Drangné Namjekyi Kandrel* (Commentary on the Difficult

145 T. Ngag dbang rnam rgyal, C. Awang langji 阿旺朗吉.

146 T. Mkhan po Ngag dbang; C. Awang *kanbu* 阿旺堪布.

147 T. Se ra dgon pa. C. Sela si 色拉寺.

148 T. *Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i bstan pa dang mjal ba'i smon lam*; C. *Zhiyu sanjie fawang dazongkaba shengjiao yuanwen* 值遇三界法王大宗喀巴聖教愿文; "Prayer for Encountering the Teaching of the Great Tsongkhapa, King of the Dharma in the Three Realms".

149 T. Dga' ldan dgon pa; C. Gedeng si 格登寺.

150 T. *'Dul ba'i mdo*; C. *Lüjing* 律經.

151 T. Yon tan 'od; C. Deguang 德光.

Points of 'Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive')[152] by the second Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso (1476-1542).[153]

Still, during this time in Lhasa, Fazun observed the social and political atmosphere around him. More than four decades later, after the Cultural Revolution, he reflected on the impressions left by his second journey to Tibet:

> That year [1936], in Tibet, I heard a great deal of reactionary propaganda. Although I had no understanding of Communist Party politics, it still aroused a sense of hostility in me. I explained all of this quite clearly in my book *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through*.[154]

While still mourning for Amdo Géshé, Fazun sought other lamas willing to travel to China and teach at the College in Chongqing. But none accepted. Even so, Fazun did not return to China with empty hands. In August 1936, Fazun left Lhasa and crossed the Himalayas back to British India with a complete copy of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, along with the collected works of Tsongkhapa and his closest disciples, Khedrup Jé (1385-1438)[155] and Gyaltsap Jé (1364-1432).[156] These works would form the basis of his translation work for the next four and a half decades.

By the time he returned to Chongqing, the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine was well underway. Fazun resumed his lectures on the *Lamrim Chenmo*. This time, his students could consult the complete Chinese text. While he was in Tibet earlier in 1936, his translation of Tsongkhapa's masterpiece had been published in Wuchang. The *Lamrim Chenmo* appeared in print alongside Khedrup Jé's *Gyüde Chiyi Nampar Zhakpa Gyapar Jyöpa* (Extensive Expression of the Presentation of the General Tantra Sets),[157] a concise exposition of the foundational principles of the Buddhist tantras. The translation of Khedrup Jé's work on tantra stood out for two reasons.[158] First, it featured a preface by Taixu, who emphasized that tantra was not, as Chinese Buddhists believed, a tradition centered mainly on the repetition of mantras, but a complex and coherent system grounded in Mahāyāna doctrine. He praised the translation's clarity and noted its value in correcting widespread misunderstandings that existed in China. Fazun's work, he argued, revealed the true structure of tantra: a practical path toward Buddhahood rooted in profound insight. Second, it featured the translator's notes. Fazun explained

152 T. *Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa'i gsung 'bum las drang nges rnam 'byed kyi dka' 'grel dgongs pa'i don rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me* (Commentary on the Difficult Points of "Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive" from the Collected Works of the Foremost Holy Omniscient [Tsongkhapa]: Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Meaning of His Thought). In Fazun's Chinese, *Bian liaoyi buliaoyi lun shinan* 辨了義不了義論釋難.

153 T. Dge 'dun rgya mtsho; C. Senghai 僧海.

154 Lü, Hu 2002, 463.

155 C. Kezhu jie 克主結; T. Mkhas grub rje. Khedrup Gelek Pal Sangpo (T. Mkhas grub rje Dge legs dpal bzang po), known as Khedrup Jé, was a close disciple of Tsongkhapa and an important early figure in the Geluk sect. A prolific scholar, Khedrup Jé excelled in Madhyamaka, tantra, and *pramāṇa*.

156 T. Rgyal tshab rje Dar ma rin chen; C. Jiecao jie Dama renqin 嘉曹杰達瑪仁欽.

157 C. *Mizong dao cidi lüe lun* 密宗道次第略論; T. *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa rgyas par brjod pa*. For an English translation, cf. Dge-legs, Wayman, Lessing 1968.

158 Cf. Fazun 2000d, 329-32.

his strategies for rendering the terminology of the Buddhist tantras that did not exist in Chinese. When a suitable equivalent existed, he used it. Where no technical terms were available, he adapted the meaning of the Tibetan term to fit Chinese usage. For Sanskrit technical terms, he followed the established practices of phonetic transcription in Buddhist Chinese.

Between 1936 and 1937, Fazun completed a series of translations of Geluk commentaries on the Vinaya. These works established the foundation for the College's curriculum in Buddhist morality. While teaching, he also translated the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* into Chinese and prepared a short commentary for his students. These efforts reflected his broader vision after returning from Tibet. It was to establish a solid foundation for the study of Tibetan Buddhism in China. Translation was central to this endeavor, but so was creating resources to train a new generation of monks. And so, in the first half of 1937, he turned to modern Chinese prose.

Two of his most widely read works during the Sino-Japanese War were pilgrimage accounts of Tibet. Both were written at the urging of Fafang 法舫 (1904-1951),[159] another close disciple of Taixu. Like Fazun, Fafang had entered the first cohort at the Wuchang Institute in 1922. After graduating in 1924, he had traveled to Beijing to study at the Tibetan Language Institute founded by Dayong. In 1925, he joined the Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet. Of the thirty monks who set out on the mission to recover China's lost tantra, most never reached Lhasa, and Fafang was among them. He studied Tibetan and the *lamrim* with Dayong and Fazun in Dartsedo and later made his way to Karze. When Dayong died in 1929, Fafang returned to China. He became one of Taixu's assistants at the Wuchang Institute. Later, he learned Pāli, the sacred language of the Buddhist canon of Śrī Laṅka, and specialized in the Theravāda tradition.[160]

In November 1936, during Fazun's second return from Tibet, he and Fafang traveled together on the Yangtze River from Wuhan to Chongqing. Along the way, Fafang urged him to record his experiences in Tibet. Within six months, Fazun produced the two books in *baihua* 白話, the vernacular language championed by the *Wusi yundong* 五四運動 (May Fourth Movement). Each was part of Fazun's broader educational mission at the College, shaped by the same spirit, the spirit of a citizen of Republican China, which guided his translations of Buddhist texts. The first of Fazun's accounts, *Modern Tibet*, appeared in Chongqing in May 1937. The second, *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through*, followed in June, evoking the memories of Fazun's final months in Lhasa.

In early July 1937, Fazun traveled to north China at the invitation of Ngakchen Rinpoché. The lama had asked him to serve as translator at the College of Tantric Scriptures in Beijing. On July 7, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident broke out near the capital, prompting Japan's full-scale invasion of China. Within weeks, as the country was pulled into the Second World War, Fazun urged Taixu to retreat to Chongqing and teach at the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine. The move brought Taixu into close and regular contact with the College's staff and students. It was here that Taixu began reading Fazun's translations of Tibetan works on Buddhist tantra.

159 On Fafang, cf. Hammerstrom 2015, 69-70; Xue 2013, 68.

160 C. Shangzuo bu 上座部.

During the Sino-Japanese War, Fazun's duties expanded beyond his lectures at the College. He undertook the translation of major works from the Geluk curriculum into Chinese. To support his students, he prepared a Tibetan language grammar[161] and a Tibetan language reader.[162] By the spring of 1938, the College welcomed a steady flow of eminent monks fleeing the areas occupied by the Japanese. The monk Weifang 法舫 (1908-1969), former head of the Wuchang Institute, moved to Chongqing after Wuhan became a military stronghold and a hub of national defense against the Japanese. Soon after, more of Taixu's close disciples arrived. Among them was Yinshun 印順 (1906-2005), an authority on the Chinese Mādhyamika. The monks Xuesong 雪松 (1909-2000) and Yanding 嚴定 (1902-1954) joined as well. Both had traveled to eastern Tibet with Dayong and Fazun one decade earlier, but neither had made it to Lhasa. Seeing the need for shared leadership, Taixu appointed Fazun and Weifang to head the College. The arrangement freed Fazun to focus on translation. That same year, seeking deeper understanding of the nature of tantra in Tibet, Taixu also asked Fazun to translate Tsongkhapa's *Ngakrim Chenmo* into Chinese.

Between 1939 and 1942, Fazun completed a body of translations that confirmed his reputation as China's leading authority on Tibetan Buddhism. In 1939, after finishing the *Ngakrim Chenmo*, he asked Yinshun to refine the Chinese draft for style. Soon after, the Bodhi Study Association in Beijing published the work. That same year, he also translated the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Compendium of Training)[163] by the Indian master Śāntideva (c. eighth century).[164] In preparing it, he drew extensively on Yijing's earlier Chinese rendering of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. When no exact Chinese equivalents existed, Fazun created clear translations from the Tibetan and supplemented them with concise glosses.

Around this time, the foundations of the revival of tantra that had inspired Taixu and Dayong in their mission began to collapse, not by means of new knowledge of sūtra and tantra, but under the weight of historical knowledge.

In 1940, for his lectures on Tibetan history at the College, Fazun wrote his *Xizang minzu zhengjiao shi* 西藏民族政教史 (Political and Religious History of the Tibetan Nation).[165] The book stands out as his most rigorous historical study of Tibetan sources. Unlike Li Yizhuo's *Xizang Fojiao lüeshi*, published a decade earlier, in his *Xizang minzu zhengjiao shi* Fazun does not rely on Chinese or Japanese sources that identify Tibetan Buddhism with *Lamajiao* or with Japan's tantra. His innovation was to bring together Chinese and Tibetan sources. From the Chinese tradition, he used dynastic genealogies such as the *Tufan zhuan* 吐蕃傳 (Monograph of the Tufan), collected in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang) from the Song dynasty 宋朝 (960-1127). For his Tibetan sources, he turned to Butön Rinchen Drup's (1290-1364)[166] *Chöjung* (History of Buddhism)[167] and the third Tukwan

161 C. *Zangwen wenfa* 藏文文法.

162 C. *Zangwen duben* 藏文讀本.

163 T. *Bslab pa kun las btus pa*; C. *Dasheng ji pusa xue lun* 大乘集菩薩學論.

164 T. Zhi ba lha; C. Jingtian 靜天.

165 Cf. Fazun 1940.

166 T. Bu ston rin chen grub.

167 T. *Chos 'byung*.

Losang Chökyi Nyima's (1737-1802)[168] *Drubta Shelgi Melong* (Crystal Mirror of Doctrinal Systems).[169]

In the opening pages of his *Xizang minzu zhengjiao shi,* Fazun introduced the Bön religion and offered a new periodization of the history of Buddhism in Tibet, one that remained foreign to Li Yizhuo's earlier work. He wrote:

> Tibetan historical works frequently narrate the rise and fall of religion. They are tied to the biographies of those who founded or glorified it, and thus to the politics of their age. Such records cannot be separated from religion, for once separated they lose their value as history. Historical accounts, therefore, extend no further than the rise and fall of religion. There are two religions of Tibet: (1) the original religion of the way of the gods, called *bönpo*, which has been passed down to our day and still has its worshippers; and (2) Buddhism, first introduced from India during the Tang dynasty. In the early reign of Emperor Wuzong it was destroyed, but in the Song it flourished once again. Thus, Tibetan histories speak of "old Buddhism", or the "early dissemination", and "new Buddhism", or the "later dissemination". Before the Tang there was only the religion of the way of the gods, with no trace of Buddhism. In the later dissemination, Buddhism again fell into decline, until Tsongkhapa arose, who reorganized and revived it, shaping the religious and political order of the past six centuries. Therefore, Tibetan history can be divided into two periods: (1) Ancient history, from before the introduction of Buddhism through its spread up to the rise of the Yellow Religion; and (2) Modern history, from Tsongkhapa's founding of the Yellow Religion to the present.[170]

For the first time in a Chinese work on Tibet, Tibetan historians were given the authority to narrate their own country's past. Fazun showed that Tibet's institutions were both political and religious. The two aspects were inseparable. Citing records from the Tang, Fazun explained that Tibet had two religions. The first was *Shendao jiao* 神道教, 'religion of the way of the gods', identified as *Bengbo* 崩薄, 'Bön tradition';[171] and *Fojiao* 佛教, 'Buddhism'.

According to Fazun, Buddhism entered Tibet from India during the Tang dynasty and its history unfolded in two great stages. The first was *jiufojiao* 舊佛教, 'old Buddhism',[172] the early traditions that spread from the seventh to the ninth centuries during the *qian hong qi* 先弘期, 'period of early dissemination'.[173] The second was *xinfojiao* 新佛教, 'new Buddhism',[174] which spread from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries during the *hou hong qi* 後弘期, 'period of later dissemination'.[175] With this framework, Fazun added another innovation. He divided Tibetan history into *gudai shi* 古代史

168 T. Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma.

169 T. *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*.

170 Fazun 1940, 1-2.

171 T. Bon po.

172 T. rnying ma.

173 T. bstan pa snga dar.

174 T. gsar ma.

175 T. bstan pa phyi dar.

'ancient history' and *jindai shi* 近代史 'recent history', a distinction that also exalted the rise of his own Geluk sect. It marked the rise of Tsongkhapa as the watershed between the two great stages of Tibetan history.

Here, at Chongqing's College, Fazun relayed a story of Tibet's national religions that was radically different from Li Yizhuo's 1930 *Xizang Fojiao lüeshi*. For Fazun, Tibet's ancient Buddhism was not simply *Mijiao*, or tantra, as his teachers Taixu and Dayong believed during the revival of tantra two decades earlier. Nor was Tibet's modern Buddhism *Lamajiao*, as the Japanese Buddhist missionary Ogurusu described it in his *Ramakyō engaku* in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the word *Lamajiao* never appeared in Fazun's text. Instead, he used the terms *Mijiao* and *Misheng* 密乘, 'Secret Vehicle', to convey the categories of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. *Mijiao* corresponded with *Gyüdé*,[176] and *Misheng* corresponded to *Sang Ngak Thegpa*.[177] In Sanskrit, the two terms conveyed the meanings of tantra and Guhyamantrayāna respectively. In so doing, Fazun refused to separate *Mijiao* from *Fojiao*. Tantra was, most importantly, a division of the Buddhist Canon. Thus, he highlighted the sūtra division[178] of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, with its scriptures of Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, and Abhidharma, and the tantra division,[179] featuring the corpus of Buddhist tantra.

Through this perspective, Fazun portrayed, for the first time in Chinese scholarship, the full spectrum of Tibetan religious orders, including major sects like Kadampa,[180] Sakyapa,[181] and Kagyüpa,[182] and minor ones like Shangpa Kagyüpa,[183] Shijepa,[184] Chöyülpa,[185] and Jonangpa,[186] as well as a detailed presentation of Dzokchen. He also wrote short biographies of great masters in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism: Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, Kamalaśīla, Marpa, Milarepa, Atiśa, and Tsongkhapa. To these, he joined the thirteenth Dalai Lama and the ninth Panchen Lama, whom he had known in his own time.

Here, Fazun refrained from using Li Yizhuo's term *Xizang Fojiao*, 'Tibetan Buddhism', a modern category that had sustained the revival of tantra in the early Republic. In its place, he used the simpler, older word *Fojiao*, 'Buddhism'. In so doing, he refused to envision Tibetan Buddhism as a different branch of Buddhism. By contrast, he wrote about Tibet's Buddhism as one current among many ancient streams of Buddhism, some of which, from the Buddha's homeland in India, had also flowed to China. By giving Tibetan historians the agency to recount their own past, Fazun showed that Buddhist tantra was never a lost gem waiting to be recovered in China. Tantra was the fabric of Tibetan Buddhism itself, continuous with the stream

176 T. Rgyud sde.

177 T. Gsang sngags theg pa.

178 T. Mdo sde; C. Jing bu 經部.

179 T. Rgyud sde; C. Mi bu 密部.

180 T. Bka' gdams pa; C. Jiadang pai 迦當派.

181 T. Sa skya pa; C. Sajia pai 薩迦派.

182 T. Bka' brgyud pa; C. Jiaju pai 迦舉派.

183 T. Shangs pa Bka' brgyud pa; C. Xiangba Jiaju pai 香巴迦舉派.

184 T. Zhi byed pa; C. Xijie pai 息解派.

185 T. Gcod yul pa; C. Jueyu pai 覺域派.

186 T. Jo nang pa; C. Juenang pai 覺囊派.

of Buddhism that had come from India at the time of Songtsen Gampo. In that light, the premises of the revival of tantra collapsed entirely, as it was understood that tantra had never been transmitted to China from India in the way it had been transmitted to Tibet. Taixu's vision lost its foundation. By means of translation and history, Fazun could now describe Tibet in a language that moved beyond China's revival. As he wrote:

> There are two religions of Tibet: (1) the original *Shendao jiao*, called *Bengbo*, which has been passed down to our day and still has its worshippers; and (2) *Fojiao*, first introduced from India during the Tang dynasty.[187]

In 1942, Fazun completed his translation of Tsongkhapa's *Gongpa Rabsal* (Illumination of the Intention),[188] a major commentary on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*. This work is essential in the Geluk curriculum for understanding the view of reality of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika and distinguishing the tenets of the Mahāyāna schools. Around the same time, he retranslated the final chapters from Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chungwa* (Short Treatise on the Stages of the Path).[189] The first chapters of this treatise had been translated years earlier by Dayong, while the Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet was stationed in Kham. Dayong's sudden death in 1929 left the concluding section on *śamatha*,[190] 'serenity', and *vipaśyanā*,[191] 'insight', unfinished. In 1939, Khenpo Ngawang used Dayong's manuscript to teach the *lamrim* to Chinese disciples in Dartsedo.[192] This led to a request for Fazun to prepare a summary translation of the missing portion. Three years later, in 1942, he returned to the task, retranslating the *Lamrim Chungwa* in full.

In this period, Fazun began a close collaboration with Yinshun, who encouraged him to translate works of Mahāyāna philosophy from Tibetan, which had never reached China from India. Fazun's first efforts included the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* (Distinguishing between Dharma and Dharmatā),[193] attributed to Maitreyanātha. He then produced Chinese translations of two works from Nāgārjuna's six-part logical corpus:[194]

187 Fazun 1940, 1.

188 T. *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal*; C. *Ruzhonglun shanxian miyi shu* 入中論善顯密意疏.

189 T. *Lamrim chungba*; C. *Puti daocidi lüelun* 菩提道次第略論; also called *Lam rim'bring ba* (Intermediate Treatise on the Stages of the Path), the *Lamrim chungwa* is the middle-length of Tsongkhapa's three major treatises on *lamrim*.

190 *Shemota* 奢摩他 is the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit term *śamatha* (T. zhi gnas), otherwise rendered with the term *zhi* 止.

191 *Vipaśyanā* is the Sanskrit term (T. lhag mthong), rendered in Chinese as *guan* 觀, and transliterated as *piboshena* 毘鉢舍那.

192 Khenpo Ngawang's commentary was later published as *Putidao cidilüelun shi* 菩提道次第略論釋. Cf. Angwang Langji 1995.

193 T. *Chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa*. In Fazun's Chinese, *Bian fa faxing* lun 辨法法性論.

194 The six works in Nāgārjuna's logical corpus (S. Yuktikāya) are: 1) Ratnāvalī (T. Rinchen phreng ba; C. Baoxingwangzheng lun 寶行王正論); "Precious Garland". 2) *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (T. *Rtsod pa bzlog pa*; C. *Huizheng lun* 回諍論); "Refutation of Objections". 3) *Śūnyatāsaptatikārikā* (T. *Stong nyid bdun cu pa*; C. *Qishi kongxing lun* 七十空性論); "Seventy Verses on Emptiness". 4) *Yuktiṣaṣṭikākārikā* (T. *Rigs pa drug cu pa*; C. *Liushi zhengli lun* 六十正理論, or *Liushisong ruli lun* 六十頌如理論); "Sixty Verses on Reasoning". 5) *Vaidalyasūtranāma* (T. *Zhib mo rnam par 'thag pa zhes bya ba'i mdo*; C. *Jingyan lun* 精研論); "Crushing the Dust". 6) *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*

the *Vaidalyasūtranāma* (Aphorisms called 'The Finely Woven') and the *Śūnyatāsaptatikārikā* (Seventy Verses on Emptiness). He also translated Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*[195] and its autocommentary, essential for understanding Madhyamaka across all Tibetan orders.

In 1946, Fazun began what was likely the most ambitious project of his career: rendering a major Buddhist work from Chinese into Tibetan. Such undertakings were rare in the history of Buddhism in China. Records point to only one certain precedent. That precedent was set by Go Chödrup (ca. 755-849).[196] Known in Chinese as Facheng 法成, Go Chödrup was a monk from the Tibetan region of Tsang[197] who served as chief translator of Buddhist texts under King Ralpacan (r. 815-38),[198] during the century of Tibetan rule in Dunhuang. There, Go Chödrup spent most of his life at Xiuduo Temple 修多寺, translating fluently in both directions: Tibetan into Chinese, and Chinese into Tibetan. Among his most important translations from Tibetan was the canonical *Heart Sūtra*.[199] But his most celebrated translation into Tibetan was the *Jieshenmijing shu* 解深密經疏 (Commentary on the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*).[200] The commentary had been composed by the Korean expatriate monk Wŏnch'ŭk 圓測 (613-696),[201] one of Xuanzang's two principal disciples in the Tang capital of Chang'an 長安. In Go Chödrup's Tibetan, this work is known as *Gyanakgi Drelchen* (The Great Chinese Commentary).[202] In turn, his translation of Wŏnch'ŭk informed Tsongkhapa's thought, most notably in his *Drangné Lekshe Nyingpo*.

Fazun's endeavor recalled the scale and significance of Chödrup's achievement more than a millennium earlier. In 1946, after the end of the Civil War, he accepted a request from Dongbön Géshé (d.u.),[203] a scholar from Drepung Monastery who had taught Tibetan language in Chongqing between 1937 and 1938. The task was formidable. Dongbön Géshé asked Fazun to translate the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣaśāstra* (Great Exposition on Abhidharma)[204] from Chinese into Tibetan. This massive compendium puts forth the doctrinal positions of India's early Buddhist schools and serves as the main reference for the Vaibhāṣika branch of the Sarvāstivāda tradition. The original Sanskrit recension, now lost, is said to have comprised 100,000 stanzas. The text survived in Xuanzang's 200-fascicle Chinese translation as the *Apidamo dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, completed between 656

(T. *Dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab*; C. Zhonglun 中論); "Verses on the Middle Way".

195 T. *Dbu ma la 'jug pa*; C. *Ruzhong lun* 入中論.

196 T. 'Gos Chos grub. On Go Chödrup, cf. Shōtarō 1975, 243-6.

197 T. Gtsang.

198 T. Ral pa can.

199 S. *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya Sūtra*; T. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po'i mdo*; C. *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經.

200 T. *'Phags pa dgongs pa zab mo nges par 'grel pa'i mdo'i rgya cher 'grel pa*; "The Great Chinese Commentary on the *Ārya Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*".

201 T. Rdzogs gsal; C. Yuance 圓測.

202 T. Rgya nag gi 'grel chen.

203 T. Stong dpon dge bshes; C. Dongben *geshi* 東本格什. Cf. Tuttle 2005, 196-7.

204 C. *Apidamo dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論; Fazun's Tibetan title is *Chos mngon pa bye brag tu bshad pa chen po bzhugs so*. The translation was published in Beijing in 2011. Cf. Kātyāyanīputra 2011.

and 659 CE in Chang'an, and occupying an entire volume of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. From 1946 to 1949, Fazun devoted most of his time to the project. By the summer of 1949, he had completed two manuscripts. One he consigned to Kelsang Yeshé (d.u.)[205] in Dartsedo, where it survived the Cultural Revolution; the other he presented to the young fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso (b. 1935),[206] during the latter's visit to meet Chairman Mao in Beijing in 1954.

After the Dalai Lama's exile in India in 1959, this second manuscript was lost.[207] Published four decades after Fazun's death, the Tibetan translation of the *Apidamo dapiposha lun* marks the end of an era.[208] It also served as a watershed between the Republican period and the shifting cultural and political demands of the People's Republic. In the years ahead, Fazun would be called upon to extend his bilingual skills from Buddhist doctrine to the legal statutes of the new state.

Taixu died on March 17, 1947, at Yufo Temple 玉佛寺 in Shanghai. In his final years, while teaching at the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine, he continued to reflect on the history of Buddhism in China and the place of tantra in that history. During the 1940s, he published in *Haichao yin* a series of essays inspired by Fazun's translations of Tsongkhapa's works. These translations opened a door to Mādhyamika and Yogācāra debates that had been unknown in China until the 1930s. Yet, even as they expanded his knowledge, Fazun's translations did not shake the very foundations through which he constructed his notions of Buddhist history. Taixu's vision continued to weave tantra into a tale of continuity. He did not face the fact, known at his time, that the vast majority of the Buddhist tantras preserved in Tibet had never reached China.

Again, from his earliest training in Nanjing, Taixu had measured the history of Buddhism through the shifting lens of tantra. In this first phase, inspired by his teacher Yang Wenhui, he understood tantra through traditional Chinese Buddhist historiography. He placed tantra, that is, *Mizong*, along with the other seven great sects of Chinese Mahāyāna: Tiantai, Huayan 華嚴, Sanlun, Weishi 唯識, Chan, Lü 律, and Jingtu 淨土. Each sect, he believed, aimed equally at Buddhahood, and none stood higher or lower.[209] Things changed in the early 1930s, when Taixu began to understand the history of Buddhism in India through Oriental philology's view of the formation of the Tripiṭaka. For his knowledge of the history of Indian Buddhism, he turned to the work of another student of Yang Wenhui, the Buddhologist Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896-1989),[210] in his *Yindu fojiao shilüe* 印度佛教史略 (A Concise History of Indian Buddhism).[211]

In 1940, Taixu put forth his final synthesis in the essay "Wo zenyang panshe yiqie fofa 我怎樣判攝一切佛法" (How I Classify the Buddhadharma

205 T. Skal bzang ye shes; C. Gesang Yuexie 格桑悅協.

206 T. Bstan' dzin rgya mtsho.

207 Personal communication, Dr. Li Shenghai.

208 The work was published in 2011. Cf. Kātyāyanīputra 2011.

209 Cf. Taixu 1970a, 511.

210 On Lü Cheng, cf. Dibeltulo Concu 2021.

211 Cf. Lü Cheng 1925.

in its Entirety).[212] He argued that the Buddha had taught a single dharma, yet the course of Buddhist history transformed that teaching through the compilation of the Tripiṭaka. To explain this transformation, he divided Buddhist history into three great periods. The first was the age of the Hīnayāna, when the earliest teachings of the Buddha were collected in the Tripiṭaka. The second was the age of the Mahāyāna, when new scriptures appeared and came to prominence. Then third was the age when tantra emerged as the guiding force of the dharma. In this age, Taixu believed, the teachings of tantra led the way, while the Sūtra teachings followed behind.

To describe the first period, Taixu considered the compilation of the Tripiṭaka during the first Buddhist council, led by Kāśyapa, Ānanda, and Upāli.[213] Two centuries after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, discord fractured the monastic community into twenty schools. Together, they shaped what was later known as the Hīnayāna, with its varied interpretations of the dharma. For Taixu, this early Buddhism, transmitted to Śrī Laṅka and preserved in the Pāli canon, marked the height of the Hīnayāna, even though Mahāyāna teachings were already present within the Buddhadharma. The second period began about six centuries after the Buddha's passing, when the Mahāyāna flourished through thinkers like Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. During this time, Hīnayāna scriptures and practices still existed, but they had become marginal. Taixu described this as an age of coexistence, when the Mahāyāna became more prominent while the Hīnayāna receded. The third period unfolded twelve centuries after the *parinirvāṇa*, when new debates emerged within the Mahāyāna. In the Mādhyamika school, continues Taixu, Bhāvaviveka advanced new interpretations of emptiness,[214] while in Yogācāra, Dharmapāla refined arguments on existence.[215] These philosophical disputes, rooted in earlier Mahāyāna discourse, coincided with the rise of tantra. Figures such as Nāgabodhi spread practices that blended Indian popular customs with Mahāyāna ritual, giving birth to the flourishing of Secret Mantra. For Taixu, this signaled the age when tantra led and Sūtra followed. By the seventh century, when Xuanzang traveled to India, tantra had not yet become dominant. Yet, remarks Taixu, a few decades later, Yijing found a very different scene in India. He reported that his fellow students were learning mantras, which was evidence of the widespread nature of tantra. Taixu pointed to the transformation of Nālanda Monastery, once a stronghold of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, into a monastery devoted to tantra. Drawing further on Lü Cheng's history, he added that Vikramaśīla Monastery, in the final stages of Buddhism in India, had been entirely devoted to tantra.[216]

In this linear progression, according to Taixu, the threefold evolution of the religion in ancient India could also be mapped on the countries of modern Asia. "The three periods I have explained above form the entire transmission of Indian Buddhism since the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, that is, the Buddhism that has propagated in India in the three periods has also become the three great systems of Buddhism disseminated in the modern

212 Cf. Taixu 1970a.

213 Cf. Taixu 1970a, 516.

214 C. kongxing 空性; S. śūnyatā; T. stong pa nyid.

215 C. you 有; S. bhava; T. srid pa.

216 Cf. Taixu 1970a, 517.

world".[217] The Hīnayāna survived in the Pāli Buddhism of Southeast Asia. The Mahāyāna found its home in the Chinese Buddhism of East Asia. And tantra was present, he claimed, in *Zhongguo de Xizang* 中國的西藏, that is, "China's Tibet". As he concluded his essay, Taixu then sketched his world map of Buddhist systems. The early Hīnayāna took Śrī Laṅka as its center and spread to Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Malay archipelago. He name this system *Bali wenxi fojiao* 巴利文系佛教 'Buddhism of the Pāli language system', or the *Xilan xi fojiao* 錫蘭系佛教 'Śrī Laṅka's system of Buddhism'. The Mahāyāna of the second period made China its center and spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. This was *Han wenxi fojiao* 漢文系佛教 'Buddhism of the Chinese language system' or *Zhongguo xi fojiao* 中國系佛教 'China's system of Buddhism'. The tantra of the third period, remarked Taixu, took Tibet as its center, spreading from there to eastern and northeastern Tibet, as well as Mongolia and Nepal. This was, for Taixu, *Zangwen fojiao* 藏文佛教 'Buddhism of the Tibetan language', or *Xizang xi fojiao* 西藏系佛教 'Tibet's system of Buddhism'.

Hence, in Taixu's view, when the historical Buddha was alive, the dharma was of one flavor. The Buddha himself stood as the root and refuge of the teaching. Only after his *parinirvāṇa* did the dharma divide into three ages, from which the three great linguistic systems of Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhism had emerged.[218] Still, in the elegance of Taixu's theory, something was amiss. Taixu's global vision of Buddhism left no room for Sanskrit, the language in which the Buddhist tantras had been preserved in Nepal and which had been objects of study in Europe.[219] Instead, he folded Nepal into the Tibetan language system, for he identified Nepal's Buddhism with the third period of tantra. In the end, Taixu continued to imagine the complex history of Buddhism in one simple line: from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna, and from Mahāyāna to tantra. That line could be mapped onto three countries of the modern world, Śrī Laṅka, China, and Tibet, where the Buddhist Tripiṭaka had been preserved in the Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan languages.

By the time of his death, the very premises of the revival of tantra had collapsed in Taixu's thought. His linear progression left no room for the idea of a Chinese tantra preserved in Tibet. In his own account, Tibet' system of Buddhism had reached Nepal, but had never reached China.

Fazun attended the funeral of Taixu at Yufo Temple in Shanghai. Soon after, back in Chongqing, he resumed his translation projects. At the same time, he wrote fresh teaching materials for the College. At the request of the Ministry of Education, he drafted two textbooks, a manual on Tibetan language in eight fascicles[220] and a compendium on general knowledge in six,[221] neither of which appeared in print. By the summer of 1949, months before the end of the Civil War, the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine had trained nearly one hundred students. Now, on the eve of the summer recess, Fazun handed over the College's leadership to Zhengguo 正果

217 Cf. Taixu 1970a, 517.

218 Cf. Taixu 1970a, 519.

219 Cf. Buffetrille and Lopez 2010; Lopez 2008.

220 C. *Zangwen keben* 藏文課本 (Tibetan Language Notebooks).

221 C. *Changshi keben* 常識課本 (General Knowledge Notebooks).

(1913-1987)[222] another disciple of Taixu. Born in Sichuan, Zhengguo had studied at the College in Chongqing for six years under Taixu and Fazun and then joined its faculty. Fazun spent that summer in Chengdu, where he completed the Tibetan translation of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣaśāstra*. In the late summer, after bringing the Tibetan manuscript of the treatise to Dartsedo, Fazun began to step back from his duties at the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine.

That winter, after the Nationalist Party's defeat in the Civil War, the Republic of China retreated to Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army advanced west into Sichuan. Fazun, who had heard nothing from his family for years, feared the worst. Hebei, his home province, had been under Japanese occupation. He worried that no one had survived the war. And so, in early January 1950, Fazun left Chengdu. He traveled north along the Yangtze River and one month later he reached home. To his surprise, his mother was still alive and so were the rest of his family. He stayed home for a month and visited childhood friends he had not seen for decades.

In the spring of 1950, Fazun entered a new phase of his life. He began to work on several translation projects at the Bodhi Study Association in Beijing. That same year, Zhengguo urgently traveled to Beijing to consult with Fazun on a matter of great importance. The Office of Culture and Education of the Southwest Military District of the PLA[223] had requested to take over the property of the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine in Beibei. Zhengguo, uncertain how to respond, sought Fazun's advice. Fazun agreed that there was no alternative but to comply with the PLA's request. During the Republican period, policies toward the monastic community had already been strict. But under the Communist regime the Chinese monastic community was compelled to cooperate fully or risk being accused of rightism, counter-revolution, or espionage.[224] Following the new land reform policy,[225] which targeted all landowners rather than monasteries specifically, the government confiscated the College's premises. Many of its teachers and students were forced to work for the PLA.[226] Thus ended the twenty-year history of the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine in Chongqing.

Now based in Beijing, Fazun joined the Bodhi Study Association, one of the few state-sanctioned institutions with expertise in the Tibetan language. This third phase of his life was marked not only by the translation of Buddhist texts but also by work on political writings. In 1950, the Chinese Central Committee for Minority Affairs[227] sought individuals capable of rendering Marxist and Maoist works from Chinese into Tibetan. Some officials learned that the Bodhi Study Association was the only center in Beijing where Tibetan was taught. Its translators, however, struggled with the task, since their training relied heavily on Buddhist terminology and lacked a

222 On Zhengguo, cf. Tuttle 2005, 223; La Liberté, Fisher, and Ji 2020, 175.

223 C. Jiefangjun xinangjunqu wenjiaochu 解放軍西南軍區文教處.

224 Welch 1967, 100-1.

225 Welch 1967, 234-5.

226 Lü and Hu 2002, 464.

227 C. Zhongyang minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 中央民族事务委员会.

vocabulary for modern political discourse.[228] For the next four years, Fazun trained a new generation of translators and produced Tibetan versions of key texts in the education of Communist cadres, such as Mao Zedong's *Xinminzhu zhuyi lun* 新民主主義論 (On the New Democracy), *Shehui fazhan shi* 社會發展史 (A History of the Development of Society), *Lun renmin minzhu zhuanzheng* 論人民民主專政 (On the People's Democratic Rule), and *Mao zhuxi yulu* 毛主席語錄 (Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong; commonly known in English as *Mao's Little Red Book*). These works were intended to instruct Tibet's future leaders in the logic of the Communist Revolution.[229]

Yet, even in this period, Fazun never abandoned translation of Buddhist texts. In 1952, he completed Tsongkhapa's *Rim Nga Rabtu Salwai Drönme* (Brilliantly Illuminating Lamp of the Five Stages),[230] his major commentary on the *Guhyasamāja* tantra. Fazun also put to good use the teachings he had received from Amdo Géshé in Chamdo, translating Longchen Rapjam's (1308-1363)[231] *Dzöchen Dün* (Seven Great Treasures)[232] of the Nyingma sect. Around the same time, he translated the opening eight chapters of Āryadeva's *Catuḥśatakaśāstra* (Four Hundred Verses), thus completing the work that Xuanzang had partially rendered into Chinese during the Tang dynasty under the title *Guangbai lun* 廣百論 (Great Treatise of One Hundred Verses). In addition, Fazun translated two commentaries[233] of the first Dalai Lama Gendün Drup (1391-1474).[234] Finally, he rendered into Chinese the Tibetan language dictionary[235] of the Buryat Mongol scholar Géshé Chödrag (1898-1972),[236] originally compiled in Lhasa in 1946. The blockprint edition of the dictionary had been completed in 1949, and before its publication in Beijing Fazun translated all entries into Chinese.[237]

In 1953, Fazun was invited to participate in the founding of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC).[238] The Association drew on earlier, contested efforts to organize Buddhism at the national level during the Republican era. Already in 1912 and again in 1929, Chinese Buddhists had attempted to form centralized associations, but disagreements between reformers such as Taixu and conservatives such as Yuanying 圓瑛 (1878-1953), as well as resistance from the state, doomed them to failure. After 1949, the PRC government sponsored the creation of a single, unified body. Established at Guangji Temple 廣濟寺 in Beijing, the Association gathered leading figures such as Yuanying, Zhao Puchu, and Lü Cheng, and soon became the

228 Hu (unpublished).

229 Wang-Toutain 2000, 720 fn.

230 T. *Rim lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*; C. *Mizong daocidi lun* 密宗道次第論.

231 T. Klong chen rab 'byams; C. Langqin Naojiang 郎勤撓絳.

232 T. *Mdzod chen bdun*; C. *Qibao Lun* 七寶論.

233 Fazun's Chinese titles are *Jushe song lüejie* 俱舍頌略解 (T. *Dam pa'i chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi rnam par bshad pa thar lam sal byed*) and *Ruzhong lun lüejie* 入中論略解 (T. *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i bstan bcos kyi dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba'i me long*).

234 T. Dge 'dun grub; C. Gendun zhuba 根敦主巴.

235 T. *Dge bshes Chos kyi grags pas btsams pa'i brda dag ming tshig gsal ba*; C. *Gexi Quzha Zangwen Cidian* 格西曲札藏文辭典.

236 T. Dge bshes Chos grags; C. Quezha geshi 卻扎格什.

237 Tuttle 2025, 292 fn 48.

238 C. Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中國佛教協會.

sole authority for overseeing Buddhist affairs in the People's Republic. In 1955, Fazun was invited to contribute articles to a new project, the *Fojiao baike quanshu* 佛教百科全書 (Buddhist Encyclopedia). During this period, he also lectured regularly to students at the Bodhi Study Association, offering courses on the *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, and the *Madhyamakāvatāra*.[239] In 1956, he was elected vice president of the newly founded Zhongguo foxueyuan 中國佛學院 'Chinese College of Buddhist Studies' in Beijing, where he also began to teach.

In 1957, Fazun's earlier work from the mid-1930s attracted criticism when a passage from *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through* was cited by Party officials. In the book, while reporting on Tibetan debates over national security, Fazun had claimed that "surrendering to the British could enable Tibet to maintain its religion, an outcome that was much more desirable than facing an invasion from the Communist bandits, which would result in the loss of lives and assets, along with the certain devastation of its sacred institutions".[240] The offending reference, conveyed by the term *gongfei* 共匪, 'Communist bandits', was interpreted as an insult to the State.[241] Where the term *gongfei* appeared in Fazun's book, he reflected on the relations between Tibet, China, and the British. He attributed the worsening of relations between China and Tibet less to Tibet itself than to the arrogance and misconduct of Chinese and British representatives in Lhasa. In particular, he wrote of the British presence in Tibet as aggressive, hegemonic, and intent on fomenting discord. Fazun was reprimanded but spared serious consequences, thanks to his reputation and the support of colleagues who respected his scholarship. Some members of the review committee explicitly pressed that the accusations should not be allowed to escalate. The following year, he was required to participate in an official session of self-criticism, but the matter was dropped. His standing in the Buddhist and academic communities shielded him from harsher punishment.[242]

Even so, Fazun's pilgrimage accounts continued to draw scrutiny. In 1958, during the *Jiaoxin yundong* 交心運動 'Surrender Your Heart Movement', Fazun publicly acknowledged his past mistakes.[243] Launched at the height of the *Dayuejin* 大躍進 (Great Leap Forward; 1958-1962), the campaign was promoted by Chairman Mao Zedong as a new, intensified method of thought reform. Its name referred to the call to surrender one's heart to the Party.[244] Participants were urged to confess their deepest and most reactionary thoughts. In secular and industrial settings, intellectuals and capitalists were often compelled to draft personal reform pledges, vowing to reeducate themselves in two short years, sometimes by working seven days a week

239 Hu (unpublished).

240 Fazun 1937b, 34.

241 Cf. Fazun 1937b, 32, 35, 42.

242 Cf. Mei 1999, 45. Mei had the opportunity to converse with both Ms. Hu Jiou and Master Jinghui 淨慧法師, who, together with Zhengguo, had taken care of Fazun after the Cultural Revolution in his last period at Guangji Temple. Master Jinghui, reports Mei, stated that in 1958 Zhengguo and others of Fazun's students from Chongqing's College were subjected to sessions of self-criticism, and that in those years the only way for them to protect themselves was to cooperate and submit to the Party's directives. The causes of Fazun's period of detention during the Cultural Revolution were linked to these earlier episodes.

243 Cf. Mei 1999, 46.

244 Cf. He 2016, 197, 529.

and twelve hours a day. In Buddhist circles, however, the campaign took a milder form. Students, cadres, and Party members attended Fazun's review sessions. They still held Fazun in high esteem, and the meetings did not escalate. Party officials had instructed in advance that his dignity should not be harmed.[245] And so, despite mounting political pressures, Fazun continued to publish historical and doctrinal essays in leading Buddhist journals. His essays appeared in *Xiandai foxue* 現代佛學 (Modern Buddhist Studies) and *Zhongguo fojiao* 中國佛教 (Chinese Buddhism). These writings defended the Geluk tradition against misconceptions, argued for the intellectual rigor of Tibetan scholasticism, and placed Tibetan Buddhism firmly within the scope of Mahāyāna orthodoxy.[246]

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution reached the Chinese College of Buddhist Studies. The institute closed its doors, and the Red Guards targeted Fazun. They branded him a *heibang fenzi* 黑幫分子, that is, a 'black gang member', a term used for those accused of criminal or reactionary activities. Soon after, he was imprisoned and sent to a forced labor camp. During this period, he fell and broke his leg so badly that it never healed. The injury left him disabled for life. The pilgrim who had once walked thousands of miles across Asia, crossing the Himalayas twice on foot, now struggled to move a single step without help. Fazun refused to remove his monastic robes despite Party directives. He never made a public stand and kept his vows in private, avoiding direct confrontation with the authorities.

In 1972, all accusations against Fazun were cleared, and he was released from the labor camp. By the following year, afflicted with heart disease, he settled at Guangji Temple in Beijing. While living privately, despite fragile health, he started translating again. Between 1977 and 1980 he centered his attention on major works of Indian Buddhism that had not yet been rendered into Chinese. With the demise of the *Siren bang* 四人帮, the 'Gang of Four' that was later blamed for the abuses of the Cultural Revolution, Zhao Puchu had appealed to senior Buddhist educators to endorse the reform policies of PRC President Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1898-1972). A broken man, the old pilgrim turned to Buddhist logic, an ancient discipline of reasoning that closely resembled modern philosophical thought – a science that had long been neglected in China. His translations included Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Dharmakīrti's (600-660) *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā* (Commentary on the

245 Cf. Dibeltulo 2005, 53.

246 Unlike the essays and articles composed in Chongqing, those of the second reflect a greater mastery of historical and philosophical subjects. It was also in this period that Fazun wrote most prolifically. Among his historical studies are a detailed history of the first and second periods of dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, an account of the history and doctrinal features of the Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyü, Shangpa Kagyüpa, and Sakya sects, and a history of Tibetan Buddhism in relation to the Yuan and Ming dynasties in China. Among his doctrinal writings, two extensive presentations of Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Awakening* (C. *Puti daocidi guanglun* 菩提道次第廣論; T. *Lam rim chen mo*) appeared in the journal *Xiandai foxue*. The first installment, titled *Puti daocidi guanglun de zaozuo, fanyi, neirong he tijie* 《菩提道次第廣論》的造作、翻譯、內容和題解 (The Composition, Translation, Content, and Title of the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*), was published in 1954. The second, *Zongkaba dashi de Puti daocidi lun* 宗喀巴大師的《菩提道次第論》 (Master Tsongkhapa's *Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Awakening*), appeared in 1957. Other doctrinal studies from this period include two comparative essays on the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, a description of Guṇaprabha's *Vinaya Sūtra*, a study of concentration techniques based on the *Abhidharmakoṣa* and the *Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra*, and a short analysis of the six logical works of Nāgārjuna, *Longshu pusa de liubu lun* 龍樹菩薩的六部論 (Nāgārjuna's Six Treatises on Logic): those essays are republished in Lü and Hu 2002.

Compendium of Valid Cognition), and Atiśa's *Jangchuplamgi Dröma* (Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment).[247] The effort demanded all the strength he had left. Nearly eighty, and half-blind, Fazun worked with a magnifying glass in one hand and a pen in the other.[248] While translating Dharmakīrti's treatise, he suffered two heart attacks and was hospitalized twice. Yet, each time, he returned to his desk. Alongside these translations, he composed short commentaries on both treatises, the *Jiliang lun lüejie* 集量論略解 (Concise Explanation of the Compendium of Valid Cognition) and the *Shiliang lun lüejie* 釋量論略解 (Concise Explanation of the Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition).[249]

In 1980, the Chinese College of Buddhist Studies, which had reopened after its shutdown during the Cultural Revolution, appointed Fazun as its director. Fazun was invited to preside at the ordination ceremony next year, which would mark the College's reopening, coinciding with the fourth conference of the Buddhist Association of China. He did not live to see the event. On December 14, 1980, the day of his 79th birthday, Fazun suffered of a third and ultimately fatal heart attack, leading to his death. Nine months later, in September 1981, a stūpa enshrining Fazun's relics was consecrated at Guangzong Temple 廣宗寺 on Mount Wutai. Here, a stele located on the front side of the reliquary monument bears an inscription penned by Zhao Puchu, saying:

> "翻經沙門法尊法師靈骨塔"[250]
>
> "Stūpa of the relics of dharma master Fazun,
> *śramaṇa* translator of the Scriptures".

247 T. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*; C. *Putidao deng lun* 菩提道燈論.

248 On Fazun's last days, cf. Hu (unpublished).

249 In 1979, Fazun also composed his biography, *Fazun fashi zishu* 法尊法師自述" (Master Fazun's Autobiography). It was published posthumously in 1985 in *Fayin*. Cf. Lü, Hu 2002, 459-64.

250 Pinyin: *Fanjing shamen Fazun fashi lingguta*.

> We had hoped he would go on translating essential scriptures, restoring lost works, expanding Śākyamuni's teachings, and adding luster to the "Four Modernizations". Yet his karmic task had run its course, and he departed suddenly. How piercing the truth of impermanence! Our great craftsman of the dharma is gone. Heaven and earth have lost their color; the grasses and trees are mourning.[251]
>
> Zhao Puchu, 1981

On December 24, 1980, at the ceremony held for Fazun's funeral in Beijing, Zhao Puchu offered a compelling portrait of the pilgrim's life. In Zhao's tribute, Fazun exceeded the roles of scholar and translator. He was a hero who had dedicated himself to the revival of Buddhism in early-twentieth century China, successfully integrating Tibetan Buddhism into the nation. Zhao counted him among China's great Buddhist pilgrims, including Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing. Nevertheless, Zhao also placed Fazun in another lineage, that of the advocates of *sihua* 四化 'Four Modernizations'. Originally laid out in the 1960s by Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976), a senior leader in the CCP and the PRC's premier, this program advocated for reforms in the domains of agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology. After Chairman Mao died in 1976 and the Gang of Four were arrested, the program was resurrected, which laid the groundwork for Deng Xiaoping's reform initiatives during the early 1980s.

In his speech, Zhao established a link between Fazun's last efforts as a translator and state reform. "Even in his final years, at an advanced age, he answered the Buddhist Association's call to contribute to China's Four Modernizations".[252] Zhao further stated that in those last two years of his life, Fazun had rendered more than 200,000 words from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* into Chinese. "Once those were complete, he kept translating and writing. On the very morning of his passing, he still held the pen in his hand".[253] This was, according to Zhao, Fazun's final act of selflessness. He had been a true craftsman of the dharma,[254] an artisan, in Zhao's portrait, whose life had been devoted entirely to fulfill his mission. His very last project, the translation of Dharmakīrti's treatise on Buddhist logic, contributed to the renovation of the nation after the Cultural Revolution in the field of scientific thought.

Not long after Fazun's death, Zhao crafted a curated recollection of his legacy. By placing Fazun in a lineage of Chinese Buddhist cultural heroes, Zhao's retelling obscured the relationships that had enabled his translations in the first place. Indeed, Fazun's translations had not been solitary feats. Years of diligent study in Tibet alongside his teachers – including Drakar Rinpoché, Amdo Géshé, Pabongka Rinpoché, the Ganden Tripa, and the Jangtsé Chöjé – were the foundation for his translations, in a period marked by physical hardship but also profound intellectual fulfillment. These encounters, portrayed with great clarity in *Modern Tibet*, were eventually overlooked

251 Zhao 1981, 25.

252 Zhao 1981, 25.

253 Zhao 1981, 25.

254 C. fajiang 法匠. In Buddhist Chinese, *fajiang* refers to a teacher skilled in shaping and guiding their students, akin to a master craftsman molding raw material.

once his translations became objects of national pride, yet also items to be offered for sale in bookstores across China, detached from the very space of transmission – modern Tibet – that had allowed their existence. In Zhao's eulogy, Amdo Géshé Jampel Rölpai Lodrö, Fazun's main teacher from Chamdo, remains unmentioned.

Ultimately, the revival of tantra of the first half of the twentieth century had failed to retrieve a distinct tantra for China. But the discursive colonization of Tibet in the imagination of Republican Chinese survived the Cultural Revolution, entering new levels of sophistication. Beginning in the 1980s, Buddhists in the People's Republic continued to project their historical anxieties and existential aspirations onto Tibetan religion. Yet, by choosing not to constrain his Tibetan sources within Chinese categories, Fazun had already transformed that project of retrieval into a practice of encounter. Fazun's translations, then, should be regarded more than just relics of the revival of tantra. They are records of living relationships, embedded at the point of contact between teacher and disciple. That space of contact, transcending language and cultural barriers remains visible in *Modern Tibet*, before nationalism transformed the work of Fazun into a tool of cultural hegemony. Certainly, Fazun's legacy is not found in the return of a tradition. Rather, it abides in the discipline of portraying the tradition of another with care, in ways that recognize the importance of relational subjectivity. If the statue of Phakpa Lokeśvara holds a presence in this tale, then, it is not as a relic of lost origins, but as an embodiment of compassion achieved through clarity – a reminder of what is essential to truly see in the encounter.

After Fazun's death, Zhao Puchu sought to redefine Fazun's legacy. By depicting Fazun as a lone translator who conveyed Tibet's dharma into Chinese possession, he elevated translations born of human relations into objects of national pride. The pilgrim's life and journeys showed no trace of the trials of the voyage through Kham, the periods of destitution in Lhasa, the joyful learning in Tibetan monasteries, and the meditations on death and impermanence for the loss of many of his teachers and friends, all clearly recounted in *Modern Tibet*. The space of translation was gone. The objects of translation remained. Understanding this point does not undermine Fazun's achievements. Rather, it aims to resist their perception as cultural objects created to serve the nation, an idea originally conceived during the revival of tantra, a movement that sought to bring Tibet into a history of China where it was ultimately foreign. The task before us is to move beyond regarding Fazun's translations as gifts from a lost origin. Perhaps, when reading *Modern Tibet*, the task is then to remember Fazun not as a solitary pilgrim, the broken, suffering man of his old age, but as a vivid presence in a modern encounter, a moment when Buddhists in China and Tibet forged genuine relations that bridged divides in language, thought, and tradition.