

Chinese Buddhism in Austria

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1. Introduction

More than 30,000 ethnic Chinese are living in Austria, the majority of whom have settled down in urban areas and specifically in Vienna.¹ Migration commenced in earnest only slowly in the 1950s and 1960s, predominantly stemming out of Taiwan. In the 1970s and early 1980s many Vietnamese-Chinese (or Hoa) arrived as a result of the *páihuá* (displacement of ethnic Chinese) policy of the Vietnamese authorities (Vuong 2011). At the same time, following Dèng Xiǎopíng's (1904–1997) “reform and opening up” (*gǎigé kāifàng*) measures, and especially the 1985 liberalisation of exit regulations, migration from the People's Republic of China (PRC) gained traction (Kwok 2013; Kaminski and Xu 2017: 86–87). The surging migration also transplanted portions of the Chinese religious panorama to Austria, which is distinctively influenced by the so-called Three Teachings (*sānjiào*)—namely, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Accordingly, the realm of popular religion is deeply rooted within the *sānjiào* cosmos and even the growingly important spectrum of Christian groups has a related colouration.

One chiefly encounters the latter in the guise of the Austrian Chinese Catholic Church Vienna (*Àodìlì Wéiyěnnà Huárén Tiānzhǔ Jiàohuì*) and the Vienna Chinese Christian Church (*Wéiyěnnà Huárén Jīdū Jiàohuì*), which is part of the Free Churches cluster that obtained state recognition in 2013 as a member of the *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich* (Union of Evangelical Congregations in Austria).² Whereas these two belong to the oldest segment of institutionalised Chinese religion in Austria, other small-scale groups³—notably such as the PRC's current nemesis, the Church of Almighty

1 Estimates go as high as 40,000 for 2011, indicating that the figure has more than tripled since 1995 (12,000) (Latham and Wu 2013: 29).

2 Another Free Church affiliated with the *Freie Christengemeinde-Pfingstgemeinde* (Free Christian Congregation/Pentecostal Congregation), and thus also part of the wider Free Church cluster, conducting services in both German and Chinese is the Vienna-based Victory Family Centre founded by a missionary team from Singapore in 2003.

3 Vienna is also home to a small Protestant Taiwanese Community, the Vienna Taiwan Christian Church (*Wéiyěnnà Táiwān Jīdū Jiàohuì*).

Christ (*Quánnéngshén Jiàohuì*)—are very recent arrivals. Chinese Christianity in Austria chiefly caters to its ethnic Chinese clientele and remains marginally visible. Another significant ethnic provider is Yíguàndào (Way of Unity), a crucial exponent of Chinese popular religion,⁴ which flourished in Taiwan and whose Āndōng lineage—being the most active in Austria—gained a foothold in Vienna in 1992 before spreading to Linz and other places.⁵ For some years now, the Austrian Yíguàndào also participates in a field that, in the public perception, is most resonantly engaging with Chinese religious practices and mindscapes—the “holistic milieu.”

The holistic milieu encompasses a plethora of holistically envisioned methods involving psycho-physical healthcare, life counselling, and spiritual cultivation. With offerings ranging from meditation to *qìgōng* and *tàijí*, Yíguàndào has additionally established a solid outreach to a non-Chinese audience. It is foremostly *qìgōng* and *tàijí*, their various (newly created) traditionalist and scientific derivatives, but also the wider area of Chinese martial arts that for many serve as a first point of contact with the Chinese religio-spiritual universe.⁶ A prominent actor falling into the category of *qìgōng* derivatives (with a New Age bent) is Fǎlún Gōng (Practice of the Law Wheel), also called Fǎlún Dǎfǎ (Great Law of the Law Wheel). Austrian Fǎlún Gōng has been active since the early 1990s and operates groups with mostly non-ethnic practitioners across the country. Fǎlún Gōng spokespersons particularly stress the Buddhist-Daoist self-identity of this “cultivation way” (*Kultivierungsweg*), with the former aspect being most vividly illustrated by (Buddhist) swastikas in the movement’s logo (Pokorny 2022).

The field of Chinese martial arts is replete with religious undertones. Kung fu (*gōngfū*) is particularly noteworthy—specifically in its Shàolín guise. The latter emerged out of the Chán (Japanese: Zen) Buddhist tradition and the eponymous Shàolín Monastery in the PRC’s Hénán province. Of course, to what extent Chán aspects and practices such as meditation are visibly integrated in a western Shàolín kung fu setting varies. In Austria, to a

4 Indeed, with its “Buddha halls” (*fótáng*; i.e., Yíguàndào temples) and other doctrinal, aesthetical, and terminological borrowings, an outside observer might take Yíguàndào to be a Buddhist(-derived) movement. Members of the Chinese community in Austria effectively take some Yíguàndào facilities as Buddhist, such as the Vienna-based Tiāndào Aodili Zōnghuì (Austrian Association of the Heavenly Way), which operates its Buddha Hall, the Tiānwéi Fótán, since 2004.

5 A well-known Yíguàndào offshoot, whose name is reminiscent of Buddhism, is also active in Austria: Mílè Dàdào (Maitreya Great Way).

6 Another ambit of Chinese religious concepts is Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and its sub-disciplines (dietetics, acupuncture, etc.) as well as *fēngshuǐ*. Moreover, scattered ideas (*qì*, *dào*), figures, and practices (*Yījīng* divination) are persistently marshalled and reconfigured by esoteric suppliers.

large degree, Shàolín kung fu providers emphasise their Buddhist heritage and identity, which renders them into central stakeholders of Austro-Chinese Buddhism. For example, the major Shàolín group *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* (Shaolin Temple Austria), based in Vienna, is affiliated as an order/dharma group with the Austrian Buddhist Religious Society (*Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft; ÖBR*) under the name *Shaolin Kulturverein* (Shaolin Cultural Association). By and large, Chinese Buddhism in Austria means Chán Buddhism.⁷ Whereas the local Shàolín context has mainly a PRC background, the majority of Chán groups hail from Taiwan, such as foremostly the *ÖBR* member Fógūāngshān (Buddha Light Mountain), which maintains the largest Buddhist temple in Austria.

Buddhism occupies the central role amid Chinese religions in Austria. Yet, its visibility and outreach to a non-ethnic audience—the Shàolín tradition aside—lags behind significantly compared to that of Japanese (Pokorny 2021) and Korean Buddhism. This, in turn, means that Austro-Chinese Buddhism, excluding Shàolín kung fu, is primarily a diasporic phenomenon. There exists virtually no scholarship on Chinese Buddhism or any other forms of Chinese religion in Austria.⁸ Thus, this is the first paper to examine a crucial facet of the Chinese religious lifeworld in Austria, namely Chinese Buddhism. It draws on both archival/textual and long-time ethnographic research (qualitative interviews and participant observation). The following section adumbrates the historical situation, largely exploring how the local Buddhist community engaged with things Chinese. Thereafter, Austria's contemporary Buddhist actors are briefly introduced: Taiwanese Humanistic Buddhism (*rénjiān fójìào*) as represented by Fógūāngshān and Cǐjì; an ethnic Taiwanese popular Buddhist community; (chiefly Shàolín) kung fu providers; and a pan-Buddhist group with a penchant for the Chinese tradition. The concluding remarks wrap up the key findings of the paper.

7 Today, Chinese Buddhism largely comes down to the cross-fertilising traditions of Chán and the Pure Land (*Jìngtǔ*).

8 Exceptions are the paper by the buddhologist Max Deeg (2005: 58–61), in which he briefly touches on Yíguāndào and Fógūāngshān in Vienna, as well as Nikolas Broy's (2021: 179–184) engagement with the history and activities of Yíguāndào's Āndōng division in Austria. Some papers, mostly written from the perspectives of sociology (of religion and sport), medicine, and sports science, refer to *tàijí* (and to a lesser degree *qìgōng*) with respect to its presence in Austria (see, e.g., Norden and Polzer 1995). Even if therein the authors go beyond mere *en passant* mentions, sociological let alone historical and religio-spiritual dimensions of these local expressions are (if at all) only scarcely addressed. In the same vein, TCM and *fēngshuǐ* are occasionally touched upon in Austria-specific case studies with a focus on their practical/healthcare effects/identities (e.g., Cinkl 2010), as well as (specifically for the latter) architectural and aesthetical reflections.

2. Some Brief Historical Reflections

Austrian Buddhism enjoys a special role in Europe. This is not because the current president (2017–2020) of the European Buddhist Union, Ron Eichhorn (b. 1966), happens to be an Austrian from Graz, but because the Austrian authorities were the first to acknowledge Buddhism as an official religion in 1983—or, according to Austrian legal terminology, as a Legally Recognised Religious Society (*gesetzlich anerkannte Religionsgesellschaft*)—that is, fifteen years prior to the second European country, Portugal (1998). The successful outcome of the application process, which had failed once previously, almost coincided with the one-hundredth anniversary of the conversion (1884) of Karl Eugen Neumann (1865–1915), the patriarch of Austro-Buddhism. Neumann was a seminal translator as well as a Pāli Buddhism enthusiast like many generations that came after him. That is to say, until the 1950s, Buddhism in Austria was basically anchored to the Theravāda tradition.

This slowly changed especially thanks to Fritz Hungerleider (1920–1998). Serving as president of the *ÖBR*'s early predecessor organisation *Buddhistische Gesellschaft Wien* (Buddhist Society of Vienna; *BGW*) from 1955 to 1976, Hungerleider was one of the most important popularisers of Buddhism, and specifically Japanese Buddhism (Zen), in Austria and Germany. He was of Jewish descent and fled Austria in 1938 for Shànghǎi. He stayed until 1946 and reportedly became a Buddhist (like Neumann before him) after reading Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). Hungerleider, who later received Zen training in Japan, is renowned for being the first Zen instructor who directed a *sesshin* (intensive meditation retreat) in the German-speaking world, namely in Roseburg near Hamburg in 1962. Although he primarily remained a Japanophile, in his talks and (mostly radio) interviews Hungerleider also addressed Chinese Buddhism and culture and considered himself also versed in the Daoist tradition.

Among Austro-Buddhists, the latter was commonly seen as being closely tied to (East Asian) Buddhism. Hence, already from the 1970s, *tàiji* (qua “living Daoism”) became a fixed element in the *BGW*'s workshop programme and weekly training routine/offering.⁹ So, it comes as no surprise that the cover of the 1979 autumn issue of the Austrian Buddhist quarterly *Bodhi Baum* (Bodhi Tree) featured a calligraphy of the Chinese characters for *tàiji* by one of its then key popularisers Chuangliang “Al” Huang (Huáng Zhōng-

⁹ For some practitioners at the time, *tàiji* was indeed not only compatible with Buddhist practice but very much conducive due to a perceived genuinely Buddhist spirit.

liáng; b. 1937).¹⁰ Huang held several annual workshops in collaboration with the Buddhist Society until the mid-1980s. A fellow *tàiji* exponent, who came to fame within New Age circles as the “Daoist master” of Fritjof Capra (b. 1939), was the London-based native Singaporean Liu Hsiu Chi (Liú Xiūqí; 1930–1994). He was invited for a workshop on Daoism and *tàiji* to the Scheibbs centre in 1978.¹¹ From 1983, *qigōng* exercises were occasionally included in the events calendar of the *ÖBR*. To this day, both *tàiji* and *qigōng*—notably, at times qua “Shaolin Taiji” and “Shaolin Qigong”—keep being regularly advertised by the *ÖBR*.

From the late 1970s, the interest in Japanese Buddhism, in particular Zen, surged through the arrival of the Rinzaï monk Herbert (Genro) Koudela (1924–2010), who went on to become a long-time *ÖBR* president (1986–2002). Whereas the popularity of Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism (but also Theravāda) rose, Chinese Buddhism and China remained a barely known and romanticised other for many Austro-Buddhists at the time. In fact, it would take another two decades before Chinese Buddhist practice would become accessible to a larger non-ethnic followership.¹² In the meanwhile, Chinese Buddhism and culture were, if at all, largely approached theoretically and historically. General curiosity and at times outright awe dominated. A notable example (albeit involving present-day China) is a *Bodhi Baum* article by Hedwig Steinke-Boll (1903–1988),¹³ a co-founder and sponsor of the Scheibbs Buddhist Centre (*Buddhistisches Zentrum Scheibbs*), in which she shared recollections from her 1979 visit to the PRC:

Probably more important than the existence of the Buddha Teaching within temples and monasteries is another factor, which has remained latent and alive in the Chinese people as a genuinely Buddhist (but also Confucian) heritage. One must have experienced it, this “Other,” which one would not expect [to encounter] in China to such an extent. The people radiate something that has fascinated me, something noble and clean, which you sometimes discover in

10 Running from 1976 to 1993, the Scheibbs-based *Bodhi Baum* served as the major periodical of the Austrian Buddhist Community.

11 In 1975, a group of dedicated *BGW* members established a branch centre in the village of Scheibbs in Lower Austria. Within a short amount of time, the centre turned into the major Buddhist retreat/workshop site in Austria.

12 As a comparison, Korean Buddhism commenced its broader activities in the early 1990s, while popularised Vietnamese Buddhism, in the form of Thích Nhất Hạnh’s (b. 1926) Order of Interbeing (Tiếp Hiện), launched its activities likewise in the late 1990s.

13 Steinke-Boll was the adopted daughter and closest aide of Martin Steinke (1882–1966), a prominent German Buddhist, who, in 1933, received ordination as Tao Chün (Dào jùn) at the (Línjì Chán) Qīxiá Temple in Nánjīng (for an emic account, see Steinke 1981), where eight years later also the Fóguāngshān founder Hsing Yun (Xīngyún; b. 1927) would be tonsured.

the descendants of great ancient cultures: a candour and open-mindedness that is never obtrusive: their politeness, friendliness, and patience are paired with genuine modesty and dignity; their helpfulness and hospitality are unselfish and spare no service to others—and, on top of that, radiant faces and happy laughter. Do such people not practise genuinely Buddhist virtues? [...] Aggressions are foreign to him [i.e., the Chinese].¹⁴

However, Chinese Buddhism/culture continued to be a marginal topic within the Buddhist community with—at any one time up to the 1990s—likely no more than half a dozen mostly Zen aficionados more seriously engaging with it (mainly through texts). Ethnic Chinese Buddhists in those days were predominantly solitaires; sustained community-building would start only hesitantly from the mid-1990s.

Ingrid Schreiber (b. 1956), who was a student of Chinese, helped to put Chinese Buddhism somewhat on the map for Austro-Buddhists. Schreiber spent the years between 1980 and 1982 in Běijīng, also with the aim to write a doctoral thesis on nuns in Chinese Buddhism. Her Scheibbs companion, Franz Ritter (b. 1947), one of the key figures of Austrian Buddhism at the time with a predilection for Zen and Naikan, visited Schreiber in early 1981. The two travelled the country for nearly two months, resulting in a *Bodhi Baum* special issue on “Buddhism in China” (summer 1981; see Figure 1). Ritter, who was, in hindsight, very much positively influenced by this sojourn (Interview with Franz Ritter on October 10, 2019), included an ambivalent account of his experiences in the special issue, because his former romanticised approach gave way to a sense of the bustling, harsh socio-political reality that embraced Chinese culture (Ritter 1981). Interestingly, the image of Chinese Buddhism/culture among Austro-Buddhists seems to have been divided along historical lines. Whereas the tradition of old was appreciated by many, particularly for the transformative impact it had on Indian Buddhism as well as its related former role vis-à-vis Japanese Buddhism, contemporary Buddhism in China, taken to be inextricably linked to the Chinese regime,

14 “Wichtiger als die Existenz der Buddha-Lehre in Tempeln und Klöstern ist wohl ein anderer Faktor, der als echt buddhistisches (aber auch konfuzianisches) Erbe im chinesischen Menschen latent und lebendig geliebt ist. Man muß es erlebt haben, dieses ‘Andere’, das man in China nicht in solchem Ausmaß erwartet hat. Die Menschen strahlen etwas aus, was mich faszinierte, etwas Edles, Sauberes, das man manchmal bei Nachfahren großer alter Kulturen entdeckt: eine Offenheit und Aufgeschlossenheit, die nie aufdringlich wirkt: ihre Höflichkeit, Freundlichkeit, Geduld sind gepaart mit echter Bescheidenheit und Würde; ihre Hilfsbereitschaft und Gastfreundschaft ist uneigennützig und scheut keinen Dienst am anderen — und dazu strahlende Gesichter und fröhliches Lachen. Praktizieren solche Menschen nicht echt buddhistische Tugenden? [...] Aggressionen sind ihm fremd [...]” (Steinke-Boll 1980: 89–90).

was occasionally met with reserve and flagrant resentment, specifically by practitioners of non-East Asian Buddhisms. Accordingly, and indeed much to the surprise of Schreiber and Ritter, the *Bodhi Baum* special issue stirred some heated criticism for it was held by a few to promote the “grizzly Chinese regime” (Interview with Ingrid Fischer-Schreiber on October 23, 2020).

For the autumn of 1983, Schreiber and Ritter (in collaboration with a Konstanz-based travel bureau) meticulously planned a three-week educational tour to Buddhist China. A very detailed itinerary of the *Reise ins buddhistische China* was given in an eight-pages long *Bodhi Baum* article, including the stated aim to “[...] render the resurgence of Buddhism in various aspects accessible and experienceable [...], and to let the unswerving power and the activities of the believers felt and witnessed.”¹⁵ The tour was never realised due to low interest (presumably facilitated by the high costs of DM 6,780, which translates to presently EUR 6,750), and Schreiber subsequently reduced her engagement with and eventually withdrew from the *ÖBR* (also owing to the perceived increasingly bureaucratic structure of the latter).¹⁶

Over the next two decades, the *Bodhi Baum* and—in its initial succession—the quarterly *Ursache & Wirkung* quite infrequently featured brief notes and articles on Chinese Buddhism.¹⁷ The few scattered articles comprise: a report on the *Dāfōwān* sculptures at Bāodīngshān (Ostertag 1985); a

15 “Praxis ist wieder möglich geworden, auch für Laien, die in etlichen Klöstern die Möglichkeit haben, in regelmäßigen Abständen an Meditationen, Verehrungen, Lehrunterweisungen teilzunehmen und die traditionellen Festtage wieder zu feiern. Unsere Reise hat es sich zum Ziel gemacht, das Wiederaufleben des Buddhismus in all diesen Aspekten zugänglich, erlebbar, erfahrbar zu machen, teilzuhaben an einem Geschehen, wenn auch nur jeweils für kurze Zeit, das die unerschütterliche Kraft und die Aktivitäten der Gläubigen spüren läßt” (*BM* 2/83: 107).

16 Specifically through her *Lexikon der östlichen Weisheitslehren* (Encyclopaedia of Eastern Wisdom Teachings) (Fischer-Schreiber 1986), published in four editions until 1997 and reprinted thereafter until 2013) but also her *Lexikon des Buddhismus* (Encyclopaedia of Buddhism) (Ehrhard and Fischer-Schreiber 1992) and *Lexikon des Taoismus* (Encyclopaedia of Taoism) (Fischer-Schreiber 1996), Fischer (then Fischer-Schreiber) became an important populariser of Eastern traditions. From 1997 to 2002, she joined the editorial team of *Ursache & Wirkung* (Cause & Effect).

17 *Ursache & Wirkung* began in April 1991 as a semiannual “information sheet” (*Informationsblatt*), edited by the later *ÖBR* president Peter Riedl (b. 1943; p. 2002–2006). The subtitle *Information der Buddhistischen Kultusgemeinde Österreichs* (Information of the Buddhist Community of Austria) was already replaced in the next issue (October 1991) with *Zeitschrift der Buddhistischen Kultusgemeinde Österreichs* (Journal of the Buddhist Community of Austria). Two years later it was again changed to *Zeitschrift für Buddhismus, Österreich* (Journal of Buddhism, Austria). In 1994, *Ursache & Wirkung* became a quarterly, and for the summer issue 1997 *Österreich* (Austria) was dropped from the subtitle. Starting with the summer 2000 issue the subtitle was dropped altogether, only to variously

conversation with the abbot of (the Cáodòng Chán) Zhēnrú temple (Mitchell 1987); a discussion of Huáyán tenets (Strelka 1989); an essay on the Three Teachings with a focus on Buddhism (Hempel 1992); a brief introduction to Chinese Pure Land Buddhism (Berthold 1998); an account on Buddhist nuns in the PRC (Wagner 1998/1999); a historical examination of Chán painting (Schirmer 2001); a historical survey of Buddhism in China (Lainé 2003); and a Pūtuóshān (i.e., a prominent site for Guānyīn worship) travelogue (Boucher 2003). Additionally, two articles in *Ursache & Wirkung* deal polemically with Fālún Gōng, likening it to the destructive Japanese Buddhist-based “cult” Ōmu Shinrikyō (Zotz 1999) and characterising its founder Lǐ Hóngzhì (b. 1951) as a modern-day Pied Piper (Wagner 2002). In fact, Wagner uses his critical depiction of Fālún Gōng primarily to launch an attack against the state of Buddhism in China, which he perceives as apathetic, lacklustre, and unsavourily regime loyalist.¹⁸ Similarly, the China-related portfolio of the Vienna-based major Buddhist publisher *Octopus-Verlag* (founded in 1972) was extremely limited, with most of its titles falling into the categories of Theravāda, Tibetan, and Japanese Buddhism, mirroring the dominant areas of interest among Buddhists in Austria up to the present.

The establishment of the first ethnic-Taiwanese Buddhist communities in the 1990s marks a turning point in the history of Chinese Buddhism in Austria. Before, ephemeral small-scale ethnic circles aside, practical Chinese Buddhism was largely encountered, however scarcely, as a contextual by-product of kung fu training. The still hardly visible Cǐjì formally commenced its activities in 1993, but it was the arrival of Fóguāngshān, which launched its mission to Austria in 1996, that made a difference because of its proactive public relations activities. Increasing ethnic Chinese presence from the 2000s also led to the temporary hiring of an ethnic teacher of Buddhist education by the ÖBR, Chun-Kuei Chen, who was and still is connected to a small Taiwanese lay Pure Land group with a temple in Vienna’s ninth district at Althanstraße 35 (Pusitz 2003; see the next section).

The *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum* (Pu Fa Meditation Centre; *Pūfǎ Jīngshě*) in Linz was another key branch of Taiwanese Humanistic Buddhism that started to slowly materialise in those years and represented a relatively visible provider of Chán Buddhism. The genesis of this centre at Hörzingerstraße 62c came about in 2000 when a group of Buddhists from Linz travelled to

reappear from the winter 2006 issue. With the spring 2015 issue, the overall name was slightly changed to “Ursache \ Wirkung.” The name changes also indicate the evolution of the journal from a small ÖBR-related bulletin to a pan-German-speaking journal.

¹⁸ Among the very few, seemingly random notes, one interestingly finds two on Cǐjì’s (see the next section) welfare activities (*BM* 1/83: 53; *BM* 3/83: 160), and one on the foundation of Fóguāngshān’s His Lai (Xīlái) Temple in California (*BM* 4–5/87: 113–114).

Zhōngtáishān (Chung Tai Shan; Middle Platform Mountain) Temple in Pǔlǐ, north-central Taiwan, to undertake a meditation course. Zhōngtáishān Temple, whose construction finished in 2001 making it one of the largest Buddhist monastic sites worldwide, is the head temple of the eponymous Zhōngtáishān movement. Alongside Cǐjì, Fóguāngshān, and Fāgǔshān (Dharma Drum Mountain), Zhōngtáishān is one of the four chief Buddhist orders in Taiwan today (Pokorny and Winter 2018; Kuo 2008: 30–33). Founded by Wéijué (Wei Chueh; 1928–2016) in the Línjì tradition as Língquánchán (Spiritual Source Chán) in Keelung (Jǐlóng) following the end of martial law in 1987, Zhōngtáishān presently has a membership of more than one thousand clergy members and around one million lay practitioners worldwide. The European branch head temple is located in Rome. During the visit, the Austrian group consisting of ethnic Taiwanese expressed the wish to establish a Zhōngtáishān centre in Linz. In October 2009, Zhōngtáishān indeed dispatched two nuns—Jiàn Mó and Jiàn Xún (see Figure 2)—to Linz in order to begin teaching and establish a new Zhōngtáishān centre. Thus, the *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum*, which was incorporated as an association (*Verein*; ZVR number: 083953161) with the name *Pufatempel – Buddhistischer Verein*, became the 108th branch centre of the parent movement. In December 2012, it became a member organisation of the ÖBR. In April 2013, an inauguration ceremony took place under the auspices of the Zhōngtáishān abbot Dharma Master (*fāshī*) Jiàn Dēng (b. 1963; see Figure 3). While it was active, the *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum* offered courses in meditation (that were divided between courses for adults and courses for children), traditional Chinese liturgy, Buddhist recitation, vegetarian cooking, and Mandarin (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Sūtra recitations would take place every Saturday, and on Sunday the centre would hold a meditation followed by another sūtra recitation. These meetings would often be accompanied by Dharma talks and general group discussions. Furthermore, Buddhist ceremonies were often performed. Despite its relatively decent visibility as ÖBR member and diverse activities, the *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum* could not substantially extend its membership over the years. Ultimately, in 2016, the *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum* closed, also due to on-going severe problems with some neighbours, which even resulted in a lawsuit.

For a non-ethnic Chinese audience, these Buddhist providers evidently had and have only limited appeal. A much more powerful effect on the spread and appreciation of Chinese (Buddhist) culture in Austria derives from popular culture, specifically Hong Kong (and various Hollywood) kung fu movies/series starting in the early 1970s. At the time the first kung fu training centres were established in the United States and Europe. In Austria, (Shàolín) kung fu providers became active from the 1980s. While already in

the early 1990s Chinese Shàolín troupes began touring the world—the first event in Austria took place in 1995—with the abbotship of Shì Yǒngxìn (b. 1965), the Shàolín Monastery embarked on an international expansion course establishing cultural centres overseas (see Lu 2019: 235–241). Headquartered in Berlin, the Shaolin Europe Association was launched by Shì Yǒngxìn at a conference in Vienna in September 2010. The official Shàolín Monastery branch temple, the *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*, was founded a year later. Although individual Shàolín masters were already active before, the 2010s witnessed a proliferation of Shàolín kung fu offerings in Austria.

This paper shall now turn to an examination of the current situation of Chinese Buddhism in Austria. It is divided into six sections: Fóguāngshān; Ciji; Wéiyěna Cíēn Fótáng; the Shàolín tradition; and two individual providers with a Chán propensity, *Studio Zhang* and *Der stille Punkt, Wien – The Still Point, Vienna*.

3. Contemporary Chinese Buddhism

3.1. Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien

The history of Fóguāngshān in Austria dates back to 1996 when Master Xīngyún, who founded the Fóguāngshān Monastery (*Fóguāngshānsi*) in Kaohsiung (Gāoxióng), southern Taiwan in 1967, visited Vienna in order to hold a Buddhist lecture and enable those who wished to take refuge (*guīyī diǎnlì*).¹⁹ This visit heralded the start of the Fóguāngshān mission in Austria. Today, Fóguāngshān’s more than two hundred temples and centres located in more than thirty countries are catering to several million lay adherents. Xīngyún is one of the worldwide figureheads of Humanistic Buddhism, calling for the spread of happiness through fostering harmonious social relations—or in the wording of Fóguāngshān’s maxim: “[G]iving faith, hope, joy, and service to other people” (cited in Günzel 2018: 478).²⁰ Notably, more than other exponents of Humanistic Buddhism, Xīngyún promotes devotion-alism-derived salvific efficacy and a simplified rereading of the Buddhist sources.

19 That is, a formal ceremony in which the practitioner “takes refuge” in the Buddha, the *Dhárma* (the teachings of the Buddha), and the *Sangha* (the monastic community).

20 Chandler 2004 remains the only book-length treatment of Fóguāngshān in English. Günzel 2018 offers a succinct overview.

Over the following two years, the Austrian mission flourished and was subsequently officially registered as an association (ZVR number: 140193903) with the name “FO GUANG SHAN Internationale [*sic*] Buddhist Progressive Society (Internationale Progressive buddhistische Gesellschaft)” in 1998. Xīngyún returned to Vienna in November 2004 to oversee the beginning of construction of a new temple at Sechshauserstraße 50 in the fifteenth district: he led a Groundbreaking Purification Ceremony (*dòngtū sǎ jìng diǎnlǐ*), which essentially prepared the locale for a Fóguāngshān temple (see Figures 4 and 5). This then led to a somewhat tumultuous period in which the temple itself was actually constructed: the architect changed three times over issues pertaining to not understanding Buddhist culture and being unfamiliar with local building regulations. Furthermore, there were a number of financial setbacks. However, planning permission was eventually granted in 2009 and the *Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien* or Wéiyě nà Fóguāngshān was completed, inaugurated, and opened in November 2010 (see Figure 6). The original head nuns were Master Mǎn Lún and Master Miào Xiáng, with the former acting as the head of the temple. During the long period leading to the opening of the temple, each Fóguāngshān follower in Austria had a recitation plan: everyone chose a personal sūtra or mantra and then recited it on a daily basis for the entire duration of the construction project. At the end of each year, every follower would devote all the merit accumulated through recitation over the course of the year to the construction project (Interview with Lín Yùjiāo on October 7, 2020). Prior to the opening of the temple, the group had been using a rented apartment qua temple in the fourth district’s Wagasse 12/14 in which the living room acted as the classroom and dining room, and the bedroom doubled as the Master’s sleeping space, a reading room, and an office. Later, they moved into facilities in the sixth district’s Mollardgasse 40/21.

Today, *Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien* is presided over by the current head nun Master Jué Róng and is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00–17:00. There are 150 official members but the larger events have been attended by up to 300 people. The temple itself has a very unique design. It is intended to represent a monk in meditation: the far-right side (in black) is the monk’s exposed shoulder while the yellow brick that extends from the right through the middle and into the left-hand side is the monk’s robe. At the very centre is a window looking into the main shrine room to which the monk is turning, and at the very top (which one cannot see from the street) the monk’s head is set back in contemplation (as symbolised by the meditation room on the roof). On top of depicting a meditating monk, the building is also intended to symbolise openness (due to the large number of windows) as well as the Three Jewels (*sānbǎo*). Inside, a small reception area leads to the library and a shop

that sells books, incense, statues, CDs, and DVDs (among other things). The main shrine hall is on the first floor. Dominating this room is a large Buddha statue. In front of this statue is a smaller Guānyīn (Sanskrit: Avalokiteśvara; a bodhisattva who is typically associated with compassion) statue. On the Buddha's left is a Guān Yǔ (a bodhisattva who typically represents virtue and loyalty) and on his right a Wéi Tuó (a bodhisattva who is typically regarded as being the protector of the Dharma). An altar in which offerings (typically candles, flowers, bowls of food, and incense) are made sits in front of these statues. The rest of the room is taken up by eight seating platforms and floor space in which meditation cushions are often placed. The first floor also has a seminar room as well as a small memorial hall. This latter room houses tablets with the names of people (both living and dead) who, for various reasons, have been deemed worthy of being remembered, and a statue of Dizàng (Sanskrit: Kṣitigarbha; a bodhisattva more commonly known by his Japanese name Jizō who accompanies those in death). On the second floor are seven twin guest rooms (each with their own bath and toilet). On the third floor is a meditation room with both meditation stools and cushions, as well as a rooftop rock garden that is also used as a meditation space if weather conditions permit. The temple also has a basement floor that houses several seminar rooms as well as a kitchen.

Aside from being open to public visits in which people are encouraged to make use of the space, the temple also organises several events throughout the year. There is a sūtra recitation and Dharma meeting every Sunday from 15:30–17:00. There is also a Full Moon Light Offering Service (*guāngmíng dēngfāhuì*) from 11:00–12:30 every first and fifteenth of the Chinese lunar calendar. This ceremony is of particular importance in the Fóguāngshān community. It involves lighting lamps as an offering to the Buddha while reciting the *Pradīpadānīya Sūtra* (*Shīdēng gōngdé jīng*; Sūtra of the Merit of Offering Light). The group also holds a number of annual ceremonies and festivals. The temple celebrates traditional Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year (*chūnjié*) and the Double Ninth Festival (*chóngyáng jié*).²¹ The New Year Festival of Light and Peace (*chūnjié píng'ān dēnghuì*) is a month-long festival that takes place in the first lunar month of the Chinese calendar. Although the main festivities take place in the original Fóguāngshān temple in Taiwan,

21 The latter is held on the ninth day of the ninth month according to the lunar calendar. Traditionally, the number nine is believed to be a strong *yáng* number. In other words, within the *yīnyáng* duology, the number nine sits firmly on the side of *yáng*. The ninth day of the ninth lunar month is therefore believed to have a superfluous amount of *yáng* to the point that the date is traditionally regarded as auspicious. The festival itself is usually observed by remembering one's ancestors by visiting their graves. Today it is often equated to Senior Citizens Day as a large amount of emphasis is given to the elderly.

the festival unites the global Fóguāngshān community with each temple branch—Vienna very much included—using traditional lantern making techniques to create lanterns that act as a global Fóguāngshān blessing. There is also an annual Qīng Míng Ancestor Memorial Service (literally: Qīng-Míng Dharma meeting; *Qīng-Míng fǎhuì*). This service is dedicated to remembering and honouring ancestors and takes place every year on the fourth or fifth of April (depending on the lunar calendar). The temple usually holds this service over the course of two days during which sūtras are chanted and the merit accumulated from this chanting is dedicated to all participants as well as ancestors. On the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month the temple holds the so-called Ullambana Dharma Service (literally: Dharma meeting of the Day of Filiality; *xiàodào yuè fǎhuì*). On this day, a variety of food is offered to the Buddha and saṃgha, and the merit accumulated from doing so is transferred to the parents of the participants. The temple also holds a Medicine Buddha Dharma Ceremony (*yàoshī fǎhuì*). Although this is usually a service carried out for the purpose of healing attendees or relations of attendees, this year (2020) has seen a comparatively greater emphasis placed upon these ceremonies (Interview with Lín Yùjiāo on October 07, 2020). *Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien* has acted in conjunction with the wider global Fóguāngshān community by dedicating merit towards ending the COVID-19 pandemic: a Google Drive form is offered at all Fóguāngshān centres in Europe. Here, practitioners can record their number of Medicine Buddha mantra (*yàoshī guàndīng zhēnyán*) recitations. The temple also holds an annual Amitabha Ceremony (*mituó fǎhuì*) during which the *Amitabha Sūtra* (*Āmituó jīng*) is recited and the merit accumulated from doing so is subsequently dedicated. On the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, the temple celebrates the Buddha’s birthday by conducting a Bathing of the Buddha Ceremony (*fódàn jié yùfó fǎhuì*) during which the main altar is decorated with flowers (to represent the garden of Lumbini: the site of the Buddha’s birth), and participants use a ceremonial ladle to pour fragrant water steeped with special herbs over the statue of an infant Buddha. Finally, the temple also holds an annual celebration of Vesak: the Buddha’s birthday (*fótuó dàncén jìniàn rì*), which takes place during the full moon of the month of Vesākha (which fell on the sixth of May this year). The temple often celebrates this day by taking part in an international sūtra writing ceremony as well as conducting refuge ceremonies.

On top of the aforementioned celebrations, festivals, and ceremonies, the temple also organises various courses. Although these have all been temporarily put on hold due to COVID-19, they include a reading group that meets to discuss various Buddhist texts, meditation classes, tea classes in which people can learn about how one can utilise the brewing and consumption of

tea as a meditative practice, a choir that performs Buddhist songs, and medical classes that teach traditional Chinese medicine as well as ways in which one can utilise Buddhist practice in healing.

The temple also works in conjunction with the wider European Fóguāngshān community. A seven-day meditation retreat was organised by the entire European community in 2017. It took place in Fóguāngshān Fǎhuá Temple in Bussy-Saint-Georges, France. Similarly, the European community has organised a number of short-term monastic experience retreats in which the European Fóguāngshān lay community has come together to experience a short (usually a week) retreat designed to mimic monastic living.

3.2. Cíjì

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Austria or Fójiào Cíjì Jǐnhuì Àodìlì Liánluòchù (Buddhist Compassion Relief Foundation Austria Liaison Office) was formally established in Vienna in 1993. It is the Austrian branch of Fójiào Cíjì Gōngdé Hui (Buddhist Compassion Relief Merit Society; in short Cíjì or, self-styled, Tzu Chi) established by the Buddhist nun Zhèngyán (b. 1937) in Taiwan in March 1966. Cíjì has since grown and now has volunteers in fifty countries with 502 offices worldwide. It claims an overall followership of more than ten million. In line with the guiding principle of Humanistic Buddhism, Zhèngyán emphasises the soteriological need to actively contribute to social harmony. That is to say, one must “create happiness/good fortune” (*zàofú*) by taking compassionate action towards others in order to receive merit (*gōngdé*).²²

The Cíjì Vienna branch was established and it is still today run by Yóu Cízhí. It is located at Flurschützstraße 1 in the twelfth district. During the early years, the group reportedly had close to twenty volunteers in Austria (Interview with Yóu Cízhí on August 18, 2020). Today, this number now stands at less than ten, but the office nevertheless remains active in providing relief. Much of the activities of the Austria Liaison Office is in conjunction with the wider European Cíjì community. In 2014, for example, in response to the Balkan Peninsula flooding, the wider European Cíjì community was mobilised in response to a request from the Bosnian government. Volunteers from Austria helped to make up the altogether fifty volunteers involving other adherents from Germany, Britain, France, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, and Taiwan who travelled to the worst hit regions to provide long-term help in money

²² There is a growing body of scholarship on Cíjì. Book-length studies in English include Huang 2009 and Yao 2012. A compact introduction is provided by Yao 2018.

and relief materials to 600 families: a thousand blankets made from recycled PET bottles, cash vouchers for a total of EUR 163,200, copies of a letter of sympathy from Zhèngyán, copies of *Jīngsī yǔ* (Still Thoughts), that is, a collection of aphorisms by Zhèngyán, and small gifts.

Until recently, much of the Austrian office's time and effort were channelled into providing relief to refugees living in Austria. However, of late, the vast majority of activities have centred on COVID-19. The wider Cíjì community has been mobilising to provide short-term supplies and financial aid for communities impacted by the virus. The Austria Liaison Office has thus been co-ordinating with the wider Cíjì community regarding the provision of hygiene education and donation of medical supplies and PPE (personal protective equipment) to front-line responders and medical professionals. During Austria's lockdown, the wider Cíjì community, via the local Austrian branch, distributed sets of medical packs including masks, PPE, sanitisers, gloves, and surgical coverings across Austria. Moreover, the Austrian office is currently part of talks with the wider community in how best to provide mid-term to long-term support for those affected by COVID-19 in Austria as well as various communities around the world.

Alongside the wider Cíjì global community, the Austria Liaison Office's most important day of the year is very much the second Sunday of May when the Buddha Bathing Ceremony (*yùfó diǎnlǐ*) is conducted (see Figure 6). This occasion is of utmost importance to the group due to the culmination of three important holidays: Mother's Day, Buddha Day, and Cíjì Day.²³

3.3. Wéiyěna Cíēn Fótáng

Wéiyěna Cíēn Fótáng (Compassion and Kindness Buddha Hall Vienna) is located at Althanstraße 35 in Vienna's ninth district. It was founded in 1995 by a group of ethnic Taiwanese lay Buddhist practitioners. The temple itself is a rented space that is funded by a non-obligatory membership fee. The group is wholly composed of lay practitioners. Although there is no single person who acts as the head, it was Chun-Kuei Chen that initially instigated the collective project. Chen arrived in Vienna in 1977 and came to eventually lament the lack of dedicated Buddhist places of worship. She therefore brought together the Taiwanese lay-Buddhist community and, after a lengthy period of fundraising, established the Wéiyěna Cíēn Fótáng. The group is

²³ In commemoration of its thirtieth anniversary, the second Sunday of May became Cíjì Day in 1996 (Cíjì having originally been founded on March 24, 1966, according to the lunar calendar).

today composed of approximately one hundred members. They meet twice a month in accordance with the lunar calendar: with each new moon and full moon, the group observes Uposatha (*bùsà*).²⁴ These meetings are usually attended by approximately twenty-five members. Meetings typically consist of silent meditation and Guānyīn veneration. The latter is reportedly central to the group: “[W]e pray to Guānyīn, the goddess of compassion, for help with our own lives and also to help ease the suffering of the world” (Interview with Chun-Kuei Chen on November 6, 2020).²⁵ Chen deems the group’s practice to be “traditional Taiwanese Buddhism.” In practice this means that the temple is predominantly Pure Land based (see Jones 2019), however, the group also maintains close ties with *Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien* with many members attending their events. Although the activities of the temple have been greatly impacted by COVID-19, the temple has in the past organised up to three visits a year: members collectively pay to fly Taiwanese monks from varying traditions to Vienna to give Dharma talks, conduct ceremonies, and lead meditations.

3.4. Shàolín Buddhism

It should be noted from the outset that Austria is home to dozens of kung fu providers. Many of these providers often utilise seemingly Chán practices (such as meditation) in their sessions. Moreover, Chán Buddhist imagery is extremely common at these establishments. However, it is rather rare to find such an establishment that actively practices Chán. For the most part, these schools are martial arts establishments that are removed from saliently religious connotations. We will focus only on providers of (Shàolín) kung fu that take a marked interest in Chán outwardly and/or inwardly. Although this interest exists to varying degrees—indeed the majority of the following establishments would first and foremost define themselves as places of martial arts as opposed to ones of religious activity—each of the following self-defines as Chán Buddhist.

²⁴ A day of observance in which Buddhists make a conscious effort to study and practice the Dharma. In practice, this usually constitutes a meeting to meditate.

²⁵ “*Wōmen bài dàcí dàbēi de guānyīn, qíqiú tā bāngzhù wōmen zìjǐ de shēnghuó, bāngzhù jiǎnqīng shìjiè de kǔnàn* 我们拜大慈大悲的观音、祈求她帮助我们自己的生活、帮助减轻世界的苦难。”

3.4.1. Shaolin Tempel Österreich

The temple was founded by Shì Yánliáng (b. 1978) in 2011. He has since remained the central figure of the establishment. Born to a Buddhist family in Yíngshàng County in Ānhuī Province, Yánliáng had begun practicing kung fu at the age of four under the tutelage of his uncle who was a resident of the Shàolín Monastery. At the age of fifteen, Yánliáng joined the Shàolín Monastery. It was then that he received the name “Shì Yánliáng” from Master Shì Yǒngxìn. In 2004, he travelled, as instructed by Shì Yǒngxìn, to the Shaolin Tempel Deutschland (Shaolin Temple Germany; www.shaolin-tempel.eu/; see Lüdde 2008) in Berlin to teach for six months. Later, in 2005, Shì Yǒngxìn sent him back to the German temple to work as a monk and teacher trainer. In May 2007, Yánliáng was eventually sent to Vienna to found a new temple. In 2010, he passed the Grand Master’s examination in China, and on October 1, 2011, the *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* (Shaolin Temple Austria; shaolinkultur.at/) was officially inaugurated.²⁶ The importance of Shì Yánliáng in the realm of Chán Buddhism cannot be understated. He acts as the Shaolin Europe Association’s representative for quality management and is in charge of overseeing the establishment of cultural centres and temples in Europe. To this end, he acts as something of an inspector: it is his role to ensure that each Shàolín establishment in Europe that has been recognised by the Shàolín Monastery is sufficiently meeting the set standards. More importantly, he is the official European contact for Shàolín culture: an umbrella term that essentially constitutes Chán Buddhism, Chán meditation, Chán medicine, Shàolín kung fu, Shàolín *qìgōng*, and *tàijí*.

Shaolin Tempel Österreich is the only Shàolín establishment in Austria that is officially recognised as an offshoot of the original Shàolín Monastery in China. It is an official member of the Shaolin Europe Association that is headquartered in the Shaolin Tempel Deutschland. Moreover, it is the only provider of Shàolín that is registered with the ÖBR, formally becoming a member in 2012. The temple itself is located in Vienna’s fifth district (Bacherplatz 10/3) and has approximately 800 registered students with circa seventy coming on a frequent basis. It is a sizable establishment with two major training rooms, one of which also doubles as something of a Buddhist meditation hall (see Figure 8), with the most prominent feature of this room

²⁶ An association was incorporated a few months earlier in July 2011 under the name *Shaolin Kulturverein* (ZVR number: 370805731).

certainly being the Trikāya Buddha²⁷ (*sānshēn*). It was instantly noticeable that each member took paying due reverence to the three Buddhas very seriously, everyone bowing deeply whenever they entered the room.

The temple organises weekly kung fu and *qìgōng* lessons that are divided into those for adults and those for children. Herein, it is very clear that a traditional approach to Shàolín is emphasised: Shì Yánliáng actively seeks to keep all lessons fully in line with the methods utilised at the Shàolín Monastery. Although the temple does not hold weekly meditations, Buddhism is an unmistakably crucial feature of the establishment. The temple, however, does hold meditation workshops several times a year that focuses on Chán meditation (both seated and walking). Moreover, Buddhist ceremonies are carried out during Buddhist holidays and by request. The temple also offers Buddhist pastoral care to those who seek it.

On top of the weekly lessons, the temple organises various events and workshops throughout the year. These range from traditional calligraphy lessons, which often focus on the Heart Sūtra ([*Bōrě bōluómìduō*] *Xīnjīng*), specialised kung fu workshops (such as advanced lessons and specific forms), fan workshops, and Chinese lessons, to name but a few. The most important week in the temple's calendar is "Shaolin Culture Week" (*Shaolin Kultur Woche*) during which the temple offers free lessons and talks. This year, alongside kung fu and *qìgōng* lessons, various talks (such as one on meditation) were given. Regarding the latter, it was once again very clear that many of the students of the temple take the temple's Buddhist doctrine very seriously despite the fact that the majority do not self-identify as Buddhist themselves. In this particular case, for example, there were a number of questions after the meditation Dharma talk that, for the most part, focused upon incorporating the Buddhist values discussed into their daily lives.

3.4.2. Shaolin Österreich Wien

Shaolin Österreich Wien (Shaolin Austria Vienna; shaolinoesterreich.at/) is located at Schönbrunnerstraße 147 in Vienna's fifth district. It was founded in 2005 (incorporating as an association under the name *Shaolin Österreich*; ZVR number: 885528026) and is essentially a partner of *Shaolin Tempel*

27 Three separate Buddha statues that each represent one of the three *kāyas* (bodies) that all Buddhas are held to possess: the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*; C. *fāshēn*) that denotes the inconceivable and empty aspect of a Buddha; the Bliss Body (*sambhogakāya*; *bàoshēn*) that denotes a Buddha's subtle yet limitless form; and the Appearance Body (*nirmāṇakāya*; *yìngshēn*) that denotes the Buddha's physical manifestation in time and space.

Österreich. It is therefore also an official member of the Shaolin Europe Association. Whereas *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* reportedly represents the religious-ritual aspects of the Austrian Shàolín community, *Shaolin Österreich Wien* teaches the strategic-philosophical-health aspect (Interview with Robert Egger on July 01, 2020). Therefore, although Buddhism still undeniably holds a crucial role at the heart of the group, it does not possess the overt nature of Buddhism found at *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*.

At the very centre of *Shaolin Österreich Wien* is Robert Egger, who, in 2003, was granted power by Master Shi Yǒngxìn to pass on and teach the practice of Shàolín. Egger is a neurophysicist and a self-defined pragmatist. His teaching of Shàolín is therefore married with lateral thinking and what he describes as both Eastern and Western philosophy (ibid.). Therefore, unlike *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*, the identity of *Shaolin Österreich Wien* is far less conspicuously Buddhist. Indeed, Egger himself is openly referred to as the “neurophysicist among management consultants” (*Neurophysiker unter den Managementberatern*). Therefore, whereas for *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* the practice of Shàolín cannot be removed from Buddhism, the “tailor-made” nature of courses run by *Shaolin Österreich Wien* means that Buddhism has comparatively limited importance. The group advertises the practice of Shàolín as mental and physical techniques that can achieve enormous benefits in both one’s professional and private life: “[U]sing numerous mental and body techniques, you will learn how to exhaust your energy and use it specifically for your management tasks.”²⁸ Moreover, although the school reportedly follows the official Shàolín Monastery methods for teaching Shàolín, in practice, due to the nature of what is exactly taught, *Shaolin Österreich Wien* typically employs syntactic means that take Shàolín concepts and give them more of a modern guise (Interview with Robert Egger on July 1, 2020). However, despite this seeming attempt to distance itself from the religious aspects of Buddhism that is very much a part of *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*, *Shaolin Österreich Wien* has a noticeably overt Buddhist aesthetic and tone: Buddha statues are abundant, Chán meditation is often taught, and Egger himself is quick to reference *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* as well as the Shàolín Temple in China as the highest source of wisdom (ibid.).

Although *Shaolin Österreich Wien* does not currently offer weekly activities, they organise various Shàolín workshops. One can also book private lectures, workshops, seminars, and motivational talks. The private lectures and seminars are targeted at businesses. Herein, Egger combines Shàolín

28 “Anhand zahlreicher Mental- und Körpertechniken erfahren Sie, wie Sie Ihre Energie ausschöpfen und diese gezielt für Ihre Führungsaufgaben einsetzen können” (<http://shaolinoesterreich.at/shaolin-strategie/>; accessed: November 6, 2020).

“strategy” with “success concepts”—essentially a combination of basic Shàolín philosophy with performance psychology—in order to help businesses rethink and re-evaluate management and leadership. The workshops range from half a day to a maximum of two-day courses. These are once again targeted at businesses, focusing on themes such as management, leadership, sales, team building, project management, communication, motivation, and general employee performance.

3.4.3. Shaolin Chan Wu Chi

Shaolin Chan Wu Chi (Shàolín Chán Wǔjǐ; “highest Shàolín Chán martial arts”; shaolinspirit.at/) is located at Invalidenstrasse 5-7 in Vienna’s third district. It was established and is currently managed by Shi Héngyì, a thirty-fifth generation Shàolín monk. Born in Ānhuī Province, Héngyì began training in kung fu at the age of seven under Kāng Shèngghé. He later moved to the Shàolín Temple where he was placed under the tutelage of Shì Yánmíng (b. 1964), a thirty-fourth generation Shàolín monk who eventually instructed Shì Héngyì to move to Austria to spread Shàolín (Interview with Shì Héngyì on August 7, 2020). Upon arriving in Vienna in 2003, Héngyì established a Shàolín school in the third district. During these early days, Héngyì simply rented a hall. He taught here for nine years before formally establishing *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* at the ninth district’s Grundlgasse 1. He taught here for a further six years before purchasing a larger establishment in the third district. The current headquarters of the school was therefore established in 2012, the same year the group registered as an association (ZVR number: 173181220). The training hall itself is very spacious and well equipped. *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* has approximately 150 students overall. Kung fu and *tàijǐ* are both taught from Monday to Friday. Classes are divided between two levels of adult classes and two levels of children classes. The former are usually attended by twenty-five to thirty students, however on quiet days this number can be as low as ten. The latter are usually attended by fifteen to twenty students. On Saturday, the school also practices both *qìgōng* and Chán meditation.

Chán Buddhism is of utmost importance to *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi*. This is to the degree that “Chán Buddhism” and “meditation” are both listed alongside kung fu, *tàijǐ*, *qìgōng*, and *sànshǒu* as part of the school’s logo which, incidentally, is a Dharma Wheel (*fǎlún*).²⁹ Moreover, the training hall itself is generously adorned with several Buddha statues (to which the students are

²⁹ Also often referred to as Chinese boxing or Chinese kickboxing, *sànshǒu* is a modern fighting style that was developed by the Chinese military. It essentially combines traditional kung fu with more modern fighting techniques, such as kickboxing.

actively encouraged to show due reverence) and the weekly meditation sessions (that take place outside of regular training) are often accompanied by informal Dharma talks (see Figure 9). It is therefore unsurprising that Héngyì refers to *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* as very much a Buddhist group. Interestingly, the school differs from *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* in its teaching of Shàolín due to a difference in Buddhist morality. Whereas *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* very much follows the classic teachings of the original Shàolín Monastery, *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* has adopted a different approach. Following in the footsteps of his second teacher Shì Yánmíng, Héngyì believes that the traditional teachings of Shàolín cannot and indeed should not be applied to a modern Western context. He believes that these traditional teachings are unnecessarily violent for a context in which violence is very rarely required. He therefore opines that in order to truly adhere to Buddhism, he needed to change the form of Shàolín kung fu that he teaches: whereas the forms of kung fu taught in *Shaolin Tempel Österreich* can, in theory, be directly used in combat, the forms taught in *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* are explicitly not to be used for violence (Interview with Shì Héng Yì on August 7, 2020). Instead, Héngyì teaches Shàolín kung fu as part of a dual means of practicing Buddhism: kung fu being “action meditation” (*dòngzuò chán*) and “seated meditation” (*dǎzuò*). However, it should be noted that although the Shàolín training of *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* are explicitly intended for nonviolence, recently Héngyì has begun teaching women’s self-defence courses at the school.

On top of its regular training schedule, *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* also holds various special events throughout the year. During the summer months, for example, it often holds special kung fu classes on *Donauinsel*. Furthermore, the school often organises special summer camps that are often in collaboration with *Shaolin Tempel Steyr*. In 2015, the two groups even organised a two-week trip to the PRC.

3.4.4. Shaolin Tempel Steyr

Shaolin Tempel Steyr (www.shaolinsteyr.at/) is located near the central train station in the city of Steyr, Upper Austria, at Damberggasse 2. At the very core of the school is its founder Oliver Haas (Chinese name: Shì Miàojiè). Haas was born in Steyr and moved to Vienna to study physics. He was hoping that the study of physics would allow him to grasp how the world works but he quickly realised that every question led to more questions. At the same time, he began training at Shaolin Tempel Wien. Although this was initially only intended to be a fun way of keeping fit, Haas quickly started taking

Shàolín very seriously and began to also study Chán. He eventually concluded that although Shàolín and Chán Buddhism “did not give answers, they led to a state of mind where questions are no longer important” (Interview with Oliver Haas on September 18, 2020). In 2008, three years after discovering Shàolín, Haas began to teach kung fu to children. A year later, he held a Shàolín seminar in Steyr, which proved to be extremely popular. He therefore began a weekly Shàolín group in Steyr, hiring out the gym of the Steyr grammar school. He commuted from Vienna every week to give this course. These sessions were likewise popular and they were quickly run twice a week. Haas eventually decided to discontinue his physics degree in favour of moving back to Steyr to fully dedicate his time to teaching Shàolín. It was during this time that he also instigated lessons in Linz. He registered *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* as an association (ZVR number: 704151919) in 2010 but still hired out the same hall. In 2013 he began renting a new training hall and his school continued to grow. In 2017 he decided to instigate a “New Temple” project. Thus, in 2018, the group began renting an abandoned building that was eventually transformed into the current location of *Shaolin Tempel Steyr*. Today, *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* is an impressively spacious place: there are two large training rooms as well as a lounge that is used for social gatherings.

Shaolin Tempel Steyr has approximately 110 students. The temple has the busiest weekly schedule of all Shàolín providers in Austria. Kung fu lessons are divided into five separate groups: young children kung fu, children kung fu, two separate levels of adult kung fu, and “Shaolin Fit.” The latter is especially targeted at older people, those with various disabilities, and those with certain injuries who would otherwise participate in the adult classes. The school also offers *tàijí*, *sànshǒu*, and *qìgōng* lessons.

What particularly stands out about *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* is that, by comparison, a great deal of emphasis seems to be placed upon the fostering of community. Unique among the Shàolín providers in Austria, *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* organises a weekly community meeting in which members convene to discuss new ideas and projects as well as, above all else, “strengthen the community” (see Figure 10). This sense of community is obviously of great importance to Haas who has maintained a deep connection with his original master in Vienna: Shì Héngyì of *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* (see Figure 11). As previously mentioned, the two schools often collaborate. During the 2020 nationwide lockdown, the two schools came together over Zoom for online sessions. Haas describes the relationship he has with his own school as well as the relationship between the two schools as “like family.”

According to Haas, *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* “lives Buddhism” quicker than it actively teaches it. Strictly speaking, it is a Chán establishment that seeks

to teach one to “see things as they are” (Interview with Oliver Haas on September 18, 2020). In terms of meditative practice, the group is the most active Shàolín group in Austria with three scheduled meditations a week. Haas incorporates Buddhist concepts and principles into his lessons but rarely outwardly calls this Buddhism. He does, however, sometimes teach and discuss basic Buddhist doctrine such as the Four Truths (*sìdì*) and the Eightfold Path (*bāzhèngdào*). Furthermore, the school’s logo is a Dharma Wheel with each of the eight circles filled with a specific kung fu position. Taken as a whole, this symbolises that practice is an essential aspect of the Buddhist path that leads one to freedom.

3.4.5. Shaolin Wushu Training Center

The *Shaolin Wushu Training Center* (shaolinwushu.at) is located at Praterstraße 25/1C in Vienna’s second district. Opened in January 2019, it constitutes the youngest Shàolín centre in Austria. At the core of the school is its founder Shì Héngzhàn (b. 1988). Originally a student of the Tǎgōu Wúshù School in Dēngfēng, central-eastern China, at the age of sixteen he was accepted into the Shàolín Monastery and eventually became a Shàolín monk of the thirty-fifth generation. After a period of teaching across Austria, the USA, and Mexico, Héngzhàn decided to permanently move to Austria in 2014. He has now accumulated twenty years of Shàolín experience. His *Shaolin Wushu Training Center* in Vienna constitutes his desire to “bring both martial arts and Chinese culture closer to all interested people.”³⁰ The school has approximately eighty students. The training is divided into regular kung fu sessions, two children’s classes (5–8 and 9–15 years old), and kung fu form training. The school also offers power and strength training once a week, *qìgōng* twice a week, and *sànshǒu* once a week. On top of this regular training schedule, the *Shaolin Wushu Training Center*, like *Shaolin Österreich Wien*, offers “Chinese martial arts for business.” However, unlike the latter, the *Shaolin Wushu Training Center* incorporates slightly more Buddhist elements into these business workshops.

Although by Shì Héngzhàn’s own admission, Chán Buddhism is only “more or less” (*chàbùduō*) important to the centre, he is firm in his belief that kung fu can only be understood and successfully studied within the necessary context of Buddhism and Chinese culture (Interview with Shì Héngzhàn on July 31, 2020). He therefore argues that it is of great importance to constantly

³⁰ “Ich möchte allen interessierten Menschen sowohl die Kampfkunst als auch die chinesische Kultur näher bringen” (<https://shaolinwushu.at/shifu-shi-heng-zhan/>; accessed: October 10, 2020).

incorporate Chán into his lessons. He reportedly does this by continuously emphasising that kung fu should be treated as Chán meditation in motion: a means of realising one's inherent Buddha nature (*ibid.*). The group has a planned Chán meditation once a week. There is also a small Buddhist shrine situated outside the training hall that Shì Héngzhàn encourages students to bow to before classes (see Figure 11).

3.4.6. Shaolin Kung Fu Wien

Shaolin Kung Fu Wien (www.shaolin-kungfu-wien.at) is located at Fugbachgasse 12/3 in Vienna's second district. It was founded in 2010 by Christian Knak alias "Meister Wolf," who began training in Shàolín at the age of eighteen. He studied under Bambang Tanuwikarja at the Kung Fu Academy Berlin, where he learned Tee Kuo Siau Lim Kung Fu, the form created by Tanuwikarja. This form later became the most prominent one taught at *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien*. The school has approximately ninety students. The weekly schedule is divided into three separate levels of adult kung fu sessions, a young (4–6 years old) kids group, an older (6–13 years old) kids group, weapon training, *qìgōng*, acrobatic kung fu, vinyāsa yoga, haṭha yoga, and a show group.

Compared to other Austrian providers of Shàolín, *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien* places a small amount of emphasis on Chán Buddhism. Although it outwardly acknowledges the Chán roots of Shàolín, it also makes it clear that the meditation practices of the school are strictly non-religious. However, it was rather striking that each student, including the younger ones, for the most part, all bowed to the small Buddha shrine that stands outside the two training halls (see Figure 12). Furthermore, despite this obvious effort to remove religious connotations, the Buddha is often alluded to both in class (often through basic Buddhist doctrine, such as the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path) and in the school's publications (namely their website and Facebook page). Chán meditation is essentially taught by request. There are no scheduled group meditations, and the teachers make it clear that it is up to the students whether or not they wish to utilise meditation.

3.4.7. Shaolin Wahnam Wien

Alongside *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien*, *Shaolin Wahnam Wien* (www.shaolin-wahnam-wien.at) also utilises the facilities at Fugbachgasse 12/3.³¹ The school falls under the umbrella of the Shaolin Wahnam Institute (www.wongkiewkit.com; www.shaolin.org), a school that was established in 1982 by Wong Kiew Kit (b. 1944), a Malaysian born fourth generation successor of China's Southern Shàolín Monastery (*Nánshàolínsì*).³² *Shaolin Wahnam Wien* was itself established in 2013.³³ At the centre of the school is Shīfù Leonard Lackinger (b. 1981), who initially attended *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien* and was trained by Meister Wolf. After a year of intensive training, he took the advice of one of his fellow students and attended a Shàolín seminar led by Grandmaster Wong. Ever since, Lackinger has completely dedicated himself to the teachings of Wong and has subsequently travelled extensively in order to participate in various courses given by him. Embracing Wong's training and teaching ethos, Lackinger eventually started teaching himself after being formally accepted by Wong as an official Shaolin Wahnam Institute instructor. This led to the formation of *Shaolin Wahnam Wien*.

The school has approximately one hundred students and the weekly schedule is divided into three types of lessons: Shàolín kung fu, *qìgōng*, and *tàijí*. The school's general ethos is "teach what you practice and practice what you teach" and there is special emphasis placed upon the importance of individual private practice on top of the weekly group lessons (Interview with Leonard Lackinger on October 11, 2020). Classes range from six to twenty-five students, depending on the art and stage of development with advanced classes tending to be on the smaller side. Furthermore, Lackinger also offers intensive private training sessions.

Like *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien*, *Shaolin Wahnam Wien* outwardly places little emphasis on the practice of Chán Buddhism. Lackinger states that although the school very much practices the Shàolín arts, it is fundamentally a non-religious institution: they practice Shàolín kung fu, *qìgōng*, and *tàijí* to

31 *Shaolin Wahnam Wien* is registered as a company with the name *Shaolin Wahnam-Schule für Shaolin Qi Gong, Tai Chi Chuan und Shaolin Kung Fu e.U.* (registration number 501292 w).

32 This monastery is not to be confused with Shàolín Monastery. The Southern Shàolín Monastery no longer exists. Indeed, its very past existence is often disputed (cf. ter Haar 1998: 402–416).

33 Already nine years earlier, in 2004, an association with the name *SHAOLIN WAHNAME AUSTRIA* (ZVR number: 258796677) was founded, which is now largely defunct.

“enhance our worldly lives, to be healthy, happy and successful.” Acknowledging the Buddhist roots of Shàolín, Lackinger states that while some of our students might be drawn to Buddhism “this has nothing to do with our teaching, although the philosophy of our training might spark some interest in Asian forms of spirituality” (Interview with Leonard Lackinger on October 11, 2020). This said, rather like *Shaolin Österreich Wien*, the group has a distinct Buddhist aesthetic. The facilities at Fugbachgasse 12/3 have the aforementioned Buddha shrine that members bow to before classes. Moreover, the group regularly hold separate meditation sessions.

3.4.8. Shi Xinggui Shaolin International

Shi Xinggui Shaolin International (Shì Xíngguī Shàolín Guójì Quánfǎ Liánméng; www.shixinggui.at) is located at Salzburg’s St. Veit im Pongau, Markt 10a (see Figure 13). As the name suggests, at the centre of the school is the figure of Shì Xíngguī, a thirty-second generation Shàolín monk. Xíngguī was born in Hénán Province and entered the Shàolín Monastery at the age of eight. In 1989, he became a certified Shàolín master. After a period of travelling across the world and participating in various competitions and performing in several shows (including a stay in Austria in 1995), he eventually decided to settle in Austria in the federal state of Salzburg in 1997, where he has lived ever since. Although *Shi Xinggui Shaolin International* does not offer weekly training, it does offer various courses throughout the year. These range from general kung fu, various forms of Shàolín, *qigōng*, *tàijí*, and self-defence. These courses are often paired with lessons in Chán meditation. They take place not only in St. Veit im Pongau, but also in Goldegg and Mondsee as well as in Germany and Switzerland.

Xíngguī places great emphasis on Chán Buddhism in all aspects of his teachings. He believes that Shàolín cannot be removed from its Chán roots, and this should be made apparent at all levels of teaching. He also often refers to the healing powers of sūtra chanting and regularly encourages his students to engage in chanting (Interview with Shì Xíngguī on July 9, 2020). One can even find sūtra chanting CDs made by Xíngguī at *Shi Xinggui Shaolin International*. *Shi Xinggui Shaolin International*’s umbrella company Dehai Wu is registered as *Humanenergetiker* (energy healer) with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*).

3.4.9. Garuda Warrior Academy

The *Garuda Warrior Academy* (www.garudawarrior.at) is located at Diefenbachgasse 46 in Vienna's fifteenth district. It was established in 2015 by Amelie Ginthör-Weinwurn, Pierre Samuel Naquet, and Manuel Scherzer.³⁴ The three met in Vienna and quickly bonded over their mutual love for kung fu. What apparently quickly struck them was that each had a very different background regarding kung fu training. Ginthör-Weinwurn, on top of being a kung fu teacher, is a restorer and an artist. After trying dance, fencing, wihng cheün, muay thai, jeet kune do, and classic boxing, she eventually discovered Shàolín. To her, the connection between healthy living and martial arts are of utmost importance at the academy. She was originally responsible for teaching kung fu to children but has recently (early 2021) moved to a more administrative role. Born in France, Naquet has been training in Wùshù for twelve years. He has a very competitive background, possessing eleven titles, including Austrian and French Champion. Marketing himself as a passionate personal trainer, before leaving the academy in early 2021, he was responsible for teaching self-defence and sparring at the academy. Scherzer is reportedly the “most spiritual” of the three. Having discovered Shàolín after experimenting with karate, capoeira, wihng cheün, and muay thai, he completed the Shàolín teacher training under Master Shì Yánliáng of *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*. For him, Shàolín and Chán Buddhism are “exactly one and the same” (Interview with Manuel Scherzer on October 13, 2020). He is responsible for teaching traditional Shàolín kung fu, *qigōng*, *tàiji*, and meditation, and today serves as the prime director of the school. The academy was founded in response to what the founding members perceived as an existing problem with modern Shàolín: teachers either neglect the fighting aspect or the spiritual one. By combining the three distinct approaches of the founding members, *Garuda Warrior Academy* was established with the intent of offering the “full spectrum” of Shàolín that successfully “synthesises the traditional aspect with modern martial arts” (ibid.). This ethos is reflected in the academy's symbol: the Garuda (see Figure 14).³⁵ This figure was chosen not only for the manifold associations with strength, but also for the appearance

34 The registered association (ZVR number: 670619922) carries the name *Sportunion Garuda Warrior Academy Verein für Kampfkunst, Kurzbezeichnung: Garuda Warrior Academy*.

35 A legendary bird (sometimes a humanoid bird-like being) that is a prominent figure in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. In Buddhism, he is usually seen as a protector of the Dharma.

of Garuda in multiple religions. This latter reason has the intention of inspiring one to cultivate an interdisciplinary understanding of Shàolín that incorporates martial arts, competition, and Buddhism as a unity.

The academy has approximately seventy students. The training is divided into Shàolín kung fu sessions (which are again divided into adult and children sessions), sǎndǎ (i.e., *sànshǒu*; which is likewise divided again into adult and children sessions), *róuquán*,³⁶ *tàolù*,³⁷ *qìgōng*, fitness and conditioning, and sparring. The academy also works together with Vienna's *Sportunion*—the local branch of a major sports holding organisation in Austria—through which they often hold events at schools and festivals. The academy's premises is divided between a small kitchen, office space, the main hall, and a small meditation room.

Garuda Warrior Academy takes the practice of Chán Buddhism extremely seriously. It is unique among Austrian providers of Shàolín in that it holds a weekly Buddha puja (i.e., a devotional ceremony in which offerings are presented to the Buddha). It also organises a weekly Chán meditation. This said, Scherzer believes that the school very much looks like a sports school from the outside, and it is only once students begin practicing Shàolín that they will slowly be drawn to Buddhism through “free and easy exchange” (Interview with Manuel Scherzer on October 13, 2020). Therefore, although the *Garuda Warrior Academy* does indeed take Buddhist practice very seriously and will often engage in Chán practices and discussions, this is not something that is necessarily marketed.

3.4.10. Manuel Scherzer Shen Warrior

On top of being a teacher at the *Garuda Warrior Academy*, Scherzer also offers private tuition that has a strong focus on his religious background (www.shenwarrior.com), being registered with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce as a *Humanenergetiker*. On top of his certification to teach Shàolín from Shi Yánliáng, Scherzer also reportedly has twenty years of varied meditation experience (*vipassanā*, Daoist, Shivaist, and Buddhist) as well as a certificate in Studies on Buddhism from the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka (Interview with Manuel Scherzer on October 13, 2020). His private sessions focus not only on Shàolín kung fu, but also on Buddhist philosophy, meditation, general awareness, and personal development. Much of

36 Literally meaning “soft fist,” this is a slow form of kung fu that places most weight upon mental focus and precise movements.

37 A form of kung fu that teaches a set of connected choreographed movements.

these Shàolín lessons and seminars are specifically targeted at cultivating success in business via Shàolín methodology. Herein, his sessions are intended to prevent burnout, reduce stress, boost awareness, develop team building, and cultivate leadership skills. Scherzer wishes to remove himself from the notion of being a master (ibid.). Instead, he chooses to emphasise that people “train together.” He has also noted that whereas he very much teaches and discusses the traditional Shàolín Chán Buddhist philosophy while at the *Garuda Warrior Academy*, this is not necessarily always the case during his private sessions that he tailors to each individual pupil.

3.4.11. Nord Shaolin Kung Fu Wien

Nord Shaolin Kung Fu Wien (Northern Shaolin Kung Fu Vienna; www.nord-shaolin-kungfu.at) is located at Glasergasse 17 in Vienna’s ninth district. It was founded in 1985 and follows the Long Fist (*chángquán*) form of kung fu that, as the name suggests, emphasises fully extended kicks and striking techniques. This style was developed in Shāndōng Province and was then further developed and taught in Seoul, South Korea, by Master Lǐ Déjiāng (Lee De Jiang; b. 1931) who, like several prominent kung fu teachers, immigrated to South Korea following the Cultural Revolution. Lǐ began practicing chángquán kung fu at the age of eleven. When he moved to South Korea in 1949, he initially planned to eventually move back to China. However, after a decade, he decided that the political climate in China prevented him from returning and so instead started teaching martial arts to Chinese immigrants at the Chinese Embassy in Seoul. In 1963, he opened his own school and started teaching martial arts to non-Chinese nationals. One of these students was Yi Che-dong (Lee Je Dong; b. 1954), who joined the school when he was fourteen and had become a recognised master by the age of thirty. In 1985, Lǐ decided to bring chángquán kung fu to Europe. Along with Yi, he opened his own school in Vienna; thus *Nord Shaolin Kung Fu Wien* was founded in 1985. Later, in the 1990s, he set up a school in Greece. Together, these are reportedly the only schools in Europe in which chángquán kung fu is taught. Yi remained in Vienna after the initial establishment of the school but, after four years, handed the school over to Gerhard Rosen in 1988.

Unlike other Austrian providers of Shàolín kung fu, *Nord Shaolin Kung Fu Wien* has a comparatively collective attitude towards teaching and training: there are no formal lessons but instead students, who all practice the aforementioned chángquán style, are accompanied in their individually designed training by the older students and are trained in “self-awareness and personal responsibility” (Interview with Gerhard Rosen on October 16,

2020). There is therefore a large emphasis placed upon taking away pressure to perform and placing expectations or demands upon students. It is for this reason that the school makes it very clear that there are no examinations or competitions. Several of its members practice Chán. Furthermore, much of the training explicitly centres upon Chán Buddhist philosophy: particularly cultivating the willpower to combat attachment.

3.5. Studio Zhang

Studio Zhang (or Wǔshù Jiànshēn; www.zhang.at) is located at Kremsergasse 1/2 in Vienna's thirteenth district. In contrast to the previously discussed schools, it is not a dedicated school of Shàolín but instead markets itself as something of an all-encompassing school of *tàijí*, *qìgōng*, and Wǔshù that is grounded in Chán. As the name suggests, at the centre of the school is its founder Master Zhang. Born in Héběi Province, Zhang began studying kung fu and Chán philosophy at the age of twelve. In 1983, after receiving a bachelor's degree in education from Fujian Normal University, he began to teach *tàijí*, *qìgōng*, and Wǔshù at Fújiàn University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. In 1989, he visited Austria for the first time after receiving an invitation from a circle of TCM practitioners. He put on various performances and reportedly attracted a great deal of public attention (Interview with Meister Zhang on September 30, 2020). This inspired him to permanently move to Vienna with his wife and two sons in 1991. It was in this year that he founded *Studio Zhang*. Since then, *Studio Zhang* has grown and today it is run by both Zhang and his son Zhang Zhi, who now teaches several of the lessons (namely beginner and advanced Wǔshù courses). Various forms of classes are organised. The two main forms are winter and summer semester classes that run from Monday to Friday, and special courses that usually take place during weekends. Classes are usually attended by approximately twenty students. *Studio Zhang* offers a wide range of lessons in various forms of kung fu, *qìgōng*, and *tàijí*. Semi-frequently, seminars across Austria, Germany, and Switzerland are also given. The studio also offers private sessions.

Although *Studio Zhang* does not organise dedicated Chán meditation sessions (although this can be arranged on a private basis), meditation is a major part of the school and is often incorporated into sessions. These meditation lessons are often accompanied with explanations of basic Buddhist concepts. Furthermore, *Studio Zhang* itself houses a rather large number of Buddhist statues that both teachers encourage their students to show reverence to.

3.6. Der stille Punkt, Wien – The Still Point, Vienna

On the surface, one might not consider this to be a group pertaining to Chinese Buddhism. The group advertises itself as a mix of “Advaita and Zen.” However, upon closer inspection one finds that this otherwise pan-Buddhist group is extensively studying English translations of Chinese texts. Indeed, these are not the only texts that the group studies, but the Chinese Buddhist texts that are examined are very much regarded as “sacred” by the group: they are introduced as “sacred texts” that can help one on the path to liberation (Interview with Jacques Van Engel on July 9, 2020). *Der stille Punkt, Wien – The Still Point, Vienna* (www.meetup.com/de-DE/Der-stille-Punkt-Wien/) was established by Jacques Van Engel in 2018. It is located at the fourteenth district’s Hütteldorfer Straße 128. Born in Belgium, he worked as an environmentalist at the United Nations Development Programme in New York and then moved to Vienna upon retirement. He has reportedly been studying and practicing Buddhism since he was twenty (ibid.). The group has approximately twenty members. Sessions take place once a week and are usually attended by about ten practitioners. The meetings are conducted in English, but it is usually the case that everything said by Van Engel is translated into German by another member. Meetings consist of both silent and led meditations punctuated with text readings that are then discussed (see Figure 15).

What makes this group relevant to this study is their dedication to the analysis of texts. In 2020, for example, the group extensively studied Wúmén Huikāi’s (1183–1260) *Wúménguān* (The Gateless Barrier), a collection of Chán *gōng’àn* (Japanese: *kōan*). Using an English translation of the text, Van Engel provided the group with his own interpretation which he regarded as “examining a Chinese classic through an Advaita lens.” Rather than adopting a classical Buddhist school of thought, the interpretations are very much based upon his own personal interpretations.

4. Concluding Remarks

Lived Chinese Buddhism in contemporary Austria largely manifests as ethnic Taiwanese (sections 3.1 to 3.3) and Shàolín Buddhism (section 3.4). Additionally, although ordinarily fuzzier and less pronounced, one finds related offerings within the wider kung fu scene and amid scattered pan-Buddhist and Zen groups, of which two examples were briefly introduced in this paper (sections 3.5 and 3.6). Moreover, Chinese Buddhism predominantly means Chán and only to a lesser extent Pure Land Buddhism. The latter tradition,

however, permeates the former in varying degrees, notably in its popularised forms (e.g., Fógūāngshān).

What we call “Shàolín Buddhism” is a tradition that is markedly dimmed in its straightforwardly religious tenor by its broader martial arts expression qua Shàolín kung fu. So, while it had a potentially sizeable outreach to thousands of practitioners in the booming years since the early 2010s, it essentially remains a mere by-product, although a crucial one, of the kung fu life-world. As such, it may (however intensely) or may not be utilised by practitioners. Directly catering to a Buddhist clientele are the Taiwanese groups discussed. Yet, in contrast to Shàolín Buddhism, these groups mainly recruit from within the ethnic Chinese (i.e., largely Taiwanese) diaspora community. This is also because especially the “market of East Asian dhyāna traditions” is already well occupied particularly by Zen (and lesser so Korean Sōn and Vietnamese Thiền) providers, who specifically attend to a non-ethnic audience.³⁸ Accordingly, the potential for growth is quite limited for the time being, which has already led to stagnation or even dissolution, as was the case with the former Linz-based Zhōngtáishān branch *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum*.

What is striking is that practitioners from the PRC seem to be quite underrepresented within Austro-Chinese Buddhism. In fact, both Fógūāngshān and Shàolín Buddhism are frequented by mainland Chinese but their numbers are still low. As for the latter, surprisingly, Buddhist ceremonies were indeed attended by mainland Chinese, most notably *Shaolin Tempel Österreich*, but this was not the case with ordinary training sessions. Presently, stable ethnic Buddhist communities consisting purely of PRC immigrants do not seem to exist. Yet, it is evident that there is a certain demand for institutionalised Buddhist offerings also among mainland Chinese. Whether (and in what fashion) this demand turns into fully-fledged groups needs to be seen.

38 As shown through the brief historical overview, the presence of Chinese Buddhism in practice is for the most part a rather recent occurrence. What is more, contrary to the Sōn and Thiền providers, who likewise emerged in the 1990s, the Taiwanese Chán groups are run and populated by ethnic adherents, which effectively renders them less versatile in attracting non-ethnic practitioners.

Appendix

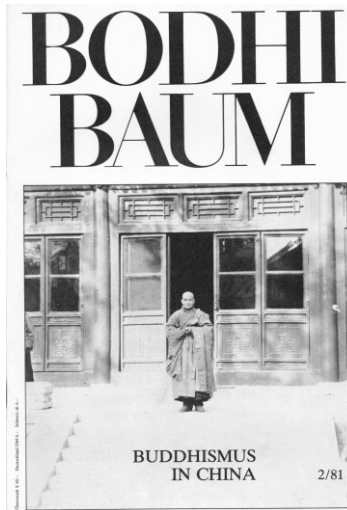


Figure 1: Cover of the *Bodhi Baum* special issue on “Buddhism in China.”

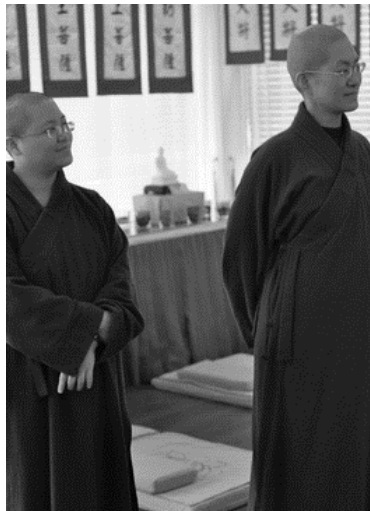


Figure 2: Zhōngtáishān nuns Jiàn Mó and Jiàn Xún heading the Linz branch centre.



Figure 3: Inauguration ceremony of the *Pu Fa Meditationszentrum* conducted by the Zhōngtáishān Dharma Master Jiàn Dēng with some 140 spectators in attendance (April 6, 2013).



Figure 4: Xīngyún conducting the Groundbreaking Purification Ceremony for the construction of the Fóguāngshān temple in Vienna on November 8, 2003.



Figure 5: While in Vienna, Xīngyún was invited to award the Energy Globe Austria 2004 in the Ceremonial Hall of the Vienna Stock Exchange alongside the then Minister of the Environment Josef Pröll (b. 1968) (centre) and Paul Rübiger (b. 1953) (right), then an Austrian member of the European Parliament (November 9, 2004). Xīngyún was introduced as the “Head of Chinese Zen Buddhism.”



Figure 6: Front side of *Fo Guang Shan Tempel Wien* (October 23, 2020).



Figure 7: Buddha Bathing Ceremony of the Ciji Vienna branch (May 12, 2013).



Figure 8: Shì Yánliáng conducting a Dharma talk on meditation (September 11, 2020).



Figure 9: Shì Héngyì paying homage to the Buddha in the *Shaolin Chan Wu Chi* main hall (August 7, 2020).



Figure 10: Buddhist shrine in the main hall of *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* (September 18, 2020).



Figure 11: Weekly discussion meeting of *Shaolin Tempel Steyr* practitioners. Oliver Haas and his own master Shì Héngyì are sitting on the right. While these are not intended as formal Buddhist discussions per se, Buddhist topics do sometimes come up.



Figure 12: *Shaolin Wushu Training Center*'s Buddhist shrine located outside the training hall (July 31, 2020).



Figure 13: Buddhist shrine located at the entrance area of *Shaolin Kung Fu Wien*. A student can be seen in the background, readying himself for class in one of the two training halls (September 15, 2020).



Figure 14: Banner depicting the *Shi Xinggui Shaolin International* official logo that is situated at the entranceway of the school (July 09, 2020).



Figure 15: Painting of the Garuda at the head of *Garuda Warrior Academy's* main hall (October 13, 2020).



Figure 16: Beginning of a *Der stille Punkt, Wien – The Still Point, Vienna* meeting (October 22, 2020).

List of Abbreviations

<i>BGW</i>	<i>Buddhistische Gesellschaft Wien</i> (Buddhist Society of Vienna)
<i>ÖBR</i>	<i>Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft</i> (Austrian Buddhist Religious Society)
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PRC	People's Republic of China
TCM	Traditional Chinese Medicine
ZVR	<i>Zentraler Vereinsregister</i> (Associations Central Database)

Glossary

Daòjùn	道峻
Dèng Xiǎopíng	邓小平
Genro	玄朗
Huáng Zhōngliáng	黄忠良
Jiàn Dēng	見燈
Jiàn Mó	見模
Jiàn Xún	見馴
Jué Róng	覺容
Kāng Shèng hé	康胜和
Lǐ Déjiāng	李德江
Lǐ Hóngzhì	李洪志
Liú Xiūqí	劉修琦
Mǎn Lún	滿綸
Miào Xiáng	妙祥
Shì Héngyì	释恒意
Shì Héngzhàn	释恒占
Shì Miàojiè	释妙戒
Shì Xíngguī	释行皈
Shì Yánliáng	释延良
Shì Yánmíng	释延明
Shì Yǒngxìn	释永信
Wéijué	惟覺
Wúmén Huìkāi	無門慧開
Xīngyún	星雲
Yì Che-dong	이체동
Yóu Cízhí	游慈直
<i>Āmítuó jīng</i>	阿彌陀經
Āndōng	安东
Ānhuī	安徽
Àodìlì Wéiyěnnà Huárén Tiānzhǔ Jiàohuì	奥地利维也纳华人天主教会
Bǎodǐngshān	宝顶山
<i>bàoshēn</i>	報身
<i>bāzhèngdào</i>	八正道
<i>Bōrě bōluómìduō xīnjīng</i>	般若波羅蜜多心經/般若波罗蜜多心经
<i>bùsà</i>	布薩
Cáo dòng	曹洞

<i>chàbùduō</i>	差不多
Chán	禪/禅
<i>chángquán</i>	長拳/长拳
<i>chóngyáng jié</i>	重陽節/重阳节
<i>chūnjié</i>	春節/春节
<i>chūnjié píng'ān dēnghuì</i>	春節平安燈會
Cíjì	慈濟
Dàfówān	大佛灣
<i>dào</i>	道
<i>dǎzuò</i>	打坐
Dēngfēng	登封
Dizàng	地藏
<i>dòngtǔsǎ jìng diǎnlǐ</i>	動土灑淨典禮
<i>dòngzuò chán</i>	動作禪
Fàgǔshān	法鼓山
<i>fǎlún</i>	法輪/法轮
Fǎlún Dàfǎ	法輪大法/法轮大法
Fǎlún Gōng	法輪功/法轮功
<i>fǎshēn</i>	法身
<i>fǎshī</i>	法師/法师
<i>fēngshuǐ</i>	風水/风水
<i>fó àn jié yùfó fǎhuì</i>	佛誕節浴佛法會
Fóguāngshān	佛光山
Fóguāngshān fāhuá chán sì	佛光山法華禪寺
Fóguāngshānsì	佛光山寺
Fójiào Cíjì Gōngdé Huì	佛教慈濟功德會
Fójiào Cíjì Jījīnhuì Àodìlì Liánluòchù	佛教慈濟基金會奧地利聯絡處
<i>fótáng</i>	佛堂
<i>fótuó dànchéng jìniàn rì</i>	佛陀誕辰紀念日
Fújiàn	福建
<i>gǎigé kāifàng</i>	改革開放
Gāoxióng	高雄
<i>gōng'àn</i>	公案
<i>gōngdé</i>	功德
<i>gōngfū</i>	功夫
Guānyīn	觀音/观音
Guān Yǔ	關羽
<i>guāngmíng dēngfǎhuì</i>	光明燈法會
<i>guīyī diǎnlǐ</i>	皈依典禮
Héběi	河北

Hénán	河南
Huáyán	華嚴/华严
Jīlóng (Keelung)	基隆
<i>Jìngsī yǔ</i>	靜思語
<i>Jìngtǔ</i>	淨土
Jìzō	地藏
<i>kōan</i>	公案
Língquánchángsi	靈泉禪寺
Línjì	臨濟
Mílè Dàdào	彌勒大道
<i>mítuó fāhuì</i>	彌陀法會
Nánjīng	南京
<i>Nánshàolínsì</i>	南少林寺
Ōmu Shinrikyō	オウム真理教
Quánéngshén Jiàohuì	全能神教會
<i>qì</i>	氣/氣
<i>qìgōng</i>	氣功/氣功
<i>Qīng-Míng fāhuì</i>	清明法會
Qīxiási	栖霞寺/棲霞寺
<i>páihuá</i>	排华 (abbreviation of <i>páichì huárén</i> 排斥華人)
Pǔfǎ Jīngshě	普法精舍
Pǔlǐ	埔里
Pǔtuóshān	普陀山
<i>rénjiān fójiào</i>	人間佛教
Rínzài	臨濟
<i>róuquán</i>	柔拳
<i>sānbǎo</i>	三宝
<i>sǎndǎ</i>	散打
<i>sānjiào</i>	三教
<i>sānshēn</i>	三身
<i>sànshǒu</i>	散手
<i>sesshin</i>	接心
Shāndōng	山东
Shànghǎi	上海
Shàolín	少林
<i>Shàolín Chán Wǔjí</i>	少林禪武極
Shàolínsì	少林寺
Shì Xínggǒu Shàolín Guójì Quánfǎ Liánméng	释行皈少林国际拳法联盟
<i>Shīdēng gōngdé jīng</i>	施燈功德經

<i>shīfū</i>	师傅
<i>sìdì</i>	四諦/四諦
Sōn	禪/禪
<i>Tǎgōu wǔshù xuéxiào</i>	塔沟武术学校
<i>tàijí</i>	太极/太極
<i>tàolù</i>	套路
Tiāndào Àodìli Zǒnghuì	天道奧地利總會
Tiānwéi fótán	天惟佛壇
Wéi Tuó	韋馱
Wéiyěna Cíēn Fótáng	维也纳慈恩佛堂
Wéiyěna Fóguāngshān	維也納佛光山
Wéiyěna Huárén Jīdū Jiàohuì	维也纳华人基督教会
Wéiyěna Táiwān Jīdū Jiàohuì	維也納台灣基督教會
<i>Wúménguān</i>	無門關
Wǔshù	武术
Wǔshù Jiànshēn	武术健身
<i>xiàodào yuè fǎhuì</i>	孝道月法會
Xīláisi	西來寺
<i>yáng</i>	陽/阳
<i>yàoshī fǎhuì</i>	藥師法會
<i>yàoshī guàndǐng zhēnyán</i>	藥師灌頂真言
Yíguàndào	一貫道
Yǐngshàng	穎上
<i>yìngshēn</i>	應身
<i>yīnyáng</i>	陰陽/阴阳
<i>yùfó diǎnlǐ</i>	浴佛典禮
<i>zàofú</i>	造福
Zen	禪
Zhēnrú sì	真如寺
Zhōngtáichánsì	中台禪寺
Zhōngtáishān	中台山

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