

GOSTUJOČE PREDAVANJE

»Women in the Writing of Religious and Social History: The Narrative of Female Protagonists in Taiwanese Buddhism«



Dr. Stefania Travagnin

Reader in Chinese Buddhism at SOAS, University of London



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 **文化部**
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
Taiwan (R.O.C.)

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Abstract: Religion in Taiwan has been characterized by a constant narrative of female figures. The most worshipped goddesses are probably Mazu and Guanyin, two female deities that are associated with, respectively, Daoism and Buddhism, but are also found very often together in the same temple. And the most charismatic religious leader today is the nun Cheng Yen (b.1937), founder and leader of the Buddhist transnational Tzu Chi Foundation. From the nuns who led women's practice during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) to the nuns who promoted women's ordination in the early 1950s; from the Buddhist woman who introduce Vajrayana practice to Taiwan to pioneers in the development of education and social service: women in Taiwan have been writing important pages of local history, and listening to their voices and experiences will help us rethink agency in the discourse of Buddhism on the island.

Stefania Travagnin is Reader in Chinese Buddhism at SOAS, University of London. Travagnin has done field research among Buddhist communities in Taiwan for more than twenty years, and has been visiting scholar in several Taiwanese institutes like Academia Sinica, National Cheng Chi University, and the National Central Library; she has active collaborations with Taiwanese Buddhist institutions like Tzu Chi Foundation and Foguangshan, and is a research fellow at the Center for the Study of Buddhism in Taiwan in Hsuan-Chuang University. Her research and publications on religion in Taiwan have explored especially Buddhist women, the phenomenon of Humanistic Buddhism, religion and media, and life and works of the monk Yinshun. She has edited or co-edited several volumes, including *Religion and Media in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong* (Routledge, 2016), and the three-volume publication *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions* (De Gruyter, 2019-2020). She is also editor-in-chief of *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*.

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