

Week 5: The Tibetan/Vajrayana tradition and Thich Nhat Hanh

The Center at Belvedere
Charlottesville, VA

Link to extended readings & slides:<https://parusanalytics.com/introbud2025/week-five-2025.html>

4 February 2024

Public Talk by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche
in Charlottesville at Unity Church



April 8, 2025

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Public Talk
by Tenzin Wangyal
Rinpoche
IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Unity Church in Charlottesville is graciously hosting Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for a public talk.

Location: Unity Church

Address: 2825 Hydraulic Rd,
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Time: 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Historical development

- **3rd century CE: Bon influenced in Kingdom of Zhangzhung (eastern Nepal)**
- **First dissemination (7th–9th centuries)**
- **Era of fragmentation (9th–10th centuries)**
- **Second dissemination (10th–12th centuries)**
- **Mongol dominance (13th–14th centuries: Yuan Dynasty)**
- **Ebb and flow of Chinese (Ming, Qing, Communist) control and Tibetan independence (15th–present)**

Major orthodox schools of Tibetan Buddhism

- **Nyingma** (700s) [Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, but he is also Kagyu]
- **Kagyü** (1000s)
- **Gelugpa** (1409) [Dalai Lama]
- **Sakyapa** (1073)
- **Bon** (Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha International): pre-Buddhist, so only sort of orthodox

A characterization of the four schools

In his work, *The Four Dharma Traditions of the Land of Tibet*, [Mipham Rinpoche](#) described the four main schools as follows:

Nyingma followers of Secret Mantra emphasize the actual tantra.

They pursue the highest view and delight in conduct that is stable.

Many reach the vidyādhara levels and attain accomplishment, And many are mantrins, whose power is greater than others.

Kagyü followers, the protectors of beings, emphasize devotion.

Many find that receiving the lineage's blessings is sufficient.

And many gain accomplishment through perseverance in the practice

They are similar to, and mix together with, the Nyingmapas.

The Riwo Gendenpas (i.e. Gelugpas) emphasize the ways of the learned.

They are fond of analytical meditation and delight in debate. And they impress all with their elegant, exemplary conduct.

They are popular, prosperous, and put effort into learning.

The glorious Sakyapas emphasize approach and accomplishment.

Many are blessed through the power of recitation and visualisation,

They value their own ways and their regular practice is excellent.

When compared to any other school, they have something of them all.

Ema! All four dharma traditions of this land of Tibet

Have but one real source, even if they arose individually.

Whichever one you follow, if you practise it properly

It can bring the qualities of learning and accomplishment.

Some modernizing variants













- **Rimè** (19th century) "no school" : nonsectarian involving all schools, including Bon
- **Shambhala**: Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1960s), Naropa University (Boulder), Pema Chödrön
- **New Kadampa Tradition – International Kadampa Buddhist Union (NKT—IKBU)** "is a global [Buddhist new religious movement](#) founded by [Kelsang Gyatso](#) in [England](#) in 1991" [Wikipedia...], and is sort of a Gelugpa spinoff but is passionately opposed to the Dalai Lama, nominally over a specific ritual. It's complicated...
- **Mind and Life Institute** (Charlottesville; Dalai Lama): integration with Western scientific approaches





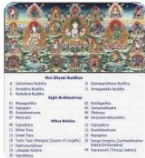





















B. Alan Wallace. *The Attention Revolution* (2006)

Some major bodhisattvas













- Avalokiteshvira (China: Guanyin): compassion
- Tara, in many manifestations: help at a human level (Freya)
- Manjushri: wisdom (Odin)
- Vajrapani: protection and the power of the Buddha (Thor)
- Samantabhadra: kindness/happiness

											
Daycen Manjushri - Bodhisattva Of... \$649.99 Wayfair Free shipping	Avalokiteshvara Statue, Chenrezig... \$158.40 Etsy Free shipping	Framed Tibetan Thangka Of... \$6,000.00 1stdibs.com Used	Buddhist Avalokiteshvara... \$28.59 Amazon.com Free shipping	Bodhisattva statue, Avalokiteshvara \$1,558.17 Etsy Used	30" Avalokiteshvara Statue Ten Faces... \$1,100.00 Etsy Used	Yellow Jambhala Bodhisattva... \$373.59 Buddhastoneshop Free shipping	8" The Tibetan Buddhist... \$246.99 Wayfair Free shipping	Buddhist Bodhisattva... \$41.00 Gthic.com	Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara... \$367.32 Etsy Used	Finely Carved Murtof Manjushri - ... \$1,599.99 Wayfair Free shipping	Manjushri - Bodhisattva of... \$2,799.99 Wayfair ★★★★★ (15)

											
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Ads - Shop image bodhisattvas buddhism

											
Original Vintage Heavenly Gatherin...	Buddhis Khakkhara Four Perfections...	Bodhisattva Green Tara Six True Wor...	Dearmond The Future Buddha...	Tibet Mahakala Bodhisattva...	7th/9thc Solid-cast Bronze Prakhon...	Bronze Tibetan Buddha Manjushr...	Rare Thangka of Padampa Sangye...	Reduced Stunning Pair Of 18th-19th...	Bodhisattva Green Tara Hope Copper...	Buddhist Bodhisattva...	Jambhala - Kuber - God of wealth...

Preliminary practices (ngöndro)

- **Empowerment: guru yoga**
- **Mantra**
- **Visualization (deity yoga)**
- **Mandala**
- **Dream yoga/lucid dreaming**

Advanced practices

- Samatha
- Vipassana
- Dzogchen ("Great Perfection")
- Mahamudra ("Great Seal")
- Quite the assortment of esoteric tantric practices, some of which are indeed thoroughly antinomian and...above my pay grade...
- "Tibetan Book of the Dead" (exceedingly popular, but probably not what you think it is...)

Tibetan compared to Insight

- Advanced leadership is still primarily immigrants from Tibet, though there is some second-generation leadership
- Huge investment in land and temples, many in remote areas
- Strong emphasis on cosmological/immaterial aspects: completely opposite of scientific/rational "Protestant Buddhism"
- Emphasis on advanced meditation methods
 - Contrast to the Thai Forest advice: "You learned a fabulous new meditation method? Well, one more thing you'll need to learn to give up"
- Very large fairly recent—past 500 years—literature, albeit still mostly in Tibetan
- Tolerates feral children at events

Advanced meditation methods

- tummo—"inner fire"—meditation by advanced practitioners raised skin temperature in extremities by 12-degrees F, air temp for 5-degrees F
- Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche could measurably shift from awareness to metta meditation in seconds
- The potential effects of some of these are one reason for secrecy:
 - "Kundalini meditation"—which is not Tibetan per se but deep Hindu history and might influence some Tibetan methods—is quite an advanced combination of yoga, breathing (*pranayama*), and meditation methods, but without proper instruction can produce some fairly nasty effects known as "Kundalini psychosis"

- New jersey
- Los angeles
- Sakya monastery
- Mahayana temple
- Mahayana buddhist
- Hsi lai temple
- Minnesota
- Hampton mn
- New >



Wikipedia Buddhism in the United States - Wikiped...



Wikipedia List of Buddhist temples in the United ...



106.9 KROC Largest Buddhist Temple in North ...



Wikipedia Hsi Lai Temple - Wikipedia



Worldpackers Best Buddhist temples to visit in the USA



www.sakya.org Sakya Monastery – Tibetan Buddh...



Mandalas Life Well known Buddhist monasteries ...



Only In Your State North America's Largest Buddhist...



ABC7 One of the largest Buddhist temples in...



Sakya Monastery – Tibetan Bu... Monastery – Sakya Monaste...



Los Angeles Times Biggest modern Hindu temple...



YouTube Hsi Lai Temple Hacienda Heights, Los ...



Visit Bloomington Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Ce...



Everett Herald Tibetan Buddhism ...



Whittier Square Dentistry Visit Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple - Largest ...



The Guardian They moved to a Buddhist retreat in ...

Katog Palace of the Secret Mantra that Guides Beings

Katog Drodul Sang Ngak Ling Potrang



Located in northwest Arkansas; <https://katog.org/about-the-retreat-center/>



Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center & Kumbum Chamtse Ling Monastery

Bloomington, IN: <https://tmbcc.org/>

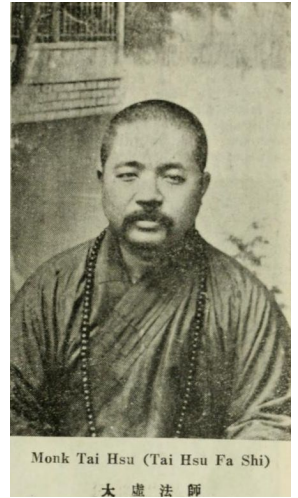
**Thich Nhat Hanh,
The Order of Interbeing and
Plum village**

Yet another modernizer: Taixu

Taixu (January 8, 1890 – March 17, 1947)^{[2][3][4]} was a Chan Buddhist modernist in southern China, activist and thinker who advocated for a reformation and revival of **Chinese Buddhism** by drawing upon eclectic domestic and foreign sources and ideologies. [Wikipedia]

Various reforms advocated by Taixu

- Dramatically reduce the number of monastics, with those remaining involved primarily in education and charitable work along the Christian model
- Reconciling Buddhism and modern science where possible
- Increasing the role of women in Buddhism, and advocating for modern roles of women in society as a whole
- Inter-religious dialogue, but as equals
- The "Pure Land" can be in the present world



Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)

- Entered monastic life at age 16
- Studied and taught at Princeton, Columbia and Cornell thanks to a Fulbright grant
- Engaged in a variety of "engaged Buddhism" social welfare actions; associated monastics were quite involved in the Vietnamese politics of the day
- Exiled after persuading Martin Luther King to oppose Vietnam War, then by Vietnamese Communist government
- In late 1960s, founds the Order of Inter-being, which eventually will have about a dozen monasteries around the world
- In southern France, builds Plum Village from essentially nothing, and writes 100+ books and pamphlets
- Following the model of Mahasi Sayadaw, Ajahn Chah, and Ram Das, has a severe stroke in 2014 and is paralyzed for the last eight years of his life. Leadership of Plum Village passes to his long-time assistant, Sister Chan Khong (b. 1938)



This map was created by a user. [Learn how to create your own.](#)



Sanghas practicing in the Plum Village tradition.



827,115 views

Published on December 23, 2022

[SHARE](#)

Sangha Directory

- All Ages
- Young Adults (Wake Up)
- Startup
- Practice Center
- Resource



Thich Naht Hanh's Order of Interbeing: 14 Mindfulness Trainings

1. Openness
2. Non-attachment to views
3. Freedom of thought
 - Very strong emphasis on tolerance in these first three trainings, e.g. "I am determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones."
4. Awareness of suffering
5. Simple, healthy living
6. Dealing with anger
7. Dwelling happily in the present moment
8. Community and communication
9. Truthful and loving speech
10. Protecting the sangha
11. Right livelihood
12. Reverence for life
13. Generosity
 - includes a ecodharma component
14. Right conduct
 - specifically sexual conduct

The 14 Mindfulness Trainings

of Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing

1. Openness

Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, I am determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help me learn to look deeply and to develop my understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill or die for.

2. Non-attachment to Views

Aware of suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, I am determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. I will learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to others' insights and experiences. I am aware that the knowledge I presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life and I will observe life within and around me in every moment, ready to learn throughout my life.

3. Freedom of Thought

Aware of the suffering brought about when I impose my views on others, I am committed not to force others, even my children, by any means whatsoever – such as authority, threat, money, propaganda or indoctrination – to adopt my views. I will respect the right of others to be different and to choose what to believe and how to decide. I will, however, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness through compassionate dialogue.

Impressions of Plum Village approach

- Plum Village itself is largest Buddhist monastery in Europe; also includes a number of lay followers. Monks and nuns are celibate
- Fairly general Mahayana approach
- In North America, emphasis is on relatively small and simple "house church" sanghas; large sanghas will split
- Pretty much a fixed format of the "service", not unlike Christian services.
- As with Tibetan, and based on pictures, retreats seem rather child friendly compared to Insight and Zen
- Consistent with Taixu, focus is on this world, not the cosmology



<https://plumvillage.org/about/plum-village>

"Order of worship" for CVille's Cloud Floating Free

- Guided meditation
- Walking meditation (which more generally is seriously a Plum Village thing...)
- Silent meditation
- Sharing of names of people in need of care
- Metta (lovingkindness) meditation and dedication of merit
- Individual introductions
- Short break for tea
- Reading from a work of Thich Nhat Hanh
- "Dharma sharing" by individuals
- Traditional five recollections
- Modernized version of three jewels

Note absence of an offertory...

A few observations on current challenges and possible transitions

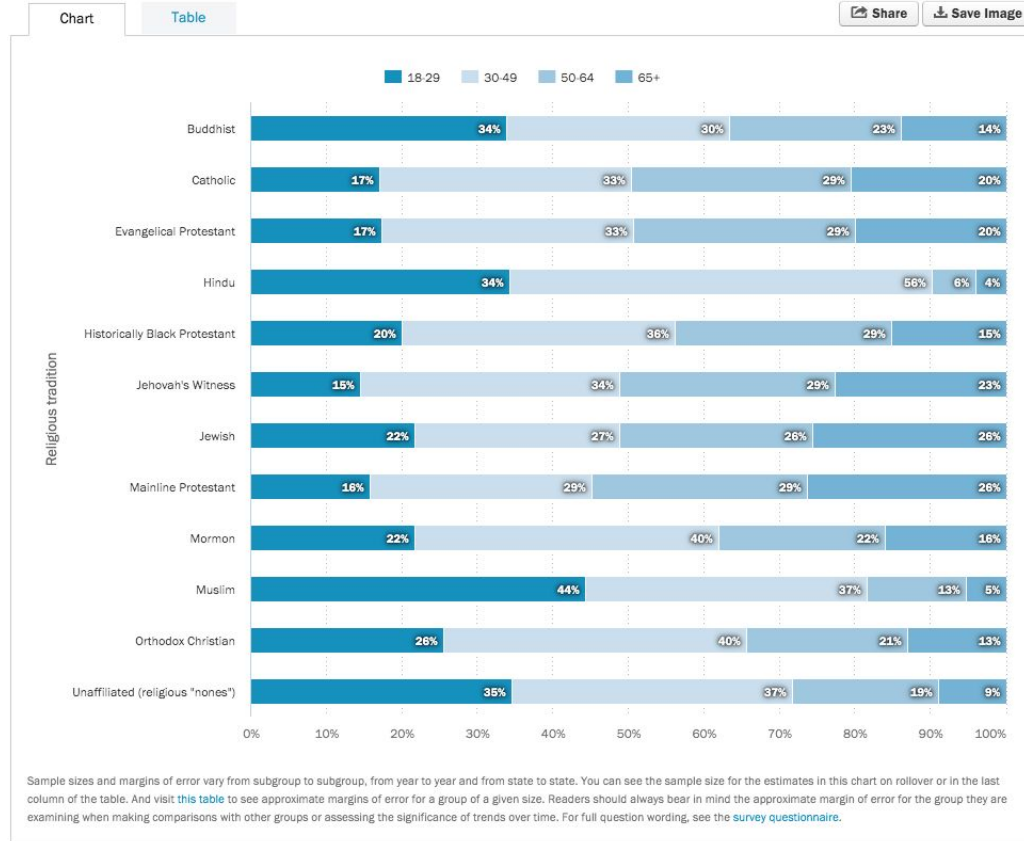
Note: this doesn't mean we aren't meeting next week

Challenges

- Generational transition in leadership, which is already well underway with the original Asian modernizers, and is necessarily approaching the first-generation US teachers
 - Dalai Lama could be particularly important, though probably not, and Yongey Mingyur rinpoche is already filling his niche as a Western celebrity
- Fate of ethnic Asian "churches", which are seeing the same decline as mainstream Protestant denominations
- Going beyond the "wealthy white affinity group" model
 - This seems to be going well in a new generation of teachers, who are also disproportionately LGBTQ+
 - Cost of retreats remains a serious constraint
 - Lack of a robust "business model" for both teachers and facilities: there are [possibly] more Christian professionals in Cville/Albemarle than in all of IMS; there is also competition from secular therapeutic mindfulness

Age distribution by religious group

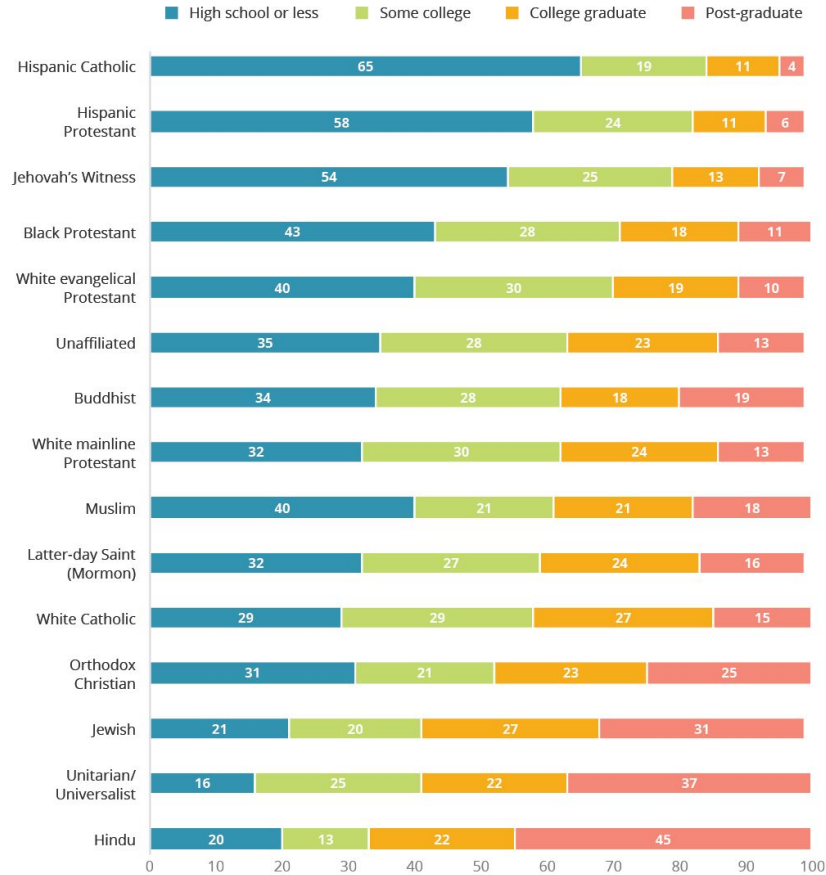
% of adults who are ages...



Source: <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/age-distribution/>

FIGURE 5. Educational Attainment, by Religious Affiliation

Percent who are



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Atlas.

Open questions and speculative answers

- Will interest in therapeutic/secular mindfulness translate into increased interest in Buddhism, particularly among the "nones"?
 - Past US experience suggests "no"
- Per Rodney Stark's theories of a "marketplace" for religious ideas, are there missing niches that could be filled by a new synthesis
 - Possibly, though none seem to be on the horizon at the moment. Though they wouldn't be to a Boomer
 - Zen seems to me endangered due to the resource intensity, loss of interest in Japan, overlap with Theravadan and Tibetan open awareness practice, and, of course, Zen Burgers
 - US religious movements generally tend to split rather than combine
- What is the long-term role of the electronic sangha?

Ultimate comparative religion chart: I2BUS-2023

Standard trinitarian pagan cosmology (Sahlins)

"Hinduism"

neo-paganism and assorted New Age NRMs

Abrahamic/
monotheistic

Judaism

Christianity

Islam

Dualistic

Zoroastrianism

"Gnostic"

Manichean

Mysticism

Sufism

monastic practices

Religious Society of Friends

Philosophical/
atheistic

Taoism

Confucianism

Buddhism

secular humanism

Stoicism