

## *From One Buddhist Temple to Many Buddhist Institutions: Interdisciplinarity, Multisited Patchwork Ethnography, and Fieldwork in Today's China*

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Figures: Main halls, temples for Chinese Buddhist Nuns hosting Buddhist Academies, from left to right: Pushou temple (普寿寺) - 2018, Aidao temple (爱道堂) - 2024, Qifu temple (祈福寺) - 2024, Wanfo temple (万佛阁) - 2024, Chenxiang temple (沉香阁) - 2024 © Amandine Péronnet

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This presentation reflects on the methodological challenges and innovations involved in studying contemporary Chinese Buddhist institutions through the lens of gender, education, and authority. My research explores the evolving landscape of Buddhist institutions in post-Mao China through the case of Chinese Buddhist nuns and their strategic use of educational networks. Focusing on how Buddhist higher education serves as a system for producing and legitimizing religious elites, I examine the ways in which nuns engage with institutional affiliations to navigate patriarchal structures and assert religious authority. My methodology combines digital ethnography, targeted onsite fieldwork, and textual analysis—a “patchwork ethnography” that reflects both the fragmentation of the field and the hybridization of data collection practices (Watanabe, Varma et Günel, 2020). This approach enables me to trace biographical trajectories and institutional affiliations across multiple sites—both physical (monasteries, academies) and digital (websites of Buddhist associations and government institutions). This in turn allows me to analyze how patterns of affiliation to educational networks emerge and evolve. These networks reveal how digital and offline spaces jointly shape religious authority and how educational affiliations function as powerful tools of symbolic legitimation. By bridging disciplines and fieldwork modalities, I intend to contribute to a broader reflection on how scholars adapt their research practices to increasingly complex and multisited religious landscapes. In such a fragmented, politicized, and mediated context, I contend that interdisciplinarity and methodological hybridity are not only responses to the complexity of fieldwork, but also powerful means for enriching our analytical perspectives on religious authority in contemporary China.