
Original Article

The normalisation of body gifting in Taiwan

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Abstract The Tzu Chi Foundation has made body gifting, such as body donation, bone marrow donation and cord blood donation, successful in Taiwan. Using Foucault's theoretical framework of governmentality and normalisation, this article discusses how a Buddhist charity, the Tzu Chi Foundation, normalises body gifting in Taiwan through their campaigns, system and philosophy. It argues that Buddhist discourses of karma create a 'benefit-all altruism' in body gifting. Furthermore, the emergence of the Tzu Chi Foundation in the last five decades has been a process of discipline and norm construction. The Tzu Chi Foundation, with its comprehensive missions, builds up an extensive network to spread their philosophy in different fields, from environmental protection and humanity education to medical care. The practice-oriented and community-based volunteer system helps the 'giving' ideology take root in the communities in Taiwan. Finally, through the media and the Internet, the effect goes beyond the institutional boundaries and reaches the public. *BioSocieties* advance online publication, 3 August 2015; doi:10.1057/biosoc.2015.29

Keywords: body gifting; Foucault; normalisation; Tzu Chi; Taiwan

Introduction

Advances in medical services open up an opportunity for patients who need transplantation. To match this demand, there is a need for living and deceased donation of body parts, which ranges from tissue donation such as blood, skin, bone marrow and cord blood, organ donation such as kidney and liver, to donation of the whole body. The literature on organ donation finds that the donation rates in Asian industrial countries are disproportionately lower than those in Western industrial countries (He *et al*, 2010). In addition, shortage of cadavers has been a challenge for medical schools in China (Zhang *et al*, 2008), Hong Kong (*South China Morning Post*, 2013) and Taiwan. Nevertheless, in the last few years Taiwan has shown outstanding results in whole-body donation, bone marrow donation and cord blood donation and has had the highest organ donation rate in Asia. This article discusses one of the forces, which I argue is to be the main one, that normalise the practice and attitude of body gifting in Taiwan. This force is the largest non-governmental organisation in Taiwan – the Tzu Chi Foundation – with nearly 10 million volunteers and donors in 50 countries.

Titmuss (1997) compared the different blood donation systems (voluntary blood donation and payment system) in the United States, Britain and other countries. He concluded that, since altruistic gift relation creates social cohesion and social wealth, a system of voluntary blood-giving is safer and more economically efficient than the system based on payment for blood giving. However, the *gift* discourse as one-way and altruistic can only provide a partial account of why people participate in human tissue donation (Tutton, 2002; Shaw, 2010). The literature on human tissue donation in Asia is limited. Copeman (2009) and Simpson (2004) have looked into how Buddhism is related to human tissue donation in South Asia. Copeman (2009) uses the term “virtuous utility” to explain blood donation in contemporary North India and argues that blood donation is divinised through religion. Simpson (2004) used eye and blood donation in Sri Lanka to illustrate the involvement of Theravada Buddhism in tissue donation. In this article, I use the notion of ‘benefit-all altruism’ embedded in the Buddhism to understand the intention of body gifting in Taiwan. In addition, using Foucault’s theories about normalisation and discipline, I discuss how the Tzu Chi Foundation normalises the attitude, perception and behaviour of body gifting among its members and the wider public through the analysis of this organisation’s philosophy, missions, discourses and system.

Foucault (1991) argues that disciplinary power can be implemented through means such as hierarchical observation, examination and normalising judgement. In addition, the notion of governmentality is the programme, technique and strategy for “conduct of the conduct” (Ross, 2000), which can be used to understand the way everyday existence and conduct are governed (Rose and Miller, 1992). Governmentality is discussed not only in the political context, but also in other contexts, such as religion (Garmany, 2010; Ghatak and Abel, 2013) and education (Paters *et al*, 2009), that produce knowledge and social order.

This article focuses on three body gifting campaigns that the Tzu Chi Foundation advocates, which are whole-body donation, bone marrow donation and cord blood donation. Human organ and tissue donation is excluded in this article because this is a separate system that is led by the Taiwan Organ Procurement Association and the Taiwan Organ Registry and Sharing Centre. The Taiwanese government had enacted regulations to facilitate the national campaign for organ and tissue donation. The Regulation Governing the Transplantation and Allocation of Human Organs, enacted in 2014, states that a family that has donated its family member’s organ or tissue will be a priority on the waiting list if transplantation is needed for members of that family. The collection and recruitment of organ and tissue donation is implemented through hospitals. In contrast, whole-body donation and stem cell donation (cord blood and bone marrow) in Taiwan lacks government support both in regulation and in promotion. The Tzu Chi Foundation is the organisation that has set up the system for whole-body donation and stem cell donation in Taiwan.

This article is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data are audio records and notes collected from interviews and ethnography I conducted in Taiwan for 1 month in 2013 and 1 month in 2014. I visited a bone marrow donor recruitment activity, Tzu Chi Taichung branch, and its headquarters in Hualien, and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cell Centre (BTCSCC). In addition, I conducted formal and informal interviews with 20 people, including Tzu Chi members and non-Tzu Chi members. The secondary data are drawn from document

analysis of the books, Websites and TV programmes that the Tzu Chi Foundation publishes, as well as the news, public documents and reports about the Tzu Chi Foundation. This article starts with the problem of body gifting in Taiwan before the Tzu Chi Foundation promoted it. It analyses the Tzu Chi Foundation's philosophy and how the organisation became involved in the work of body gifting in Taiwan. It then moves into a discussion of its activities that normalise the conduct of body gifting among its members and the wider public in Taiwan in cases of body donation, bone marrow donation and cord blood donation.

Body, Organ and Tissue Donation in Taiwan

Taiwan is an immigrant society with a population of 23.32 million people. The demographics of Taiwan are composed of Han Chinese as the majority group and some other ethnic groups who migrated from mainland China to Taiwan over the past 400 years. IN addition, there is a small proportion of indigenous peoples that are officially recognised as 14 different groups (Executive Yuan, 2013). Taiwanese culture is intertwined with Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and folk beliefs. Body gifting used to be taboo in Taiwan, and the barriers usually lie in two factors: keep the intact body and the ownership of the body. First, preserving an intact body is considered to be important for the afterlife and is a main reason for refusing to donate (Yong *et al*, 2000; Molzahn *et al*, 2005). It is believed that without an intact body, a person would be handicapped in the next life. Second, according to Confucianism, individuals do not have independent ownership of their own bodies. Rather, there is a collective ownership, with the body mostly owned by the parents (Lam and McCullough, 2000; Zhang *et al*, 2008). Confucius said, "The body, hair and skin, all have been received from our parents, and we should not damage them – that is the beginning of filial piety". Out of respect for ancestors, individuals are expected to protect their body in an intact condition, as they received it from their parents. Other common reasons include issues relating to ill health, family members' refusal to donate because of worry that it would increase their grief, and fear. All these concerns hindered body gifting in Taiwan.

The Historical Background of the Tzu Chi (*Ciji*) Foundation

The Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, usually known as the Tzu Chi Foundation, is a non-governmental organisation founded and led by Dharma Master Cheng Yen (*Zhèng yán*), a Buddhist nun, in Taiwan in 1966. The motto of the Tzu Chi Foundation is "be committed to Buddhism and all living beings (*Wèi fójiào, wèi zhòngshēng*)". Tzu Chi, literally 'Compassionate Relief', started by selling baby shoes to raise money to help the poor in a remote area in Hualien. It has now expanded into an international humanitarian organisation with millions of volunteers, and is the largest non-governmental organisation in the Chinese societies.

The Tzu Chi Foundation has a Mahayana Buddhism origin, and now has developed into a Buddhist sect called *Ciji zōngmén* (Tzu Chi sect). At the beginning, Master Cheng Yen followed *Rénjiān fójiào* (humanistic Buddhism), which emphasises helping this world to become a 'Pure Land' through secular action (Harvey, 2013). Practitioners in this sect spend

little time in meditation (as in Zen Buddhism), reciting sutras or chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha (as in Pure Land Buddhism). Nor do they encourage monastic life as a quicker way of achieving perfection and liberation. Master Cheng Yen developed the Tzu Chi Foundation into ‘engaged Buddhism’ (Harvey, 2013), which takes a socially engaging direction. Social engagement makes the Tzu Chi Foundation outstanding in the Buddhist community. Buddhism is more reserved than other faiths about expressing views on social issues, and Buddhist groups give little comment or criticism about bioethics (Jordens *et al*, 2012). Traditionally, Buddhist monks and nuns in Taiwan retreat from the world and devote themselves to the monastery. Tzu Chi takes a very different route, in which it actively engages in community service and international relief.

Tzu Chi’s action-oriented character is related to two key events. The first one happened in 1966 when Master Cheng Yen visited a follower at the hospital. She saw a pool of blood on the floor left by a woman who could not afford the deposit for treatment for a miscarriage. The inner pain caused by seeing the blood was the catalyst for the Master to establish the Tzu Chi Foundation and its future dedication to building hospitals in remote areas. The second event was related to Catholicism. Three Catholic nuns visited the Master and discussed their beliefs. Before they left, they said, “Buddha’s compassion to all livings is great. Although God’s love is toward mankind, Catholics have built churches, hospitals and nursing homes to assist the poor. What is the contribution of Buddhism?” This conversation strengthened her determination to help the poor and needy through medicine. She became dedicated to the idea that if she brought 500 people together, they would become one Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands to see the needy and provide services for them. Consequently, Tzu Chi is the first Buddhist group to set up hospitals in Taiwan, at a time when most of the religious hospitals in Taiwan are funded by Protestant or Catholic groups.

Master Cheng Yen’s teaching is based mainly on the Innumerable Meanings Sutra, Lotus Sutra and Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra. Since 1989, the Tzu Chi Foundation has published *Jing Si Aphorisms*, which is a collection of the sayings from Master Cheng Yen. She uses simple and easy to understand language, combined with examples from daily life, to teach the Buddhist classical texts and life lessons. Master Cheng Yen believes that spreading good words enables the spread of the spirit of goodness in the community. Quotations of *Jing Si Aphorisms* can be seen on the walls of the buildings of Tzu Chi. Tzu Chi volunteers are active in giving away *Jing Si Aphorisms* to its followers, the general public. It is common to see a sentence from *Jing Si Aphorisms* on the walls of police stations, fire stations, hospitals, schools and shops in Taiwan. It was reported that *Jing Si Aphorisms* helped to solve conflicts in the police station, and calm the mind of policemen (Shi, 2013).

The Tzu Chi Foundation is a ‘non-temple-centred’ modern Buddhism that is rooted in the community. Master Cheng Yen encourages followers to believe that everywhere is the very place to practise their Dharma. Therefore, followers are expected to live their Bodhisattva path regardless of whether they are in a living room, garage, kitchen, market or office. The current campaigns that the Tzu Chi Foundation advocates are known as ‘Tzu Chi’s eight footprints’. These include four missions– charity, medicine, education and humanistic culture – and four tasks, which are bone marrow donation, international relief, environmental protection and community volunteer action. Therefore, medicine and stem cell donation have been the main missions of the Tzu Chi Foundation.

The Buddhist Body

In order to understand body gifting, we should investigate the understanding and discourses of the body in Buddhism and the Tzu Chi sect. In Buddhism, the body is the base of many qualities. Buddhism makes a distinction between rupakaya and dharmakaya. Rupakaya (*Sè shēn*) is the physical body. The physical body is one of the bodies in the Buddhist sutras. Dharmakaya (*Fǎ shēn*) is the dharma body, pure body or truth body, which is intangible, invisible and not material. The physical body, which is material, has limitation and will perish. In contrast, dharmakaya, the truth body, always exists and has no beginning or end. The Lotus Sutra describes Buddha's dharmakaya as being like a boundless void, which is the perfect state that Buddhists pursue. As the Master Cheng Yen says, "Buddha's physical body has perished, but his dharma body exists in the void for eternity" (Tzu Chi Foundation, 2009). While Buddhists aim to realise the dharma body as the Buddha did, the physical body is not regarded as sacred; rather, it is sometimes called a 'vile skin-bag' (*Chòupínáng*) because it produces dirty secretions. The physical body is also a source of troublesome desires. Nevertheless, the physical body is still the vessel for the truth (Shi, 2013). In Buddhism, giving up material attachment to society is one of the ways to achieve liberation. Therefore, body gifting gains merits and helps to achieve liberation. However, it is anything but an easy decision to make.

In addition to biological life, *wisdom life* (*Huì mìng*, 慧命) is emphasised in Master Cheng Yen's teaching. There is an end to biological life, but there is no end or limit to wisdom life. It is believed that reviving the wisdom life is more important than the length of biological life. It is also believed that through charitable thought and conduct people can gain wisdom life, and eventually become bodhisattvas. Studying the Buddhist sutras and altruistic conduct are also ways of cultivating wisdom life. In this sense, life is extended into another form (wisdom life) through body gifting. Therefore, bestowing human tissues to help people can achieve a higher level of life – wisdom life. Tzu Chi's discourses focus not only on the biological self, but also on the spiritual and religious self, which is embodied in the wisdom life.

'Silent Mentor': Whole-Body Donation Campaign

Whole-body donation is enormously important to anatomy lessons, which are essential for medical students to study the structure of the human body and gain tactile experience. Medical schools in Taiwan used to have a shortage of cadavers because very few people donated their bodies after death, because of the barriers mentioned earlier. The supply relied on cadavers from the Homeless Shelter until the Tzu Chi Foundation started its body donation campaign. In 1994, Tzu Chi set up Tzu Chi medical school, and faced the same problem of a shortage of bodies for anatomy lessons. In 1995, a follower voluntarily donated her body to the Tzu Chi University for anatomy lessons. After that, Master Cheng Yen promoted whole-body donation – the Silent Mentor Programme – which has changed people's mind-set towards whole-body donation. To date, more than 35 000 people have signed an agreement for body donation, and every month an average of 100–200 people continue to sign such agreements. Most of the donors are followers of Master Cheng Yen.

Some followers were so determined that they moved to Hualien before they passed away to make sure their body could be processed in time. One cancer patient who considered that a body that had undergone a major surgery would not be accepted for body donation refused any surgery or chemotherapy so that he could keep his body intact for donation. Before passing away, he said to medical students, “You may make hundreds, or even thousands of wrong cuts on me, but please don’t make one single wrong cut on your patients”. The donated unembalmed bodies are used for human anatomy class, pathology anatomy and simulated surgery,¹ based on. The bodies are not only used at Tzu Chi University, but there are also enough to supply other medical schools in Taiwan. Before this programme, 20 students shared one cadaver (Lu, 2011), but now every 4 students can share one cadaver.

How does Tzu Chi change the mind-set of the traditional taboo relating to body donation? First, Master Cheng Yen gives the body donors a name, silent mentor, and highlights their selfless donation to education as a ‘great love’ (*dà ài*) and ‘great sacrifice’ (*dà shě*). The ‘silent mentor’ campaign changed the character of donated bodies, the process, and the relationship among the donor, family and medical staff. ‘Silent mentor’ emphasises the personhood of the donated body. The donated body used to be viewed as a cadaver without life, and *it* was a thing or tool for medical training. As a silent mentor, the body is viewed and treated as a human or a patient; most importantly, *he* or *she* is a teacher from whom the medical students and staff learn through surgical dissection.

Second, the particular ritual and process of body donation brings humanitarian education to it. Before the anatomy class, the students are requested to visit the family of the donor to learn the life story of the silent mentor, the disease and the reason for body donation. Through the family visit, the students know the donor by name, which brings humanity and respect to the medical education. Different religious blessings are performed on the day before the lesson. When the students dissect the body, the picture of the donor is hung by the body to remind the students to be grateful and to treat the silent mentor as a patient instead of a body. After the lesson finishes, students stitch back every cut on the silent mentor, with respect. In this way, the body is still kept intact after death, in adherence to the folk belief. Afterward, students dress their silent mentor in a white cloth, and the traditional robes sewn by the residential nuns of Tzu Chi Abode of Still Thoughts (*Jīng sī jīng shě*). Finally, the silent mentor is placed solemnly in a coffin. These procedures mitigate the concern about maintaining body dignity. There is a final ceremony and annual memorial ceremony to show gratitude and respect to the silent mentor. One donor’s sister said that the family was very upset when her sister signed the agreement to whole-body donation. Yet, when they went to the final ceremony, they realised that she had done a marvellous thing.

Third, the Buddhist ritual for the silent mentors is thought of as a process of sanctification. The Tzu Chi Foundation holds memorial services for silent mentors each year. Through music

1 Tzu Chi set up the first and only Medical Simulation Centre in Taiwan in 2003. By using cryopreservation, which rapidly freezes the body without using preservatives, the muscles and vessels can resume their elasticity when the body is thawed back to room temperature. Students and doctors are able to practise medical simulation surgery before they do it on a patient. In earlier times, junior doctors could only watch how the senior doctors performed a procedure. By using simulation surgery, junior doctors can learn to practise the first cut, and senior doctors can advance their skills or try new surgical procedures on the body.



and words, students express their gratitude towards silent mentors and their families. After cremation, the ashes of the silent mentors are placed in the Hall of Great Giving (*Dàshětáng*), the memorial hall for body donors at Tzu Chi University. The Hall is decorated with lotuses and broadcasts 24-hour Buddhist sutras. A statue of the *De cáng wáng púsà* (Ksitigarbha or Earth Store Bodhisattva) is placed at the front of the hall. The corpse is thought to be transformed into the body of a bodhisattva through these rituals (Lu, 2011). Master Cheng Yen particularly admires and follows Earth Store Bodhisattva, who once vowed that “I will not realise Buddha-hood until the hells are emptied. I vow that only after all living beings have been rescued will I myself accomplish Bodhi”. Master Cheng Yen was inspired by his determination and action, and she vowed that she would stand guard in front of the gate of hell, and spread Buddhist teachings to the world.

Fourth, ownership of the body is interpreted with new meaning. Confucian teaching dedicates the ownership of the body to the parents, rather than to the individual. Master Cheng Yen advocates that “In life, there is no right of ownership, but only the privilege of use”, and encourages body donation for medical education. In addition, the Tzu Chi Foundation is dedicated to promoting recycling, turning waste materials into useful goods. The discourse about body donation adopts a utility perspective. Lu (2011) argues that the whole-body donation campaign transformed the corpses into three symbols, namely, the body of ecology, the body of morality and the body of bodhisattva. The body of ecology echoes the maximisation of utility that the Tzu Chi Foundation has been promoting. Master Cheng Yen said that the body is useless for the self after death, but it can be useful for others through whole-body donation. Body donation therefore turns the useless into the useful.

Finally, Buddhist karma is essential in body gifting in Taiwan. In one talk, Master Cheng Yen taught about the karmic law of cause and effect:

Everyone’s karmic retribution differs, depending on the negative karma we create ... Buddha says that how living beings share collective karma, when the karmic retribution of living beings’ collective negative karma come to bear, it can bring about great disasters. We often speak about impermanence of life, which is actually a result of the karma that we bring with us life after life ... we should understand that there are three kinds of karmic retractions. The first one is present-life retribution, the second is next-life retribution, and the third is future-life retribution. Present-life retribution is when we suffer in this life the consequences of our deeds in the present life. but some people may not suffer the consequences of their deeds in this lifetime, but only suffer in their next life. This is called next-life retribution. for those who still don’t suffer their retribution in the next life, it means that their blessings haven’t been depleted yet, but they will suffer their retribution in their future lives ... so I am truly very worried about the bad karma that people create collectively. As bad karma keeps building up, there will be major disasters in the world. This is why I have been calling on everyone to quickly repent deeply and sow blessings.

Venerable Yen, 2011

The Buddhist teaching of Master Cheng Yen is based on the cause and effect of karma. Body gifting creates good karma, which benefits not only the self, but also others and society.

Bone Marrow Registry

For patients who need a haematopoietic transplantation, there is about a 70 per cent chance that a patient will not find a match from a family member and therefore will need to search the international registries. The Tzu Chi Foundation set up the Bone Marrow Registry in Taiwan in 1993. The establishment of the Tzu Chi Bone Marrow Registry derived from a request from a leukaemia patient, Wen Wen-Ling, who is a student from Taiwan studying in the United States. In 1992, Wen Wen-Ling was diagnosed with leukaemia but was unable to find a human leucocyte antigen match from the databases in the United States or Japan. She returned to Taiwan and found that bone marrow donation in Taiwan was restricted to direct family members. With public pressure, later in 1993, the Legislative Yuan passed an amendment to the “Human Organ Transplant Statute”, which abolished the limitation of bone marrow donation within the direct family and allowed non-relative bone marrow donation and transplantation. In the same year, she visited Master Cheng Yen and pleaded the necessity of initiating a bone marrow registry in Taiwan. The Department of Health held a meeting for the Marrow Donor Registry project, which entrusted the Tzu Chi Foundation with the establishment and operation of Taiwan’s Bone Marrow Registry, which became the only bone marrow registry in the world to be run by a charity. By the end of May 2014, 388 243 people had registered as bone marrow donors. This registry, maintained by the Tzu Chi Stem Cells Centre, has provided 3573 stem cell transplantations to 29 countries. China, Taiwan and Korea are the top three countries to which the stem cells are sent. The action of Wen Wen-Ling turning to Master Cheng Yen for help and the Health Department entrusting Tzu Chi to set up the registry show that the Tzu Chi Foundation was highly trusted by the public and the government in Taiwan in the 1990s. The Tzu Chi Foundation advocated the campaigns that the government should have been involved in but failed to be.

In the promotion of stem cell donation, Master Cheng Yen usually cites a quote from the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, in which Buddha taught people to give up the most difficult things to give up, including wealth, family and different parts of the body, such as bone marrow:

Be able to give up all that is hard to give up. Be willing to bestow all to others: your head, eyes, marrow, and brain.

[Sutra of Innumerable Meanings]

This Buddhist teaching of giving away attachment is not unique to Taiwan. Simpson (2004) used eye and blood donation to illustrate the power of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Master Cheng Yen uses ‘great love as clear water (*Qingshui zhi ai*)’ for stem cell donation. In the meeting room of the BTCSCC, a large poster is displayed on the wall with the Chinese characters for ‘love of clear water’. Water has no colour and odour, but no creature can live without it. This kind of great love without segmentation is like water. The love is given out equally, with no boundaries of nation, race or religion. This is the pure water that is indispensable to the world. In addition, Master Cheng Yen explained that dharma is like water for cleansing people’s hearts. The Water Repentance Text (*Shui chàn*) is one of the Buddhist classics that Master Cheng Yen speaks about. The Water Repentance Text is about the law of karma. People reap what they sow. Bad karma originates from mental afflictions. Master Cheng Yen believes everyone is born with a pure heart, but the environment makes the

heart impure. Dharma is like water, a clean stream of water that can clean people's hearts. Through learning about dharma, repentance, doing good deeds and making vows to transform the self, people can start anew. Therefore, according to Pan (2009), what is tangible is the bone marrow; what is intangible is the essence of Buddhist dharma. Through the donation of bone marrow, the seed of dharma is planted.

However, the advocacy of bone marrow donation did not occur without resistance from the public, especially the older generation. People used to think that bone marrow donation was dangerous and harmful to health. One challenge to bone marrow donation was the misunderstanding that bone marrow was 'Lóng gǔ shuǐ (龍骨水)', literally 'the water of the dragon bones'. The 'dragon bones' are the bones of the spine. Therefore, *lóng gǔ shuǐ* refers to the liquid in the spine, which is the cerebrospinal fluid in Western medicine. In folk belief, the spine is very important for the body and health, and should be protected from any kind of injury or invasive procedure, such as lumbar puncture. It was misunderstood that bone marrow extraction was the same as lumbar puncture, and this created fear and rejection. Nevertheless, Tzu Chi specialist advocates for bone marrow donation made great efforts to explain that the bone marrow was extracted from the ilium, and corrected the misunderstandings. The slogan for bone marrow donation is 'save a life with no harm to oneself (*Jiù rén yī mìng, wú sǎn jǐ shēn*)'. One story on Tzu Chi's Website shows people's fear and misconception of bone marrow extraction. Mr Wong is a regular blood donor, but has been reluctant to join the bone marrow donation campaign. He agreed that bone marrow donation was a good thing but he thought that it involved extracting *lóng gǔ shuǐ*, which would affect his health. One day, he saw a Tzu Chi poster for bone marrow donation when he was donating blood. He mentioned to the nurse that he had heard that bone marrow donation involved taking *lóng gǔ shuǐ* from the spine. The nurse explained to him that bone marrow donation involves collecting haematopoietic stem cells from the hipbone, or the arm, which is similar to blood donation. He therefore decided to register as a bone marrow donor. Here, Tzu Chi provided knowledge to legitimate the bone marrow donation. The following are Mr Wong's words from the Website:

Oh, I see. I have always thought that bone marrow donation was getting *lóng gǔ shuǐ* from the spine so I was afraid to join in.

After the explanation from the nurse in the blood centre, Mr Wong Zhencheng, who is nearly 45 years old, realised that bone marrow donation is not extracting *lóng gǔ shuǐ*.

Care given by Tzu Chi volunteers is an important aspect of bone marrow donation campaigns, but is not limited to these campaigns. Donation Activities and Marrow Donation Care Team is composed of Tzu Chi bone marrow volunteers who are in charge of recruitment and taking care of the donors and recipients. Tzu Chi bone marrow volunteers are trained by volunteer doctors. I visited one recruitment event for bone marrow donation at a university in 2014. This recruitment event aimed to recruit 120 new donors and collect their blood for testing. There were about 70 Tzu Chi volunteers helping at this full-day recruitment event. The mobilisation of large numbers of volunteers, in my opinion, is only possible through the Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan. I will return to the issue of mobilisation of volunteers later.

It was common that a donor was matched but refused to donate because of pressure from the family, and this was devastating for the patients. To avoid refusal, the Tzu Chi Foundation

aims to recruit donors who really think about and discuss this issue with their family. Tzu Chi volunteers given information to the students a few days before the event. Objection by the family is one of the most common reasons for not donating when matched. Potential donors are requested to talk to their family and gain their signatures for agreement on the form provided, even in the case of students over 18 years of age. On the day, the event was segregated into four areas: registration, explanation, document and blood collection. The trained bone marrow volunteers were stationed in the explanation area to give one-to-one explanation about transplantation and the process to the students and to answer questions, and other volunteers helped in other areas. According to the volunteers, they hoped that the potential donors were fully informed about the donation process, and willing to participate. If a donor is matched in the registry, the local Tzu Chi bone marrow volunteer will call the donor to arrange a visit, during which they explain the process of bone marrow donation, and share testimony from those who have donated before. During the donation process, there are Tzu Chi volunteers or members who stay with the donor to facilitate the process, as well as to allay any fears that might be aroused. Afterward, Tzu Chi volunteers perform a 10-year follow-up on the donor. One informant who had previously been matched said that she was impressed by the care that Tzu Chi volunteers provide to the donors, and that the care that the volunteers show was very helpful with regard to her willingness to donate bone marrow.

Cord Blood Bank and Donation

There are 10 private cord blood banks in Taiwan, but the only public cord blood bank is run by the Tzu Chi Foundation. It has been stated in the literature that the advertisement of private cord blood banking would affect people's public cord blood donation, but this seems not to have been the case in Taiwan. Private cord blood banking has been predominant in Taiwan since the late 1990s, but public cord blood donation has started to become popular, which is shown in two surveys about cord blood conducted by Academia Sinica in 2004 and 2009. In the 2004 survey, 92 per cent of the respondents were willing to donate cord blood, while 63 per cent of the respondents were willing to spend money to store cord blood. Interestingly, among those who were willing to pay to store cord blood, more than 90 per cent were also willing to donate cord blood to others. In the 2009 survey, 85.3 per cent of the respondents were willing to donate cord blood. The figure for 2009 appears lower than that for 2008. But since 2008, the Tzu Chi public cord blood banks in Taiwan have stopped collecting new donations. Since private cord blood banking is predominant in Taiwan, why is the idea of altruistic cord blood donation so popular in Taiwan?

After the Tzu Chi Foundation set up the stem cell registry in 1993, it has continued to operate a cord blood bank, collecting cord blood donations for allogeneic stem cell transplant since 2002. On the basis of the existing bone marrow donation that Tzu Chi promotes, the Foundation won trust from the public and the government when it started the cord blood bank. In 6 years, this cord blood bank accumulated 12 549 units, reaching its maximum storage capacity in 2008. It stopped collecting new cord blood donations but still maintains and releases cord blood units for transplantation. By the end of 2014, the bank had provided 107 units for 91 cases, and the current number of remaining cord blood units in the bank is 12 549 (Tzu Chi Foundation, 2015).



Similar to the utility discourse that Tzu Chi uses for other campaigns, the title of an article on Tzu Chi's Website is "Tzu Chi Cord Blood Bank, turn waste into the hope to save people". Master Cheng Yen encouraged people to make the best use of everything, including cord blood, and help others at the same time. This notion again harmonises with their recycling discourse on whole-body donation and environmental protection.

Although the cord blood bank stopped collecting cord blood donations in 2008, conversations about donating cord blood to the Tzu Chi Foundation still came up in the interviews in 2013. Informant A is a father. He said that before his child was born, he knew the Tzu Chi Foundation was collecting cord blood so he contacted them. However, he realised that he needed to contact the Tzu Chi Foundation 2 or 3 months before the baby was due, for the pre-collection procedure. When he contacted the Tzu Chi Foundation, it was 1 and half months before the due date, so he gave up. He did not consider storing the cord blood in a private cord blood bank. He thought donating cord blood to Tzu Chi was doing *gōngdé* (功德), gaining merits. Master Cheng Yen once explained what *gōngdé* is. She said, "Give a cloth to someone who is cold. Give a bowl of rice to a hungry person. This is *gōngdé*. Hope you can turn your kindness into action. Let's become a person who accomplishes his charitable and pious deeds, and cultivates both blessings and wisdom". In Buddhism, blessing comes from karmic reward, which derives from good conduct. Therefore, cord blood donation was connected to creating good karma for Informant A:

In the beginning I thought the Tzu Chi Foundation was doing it (cord blood collection) so I asked (Tzu Chi). We thought that it's nice that we can do 'gōngdé' if we donate the cord blood.

Some people want to donate cord blood just because of altruism, and the Tzu Chi Foundation is the only public cord blood bank known by people. Informant B was considering donating cord blood to the Tzu Chi Foundation because donation allows either her family or other people to have the opportunity to use it if needed. In this case, the character of the public cord blood bank and equal accessibility to everyone were the main reasons for her decision to donate cord blood. Informant B said:

I was thinking to donate (cord blood) so that ourselves and other people all have the opportunity to use it. But they are not collecting any more.

I have discussed the discourses that the Tzu Chi Foundation uses to advocate body gifting campaigns. The system, organisation and training of the Tzu Chi Foundation, however, are even more crucial for body gifting in Taiwan. In the discussion, I will analyse how the Tzu Chi Foundation disciplines its volunteers and the public.

Discussion

Foucault's work has focused on analysing knowledge and power, and how they work together to create or change social order. He argues that the religious power that once ruled people's lives has been replaced by knowledge and science. However, the Tzu Chi Foundation is an example of a religious organisation that reconstructs people's thinking and behaviour.

Discipline functions through a particular set of rules, social practices and normative discourses. In *Discipline and Punish* (1991), Foucault argues that the success of disciplinary power depends on some means: hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination. I will discuss these elements and the panopticon, which are related to governing and normalising of body gifting among the Tzu Chi Foundation's members and also the wider public in Taiwan.

The docile body

For the Tzu Chi volunteers, the uniform is a symbol of its teachings. Tzu Chi volunteers wear different uniforms to represent different levels of involvement and hierarchy (although the Tzu Chi Foundation is trying to remove the hierarchy), and each uniform has symbolic meanings. For example, those who have just started volunteering at the Tzu Chi Foundation wear the blue polo shirt, white trousers and white shoes of the 'blue sky and white cloud (*lántiān báiyún*)' uniform, which represents a breadth of mind as wide as the sky and action as white as the clouds. Female Tzu Chi Committee members have tailored blue *qipáo* for official events. Master Cheng Yen named the blue *qipáo* '*róuhé rěnrǔ yī* (the clothes of the gentle and tolerant) from a scripture in the Lotus Sutra: "The clothing of the Tathagata is a mind that is gentle and tolerant". The blue working gown has eight buttons on it and is called '*bāzhèngdào*' (the Eightfold Noble Path), which reminds people who wear it to always have righteous conduct in eight aspects, which are right views, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right diligence, right mindfulness, and right samadhi. When the volunteers wear the uniforms, they are reminded of various values, such as charity, giving and righteousness, throughout the different stages on their path as a '*cí jì rén*'.² Uniforms also remind the volunteers to walk on the bodhisattva path all the time, but also of who they are and of their duties.

A schedule that provides regular and repetitive practice is common in schools, factories and hospitals to regulate behaviour (Foucault, 1991). This is found in the Tzu Chi Foundation too. Every dawn, Master Cheng Yen leads the study of dharma teachings and practices with the volunteers worldwide through the Internet. Moreover, the Tzu Chi Foundation makes the Buddhist sutra into sign language songs. Volunteers sing and sign the sutra songs on various occasions, such as in the nursing home to entertain the elders as part of their voluntary work or in the ceremonies or events the Tzu Chi Foundation organises as dharma performance. Through the practice and singing of the sign language songs, the dharma teaching are internalised for the volunteers.

Another dimension of repetitive practice lies in Tzu Chi's emphasis on *doing* through its social engagement. Its comprehensive missions (charity, education, environmental protection, humanity) are training people to break away from their attachments to various aspects of life through the donation of their talents, money and time. For example, Tzu Chi began by giving a 'bamboo coin bank' to women and encouraging them to contribute a small amount of money every day to help the poor. In this way, monetary donation is practised every day in the life of the person who accepts the bamboo bank. Participation in voluntary work requires the volunteers to contribute their time and talents. Through these constant practices of donation, body gifting is made possible as one of the donations people make. In summary, clothing,

2 The volunteers and members of Tzu Chi call themselves '*Ci ji ren*', meaning the people of Tzu Chi. This shows a strong cohesion among them, like a large family.

participating in daily voluntary work, singing language songs and daily study repeatedly remind the volunteers of their identity as *cí jì rén* and how they are supposed to behave. The clothing is the external symbol of the organisation, while singing, study and action internalise the dharma teachings.

The media are a powerful tool to disseminate values, norms and philosophy into people's lives. DaAi TV (meaning Great Love TV) was established in 1998, aiming to 'disseminate clean streams (of great love) to purify hearts'. The media network includes books, magazines, radio, TV and the Internet. Its TV programmes provide news, religious teachings, medical knowledge, environmental protection and items relating to its agendas. The drama series are all based on real stories of Tzu Chi's volunteers or members who exemplify hard work and kindness. Stories about bone marrow donation were made into a drama in 2002. The media not only strengthen Tzu Chi's norms to existing volunteers and members but also extend its influence to people outside of the Foundation.

Panopticon

Foucault (1991) illustrates that the panopticon in the centre of a prison functions as a disciplinary mechanism that makes prisoners think they are being watched all the time. Similar control can be seen in the spatial arrangement of schools. The purpose of the arrangement is to rule more the spirit than the behaviour. In the case of the Tzu Chi Foundation, I argue that discourse of karma (*yè*, 業) is a powerful and invisible panopticon for the conduct of the followers. In the Buddhist doctrine, no one can get away from karma. As Master Cheng Yen said, there is nothing people can take with them, only the results of karma that would influence people's afterlife. The consequences of karma are individual and collective. Therefore, the discourse of karma creates 'benefit-all altruism' as good deeds such as body gifting not only benefit the recipient, but also the donor and the collective through karma. Evil thought and conduct could bring negative consequences that cannot be predicted. The effects of karma range from individual health to natural disasters, from this generation to the generations after. Therefore, karma works as an invisible panopticon to monitor people's thoughts and actions in any place and at any time. It is crucial for the believers to engage in good deeds, let go of material attachments, and be positive to sow good karma seeds. In the case of cord blood donation, one parent interviewed thought that donating cord blood was doing *gōngdé*, which he thought was a way of building up blessings.

Hierarchical observation and examination

Tzu Chi is well known for the quick reaction and mobilisation of its volunteers to disasters. For example, when Malaysia Airline flight MH370 disappeared on 8 March 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers started supporting families at Beijing and Kuala Lumpur airports that same day. What made the Tzu Chi Foundation react so fast? Since 2005, Master Cheng Yen had built up a structure of four concentric circular structures, namely, Unity (*Hé xīn*), Harmony (*Hé qì*), Mutual Love (*Hù ài*) and Joint Effort (*Xié lì*).³ The structure is like a tree-and-leaf that extends

3 Unity groups consist of senior members and devoted commissioners in each major city. These groups are responsible for spiritual guidance and project positioning. Harmony groups are designated by district (*qu*), and are in charge of planning and coordinating projects. Mutual Love groups consist of volunteers from the same community, and they are in charge of task allocation and execution. Joined Effort groups are based on a single neighbourhood and are in charge of implementation and completion of projects.

from headquarters to cities and then local communities. And the members and volunteers continue to extend the Tzu Chi values to their friends and family. The linkage among these groups is crucial for a quick response. New volunteers start in the Joined Effort group to implement projects, but senior members continue to sustain and help in this group. The structure provides each volunteer and member a position and responsibility in the network.

Regarding the different kinds of membership, or the four concentric circular groups, we can find a hierarchy among them. For example, a volunteer could become a member, and then an ‘intern commissioner’, ‘commissioner-in-training’ and finally a ‘commissioner’, according to the different levels of involvement and training. Commissioners are the core team of the Tzu Chi Foundation, which is composed of more than 72 000 commissioners (Tzu Chi Foundation, 2012). They have done much voluntary work, 2–3 years of training, gained qualification, and keep Tzu Chi’s 10 commandments.⁴ The training includes the study of dharma teaching, Tzu Chi values and behaviour, such as how to walk, talk, eat, make tea and arrange flowers like a *Cí jì rén*. Being certified as a Tzu Chi Commissioner or Faith Corp member is a key milestone for its members. Master Cheng Yen personally pins on the commissioner’s badge, which is a very special moment for her followers. This is recognition of them being a *Cí jì rén*. This training and qualification, I argue, is the ‘examination’ (Foucault, 1991) in the process of normalisation, and a way to discipline the thoughts and behaviour of the Foundation’s members.

The Tzu Chi Foundation adopts a master–apprentice system. All followers are Master Cheng Yen’s apprentices. Commissioners have their apprentices to teach and to lead. Through different memberships and uniforms, the hierarchy is shaped and the new volunteers are also observed, monitored and trained by the senior ones. The network among these groups is well structured and crucial for this huge organisation. Despite there being different kinds of membership, the work is implemented together. Therefore, Huang (2009) calls Tzu Chi’s structure a ‘shapeless bureaucracy’ since the structure consists of unclear authority lines among the different parts, but a clear authority bestowed upon one individual – Master Cheng Yen.

Normalising judgement

Master Cheng Yen, as a charismatic leader, gives ‘normalising judgement’ through the praise and warning she provides daily. She praises those people who donate their body as *Shěshēn púsà* (body-sacrificing bodhisattva).⁵ Each year, Tzu Chi organises an annual celebration to appreciate the donation of bone marrow and cord blood. Tzu Chi invites the donors and the recipients to meet together at this event. This event encourages people to join in the donation of bone marrow to save lives. It is broadcast on TV, made into drama series and published in Tzu Chi magazines and books, which are educational and encourage people to donate stem cells. It is through the talks that the Master gives every day, and the broadcasts in the

4 To be an official commissioner, it is required to obey ‘Tzu Chi Ten Commandments’, which include: (i) do not kill; (ii) do not steal; (iii) do not fornicate; (iv) do not lie; (v) do not drink alcohol; (vi) do not smoke, use drugs or chew betel nuts; (vii) do not gamble or speculate; (viii) respect your parents and be moderate in speech and attitude; (ix) follow traffic regulations; and (x) do not participate in politics or demonstrations.

5 Master Cheng Yen encourages people to become *énjiān púsà* (bodhisattva in this world) through engaging in good work and developing wisdom life. The ‘body-sacrificing bodhisattva’ is one of the bodhisattvas that she names. She names people who work in environmental protection and recycling *huánbǎo púsà* (environmental protection bodhisattva).



media, that the public are given the message that body gifting is a meritorious practice, instead of a taboo. Her discourse emphasises spiritual perfection through compassionate giving, instead of exaltation of the body.

Conclusion

In this article I have investigated how a faith-based organisation – the Tzu Chi Foundation – normalises body gifting in Taiwan. I used whole-body donation and stem cell donation that are operated by the Tzu Chi Foundation instead of the government to show how this organisation set up a system and norms to promote it. The emergence of the Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan, I argue, is a process of setting up a discipline that creates new norms to regulate people's thoughts and conduct. Body gifting is part of the results of this normalisation. Foucault (1991) argues that institutions develop people's behaviour through spatialisation, time schedule, repetitive exercises, hierarchies and normalising judgement. Normality is being formed through the process. Governmentality provides a wider framework to examine the normalisation process within society. Using this theoretical framework, this article argues that the emergence of Tzu Chi, an action-oriented Buddhist charity organisation, in the last five decades has been a process of setting up a discipline that forms new norms and rules about body gifting in Taiwan.

Institution and spatial arrangement are crucial for discipline in Foucault's theory. However, what is seen in the case of the Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan is that it is disciplined through the practice it does in all kind of settings. Tzu Chi volunteers can learn dharma teachings from their home through magazines, TV and the Internet. They are encouraged to practise dharma teachings in their voluntary work in all places, instead of in just a few institutions. The training and discipline are no longer limited to the walls of institutions. In modern society where the media and the Internet play a large part in people's lives, the effects go beyond institutional or national boundaries. This powerful effect of the media and the Internet was not seen in Foucault's theory.

The comprehensive missions and the volunteer system of the Tzu Chi Foundation make horizontal and vertical networks to discipline its followers. Horizontally, through the work this organisation carries out in different fields (charity, medicine, environmental protection, education and humanistic culture), it constantly normalises its philosophy, norms and practices in different aspects of people's lives. Vertically, the community-based volunteer system acts to make its norms take root deeply in the community. With the everyday teaching from Master Cheng Yen on its TV channel, the concepts of karma and the ideas of sowing seeds of good karma by giving and serving have been normalised in the everyday practices of its followers, and also in the wider public. Along with other work the Tzu Chi Foundation does, its interest in medicine has built up *biopower* over body and tissue donation in Taiwan. It changed the taboo of tissue donation in the traditional culture. People are willing to donate tissues, and they want to donate to the Tzu Chi Foundation, especially in the 'silent mentor' campaign. The trust that people have towards the Tzu Chi Foundation shows that Tzu Chi has built up its reputation and authority in the process of discipline construction. The mixture of its character as a charitable organisation that invites people from all religions to join to do good things, and as a religious group that preaches its teaching through practice is a soft way

to internalise its philosophy to the public. Finally, according to the Buddhist discourses of karma, I argue, the body gifting in Taiwan is based on ‘benefit-all altruism’ in the Buddhist discourses that state that body gifting creates good karma, which benefits the donor, the recipient and the society as a whole. And although people cannot receive tangible things in return through body gifting, they are rewarded in good karma and wisdom life.

Acknowledgements

This article has benefited from research support provided to the project of “Bionetworking in Asia” from the ERC (283219) and ESRC (ES/I018107/1). The author is especially grateful for the support and helpful comments from Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner and colleagues from the Centre for Bionetworking. The research on which this original material is based has been subject to ethics review at the University of Sussex. The author does not have any competing intellectual or financial interests in the research detailed in the manuscript.

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