



Representatives Remarks



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Venerable Master Cheng Yen, Venerable Master De Yuan, other Buddhist venerables,
Chief Executive Officer Mr. Yen, Tzu Chi senior volunteers,
Co-initiators Dr. Her and Dr. Chen, and colleagues of our partner universities,

It is a great honor and privilege for Columbia University to participate in the Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series on Buddhism, with an emphasis on Buddhism and Modern Societies. As we all know, our donor the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation shows a great example of how Buddhism can respond to urgent crises facing humanity today. I believe this lecture series, along with the bilingual Yin-Cheng Journal for Buddhism and Modern Society that results from it, will greatly contribute to Buddhist Studies around the world.

Speaking of my own work on Buddhism and modernity, I have two forthcoming books that deal with East Asian and Western accounts of the life of the Buddha, and with Buddhist and neuroscientific approaches to the mind.

It is also truly inspirational to learn that the largest Buddhist organization in Taiwan was founded by Venerable Master Cheng Yen, a female monastic who is known in the West as “Mother Teresa of Asia.” As my colleagues know, I have always been interested in the contributions that women have made to Buddhism. Years ago, I published a book called *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*, which deals extensively with Buddhist nuns and laywomen. In my recent work, a 4-volume series on medieval Japanese Buddhism, I continue to emphasize the role played by female deities.

Because our strong emphasis on Buddhism and gender at Columbia, our



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first lecture will be on Ananda, who has a great impact on the creation of the Buddhist nun order, to be delivered by Donald Lopez from University of Michigan. And I will be happy to be his discussant.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Venerable Master Cheng Yen, our donors from the Tzu-chi Foundation, co-initiators Dr. Her and Dr. Chen, and our partner universities, for helping initiate this lecture series. I'd also like to thank Vicky and Carol at the University of British Columbia for their support. May the Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series achieve great success!

