

# 太虛大師對越南佛教的影響

## The Influence of Master Taixu on Buddhism in Việtnam \*

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### 摘 要

1920-1940 年代越南的佛教復興可由兩方面看出，一是佛教在制度上的改革與發展，二是高臺(Cao Đài)、和好(Hòa Hảo)、淨土居士(Tịnh độ cư sĩ)等新教派的興起。自 1920 年代以來，佛教改革者由中國的太虛大師(1890-1947)所擘畫的藍圖(包括僧伽教育、寺廟管理的現代化與系統化)，以及「人間佛教」的概念(為了佛教在現代世界中的未來所強調的教育、現代出版、社會工作、在家修行團體的中心性)獲得啟發，來從事佛教復興運動。

本研究擬先由中國佛教的復興、1920-1951 年間越南佛教改革者的各項活動，以及中越兩國的佛教人士與物資在兩國的往來與流動等方面談起；其次，擬由兩方面入手，藉以追溯太虛法師對越南佛教的影響：其一，透過其作品與弟子，亦即「人間佛教」如何在越南獲得詮釋與理解；其二，透過對 1928 年及 1940 年太虛法師兩度造訪越南的描述，藉以指出海外華人對跨國性佛教宣傳上所扮演的重要性。本研究強調，20 世紀前半期越南的佛教復興係為以下兩方面奠定基礎，一是 1960-1970 年代的「參與/涉世佛教」在制度與觀念上的可觀進展，二是自 1940 年代迄今越南佛教主流的制度發展與影響。由於越南的佛教復興係在跨國性的脈絡下發生，現代佛教史因而需要更有比較性的著作。

**關鍵字：**太虛大師、越南佛教復興運動、人間佛教、跨國性的佛教

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\* I thank the National Science Council (Taiwan) for awarding me Grants #94-2411-H-003-018 and #95-2411-H-003-006 to undertake this study, and I am grateful to this essay's two anonymous reviewers for their insights and suggestions for improvement.

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## Introduction

As is well known, China and Vietnam have a long record of trade, Chinese immigration to Vietnam, and Buddhist interactions. Chinese Buddhist thought, institutions, practices, and material culture have influenced Vietnam for nearly two millennia. From the mid-nineteenth century, many nations in Asia strove to revive Buddhism and develop Buddhist nationalism in order to answer the challenges and crises brought by modernization and imperialism, and in Chinese Buddhism, Master Taixu 太虛大師(1890-1947) is considered to be the pre-eminent modern reformer. In Vietnam, the Buddhist Revival, called *Chận Hưng Phật Giáo* (振興佛教) of the 1920s-50s saw reform and developments in institutional Buddhism as well as the rise of lay groups such as Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, and the Tịnh độ cư sĩ.<sup>1</sup> From the 1920s, Vietnamese Buddhist reformers revitalized their religion, inspired in great part by Taixu's blueprint to modernize and systematize *sangha* education and temple administration, and by his idea of *Renjian fojiao* 人間佛教, [*Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* ], “Buddhism for this world,” emphasizing the centrality of education, modern publishing, social work, and Buddhist lay groups to Buddhism's future in the modern world.

However, the precise details of this Buddhist Revival has never before been fully studied, and so far only scholars of Vietnamese history<sup>2</sup> are aware of Taixu's strong influence upon Vietnamese Buddhism in the 1920s-50s.

This paper first discusses the Chinese Buddhist revival and then, the

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<sup>1</sup> See Werner (1981) and Oliver (1997); Ho Tai (1983), Taylor (2001a), and Nguyễn (2004); and Đỗ (1998).

<sup>2</sup> The influence of Taixu (Thái Hư Đại Sư) upon the Vietnamese Buddhist revival is well-known among Buddhists and scholars of Vietnamese history. The Taixu-Vietnam link is briefly mentioned in Woodside (1976), Marr (1981), Đỗ (1999), and McHale (2004). On the Chinese side, scholars in Taiwan are unaware of Taixu's influence upon Vietnam and I have not yet seen scholarship from China that mentions the link.

activities of Buddhist reformers in Vietnam, and the flows of Buddhist personnel and materials between Vietnam and China. The paper then traces the influence of Taixu upon Buddhism in Vietnam, primarily in two ways: first, via his writings and his disciples; how was *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*, “Buddhism for this world,” interpreted and realized in Vietnam? Second, the paper narrates Taixu’s two visits to Vietnam in 1928 and 1940 and points to the importance of the overseas Chinese community in the propagation of transnational Buddhism in modern times.

The principle point is that the Vietnamese Buddhist Revival of the first half of the twentieth-century established the institutional and conceptual foundation for Vietnamese Engaged Buddhism’s remarkable developments in the 1960s-70s, as well as its mainstream institutional growth and influence from the 1940s to the present.

It is remarkable to see how in each case the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, India, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Japan (whether state-directed, state-approved, or from below) was seen as the way to assert each nation’s “authentic” identity; towards the goal of unifying and strengthening the nation in the face of the Western onslaught, whether colonialism or modernization or both.

However, in addition to nation-centered histories of Buddhism we need more transnational studies, for Buddhism has been undergoing a process of globalization for over a century. Ashiwa and Wank (2005) have made a good start in this direction in their article about two-way transnational networks of Buddhist clergy, devotees, and resources in China, North America, and Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines in the modern era. Unfortunately, they did not mention the age-old history of Buddhist exchanges between China and Vietnam.

### **The Chinese Buddhist Revival**

In China, “(t)he Buddhist revival, I believe, began as an effort by laymen to reprint the sutras destroyed in the Taiping Rebellion [1860s]. It gathered momentum as the discovery of Western Buddhist scholarship stimulated the need for Chinese Buddhist scholarship, and as the invasion of China by Christian evangelists and missionaries led to the idea of training Buddhist evangelists and sending missionaries to India and the West.<sup>3</sup> Up to this point only laymen were involved...<sup>4</sup> But in the last years of the Ch’ing dynasty 清朝末年 [late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> c], when moves were made to confiscate their property for use in secular education, the monks began to organize schools and social-welfare enterprises as a means of self-defense.”<sup>5</sup>

Holmes Welch believes that three threads run through the Chinese Buddhist revival: The need to secure religious identity by the laypeople; the need for economic self-preservation on part of the monastics; and gain international status (cachet), by both lay and monastics.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the Buddhist reformers in early 20<sup>th</sup> c. China, “The need for status-

<sup>3</sup> Xiao Ping stresses the role of Japan as well in the Chinese Buddhist revival of the late Qing and early Republican periods (清末民初). Interchange between the two Buddhist worlds included: reprinting of sutras in China influenced the same in Japan, a revival of Buddhist studies in both countries; Japanese Buddhist priests proselytizing in China, a revival of interest in Tibetan Buddhism in both China and Japan, Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns to Japan for study and touring, and Japanese Buddhist monastics and laypeople to China for study and touring. Xiao Ping, “Zhong’ guo jindai fojiao fuxing yu Riben,” [China’ s Modern Buddhist Revival and Japan], *Zhong’ guo fojiao xueshu lundian*, No. 42, (Kaohsiung: Foguangshan wenjiao jijinhui, 2001) pp. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> A pivotal figure in this early phase of Buddhist revival was Yang Wenhui 楊文會(1837-1911) of Nanjing whose pioneering projects included reprinting the Chinese sutras at his Jinling 金陵 Scriptural Press; a Buddhist Research Association that sponsored weekly lectures on Buddhism; and the founding of the Jetavana Hermitage 祇洹精舍, a school for monks offering both Buddhist studies and modern academic subjects. The school, whose teachers included both monks and laypeople, made a deep impression on Taixu who studied there in 1909. Pittman (2001):40-45.

<sup>5</sup> Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 260-62.

intellectual status-led to the necessity of meeting the challenges of science and Western philosophy, of Marxism, and of Christianity. It helped to bring about the revival of interest in... *Faxiang weshi xue*, 法相唯識學, “the consciousness-only school;” the birth of Buddhist scientism, and participation in modern, Western forms of social welfare.<sup>7</sup>

The major figure in the Chinese Buddhist Revival was the monk Taixu (1890-1947), with his journal *Hai Chao Yin* 海潮音 [Sound of the Tide]; his ideas about “Buddhism for Human Life,” *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教, and “Buddhism for this world,” *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教, were forged in the late Qing intellectual environment of debates about religion and the relevance of Buddhism to the modern world engaged in by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Zhang Taiyan, Wu Zhihui, Xiong Shili, Cai Yuanpei, Ji Zizhen, and Ouyang Jian.<sup>8</sup>

Instead of waiting and praying, through the intercession of Amitabha, for the glories of the Pure Land in a future life, “Taixu visualized this earthly world transformed by the dedication and sacrificial hard work of thousands of average bodhisattvas...”<sup>9</sup> both monastic and lay. These bodhisattvas, he naively hoped, would work in tandem with a stable and enlightened government.

Characterizing the Buddhist revival of the late Qing-early Republican period, Holmes Welch finds that compared to the Buddhist revival in the Tang Dynasty 唐朝, there was neither strong government support nor wide popular participation.<sup>10</sup> Nor was there evidence of Buddhist creativity in

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> Ma Tianxiang, “Wanqing foxue yu jindai shehui sichao,” [Late Qing Buddhist Studies and Modern Social Thought] *Zhong' guo fojiao xueshu lundian*, No. 41, (Kaohsiung: Foguangshan wenjiao jijinhui, 2001) pp. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001) pp. 222-3.

<sup>10</sup> However, Taixu and his supporters rallied monastics and lay Buddhists to resist the Japanese during WWII, and, the Nationalist government sponsored Taixu's lecture tour in Burma, Sri Lanka, India, and Malaysia in 1939-40. And, the precise meaning of “wide political

the arts, or a significant growth in numbers of monastics. Rather, the revival in the modern period included new elements like growth of lay organizations and lay teachers of the Dharma; clinics, orphanages, and schools; a radio station in Shanghai; proselytizing in prisons; and the effort to start an ecumenical movement with Buddhists abroad. Also, the modern revival saw Buddhist publishing houses, reorganized seminaries for Buddhist monastics, and national Buddhist associations. All of the above innovations were directly or indirectly indebted to the vision and reforms of Taixu.<sup>11</sup>

Taixu's political stance is not easily categorized: He came of age during the heady years of the 1911 revolution and his friends and colleagues included revolutionaries, anarchists, and socialists. At first he admired socialism because it, like Buddhism, he claimed, advocated human equality and social welfare. He liked socialism's message "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs."<sup>12</sup>

However after 1925, Taixu rejected Communism's call for violent class conflict and over-emphasis on the material and the collective, while neglecting the mind, the body, and the individual. His political stance became situated "right of center"<sup>13</sup> partly for pragmatic reasons (to obtain political imprimatur for his plans to reform and modernize Buddhism, to gain some government funding, and to gain the means and support to proselytize abroad) and partly for ideological reasons.<sup>14</sup>

Over the course of WWII, he came to believe that state-directed capitalism, a limited welfare state such as Roosevelt's New Deal

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participation" remains to be explored further.

<sup>11</sup> Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, pp. 262-4.

<sup>12</sup> Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, p. 182.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 182 and p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> Though Taixu placed all his eggs in the Nationalists' basket, one can hardly call the Nationalist regime stable or enlightened during the period 1925-1947, a time of civil war, war against the Japanese, and a time of severe political oppression.

government, could curb the excesses of individualism as well as monopolies and large corporations that exploit national and international markets and create growing disparities between rich and poor.<sup>15</sup> However, for Taixu, any form of political and economic restructuring is not enough to “save the world.” Using the typical language of the “clash of civilizations East and West” debates of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., he believed the Western civilizations to be sick, due to their overly individualistic and aggressive orientation of *zong wo zhi wu* 縱我,制物, (an unrestrained self, conquering nature), that has led to imperialism and war. He held that other colonized Asian nations cannot offer effective means to deal with these calamities, and he concludes that Buddhism, together with the Chinese spirit of *ke ji chong ren* 克己,崇仁 (overcoming the self, respect others), are the best remedies for this civilizational sickness.<sup>16</sup> As for Japan, he despaired that this great civilization with a rich Buddhist heritage had, in its rush to modernize in blind emulation of the West, had become but another imperialist aggressor. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Taixu appealed many times in *Hai Chao Yin* to the millions of Buddhists in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan to unite and oppose Japanese military rule and imperialist aggression.<sup>17</sup>

It is vital to note that on the one hand, Taixu was a Nationalist, an ardent follower of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, and a fierce Chinese

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pages 192-3.

<sup>16</sup> Miaozheng, “Mantan jianshe renjian fojiao: wei jinian dashi zuo,” [A casual discussion on establishing *renjian fojiao*, in the memory of the Master], *Taixu dashi jinian ji*, (Chongqing: Hanzang Jiaoliyuan, 1947):90-1.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, Taixu’s letters to Japanese Buddhists in *Hao Chao Yin*, Vol. 18, No. 8 (July 1937) and Vol. 26, No. 89 (July 1945). But Taixu did not specify how Buddhists might realistically oppose Japan’s powerful military dictatorship. It is well known that many Zen leaders and monks supported Japanese militarism and imperialism, some willingly, some through coercion. Buddhists and others who opposed the regime were imprisoned and killed. See Hesig and Maraldo, *Rude Awakenings: Zen, The Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (U. of Hawaii Press, 1995) and Brian D. Victoria, *Zen at War* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

patriot during WWII who called on Buddhists to help in various ways in the war effort and to even take up arms against the Japanese invaders of China.<sup>18</sup> Yet, Taixu's relationship with the Nationalist party-state was fraught with contradictions: Taixu liberally borrowed from Nationalist vocabulary and ideological categories, and received material support: money, means of transport, use of diplomatic channels and state-related associations abroad. But whenever the Nationalists made one of their numerous attempts to confiscate temple properties, then Taixu and others publicly opposed the government. And, a national-level Chinese Buddhist Association, one of Taixu's life-long goals, was finally permitted to convene in May 1947, two months after Taixu's death.<sup>19</sup>

With the end of WWII and the restoration of the Nationalist government in Nanjing, as Taixu and other Buddhists struggled to maintain Buddhist control over property and other interests, Taixu articulated his idea of the relation of Buddhists and Buddhist groups to the state, as expressed in the phrase *yi zheng bu gan zhi* 議政不干治: to participate in political debates is the right and duty of any citizen in a democracy, but not to hold formal political office. His idea was premised on Sun Yat-sen 孫中山's distinction between *zhiquan* 治權, holding political/administration office, and *zhengquan* 政權, democratic rights of citizens including freedom of speech and debate, the right to participate in public affairs, i.e, civil society. However this stance met with opposition from other Buddhist leaders, who preferred Buddhists remain "above-politics."<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, in July 1946 Taixu founded a Buddhist political party, "Awakening the Masses Society," and was nominated by Bishop Yu Bin,

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<sup>18</sup> See the further discussion below.

<sup>19</sup> Chen Yong'ge, *Ren jian chao yin: Taixu dashi zhuan* [Sound of the Tide of the Human Realm: Biography of Master Taixu] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press, 2003): 256, 259-60, 266-8, 271.

<sup>20</sup> Chen Yong'ge (2003):269-70.



于斌主教, to serve as a representative to the National Assembly, though Taixu was not elected.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately Taixu was unable to fully realize his plans and ideals for Chinese Buddhism: Taixu died prematurely from a stroke in March 1947 and, from 1949-49, the chaos of civil war and collapse of the central government in Nanjing and its retreat to the island of Taiwan halted further developments in China.<sup>22</sup> A decade earlier, Taixu had already deemed his attempts to inspire “a revolution in Buddhism” to be a failure, due to both his own “weaknesses and failures” as well as the strength of his opponents.<sup>23</sup> He was too self-critical.

Though the socio-political and economic environment of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century placed severe limits on the Buddhist Revival within China, Taixu spent much time and energy attempting to transform Buddhism into a global movement that would transcend the limits of nation, political faction, and Buddhist school. Towards this end, Taixu traveled to Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong (1917-1925); then to France, England, Belgium, Germany, and the United States (1928-9), as well as to Burma, Sri Lanka, India, and Malaysia (1939-40).<sup>24</sup> In Sri Lanka, homeland of the great

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 272. Chen claims that Taixu was defeated by Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石's Christian supporters, and by Chinese anti-Buddhist cultural conservatives. And, might he have added, due to the lack of support by senior monks?

<sup>22</sup> Buddhists such as Taixu's student Ven. Juzan 巨贊 (1908-1984) who remained in China formed a new Chinese Buddhist Association in 1953, firmly under the aegis of the Communist Party-State. Scholars in China are currently interested in Taixu and the Chinese Buddhist Revival, see the series called *Zhong' guo fojiao xueshu lundian* (Academic Theses on Chinese Buddhism), such as Vols. 41-43, by Foguangshan, Taiwan, and also Li (2000) and Chen (2003). The mainland Chinese monk Jinghui 淨慧禪師 (b. 1933) promotes “Buddhism for this World” but this is not the mainstream. Zheng Zimei, “Dangdai renjian fojiao de zouxiang: you zongjiao yu shehui hudong jiaodu shenshi,” *Collected Papers from the 2004 Cross-Strait Conference on Yinshun and Humanistic Buddhism*, pp. 38-9. Ven. Jinghui and his Bolin Temple 河北省, 柏林禪寺, were integral to Thích Nhất Hạnh' 一行禪師's twenty-day trip to China, including dharma talks and retreats, in May-June 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Taixu, “Wode fojiao geming shibai shi,” cited in Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, pp. 138-9.

<sup>24</sup> Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, pp. 105-114; 118-130; pp.

Buddhist revivalist Dharmapala 達摩波羅, Taixu spoke at length with the Buddhist scholar G. P. Malalasekera about forming a world Buddhist federation; in 1950 this plan came to fruition when Dr. Malalasekera founded the World Fellowship of Buddhists.<sup>25</sup>

The contemporary term “globalization” in Chinese is *quanqiu hua* 全球化, too recent for Taixu’s *Complete Works*; rather we find *quanqiu* 全球 as a noun (the whole world); *shijie hua* 世界化, globalization, and *shijie zhuyi* 世界主義 world-ism. As we have mentioned, Taixu was a strong nationalist and patriot, but he was also a staunch proponent of globalization and world-ism as those terms were understood earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially at the close of WWII, when many people hoped that transnational bodies such as the United Nations could transcend petty nationalist interests and conflicts and prevent future wars. But even more fundamentally when Taixu spoke of *shijie hua* and *shijie zhuyi* he was referring to the potential of Buddhism and the need to propagate Buddhism worldwide. Taixu believed that Buddhism was the one international force, of all religions, “isms,” and socio-political systems, that could lead to true one-world-ism, a broad and tolerant world-view, and true world peace.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the 1960s Buddhist Struggle Movement activist Trí Quang praised Taixu as “the first person to promote Buddhist integration and standardization... (he) organized many conferences for Buddhists all over the world to come together, he drafted a charter for Buddhists in the whole world, he proposed meetings for Buddhists all over the world. He’s the first person to say, in order to standardize and integrate Buddhism, we

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139-143. Pittman did not mention that Taixu also stopped in Saigon in 1928 and Saigon and Hanoi from April 28-May 4, 1940, to be discussed below.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pp. 142-3. Holmes Welch notes that “Dharmapala’s ideal of a world Buddhist movement took root in China, first under the [efforts of layman] Yang Wenhui, 1837-1911, and later under Taixu.” Welch (1968):180.

<sup>26</sup> This is a summary of points made by Taixu in a number of articles in his *Complete Works*.

should spread Buddhism to Europe and America.<sup>27</sup>

Taixu, in addition to being the inspiration for several leading Taiwanese Buddhist organizations in contemporary Taiwan via his student Ven. Yinshun 印順 (1906-2005) [See Jones (1999) and Pittman (2001)], he (unbeknownst to both him and modern Chinese scholars) had a great influence on Vietnamese Buddhist Revival, which set the stage for its remarkable developments in the 1960-70s and beyond.

### **The Buddhist Revival in Vietnam, 1920s-50s**

In the 1860s, there already were anti-French risings by rural-based lay Buddhist millenarian groups, and the period 1885-1898 saw not only lay group resistance but armed revolutionary risings by Buddhist monks, as in the 1898 “Monks’ War” in central Vietnam.<sup>28</sup> The French authorities thus intensified their suppression of Buddhism and stepped up their promotion of Catholicism to solidify their colonial rule. “This was the beginning of religious discrimination, an idea that cannot be separated from the whole complex drive toward national independence.”<sup>29</sup> French repression did not stop but on the contrary stimulated the Vietnamese resistance movements; many Buddhist participants, lay and monastic, sought to propagate Buddhism and make Buddhism institutions stronger throughout Vietnam.

However, it is very difficult to reach an absolute verdict of

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<sup>27</sup> Trí Quang (1972):149. Trí Quang did not mention the earlier efforts to bridge Buddhist traditions and/or propagate Buddhism worldwide by activists such as Dharmapala, Yang Wenhui, and the Japanese Buddhists; however it was Taixu who traveled and lectured most widely in Asia, Europe, and the US.

<sup>28</sup> Thiện Đức, “The Quest for Enlightenment and Cultural Identity: Buddhism in Contemporary Vietnam,” pp. 259-60; Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) pp. 21-4.

<sup>29</sup> Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Ibid.*, p. 24..

“decline” in Vietnamese Buddhism at the time of the Revival, for on the one hand, some historical temples popular as pilgrimage sites continued to receive royal support until 1945.<sup>30</sup> And even before 1920 and the subsequent Revival period, “...there were high-ranking monks maintaining the pulse of Buddhism,” holding well-attended dharma talks for monastics and lay in the south, center, and north, as well as reprinting Chinese sutras and translating some into *quốc ngữ*.<sup>31</sup> During the nineteenth century Buddhist temples in the north, center, and south had published Buddhist works which “...probably formed a significant proportion of all texts published” at that time.<sup>32</sup>

Yet larger realities were that Buddhism was not perceived as responding to the crises of “Westernization” and colonial rule, especially if compared with the nationalist /revolutionary platform. And, Buddhist temples were also losing supporters and resources to new lay sects or Catholicism. At any rate, calls for enlightenment, restoration, revival, and awakening resounded across Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when individual awakening was considered a prerequisite to national awakening.<sup>33</sup> When Buddhist Revivalists in both China and Vietnam used the term “enlightenment, *juewu* 覺悟 or *giác ngộ*, they purposively tapped into this transnational current.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese works circulated in Vietnam, many via local Chinese communities, regarding Meiji reformers, “Chinese Enlightenment” thinkers, and the Chinese revolution of 1911.<sup>34</sup> One might assume that the Buddhist Revival began in the north,

<sup>30</sup> Thiện Đức, “The Quest for Enlightenment and Cultural Identity,” pp. 255-9.

<sup>31</sup> This is the Romanization system used to write Vietnamese. Nguyễn Lang, *Việt Nam Phật Giáo Sử Luận* [Essays on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism, Vol. III], (Hà Nội: Văn Hảo, 1994), pp. 17-19.

<sup>32</sup> McHale (2004), p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> Marr 1971, pp. 98-100, 124-5; Woodside 1976, pp. 43-59.

with a long history of trans-border exchanges with China including importing Chinese books and newspapers, but “(t)he origins of this movement are to be found in and around Sàigòn,”<sup>35</sup> inspired by the plethora of information and publications emanating from Sàigòn in Chinese, *quốc ngữ*, and French.

And there was a network of Chinese and Vietnamese merchant contacts among Cholon, Sàigòn, and its satellite areas, as well as connections to Shanghai, where the majority of Chinese Buddhist publications, including Taixu’s, were published and distributed. Cholon had been a major importer of books from South China since the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Cholon was the link to Shanghai, and Shanghai was the center of the modern Chinese Buddhist revival, a multi-cultural haven attracting monastics and laypeople alike, the center of the modern Buddhist press and distribution system; a meeting ground for all schools of Buddhism.<sup>37</sup>

Pioneer Buddhist reformers such as the monks Khánh Hòa (1877-1947) and Thiện Chiếu (1898-1974) looked directly to China for guidance in reviving Buddhism. In 1923 at the renowned Long Hòa Pagoda in Trà Vinh, Khánh Hòa, Thiện Chiếu, and others founded the Lục Hòa Alliance to promote the Buddhist revival and establish links with Chinese Buddhist circles.<sup>38</sup> The two monks transmitted Taixu’s and other Chinese Buddhist reform writings throughout Vietnam, and published many works on the Buddhist revival.<sup>39</sup>

Of particular importance is that Thiện Chiếu propagated Taixu’s *Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* 整理僧伽制度論 [The Reorganization of the

<sup>35</sup> Nguyễn Tài Thư et al, eds., (1992), p. 388.

<sup>36</sup> McHale (2004), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> See Meng Lingbing. *Lao Shanghai wenhua qipa---Shanghai foxue shuju* [Old Shanghai Cultural Wonders: The Shanghai Buddhist Bookstore]. Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Both Nhật Hạnh and the GHPGVN give 1923 as the founding date of the Lục Hòa Alliance but *History of Buddhism in Vietnam* says 1920.

<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that most Buddhist texts in Vietnam were written in Chinese and that many monastics received a Chinese classical education in their youth.

Sangha System, 1915] among monks in north Vietnam.<sup>40</sup> This bold "...plan called for Chinese Buddhism to be reshaped institutionally with new model monasteries, benevolent organizations, and educational ventures."<sup>41</sup> These were key documents, with Taixu's periodical *Hai Chao Yin* 海潮音 (also introduced by Thiện Chiếu to Hanoi in 1927) and the publications of Shanghai Buddhist organizations, inspiring the Buddhist Revival taking place in Vietnam.<sup>42</sup> Thiện Chiếu's 1929 work *Phật học tổng yếu* [A General Summary of Buddhism] that included translations of Chinese sutras, important articles from Taixu's *Hai Chao Yin*, and his own essays, was widely circulated and debated in Buddhist circles of the time.<sup>43</sup> Khánh Hòa worked his whole life for Buddhist Revival, and the historiography of modern Buddhism in Vietnam, Thiện Chiếu is the archetype of the "engaged" Buddhist monk because he, a learned and prolific writer as well, was also a revolutionary.<sup>44</sup>

In addition Taixu's Vietnamese monastic disciples such as Trí Hải (1906-1979) and others influenced by Taixu's writings, built temples, wrote articles, published journals, wrote a variety of pedagogical tools, translated Chinese writings into *quốc ngữ*, and developed networks of lay supporters.

The reformists also founded schools for monks and nuns, attempted to reform property and economic administration of monasteries, called for

<sup>40</sup> David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 304, n. 57.

<sup>41</sup> Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, p. 95.

<sup>42</sup> Shawn McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) p. 158; Thien Do, "The Quest for Enlightenment and Cultural Identity," p. 279, n. 19; Nguyen The Anh, "L'engagement politique du bouddhisme au sud-Viet-nam dans les années 1960s," in A. Forest, et al eds, *Bouddhismes et Sociétés Asiatiques: Clergés, Sociétés, et Pouvoirs*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990) p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Nguyễn Lang, *Việt Nam Phật Giáo Sư Luận*, pp. 21-2; Nguyễn Tài Thư, et al, eds., *History of Buddhism in Vietnam*, pp. 390-1.

<sup>44</sup> See Trần (1975), Nguyễn Lang (1994), Đồng Bôn (1995).

stricter standards for recruitment and evaluation of monastics, offered lectures and classes (on Buddhism and others topics like family life) for laypeople, and promoted “Buddhism for this world,” thus building the organizational and conceptual foundation for Vietnamese national Buddhism.

And, like their counterparts in China, this period saw the formation of Buddhist Associations: of North (Tonkin, 1934) Central (Annam, 1932) and South (Cochinchina, 1931) Vietnam. Each region’s Buddhist circle had their own history, founders, and publications, though there was interaction of personnel and journals among all three regions throughout the 20s-40s.

Moreover, following a long historical tradition, Chinese monks during the Revival period continued to come to Vietnam either for pilgrimages, to work in temples located in Chinese communities, and to build new temples.<sup>45</sup> Chinese monks who visited Vietnam included: Ven Thúc Tuệ from Qingliang Temple 清涼寺 in Hebei who took an eighth-month pilgrimage from Hebei. He stayed at Trí Hải’s Quán Sư Pagoda in Hà Nội, June 12-14, 1937 and was impressed by the quality of monks at Quán Sư, reported the journal *Đuốc Tuệ*. And in November 1945, Vens. Thông Lương and Thanh Thuyền came from China for a groundbreaking ceremony for the Chinese temple Nam Phô Đà, in Sài Gòn.<sup>46</sup>

Interchange of Buddhist personnel, publications, artifacts, and ideas between China and

Vietnam (and more recently, Taiwan) has continued virtually uninterrupted, from the third century to the present day.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Impact of Taixu on Buddhism in Vietnam**

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<sup>45</sup> *Đuốc Tuệ* June 12-14, 1937; GHPGVN, p. 113.. Also see Trần Đình Việt (2002), pp. 18-20.

<sup>46</sup> GHPGVN (2001):113.

<sup>47</sup> Purcell (1951) p. 13, Trần (2002).

## I.

Taixu influenced the Vietnamese Buddhist Revivalists *through his writings and his journal, Hai Chao Yin*, especially his proposals for reforming sangha education, Buddhist organizational management, and temple administration. Besides Khánh Hòa and Thiện Chiếu as mentioned above, another monk who directly propagated Taixu's reforms was Trí Hải, born in Hà Nam in 1906, was founder of the Tonkin Buddhist Association and the Quán Su Pagoda in Hà Nội published the Buddhist journal *Đuốc Tuệ* [Torch of Wisdom] and many other works; established a strong lay association in the north; founded schools for monks and nuns; and engaged in charity and relief works.<sup>48</sup>

In early 1937 the Tonkin Buddhist Association sent Trí Hải and Mật Thễ and three others to Hong Kong where they stayed for two weeks and then to Shanghai to find Taixu at the Jing' an Temple 靜安寺 who arranged for their study at Jiaoshan, Jiangsu 江蘇的焦山. They stayed for five months studying Buddhism, Chinese, and Chinese medicine, but the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War forced the group to return to Hà Nội, sutras in hand. On the way back, the group also visited Taixu's headquarters in Wuhan, as well as temples in Henan and Guangdong.<sup>49</sup> From the 1950s on, Quán Su became the center of institutional Buddhism in Hà Nội, and is now the headquarters of the Vietnamese National Buddhist Congregation.

Taixu's ideas also moved Thích Khánh Anh (1895-1961) in 1949 to publish his translation of essays by Taixu (first published in *Hai Chao Yin*) including such topics as The Republic and Buddhism; what young Buddhists need to study; the modern woman and Buddhism; Buddhism and science, Buddhism and Confucianism, Buddhism and philosophy; using

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<sup>48</sup> See Trí Hải (1965, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pp. 39-46.



Buddhism to critique socialism; democracy and Buddhism; Buddhism and evolution; Buddhism saves the world; the movement to save the *sangha*; how laypeople should study Buddhism; biographies of famous monks; businessmen and Buddhism; discussion of burning paper money and paper funerary objects; the Pure Land in the human realm; as well as lectures on basic Buddhist principles.<sup>50</sup>

The book also includes a brief biography of Taixu written in 1928 by his disciple Chen Weidong, and a preface and introduction by Thích Khánh Anh who writes that Vietnam's Buddhist revivalists have been working to carry out Taixu's call for a revolution in Buddhism, to reform Buddhism to fit the times and to enlighten humankind.

Khánh Anh also remarked that "Buddhists should fight invaders," apparently referring to Taixu's call for both monks and laypeople to take up arms to fight [the Japanese]. Though Vietnamese monks had participated armed risings at least since the French colonial period, the activist and anti-colonial monk Thiện Chiếu's and his group, *Phật Học Kiêm Tế* (Buddhist Studies and Welfare Action Association) had also "praised Chinese monks for joining the nationalist army to fight against the Japanese invaders."<sup>51</sup> When the Japanese occupied Manchuria in 1931, Taixu organized the Buddhist Youth Protect-the-Nation Corps," comprised of monks, nuns, and lay youth who participated in ambulance and medical care teams, burial teams, consolation and prayer teams, propaganda, transport, care of refugees and orphans, and helping with economic production work.<sup>52</sup> With the full-scale Japanese invasion into China in the

<sup>50</sup> Quán Sư Temple in Hà Nội sells the 25 *Bài Thuyết Pháp Của Thái Hư Đại Sư* [25 Lectures on Buddhism by Master Taixu] (1949;1993), translated and edited by Thích Khánh Anh. Born in Quảng Ngãi Province, Khánh Anh was very accomplished in Chinese and Buddhist studies. Inspired by Buddhist revivals in China and Japan, he was active in the Vietnamese Buddhist Revival, particularly in Saigon and the Mekong Delta region. Đồng Bôn (1995), pp. 303-308.

<sup>51</sup> Phạm (2001) Chapter Five, p. 144.

<sup>52</sup> Chen (2003):242.

summer of 1937, the unprecedented degree of destruction and atrocities caused Taixu and other Buddhists to reconsider the Buddhist precept on non-harming and non-violence. Buddhists considered whether they should “put down Buddhist implements and take up the butcher knife.”<sup>53</sup>

Taixu argued that defending the nation and resisting invaders, in this case the Japanese militarists, was not only the duty of all Chinese citizens, but are fully sanctioned for Buddhists by the *Renwang huguo ban'nuo boluomi jing* [仁王護國般若波羅蜜經 a Chinese apocryphal sutra, written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by the Chinese Tantric monk Bukong, 不空].<sup>54</sup> This “Scripture for Humane Kings,” addressed not to the sangha or lay believers but to state rulers, “became the standard model text in [China, Korea, and Japan] for Buddhist-based state protection and statecraft.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the words and actions of Taixu and Chinese Buddhists during the Japanese invasion further inspired some Vietnamese Buddhist groups like Thiện Chiếu’s to carry out anti-colonial resistance against the French.

Of the “25 Lectures by Taixu,” another topic deserves special note, that of “the modern woman and Buddhism.” Vietnam had a long tradition of Buddhist nuns since the twelfth century, along with laywomen as believers and donors, but new trends from the West such as education of women and women’s rights entered Vietnam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, closely intertwined with the “making of the modern nation” discourse.

“By the 1920s, ‘women and society’ had become something of a focal point around which other issues often revolved.”<sup>56</sup> Influenced by

<sup>53</sup> Li (2001):171.

<sup>54</sup> Taixu, “Fojiao yu huguo,” [Buddhism and Protecting the Nation], Speech on Yongsheng Radio Station, Shanghai, May 1933. And Taixu, “Chengfo jiushi yu geming jiuguo,” *Hai Chao Yin*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Feb. 15, 1939; Tianhui, “Mei jizhe fangwen fojiao lingxiu ji, [An American reporter’s interview of the Buddhist Leader] *Hao Chao Yin*, Vol. 26, No. 5, May 1, 1945.

<sup>55</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripture\\_for\\_Humane\\_Kings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripture_for_Humane_Kings)

<sup>56</sup> See the excellent “The Question of Women” in Marr (1981); however, women in Buddhism are not mentioned.

Taixu and *Hao Chao Yin*, there were new schools and temples for nuns,<sup>57</sup> speeches in Vietnamese Buddhist circles on “the woman question” and “Buddhism and women” such as the public lecture on “Buddhist Studies for Women,” April 8, 1935, organized by the Annam Buddhist Association; and journal articles such as the 1936 series on women’s issues in *Tứ Bi Âm* by nun Diệu Ngôn and other nuns.<sup>58</sup> As nuns obtained education and training, the numbers of nuns as teachers and leaders grew, rare before the twentieth-century but today the normal situation throughout Vietnam. One source claims that today the number of nuns is ten times that of monks.<sup>59</sup>

***Renjian fojiao/ Nhân Gian Phật Giáo: “Buddhism for this world”***

Taixu’s thought and plan of action can be summed up in one phrase: *Renjian fojiao/ Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*, “Buddhism for this world.” Taixu first spoke directly on ‘renjian fojiao’ in 1933 “怎樣來建設人間佛教” [How to establish a Buddhism for this world]. Here is his definition:

*Renjian fojiao* is not a Buddhism in which you leave the human realm and become a god or ghost, or for everyone to take monastic vows, go to a temple, or become an eremite in the forest. It’s a Buddhism which, in accordance with Buddhist teachings, reforms society, helps humankind to progress, and improves the whole world.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> See Thích Đông Anh, “A Survey of Bhikkhunis Sangha in Vietnam,” in *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Women’s Voices Across Generations*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo (Taipei: Yuan Chuan Press, 2004), p. 52, for a list of the “Revival Generation” nun pioneers from the south, center, and north. Also see Vân Thanh (1975), pp. 535-539.

<sup>58</sup> References to nuns and laywomen can be found in Trí Hải HKT, and GHPGVN. Lê Tâm Đắc of the Institute for Religious Studies, Academy of Social Sciences, Hà Nội, told me that the topic of “women and Buddhism” originated from Taixu. Interview, Feb. 14, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Diên Văn Huệ, “Buddhist Nuns of Vietnam,” in *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Women’s Voices Across Generations*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo (Taipei: Yuan Chuan Press, 2004), p. 48.

<sup>60</sup> “Zenyang lai jianshe renjian fojiao” , *Complete Works*, Vol 47, p. 431. This was a speech

Already in July 1926 in “Jianshe renjian jingtu 建設人間淨土論” [Constructing the Pure Land for this world], Taixu discussed the construction of the a Pure Land in the human realm, stressing that people create the Pure Land starting with their hearts and minds, not relying on spirits, ghosts, or gods; creating Buddhism for this world with support of government and society; and, reforming the sangha system and establishing lay Buddhist associations.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, an entire issue of *Hai Chao Yin* was dedicated to *renjian fojiao*, “Special Issue on Renjian Fojiao,” *Hai Chao Yin*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (Jan. 1934). The “Introduction” by Ven. Daxing, states that “Since this journal’s inception [in 1920], we have consistently advocated *Renjian fojiao*…” The eighteen articles overall explore four major subjects: definitions of *renjian fojiao*; research about the history of *renjian fojiao*; practical measures to establish *renjian fojiao*; and, the subject of the Pure Land in the human realm.

An article by Đỗ Nam Tú in the Feb. 15, 1937 issue of the Tonkin Buddhist Association’s *Đuốc Tuệ* (Torch of Wisdom) introduced the ideas of *renjian fojiao* and Buddhist revival discussed in *Hai Chao Yin*, in which Đỗ liberally quotes from Taixu’s essay, “How to establish a Buddhism for this world.” Đỗ stresses that the original message of the Buddha was to relieve human suffering of the world…egalitarianism and compassion are the dominant teachings of Buddhism; and this is *renjian fojiao*. It means to make this world into the Pure Land, not wait until the Western Paradise after death. Buddhism is not secret, mystical, or ghostly but is entered into humanity and society. Đỗ concludes by saying that though the Tonkin Buddhist Association heretofore had not talked specifically about

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Taixu gave at the Hankou Chamber of Commerce in October 1933; Taixu was invited by the Hankou Lawyers Union, the Buddhist Zhengxin Association, and the Hankou Red Cross.

<sup>61</sup> Li Mingyou, *Taixu ji qi renjian fojiao* [Taixu and his Renjian Fojiao] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People’s Press, 2000), pp. 96-104.

*Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*, they had already been practicing it. “Our Buddhist Revival is not different from that in China and we agree with what the Chinese revivalists are doing...we agree with *renjian fojiao*...”<sup>62</sup>

Phạm Tài Luyện in 1936 stressed that the work of Buddhist revival included the following, each of which Taixu had already proposed: the organization of public lectures on Buddhism (which could coincide with the traditional bimonthly worship services), a structure of public spaces for such lectures and mediation for laypeople, institutes for monks and nuns, unification and standardization of the monastic system, founding hospitals and charity projects, and publication of newspapers.<sup>63</sup>

*Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* as interpreted in Trần Văn Đại’s thirty-five poems refers to Buddhist doctrines and practice made simple, integrated into daily life, Buddhism for this world. His poems fall into three categories: regarding one’s self (the Five Precepts; cultivating Buddhist virtues and ridding oneself of afflictions in thought, speech, and work); regarding others (relationship between parents and children; between teacher and student; between husband and wife; friendship, etc.); dealing with the world (Buddhist values such as compassion, joyful giving, equality, charity, enlightening the self and others, saving yourself and others, Buddhism’s influence on national affairs, co-dependent arising (karma), and worship.<sup>64</sup>

Thích Nhất Hạnh 一行禪師 relates how Đỗ Nam Tứ, Thiếu Chửu and others in the Tonkin Buddhist Association promoted Buddhist Revival and *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* in their journal *Đuốc Tuệ*. They meant that Buddhism is of and for life, “đem đạo Phật vào cuộc sống hàng ngày,” not to avoid or renounce the world. Đỗ Nam Tứ developed his ideas about

<sup>62</sup> Đỗ Nam Tứ, “*Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*,” *Đuốc Tuệ*, Vol. 55, Feb. 15, 1937, pages 3-9.

<sup>63</sup> “Chấn hưng Phật Giáo là sự rất cần thiết” [To revive Buddhism is a very important matter] Part II, *Đuốc Tuệ*, Vol. 15:18-20.

<sup>64</sup> Trần Văn Đại, *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* (Hà Nội: Đuốc Tuệ, 1951).

*Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* in his novels and many articles in Buddhist and non-Buddhist journals. Besides being inspired by Taixu, Đỗ Nam Tứ in his novel *Cô Con Gái Phật Hái Dâu* [A Daughter of the Buddha Picking Mulberry Leaves] looked back in history, as does Nhất Hạnh and other revivalists, to Emperor Lý Thánh Tông and his son Lý Nhân Tông whom Đỗ Nam Tứ portrayed as using Buddhism to build the country and reform the inequalities of the villages.<sup>65</sup>

Nhất Hạnh 一行禪師 has written: “In the 1930s, the Buddhist scholars had already discussed the engagement of Buddhism in the modern society and called it *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo* or engaged Buddhism.”<sup>66</sup> In fact, Buddhist reformers in the 1920s-40s did not use the term “engaged”, *dẫn thân*, which would be formulated later in the ‘50s-60s to translate Sartre’s term *engagé* and then famously promulgated by Nhất Hạnh with reference to his activities in the Buddhist Struggle Movement, his School of Youth for Social Service, and his Order of Interbeing. But Nhất Hạnh spoke approvingly of the Revivalists’ desire to “mang đạo Phật đi vào trong cuộc đời” (bring Buddhism into the current of life, or day-by-day world) and this is precisely Taixu’s message of “Buddhism for this world.”

Trí Quang credits Taixu “...for promoting *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*, to say that Buddhists were born to serve human beings, that monastics should not only pray for themselves but to join society; not only think of the dead, but think of the future, to sacrifice for and serve humanity.”<sup>67</sup>

## II.

We also see Taixu’s influence upon Vietnamese Buddhism **via the overseas Chinese, especially during his two visits to Vietnam**. In the

<sup>65</sup> Nguyễn Lang. *Việt Nam Phật Giáo Sử Luận* [History of Buddhism in Vietnam] Vol. III. (Hà Nội: Văn Học, 1994): 173-5.

<sup>66</sup> Thích Nhất Hạnh, (1967) p. 42.

<sup>67</sup> Trí Quang (1972):149-51.

*Complete Works* the term “Nanyang 南洋” in the broadest sense meant Annam (Vietnam, but rarely mentioning Laos and Cambodia), Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and even India. Most often, Nanyang meant the countries Taixu traveled to during his lecture tours: India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam. A few times, Nanyang narrowly referred to the Chinese Buddhist traditions in Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

The accounts of Taixu’s trips to Vietnam in the *Complete Works of Taixu* do not speak specifically of Taixu’s influence upon modern Vietnamese Buddhism but seem to take for granted that Vietnam, for centuries deeply influenced by Chinese culture, would “naturally” follow developments in Chinese Buddhism. Taixu’s great degree of cultural pride 國粹主義 and nationalism 民族主義 made him sound at times like a Han chauvinist, as he expected that China would become the leader of the Buddhist nations in Asia, since Buddhism in India was too weak: “Buddhism is the interconnecting thread for the various peoples in East Asia. China is the second homeland of Buddhism [after India]...the Buddhisms of Korea, Japan, and Nanyang all belong to the Chinese [cultural] system. Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, are totally Buddhist cultures, and have deep connections with Chinese Buddhist history and overseas Chinese business connections...”<sup>68</sup>

Taixu realized that great possibilities lay in mobilizing Chinese Buddhists overseas: Chinese in Nanyang with economic means gave donations to Buddhist temples and organizations, published and disseminated sutras and other Buddhist literature, reported on Buddhist news in their media, built and/or repaired pagodas, and collected Buddhist

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<sup>68</sup> Taixu, “Zhong’guo fojiaohui zhengli weiyuanhui zhi yansheng,” [Birth of the reorganizing committee of the China Buddhist Association] *Hao Chao Yin*, Vol. 26, No. 12, [Late 1945] pp. 448-9.

art and artifacts. On three occasions in Singapore (1926, 1928, and 1940) Taixu spoke on his plans to establish a Nanyang Buddhist Association to promote Buddhism and pan-Asian unity among the native peoples as well as the overseas Chinese of Southeast Asia.<sup>69</sup>

Leaving Shanghai August 11, 1928, bound for Europe, the US, and Japan, Taixu and his entourage stopped in Saigon from Aug. 17-19, 1928: The Cochinchina Times chief editor Chen Zhaoqi (also an administrator in the Chinese-French School) came to interview them for a special issue on Buddhism, (Cochinchina had two Chinese newspapers at that time). The group also met with the Chinese General Merchants' Association, toured Saigon and its parks, and met with Chinese-French School's headmaster, a former French army officer interested in Buddhism, Taixu was asked to give a public lecture but there was not enough time.

The Taixu group was briefed on the colonial situation in Vietnam and learned that of 700,000 overseas Chinese in Vietnam, 400,000 resided in the South, 100,000 living in Saigon, mostly businessmen involved in the transport of rice. The Chinese divided themselves into five groups according to place of origin in China, plus two Cantonese groups; each had their own *huiguan*, native-place associations. However, the KMT in Vietnam only had 1000 members because "property owners were afraid of interference from the authorities."<sup>70</sup> The group continued to Singapore and then on to Europe, the US, and Japan. They returned to Shanghai on April 19, 1929.<sup>71</sup>

The next time Taixu's contingent visited Vietnam was in 1940 on their way from Singapore returning to Kunming, as they completed their tour of

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<sup>69</sup> See his "Nanyang fojiaohui zhi zhanwang," [Prospects for the Nanyang Buddhist Association] April 1940, Lecture at the Buddhist Association of Singapore. It is unclear what became of this Association.

<sup>70</sup> "You Shanghai zhi Xigong yipie," [From Shanghai to Saigon, A Glimpse] *Hai Chao Yin*, Vol. 9, No. 8.

<sup>71</sup> See Pittman (2001):118-129 for details.



Burma, Sri Lanka, India, and Malaysia, Nov. 1939-May 1940. This tour, sponsored and funded by the Nationalist government, had two goals: To gain support in Southeast Asia for the Chinese war of resistance against Japan, and second, to promote Taixu's dream of world Buddhism.<sup>72</sup>

Taixu's group visited Saigon and Hà Nội from April 28 to May 4, 1940. Their visit was arranged by the overseas Chinese community, the Nationalist consulate, and the China Travel Service. On April 28 the group met with Cai Zinan (who worked in the Saigon Municipal government and also was the Nationalist Foreign Affairs Association representative), Zhu Jixing, and other leaders of the overseas Chinese in Saigon, as well as Cai Xuetian, editor of the Far East Times who interviewed them, as did other papers, including the China Times, the All-People Times, and the South China Times; a special issue of the *Minbao* reported on Taixu's visit.<sup>73</sup>

The next day the overseas Chinese leaders brought the group to visit the Lê Văn Duyệt temple and the Giác Viên pagoda. On the 30<sup>th</sup> a number of Chinese business leaders visited the group and asked to be Taixu's disciples. The Nationalist consul in Saigon hoped that the group could stay longer and visit Laos and Cambodia, but the group had to leave for Hà Nội the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup>. They arrived in Hà Nội on May 2, and met with members of the Tonkin Buddhist Association, including Ven. Trí Hải, Nguyễn Năng Quốc, Ven. Thanh Hanh, Trần

Văn Cờ, and honorary head Hoàng Trọng Phu. Trí Hải asked the group to stay longer in Hà Nội but they were eager to return to Kunming. Though not mentioned in the Chinese *Diary of the Buddhist Mission*, during Taixu's visit to Quán Sứ Temple in Hà Nội he wrote a couplet, now engraved on the central twin pillars of the Main Hall:

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<sup>72</sup> See Pittman (2001):139-143, though he does not mention this or the 1928 Vietnam trip.

<sup>73</sup> I am now trying to locate these Chinese newspapers.

法輪似地東西轉  
佛道逢源左右通

*The dharma wheel, like the earth, is ever-revolving and never stops;  
The teachings of the Buddha can reach everyone, everywhere.*

The group toured Hà Nội and noticed that overseas Chinese were very few compared to the south, although the overall number of overseas Chinese in Việt Nam had risen since the outbreak of WWII. On the evening of May 2, representatives from the Tonkin Buddhist Association paid them a call; it was decided that the group leave as scheduled by train on May 3 but Taixu stayed an extra day in Hà Nội, in order to give a public lecture on the war against the Japanese, on “our struggle against violent invaders” and then fly back to Kunming.<sup>74</sup>

The Vietnamese account of Taixu’s 1940 visit described Taixu as a leader in Buddhism and famous all over the world, and outlined his itinerary similar to that of the Chinese account. In addition, the *Duy Tâm* article adds that on May 28, the layman Lâm Tử Đoàn urged Taixu to visit the Lương Xuyên Buddhist Association<sup>75</sup> but with no time to travel to Trà Vinh, Taixu wrote a couplet for the Association, and looked forward to future cooperation:

佛光南照 ---*The Light of the Buddha shines in the south, Phật Quang Nam Chiếu.*

This article also mentions that Taixu gave a well-attended public talk

<sup>74</sup> Weifang, *Fojiao fangwentuan riji*, [Diary of the Buddhist Mission] April 28-May 4, 1940. *Complete Works of Master Taixu*.

<sup>75</sup> The Lương Xuyên Buddhist Association (1934), very active in the Revival, promoted Buddhism through its journal *Duy Tâm*, translated sutras, and established elementary and college-prep Buddhist schools in Trà Vinh with both Vietnamese and Chinese students. “Yuenan fojiao yu xuexiao,” [Vietnamese Buddhism and Schools], *Hai Chao Yin*, Vol. 21, No. 7, July 1, 1940, p. 23.

at a “hot restaurant” about the purpose of his recent tour in India and Southeast Asia: to propagate Buddhism and garner overseas support for the anti-Japanese resistance. He mentioned that during the tour, he heard many calls to forge alliances between all the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist traditions. He then gave a dharma talk on the Five Precepts, and four people asked to be his disciples.<sup>76</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Although Taixu never returned to Vietnam, his works have continued to be translated and published until today. Besides the “25 Lectures on Buddhism by Master Taixu” mentioned above, in 1954, Ān Quang Pagoda published translations of Taixu’s lectures on the *Thập thiện nghiệp đạo* [The Ten Wholesome Ways of Action Sutra] (1932) and the *Bát Đại Nhân Giác* [The Eight Enlightenment Sutra] (1934), while translations of Taixu’s “Chinese Buddhism” and other articles are included in *Phật Giáo Việt Nam*, Issues 1-24, published by the United Buddhist Congregation in the late 1950s. In summary, the appeal of Taixu’s writings and activities to the Vietnamese Buddhist reformers of the 1920s-50s included the following: His plans to educate and systematize the *sangha* and his modern methods to propagate Buddhism; his efforts to show how Buddhism is compatible with the modern world and can enrich and serve modern society, and lastly, his lectures and commentaries on Chinese Buddhist texts, still read in Vietnam today. Most crucially, Taixu’s ideas and actions inspired Buddhist reformers in Vietnam as they sought to restore Buddhism as the national religion of Vietnam in the Vietnamese’

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<sup>76</sup> “Thái Hư Pháp Sư đến Việt Nam: lần thứ nhì,” *Duy Tâm Phật Học*, (Sàigòn), No. 40, June 1940:161-5.

struggle against French colonialism, Catholicism, and other new religions. Taixu himself sincerely promoted Buddhist internationalism, yet at heart was still a Chinese nationalist who believed Buddhism could help build a strong independent modern nation. To Taixu, Japan's military rulers had betrayed the nation's Buddhism heritage and thus Taixu turned to the Theravada nations of Southeast Asia, where Taixu was greatly impressed by Thailand as a thoroughly Buddhist nation and society and who praised Sri Lanka and Burma's Buddhist anti-colonial nationalism as examples for China, and Vietnam to emulate.<sup>77</sup>

In 1951 when Buddhists from all over Vietnam met in Huế to form the United Buddhist Congregation, they could review several decades of accomplishments behind them: education initiatives for both monastics and youth, Buddhist publications, translations, reorganizing temple life and economy, organizing the talent and resources of lay believers, using modern methods to propagate Buddhism in society, advancing the roles of nuns and laywomen, and a record of social welfare provision.<sup>78</sup> The Buddhist Revival also produced examples of politically-engaged Buddhist monks in anti-French activism such as Thiện Chiếu. Phạm Văn Minh writes that hundreds of monks were imprisoned, tortured, and killed by the French.<sup>79</sup>

The Revival of the 1920s-50s also engendered several generations of monastics who played important roles in the making of modern Vietnam in the 1950-60s, such as Trí Hải, Trí Quang, Thiện Hoa, Minh Châu, Huyền Quang, and Nhật Hạnh.<sup>80</sup> In 1949 Thích Nhật Hạnh (b. 1926) received full ordination at the Báo Quốc school in Huế, one of the modern Buddhist

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<sup>77</sup> "Cong Bali yuxi fojiao shuodao jin pusaxing" [From Buddhism in the Pali language system to the modern Bodhisattva path] *Hai Chao Yin*, Vol. 21, No. 7 (1940).

<sup>78</sup> Phạm, "Socio-political philosophy of Vietnamese Buddhism," p. 144; Trí Hải, HKT, pp. 60-70; GHPGVN, pp. 99-100.

<sup>79</sup> Phạm, "Socio-political philosophy of Vietnamese Buddhism," pp. 144-6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

institutes involved in the Vietnamese Buddhist Revival. Trí Quang, one the most active leaders in the 1960s Buddhist Struggle Movement, graduated from the Annam Buddhist Institute, founded in 1933. Many other examples could be cited.

Of course, much in the contemporary Buddhist landscape in Vietnam was shaped by people and events after 1975 (a complex subject for a separate paper, as is the 1960s Buddhist Struggle Movement). But we do see the legacy of the Buddhist Revival and the influence of Taixu's reforms, taken for granted today: Senior monks and nuns trained in the earlier period's Buddhist Institutes now lead the Buddhist establishment; nuns, not only monks, receive education and training and now outnumber monks; global Buddhist information circulate in many media. The Buddhist Youth-Family is a nation-wide organization, and all pagodas participate in charity works to one degree or another. Vietnam's economy continues to improve, Vietnam's Buddhism is reforging international Buddhist links, and the number of lay believers is rising. Is the time ripe for another Buddhist Revival?

Thus far, scholarship on the history of modern Buddhism tends to be nation-oriented but could also benefit from a transnational approach. The Taixu-Vietnam link was previously unknown outside of Vietnam until recently and works on modern and engaged Buddhism do not explore this connection. The "revival" in modern Buddhism began in a transnational context from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> and will continue to evolve in an ever-more connected globe.

To close, here are two Vietnamese monks' views of Taixu. To Trí Quang, Taixu was a revolutionary: "With his call for 'A revolution in religious doctrine, a revolution in religious administration, and a revolution in religious property,' Master Taixu is the model for the

modern *sangha* in the twentieth century.”<sup>81</sup>

And Ven. Bích Phong (1901-1968) wrote a beautiful poem for Master Taixu upon his death in 1947, equating Taixu with the universe and comparing him with Śākyamuni himself:

中國太虛法師圓寂日恭悼  
法師曾遊化于歐,亞,美,諸洲

昔年是日證無餘  
爐熱名香望太虛  
化範未忘他世界  
法身常在此全書  
試觀我佛當時事  
寧忍金臺九品居  
西沒東升還法爾  
照臨日月本無私。<sup>82</sup>

Translated into English by 戴愛蓮：

(In Reverent Memory of Chinese Master Taixu,  
The Master who traveled and taught in Europe, Asia, and America)

Before that year and day of his death he had already reached Nirvāṇa  
The burner is hot: we are offering incense to him, the vast universe...  
He taught his disciples norms and standards  
Yet didn't forget other worlds  
The dharma-body remains in his writings.

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<sup>81</sup> Trí Quang (1972), p. 152.

<sup>82</sup> Chinese version published in Lê Mạnh Thát (2004):209; 551.

Let's look at the time of Śākyamuni:  
 He willingly forsook it all, prince-hood, riches, a luxurious life...  
 The sun sets in the West and rises in the East  
 The laws of the universe unceasing  
 The sun and the moon enlighten all  
 Without selfishness.

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## The Influence of Master Taixu on Buddhism in Vietnam

Elise A. Devido

### Abstract

The Vietnamese Buddhist Revival, *Chận Hưng Phật Giáo*, of the 1920s-40s saw reform and developments in institutional Buddhism as well as the rise of new sects such as Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, and the *Tịnh độ cư sĩ*. From the 1920s, Vietnamese Buddhist reformers revitalized their religion, inspired in great part by the Chinese monk Taixu's [Thái Hư Đài Sư] (1890-1947) blueprint to modernize and systematize sangha education and temple administration, and by his idea of *Renjian fojiao* [Nhân Gian Phật Giáo], "Buddhism for this world," emphasizing the centrality of education, modern publishing, social work, and Buddhist lay groups to Buddhism's future in the modern world.

This paper first discusses the Chinese Buddhist revival, then the activities of Buddhist reformers in Vietnam 1920-51, and the flows of Buddhist personnel and materials between Vietnam and China. The paper then traces the influence of Taixu upon Buddhism in Vietnam, primarily in two ways: first, via his writings and his disciples; how was *Nhân Gian Phật Giáo*, "Buddhism for this world," interpreted and realized in Vietnam? Second, the paper narrates Taixu's two visits to Vietnam in 1928 and 1940 and points to the importance of the overseas Chinese community in the propagation of transnational Buddhism in modern times.

The paper stresses that the Vietnamese Buddhist Revival of the first half of the twentieth-century established the institutional and conceptual foundation for

Vietnamese Engaged Buddhism's remarkable developments in the 1960s-70s, as well as Vietnamese Buddhism's mainstream institutional growth and influence from the 1940s to the present. As the Vietnamese Buddhist Revival took place in a transnational context, more comparative work is needed on the history of modern Buddhism.

**KeyWords :** Master Taixu, Vietnamese Buddhist Revival, Buddhism for this world, transnational Buddhism