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The History of Buddhism in Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

This work on Vietnamese Buddhism from its beginnings through the 20th century provides much evidence requiring Western Buddhologists to radically revise their heretofore accepted time-table for the arrival and development of Buddhism in Vietnam. It provides previously unknown data, details of nomenclature, time, and place, scrupulously gathered from archeological finds and ancient archival records by Vietnamese research-teams. Providing much historical analysis and cultural interpretation along the way, this work carries its project forward through the various royal dynasties and the French colonial period.

Part One: Buddhism's Entry into Vietnam and Its Practice under Chinese Control (from 1st to 10th Centuries A.D.)

Chapter I, "The Introduction of Buddhism into Vietnam: Dates and Routes of Introduction," argues that Buddhism came directly to Vietnam from Indian traders and missionaries in the 1st or 2nd century A.D., centuries before the massive waves of Buddhist influence which came from China. Indeed, by the beginning of the 4th century, Vietnamese Buddhist monks were traveling in turn to India to retrieve more Buddhist *sutras* and do advanced study.

Chapter II, "Ancient Luy Lau during Chinese Control of Vietnam, in the Early Centuries A.D.," shows that the Vietnamese people of Giao Chau, in present-day Ha Bac province, Vietnam, had Buddhism, probably a Mahayanist form, by the 2nd century B.C. Two or three centuries later it had 500 monks and was already sending Buddhist missionaries to South China. The Chinese feudal landlords who dominated Giao Chi during much of this time were Confucianists and Taoists. But from Luy Lau in Giao Chi, Buddhism spread to the rest of Vietnam, gradually developing into a unique Vietnamese form of Buddhism.

Chapter III, "The First Buddhist Missionaries in Vietnam," reconstructs the missions of the Indian monks Mahajivaka and Kalacarya, filtering out fiction and legend insofar as possible. It then examines the *Li Huo Lun*, a Buddhist primer written by Mouzi, a Chinese who became a Buddhist in Vietnam and returned to China in his old age. Finally it moves to Khuong Tang Hoi, an Uzbekistani who entered the monkhood in Vietnam and became an early predecessor of what was later to be the first Vietnamese Ch'an sect.

Chapter IV, "Vietnamese Buddhism from Mid-3rd Century to the 5th Century," first reports on Kararuci and Dao Thanh, who disseminated Buddhist "lotus-meditation". It then proceeds to a discussion of the book *Bach Hac Luan* ("Discussion between Black and White"), written by the monk Hue Lam. Hue Lam rejected the Pure Land (or "Lotus") school prominent in Vietnamese Buddhism at the time, probably because he

wanted to reconcile Confucianism and Buddhism. This chapter goes on to argue that the famous self-immolation of the monk Dam Hoang, and the latter's visible ascent to the Pure Land, functioned as a monastic defense of Pure Land teaching and a refutation of Hue Lam. The chapter closes with an intriguing analysis of a well-known epistolary correspondence between the Chinese official Li Miao and two Vietnamese monks, revealing the impact of contemporary doctrinal controversy on Vietnamese society and vice versa.

Chapter V, "The First Ch'an Sect in Vietnam: Vinitaruci and Phap Hien, Founders" records the history of Vinitaruci, an Indian who was tonsured in China and officially transmitted Chinese Ch'an to Vietnam circa 580 A.D. This chapter translates one of his litany-prayers, which emphasizes the *Prajna* ('wisdom of emptiness') tradition and Ch'anist 'direct transmission' of *bodhi* ('enlightenment') from Master to disciple. The chapter continues on to a detailed biography of Ven. Phap Hien, who succeeded Vinitaruci as head-monk of the Vinitaruci Ch'an sect, becoming its second Patriarch.

Chapter VI, "The Second Ch'an Sect in Vietnam: Wu Yantong, Cam Thanh, and Thien Hoi," explains the foundation of the Wu Yantong sect, the second Ch'an sect in Vietnam, named after its founder. Wu Yantong was a Chinese monk ordained in China by the great Bai Zhang, a reputed founder of China's Caodong and Lingji sects. Wu arrived in Vietnam in 820 A.D. and, shortly before his own death in 826 A.D., transmitted his 'Buddha-heart seal' to Cam Thanh, the sect's second Patriarch. The Wu Yantong sect emphasized Bai Zhang's well-known doctrine of 'no-thinking'. This chapter concludes with biographies of the Ven. Cam Thanh and the Ven. Thien Hoi, respectively the second and third Patriarchs of the Wu Yantong sect.

*Part Two: Buddhism from the Ngo to the Tran Dynasties
(10th -14th Centuries A.D.)*

Chapter VII, "Buddhism under the Ngo Dinh and Early Le Dynasties," examines Buddhist developments after Vietnam's great victory of 938 A.D., putting an end to 1000 years of Chinese domination. Over the next century Buddhism steadily strengthened itself. The monks provided an intelligentsia for the royal court, were entrusted with diplomatic missions, etc. This chapter delves into the growth of Buddhist Tantrism during this period, the widespread use of *mudra*, *dharani*, and the like. Prayer columns excavated by archeologists supply much of this helpful information.

Chapter VIII, "Buddhism under the Ly Dynasty," reports on the ascendancy of Buddhism throughout this dynasty's tenure (1010-1225). Because the Ly Kings venerated Buddhism, even urging as many men as possible to become monks, the bureaucratic strata supplied many monastic vocations. The Vinitaruci Ch'an sect at this time emphasized both Tantrism and the ideological issue of 'existence and non-existence'. The Wu Yantong

Ch'an sect emphasized direct enlightenment and the doctrine of *sunyata*. This chapter does the service of translating many beautiful poems of this period. It closes with a careful description of Ly religious architecture, and a profile of popular religiosity (*Amitabha*-worship, etc.).

Chapter IX, "Buddhism under the Tran Dynasty," describes the big changes which took place in Vietnam during the transition from the Ly to the Tran and the latter dynasty's tenure. King Tran Nhan Tong took tonsure and founded, with the help of two others, The Truc Lam Ch'an sect, ending the preceding two Ch'an sects. At the end of the twelfth century, the Buddhist monastic establishment had begun to fall into corruption, breaking the Precepts both surreptitiously and publicly. This chapter provides many translations, and describes much of the Tran dynasty scholarship (which became highly developed). King Tran Thai Tong's great Buddhist works and their special teachings are critiqued, as are those of Tran Nhan Tong. It closes with two biographies, that of Ven. Phap Loa, who consecrated 15,000 monks and nuns in his lifetime; and that of the great monk-poet Huyen Quang, who shrank from being the third Patriarch of the Truc Lam sect, preferring the eremitical life.

*Part Three: Buddhism from the Later Le To Tay Son Dynasties
(15th to 18th Centuries)*

Chapter X, "Buddhism in Prosperity and Peace: the Le Dynasty (15th century)," describes and analyzes how, in the 15th century, the Le Dynasty imitated the Chinese emperors, privileging Confucianism and integrating Buddhism further into the state-system, thus subjecting it to paralyzing controls. At the same time, the Le tolerated and sometimes favored Buddhism at the popular level because of the religion's stabilizing benefits. The author summarizes and critiques three 'Confucian' scholars who wrote Buddhist works: Nguyen Trai, who wrote beautiful poetry; Luong The Vinh, who wrote essays on Buddhist rites, thereby earning himself exclusion from the imperial (and Confucianist) 'Temple of Literature'; and King Le Thanh Ton (an exception in that he was a Monarch himself), who is most famous for his descriptions of the *hon* (forsaken spirits) which have not passed over to the next life but are trapped in 'aimless wandering'.

Chapter XI, "Buddhism in the Period of the Country's Partition by Different Feudal Groups (16th-18th century)," is panoramic in scope, describing the civil war between the new Mac Dynasty and loyalists of the former Le Dynasty. This period of suffering motivated two great Buddhist narratives, "*The Story of the Goddess of Mercy, Thi Kinh*," and the "*Story of the Goddess of Mercy of the Southern Sea*," both of which our author analyzes here. Next, in sequence, the author treats two well-known Buddhist dignitaries of the period; and the contemporary influence of the Lam Te Ch'an sect and the Tao Dong Ch'an sect. He closes with a critique

of Thach Liem, one of the most controversial figures in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Chapter XII, “Buddhism in the Period of Peasant Insurrections (in the latter half of the 18th century,” shows how tumultuous events such as the rout of the Nguyen regime in the South by the Tay Son, the invasion and defeat of Chinese troops, and the sudden overthrow of the Tay Son regime, together generated a mind-set which Confucianism could no longer adequately serve. A new synthesis of the best of each of the ‘three religions’ had to be invented. The scholar Ngo Thi Nham attempted to do this, though the underpinning of his ideas remained Confucianist. The Buddhist monk, Toan Nhat, was more successful, producing the great *Tale of Hua Su*. Bonze Toan Nhat deployed Buddhism to argue for (1) anti-royalism, (2) the necessary relation of labor to truth and mercy, and (3) the necessary relation of armed struggle to authentic compassion.

Part Four: Buddhism under the Nguyen Dynasty (19th Century)

Chapter XIII, “Buddhism in the Period of Dominant Confucianism under the Nguyen Dynasty,” describes the new accommodation with Buddhism once Nguyen Anh, backed by western capitalist force, seized power. The Nguyen Dynasty was unpopular and autocratic. Catholicism was sporadically prohibited and Buddhism sometimes severely restricted. Later, the rulers Minh Mang and Thieu Tri were favorable to Buddhism, but often had to manifest their good will indirectly, lest their actions become resented by the Confucianist establishment. Our author chronicles the Buddhist scholarship and pagoda-building sponsored by Minh Mang and Thieu Tri.

Chapter XIV, “Buddhism Characterized by Great Poets under the Nguyen Dynasty,” annotates and critiques the literary production of the first half of Vietnam’s 19th century, when Buddhism necessarily operated in a Confucianist-dominated milieu. The great poet Nguyen Du paid special attention to the motif of the ‘beautiful woman who has suffered glaring injustice’. The poet Nguyen Cong Tru could not give up a Confucianist commitment to worldly affairs, but he preferred Buddhism when dealing with life’s sorrows, reverses, and insecurity. Cao Ba Quat satirized the common people’s naive faith in Buddha, but appreciated Buddhism’s reflectiveness and esthetic sense. Finally, the poetess Ho Xuan Huong, who was a non-believer, in her poetry derided the decadence of corrupt members of the clergy.

Chapter XV, “Typical Bonzes under the Nguyen Dynasty,” describes the character of Buddhism under the Nguyen. The distinctive contribution of the Bonzes during this time was the building of a great academic archive which both collected historical records of the Vietnamese *sangha* and produced new histories and doctrinal catechisms. Bonze Thanh Dam emphasized Ch’an teachings such as the ‘Buddha-heart’, *sunyata*, and ‘silent transmission’. The Most Ven. Phuc Dien produced histories and

doctrinal treatises. Bonze An Thien was a well-known apologist, and compiled comprehensive Buddhist lexicons.

Part Five: Buddhism during French Colonial Times (Second Half of 19th through First Half of 20th Centuries)

Chapter XVI, “Buddhism’s Tendency towards World Acceptance,” means by ‘world acceptance’ a pro-active commitment to seeking solutions for sociopolitical problems. This chapter grants that Buddhism is not by nature a ‘world-accepting’ religion in this sense. Buddhism considers suffering in this life inevitable, and Buddhism guides believers towards enlightened release from the samsaric world. However, Buddhism also has fought to secure the rights of people to live and practice their religion freely. Thus our author in this chapter documents the heroic contributions of Buddhist monks to the anti-(French-)colonial insurrections of 1898, 1913, and 1916. Bonzes Vuong Quoc Chinh and Van Tru led the 1898 revolt, and Bonze Nguyen Huu Tri led the 1916 revolt.

Chapter XVII, “The Development of the Buddhist Movement in the Early Decades of the 20th Century,” examines the ‘movement for the development of Buddhism’ and kindred activities which sought to adapt Buddhist teaching to the realities of 20th century Vietnam which was under foreign control at the time, and its coming into contact with both capitalism and ‘modernity’. This chapter analyzes five Buddhist issues and how Buddhist and anti-Buddhist polemicists diversely handled their problematic: (1) ‘non-killing’ and ‘compassion’; (2) Buddhist ‘atheism’; (3) ‘no-soul’ (*anatman*); (4) the status of Pure Lands; and (5) Buddhist ‘causality’. Intriguing biographies of scholars and activists are profiled, including those of several who later forsook Buddhism and joined the Communist Party. Many other Buddhists in the movement, our author reports, remained devout Buddhists to the end of their lives.

PART ONE

**BUDDHISM'S ENTRY INTO VIETNAM AND
ITS PRACTICE UNDER CHINESE CONTROL
(FROM 1ST TO 10TH CENTURY A.D.)**

CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM TO VIETNAM: DATES AND ROUTES

Situated on the Indochinese Peninsula, Vietnam is a geographical dot amidst two large countries, the two most ancient civilizations of Asia, and probably of the whole world: India and China. Being near two such large countries and ancient civilizations, Vietnam has naturally been influenced by both. And Vietnam's acquisition of Buddhism is no exception. Nevertheless, contrary to what has been previously thought, historical evidence indicates Indians first brought Buddhism to Vietnam. Indeed, Indian Buddhist monks likely came to Vietnam first before traveling to southern China.

Vietnam's geographical position has made it a prime candidate for trade with India. The Indochinese peninsula was formed by several mountain ranges which span from Tibet in the northwest to the sea in the southeast. Among these ranges lie the valleys of big rivers, most importantly the Mae Nam which forms the Thai delta, the Mekong river, and northern Vietnam's Red and Da Rivers.

Sea routes, including through these waterways, were the most important channels connecting India with Vietnam. India is also a peninsula, albeit like a small continent. Long before the Christian Era, Indian merchants traded with Arabs and Mediterranean countries. Trade was especially brisk with the Roman Empire in gold, pearl, perfumes, silk and sandalwood. In order to source enough merchandize to trade with western markets, Indian traders set out in their boats, taking advantage of the Southwestern monsoon, sailing towards Southeast Asia, to Malaysia, to the Indonesian group of islands, crossing the Malacca Strait into the South China Sea, to Vietnam, China and then Japan. When setting out they took advantage of the Southeastern monsoon. When coming back they had to wait for the Northeastern monsoon the following year.

During a year's stay, they had enough time to trade and, gradually, deeply influence their host's production, culture, daily life, and religion. Unconsciously, they took part in the process of Hinduization in Eastern areas. It was an expansionism without occupation - just an expansion of culture, religion and economy. Among the Indian merchants who came and went, some of them stayed and married native wives. They were given recognition and respect by local authorities. This diasporas was the source of the Indian villages on the islands of Perek and Celebes in South China and Malaysia, Cambodia, Champa, and Indonesia. They brought along Indian

customs, art and religion (Brahmanism and Buddhism). They engraved religious statements in Sanskrit on stone columns or tablets. It must be remembered that Jataka Buddhist collections told many stories of crossing oceans, and the Hindu Ramayana epic told of areas like Java, Sumatra, and the “golden land” (*Suvannabhumi*).

On the Malaysian islands, where Indians arrived by sea, Chinese historical materials tell of the gradual progress of Hinduization, beginning from the second century A.D. The stone columns and tablets carved in Sanskrit found here date from no later than the fourth century. In Indonesia, engraved Sanskrit characters of Mulavarman have been found in Kutei, Borneo dating from the beginning of fifth century A.D. Stone tablets carved in Sanskrit by King Pulavarmani have been found in western Java from the middle of the fifth century. But Buddha statues of the Amaravati school, discovered in Sampaga (Celebes), on the Seguntang hill in Palembang (Sumatra), the southern part of Gember province, were much older (See W. Cohn, *Buddha in der Kunst des Ostens*, Leipzig, 1925, p. 28 and F.M. Schmitzer, *The Archeology of Hindu Sumatra*, Leyde 1937, p. 1).

According to Ye Tiao, in Yavadvipa the first Chinese contact with a Hinduized Java occurred as early as 132 A.D. On the basis of the above document, G. Ferrand, in a 1919 issue of *Journal Asiatique*, stated that “Indonesia's first contact with Hinduism must have occurred before the Christian Era”. Indian navigators were highly active in this region from before the Christian Era. They became even more active in the second and third centuries.

This situation cannot be explained by Brahmanic ideology, a religion condemning relations with foreigners as not being pure. It can only be explained by acknowledging that Brahman ideology was shaken to the roots by the egalitarian ideology of Buddhism, especially Mahayana Buddhism, a prominent Buddhist movement in India in the early years of the Christian Era. The Mahayana Buddhism movement not only advocated that all classes were equal, that everybody was equal, but it also emphasized the Bodhisattva's ideology of sacrificing living creatures, including sacrificing one's own causes in order to eliminate desire and suffering. Fearless of long and dangerous journeys, difficulties encountered due to languages, customs and habits, Bodhisattvas pursued first and foremost the lofty aim of “*chung sinh vo bien the nguyen do*,” i.e., helping mankind and saving the world without differentiating among nations, among regimes. It was possible to say that Buddhist ideology, especially the Mahayana sect, freed the Indian people, including traders to go anywhere in the world.

Mahayana Buddhism confirmed the protecting role of Buddha and Bodhisattvas towards people who believed in them and repeated their names. Indian sailors and traders often prayed for help from Buddha Dipankara and Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. A. Foucher in *Iconographie Bouddhique* writes: The name Dipankara symbolized the names of the islands (*dipa* and *dvipa*) and was considered as the Buddha protecting seamen. That is why Indian sailors and traders pray for his help during their

voyages. Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was well-known all over the Far East as the Buddha with a thousand eyes and a thousand hands who had great benevolence and great power, and could save anybody believing in her and repeating her name in their misfortunes. The fact is that Indian sailors and traders took along Buddha Dipankara statues and Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara statues to daily offer prayers and recite their names before certainly influenced the people they visited.

In addition to the various cultural and religious factors above, there are other reasons for the Indian diaspora, for example:

- King Asoka's invasion of Kalinga on the East Coast of India in the third century B.C. could have pushed people to migrate to foreign countries.

- The Kushan invasion in the early years of the Christian Era probably had the same effect.

- According to G. Coedes, the author of *Histoire Ancienne Des Etats Hindouises d' Exteme Orient*, the deep causes of India's expansion in the early years of the Christian Era were economic and commercial.

Other historical events led to improved commercial links between the Far East and the Mediterranean Sea. Alexander the Great's eastern campaign, the foundation of Maurya's dynasty and the following Kaniskha dynasty in India, the occurrence of the Seleucides Empire and especially the Roman Empire in the West. However, increased trade in luxury goods attracted the attention of a number of Latin scholars. (E.H. Warminton, *The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India*, Cambridge, 1928). These luxury goods included spices, perfumes and aloe wood, which were not found in India but on islands lying off her east coast.

Geographical names in Sanskrit like Takkola (pepper market), Karpura dvipa (camphor island), Narikeladvipa (coconut island) remind us of the areas to which Indian traders came. (Sylvain Levy in Kouen louen and Dripanlara said that Kanakapuri was a "gold town" on the Dvipantara Island. Gold was also sought by Indians, especially in Indonesia where there were many rivers with gold.

Before the Christian Era, India still bought gold in Siberia and followed the route across Bactria. But in about 200 B.C. waves of migration in Central Asia cut off this route. In the first century, India imported gold coins from the Roman Empire, and then melted them down for other purposes. Even today gold coins of this kind can be found in India. Nevertheless, India's imports of these coins were abruptly stopped when the Roman Emperor stopped the illegal export of gold that was hurting the Roman economy. India soon had to turn to South East Asia and the Far East to acquire the gold needed (R. Sewell, *Roman Coins Found in India*, 1904, pp. 591-638).

There was thus not only one reason but many for India's expansion to the East. Depending on differing historical points of view, this or that reason is given priority. The Buddhist belief promoted after Asoka's dynasty

in the year 300 B.C., which abolished prejudices about the purity of Aryans, may also have had an influence.

Following the voyages of sailors and traders were probably the journeys of Buddhist monks to propagate Buddhism. Buddhist monks at that time were often intellectuals who had a broad knowledge. Without them, the influence of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sanskrit literature could not have been thoroughly integrated into Cambodia, Champa, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

According to Chinese historians, the Funan Kingdom in Cambodia was founded in the first century by an Indian Brahmin called Kaundinya. China did not have an official and direct relation to the Funan imperial court. The chief mandarins in Funan are known to have been Indian because in Chinese historical materials their names start with “zhu,” the surname previously given to all Indians by the Chinese.

In Cambodia, archaeologists have found four stone tablets carved in Sanskrit. Relations between the Champa kingdom and China began in the years 190-193 A.D. In Quang Nam province the Dong Duong Buddha statue, one of the most beautiful examples belonging to the Indian Amaravati carving school, was found (See V. Rougier, *Nouvelles Decouvertes Chames au Quang Nam*, Befeo XI, p. 471; and A.K. Coomarasvamy, *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 197). Chinese historical materials also demonstrate that numerous small kingdoms on the Malay peninsula were “Indianized” from the beginning of the second century. Such Indianized kingdoms were obviously suitable areas for further Indian migrations.

More and more Indian people came to overseas areas in the East, mostly by the sea routes mentioned above. But what about overland routes? There were many overland routes, but they were more difficult to travel. First, there were favorable combinations of water and land routes. Instead of sailing through the Straits of Malacca, far away to the south, Indian traders could transport goods through the Isthmus of Kra on the Malay peninsula, then go along easy land routes, to cross from this sea to the other within hours. From Southern India, Indian traders could use quite small boats to cross the narrow waterway between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands or the one between Aceh and the Nicobars a little further to the South. The second route reached Kedah on the Malay peninsula. At Aceh and Kedah, archaeologists have excavated many ancient objects belonging to Indian civilization. (See H.G. Quaritch Wales, “A Newly Explored Route of Ancient Indian Cultural Expansion,” *Indian Art and Letters*, pp. 1-31).

Traders setting off from Central India could go by the land route crossing the Three Pagodas Pass and sail along the Kamburi River to the Gulf of Thailand. Further to the north, it was possible to get to the Gulf of Thailand by a land route which nowadays connects Moulmein with Tak Rahaeng, a town on a branch of the Mae Nam Wang. There was another route linking the Mae Nam with the Mekong River, crossing Korat, Sitep and the Mun river valleys. It was this route, which led directly to the Bassak

region in the midstream of the Mekong River in the Cambodian Kingdom. This kingdom was probably founded by Indian migrants before the Christian Era. In the beginning of this Era, Indian monks might have come to Laos by this route and from there crossed the Truong Son ranges to Vietnam's Thanh Hoa or Nghe An provinces.

Further to the North was the route connecting India with southern China, crossing Assam, Burma and Yunnan province. This route might have been used since the second century A.D. or even before this time. (See Pelliot, P., *Deux Itheraires*, Befeo, IV, pp 142-143; and G.H. Luce Pe Maung Tin, "Burma Down to the Fall of Pagan", *Burma Research Society*, p. 29).

All of the geographical and historical facts above refute the theories that Buddhism first came second hand from China, spreading from India to China and then from China to Vietnam. Granted, nobody denies that there were water and overland routes connecting India and China without crossing Vietnam, most importantly the two land routes through Central Asia. Nobody can also deny the fact that Vietnam was greatly influenced by Chinese Buddhism. According to historical materials, however, Buddhism was introduced directly into Vietnam by Indian monks a very long time before it entered Southern China.

Whether by sea or by land, alone or in groups of two or three people, and sometimes traveling with traders, foreign monks, particularly from India or Central Asia, came to Vietnam to spread Buddhism. Nevertheless, it is not easy to clearly answer the questions: When did the first Buddhist monks come to Vietnam? Where were they from? How many of them came? Foreign monks whose names are mentioned in Vietnamese or Chinese historical materials were probably not those who were the first to set the foundation for Buddhism in Vietnam.

It is known that in 300 B.C. during Emperor Asoka's reign, after the Third Congress for Compiling Sutras (*Ket tap*), many Buddhist proselytizing delegations were sent to West, East and South East Asia. A delegation headed by the two monks Uttara and Sona was sent to Suvannabumi, the golden land. Historical materials from Burmese Buddhism relate that the two monks came to Burma to propagate Buddhism. Nevertheless, Thai historical materials also indicate the two went to Thailand to spread Buddhism. Did the two go to Vietnam?

Until now, this question has not been settled one way or the other by Chinese and Vietnamese historians. On the basis of one Chinese scholar's materials, King Asoka's *stupa* can be found in Giao Chau (ancient Vietnam) at the Nele ("muddy") wall, affirming that the Nele wall is the present Vietnamese coastal city of Do Son.

South India was the first region which witnessed the appearance of the Mahayanist "*Bat Nha*" Sutra (*Zhi Hui* in Chinese, and *Prajna* in Sanskrit). For example, the Diamond Sutra, well known in Vietnam, is one of the most important Mahayana Sutras in the *Prajna* collection. On the basis of the collection of *Prajna* Sutras, the learned Nagarjuna promoted the

famous “Middle way“ (Madhyamika), which had a profound influence on Vietnamese Buddhism, as it did on China. An analysis of the Zen (*Chan* in Chinese) literature of the Zen masters of the first two Zen sects in Vietnam, Vinitaruci and Vo Ngon Thong, shows clearly the deep influence of Prajna ideology. It is quite likely that the Mahayana Prajna was directly transferred from South India to Vietnam through Indonesia and Champa. In China, although the first Prajna sutra was translated by Lokesama during the Han dynasty, by the end of the second century A.D., its influence was not enduring and wide. Only after Kumarajiva came to China at the beginning of the fifth century did the Prajna sutra become widely popular there. (See K. Mukerji, *Indian Literature in China and the Far East*, p. 92-93).

In Giao Chau at the beginning of the third century the sutra *Astahasrika*, translated by Khuong Tang Hoi, was considered the oldest *Prajna Sutra* (*Astahasrika*). The *Prajna Sutra Damasahasrika*, translated by Lokasema, appeared later by the end of the Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) at the second stage of *Prajna Literature* (Jaidava Singh, *An Introduction to Madhyamika Philosophy*, Delhi, p. 9). The *Astakasrika Sutra* is the oldest in the whole of the *Prajna Literature*. It surely came to Vietnam from Southern India and not China, long before it was translated. In the Buddhist center of Luy Lau, there were monasteries or schools where the Sutra Prajna was taught, including the *Sutra Astahasrika*, later translated into Chinese by Khuong Tang Hoi. In addition, the spread of Buddhism in Vietnam continued from the beginning of the common era through the following centuries owing to the contributions of Indian, Central Asian, Chinese, and even Vietnamese monks themselves who had studied Buddhism in India or China. Records show that many Chinese monks followed a Southern route and stopped in Giao Chau before going to India to look for Buddhist teachers. For example Yu Fa Lan, Yu Dao Cui at the beginning of the fourth century and Ming Yuan at the end of the fourth century, Sui Ming, Wu Xing, Tan Run, Zhi Heng, Hui Ning, and Yi Jing in the fifth, sixth, seventh centuries.

Not satisfied with Buddhism in China and the translated Sutras, they wanted to continue their study of Buddhism in India. Their journeys were long and dangerous. Storms, diseases, pirates, and the like threatened their survival. Thus, in order to prepare for their journeys they had to improve upon their physical strength, their knowledge of Sanskrit, astronomy, and the customs and habits of the people at their destination. Giao Chau was a very convenient place for such preparation. When they went and especially when they came back, they talked with monks in Giao Chau about their new knowledge of Buddhism and different Buddhist sects. They deposited there their Sutra books, which they had collected. All of this led to the further spread of Buddhism in Giao Chau.

Some Vietnamese monks also set out to look for Buddhist teachers together with Chinese monks, going “Southward” and “Westward”. Sometimes they went by themselves on the trading boats of Indian merchants. Some of their names were Mosadeva, Khuy Xung, Hue Diem,

Tri Hanh, and Dai Thang Dang. Before arriving in India, they passed many Buddhist kingdoms in South East Asia and Southern Asia. Some of them reached Southern India, or Western India, or Northern India. Most went because they were not satisfied with the amount of Buddhism that had reached their country via monks from India, China or Central Asia. They also wanted to see with their own eyes what Buddhism was like in India and what society and people with Buddhist beliefs were like there.

They made a great effort to study Buddhism and Indian society. Some of them had a very good command of Buddhism, such as Dai Thang Dang. He could explain the treatise "*Duyen Sinh Luan*." Many of these monks intended to return to develop Buddhism in their homeland though some died on the way to India or in India. After returning home, they used the knowledge they had acquired to have discussions with monks or Buddhist followers in the region. All of this helped the native people understand more about the Buddha's belief and brought a specific character to the native Buddhism.

Buddhism continued to spread throughout Vietnam until the late stage of Chinese feudal domination, and even until Vietnam became independent in the tenth century. There were, however, some changes in the introduction routes. The direct Southwestern routes from India were no longer used. New teachings of Buddhism were introduced into Vietnam through Northern routes including the various Chinese Chan sects. For example, the Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects of Zen Buddhism were introduced during the late Chinese domination stage. The Cao Tang, Lin Ji and Cao Dong schools were introduced after the tenth century. Because Vietnamese society at that time had features in common with the Chinese, it easily accepted Chinese culture, including its beliefs. At the same time, Hinduism and Islam became more popular in India, while Buddhism declined in popularity. Buddhist missionaries were no longer sent out. Nevertheless, previous Indian missionaries had already left their mark on Vietnam. They were the first and one of the important influences on the development of Buddhism in Vietnam. They and others have helped to build up the features of the history of Buddhism in Vietnam.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT LUY LAU DURING THE CHINESE CONTROL OF VIETNAM IN THE EARLY CENTURIES A.D.

At the beginning of the modern era, there were three great Buddhist centers in the Han Empire: Luoyang, Pengcheng and Luy Lau (or Lien Lau). Luoyang, which is on the banks of the Luo River, is south of the Yellow river in the northwest of Henan province in China. It was the capital of the Eastern Han dynasty. Historical materials tell that Emperor Huangdi of the Han Dynasty (crowned in A.D. 165) venerated Buddha Sakyamuni and Lao Tzu in one place. At that time Buddhist sutras were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Indian and Central Asian monks with the cooperation of Chinese monks. For example: the two Iranian monks, An The Cao and An Huyen, translated Buddhist sutras with a Chinese monk, named Fu Tiao. In Luoyang, there were two big pagodas: Bai Ma Si (White Horse Temple) and Xuchang.

Pengcheng was located in the Chu Kingdom (220-265 A.D.) on the lower part of the Yangzi River which is now in Jiangsu province, China. Here, from the middle of the first century A.D., the gentle folk followed both Taoism and Buddhism. The Chu Emperor Liu Ying (Han Emperor Guangwu's son) migrated to Pengcheng. And here, he recited prayers to both the transcendence of Taoism and the benevolence of Buddhism. (Ref. *The Story of the Chu Emperor Wang Ying in Hou Han Shu*). He did penance, fasted, prayed, and made offerings. In the year 265, there was a Buddhist organization consisting of foreign monks and Chinese scholars there.

Luy Lau was the center of Giao Chi, in the center of the Red River Delta which is now Thuan Thanh district, Ha Bac province in Vietnam. From here, there were many water routes and land routes leading to Pengcheng and Luoyang. From early on, Indian and Central Asian traders came here to trade and then monks came to practice or spread Buddhism.

Official Chinese records do not mention the Buddhist situation here at the time because this region was considered to be a remote and barbaric area on the Southern border, not worthy of attention. But it was here that one of the earliest Buddhist Chinese works appeared. It was *Ly Hoac Luan* which was written by Mau Tu in the second century A.D. From here, also, some famous monks such as Khuong Tang Hoi went to China to spread Buddhism. It is said the Luy Lau Buddhist center was founded earlier than those two centers and that Buddhism was spread from Luy Lau to Pengcheng and then to Luoyang. This seems credible. From various sources, it is possible to understand the Buddhist development in Luy Lau in the early common era.

This story, written in *Linh Nam Trich Quai*, of how Chu Dong Tu became a monk is well known: Dong Tu and Tien Dung opened shops and traded with many foreign merchants. One day, Dong Tu set off in a boat with a foreign trader. They called at Quynh Vien mountain for fresh water. Dong Tu met an Indian monk in a tent there. The monk taught him Buddhism. Then he stayed on the island to learn Buddhism. He gave gold to his friend to conduct his business and told him to pick him up on the way home. When leaving for home, Dong Tu was given a stick and a hat (made of leaves) which could perform miracles. Arriving back in his country, Dong Tu explained Buddhism to Tien Dung. Later they left their businesses and set out to look for teachers of Buddhism. The traders mentioned in this story must have been Indians who came to our country by sea. From this story, we see how attractive Buddhism was to Vietnamese working people, for both Dong Tu and Tien Dung were only traders. In addition, in *Ngo Chi*, there was a letter sent by Vien Huy to Tuan Huc in 207 A.D.

In the letter, there is a paragraph praising Si Nhiep ('Shishee' in Chinese) for keeping Giao Chau peaceful for more than 20 years. "Whenever he came or went, there was the sound of bells and flutes, the streets were full of horse carriages followed by ten Ho people holding incense sticks." "Ho" people meant Indian monks who were numerous in Giao Chau at that time. They accompanied Si Nhiep wherever he went.

The book *Ly Hoac Luan* written by Mau Tu at the end of the second century reported that the number of native and foreign monks in Giao Chau was large. Corrupt practices appeared among them which were criticized by Mau Tu: "Some of the monks drink too much wine, have wives and children, have too much money and many valuables and often deceive people." Apart from the sin of killing, some of the monks in Giao Chau committed four of the five sins prohibited by Buddhism. All the things mentioned above show that Buddhism had been established for a long time. It bears repeating that Khuong Tang Hoi (200-247 A.D), one among the first monks spreading Buddhism in Jiangdong (China), left his home to become a Buddhist monk in Giao Chau (the North of Vietnam). Only after becoming a famous monk here did he go to China to spread Buddhism. In the foreword of the *An Ban Thu Y Sutras* which he translated and annotated, he wrote "My parents died when I was a little boy, the 'Three Masters' also died, I felt very sorrowful, lacking people who could advise me." The Three Masters were Upadhyaya, Karmadana and Acarya who were in charge of Buddhist investiture for Tang Hoi.

The Three Masters' presence in any Buddhist investiture was necessary in China from the middle of the third century. Likewise, the story of *Luong Cao Tang* recounts that Tang Hoi's parents were traders from Central Asia. They came to Giao Chau to do business. It was very clear that Tang Hoi left his home to become a Buddhist monk in the North of Vietnam. He also learned Chinese characters and Sanskrit here. He annotated and translated sutra books in the North of Vietnam and then went to Jiangdong to spread Buddhism.

The Vietnamese Buddhist material entitled *Thien Uyen Tap Anh Ngu Luc* (compiled from the late 11th century to the early 13th century) refers in some detail to the Buddhist situation at Luy Lau. The book describes how the Queen mother Linh Nhan (or Y Lan) of the Ly Dynasty asked the monk Tri Khong (Thong Bien - the teacher of the prince) when and how Buddhism had been introduced into Vietnam. He told her the history of the propagation of Buddhism in China and in Vietnam and quoted the monk Tan Tian's answer to Sui Emperor Wendi about Buddhism in Giao Chau as follows: "Giao Chau has routes leading to India. By the time that Buddhism was introduced into China, twenty Buddhist towers had already been built, more than 500 monks trained and 15 books of Buddhist sutras translated in Luy Lau. Then monks like Mahakyvuc, Khuong Tang Hoi, Chi Cuong Luong, and Mau Bac went to China to spread Buddhism." This quotation is direct evidence that Buddhism flourished in Giao Chau a long time prior to its introduction to Southern China.

The foundation of the Buddhist center in Luy Lau was probably influenced by Mahayana Buddhism starting from the second century B.C. This was an active Buddhist ideological movement which harmoniously combined independence of opinion and Buddhist flexibility of character with the enthusiastic dissemination of Buddhism regardless of sacrifice and misfortunes. It is possible to say that with the appearance of the Mahayana ideological movement, Buddhism flourished and reached beyond India's borders to far away countries including Vietnam. There are two main points to be made about the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism to Vietnam.

First, it was a peaceful invasion not a military one, as in the case of China and later Islamic countries. The "Hinduized" kingdoms of the Malay peninsula, Indonesia, Kampuchea, and Champa in the early Christian Era were independent of the "Mother Country India," although in their imperial courts there were many Indian advisers and monks.

Second, it is necessary to distinguish the two Indian cultures: Brahmin culture which was essentially hierarchical and founded on national prejudice and Buddhist culture which advocates equality and is against national prejudice. Therefore, Buddhism could adapt itself to the customs, habits and political historical situation of every country and nation where it was introduced. The superiority of Buddhism became more apparent with the Mahayana ideological movement. The "Prajna literature" representing Mahayana ideology first appeared in the South of India and from there spread either to the North of India, through Central Asia to China, or through sea routes to South East Asia including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

This matter became clear when the starting points of the propagators of the Buddhist faith who went by sea to South East Asia and the Far East were carefully studied. Professor Louis de la Vallee Poussin supports this idea: "All the ports in East India took part in the spread of Indian civilization abroad, especially those in the South of India" (*Dynasties et Histoire de l'Inde*, p. 293).

Some Chinese monks like Pu Xian in the fifth century and Yi Jing in the late seventh century set off at Tamraliptti, the Ganges River estuary, to return to China. It was also from this estuary that Indian traders sailed in their quest for gold at the time when the Jatakas Sutras were being compiled. In his book, *Histoire Ancienne Des états Hindouisés d'Extrême Orient*, George Coedes writes that almost every part of India was involved in spreading Indian civilization abroad, but Southern India played the greatest role.

In a word, in the early centuries of the Christian era, Buddhism was very popular and flourishing in Luy Lau owing to its important geographical, economic, and political position at that time. Luy Lau was one of the three ancient towns (Co Loa, Long Bien, Luy Lau) of Vietnam at that time. It lay on the banks of the Dau River, five kilometers from the Duong River. In Luy Lau, people grew mulberry trees to raise silkworm, producing silk and cloth. Many postal and water routes ran across Luy Lau. For example: The land route to Pha Lai, Dong Trieu, Quang Ninh and then to the Vietnamese Chinese border (currently Route 18 in Vietnam) to the water route running from the Dau River through the Duong River, the Red River and to the China Sea or the one through the Luc Dau River, the Thai Binh River and to the South China Sea. Luy Lau's advantageous position made it a busy economic center.

Agricultural products, handicrafts and fine arts from the Red River Delta were brought here. Forest products like precious wood, sandal wood, perfumes and elephants' tusks from the North and the West of Vietnam were gathered here, too. And from here, cloth, pottery, and glassware of the delta were transported to the highland regions. Traders from China, India, and Central Asia came here to do business. They took goods to other countries or brought them back to their countries. Luy Lau became a great international commercial center that many foreigners called on or stayed. It was convenient for diplomats and messengers from southern countries to stay in Luy Lau for a short time to study the situation in China before going to one of its capitals in Luoyang, Changan, or Jianye. Luy Lau was also a convenient port of call for monks from India, Sri Lanka or Central Asia who intended to spread Buddhism in China. They came to Luy Lau to learn the language and the customs of China. With the help of Vietnamese monks who knew both Chinese and Sanskrit, they translated Buddhist sutras from Sanskrit into Chinese. For instance, the high-ranking monk Khuong Tang Hoi was very successful in spreading Buddhism during King Ngo Ton Quyen's reign. Chinese monks who wanted to go to India to study Buddhism also stopped in Luy Lau for some time in order to learn Sanskrit and get in touch with Indian monks in Giao Chau to ask them about the most convenient way to India.

For many centuries, Luy Lau was also a political center of the northern dominating authority. This center had been founded long before the Si Nhiep's reign, probably in the Zhao Tuo's reign (B.C. 179). After occupying Nam Viet in ZhaoTuo's reign, the Han dynasty still considered

Luy Lau as the center of Giao Chi. In Chinese historical records, Luy Lau is mentioned as the first in the list of ten districts of Giao Chi.

In the spring of the 16th year of the Jian Wu era, people in Giao Chi rose up and attacked Luy Lau. The Chinese Governor Su Ding had to flee. Three years later, the uprising failed. Chinese rule once more established the administrative center of Giao Chau in Luy Lau. Later, in the years 142-143, frightened of the danger of rebels' attacks, the Chinese governor Zhou Chang moved the administrative center to Long Bien district. But it was not peaceful here either, so the invaders moved back to Luy Lau.

At this time, Shishee became the governor of Giao Chau. He intended to found a kingdom in South Viet (Nam Viet) independent from China. Therefore, Shishee made an effort to build up Luy Lau into a big town and a secure fortress. Shishee died before his intention was realized. His son Shi Hui became governor. After the Han dynasty collapsed, Giao Chau was ruled by the Wu. The Wu Emperor learned about Shishee's ambition: he sent Lu Da to Giao Chau instead of Shi Hui. When Lu Da came to Luy Lau, he killed Shi Hui and moved the administrative center. Luy Lau once more lost its central position and became only a district.

Under Tang Dynasty rule over Vietnam (618-907 AD), the invaders established the administrative center in Tong Binh (present-day Hanoi). But a year later, Governor Li Daliang saw that Luy Lau was more advantageous, so he moved the administrative center back to Luy Lau as before. At this time, people in Giao Chau were in a constant state of rebellion. The Governor Li Daliang left Luy Lau until 705-805 A.D. But one day, when the Governor Li Yuanxi left the castle for a walk he saw a river in front of the castle running upstream. Considering it a bad omen, he hurriedly gathered his soldiers and left Luy Lau. This fact was related in *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, as follows: "In November, 824, Li Yuanxi saw the river running backwards outside the castle. He thought that the people here would rise up against him and he thus moved to Tong Binh, now Hanoi."

Having been the administrative center of Giao Chi for many centuries, Luy Lau was in a position to spread and develop Buddhism. Although the rulers were from the North, they had a Confucian and Taoist outlook and believed in the North's magic. Their ideology of hegemonies and racism despised the beliefs of the dominated country. But in reality, they helped recognize the superiority of Buddhism over Confucianism and Taoism in explaining man's misfortunes and the way to be free from them and showing man the way to Nirvana. Gradually, they changed their minds and attitudes and developed a great interest in Buddhism. They invited Indian monks to teach them Buddhism and pray for them, as well. Such a situation influenced the native people. More and more people began to follow Buddhism.

Being a political and economic center, Luy Lau could also develop as a cultural center. In hopes of escaping from the troubles of their

homeland, many Chinese scholars came here, for they loved this peaceful land. Merchants from India, Central Asia and Java were also learned men. They not only brought goods for exchange but also knowledge from their homeland about medicine, agriculture, astronomy, customs, and beliefs. Returning home, they not only took goods but also knowledge of the culture of Chau Giao and Asian countries. Luy Lau naturally became a focus of different cultures. The development of a number of languages for communication was stimulated. The Chau Giao language, Han characters, and Sanskrit were all used in trading and to spread Buddhism. Many monks and native people could use these three languages perfectly. This promoted the translation of Buddhist sutras and the spread of Buddhism in the land.

Buddhism in Luy Lau, however, was not quite like the Buddhism of the Buddha or the Buddhism of contemporary India. It was influenced by the ideological traditions and beliefs of Chau Giao and other Asian lands. To their chagrin, Indian monks had to accept this fact. Buddhism in Luy Lau at that time was similar to Taoism. There were features of Buddhism and Taoism in its expression and explanation. "Buddhism in India and the West encouraged kindness and purity and forbade the killing of living creatures; it also sought to abolish sexual passion" (Yuan Heng, *Hou Han Ji*). The concepts of kindness and no killing of living creatures" were Buddhist, and the concept of "abolition of sexual passion" was Taoist.

The Buddha was the ancestor of morality, the forefather of divinity. The Buddha was the Godhead who could vanish or appear or change to be round or square, old or young. The Buddha could go in the fire without being burnt, step on knives without being hurt. He could fly instead of going on foot; he remains safe in calamities, clean in dirty places. He could fly when he traveled and glitter when he sat (Mau Tu, *Ly Hoac Luan*).

Luy Lau Buddhism had features in common with the popular beliefs of the peasants, that Buddha was thought to be everywhere and know everything. He could save the good and punish the bad. For example, the Buddha in the "*Tam Cam Story*" was thought to be a God who had the power to perform miracles. He could change natural phenomena into gods who could bring happiness and abolish misfortunes, such as the stone and the statue of *Tu Phap* in the "*Man Nuong story*" or the stick and the hat in the story of "*Chu Dong Tu*."

From Luy Lau, Buddhism spread to the deltas of the Red River, the Ma River, and the Ca River. The symbol "*Tu Phap*" of Luy Lau was introduced everywhere in the country. Later, people in Van Lam (Hai Hung province) and Son Tay (on the bank of the Red River) worshipped "*Tu Phap*." Buddhism took part in making it a beloved image and its worship an established custom. Every year, people from all over the country come here to attend the traditional fair. There were folk ballads such as:

Although you do business everywhere,
You should return for the Dau fair on the eighth.

or

Although you go everywhere,
You should come to the Dau Pagoda to see its tower.

Luy Lau Buddhism was combined closely with traditional beliefs. It showed the psychology, the desire and the outlook of peasants who grow 'wet rice' in the delta of the Red River. Therefore, it has survived intact for thousands of years. Luy Lau Buddhism has not been influenced by other Buddhist sects, although many different Buddhist sects were later introduced into Vietnam. In the history of Buddhism in Vietnam, Luy Lau Buddhism has played an important and everlasting role.

CHAPTER III

**THE FIRST BUDDHIST MISSIONARIES
IN VIETNAM**

Buddhism was most likely brought to Vietnam first by well-known monks who were respected by their contemporaries. True too, many of their names were not written down and have thus been lost to history. The few mentioned in this chapter are those fortunate to have had their names passed down from generation to generation. They certainly were not the very first ones; however, below they are regarded as such because they are the first to receive mention in historical records.

MAHAJIVAKA

Mahajivaka and Kalacarya, both monks, arrived together in Luy Lau, Governor Shishee's headquarters, at the end of Emperor Lingdi's reign in the Han dynasty (168-189 AD). According to *Co Chau Phap Van Phat Ban Hanh Ngu Luc*, upon their arrival in Giao Chau, Kalacarya decided to stay while Mahajivaka continued on to China. Mahajivaka's story is mentioned in a number of Chinese and Vietnamese documents, each bringing out a unique aspect. Put together, they give a full picture of his way of preaching.

Hue Hao's *Cao Tang Truyen* tells the story of Mahajivaka as follows:

Mahajivaka was born in India and traveled to many places, both civilized and uncivilized, without ever stopping for long anywhere. To his disciples and attendants, his actions were unpredictable. He traveled from India to Funan, then along the coast to Giao Chau and Guangzhou by the end of Jin Emperor Huidi's dynasty (290-306). He came to Luoyang, then returned to India after unrest started there.

The Chinese historical text, *Fozu Li Dai Tong Zai*, contains mention of him: "In the fourth year of the Yongping era (Huidi, 294 AD), an Indian monk named Mahajivaka arrived in Luoyang."

Thien Uyen Tap Anh, a Vietnamese historical document, tells of Dam Thien's reference to the Vietnamese Bonze Thong Bien, citing Buddhism's introduction into China: "Kalacarya, Mahajivaka, Kang Zenghui, Zhi Gangliang, and Mouzi had been already in Giao Chau." Among the five Buddhist monks referred to in the book, only one was Chinese, while the others were South and Central Asians.

Mahajivaka's preaching activity in Giao Chau, however, appears in no Vietnamese nor Chinese records. Historians can only find reference to his work in China on which to base his activities in Vietnam. In the *Cao Tang Truyen* Hue Hao writes:

Mahajivaka was an Indian who traveled throughout China and uncivilized regions but without any permanent residence. What he did was wonderful, unusual and unpredicted by his contemporaries. From India he came to Funan, then along various coasts to Giao Chau and Guangzhou, doing many sacred and unusual things.

Arriving in Tuong Duong, one pleasant day in Nghe An province, he was refused entry onto a ferry to cross the river because he looked so shabby. Strangely enough, when the ferry reached the northern bank, Mahajivaka had already crossed. Seeing two tigers waving their tails and ears, Mahajivaka petted them and they suddenly moved away. Witnessing this, people on the two riverbanks followed him.

By the end of the Huidi reign, when Mahajivaka came to Luoyang, local monks held a ritual to greet him. Mahajivaka quietly kneeled down, maintaining his composure. Hue Hao continues by recounting that Mahajivaka used his supernatural powers to cure a number of sick people, including Dang Dinh Van, chief of the Hoanh Duong region.

Living then in Luoyang was a monk named Truc Phap Hanh who was loved and respected by the local people. In one conversation between him and Mahajivaka, he said, "You are a senior monk who reaches the peak in your path to enlightenment. It is very kind of you to give us some good advice."

Mahajivaka responded, "You should rally the people," preaching that one "should watch his words, never commit any crime and do good things."

Truc Phap Hanh insisted, "You were kindly requested to preach things we have never heard of, but what you said has already been learned by heart [memorized] by an eight-year old! Such being the case, there is no need to make such a request to you."

Mahajivaka smiled and said, "Though memorized by the time one reaches 100 years of age, even, what is the use of memorizing it? Everyone knows how to respect people who reach the peak of the Way in their religion but fail to know how themselves to reach it. What a pity! I have said a few things which, if put into practice, will be very useful."

When Mahajivaka left the crowd, hundreds of people invited him to lunch at their houses. Mahajivaka accepted all of them and on the next day he was seen at 500 different houses. Initially, all the hosts claimed he had come to their house only. Later they realized that he had used his supernatural powers to multiply himself and appear at every house simultaneously. This unbelievable story is surely fictitious. Hue Hao, a great admirer of Mahajivaka who shared the same views, likely did not check these stories and eagerly wrote them down for people to read.

It is mentioned in Theravada and Mahayana sutras that monks were given supernatural powers (called "*Abhidjnas*" in Buddhist texts and "magic" by Chinese books) which cannot be obtained by ordinary people. But Buddha often recommended that monks not use those powers because

it would mislead people and make them haughty. The strange things done by Mahajivaka possibly originated from these meditation practices.

THE LEGEND OF KALACARYA AND MAN NUONG

Unlike Mahajivaka, Kalacarya did not continue his trip on to China, but stayed in Vietnam. His name and deeds were closely related to the legend of Man Nuong mentioned in many historical books and legends of Vietnam, and to the annals of Phap Van (or Dau) Pagoda, one of the most ancient in Vietnam, in what is now Ha Bac, Vietnam.

The story of Kalacarya and Man Nuong was highly legendary and written differently in various books. We have read the historical legends of Kalacarya and Man Nuong in the hope of inquiring into the historical values hidden behind the legends.

According to a passage in *Bao Cuc Truyen*, when arriving in Luy Lau, Kalacarya and Mahajivaka met a monk called Tu Dinh who invited them to stay. Mahajivaka refused, continuing his eastward journey. Kalacarya remained in Tu Dinh's, entering Buddhist ascetic monkhood. With great veneration, Tu Dinh asked his daughter A Man to serve Kalacarya. After one month, Kalacarya told of his intention to leave. In response, Tu Dinh requested Kalacarya to give him Buddhist instruction and predict his future. Kalacarya answered:

Being too busy with sifting rice, one fails to realize that it is already dark; then one loses his way and gets confused. When confused, one becomes indifferent to all, sages and ordinary people as well. Now that you have entered my religion, you have a predestined attachment. Your daughter, A Man, will be bestowed a big religious favor. When she meets with a 'savior', she will become an important vessel of the Law [the Dharma]. Do you understand what I mean?

Kalacarya agreed to stay longer. Sometimes he stood on one foot saying prayers for seven days and nights. One day he read prayers and then disappeared. His voice was heard from the peak of a mountain in the West. People tried in vain to find him. What they could find was only some verses written on a big tree and on the mountain peak. Some thought that the monk had died while others said he had left for other places.

This story in *Bao Cuc Truyen* is significantly different from the same story in *Linh Nam Trich Quai* by Tran The Phap, though the personalities are the same. In the latter, the character was named Man Nuong. The Kalacarya in *Bao Cuc Truyen* foresaw what would happen to Man Nuong when he said: Your daughter, A Man will be bestowed a big religious favor. When she meets with a 'savior', she will become an important vessel of the Law."

The phrase "vessel of the Law" (*Phap khi*) here can be understood as a tool or a means to practice Buddhism. Kalacarya was 'possibly referring to the four vessels: "*Phap Van* (Dharmmegha, Buddhism as a fertilizing cloud), "*Phap Vu*" (The rain of Buddha-truth which fertilizes

all beings), “*Phap Loi*” (The thunder of dharma, awakening man from stupor and stimulating the growth of virtue, the awful voice of Buddha-truth) and “*Phap Dien*” (The lightning of the truth). Based on concrete details about Man Nuong and the four vessels in *Linh Nam Trich Quai*, Tran Van Giap in Vietnamese Buddhism from its beginning to the 13th century agrees with this interpretation.

In the story of Kalacarya and Man Nuong in *Linh Nam Trich Quai*, the name Kalacarya was transliterated into Vietnamese as “Gia La Do Le” which was possibly another transcription of the Sanskrit Kalacarya, meaning the black sage. This strange name suggests that Kalacarya was not an Aryan but a Dravidian, the aboriginal population of Southern India before it was conquered by Aryan tribes from the North. The Dravidians were pushed further to the South, so Kalacarya was possibly from the south. Man Nuong was not the true daughter of Tu Dinh, but an orphan with a miserable life who spoke in a non-standard accent. Nevertheless, she had a firm belief in religion, taking care of the cooking for monks, including Kalacarya. The following paragraph is similar to one in *Kien Van Tieu Luc* by Le Quy Don:

Sometimes in the fifth lunar month when the night was short, Man Nuong hurriedly finished her cooking. When everything was ready, the monks had not finished their prayers, everyone returning to his room. Kalacarya found no other way than to step over her body. Suddenly Man Nuong felt her heart throbbing and she got pregnant. Three or four months later, Man Nuong felt ashamed, leaving the place. Kalacarya also left for a pagoda by the riverbank and stayed there.

When the time came, Man Nuong gave birth to a baby girl. She came to see the monk and handed the baby over to him. Kalacarya carried the baby to the place under a banyan tree at the crossroads by the river head, putting her into the tree stem and saying: “I entrust this Buddhist adherent to you, take care of her and you will become a Buddhist disciple.” Before their separation, the monk gave her a stick, and said: “You carry this stick home. Whenever there is a drought you will just wave the stick, -- the water will come out to save the people.”

When Man Nuong was 80 years old, the banyan tree suddenly collapsed, drifting on the river to the ferry front of the pagoda. People came to cut at the tree, but all their axes and knives broke in the process: Some 300 villagers tried to pull it out of the water, but the tree did not move. Yet, when Man Nuong, who went down to the ferry to wash her hands, slightly pulled at it, the tree suddenly drifted ashore. Everybody was stupefied, asking her to pull the tree up so that carpenters could make four statues of Buddha. But when they worked to the core of the tree where the monk had hidden the baby, their tools broke and that part of the tree turned into a slab of stone. The workmen took the stone out and threw it into the water. Suddenly, all those who threw the stone into the water were killed. Everyone implored Man Nuong for mercy, and then asked a fisherman to

dive into the river and bring the stone up. People staged a procession for the stone into the Buddha temple for their worship.

The four statues were named Phap Van, Phap Vu, Phap Loi and Phap Dien and put into the Dau pagoda for worship. Every year, on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, people from different parts of the country, young and old, male and female, would gather at this pagoda for entertainment and singing. This ritual was named the Buddha Bathing Festival.

More details were revealed in the book *Co Chau Phap Van Phat Ban Hanh*, a book of historical legends written in verse around the year 1752:

During Shishee's time, there lived in the Linh Quang Pagoda of Phat Tich village, on the northern bank of the Duong river, a monk called Kalacarya who set up a secluded hut to preach his religion:

In Tien Son hamlet, Tien Du district
Stands the pagoda of Linh Quang on the Phoenix mountain
The green forest is called the hill of Ma Mang
Next to Thach That exists a village called Tien Mountain,
Where stays a monk from the far away country of India
Who, called Kalacarya, entered the reclusive Monkhood.
Setting up a secluded hut under a banyan tree
Where he lived and read prayers daily.

It is revealed through the above verses that the monk's name was Kalacarya who had come from India. He did not stay in the Linh Quang Pagoda which was nearby, but in a secluded hut under a banyan tree to enter his monastic seclusion. The place was the Tien Son hamlet, of Tien Du district. The book also recounted there lived in Man Xa hamlet (Ha Man village) on this bank of Duong river the family of Tu Dinh who had a beautiful daughter called Man Nuong. One day, she slept at the door of Kalacarya's room. The monk, who had just returned from a religious mission, unconsciously stepped over her body and Man Nuong became pregnant. After 14 months, on the eight of the fourth moon, she gave birth to a daughter:

The woman's longing for day and night,
The baby to be born though it is fourteen months or more.
Then on the eighth of the fourth moon in summer [came one]
Who looks beautiful, with five-color halos around her body.

The above verses described Man Nuong's daughter as the reincarnation of Buddha: her 14-month pregnancy term, the birthday on the eighth day of the fourth moon - also the Buddha's birthday recognized by northern Buddhist countries - and the last verse's reference to the baby's body being covered with five-color halos.

The book went on:

Man Nuong, as instructed by her father, handed over the baby to a monk who carried the baby to the old banyan tree, knocking at it and saying some prayers. Suddenly the tree cracked into two for the monk to put the baby inside. The tree then shut again and blossomed. The monk and Man Nuong returned home. The monk then gave her his stick saying that whenever drought appears, if she just plants the stick on the ground, there would be water.

Once when a great drought occurred, Man Nuong did as told by her master, realizing that it was effective. “Suddenly water is following in streams, people everywhere, in the North, the South, the East, or the West who were longing for water, did not know why [there suddenly came water].” Then in the year of the Mouse, a storm pulled down the banyan tree which had drifted to the Dau River. All the strong men in the village came to pull the tree ashore but it did not move. When Man Nuong went to the river to wash her hands, the tree was bobbing on the river, seemingly to show its gladness. Man Nuong threw out the strap of her bodice, and the tree drifted ashore at once. That night Shishee, who was asleep in his office, was told in a dream by a deity to carve the banyan into four statues.

The workmen cut the tree into four pieces, each of which was carved into a statue. When this was done, rituals were held to give names to the statues. When the name-giving ritual was organized for the first statue, a five-colored cloud appeared in the sky, hence its name was “*Phap Van*” which was brought to Thien Dinh (or Dau) Pagoda for worship. Then a similar ceremony was held for the second statue, when it was showering, its name was “*Phap Vu*” which was brought to Thanh Dao pagoda (namely Dau pagoda) for worship. Similarly, the third statue was given the name of “*Phap Loi*” and the fourth “*Phap Dien*”: when the rituals were held, thunder and lightning appeared in the sky, and the statues were brought to Phi Tuong pagoda (namely, Tuong pagoda) and Phuong Quan Pagoda (namely Dan pagoda) respectively for worship.

A solemn ceremony was held for the ‘anointing’ of the four statues:

People gathered along streets like in a fairy tale,
To attend the inauguration of the four statues,
How cheerful it was!
With the beat of gongs and drums,
And the seemingly endless explosion of firecrackers.

From then on, every year on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, rituals have been held at the four pagodas where the four statues are venerated. Noted monks from various localities also return to Luy Lau for religious devotion. The names of the four statues were known even in China, so the Emperor Mingdi of the Eastern Jin dynasty (323-325 AD) sent his general Tao Kan and an army to Vietnam to take the statues, but:

Though 1000 troops were sent,
 They could not carry the statue,
 Which became as heavy as Altai Mountain.
 The next day 3000 troops came,
 Hoping to carry the statue to the North,
 But these Chinese soldiers fell dead.
 That stupefied Tao Kan,
 Who then prayed to Buddha for mercy,
 And was willing to bring the statue back to the pagoda,
 Being aware that it was impossible to carry it to the North.

Through these excerpts, the allegorical nature of *Co Chau Phap Van Phat Ban Hanh* is obvious. The allegories here make it easier to understand and remember that Vietnam's Phap Van Buddha was determined to stay in Vietnam and not be taken to China. He stayed and protected historical records and wrote war songs for the anti-Chinese resistance under the Ly dynasty. Phap Van was also carried to Thai Nguyen, joining victorious Vietnamese troops. *Phap Van* Buddha not only took part in the resistance war against foreign aggressors but also helped Vietnamese peasants by creating favorable weather and good crops.

During his rule (1072-1128), King Ly Nhan Tong twice asked his men to stage a procession for *Phap Van* Buddha from Bao Thien and Khau Son pagodas to the capital city so that he himself could pray for good weather. In 1136 when the country was struck with a great drought, *Phap Van* was also carried in procession to Thang Long (present-day Hanoi) for the King's mother to pray herself. Later, it rained for three consecutive days.

The stories above - although the reality of what they assert is questionable and deserves further examination - at least demonstrate popular belief about the four statues, which are strongly connected to the Vietnamese national spirit.

MOUZI AND LI HUO LUN

Mouzi, whose real name was Mou Bo, was a Han Chinese born circa 167 AD in Shangwu of present day Guangxi and Guangdong provinces. He was originally a Taoist, but after migrating to Vietnam, he became a Buddhist. Later at an advanced age, he returned to China.

Mou Bo's *Li Huo Lun* (*Ly Hoac Luan* in Vietnamese) was the first Chinese attempt at an explanatory work on Buddhism. It was written in question-answer form and was frequently used by Indian theorists on Buddhism to disseminate the religion about 200 years after Gautama Buddha entered Nirvana. The title, *Li Huo Lun*, means a book to correct people's misinformation about Buddhism. "Li" means to treat or settle. "Huo" denotes things that mislead people, puzzles, or errors. Finally, "Lun" is

is used to describe an opinion, view, or statement. *Li Huo Lun* was collected and published by Zeng You in the sixth century.

The fact that *Li Huo Lun* was mentioned in both the Sui and Tang dynasty's imperial records shows that it was widely known among the scholarly circles of China. In Sui's records, Mouzi is wrongly labeled as Mou Yong, a high-ranking officer, although Mouzi said himself that he had never been a mandarin. This was surely a mistake, for Mou Yong's real name was Zi You and he lived during Emperor Zhangdi's reign, while Mouzi lived during Lingdi's term in power. While still young, Mouzi was known as a smart student who read a lot as he attested in the foreword of his book: "I, Mouzi, love all books, big or small. Though I do not like the art of warfare, I also read books on it. Though I read books about immortal deities and fairies, I do not believe in their immortality." We can assume that Mouzi was a rather learned man with an independent mind and skeptical of what was written.

Li Huo Lun's foreword also tells of the aftermath of Emperor Lingdi's death. China's later fall into turmoil compelled people, including Mouzi and his mother, to seek asylum in Giao Chau where peace prevailed and Shishee had his headquarters. As Mouzi told the reader, when he was young he had been widely known for his scholarship, earning him an invitation to a high-ranking post:

The governor Shishee, who knew that I had some schooling, invited me to assume a post. I was young then, eager for more study, disheartened by the troubled times and with no desire to become a mandarin. I refused.... With his admiration for my educational records and knowing that I had not yet held any post, the governor expressed his wish to give me a high-ranking position. But I used my illness as the pretext to refuse his offer.

The book's foreword also reveals that among the Northern refugees in Giao Chau at the time, many believed in and practiced the doctrine of abstaining from eating in order to reach immortality, as advocated by Taoism: Mouzi used the Five Confucian Classics to argue with those people, -- who were unable to answer his questions. This shows that though a Confucian and a Taoist believer (more of the former than the latter), Mouzi rejected the 'eternal life' theory advocated by a Taoist sect. It is also known that there was then another Taoist sect called Sheng Tan which advocated a free lifestyle. Known among this group was Liu Ling who was drunk all day. Having fully realized the sublimity of the Taoist philosophy, Mouzi separated himself from this sect, neither adopting a free lifestyle nor taking on austere practices in order to achieve eternal life.

After his mother's death, Mouzi refused to go to Lingling and Guiyang as requested by the governor of Giao Chau. Then he was "determined to follow Buddhism and study Taoism to savor Taoist

mysticism as good wine, to enjoy the Five Classics.” Most of the ordinary people thought that Mouzi had betrayed the Classics and had adopted a heterodox creed. He thought it of no use to dispute this, and did not directly argue. Nevertheless, using his pen, he summarized statements by sages to explain his own thought.

Li Huo Lun contains 37 questions and answers, chiefly challenges to Buddhism by Confucianists, the last nine by Taoists.

Questions 1 and 2 concern Gautama Buddha. Here Mouzi describes the Buddha as a superman with supernatural powers, and not just only as a historical figure. This view of the Buddha is more in concert with Mahayana Buddhism than with the Theravada sect. In Pali prayer books more stress is placed on the Buddha's mysterious and supernatural powers, which are indescribable and as profound as the deep sea and less stress is put on Buddha as a superman.

In Mouzi's answers, he gives his view on why the Buddha was born where he was. “Buddha was born in India just because it lies in the center of the world and it is a neutral place.”

Questions 3 and 4 deal with Buddhist doctrine. With an argument similar to the preceding, Mouzi praised the profundity and wondrousness of worldly thought and language. With a religious belief obviously influenced by Taoism, Mouzi wrote, “One should be led by nobody, lead nobody, rise to nowhere and press nowhere from underneath.”

Question 5 considers the anxiety caused by too many Buddhist prayer books to learn thoroughly. Meanwhile, Confucianism is completely contained in the Five Classics, containing no more than 80,000 words. The question and answer book shows that during Mouzi's time in Giao Chau, namely in the early second century, there had been thousands of Buddhist prayer books.

Questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 and their answers reveal that the questioner was a Confucian to the bone, who took Confucian teachings as the standard to evaluate everything. The questioner asks, “Why should one who has read the Five Classics read Buddhist books? Why have Buddhist monks shaved their beards and heads, abandoned their wives and children, as well as their property which was passed down to them by their parents?”

Rejecting this narrow-minded literal Confucian interpretation, Mouzi answers, “When doing a big good thing, one should not be petty with details. For instance, when the father falls into a pond, the big good thing is saving him from drowning while other acts such as pulling his legs and arms or putting him upside down to drain the water from his lungs are only minor details.”

Questions 11 and 12 queried the then Giao Chau Buddhist monk's way of dressing and behavior, which were a world apart from normal customs. Again, this showed Confucian narrow-mindedness, coming from those who are dogmatically stuck to Confucius's words and practices. These people fail to realize that Buddhism is world-denying in character without indulging in honors and privileges as well as worldly beauty. The Buddhist

monks' way of dressing and behavior must symbolize that Buddhist idea. Question 11 contains the complaint that monks in Giao Chau wore red frocks and failed to observe the Confucian rule of conduct with others: for instance, they failed to kneel down or welcome others. Through this question one can see that Buddhism in Vietnam during Mouzi's time was directly influenced by Indian Buddhism, hence the local monks also dressed in red frocks and like Indian monks observed rules of conduct.

Questions 13 and 14 queried Buddhism's theory of rebirth, as well as of life and death, and of demons and deities in Buddhism. In his answers, Mouzi merely quoted Zhou Gong, a renowned Confucian who had also spoken of demons, saying: "I have many talents, and I know how to worship demons." Gong also practiced necromancy, a custom of ordinary Chinese proving that even the Chinese believe that in the dead person there is something that does not die, that is a sort of 'soul'.

Questions 15 exposes the 'Great Han' ideology or Chinese vanity. The questioner recalls Confucius's statement: "The regions of Yi and Di with Kings are not better than the kingless land of Xia," along with Mencius's statement: "I often hear that the Han people are used to assimilate the Yi and Di, but not that the Yi and Di assimilate the Xia."

Mouzi once again in his answer was strongly critical of the 'Great Han' ideology, saying that, without going anywhere and without seeing the world, the Han thought at once that they were the best in the world, and without studying the philosophies of other countries, they thought at once that Confucianism was an absolute truth and superior to all other doctrines. It was just like a person who only saw the river and stream but not the sea, who only saw the light of a torch but not the light of the sun.

Question 16 points out that among the Buddhist monks in Vietnam "Some are alcoholics, some get married, some are traders, and some are liars." Mouzi replied that whether a religion is good or bad was not due to [the behavior of] its followers, but due to the religion itself. In every religion, including Confucianism, there are good and bad adherents.

Questions 17, 18, 19 and 20 are all about Confucianists' trifling queries over alms-giving, and about the use of examples and images in preaching religion, as in Buddhist prayer books.

Question 21 is about the day when Buddhism was introduced into China. Mouzi wrote in his answer:

When King Han Mingdi saw in his dream a golden person flying in front of his palace, he asked his officials, who told him it was Buddha. The King immediately sent his envoy to the country called Dai Nhuc Chi to copy the 42-chapter prayer books and bring the copy home. Then he ordered the construction of a pagoda and the carving of a Buddha statue for veneration. From then on the number of people who followed Buddhism has increased.

Here Mouzi confirms that Buddhism has been in China since the first century (67 AD) when King Han Mingdi ruled the country.

Questions 22-28 center on Mouzi's evaluation of Buddhism and his way of quoting Confucius's teachings, not the Buddha's, to defend Buddhism. Once again, Mouzi uses examples to compare Buddhism either to Confucianism or Taoism: "Buddhism is like Heaven's well, while Confucianism and Taoism, the cave and hill. Buddhism is like the sun, while Confucianism and Taoism, the torch. Buddhism is the fruit, while Confucianism and Taoism, the flower and leaves."

In Questions from 29 to the end, Taoism representatives ask: Does eternal life exist in Buddhism? Mouzi says that Taoist books say nothing about abstaining from eating. This was invented by the Taoist hermits. Moreover, Mouzi added, though not eating rice, the Taoist hermits ate a lot of meat and drank a lot of alcohol. Therefore, illogical for they all died young. Mouzi recalled that the three Taoist hermits who had taught him all died before reaching 80.

In short, the Taoist hermits bragged about what they had really invented and not found in Taoist books. Mouzi quoted Laozi as saying, "Even the sky and earth cannot exist forever, so how could man?" Here, Mouzi rejects the Taoist hermits' theory of eternal life.

At the end of *Li Huo Lan*, the questioners give nothing short of compliments to Mouzi for his complete explanation of what they had never heard of. They, too, converted to Buddhism.

How did the above phenomenon of Mouzi and his book *Li Huo Lun* shed light on the Buddhist situation in Vietnam during the early common [Christian] era? Based on an analysis of this text, the following points can be made regarding Mouzi's role in propagating Buddhism in Giao Chau and on nascent Vietnamese Buddhism during the beginning of Chinese control:

1. Contrary to some previous writers, Mouzi was not among the first Buddhist missionaries in Vietnam. He firmly grasped Confucianism and Taoism, and was already a noted scholar even while young. From Shangwu (southern China) he and his mother fled his disturbed country during the last years of the post Han dynasty to the peaceful Giao Chau. They arrived in Luy Lau, the capital city of Giao Chau, a thriving Buddhist center.

2. With whom did Mouzi study Buddhism? Certainly with Indian as well as Caucasian monks, and possibly with Vietnamese monks. Nothing was mentioned about whether Mouzi knew Sanskrit or Pali. So in Luy Lau there had to have been many Chinese translations of the Buddhist canon and books. Many Buddhist convents and pagodas were likely places where Buddhism was taught, attracting many students including Mouzi.

3. It is safe to conclude that there were then in Giao Chau, Indian, Caucasian and Vietnamese but not Chinese monks, because Zhou Shixi, who was mentioned in the Chinese history of Buddhism as the first Chinese

Buddhist monk, lived by the end of the 3rd century, the century after Mouzi. By that time, the number of Vietnamese Buddhist monks had been fairly large and as Question 16 indicates, many social evils were found among them. This is only natural. When Buddhism is thriving as it did then, the number of its followers increases, as does the number of Buddhist monks and opportunists who renounce the world to seek honor and privilege, and naturally the number of monks who break the religious rules becomes numerous. It was thus Buddhism's great development in Vietnam that resulted in a large number of degenerate monks.

4. Li Huo Lun was part and parcel of the defense of Buddhism. Through the study of Indian Buddhism one can realize that Buddhism had to go through a long period of development before the appearance of sutras and treatises which systematized the fundamentals of the religious tenets, righted and criticized wrong perceptions by Buddhist followers and monks, and rejected the attacks and distortions by representatives of other religions and religious doctrines. *Li Huo Lun* functioned as the answer to attacks against and distortions of Buddhism by Confucianists and Taoists.

5. Vietnamese Buddhist monks then possibly dressed in the same way, observed the same ceremonies and adopted the same life-style as did Indian monks. Therefore the reason for Question 11. It should be noted that only with the arrival of Bonze Superior Wu Yantong in Vietnam in the 9th century, setting up the second Chan school in Vietnam, could the regulations of China's Buddhist Institute be practiced in Vietnam. This is easy to understand because Superior Bonze Bai Zhang who directly taught Wu Yantong was the first to set up the new Buddhist regulations called "Bai Zhang's Regulations." And before Bai Zhang's and Wu Yantong's time, Vietnamese monks could only follow rules practiced by Indian monks. That is what we can now conclude without doubt. And the way of life adopted by the Indian monks had to be very strange to the Confucianists who lived under the Confucian rule.

KHUONG TANG HOI'S CHAN SECT

A foreigner called Khuong Tang Hoi, who was born in Sogdiane, lived and studied Buddhism in Vietnam, and then went on to propagate Buddhism in China, can be considered the founder of the Vietnamese Chan sect. Tang Hoi's parents migrated from their native place, Sogdiane (now Uzbekistan) to India, and then finally settled down in Giao Chau. Tang Hoi was born in Giao Chau. At the age of 10 when his parents died, he left the family for the study of Buddhism. He made big progress in his study, being good not only at Sanskrit but also at Chinese. After a period of religious practice in Giao Chau, he left for the Jiang Dong region of China, where, as he was told, Buddhism had not yet appeared. He arrived in Jianye (present-day Nanjing), the capital of the Wu Kingdom, in the 10th year of Wu Emperor Sun Quan, 255 AD. He died in the year 280 AD under the Jin dynasty. So he lived in China for 25 years (See *Tam Tang Chronicle*).

It has been said that before Tang Hoi's arrival, Buddhism had not yet appeared in Jiang Dong. This idea is not quite correct. Possibly there had been no pagodas and monks, but Buddhism had been already known to Jiang Dong thanks to a recluse of Northern Indian and Caucasian stock, named Chi Khiem and known under the pen name of Cung Minh. He was once the student of Veteran Bonze Lokasema in Luoyang. When Luoyang was struck with disturbances, he migrated to the South (in 222 AD) and was put in an important position by Kim Sun Quan, being invited to teach the crown prince and given the doctorate title. He was proficient in six languages, including Sanskrit and Chinese. During his 30 years in Jiang Dong, he translated many classical books such as *Dai A Di Da Kinh*, *The Prajna Sutra*, and *The Amitayur Dhyana Sutra*.

About the year 247 A.D., Khuong Tang Hoi arrived in Jianye. During his religious practice in Giao Chau and China, he translated 14 sets of sutras, but only five of these survive to this day. Two books which attracted great attention from Western scholars were *Satparamita Sannipata Sutra* (Nanjo 143) and *Samuykta Avadana Sutra* (Nanjo 1359). The contents of these two books were translated into French in *Cinq cents Contes (Five hundred stories)*. In these two books, Khuong Tang Hoi cited many stories such as "avadana" and "jatakas" to illustrate six good virtues (*Paramitas*) of Bodhisattva: aimsgiving, observance of precepts, patient resignation, skilful means of study, meditation in the highest possible equanimity, and wisdom. These are called the *Paramitas* which in Sanskrit means reaching the other bank, namely 'perfection'. These six virtues were to be accumulated until perfection was obtained. And Khuong Tang Hoi used many heart-rending stories to illustrate these virtues. For instance, the following story titled "Kalmasapads" was recalled by Khuong Tang Hoi in *Samuykta Avadana*:

Once upon a time, a Buddhist asked the King for alms. Because he was leaving to go hunting, the King promised to give them after he returned. Having been engrossed in pursuing a beast, he strayed from his entourage, running into a deep valley where he was captured by a demon which wanted to eat the King alive. The king said: "This morning I met a Brahmin who asked me for alms. I promised to give him the alms when I return in the afternoon. Therefore, I have to return to do it first, then I will return here for your feast." The demon responded: "I want to eat you right now. If I let you go how could I know for sure that you will return?" The King said in reply, "If I tell a lie, I will break my promise to the Brahmin." The demon agreed to let him go. Returning to his palace, the King gave the alms to the Brahmin and held a ceremony to pass his throne to the crown prince. He then returned to the demon, who was deeply touched by the

King's truthfulness. He hailed the King and gave up his intention to eat him.

Another story titled “Saddanta Jataka” (“The Six-Tusked Elephant”) was also written down by Khuong Tang Hoi in Sannipata sutra, which roused great interest and good impressions among the Indian artistic and literary circles. The story reads as follows:

The six-tusk elephant is one of Buddha's predecessors. It lived happily among its herd in a far away valley near the Tuyet Son (Himalaya) mountain range. Unfortunately, a female elephant committed suicide because of jealousy. Before dying, it swore to take revenge on the male elephant for her unhappiness. The female elephant was later reborn as a Queen in Benares, and thanks to her supernatural powers she could remember her previous life as well as her wish for revenge. So, she ordered a good hunter to kill the deistic elephant and bring to her the six tusks. The hunter fired poisonous arrows at the elephant who, thanks to his supernatural powers, was not hurt. Moreover, he was not angry, forgave the hunter and handed him his six tusks. When returning to the capital city, the hunter presented the six tusks to the Queen who suddenly felt heart-broken because of her deep love for her former husband.

Among the prayer-books translated by Khuong Tang Hoi, the following are noteworthy for they had subsequently great impact on Vietnamese Buddhism:

First is the *Bat Thien Tung Bat Nha (Astasahasrika)*. The early translation of this book in Vietnam showed that the Mahayanist and Prajna ideology were passed directly to Vietnam from southern India because Southern India was the place where the first Prajna sutra appeared before the Christian era, and it was primarily on those Prajna scriptures that the theorist Nagarjuna based his well-known theory called Madhyamika. It should be recalled that in China, the first person to translate the Prajna sutra was Lokasema, an assistant to An The Cao, a prince of An Tuc (present-day Iran). Lokasema was of Caucasian origin. The prayer-book translated by him was *Dasasahasrika* also called *Asiadasahasrika* (comprised of 18,000 sentences). The translation was completed in 172 AD (Jaidev Singh, *An Introduction to Madhyamika Philosophy*, p. 9, Delhi, 1978).

Khuong Tang Hoi translated the *Astasahasrika*, the first Prajna prayer-book to appear from the Mahasanghikas time. The theme of Khuong Tang Hoi's translation was “sunyata” (vacuum or ‘emptiness’), which was also the theme of the entire Madhyamika Philosophy initiated by Nagarjuna and which would greatly influence the Vietnamese Chan sect in particular

and Vietnamese Buddhism in general, particularly under the Ly and Tran dynasties.

It should be noted that Lokasema's translation of the Prajna Sutra in the second half of the second century had little echo among the then Buddhist circles of China, and only in the early 5th century when the Venerable Bonze Kumarajiva went to China and translated a series of Prajna prayer-books such as *The Maha* (27 volumes), *Prajna Paramita Sutra* (10 volumes), and especially the well-known *Kim Cuong Prajna Paramita*, could the profound influence of Prajna ideology be promoted in China.

While in Luy Lau, Khuong Tang Hoi not only translated the Astasahasrika Sutra but also made footnotes to the book *Anapana Sati* translated in Luoyang by An The Cao, which taught counting the exhalations during meditation. Therefore the name "Anapana meditation" appeared, that is meditation through counting breaths. The Anapana Sati canon was found in Pali prayer-books. That was why some people put the Anapana meditation in the methods of Small Vehicle meditation, and even said that Khuong Tang Hoi had "Mahayanaized" An The Cao's meditation. (see Nguyen Lang, *Vietnam Phat Giao Su Luan [A Historical Interpretation of Vietnamese Buddhism]*, Vol.I, page 77).

In fact, meditation through counting breaths was introduced time and again by Buddha, not only in the *Anapana Sati* prayer-book, for instance, but also in the prayer-book No. 61 titled "Faithful Rahula in Ambala Forest." Here Buddha advises his son Rahula, who had just renounced the world to enter his monkhood: Rahula, just practice breathing in and out. This will greatly benefit you..."

In his foreword for the translation of the *Anapanasati* by An The Cao, Tang Hoi wrote: "There is a Bodhisattva named An Thanh, and nicknamed The Cao, son of the king of the country of An Tuc. After passing his throne to his uncle, he came to this land, then to the Capital" (namely Luoyang, the capital of the Han dynasty). Tang Hoi raised An The Cao to the position of Bodhisattva, a typical conception of the Mahayana sect. He also pointed out in his foreword: "It is not because he does the teachings that we dare not speak freely."

In short, before Venerable Bonze Vinitaruci's arrival at Phap Van pagoda, Khuong Tang Hoi had already propagated Buddhist religious practice in Vietnam, that is Anapana meditation which is practiced through breathing in and out as had already taught to his followers by Buddha when he was alive.

Though having studied Buddhism and entered his monkhood in Giao Chau, Khuong Tang Hoi's prestige was great when he propagated Buddhism in Jianye. He was respected by King Sun Quan who ordered the construction of the "Kien So" pagoda and monks' meeting hall called Phat Da Ly (Buddha's place). The word "Kien So" suggests that before that time there had been no pagoda and no monks' meeting hall in Jianye in particular and in general, though King Sun Quan had before received and lavishly

entertained Chi Khiem, a Buddhist recluse in Central India, who had fled from Luoyang.

As a legend goes, when arriving in Jianye, Khuong Tang Hoi used all his talents and supernatural powers to make King Sun Quan see Buddha's Sarias with five brilliant colors, thus gaining the King's veneration and respect. He also said his prayers in Sanskrit with a beautiful voice, attracting interest and respect from his audience. Khuong Tang Hoi was highly praised in the book *Luong Cao Tang Truyen* ("Monks' stories") by Hue Hao: "He was a wonderful, talented, learned, open-hearted and sincere man who was fond of study. He preached Buddhist prayer-books clearly, read many books on astronomy as well as other books... He was a literary genius."

We know that when Khuong Tang Hoi first came to Jianye, things were not easy for him. He had to set up a thatched shrine by himself and he made many statues of Buddha. Not until later when the Wu Emperor Sun Quan and his court were convinced and won over by him, could he have had favorable conditions to spread Buddhism in Jiang Dong.

CHAPTER IV

VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM FROM MID-THIRD CENTURY TO FIFTH CENTURY

Carrying forward Mouzi's and Khuong Tang Hoi's cause, many other noted monks from the mid-third century to the fifth century continued their predecessors' mission. Among them, some were foreigners and others were Vietnamese, but all of them did meritorious service in propagating and building the religion in the country.

KALARUCI AND DAO THANH, DHARMADEVA AND HUE THANG

By the mid-third century, a monk native to Dai Nhuc Chi, called Kalaruci which was transcribed in Chinese as Zhi Gang Liang Lou and translated as Zhen Xi, had translated a number of Mahayana Buddhist sutras in Giao Chau and Guangzhou. The book *Lich Dai Tam Bao Ky* recounted that “under Jin Emperor Wudi's rule (265-290) lived a foreign monk called Gang Liang Lou Zhi (Kalaruci) who translated *Thap Nhi Du Kinh* in Guangzhou in the sixth year of the Thai Thuy era (266).

The Nanjo Buddhist bibliography added the following detail: “Monk Zhi Gang Liang Jie (another name of Kalaruci) translated many sutras in northern Vietnam during the 255-256 period.” Of those books, the famous Mahayana Buddhist sutra, *Phap Hoa Tam Muoi*, was translated with the help of the Vietnamese monk, Dao Thanh.

It is known that the *Phap Hoa Tam Muoi* was an extremely important scripture which had seven different translations from the Wu to Sui dynasties. Of them, the translation by Kumarajiva¹ was most well known while the translation by Kalaruci and Dao Thanh was the oldest one. With the translation and widespread propagation of the sutra, the worship of Avalokitesvara was very common in China and Vietnam. Avalokitesvara was a symbol of the great benevolence and boundless compassion.

The word “*Tam Muoi*” in the title of the sutra means a meditation position. The book explained a position of meditation called meditation in lotus position, as well as some important theories on Buddha's real body,² which held that only the embodied Buddha lived, got old, entered Nirvana, that was only the historical Buddha, the embodiment of Buddha, not the real body of Buddha. Besides, the book also said that all religious phenomena seemed to be tricky, like foam on the water's surface. It can be easily understood that Kalaruci and Dao Thanh had thought that the Mahayana religion was inclined towards meditation, the truth of which could only be tested through meditation, but not through languages or logical thinking.

Kalaruci and Dao Thanh lived during the third century. No historical documents mention any Buddhist meditation practiced in Giao Chau during the fourth century. But in the fifth century, according to the book, *Monk's Stories*, there were in Giao Chau two noted Buddhist meditation practitioners, that was Dharmadeva of Indian origin and Thich Hue Thang of Vietnamese stock. The book wrote about them as follows: "Thich Hue Thang, a Giao Chau inhabitant, liked to live a secluded life at Chau Son pagoda, reading his prayers from the Lotus sutra once a day and continuing on, faithful to his monkhood, for many years. The monk learnt good virtues from the foreign monk Dharmadeva, and each time he sat for meditation he sat all day. Liu Hui, who came from Pengcheng to Nanhai, invited the monk to China, who then moved to U The pagoda where he feigned to be dull though in fact he was talented and intelligent. Those who stayed with him for a long time respected him. He begged for food every day and refused to live on the food at the pagoda. In the fifth year of the Vinh Minh era, he moved to live in Yuan Xian secluded temple, near Zhong mountain, and died at the age of 70."

As mentioned above, the book *Phap Hoa Tam Muoi*, translated in Giao Chau by Kalaruci and Dao Thanh in the third century, taught a meditation method called lotus meditation. By reading this book once a day, certainly Hue Thang practiced this meditation method which had attached importance to the meditation position, which was different from the method of dynamic meditation advocated by the Linji Chan Buddhist sect, which was aided by supportive movements such as shouts and screams, stick swinging, etc.

Historical documents fail to mention which country Dharmadeva belonged to. It was revealed through the book *Dai Duong Hoi Dien Luc* that the monk Dharmadeva had translated the Nirvana theory by Bodhisattva The Than, and the translation is still kept in the, where it is numbered 1527.

Comparing the time when Bodidharma arrived in China and that of Dharmadeva's arrival in Giao Chau, we realize that the former came to China in 520, namely in the early sixth century while the latter arrived in Giao Chau and met Hue Thang in the early fifth century, then Hue Thang was invited to China by Liuhui, having stayed at U The pagoda whence he left in 487. So, *Dai Han Tang* Dharmadeva explained the method of meditation in Vietnam more than a half century before Bodidharma arrived in China. The book *Monks' Stories* records: "Bodidharma first came to Nanyue of Song, then finally crossed the river to Wei." However, this has not been confirmed by any historical documents.

Hue Thang at U The Pagoda:

U The pagoda was built in 457, namely some 20 years before Hue Thang's stay. It is situated on Niu Tou mountain, Shang Yuan district of present day Jiangsu province. Later, the mountain was widely known because monk Phap Dung had initiated and founded the Niu Tou

Chan sect there. So, Hue Thang was the predecessor of Phap Dung, and his ideology on meditation surely exerted a certain influence on Phap Dung's meditation ideology.

At U The pagoda, Hue Thang often pretended to be dull, as remarked by Dao Tuyen in *Monks' Stories* which added: "Thang never used food in the pagoda but lived on begging for food." It is, therefore, obvious that Hue Thang's way of living and practicing religion were different from those of the Chinese monks at that time. To live on begging for food is the Indian monk's way of life right from the time when the monk's Sangha was founded and when Buddha was still alive. It's hard to confirm whether living on begging for food was Hue Thang's own way of life or the way of living of all Giao Chau monks due to the lack of concrete historical documents. But it is certain that by the fifth century though there were contacts between Vietnamese Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism, the influence of Indian Buddhism through the contingent of Indian and Caucasian monks in Giao Chau was still strong and profound.

Some writers thought that Hue Thang's attitude of pretending to be dull while in U The pagoda was because he had been forced to China by Liu Hui. However, this was only a hypothesis, for generally speaking all Buddhist monks are people of few words, who rarely show off their talents. Yuan Xian pagoda near Zhong mountain was the place where Hue Thang came to live in 487. Situated about 10 miles from Nanjing, it was built in 406-409 and became a rallying place of many Chinese monks.

THE HUE LAM INCIDENT AND THE BOOK BACH HAC LUAN (DISCUSSION BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE)

Though the Hue Lam incident in the book *Bach Hac Luan*³ largely occurred in China, it must be analyzed and introduced here so as to understand a series of Buddhist incidents occurring simultaneously in Vietnam, for instance the incident after the exchange of letters between Chinese Ambassador Li Miao and two Vietnamese monks Dao Cao and Phap Minh, the incident in which monk Dam Hoang set himself on fire at Tien Chau Son pagoda (in the former province of Bac Ninh, now Ha Bac). Moreover, at near the end of his life Hue Lam came to Giao Chau and passed away there. Though at the near end of his life such a high ranking official as Hue Lam, who once held the position as the King's first minister and was such an erudite and straightforward person, could not help but exert deep influence on the Buddhist situation in Giao Chau; then the Hue Lam incident demonstrated the reaction to the Buddhism situation during the Liu Song times, which can be seen through District Chief Xiao Buzhi's report to Song Emperor Wendi in 425:

Buddhism in China has developed through four dynasties
with thousands of tower pagodas and Buddha statues

now... But over the past few years, the people's belief has been at a low ebb: the people have refused to practice sincere belief but make luxurious competition their aim. Nobody has cared for the repair of ruined pagodas but each of them has wished to build a pagoda of his own to show off his wealth. Timber, bamboo, gold, copper, brocade, fabric were wasted in great quantities. This is contrary to the laws which should control these matters. If not, things will be worse. So, I would like to request that from now on, if anyone wishes to cast bronze statues, he must go to the capital for the permit, anyone wishing to set up tower pagodas must go to the district administration, explaining the reason and waiting for the permission before the construction. If not, the bronze, gold, timber, tiles, bricks... will be confiscated for the public funds.

The Emperor agreed with the report. The incident took place in the year 435 under Song Emperor Wendi's reign. Attention should be drawn to the following sentence in the above paragraph: "Buddhism in China has developed through four dynasties with thousands of tower pagodas and Buddha statues now." This evaluation showed that during the first years of its import into China, Buddhism was confronted with a strong opposition from Confucianists and Taoists. Later, it gradually developed in scope and scale in both Northern and Southern China, occupying a firm position in the Chinese society as a perfect religious constitution with all components such as canon, ceremonies, organizations, Buddhist schools, and a large number of followers of all social strata: kings and queens, mandarins, generals to Confucianists, intellectuals, traders, handicraft workers, peasants. That is to say the social foundation of Buddhism in China was so firm that the religious organization on the one hand still took advantage of the politicians' support and on the other sought to defend itself and affirm its independence. In 404, monk Hui Yuan in Lu Shan (southern China) made public his book saying the monks do not have to respect kings and queens, while monk Fa Guo in Northern China (died in 410) tended, on the other hand, to identify the emperors with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

These attitudes of the religious organization and a number of negative phenomena were unavoidable when Buddhism thrived (with big pagodas, big statues and a too large contingent of monks, while a small number of people joined the army and production...), which led to reaction and opposition from many responsible people in the then administration, including some kings and queens.

The report mentioned above is one example of that common reaction. Xiao Buzhi also criticized, that "over the past few years, people's belief has been at a low ebb." Of course, he wanted to speak of genuine belief, which is called "true belief" in Buddhist books. According to him,

by then very few people had genuine belief while many ran after luxurious waste.

When Xiao Buzhi submitted the report, Hue Lam also published his book *Bach Hac Luan* (also called *Quan Thien Luan*) which was most resolutely critical of Buddhism by Confucianist representatives, though the author was a Buddhist monk himself, even not an ordinary monk but the one called by the people the “Black-dressed first minister of the king,” because from 426, monk Hue Lam was invited to work as the advisor to Song Emperor Wendi. That a monk worked as the advisor to the king and strongly criticized Buddhism was really a rare thing and an extraordinary phenomenon, which can be understood only through the analysis of the background of Chinese Buddhism at the time, as well as an analysis of Hue Lam himself.

From the third century on, the Chinese received Buddhism in a passive way (mainly through the translation of classical Sanskrit books), then more critically, beginning with the hot debate among Chinese monks on the conception ‘Nihilism’ or ‘Voidness’ in the Prajna Sutra. This debate has left in the history of Chinese Buddhism the names of six theorists, including Yu Daoshui who wrote the book *Duyen Hoi Nhi De Luan*, explaining that everything and every phenomenon was created by conditions which didn't really exist, so, it was called ‘Nihilism’. Yu Daoshui, a native of Dun Huang died in Vietnam on his way to India for the Buddhist sutras in 320, when he was only 31 years old.

In addition to the Chinese monks' debates on the question of ‘existence’ and ‘voidness’, there was a series of incidents such as monk Giac Hien who quited Kumarajiva's Sutra Translation Board in Chang An; monk Thich Dao Sanh (a contemporary of Hue Lam) was expelled from Thach Vien pagoda because he had explained that “even Ichantika can become Buddha;” and finally Hue Lam was expelled to Giao Chau by the religious organization in Southern China for he had written the book *Bach Hac Luan* in 433. However, under Song Emperor Wendi's protection, the expulsion was delayed till 456 when the latter was killed by his son.

The above situation showed that by Liu Song's time in Southern China, Chinese Buddhism had developed so strongly that the religious organization dared to order the expulsion of a monk, an advisor to the Emperor. However, once Buddhism widely and deeply infiltrated the society, it could not help but be affected by vices already found in the society, which Buddhism should have strongly criticized and gotten rid of, for instance, formalism: people competed with one another in building pagodas, casting statues, organizing big rituals. In his book *Bach Hac Luan* Hue Lam was strongly critical of this. He also criticized a number of Buddhist theories which, though accepted by almost every adherent, monks as well as followers, had not been confirmed, such as the theory on metempsychoses, and the theory that Buddha and Bodhisattvas were supermen with many supernatural powers, with boundless halos, with eternal life, etc.

So what kind of person was Hue Lam? With what influence and talents could he dare to run counter to the accepted belief of the whole religious organization? In the book *Quang Hoang Minh*, Dao Tuyen wrote about Hue Lam as follows:

Hue Lam native to Qin district, entered his monkhood at Zhi Cheng pagoda in Yang Du. He was a learned man and an acquaintance of king Lu Long of the Song dynasty. He wrote the book *Bach Hac Luan*, of which the gist was that while practicing Buddhism and Confucianism simultaneously, people should not praise one while disparaging the other just only because of their different origins; rather, though two different ways, they both lead to one destination.

It should be noted that in the book *Quang Hoang Minh*, Dao Tuyen refused to call Hue Lam by the name Thich Hue Lam, but by the name Luu Hue Lam. It is true that Dao Tuyen, a Buddhist historian, as well as many of his contemporaries, refused to recognize Hue Lam as a genuine Buddhist monk, though as a learned man with many talents.

One thing we should inquire into is how Hue Lam intended his book *Bach Hac Luan* to be understood. Did he mean for it to reform Chinese Buddhism? Obviously, Hue Lam wished to build a Buddhism that conciliates Buddhism and Confucianism, not philosophically but in social virtues. For Buddhism, the six Paramitas of the Mahayana Buddhism must be practiced: alms-giving, observance of precepts, patient resignation, skillful means of study, meditation in the highest possible equanimity, and wisdom; while for Confucianism five rules of conduct must also be practiced: benevolence, righteousness, politeness, wisdom, belief. Hue Lam didn't agree with Buddhism of the "charity" type as seen in the making of statues and the construction of pagodas, which exhausted the property and strength of the people and the State. He also refused to accept the metaphysical self-argument of "Non-existence and Existence" theory, because, according to him, if one said everything did not exist and was untrue, why did one encourage the construction of big pagodas, the making of big statues, and why did one run after empty fame, after formalism? Hue Lam also refused to accept some Buddhist theories which could not be confirmed, such as the theory of metempsychoses, the theory on boundless halos around Buddha's body, and the theory on eternal life. His argument ran counter to a Buddhist trend which was then very common and universal, namely "The Pure Land School" or "The Lotus Sect." The followers believed that to the west of our world full of misery and misfortune, existed a world full of happiness, called "Sukhavati" (The world of Supreme happiness) where lived Buddha Amitabha and two Bodhisattavas, Avalokitesvara and Samantabhadra. Any living being who daily said in pray the Buddha's name would be reborn into the "Sukhavati"

world after his death, not only living happily but also being won over to the religious ideal directly by the Buddha. What the followers needed to do to achieve this was to have a sincere belief in Buddha and say his name daily. Obviously, that was a fairly easy way to attain the enlightenment, which being largely based on Buddha's strength, required very little effort from the adherents. It was, therefore, very popular then in both Northern and Southern China.

One of the evidences for this was that all Buddhist sutras belonging to this sect were translated and published many times. For instance, the book *Dai Vo Luong Tho (Eternal Life)* had ten different translations, not to mention other forms of publication. The book was about the endless illumination attained by Buddha and his eternal life. Yet, Hue Lam dared to say in his book, *Bach Hac Luan*, that "he [Buddha] illuminates endlessly, but nobody sees any light, saying that he has an eternal life, while no one sees a 100-year old man." Clearly, as a Buddhist monk, Hue Lam did not oppose and criticize Buddhism in general, but he attacked strongly and directly the Buddhist situation during the Liu-Song period, which, according to him, the then religious organization was largely responsible for.

DAO THIEN AND DAM HOANG

Thich Dao Thien's Theory of Buddhism

The second Vietnamese monk, as mentioned in *Monks' Stories* after Hue Thang, was Thich Dao Thien:

Thich Dao Thien, a native of Giao Chi (former name of Vietnam), renounced the world while still young and entered the monkhood. He was respected and loved by villagers and fellow monks for his good virtues. Previously Tien Chau Son pagoda had been frequented by tigers, but they were no longer seen once Dao Thien came to the place. By then, Qi Emperor Jing Ling deployed the study of Dhyana, setting up many lecture halls. Therefore, people from various localities flocked into Jing Ling. They were all talented persons and outstanding disciples. Dao Thien lectured to them on interesting books through which truth was presented. During the first years of Rong Ming's reign, he came to the capital city, staying at Van Cu Ha pagoda, near Zhong mountain. He was so proficient in well-known sutras that Buddhist monks and nuns set a firm confidence in him. He explained in a serene way, from which they learnt the majestic gesture. The number of people, urban and rural, who came to him for religious practice reached over one thousand and the frequent

students numbered several hundreds. He usually got away from noisy places, took ordinary food and wore shabby clothes. If anyone offered him good foods, he gave them to the poor and the sick. Near the end of his life, he stayed in the pagoda on a mountain, refraining from any contact with the worldly life, leading a life of poverty and preserving good virtues. Dao Thien felt happy with such a life, though people thought it gloomy. He died in his temple at the age of 70.

The above excerpt from the book *Monks' Stories* helps us draw some conclusions about the monk Dao Thien personally and about his historical background:

a) Dao Thien was a monk well-versed in theories on Buddhism. He strictly observed the religious life. His name was known so widely, even in China, that he was invited to Jing Ling to teach Samadhi at various lecturing halls set up by Emperor Jing Ling, a son of the Qi Emperor Gaozu (479-482). According to *Nan Qi Shu*, Jing Ling organized two Buddhism congresses during the Qi Wudi reign (483-493). Regarding the first congress, the *Nan Qi Shu* wrote that “noted monks were invited to preach Buddhism and rewrite the sutra, in a new language: therefore, Buddhism finally prospered in Jiangzuo region.” Among the noted monks invited by Jing Ling to preach Buddhism was Thich Dao Thien, a Vietnamese.

b) While in Jing Ling to lecture on Buddhism, Dao Thien's prestige was so high that the number of people who came to him for religious practice reached one thousand, and the frequent students numbered several hundreds. Though held in such high prestige, Dao Thien preferred to live a secluded life with spare meals and simple dress. If anyone gave him good clothes or good food, he gave them to the poor and the sick.

Monk Dam Hoang and the suicide by fire at Tien Chau Son pagoda.

Monk Dam Hoang's life story was written in the *Monks' Stories* as follows:

Thich Dam Hoang, a native of Hoang Long, renounced the world while still young and was very good at Buddhist theory. During the 420-422 period, he moved to the South, staying at Dai pagoda then Tien Son pagodas in Giao Chi, reading prayers in the Eternal life sutra and Guan Jing and with determination to be reborn in the world of Supreme Happiness (Sukhavati). In 445, he set himself on fire on the mountain. However, he was saved by his students, but with half of his body burned. After one month's treatment he recovered. Later, one day when people in the pagoda

went to attend a festival in a nearby hamlet, he again set himself on fire. Villagers came to rescue him but this time he was dead. So they put more firewood on the fire to cremate him. The fire lasted till the next day, then died out. On that day, people saw Hoang dressed in yellow and riding a yellow deer to the West without stopping to ask after anyone. Having seen this, the people and monks collected his bones and ash for veneration.

The book, *Monks' Stories*, was compiled by Hue Hao in 530, that is 80 years after the voluntary self-burning. The writer might have relied on details already written or noted down, or told by Giao Chau people about Dam Hoang's self-burning, and, of course, with things added or cut to make the story more mythological and sacred. Another book entitled *Vang Sinh Tinh Do Truyen*, also about Dam Hoang's story, was compiled later, in the 1066-1077 period by Gioi Chau. Its content was similar to that in the *Monks' Stories*, and only different in the following paragraph: "His disciples gathered his remains which, when struck against stone, did not break but gave out light. The next day, people saw Hoang dressed in yellow, riding a yellow deer and moving hurriedly to the West: he didn't answer when called to by anyone. If called a second time, he only pointed one hand to the West. Some people tried in vain to run after him..."

According to Hue Hao, Dam Hoang was Chinese, not Vietnamese. His native place was Hoang Long, namely Hebei province, near Peking. But according to Gioi Chau, he entered his monkhood in Guang Ling of the present day Jiangsu province. Having followed the Sukhavati Sect or Chingtu Sect, he daily read prayers in two books: *The Eternal Life* and the *Guanjing*. These books taught the Pure Land Sect, hoping for rebirth in Buddha Amitabha's Western Paradise (Sukhavati) or the World of Supreme Happiness, which was very popular then in China. After Khuong Tang Khai, a Caucasian monk translated the *Eternal Life sutra*. Dam Hoang always used it. By Dam Hoang's time, namely within two centuries, the book had had ten different translations, including the very well known one by Kumarajiva. It is realized through this that the Chinese belief that the Buddha had endless halos was deep-rooted. In the chapter "Monk Hue Lam and the book *Bach Hac Luan*," we clearly see that Hue Lam had attacked directly that [deeply-rooted] belief.

Hue Lam's criticism and the book *Bach Hac Luan* made public in 435 under Song Wendi's rule occurred simultaneously with Xiao Buzhi's report demanding that the king issue a decree restricting the construction of pagodas and the casting of statues because they were causing a big waste of material and heavy losses to the public fund.

Can it be true that Dam Hoang's self-immolation at Tien Chau Son pagoda, especially the detail that "people saw Hoang dressed in yellow, riding a yellow deer and going in great hurry to the West..." was an answer to Hue Lam's book *Bach Hac Luan*?

SIX LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN LI MIAO AND TWO BUDDHIST MONKS: DAO CAO AND PHAP MINH

The full texts of these six letters were found in *Hoang Minh Tap* by Tang Hoi and rewritten in Chinese in *Dai Tang Kinh*. Because of the importance of the six letters, we would like to present, in the first part, the main characters, namely two Buddhist monks, Dao Cao and Phap Minh, then Li Miao. Then, we will summarize the content of each letter with explanation and comments.

a) Persons mentioned in the six letters:

The two monks, Dao Cao and Phap Minh, lived during the Liu Song dynasty, namely in the middle of the fifth century, 420-478. This can be confirmed through a still extant text in print titled “*Reply Letter to Li in Giao Chau, from Thich Dao Cao*” during the Song dynasty.

On Thich Dao Cao:

One of the two authors of the six letters: One thing we know for sure is that Thich Dao Cao had to be a person from Giao Chau, namely a Vietnamese, because he was mentioned in Chinese historical documents with the same footnote “Dao Cao, a monk from Giao Chau” (*Quan Song Wen*, book 63).

Secondly, Dao Cao was not only one of the authors of the six letters but also the author of the book titled *Ta Am* (“Borrowed sounds”) and another book called *Dao Cao Phap Su Tap* (See *Nhat Ban Quoc Kien Tai Thu Muc Luc*, quoted by L.M. The., Van Hanh Compilation Board). So in addition to his works on Buddhism, Dao Cao wrote the book on the [linguistic] principles to borrow sounds in speaking to describe Vietnamese things not available in China or without Chinese words to describe them. It is also known that in the above Japanese bibliographical book, an anonymous book called *Ta Am Tu*, a dictionary of borrowed words, was also compiled. Could Dao Cao also be the author of that dictionary?

Meanwhile, the book *Dao Cao Phap Su Tap*, as mentioned in the Japanese bibliographical book, might be a complete work or a collection of Dao Cao's works. Regrettably, these two books, *Ta Am* and *Dao Cao Phap Su Tap*, are no longer available. However, all the letters have been kept till today in *Hoang Minh Tap* (Hoang Minh's collection) by Tang Huu and preserved in *Han Tang*.

On Thich Phap Minh:

So far, Phap Minh has not been mentioned in any historical document except for one sentence in *Quan Song Wen* by Yan Kejun referring to “Phap Minh, a monk from Giao Chau.” This indicates that Phap Minh was a native of Giao Chau, and not Chinese.

On Li Miao:

Phap Minh and Dao Cao called Li Miao “*su quan*” in Vietnamese which might be the special envoy of the Chinese Emperor, who was sent to a certain locality for a certain mission, or the chief of a district. Though his

biography was not clearly mentioned in historical books, he was a man of the Northern Court, who had a broad knowledge of Confucianism and great concern for the role of Buddhism in the society.

b) The summary and explanation of the contents of the six letters:

The common title for the original letters in *Hoang Minh Tap* is: “*Cao Minh Nhi Phap Su Dap Giao Chau Ly Mieu Nan Phat Bat Kien Hinh Su*,” which means “Two monks Dao Cao and Phap Minh answering the question of Li Miao in Giao Chau on the non-appearance of Buddha’s image.”

The content of the first letter:

Ly Miao asked-- If Buddhism is considered miraculous, why didn't Buddha appear in this world now? Now, it's time for Buddha to appear. If not, the doctrine would be only empty words. (Why did he say “now?” Is it true that by this time Hue Lam had already written the book *Quan Thien Luan* or *Bach Hac Luan*, which stirred the Buddhist circles in China and Giao Chau because Hue Lam had denied the story of Buddha with endless halos and eternal life?)

The second letter, Dao Cao’s reply:

Buddha appeared in three ways: First, he appeared physically as a human being, as did Sakyamuni Buddha; second, he appeared by leaving his religious practice behind for others to follow; and third, he appeared by leaving behind the Buddhist regulations for people to obey. Which way he appeared depended on the desires of living beings during each period. Whatever their aspiration and need, Buddha would appear in that way.

Moreover, these things are unseen because they were in the past,-- hence we have to believe what had been written down in books.

The third letter, Li Miao’s letter:

At present, Li Miao said, Confucianists and disciples of Mozi have feverishly attacked Buddhism and Buddhist practice. We cannot only use reasoning and books to argue with them. Buddha is a holy person with unlimited wisdom and boundless love: why does he not appear to get rid of all doubts?

Moreover, there are things which can be relied on in books,-- for example, the worldly things mentioned by Confucius. Yet Buddha spoke not only of things in this world but also about things of the future. When speaking of future things, the vestiges of Buddha should prevail for at least three generations, that is, they must exist now. But where are those vestiges?

The fourth letter, Dao Cao’s letter:

The vestige you seek is found in the fact that some people sit for meditation in the jungles, some enter the monkhood, some observe

Buddhist rituals, some sing in praise of Buddha. All these things can be heard and seen. Moreover, whether the vestige and light of the holy being are seen or not depends on one's sincerity. With sincerity, one would have inspiration, and when inspired one would see them. Without sincerity one would not have inspiration and would not see. People who have seen tell those who did not see. What could we do if the latter do not believe? You asked where were the things done by Buddha, if with sincerity and with ability to see, they are just in front of you, before your very eyes.

The fifth letter, Li Miao's letter:

Li Miao recalled his initial doubt, and intended to say that Confucianism also discussed future things, not only things of the present life. Li Miao quoted the following sentence, "Doing good things one will be happy, doing bad things one will be miserable," to prove his viewpoint.

The sixth letter, Phap Minh's:

On behalf of Dao Cao, Phap Minh answered the above letter from Li Miao. He held that Confucius was incomparable to Buddha who taught things of three generations, while Confucius's teachings only stopped at the present life, as Li Miao said previously in his letter.

Buddha spoke of living beings, sunk in metempsychosis [rebirth] from generation to generation without end. People are so dull-witted and indulged in superstition, so how could they see Buddha? Meanwhile, the Buddhist sutras circulated in this world are just like trapping baskets waiting for those who have predestined affinity to Buddhism: they will be able to understand and practice, to be inspired and see. Phap Minh stressed the theory of inspiration initiated by Dao Cao, citing this time a series of examples mentioned in historical books. For instance, the stories that Emperor Han Mingdi dreamed of Buddha, then sent his envoys to India for the Buddhist sutras; that Song Wudi was told in his dream that because he had given a bowl of rice as alms to Buddha Amitabha, he had been put on the throne; that Wu Zongquan was allowed by monk Khuong Tang Hoi to see Buddha's splendidly illuminating *sarira* pearl (still kept today at Jianchu (Jianye) pagoda); that a stone statue of Buddha drifted in the sea offshore from Wu district, which hundreds of monks and followers tried in vain to pull up while later a group of five or six monks, together with a group of four persons led by Zhou Zhang, pulled it up, easily; that Guo Wenju touched a tiger's mouth, or Lan Gong flicked off snow on a tiger; that with Hu Gong's prayer, the dried up streams suddenly became flooded with water... Phap Minh cited those examples to prove that the theory of inspiration advocated by Dao Cao and himself was correct.

The above six letters show that by the sixth century Buddhism in Giao Chau had strongly developed, and that Giao Chau monks had a broad knowledge and had thoroughly grasped the Buddhist theories, and their reputation had spread so widely that even officials from the Chinese Royal Court came to learn from them.

NOTES

¹Kumarajiva, a Kuchean and a well-known translator in the fifth century.

²Mahayana Buddhism considered Sakyamuni as only a reincarnation of Buddha; therefore he was born and died, while the true existence of Buddha, or the Sacred Body, is eternal, hence called the “eternal sacred body.”

³Confucians were considered ‘white’ scholars and Buddhist monks ‘black’ scholars, so the book title means discussions between Confucians and Buddhists.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST CHAN SECT IN VIETNAM: VINITARUCI AND PHAP HIEN, FOUNDERS

VINITARUCI

Some time around 580 A.D., the Indian monk Vinitaruci founded the first Chan sect in Vietnam. This exact date is unclear for even according to *Co Chau Phap Van Bon Hanh Ngu Luc*, during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-419 A.D) “an Indian monk named Vinitaruci, knowing of Buddhism’s existence in what is now Vietnam, came and lived in the Phap Van Pagoda. There he taught the doctrine, contributing to its blossoming during this period.”

Regardless of the date, monk Thong Bien's quote in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* affirms, by reference to his disciple Phap Hien (Fa Xian in Chinese), that Vinitaruci was the founder of a Chan sect in Vietnam. “Now, the Honorable monk Phap Hien having reached enlightenment with Vinitaruci, propagated the Three Founders' principles, was a living Bodhisattva, lived in the Zheng Shan Pagoda, and educated and invested about 300 people, not insignificant for China.” On Vinitaruci's life, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* relates as follows:

The monk Vinitaruci belonged to the Brahmin caste, was born in South India and came to China. About the Nham Ngo year (562 A.D) under the 6th Dai Kien era of the Chen's reign, he came to Chang'an. In 574, when Buddhism was repressed by Wu Di, he went to the Ye area (Henan, China). At that time, the third Head Priest of the Chinese Chan sect enjoyed the right of sanctuary in this region of Sikong mountain. When Vinitaruci met the founder, Zeng Can, and saw his uncommon manner, he clasped his hands three times, but the founder remained quiet without saying a word. While standing pensive, his heart brightened as he was self-assured and he bowed three times. The founder did nothing, but nodded three times. Vinitaruci moved backwards three steps and said: “Up to now, your devotee has had no opportunity, now I beg your compassion to accept me to be your servant.” The founder told him: “Go quickly southward and get in touch with the people, do not remain here any longer.” He immediately left the founder and went southward. He lived in the Zhi Zhi Pagoda in Guangzhou. It was about the sixth year of the Da Di era. In that place, he translated a

certain number of prayers as *Tuong Dau* and *Nghiep Bao Sai Biet*. On the third month of the year Canh Ty, second year of the Da Qiang era (580), he came to our country, cloistered in the Phap Van Pagoda, and translated the *Tong Tri* prayers.

Before translating, he called his disciple Phap Hien and read him the litany. That litany appears in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* as follows:

The heart that bears the mantle of Buddha
 Never deceives and gets to the Great Void
 No lack, no plenty, no departure, no arrival.
 No gain, no loss
 No resemblance, no difference
 No length, no shortness
 No creation, no destruction
 No leaving off
 Due to my great aspiration for grace
 I gave to myself a false name
 So did Buddha in three generations, he succeeded
 So did the founder in many generations,
 And he succeeded too
 And so did I.
 You can do the same and you will succeed
 To do so intentionally or unintentionally
 One can succeed and my founder Zeng Can,
 When giving me such a heart, ordered me to go preaching.
 And not to stay here any longer
 I have passed through many places before arriving here
 Now I have the pleasure to meet you
 What a marvelous meeting!
 Behave yourself seriously
 Now I have to go far.

Once those words were said, the monk joined his hands and died. His disciple, the venerable monk Phap Hien, held a solemn Buddhist funeral service, buried his teacher's remains, and built a tower of mourning. His death occurred in the 14th year of Sui Emperor Kai Huang's era (594 A.D.).

Despite the little remaining biographical information on Vinitaruci, there are a certain number of remarkable historical details we know about him:

1. Vinitaruci was Zeng Can's most enlightened disciple, the third founder of the Chinese Chan sect. We can thus consider Vinitaruci as the fourth founder of the Chan sect who can be credited with spreading Buddhism in northern Vietnam. Dao Xin was Zeng Can's other enlightened

disciple, being also the fourth founder although he remained in China. Vinitaruci was Dao Xin's contemporary. The final part of the above mentioned litany shows dearly his deep sentiment towards spreading Buddhism: "Our ancestor Zeng Can, when giving us such a heart, orders us to practice religious education."

2. Beginning his litany, Vinitaruci refers to the Buddhist mantle, which means a disciple's true heart is confirmed by receiving his teacher's mantle (literally, "heart seal"), and not because the student is just aspiring according to the Buddhist religion. When speaking about consciousness, one should speak about the heart, and when speaking about diffusing religion to a follower by a monk, one should speak from the heart. But what is this heart exactly? Vinitaruci used a series of negative words as "no lack, no plenty, no gain, no loss, no departure, no arrival, no resemblance, no difference, no length, no shortness, no creation, no destruction, no leaving off." The general meaning here is very clear: "The true heart is a reality but cannot be shown through language; it can be only perceived and felt."

Zeng Can's poem, "Believing the brightened heart," concerns exactly this issue:

If anybody wants to penetrate religion, he must not make a choice, must not love or hate. Religion naturally shows itself. A little misunderstanding leads to separation, as the sky and the earth. To become immediately impregnated with religion one must let his heart be involved with favorable thoughts or adverse thoughts, with adaptable or opposite deeds. If one does not hate human life, human life would then be religion, too... If one remains constant to his beliefs, does not change his heart, truth would be the true heart, would be the perfect language, and would be the time. In short, if one keeps his heart unchanged, he will possess religion, will get truth. Truth is not far from him but is in himself. It is in front of him.

These thoughts, as we will see in the Buddhist poems during the Ly and Tran reigns, can be regarded as fundamental thoughts running through the history of Buddhism in Vietnam.

The last part of the litany confirms the historical hypothesis on the passing of the Buddhist mantle from Zeng Can, the third founder of Buddhism in China to Vinitaruci. A teacher's passing of his mantle is his affirmation that his disciple has achieved enlightened consciousness conformable to the Buddhist heart, the heart which as the scholar says in his litany does not deceive, has the great emptiness, has no shortness, no abundance. Passing the mantle means passing one's beliefs to another heart without the help of anybody or anything. The scholar and his disciple harmonize themselves in the same heart, also called Buddhist virtue, or the origin of consciousness for everybody. Every human being has it in his

heart, no lack, no plenty, no increasing, no reducing, no creation, and no destruction. Therefore to pass a mantle means in reality to pass nothing because of the existence of that heart in oneself.

During Ly Thai Tong's reign, the King wrote a litany in the monk Vinitaruci's honor as follows:

You opened a way to the country Nam
 I was told that you had been trained and educated in Buddhism
 And showed openly your beliefs in Buddha
 Separate or together you kept the same source of beliefs
 The moon Lang Gia light was so bright
 The lotus Prajna emitted a marvelous perfume
 When we meet each other, we will discuss religion.

Although Vinitaruci was the founder of the Chan sect in Vietnam, Buddhism also came to China and Vietnam via the teachings of Bodhidharma, whose doctrine retained a large number of characteristics of Dhyana (the Indian Chan sect). It was Hui Neng, from the later sixth generation, who developed Chan Buddhism into a doctrine with Chinese characteristics.

Consequently, the first Chan sect introduced in Vietnam at the end of the sixth century, although having come from China, was first propagated in Vietnam by an Indian monk. This may be why numerous characteristics of Vietnamese Chan Buddhism resemble the Indian Dhyana sect. Mention is also made of Vinitaruci in the Chinese historical record *Tishi Tongjian* written by Ti Beniue during the Song dynasty: "About the year... [582 A.D.] Sui Wendi called the Indian monk, Dharmajanana, (the Chinese name was Fa Zhi) to the capital to translate Buddhist prayers."

At that time, Vinitaruci, whose Chinese name was Mie Xi, had just arrived. He was also requested by the King to translate prayers. In February of that year, Vinitaruci finished the translation of the *Tuong Dau Prayers*. In March, Dharmajanana finished the translation of *Nghiep Bao Sai Biet*. In July, Vinitaruci finished the translation of *Tong Tri*.

Although these two historic documents disagree on the dates, the place, and the translators' names, this confusion can be resolved. *Thien Tuyen Tap Anh* recounts that in 580, Vinitaruci came to Vietnam while according to *Tishi Tongjian*, he was still in the Sui capital translating prayers in 582 A.D. implying that *Tong Tri* was translated there and not in Vietnam. Nevertheless, due to the fact that Vinitaruci and his sect had close ties to the compilers of *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, this text is likely the more reliable one. In addition, Chinese historical documents primarily mention Vinitaruci without providing valuable details.

In contrast, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* gives a wealth of detail: "He came to the Phap Van Pagoda March of the year Canh Ty (580) where he lived and trained people until the year of Giap Dan (591); he died afterwards in that pagoda." Thus he stayed in Vietnam 11 years in all. When he came to

the Phap Van Pagoda, a Vietnamese monk named Quan Duyen was also educating people about Buddhism. Vinitaruci remained there and chose Phap Hien who later studied Buddhism with Quan Duyen, as his disciple.

Thien Uyen Tap Anh lists the monks that belong to the 19 generations of Vinitaruci's Buddhist sect as follows:

1. Vinitaruci (died in 591).
2. Phap Hien (died in 626).
3. Hue Nghiem, one of Phap Hien's 300 followers.
4. Thanh Bien (died in 686).
5. A monk whose name and biography remain unknown.
6. A monk whom nobody knew.
7. Long Tuyen cloistered in the Nam Duong Pagoda.
8. Dinh Khong (died in 808) and two others whose names and biographies remain unknown.
9. Thong Thien and two others whose names are unknown.
10. La Quy An (died in 936), Phap Thuan (died in 991), Mahamaya (died in 1029) and another unknown monk..

The nine remaining generations under the Ly dynasty are presented below in Chapter 8.

Vinitaruci's Doctrine

Vinitaruci was Zeng Can's disciple, the third founder of Buddhist religion in China, three generations before Hui Neng. He lived in a period hungry for new religious ideas from India, ideas that emphasize and advance reform, including the radiating Prajna. At the same time, it was then believed that religions must have supernatural powers and abilities, often called '*cabala*'.

One should not think, however, that after self-reflection and achieving '*cabala*', a monk is necessarily a Tantric Buddhist. Anybody patient in self-revision and refection when reaching the highest step of progress could resemble '*cabala*' and need not belong to Tantrism. The arhats at every level had '*cabala*' but not all arhats trained themselves according to Tantric principles.

Much less, Indian Tantrism blossomed only from the beginning of the seventh to the tenth centuries, while Vinitaruci was in China since 562, and the first prayers he had translated called *Gayaciras* were not Tantric prayers but a series of very important Mahayana prayers belonging to the Prajna system.

The first monk who had introduced those prayers in China was Kumarajiva. He translated a text which was called Manjusri sutra (Nanjo 238). Vasubandu wrote an interpretive text on these prayers, called in Sanskrit "*Manijuribodhisata Pariprhha Bodhi Sutra Sastra*" Bodhiruci translated Vasubandu's interpretations into Chinese, including the original

text (Nanjo 1121). Vinitaruci translated the text as *Tuong Dau Tinh Xa* or "Elephant head prayers." Did Vinitaruci do a translation wrongly? No. Vinitaruci had come to China in 562, and it was not until 20 years later in 582 that he translated these prayers, clearly enough time to allow him to learn and master Chinese.

This name is actually based on a place, Gautama Buddha's starting point, where he taught those prayers. After having stayed in Uruvela and having awakened the consciousness of one thousand Buddhist believers, Gautama Buddha went to Gaya, and made a halt at Gayasira (Elephant head) temple where he preached these prayers. Afterwards they were called the "prayers of the Gayasira, the elephant Head." Among the listeners were the King Bimbisara and many Brahmans and laymen.¹

The substance of these prayers deals with consciousness-wakening, i.e., Bodhi. The book *Historical Essays on Vietnamese Buddhism (Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan)* by Nguyen Lang (page 117) contains an excerpt of those prayers:

Buddha told Manjusri: Bodhi is perfect in three fields: perfect in speech, perfect in language and no need for home. Moreover, to take refuge in an unsafe refuge means to take refuge in Bodhi, to take refuge in a disagreeable refuge means to take refuge in Bodhi, to take refuge in Nothingness means to take refuge in Bodhi, to take refuge in Buddhist spirit means to take refuge in Bodhi. Moreover, the intellectual must use religion as substance. Religions and reason must be equitable. There must be no distinction, because it is a means. One must penetrate oneself with the five Commandments of Buddhism, the twelve affinities, the mutation from life to death and from death to life and the different forms of good and evil, all is like transformation, without being, without nullity...

The thoughts about no refuge, about perfection of being and nullity were Prajna thoughts and were introduced by Long Tho (Nagarjuna) at the beginning of his book *Trung Luan (Madhyamika)* with the Prajna litany:

No creation and no destruction
No length and no shortness
No constancy and no difference
No arrival and no departure

In short, according to Nagarjuna, the true nature of magical powers cannot be seized through religious practice and Prajna. It was by those means that one could enter the true nature of magical powers. Similar words were used by Vinitaruci to his disciple Phap Hien before dying: "Buddha's heart does not deceive us. It exists plentifully as the Great Emptiness, no

lack, no plenty, no departure, no arrival, no gain, no loss, no one, no two, no creation, and no destruction.”

The conversation between Vinitaruci and Phap Hien at their first meeting also expressed thoughts on language, written text, and the concept of the true nature of magical powers. Their conversation was written in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* as follows:

Since his arrival from Guangzhou to that pagoda (i.e., the Phap Van Pagoda), Vinitaruci saw Phap Hien, looked attentively at his face and asked: ‘What’s your family name?’ The monk Phap Hien asked Vinitaruci the same question. Vinitaruci asked again: ‘You don’t have a family name?’ Phap Hien answered: ‘I surely have a family name, but how do you know?’ Vinitaruci shouted: ‘To know, what for?’ The monk Phap Hien suddenly recovered possession of himself, bowed to his knee and was immediately recognized as a predestined Buddhist.

According to Vinitaruci, the substance of the magical powers cannot be known. One does not need to know because it is perfect in language, perfect in conceptual thinking. It can be only reached through abstinence and meditation, using Prajna. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* relates that after Vinitaruci’s death, Phap Hien went straight to the Tu Son mountain and enveloped himself in silent meditation. His body became dried out as a tree. He forgot everything. Birds flew towards him. Wild animals went around him.

The Chinese book *Chuan Deng Liu* also related a similar conversation between Dao Xin (the fourth founder of Buddhism in China) and Huang Ren (the fifth founder) as follows:

One day Xin came to Huang Mei. In the middle of the road, he met a strange boy, different from others. He asked him: ‘What’s your family name?’ The boy answered: ‘I belong to Buddha’s family’. The monk asked again: ‘You don’t have a family name, do you?’ The boy answered: ‘My name isn’t that’. The monk silently realized that the boy was a talented man of religion, ordered his servant to come and see the boy’s parents, asking for their permission to let him come with them home. Thinking that it was predestinated, his parents easily agreed, allowed him to become the monk’s follower and named him Huang Ren.

These two stories had two different personages of the same spirit. Not surprising, for Vinitarucian monks have the same thoughts expressed in their litanies, conversations, and poems. The monk Dao Hanh (12th

generation) and the monk Hue Sinh (13th generation) both adopted Vinitaruci's line of thought.

In summation, according to Vinitaruci's ideas, scholars should adopt a non-prejudicial spirit without refuge, i.e., not admit existence, nor nullity, not to confuse any particular virtue with the true nature of magical powers and, of course, not to have prejudice towards any particular virtue,..... all is nothing but the imagined product of personal reasoning. The state of Buddhist meditation is the truly perfect language, perfect with written texts and conceptual thinking.

All of this can be expressed through a negative sentence from Long Tho's litanies of *Bat Bat* (the eight "no's"), or through a monk's funny and strange answers when he is asked an unanswerable question as to the material character and the true nature of the magical powers. The state in Buddhist meditation is not the state of simple living, being subject to three dangerous things: ambition, loss of temper, and ignorance, similar to the well-known Buddhist story about blind men trying to describe an elephant.

The living being does not differ from the blind man who touches the elephant: he would say that the elephant would be like a column if he touched its leg, a fan if he touched its ear, or a plank if he touched its back. The matter is not touching with the hands or by conceptual thinking. The matter would be to open one's eyes, that is to say practice total abstinence, meditation, and Buddhist penetration. The man who enters meditation sees things differently from the vulgar. He has more possibilities, more powers than the vulgar which are provisionally called '*cabala*' in Buddhist books.

As a matter of act, our realms and capabilities are limited by our dispersed thoughts, lack of concentration, and lack of determination. If our thoughts were truly concentrated, interested, and not dispersed, we would see things more clearly, more calmly. With a certain degree of concentration, we would obtain possibilities and powers that would be called "supernatural magic." Truly speaking, those are only the natural possibilities of a man who realizes progress in his worship and not supernatural magic or '*cabala*'. Therefore, it would be wrong to call a magic performing monk a Tantrist.

PHAP HIEN

The Vietnamese monk Phap Hien was born in Chu Dien, what is now in the Gia Lam district of Hanoi. He became the second founder of the sect that bears his teacher's name after being presented with his teacher's mantle. He was praised as a living Bodhisattva by the monk Tan Tian in his report to the Sui court dissuading the Emperor from sending a delegation of missionaries to Giao Chau, for at this place is "The honorable monk Phap Hien, who reached enlightenment together with Vinitaruci, propagated the Three Founders' principles, has been confirmed as a living Bodhisattva, and lives in the Chung Thien Pagoda teaching and training 300 people to become Buddhists."

Phap Hien was praised and given highly honorable titles such as a living Bodhisattva by Tan Tian himself, a high ranking monk known as a profound scholar in the Sui capital. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk [Phap Hien] had the family name of Do, cloistered in the Chung Thien Pagoda located in the Thien Phuong mountain in Tien Du and was born in Chu Dien. At the beginning, he studied with the monk Quan Duyen in the Phap Van Pagoda. He was afterwards accepted as a disciple by the Indian monk, Vinitaruci, who had come from China. The latter had also transferred his Buddhist mantle to him.

After Vinitaruci's death, "he [Phap Hien] went straight to Tu Son, and concentrated himself in meditation: the body having gotten dried out as a tree, his body fell down and he forgot everything. Birds flew towards him, wild animals turned around him. Hearing of this, uncountable contemporaries came and asked for lessons. The monk built a pagoda and taught followers. Their number often reached more than 300. Buddhist religion in the South blossomed from then on."

A Chinese vice-governor in Giao Chau named Liu Fang under the Sui's reign, reported to the King Sui Gaozu that "This country had honored Buddhist prayers for a long time and highly estimated virtuous and well-known monks." The King ordered the governor to grant five cases of Buddha's remains, as well as promulgate royal ordinances and order the construction of towers for the Buddhist cult. Phap Hien built towers in the Phap Van Pagoda in Luy Lau and in other well-known pagodas in territories as Phong, Hoan, Truong, and Ai.

When Phap Hien received relics or ashes left after the cremation of a Buddha or saint from the Sui Emperor, he distributed them to the well-known pagodas in the territories: Phong, Hoan, Truong, and Ai. Phong or Phong Chau now is in the Vinh Tuong and Lam Thao districts of Vinh Yen. Hoan, i.e., Hoan Chau is Nghe An province today. Truong Chau is called Tuyen Quang today. Lastly, Ai Chau is in present-day Thanh Hoa province, called the Cuu Chau (Nine Districts) during the Sui dynasty. Numerous pagodas were built in a lot of districts in Vietnam, from Nghe An to Tuyen Quang. All of Phap Hien's work ended under Tang Wudi's reign in the 9th era (626 A.D) when he died.

The primary lesson of Vinitaruci's Buddhist sect is its veneration for worship and religious striving. This was why, at Tang Wudi's death, Phap Hien left the Phap Van pagoda for good and came straight to the Tu Son mountain, concentrated himself in Buddhist mediation to the point of having his body dry out and he to forget everything. Nevertheless, he did not abandon propagating the doctrine, and he built pagodas to receive many followers to whom he taught Buddhism. Educating people is every monk's work, no matter which sect he belongs to. In spite of Bodhidharma's teaching against the written word, Buddhists in Vietnam have paid great attention to educating, preaching, and translating the Buddhist canon.

NOTE

¹Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, p. 351.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND CHAN SECT IN VIETNAM: WU YAN TONG, CAM THANH, AND THIEN HOI

THE LIFE OF WU YAN TONG AND THE WU YAN TONG SECT

In 820, about two centuries after Vinitaruci, a Chinese Buddhist monk known as Wu Yantong (Vo Ngon Thong in Vietnamese) came to live in the Kien So pagoda located in the village of Phu Dong, Bac Ninh province (present-day Ha Bac). He was to become the founder of the second Chan sect in Vietnam. He was born in Guangzhou with the family name Zheng. He later studied at the Shuanglin (“double forest”) pagoda in Yuzhou, China. According to some sources, Yuzhou was then part of Zhejiang province. To others, it belonged to Guizhou and was the main town of the Weichuan district. Following the fall of the Tang dynasty, Yuzhou became known as Sizhou. Although very learned, Wu Yantong was said to be a reserved man (e.g., the Chinese monograph *Chuan Deng Liu* referred to him as Bu Yutong, or “not through spoken language”). The following story is recounted in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*:

One day Wu Yantong was praying to Buddha when a man came by and asked, ‘What are you praying to?’

The monk answered, ‘Praying to Buddha’.

Pointing to the statue of Buddha, the man asked, ‘What is this?’

The monk was unable to answer. That night, the monk, in full garb, came to kneel before this man and said, ‘I do not understand the principles of that which you questioned me about earlier’.

The man asked, ‘How many summers (1) have you been in orders?’

‘Ten summers’, answered the monk.

The man then asked, ‘Have you definitely left your home to enter religious life?’

The monk was perplexed. Then the man continued, ‘If you don’t understand my questions, even one hundred summers of worship would be of no use to you’.

The man brought Wu Yantong to study under the Daoyi who had been the disciple of Nanyue Huairang. But Daoyi had died just before the new monk arrived, so the latter asked to be a disciple of the monk Bai Zhang, who was himself Daoyi’s best disciple. (Daoyi’s family name was Ma, and he was therefore commonly known as: ‘Ma the Patriarch’).

Bai Zhang (Vietnamese: Bach Truong) (710-814), originally from Changluo in Fuzhou, was Ma the Patriarch's favorite disciple. After finishing his studies under Ma, he went to cloister himself in Da Hong mountain, near Fuzhou. He owed his name to the height of the mountain where he retired, for Bai Zhang means "one hundred paces". According to the Chinese *Chuan Deng Liu (Truyen Dang Luc)*, Bai Zhang founded two Chan sects in China, the Thien Quy Nguong and Thien Lam Te sects. In fact, Bai Zhang was also at the origin of another sect, the Wu Yantong sect, this time in Vietnam, not China. To understand the conceptual basis of the Wu Yantong sect which concerns us here, we must first have a firm grasp of Bai Zhang's philosophy.

The fundamentals of his philosophy can be inferred from this conversation between Bai Zhang and some of his disciples. One day, during a lesson, a disciple asked Bai Zhang about the Buddhist concept of corruption expressed in the scriptures. He answered:

First of all you must give up all predestined inclinations, forget everything, good or evil, in this world or out of this world, must remember none of this, nor think of it, in order to devote your body and your heart and allow them thereby to become free and detached. The heart becomes as hard as wood, as hard as stone, making no distinctions, engaging in no action. If your heart reaches that point, the sun of your intelligence will appear as naturally as the sun appears when the clouds disperse.

The *Chuan Deng Liu*, which reports this conversation, adds that after hearing the master's explanation, Wu Yantong had a deep religious experience, went back to Guangzhou and secluded himself in the An Hoa Pagoda. (*Thien Uyen Tap Anh* refers to it as the Hoa An Pagoda). The fundamental concept of Bai Zhang's philosophy is a state of absolute abstinence called the "no-thinking" position. One is absolutely at peace, free from interminable, disorderly thought and feeling in the mind and heart. Then one's spirit may blaze and reality will appear clearly before one's eyes. That is enlightenment and deliverance. That is Nirvana. This is the nature of Bai Zhang's teachings which were to be spread in Vietnam through the Wu Yantong sect.

In the year 820, Wu Yantong went to Vietnam and came to the Kien So Pagoda in Phu Dong (Bac Ninh province). All day long he sat, facing the wall, without pronouncing a word. He sat like this for several years, without anyone knowing who he was. Only the resident monk of that Pagoda, named Cam Thanh, knew that he was a high-ranking monk in his Buddhist order, and served him with devotion.

In 826, Wu Yantong died, passing his Buddhist seal to Cam Thanh. Before dying he spoke to Cam Thanh:

Long ago, my master was Nanyue Huairang. Before dying he taught me:
All knowledge alike
Is born from the heart.
The heart has no point of origin,
Knowledge has no permanent place of rest.
If one can conquer the heart,
Nothing will stand in the way of action.
If not in the presence of higher intelligence, prudence in words.

When he had taught this, Wu Yantong clasped his hands and died. Cam Thanh incinerated his body, gathered the remains and built a tower on Tien Son mountain. Wu Yantong died at the age of 98, in the year of the horse (826).

The litany recorded above and attributed to Huairang (677-714) is an important scripture, as this monk was the direct disciple of the sixth Patriarch of the Chinese Chan sect, Hui Neng, and the most famous one as well. Huairang became Ma Daoyi's teacher, who was later to be Bai Zhang's. Finally Bai Zhang passed his knowledge to Wu Yantong.

Let us delve a bit into the significance of this litany. The last two lines express a warning: "If not in presence of higher intelligence, prudence in words." If the interlocutor is not a highly intelligent, educated man, one must not communicate the content of this litany. Why was such a warning necessary? Was it because the depth, the power of these words was beyond the simple man's understanding?

How do we understand the first four lines according to Wu Yantong's and Huairang's philosophy? Knowledge is in nature, all events: all phenomena in the universe appear to make up reality, but in fact they are dependent on the activity of consciousness to subsist and maintain themselves. This is the mysterious truth that the simple man is unable to believe or understand. If through training, a person succeeds in ending consciousness, reaching the state called "no thinking," without thought, consciousness or differentiation, then all knowledge, all things, all phenomena lose their support, are unable to live or become reality. It is then that real enlightenment comes, that the intelligence blazes forth. The religious person receives enlightenment and deliverance; all obstacles are swept away.

Reality exists before us, but distorted, disfigured by the will of the heart that tries to differentiate things. That propensity to differentiate is our ordinary conscious state. Religious training aims at mastering this will to make way for the illumination of the intelligence. In Buddhist writings this is called Prajna's intelligence, a state of perfect understanding. In the light of Prajna's intelligence, the world we perceive before us is not the everyday world, but the reality, the world of Nirvana.

THE SPREAD OF THE WU YAN TONG SECT'S IDEAS AND SCRIPTURES

According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the Wu Yantong order spanned 15 generations. Only the first four are of concern to us here, the rest will be dealt with in a following chapter (Buddhism under the Ly).

1. Wu Yantong (died 826)
2. Cam Thanh (died 860)
3. Thien Hoi (died 900)
4. Van Phong (died 959)

The Wu Yantong Chan sect differs from Vinitaruci in several respects. Though both sects were introduced from China, the Vinitaruci sect was established in Vietnam by an Indian monk and betrays the influence of Indian Buddhism, while the Wu Yantong order was founded after Hui Neng, the sixth patriarch, and therefore carries the mark of Chinese Buddhism. Bai Zhang followed three generations after Hui Neng in a direct line, and was to become Wu Yantong 's teacher. He wrote a well-known series of books titled *Bach Truong Thanh Quy* which lay down the laws regulating the activities and training of monks in religious institutes. It is quite possible that Wu Yantong himself introduced these regulations into Vietnamese pagodas. The aim of this set of rules was to create a stable routine in training and daily activities, thus aiding monks to achieve tranquillity in their hearts.

The fundamental idea in the Wu Yantong system is that the truth is not far from us, it is before us, in every man himself. Truth can only be perceived directly and cannot be understood through the medium of language, written texts, books. When speaking about prompt enlightenment, we mean that there is no need of language, written texts or any speculation.. Here we should associate these thoughts with a statement by Bai Zhang, typical for South China Chan sect: "If the heart is void, the intellect will blaze itself. What does the word "void" mean? At a low level, it means to have no evil deed or thought, to have no trivial and vulgar ambition. At a higher level, it means something superior than language, thought and speculation. The consciousness seems to stop and does not run after any inside or outside predestined fates.

Later on, several authors, basing themselves on this text, went on to explain it as "prompt" enlightenment. Such an explanation does not conform to the fundamental thought of Chan Buddhism in general, and not only Hui Neng's Chan sect in particular. It should be understood as a direct (and not prompt) enlightenment.

Let us recall the litany said to be written by Bodhidharma, which summarizes the guiding principles of Chan Buddhism as follows:

Not through word or language

Not to communicate truth through dogma
To go straight into the heart
To train the heart to become Buddha.

If we do not refer to texts for explanation, but base ourselves instead on the intent of the litany, we understand that the fundamental idea is that truth is not far from us, but is in every person's heart, that we can find Truth in that heart by apprehending it directly without the help of language, texts, books or teaching. Basically, one cannot grasp Truth in words, not even through the classical prayers or a master's teachings, nor even by one's own power of reason. Truth must be met directly. In fact the crux of the matter is not whether it takes a short or long time to reach this point but whether one approaches it directly or indirectly. If indirectly, then Truth will remain forever far from us; if directly, then Truth appears right in front of us.

The aim is not only to deliver mankind from suffering and the cycle of reincarnation, but also rather to reach Truth as an end in itself. It is necessary, however, that you know to look into yourself to find the truth that resides in your soul, your heart. If you search for truth around you, you will pass from Karma to Karma without reaching enlightenment and deliverance. The ocean of suffering will only widen and the shores of enlightenment remain distant and dark

Nguyen Hoc (died 1175), also a patriarch of the fourth generation of the Wu Yantong order, tried to clarify these precepts in the following verses:

The Way has no form
It exists before you, not far away.
Turn into yourself to find it,
Don't search for it another place (or another person)
For though you may find it there,
What you find will not be really truth.

These lines express the fundamental beliefs of Vietnamese Buddhism, and of Buddhism in general.

CAM THANH, THE SECOND GENERATION

Cam Thanh was born in Tien Du district. While his original name remains unclear, we do know that he first took the name Lap Duc upon entering the orders. A notable in the village, by the name of Nguyen, built a pagoda and asked him to become the resident monk. He at first refused, but then, according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, he had a dream, in which an angel advised him to accept the offer, for not long thereafter he would benefit greatly from it. He therefore accepted. The pagoda was called Kien So, located in Phu Dong, Tien Du (former Bac Ninh province).

Soon thereafter, Wu Yantong came over from China. Lap Duc recognized him as an extraordinary man and served him with great devotion. Wu Yantong renamed him Cam Thanh. One day the old monk imparted to him the following history of the sect: "Long ago, due to a predestined cause, the Buddha came to life. Once his noble mission was accomplished, he entered Nirvana. Buddha's true, great and marvelous heart was called 'the eyes denote quietness'."² Sakyamuni personally transmitted his religion to his disciple, Mahakasyapa, who in turn passed it down from generation to generation: The great Bodhidharma left India and, after facing many dangers came and transmitted the religion to the sixth patriarch, Hui Neng, himself the disciple of the fifth patriarch, Huang Ren. When Bodhidharma first arrived, as he was entirely unknown, he started proselytizing, in order to ease the transmitting of his teachings. Once he had recruited 90 followers from among the people, realizing that proselytizing could cause factionalism, he stayed with Hui Neng and ceased all proselytizing from then on. From then on, teaching was to be done from heart to heart.

Nanyue Huairang was the first to receive this heart to heart teaching; Huairang taught Ma Daoyi in the same way, and he in turn became Bai Zhang's teacher. It is from Bai Zhang that I know this method. It is by now well known in the North. Since there are many men who follow the way of Mahayana, I decided to go South to seek men of intellect: A predestined cause ordained our meeting".

Then Wu Yantong taught his disciple a litany, which we divide into several parts and paraphrase, in the interest of clarity.

a. History of Buddhism. The first section of the poem recalls the legendary history of the faith, beginning from Sakyamuni, passing through Mahakasyapa and so on, until Bodhidharma brought it to China and founded Chinese Chan Buddhism. Thereafter, Chan Buddhism was divided into five sects. The first Chan order is known as the "heart sect," since it postulates the heart which is in every living creature as its fundamental principle.

b. The principle of the heart. To say that Buddha transmitted the religion of the eyes to his disciple Mahakasyapa is in fact to say that Buddha transmitted nothing at all, because genuine religion is nothing more than the heart that resides already within Mahakasyapa as it does in every person. If we can attest to the existence of the heart, we can also be sure that the Western Paradise, Buddha's universe, the Nirvana, is always to be found in that heart and nowhere else. The same moon, the same sun, the same mountains and rivers fill this world, so if we can attest to the existence of the heart, then the same moon, sun, mountains and rivers can be said to constitute Nirvana. One must follow this Truth exactly, for the slightest error will cause a deviation of a thousand miles. Indeed, Truth is within everyone, and the farther one goes searching for it, the farther one is from the Truth.

c. Wu Yantong enjoined Cam Thanh to observe carefully, think deeply and not misunderstand the spirit of his teaching, as any misunderstanding might lead future generations into error. The marvelous heart, i.e. Nirvana, cannot be asked about directly, because it is above reason, above language. Thus if anyone asks about it, one must keep silent.

THIEN HOI, THE THIRD GENERATION

Thien Hoi was born in Sieu Loai district, Bac Ninh province (actual Ha Bac). As a boy, he studied at the Dinh Thien Pagoda in his native village. While still an adolescent he entered orders and took the name To Phong. He then became a disciple of Cam Thanh in Kien So Pagoda.

One day the disciple asked his teacher, Cam Thanh, "In the sutras, Gautama Buddha said he trained in the immensity and void to become a Buddha. Now you say the heart is Buddha. Buddha is the heart. What do you mean by this?" The master answered, "Who is the person speaking the words spoken in the sutras?"

"Those words were not pronounced by the Buddha then?"

"No, Buddha did not speak those words. In the Scriptures, Buddha says, 'when I was among the living, I taught them for 49 years, without ever writing down a single sentence.' This he said because his religion was the true one. If you rely upon written texts to find the way, you will become bogged down in details; if you endure suffering to find Buddha you will become lost; if you part with the heart to find Buddha, you commit a heresy; but if you accept that this heart is Buddha then it must be so."

The disciple asked, "If you say the heart is Buddha, then within the heart what is Buddha and what isn't?"

To this the master answered, "Long ago someone asked the Patriarch Ma, 'If you say that the heart is Buddha, then what in the heart is Buddha?' Ma answered, 'If you suspect that the heart is not Buddha, please take it out and show it to me'. The man could not. Ma pursued, 'If you succeed, you will find Buddha everywhere, in everything. If you fail you will go from one error to the next'.³ This means that you err because you are hidden from the truth by one sentence only. Do you understand now?"

"If that is so, I understand."

"What have you understood?"

"That Buddha is everywhere, in everything and where Buddha is, there also is the heart."

Once he had spoken, the disciple prostrated himself. Cam Thanh said, "So you have achieved enlightenment." He then gave his disciple the name Thien Hoi, which means "to understand well." The latter returned to Dinh Thien Pagoda to become the resident monk there. In the year 800 he died, passing his seal to his disciple, Van Phong. Between the introduction of Buddhism in Vietnam and the founding of the Wu Yantong sect lies a period of almost one thousand years. Vietnam was during this time known successively as Giao Chi, Giao Chau, Ai Chau, Nhat Nam. It was already

one of the bases from which Buddhism was to spread through East Asia, one of the earliest locales where Buddhist sutras were preached and translated, and finally one of the important stops for monks teaching and searching for scriptures.

Whether originating from the South or the North the proselytizing of Buddhism was always peaceful and showed no sign of xenophobia towards foreign religions, as was the case in China. Many Vietnamese came to Buddhism of their own accord, and adopted the Buddhist beliefs such as compassion, reincarnation, retribution, etc., in order to train themselves and help others. There were some (such as Ly Phat Tu) who used Buddhism to rally the population to resist the domination of the Chinese. In time, Buddhism penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of the Vietnamese people. By the end of Chinese rule, it had become generalized throughout the society. In every Vietnamese Buddhist, religious identity and national identity were closely related, and became strong factors in the national insurrection of the tenth century. This mixed identity also created favorable conditions for the adoption of Buddhism as a national religion after the recovery of Vietnam's independence.

NOTES

¹One summer is equal to one year cloistering in a temple.

²I.e., the Buddha's intelligence.

³From the Chinese original, meaning, "If successful, everyone will become Buddha; if not, they will fail forever."

PART TWO

**BUDDHISM FROM THE NGO TO
THE TRAN DYNASTIES
(10TH-14TH CENTURIES A.D.)**

CHAPTER VII

BUDDHISM UNDER THE NGO, DINH AND EARLY LE DYNASTIES

The famous Bach Dang victory in 938 put an end to one thousand years of Chinese feudal domination and opened a new independent era in the history of Vietnam. In the tenth century, the newly-built independent state consolidated its position and readied itself to resist enemies from abroad and stifle domestic dissent and division from within. Against this background, violence and military might became the state's primary method of social and political control. It was paradoxical also during this period however, that major steps in the expansion of Vietnamese Buddhism took place. The same Kings who “put cauldrons of boiling oil in the middle of their courtyards and raised caged tigers and jaguars” to intimidate their opposition, were also great supporters of Buddhism. To understand this seemingly contradictory situation, we must first grasp the nature of Vietnamese Buddhism in the tenth century.

Since the end of the period of Chinese feudal domination, Buddhism expanded throughout all regions of Vietnam. A stratum of influential Vietnamese monks appeared, many of whom had studied in China, Indonesia, and India. Due to their profound knowledge (including mastery of both Chinese and Sanskrit), these monks came to be perceived as an intelligentsia. Moreover, Buddhist monks and their disciples participated together with the people in the movement for national liberation and independence.

During the period immediately following independence, in addition to the reasons suggested above, two other factors contributed to the increased prestige and social import of Buddhism. First, the newly independent state needed an ideological basis from which to build and manage the country. And second, the development of Confucianism was not complete. Thus the door was left open for the encroachment of Buddhist orthodoxy.

NEW BUDDHIST CENTERS

From the end of the period of Chinese feudal domination, Buddhism expanded not only throughout the Red River delta, but as far as Ai Chau and Hoan Chau (i.e., former Thanh Hoa and Nghe An territory). Ancient historical texts have recorded the names of well-known monks of that region from as early as the Tang dynasty.

In the tenth century, most areas under Buddhist influence had developed in the northern regions of the Red River delta. Apart from ancient Buddhist centers such as Luy Lau (Thuan Thanh, Ha Bac), and

Kien So (Phu Dong, Gia Lam), there were also many pagodas at Bac Giang (i.e., Ha Bac today). In the Co Phap prefect (named the Thien Duc district under the Ly dynasty), there were many well-known pagodas including the Kien Duong Pagoda in Hoa Lam village, the Thien Chung and Luc To pagodas in Dich Bang village, the Song Lam Pagoda in Phu Ninh village, and the Cam Ung Pagoda in Ba Son Mount (Tien Son), etc.

The tenth century also witnessed the creation of completely new Buddhist centers. We must first make mention of the Dai La center which became Thang Long under the Ly dynasty. It was there in the sixth century that King Ly Nam De built the Khai Quoc pagoda (known today as the Tran Quoc Pagoda in Hanoi). Until the middle of the tenth century, the Khai Quoc pagoda was home to the Bonze Van Phong of the third generation of the branch of the Wu Yantong sec. Van Phong's disciple, the leading monk Ngo Chan Luu, bore the title Khuong Viet. Under the Dinh, he enlarged the Khai Quoc Pagoda, turning it into a center for the spread of Buddhism. In *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* it is said that the great monk Khuong Viet led the expansion of Buddhist studies in the Khai Quoc pagoda and that the Buddhist monk Da Bao attended courses there. There were also then in Dai La, other pagodas such as the Cat Tuong home of the monk Vien Chieu during the Ly dynasty.

Another center was Hoa Lu. Hoa Lu served as the capital under the Dinh and early Le dynasties. The Kings of those dynasties held Buddhism in high regard and patronized many pagodas, the remains of which can still be found today. For example, from the Thap pagoda, there exists today the original foundation, which can be seen along the banks of the Hoang river. The square stones anchoring the columns measure up to 0.68 meters, thus suggesting the great size of this ancient pagoda. From another Hoa Lu pagoda, the Nhat Tru, very few traces of ancient architecture still exist. The three-meter high eight-sided columns erected in 995 and on which were carved the ancestral tablets of *Lang Nghiem* are the only vestiges which remain today. It is probable that the entire ancient pagoda was erected towards the end of the tenth century.

The Ba Ngo pagoda, also in Hoa Lu, was supposedly also built during the Dinh dynasty. Its stele from the Yuan period bears the following inscription: "The Ba Ngo in our hamlet was a well-known site from the old capital of Dai Co Viet." The Ba Ngo agricultural goddesses are worshipped in this pagoda, suggesting that Buddhism may have merged at this site (as at Luy Lau) with a popular indigenous cult.

BUDDHISM, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

As Buddhism expanded and penetrated into Vietnamese society, the royal court formally recognized it as an official religion. After taking the throne in 971, King Dinh Tien Hoang standardized the different grades for the Buddhist monkhood, as well as for cultural and military dignitaries. Ngo Chan Luu was named "Tang Thong," the highest rank in the

monkhood, and awarded the further appellation of “Khuong Viet.” Truong Ma Ni was named “Tang Luc“, one grade below that awarded to Ngo Chan Luu. The grades “Tang Thong” and “Tang Luc” continued to be used by succeeding royal courts.

That the standardization of different grades within the Buddhist clergy occurred simultaneously with the consolidation of the State apparatus suggests that the Dinh kings held Buddhism in high regard. The succeeding Le dynasty pursued similar policies. Many monks became advisors to the Dinh and Le Kings on matters of domestic and foreign policy. The title “Khuong Viet“ awarded by Dinh Tien Hoang to Ngo Chan Luu meant, “to help the Viet country”. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, Dinh Tien Hoang frequently consulted Khuong Viet and paid him great respect. The King Le Dai Hanh held Khuong Viet in such high esteem that he was “permitted to participate in the great military affairs of the nation.”¹ Do Phap Thuan (died in 990), a monk of the Vinitaruci Chan sect was also an advisor to Le Dai Hanh. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, “From the foundation of the early Le dynasty, Do Phap Thuan worked very hard for the national interest, but when peace was reestablished, he refused every title and award. This attitude increased the respect which King Le Dai Hanh accorded him and the King dared not call the Bonze by his name. Instead, King Le Dai Hanh called him the Great monk Do and instructed him to indulge in literary pursuits.”² Other Bonzes such as Ma Ha, Sung Pham,³ and Van Hanh were also often consulted by King Le Dai Hanh about the resistance against the Song in 980. Van Hanh was to gain a reputation for his work contributing to the enthronement of Ly Cong Uan.

Other Bonzes under the Dinh and Le dynasties were entrusted with diplomatic missions, such as welcoming Chinese ambassadors. In 987, King Le Dai Hanh ordered the Bonze Phap Thuan to disguise himself as a river commander and welcome the Chinese ambassador Ly Giac. After Ly Giac returned to China, the King ordered Khuong Viet to write a farewell poem entitled “*Ngoc Lang Quy*“:

Sunshine and farewell wind swell the sails.
 His Excellency returns to his imperial country.
 He crosses blue waves of very large ocean to be back to his vast sky.
 Our feelings are deeply heartfelt.
 Have some cups of wine before leaving.

I touch the ambassador's State coach and my heart is full of affection. Please, forward to the Emperor our will to work for the Southern country.⁴

This elegantly worded diplomatic poem dearly expresses our will to be independent and the masters of our own country. It also represents the earliest known work of Vietnamese literature. While monks contributed

little to the functioning of the administrative apparatus, their influence on politics was nevertheless significant.

The influence of Buddhism on society also increased in the heavily populated delta region, hundreds of pagodas sprang up. As mentioned above, the formation of new Buddhist centers indicates the growing social influence of Buddhism. Since its inception, Buddhism has always fused closely with traditional popular beliefs. Even after its influence spread far from its original centers, Buddhism still retained a strong syncretistic character, routinely adapting to accommodate older indigenous popular beliefs. The following eleventh century story about the monk Ma Ha taken from *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* is instructive:

Ma Ha went to Ai Chau, and continued on till the outskirts of Sa Dang. The people there worshipped evil spirits and took great joy in slaughtering animals. The monk advised them to fast but the people replied, 'Our spirits have the power to bless us or harshly punish us; we dare not provoke them'. The monk responded, 'You must abandon evil and do good. If anything bad happens, I will bear full responsibility'. A villager answered, 'In this village, a man has been stricken with leprosy for years. Physicians and sorcerers can do nothing. If you could cure him, we will behave as you have said'. The monk poured holy water on the leper and he was immediately cured.⁵

The aim of this story was to praise Ma Ha's religious skill. It also reflected the reality that people tended to abandon their religious beliefs for Buddhism, only if Buddhism could prove itself better able to serve and protect them.

The disorder plaguing the period of the twelve warring lords also tended to bring people closer to Buddhism. The ruling class, while ordering mass slaughters, simultaneously prayed to the Buddha to forgive them their crimes. A good example is the South Viet Prince, Dinh Lien, the son of Dinh Tien Hoang, who after killing his younger brother, ordered the erection of one hundred stone columns at Hoa Lu. The King made this gesture both to seek the emancipation of his brother's soul and to ensure the future maintenance of his own wealth and prestige.⁶

As it penetrated deeper into popular spiritual life, Buddhism carved out a durable niche in society. While its full flowering obviously did not occur until the Ly and Tran Dynasties, historical and archaeological evidence available to us today from Hoa Lu suggests that the development of Vietnamese Buddhism in the tenth century was also quite significant.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHAN SECTS

The Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects, founded initially during the

period of Chinese domination, continued their development under the Ngo, Dinh, and Le reigns. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* lists the names of prominent members of the Vintaruci sect including famous tenth generation monks such as Phap Thuan and Ma Ha,⁷ eleventh generation monks like Thien Ong and Sung Pham⁸ and those of the twelfth generation including Van Hanh. In the Wu Yantong sect, third generation monks such as Khuong Viet and the fifth generation monk Da Bao were also acclaimed.

Bonze Superior Phap Thuan (915-990) (family name Do) entered the monkhood and lived at Thanh Hoa's Co Son pagoda. He was the follower of Bonze Phu Tri from the Long Thu pagoda. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* noted that he was “an erudite scholar, well-versed in poetry, with a special talent for helping kings and profoundly understanding the basic problems of life. The advice he gave to King Le Dai Hanh has already been mentioned. When the King asked him about the country’s destiny, he answered with the following poem:

The country's destiny is like the entwining clouds,
The country Nam enjoying peace.
Nothing hovers over the imperial palaces.
Fighting has ended everywhere.

Phap Thuan was also the author of the book *Bo Tat Hieu Sam Hoi Van*. Bonze Superior Ma Ha's full name in Sanskrit, “Mahamaya,” means “great illusion.” Originally of Cham descent, he eventually assumed the family name Duong. His father, Boi Da, knew Sanskrit well and rose to the official rank of Boi Da (or Da Phan, which perhaps stood for the functionary who took care of Sanskrit books under the Le reign). He not only knew Sanskrit but Chinese, as well. He was a disciple of Do Phap Thuan and later served in Ai and Hoan upland district.

The Bonze Superior Ong (family name, Lu) studied under the patriarch La Quy An. He lived at the Song Lam Pagoda in Phu Ninh village (part of Gia Lam, Hanoi) and died in 979. The well-known monk Van Hanh (died 1018)⁹ was a disciple of Ong and lived towards the end of the Le and the beginning of the Ly dynasties.

Sung Pham (family name Man), a follower of Bonze Superior Vo Ngai, studied in India for nine years. Upon returning, he lived in the Phap Van Pagoda, known today as the Dau pagoda in Ha Bac.

In the Wu Yantong sect, during the Ngo reign, there lived a Bonze Superior named Van Phong, who was the professor of Khuong Viet Ngo Chan Luu. Van Phong lived in the Khai Quoc pagoda (known today as the Tran Quoc pagoda). He was a follower of Bonze Superior Thien Hoi who lived in the Dinh Thien pagoda, located in Sieu Loai Village (today Thuan Thanh, Ha Bac). *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* notes an interesting exchange that occurred between the two monks Thien Hoi and Van Phong concerning Buddhist conceptions of “Life and Death”:

- Thien Hoi: Life and death are great problems, we must rid ourselves of them.
- Van Phong: How can life and death be avoided?
- Thien Hoi: To avoid them, one must go to a place where life and death are not.
- Van Phong: And where is the place where life and death are not?
- Thien Hoi: Find them in the place they are.
- Van Phong: And how does one find them?
- Thien Hoi: Go away! Come back here in the afternoon.
- Van Phong died in 956 during the reign of King Ngo Xuong Van.

The great monk Khuong Viet Ngo Chan Luu lived in the Phat Da Pagoda in Cat Li, the village of his birth.¹⁰ He was a disciple of Bonze Superior Van Phong who served at the Khai Quoc Pagoda, and afterwards, in that pagoda, he opened a school for Buddhist studies. From the age of forty, his reputation grew and he became advisor successively to King Dinh Tien Hoang and Le Dai Hanh. His old age was spent at a pagoda on Du Hy mountain. He died in 1011,¹¹ leaving behind a small poem:

In the tree, there originally is fire.
 Fire disappears and appears successively.
 If one asserts that trees have no fire,
 How to generate fire if one perforates them [cuts them up]?

One of Khuong Viet follower was Bonze Superior Da Bao of the Kien So Pagoda in Phu Dong village (today situated in Hanoi suburb). Like Bonze Superior Van Hanh, he also prophesied that Ly Cong Uan would become King. And afterwards, he became the advisor to King Ly Thai To.

Besides the monks belonging to the two above-mentioned sects, Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong, there were also monks whose sect adhesion was unknown, the monk Truong Ma Vi for example. While the Viet state encouraged the expansion of Buddhism during this period, there is no evidence of the existence of a stratum of hermits or other Buddhist practitioners independent of monastic institutions.

It is very difficult to note the distinction between the ideology of the two religious sects, Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong, in the tenth century. It seems that monks of the Wu Yantong sect concerned themselves with a series of fundamental subjects such as the problem of mortality and immortality, questions about the soul and the existence of absolute truth. These issues found expression in a number of litanies and formal dialogues, such as the dialogue between Da Bao and Khuong Viet on fidelity.¹²

In the biographies of monks from the Vinitaruci sect, we find none of these thoughts, but instead we find emphasis on problems relating to Hindu mysticism or Tantrism. Tantric features can also be found in the Wu Yantong sect. The existence of tantric elements in the texts of Buddhist sects from this period suggests that Buddhism was attempting to

incorporate popular tantric concerns in order to increase its relevance for the populace.

Tantric Factors on the Hoa Lu Prayer Columns

Tenth century monks, particularly those of the Vinitaruci sect, frequently concerned themselves with questions of Tantric philosophy. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk Ma Ha “recited the Buddhist scriptures *Dai Bi Tam* continuously over a three year period.” Afterwards he could understand the *Dhuranisamadhi* and other magic. The monk, Van Hanh, also studied the *Dhuranisamadhi*.

The *Dhuranisamadhi* was a popular form of spiritual self-improvement which originated with Tantrism. It consisted of using a method of meditation called “*samadhi*” in order to realize the “*dharni*” a state of goodness without wickedness. Tantrism maintained the existence of certain secrets of the body, secrets of the mind and secrets of language. In order to preserve the secrets of the body one had to perfect the “*mudra*” (a Hindu dance [and gesture] technique). In order to preserve the secrets of the mind, one must perfect one's “*samadhi*” (meditation). To protect the secrets of language one must recite “*dharani*” (incantations), considered secret words with prophetic power. Different “*dharani*” existed for different objectives. These incantations were originally in Sanskrit but when propagated in China and Vietnam, were transcribed into Chinese characters. While the original meaning was lost in this process, it was believed that the sound of the phonetic incantation was both mystical and sacred.

The Tantric incantation *Mahakarunahridayadharani* was highly respected by Vietnamese monks in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Along with Ma Ha, many other monks studied and recited this “*dharani*.” For example, according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk Tu Dao Hanh of the Ly reign “recited this “*dharani*” everyday, one million eight thousand times.” Monks recited these different incantations in order to cure diseases, ward off evil spirits, beg for rain and ensure good weather.

Moreover, in the tenth century, monks often used forms of litany and prophesy to influence public opinion regarding political movements. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* claims that “the monk Phap Thuan's speeches were prophetic” and that monk Van Hanh's sentences were “considered oracular by the people.” Van Hanh was renowned for prophesying that Ly Cong Uan would become King. Besides conventional prophesies often made during religious activities, monks accepted and relied on phenomena such as omens and dreams.

Describing the extraordinary acts attributed to the monk Khuong Viet from the Wu Yantong sect, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* related the following:

Khuong Viet often visited Ve Linh mountain in Binh Lo district. Finding the site melancholic, he decided to build a pagoda there. One night he dreamed that an angel wearing

yellow armor, holding a yellow spear in his left hand, a Buddhist stupa in his right, and followed by ten hideous monsters appeared and said to him: 'I am the Heavenly King, Ty Sa Mon, my followers are all evil demons. The Celestial Emperor has ordered me to guard the boundaries of this country to encourage a flowering of Buddhism. Because both you and I serve an ancient cause, I am coming to ask you for help'. Paralyzed with fear, Khuong Viet woke up and heard strange and shrill cries coming from the mountain. The next morning, Khuong Viet went to the mountain and saw a 100 foot tree with fresh leaves and branches, surrounded by serene looking clouds. The monk chopped the tree down and carved images of demons from the wood which resembled those he had seen in his dream. In the first year of the Thien Phuc era (980), the Song armies invaded our country. Hearing of this divine man, King Le Dai Hanh sent a messenger to ask for help. Afraid, the Song armies retreated to defend Huu Ninh River. Seeing waves and winds and water dragons dancing and jumping, the invader's armies disbanded and ran away.

This story is reminiscent of one found in a variety of Buddhist texts that tell of Heavenly King Ty Sa Mon who, with the monk Bat Khong (Amoghavajra), founded Tantrism in China during the seventh century.¹³ Ty Sa Mon (Vaistramana or Vaitsravana in Sanskrit), originally the God of good fortune in Indian mythology, eventually became known as a god who defends Buddhist doctrine in Buddhist mythology. Perhaps belief in Ty Sa Mon (together with other Heavenly kings) was propagated in our country at the same time that Chinese Tantric influence became significant.¹⁴

Interestingly enough, evidence of Tantric influence on Vietnamese Buddhism can be found on the tenth century prayer columns at Hoa Lu. Up to now, nearly twenty prayer columns have been discovered in Hoa Lu, near the Hoang Long river about two kilometers from King Dinh's temple. The columns were eight-sided stone pillars, each side running from 50 to 70 centimeters. On the first column, found in 1965, one can read that the Tinh navy commander-in-chief, the South Viet King Dinh (Khuong) Lieu, erected one hundred "bao trang" in the year Quy Dau (i.e., 973).¹⁵ "Bao Trang" (*ratnadhavaja*) often called "Kinh Trang," were columns of Buddhist prayers. Dinh Lieu whose name was carved Dinh Khuong Lieu on the prayer columns, was the oldest son of King Dinh Tien Hoang. On a number of prayer columns, discovered in 1987, the reason for the erection of the columns was inscribed. King Khuong Lieu¹⁶ erected one hundred *ratnadhvaja* to beg for the emancipation of the soul of his younger brother - the Most Venerable Noa Tang Noa - whom he himself had killed. Dinh Noa Tang Noa was called the Most Venerable but was neither a monk nor a

retired scholar. According to what was carved on the prayer columns, Dinh Noa Tang Noa was killed for “lack of filial piety towards his father (i.e., Dinh Tien Hoang) and ungratefulness towards his eldest brother (i.e., Lieu), as well as for having an evil heart.”

According to *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, in the spring of the year Ky Mao (979), Viet King Dinh Lieu killed his younger brother Hang Lang because the latter was named heir prince by their father, Dinh Tien Hoang.¹⁷ We cannot be sure that Hang Lang and Dinh Noa Tang Noa were the same person. However, if we assume that they were,¹⁸ the newly discovered prayer columns would have been erected after the year Ky Mao Spring (979) and before the assassination of Dinh Lieu and Dinh Tien Hoang which occurred in October of that year. Thus it is possible that the prayer columns were erected on different dates.

One remarkable aspect of the Hoa Lu prayer columns is that they all have the *Usnisavijayadharani* incantation carved on them, phonetically transcribed into Chinese characters.¹⁹ *Usnisajayadharani* was a popular Tantric incantation. According to this sutra: “A King, Thien Tru (*Supra-Tisthita* in Sanskrit) led a decadent and wasteful life. One night, he heard a voice from the sky announcing that he would die in seven days. Afterwards he would be reincarnated seven times as different animals, pig, dog, fox, donkey, venomous snake, vulture, and raven. Thereafter, he would be forced to bear all of the tortures of hell. When he finally returned to his human form it would be as a blind man. Thien Tru was filled with terror and begged the God Indra for help. Indra agreed and implored benevolence from Buddha. Buddha read an incantation entitled *Usnisavijayadharani*. Indra recited this incantation to Thien Tru and spread it among all living creatures.” According to Buddha, this incantation could sweep away all misfortunes arising from life, death and hell. Anyone who recited the incantation would prolong his life and be blessed by Bodhisattavas and angels.²⁰

When he ordered the erection of the prayer columns carved with the *Usnisavijayadharani*, Dinh Lieu surely wanted to rid himself of the aforementioned animal Karmas and to repent for his crimes, such as the assassination of his younger brother. Upon erecting the prayer columns, Dinh Lieu also made a wish that the great Emperor, winner of the King Dinh Tien Hoang title,²¹ was to remain eternally the King of the southern country. He also wished that Khuong Lieu would forever after maintain his wealth and position. Both wishes are clearly carved on a prayer column discovered in 1987.

Like the other incantation, the *Unisavijayadhaani* was not translated but was transcribed phonetically directly into Chinese. In China, this incantation had different transcriptions at different times. A detailed comparison shows a resemblance between the incantation carved in Hoa Lu and the transcription made by the Chinese Tantric monks, the founders of the eighth century Tantric sect. In particular, the Hoa Lu incantation bears a deep similarity to that of the Chinese monk's Bat Khong Sect.²² It is

probable that the transcription of the incantation came to Vietnam during the period of Chinese feudal domination.

Other than the *Usnisavijayadharani* incantation, only one other incantation (discovered in 1964)²³ can be found on the Hoa Lu prayer columns. While some sentences and characters have faded beyond recognition, the meaning of this sutra is relatively clear. It can be translated as follows:

In his lotus palace, the supreme Victorious Buddha is sitting on his diamond throne. His sayings echo throughout three thousand worlds. His merit is as bountiful as the Ganges sands. Wondrous phrases and chapters emanate from the top of the Buddha's head²⁴ and are transmitted by 99 Nhu Lai Buddhas. Indra²⁵ then passes them on to Thien Chu Thien²⁶ and because of this, his Karma, which had destined him to be reincarnated seven times as seven different animals, is destroyed. If one maintains the Dhuranisamadhi (religious rites) of the Tantric sect, he will be bequeathed a benevolent heart and enjoy clear sight throughout his life. I am only a simple creature, who only knows how to praise intellectuals of the Dhuranisamadhi.²⁷ All profits and wealth must be given to simple creatures. Nhu Lai from ten directions, bodhisattvas from many different worlds...(unreadable), the general Tam Chi and his evil demons, Diem Vuong the lord of Hell together with his two assistants entrusted with examining good and evil actions... (Unreadable) After hearing this report, everybody asks to descend to earth to work for the everlasting existence of Buddhism and encourage all people to follow the teachings of the supreme being, Buddha Hearing, the voice of the Phat Dinh Ton Thang Vuong,²⁸ all the living creatures are moved and become Buddha.²⁹

Obviously this text bears close relation to the *Usnisavijayadharana* as it includes the story about King Thien Tru and the spread of the incantation. It is worth noting that in this version, the “*dharani*” is repeated twice and the Tantric “*dharani*” once. The presence of Tantric elements is undeniable.

This version also tells of the holy place of Mahayana full of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, good angels, evil demons, the emperor of Hell with his Demon army³⁰ and the General Tan Chi. In Buddhist mythology Tan Chi (*Pancika* or *Sanjaya*) was one of the eight generals commanding the demon army under Ty Sa Mon's authority. Today in front of the Nhat Tru Pagoda at Hoa Lu, there still remains a three-meter high stone column which had been erected in 995 during Le Dai Hanh's reign. On the eight

sides of the column are carved the words of the incantation from the *Surangama sutra* as follows:

The angels often heard sounds in Sanskrit,
Heard the chant “Phat Dinh Dhalany”
And thus were abstinent...

It is very possible that the “*Phat Dinh Dhalany*” recalled in the previous version is the same as the incantation “*Phat Dinh Ton Thang Dhalany*.” In any case, it appears that under the Le reign, reciting the Dhalany incantation was a popular activity. The prayer columns erected under the Dinh and Le reigns show the influence of Tantrism on Vietnamese Buddhism. However, independent Tantric sects never existed in Vietnam as they did in China. Sects from the Le period can be more accurately described as Chan sects.

NOTES

¹*Thien Uyen Tap Anh Ngu Luc*: Volume 1 (hereafter *TUTANL*).

²According to *TUTANL*, King Le Dai Hanh often invited Sung Pham to come to the palace for consultations on religious matters and treated him very kindly. It also claimed that Sung Pham died in 1087, at the age of 84, the third year of Quang Huu during Ly Nhan Tong's reign. Sung Pham was born in 1004 (or 1003) and Le Dai Hanh in 1005, so that it would have been impossible for him to have consulted with the King on religious matters. Perhaps the information on Sung Pham's life and death is incorrect.

³Two copies of this poem are recorded, one in *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* and one in *TUTANL*. Here is quoted the copy restored by Hoang Van Lau, based on a number of lines from the farewell poem “*Nguyen Lang Quy*.” See Hoang Van Lau. “On the Farewell Poem in the Tenth Century” in “*Problems in the Study of Han Nom Documents*.” (Hanoi, 1983 p. 119- 211).

⁴*TUTANL*: Volume II.

⁵Based on Hoa Lu prayer columns discovered in 1987. See the following section.

⁶*TUTANL* mentioned the order of those generations excluding the founders of the sect as the Vinitaruci and the Wu Yantong. The founders' followers were called the first generation. If the Vinitaruci is included, Phap Thuan's generation will be called the eleventh generation. Here as elsewhere, we follow the original way of listing generations as that of the *TUTANL*.

⁷As previously mentioned, we are skeptical about the birth date of Sung Pham.

⁸At present, many documents note that Van Hanh's family name is Nguyen. This is originally based on the *TUTANL*. But the *TUTANL* is text from the Tran dynasty which substituted the family name Nguyen for Ly. For example Ly Giac was known in this document as Nguyen Giac, Ly Thuong Kiet became Nguyen Thuong Kiet, etc. Thus we believe that the family name of Van Hanh is actually Ly, but changed in the *TUTANL*.

Van Hanh was born in Co Phap which was also King Ly's birth place.

TUTANL mentioned that Van Hanh died in the ninth year of Thuan Thien (1018) while *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* claimed that Van Hanh died in the sixteenth year of King Thuan Thien (1025).

⁹According to the *TUTANL*, Khuong Viet was born in Cat Li village, Thuong Lac district; the location of this village is unknown. *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (Original edition, book 1, page 76) wrote that Pham Hap fought against Le Hoan, was defeated and came with his soldiers to Cat Loi village in Bac Giang. Cat Loi village as well as the Pho Da pagoda are where the monk Khuong Viet had cloistered, and in Bac Giang (belonging to Ha Bac today).

¹⁰*TUTANL* mentioned that Khuong Viet died in Thuan Thien's second year of Ly's reign (1011) at the age of 52. It also added that according to some people, he died at the age of 72. It was wrong to say that this monk would have had to be born in 960 and couldn't become a leading monk in 971, at the age of 11. So it's correct to say that Khuong Viet died at the age of 72: his birth year would be 933, and he would become a leading monk at the age of 39. This is consistent with the *TUTANL* which claims "he enjoyed a great reputation throughout the whole country at the age of 40."

¹¹*TUTANL* wrote: "One day, Da Bao, a talented disciple, asked Khuong Viet: "What is 'the beginning' and 'the end' in Buddhist doctrine?" The monk answered: "There is no beginning and no end."

¹²According to *Phat To Lich Dai Thong Tai* (book 13, chapter 36), in the year Quy Ti dynastic title Thien Bac (753), when the Tay Phien (i.e., Tho Phon) soldiers encircled Luong Chau, the monk Bat Khong read secret words calling the ghost soldiers and an angel wearing armor arrived. King Duong Tran Huyen Tong asked his identity and Bat Khong answered that he was the Heavenly King Sa Mon's eldest son coming from the North. Some days later, there was news about military victory in Luong Chau obtained with the ghost soldiers' help. Huyen Tong ordered the soldiers to build a temple for the cult of the Heavenly King Sa Mon. A similar version is given in *Than Tang Truyen* book 8 (stories about the angel monks, book 8).

¹³Ty Sa Mon was a heavenly King guarding the North together with three others guarding three other parts making Four Heavenly Kings or Four Great Heavenly Kings. In 1011, the Four Great Heavenly Kings Pagoda was built in the Thang Long suburbs.

¹⁴On this column of prayer the character "*Khuong*", written between two other characters "*Dinh*" and "*Lien*" was lost.

¹⁵The designation of the King's position is completely inscribed on the column.

¹⁶*Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, part I, page 5a.

¹⁷One must pay attention to the fact that the character "*Dinh*" and the character "*Hang*" resemble each other and are easy to confuse.

¹⁸Ha Van Tan, "From a [year-] 973 Buddhist Prayer Column Newly Discovered at Hoa Lu", *Historical Research*, #76, 1965, p. 39-50.

¹⁹These prayers can be read in *Dai Chinh Tan Tu Dai Tang Kinh*, Volume 19.

²⁰Dinh Tien Hoang's title.

²¹Ha Van Tan: As quoted above, pages 45-46.

²²Ha Van Tan: The Buddhist prayer columns dated from the second Kinh Dinh in Hoa Lu: *Archaeological Studies Review*", no.5-6, 1970, pages 24-31.

²³The original words were "*quang truong thiet tuong*" and meant "the general who had a large and long tongue". That expression suggested one of 32 strange and marvelous qualities of Buddha. It showed the Buddha's eloquence.

²⁴The *Usnisavijayadharani* incantation.

²⁵Originally it was '*Kieu Thi Ca*' transcribed into Sanskrit '*Kaustika*' or '*Kutsica*', Indra's family name.

²⁶Thien Tru Thien (*Supratisthitadeva*) was also King Thien Tru.

²⁷The original word was "*tat ba nha*" transcribed "*sarvajna*" in Sanskrit and meant "all the knowledge". This suggested that the Buddha's intelligence was perfect after he had completely mastered the Buddhist doctrine.

²⁸Phat Dinh Ton Thang Vuong was the name of one of the Buddhas called Phat Dinh. But here the words "*Phat Dinh Ton Thang Vuong*" signified the incantation words *Phat Dinh Ton Thang*.

²⁹This litany showed the conception "*Dai Thua*" (Mahayana) on the emancipation of souls according to which all people could become Buddha. *Phap Hoa Kinh Phuong Tien Pham* wrote: "Anyone who has the opportunity to hear Buddha. preaching will inevitably become a Buddha."

³⁰This litany was called "*duoc xoa*," "*yaksa*" when transcribed into Sanskrit. It was also called "*da xoa*."

CHAPTER VIII

BUDDHISM UNDER THE LY DYNASTY

During the Ly dynasty (1010-1225), as the centralized state apparatus was integrated and consolidated, Vietnamese society became progressively more stable. The first written law, a criminal code, was promulgated. Through a set of policies inducing support for irrigation, the country experienced rapid agricultural, industrial, and domestic and foreign commercial development. Successful military resistance against the Chinese Song dynasty contributed to heighten national consciousness.

At that time, and particularly towards the end of the eleventh century, all ideological and spiritual life came increasingly under the influence of Confucianism. Nevertheless, instead of losing its stature in the face of Confucianism, Buddhism rose to unprecedented levels.

THE ASCENDANCE OF BUDDHISM

The founder of the Ly dynasty, Ly Cong Uan (also known as Ly Thai To, his imperial name) was raised in a pagoda and enjoyed support throughout his reign from such influential Buddhist circles as monk Van Hanh of the Vinitaruci sect and monk Da Bao of the Wu Yantong sect. Immediately after taking the throne, until the end of his rule, Ly Cong Uan supported policies favorable to Buddhism's development. He sponsored the construction of pagodas throughout the whole country, assisted those who wished to become monks, and sent messengers to China to ask for the Tripitaka. Buddhism's growth under the patronage of Ly Thai To was able to take place as Buddhist practices had already existed under the Dinh and Early Le dynasties.

All the Ly Kings venerated Buddhism. Ly Thai Tong belonged to the seventh generation of the Wu Yantong sect. Ly Thanh Tong belonged to the first generation of Thao Duong sect, Ly Anh Tong belonged to the third generation, and Ly Cao Tong to the fifth generation of the same sect. And Ly Hue Tong, after abdicating to princess Chieu Hoang, took the Buddhist name, Hue Quang, and entered the monkhood.

When a king follows Buddhist practices, it is natural that the whole royal bureaucratic strata do the same, a point brought out in the Linh Xung pagoda stele erected in 1126: "The high ranking dignitary Ly Thuong Kiet, although committed to solving worldly problems, venerated Buddhism. Was this due to the fact that the King and his mother patronized a Buddhist cult? Perhaps high ranking dignitaries were merely obeying royal orders in their support of Buddhism."¹ According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, it appears that royal bureaucrats vied with each other to curry favor with monks. The capital's tutelary governor Nguyen (or Ly?) Tuan reportedly respected the

virtues and reputation of monk Dinh Huong such that the monk was invited to reside at the Cam Ung pagoda.²

The Bonze superior Cuu Chi received three personal visas from the King Thai Tong. The King's advisor Luong Nham Van was known to hold great respect towards him. Around the era Long Thuy Thai Binh (1054-1058), the Prime Minister Duong Dao Gia invited Bonze superior Cuu Chi to come and reside at the Dien Linh pagoda.³ Cuu Chi, who died in 1063, was frequently consulted by many royal dignitaries including the grand duke Phung Can,⁴ Uy Vu, Hi Tu, Thien Hue, the price Hien Minh, the general Vuong Tai, the greatest advisor Luong Nham Van, the great tutor Dao Su Trung, and the chief dignitary, Kieu Bong.

The Bonze superior, Dai Xa (1120-1180), was highly esteemed by Prince Kien Vinh and Princess Thien Cuc. "The Defence Minister Phung Giang Tuong showed great respect for monk Quang Nghiem (1122-1190) whom he invited to come and reside at the Tinh Qua pagoda." The monk, Tri Thien, who lived during the Anh Tong and Cao Tong periods, was also considered a master by the official, To Hien Thanh, and advisor, Ngo Hoa Nghia.⁵

Many monks descended from royal bureaucratic families. For example, the Bonze superior, Vien Chieu (999-1090), was the son of the Queen mother's brother (Ly Thanh Tong's mother). The monk, Quang Tri (died about 1082-1092), was the brother of imperial concubine, Chieu Phung. The monk Hue Sinh (died in 1036) was the Vice-Minister of Defence, Lam Tuong's younger brother. The monk, Man Giac (1052-1096), was the Vice Minister Ly Hoai To's son. The monk, Tri Bao (died 1190), was a high-ranking dignitary To Hien Thanh's uncle. The nun, Dieu Nhan (1042-1113), was the grand duke, Ly Nhat Trung's daughter, and was himself Ly Thai Tong's son.

Big pagodas and towers were built under the Ly dynasty at the expense of the kings or their families. The stele of the Ling Xung pagoda reads:

More than two thousand years have gone by since the onset of Buddhism, the cult of that religion scored new developments from day-to-day. The people exploited every place to find beautiful sites to build pagodas; without any help of royal family members, they would have done nothing.

Owing to the support from kings and mandarins, Buddhism obtained an important social position. Its influence spread in every region of the country. In 1010, immediately after the transfer of the capital to Thang Long (present-day Hanoi), Ly Thai To ordered the building of a series of pagodas and promulgated a decree encouraging citizens to become monks. Following his order, pagodas and temples were built throughout the kingdom, even in remote regions. Previously, under the Dinh and Early Le

dynasties, many pagodas were built in Thanh Hoa. Nevertheless, a series of new pagodas were built in that province, particularly following Ly Thuong Kiet's nomination as its governor. To carry out the king's exploration and exploitation policies in Nghe An province, many royal ministers, such as Ly Nhat Quang (Ly Thai To's eighth son) and Luu Khanh Dam, came and governed that region and ordered the building of many pagodas.⁶ Surprisingly, under the Ly, pagodas were built in ethnic minority regions. For example, the Bao Ninh Sung Phuc pagoda was built about 1107 in the Vi Long mountainous district (Ha Tuyen), in a region inhabited by the Tay ethnic minority.

The campaign to fill these new pagodas was no less active. In 1014, the King approved the chief monk Tham Van Uyen's report asking to set a fasting altar in the Van Tue pagoda in Thang Long citadel to train followers. Two years later, in 1016, more than a thousand Thang Long inhabitants were promoted to be Buddhist instructors. In 1019, Ly Thai To signed another decree encouraging the people in the entire country to become monks. The number of Buddhist followers consequently increased. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* gives some indication of the number of followers in the pagodas. For example, the monk Da Bao is said to have had more than one hundred followers in his Kien So pagoda located in Phu Dong, Hanoi. During the mid-11th century in the Trung Minh pagoda located on Thien Phuc mountain (Tien Son, Ha Bac) where Thien Lao was the resident monk, "There were more than a thousand believers who transformed his pagoda into an animated Buddhist gathering." The monk Nguyen Hoc (died 1175) had more than one hundred followers in his Quang Bao pagoda (Ha Bac). Monk Dao Hue (died 1172) had more than one thousand followers in his Quang Minh pagoda. And in the Thanh Tuoc pagoda located on Du Hy mountain (Ha Bac), where the monk Tri Bao (died 1190) cloistered, follower-inhabitants were so numerous that the pagoda "seemed to be a market."

In order to feed such great numbers, pagodas under the Ly, controlled rice fields, many of which were royal donations of public land. There were other royal donations, as well. According to the stele in the Van Phuc pagoda (present-day Phat Tich pagoda in Tien Son, Ha Bac) in the fourth year of Long Thuy Thai Binh era (1057), the King ordered the construction of more than one hundred rice fields. The stele in the Bao An pagoda (Me Linh, Hanoi), erected in 1209, mentions that a man with the family name Nguyen granted to the pagoda many rice fields: "On all 126 acres, rice was grown to make rice-cakes to feed monks, three acres were given to pagoda keepers, and the remaining part was given to the inhabitants for pagoda festivities, and for alms to forsaken spirits."⁷ The inscription on the bell in the Than Quang pagoda (today's Keo pagoda in Vu Thu, Thai Binh) estimates in all the Ly kings offered pagodas 1,371 Vietnamese acres.

These pagoda rice fields were sometimes located very far from the pagodas, as a stele in the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower (Doi pagoda, Ha Nam Ninh) relates:

The Queen mother Linh Nhan offered 72 contiguous Vietnamese acres of rice fields, situated in the Man De region belonging to the two hamlets of Cam Truc and Thu Lang in Cam Giang district. The inhabitants enjoyed their harvests for generations. Those rice fields were offered to the cult of Buddha and were exempt from taxation.

The pagodas were located in Duy Tien, Ha Nam Ninh province, and the rice fields were in Cam Binh, Hai Hung province. That proves the pagoda possessed many rice fields scattered in many places.

Pagoda rice fields were primarily farmed by sharecroppers. Some pagodas under the Ly even used slaves in their fields. *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* mentions that, "Pagodas had slaves and wealth stored in warehouses."⁸ A certain number of monks were provided by the Ly with "*thuc ho*," meaning that those people were allowed to charge rent and tax peasants. For example, according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk Man Giac residing in the Giao Nguyen pagoda in the Thang Long citadel was allowed by the Ly to tax the wealth of 50 families. After the monk Khong Lo's death (1119), the Ly Emperor signed a decree permitting pagoda expansion and exempting 20 families from rent and taxes which could be used to make ceremonial offerings. Both *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* and *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* tell of monk Minh Khong, who after having successfully cured the King Ly Than Tong, was allowed to charge rent and tax two hundred families and was exempted from having to pay rent and taxes himself.⁹

After the monk Giac Hai's death, King Ly Than Tong exempted 20 families from taxes and rent, provided they venerate the monk. Monk Gioi Khong enjoyed the same arrangement with 10 families. Pagodas had large quantities of wealth donated by the believers, i.e., "*kho vat*," wealth kept in warehouses as was written in the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* also wrote that the monk Tinh Khong (died in 1170) residing in the Khai Quoc pagoda in Thang Long was offered so much wealth and offerings that thieves followed him around the pagoda.

The monk Tri Thien, living under Ly Anh Tong and Ly Cao Tong's reigns in the Phu Mon pagoda, was given many offerings by Buddhist believers from many regions. According to the text on the stele written in 1157, the Dien Phuc pagoda located in the Co Viet hamlet (Hai Hung) reserved a whole courtyard to store its rice harvest.

Due to the possession by pagodas of many rice fields, lands and wealth, in 1088, King Ly Nhan Tong authorized high-ranking officials to function as "*de cu*," i.e., pagoda wealth-managers.¹⁰ In short, under the Ly, the economic influence of pagodas further strengthened Buddhism's position in Vietnamese society.

The Ly also maintained the hierarchic system of Buddhism that had existed under the Dinh and Early Le, a system comprised of chief monks and common monks. Their functions were divided into two degrees: left side chief monks and right side chief monks; left side common monks and right side common monks.¹¹ A certain number of monks commanding great prestige were promoted to state advisors by the kings. And many State advisors performed the chief monk function as the monk Vien Thong (1080-1151). There were also many chief monks who were not state advisors, as the monk Khanh Hy (1067-1142) and many state advisors, who failed to work as chief monks, as the monk Minh Khong (1099-1174). In many regions, a certain number of monks were appointed to look after Buddhist affairs in the region. For example, the texts of a stele in the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh Pagoda, erected in 1118, and a stele in the Linh Xung pagoda, erected in 1126, describe that, while monk Phap Bao stayed in the Phuc Dien Tu Thanh pagoda (Thanh Hoa), he was also in charge of common religious affairs in the district of Cuu Chan, Thanh Hoa.

A certain number of monks participated in the Ly Cong Uan's enthronement. Monk Van Hanh and the monk Da Bao both played important roles in politics. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* gives further evidence of the connection between Buddhism and the State:

After having been enthroned, Ly Thai To often invited the monk Da Bao to the imperial palace for consultation on religious problems and generously remunerated him. Even during discussions of political affairs, the monk was allowed to take part. But after the Ly's state apparatus was consolidated, monks no longer took part in political affairs. The state's advisors were the nation's masters on religion and not advisors on political concerns. A certain number of monks were invited by the Kings to come to the imperial palace by the side gate only for consultation on the Buddhist doctrine. They became limited to roles in the religious sphere and not in handling life problems.

Sometimes, the monks even formulated the country's governing policy: The imperial preceptor Vien Thong gave the following advice to Ly Than Tong:

The people are like material things. If they are put in a peaceful place, they will be peaceful. If they are put in a dangerous position, they will become dangerous. All depends on their master's behavior. If the master's love conforms to men's hearts, he will be beloved as their parents, admired as the sun and the moon, and so he will put his people in a peaceful position. Whether the country is at peace or in trouble, all depends on its public officials.

If the latter are good public servants, the country will live in peace. If not, the country will live in trouble. By experience, it can be seen that among the previous rulers, none has made the country rise without employing great men, nor made the country fall without employing little men. But the origin of a country's rise or fall is not a pretext that comes instantly, but only gradually. The universe cannot be suddenly cold or hot to the season spring or autumn. It is the same for the Kings. They are powerful or crumble gradually on condition that they have performed good or evil actions. The last time Kings have known all that, so they imitated Heaven in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at bettering themselves, or they imitated Earth in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at pacifying the people. To correct oneself, one must be careful in one's heart, be afraid as if walking on thin ice. To pacify the country, one must respect one's inferior, must be afraid as one holds worn reins. Doing so, one will inevitably be powerful. Doing the contrary, one cannot avoid failure. Power or crumbling comes progressively.¹²

Although these words refer to national policy, they reflect no more than a general view. Indeed, as was the situation of Buddhism at the time, the doctrine's belief in benevolence more or less influenced royal policies, as has been amply recorded in ancient historical records. The Buddhist spirit during the Ly period was manifested through Buddhist activities as well as through its celebrations, both of which created unique cultural characteristics. Festivities were often held for the inauguration of new pagodas and towers. Large Buddhist functions were organized by the kings, as many pages in history refer to those Ly festivities. For example, in 1118, the Festival of the Thousand Buddhas was held for the Thang Nghiem Thanh Tho pagoda's inauguration. In 1119, a celebration took place to mark the completion of the Tinh Lu pagoda. In 1123, an inauguration festival was held for the Phung Tu pagoda and another for the Quang Giao pagoda in Tien Du. In 1121 a ceremony for the inauguration of the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower in Doi Son (Doi mountain) was held.¹³ In 1127, the Trung Hung Dien Tho pagoda was inaugurated.

We can wean an impression of the atmosphere at these inaugural ceremonies from two paragraphs of the stele on the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower (1121):

Before the inauguration, pagoda servants always embellished palanquins and vehicles and swept dust. Sandal smoke hovered above the country like clouds. Flags and gonfalons flew everywhere, in all directions.

Bells and tom-toms resounded loudly. Gongs and cymbals echoed noisily. In front of the procession, there was the rattan vehicle of the Buddhist altar and in the rear, there was the imperial palanquin, monks, nuns...

The King seriously read the litany and at the end bowed his head in thanks to Heaven. The palace women stood with a shy air. After the prayers they offered milk for dancing and singing. Vegetarian food with white rice was offered to hungry passers-by. Money was distributed generously to poor people from everywhere.¹⁴

Festivals existed during the construction of pagodas and statuary, as well as the casting of bells. Historical records reveal that in 1036 the Long Tri Festival commemorated the erection of the Buddha Dai Nguyen statue. In 1040 during the La Han Festival, more than a thousand statues and paintings of Buddha and ten thousand gonfalons were inaugurated. Festivals were also organized to encourage people to join the monkhood as *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* reports occurred in Nghenh Tien Duong. These Buddhist festivals were organized both by kings and common folk.

In addition to the festivities marking the inauguration of pagodas, towers, statues, and bells, other annual Buddhist festivities took place. Historic books and Buddhist annals recall the annual festivities organized under the Ly, as the Buddha's bath, the Buddha's birthday (eighth day of the fourth lunar month), the Wandering manes day (15th day of seventh lunar month). It was at this time that monks began their practice of the *vassa* three month summer retreat. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* recalls in the story of the monk Tuc Lu the 'escape from summer day', the 15th day of the seventh lunar month.

In the localities of many pagodas and monks the number of male and female believers was also great. And many of these believers organized associations aimed at helping monks, particularly with ceremonial celebrations. The stele in the Bao An pagoda, erected in 1209 in Me Linh, Hanoi, mentions one such association, named Hoi Thich Giao ("The Buddhist Association"), founded with 10 members. Under the Ly, pagodas were not only places for monks and Buddhist believers, they were also centers for cultural activities and studies. Large pagodas also functioned as schools for aspiring monks. Many pagodas provided schooling for children.

With respect to the canon, during the previous Dinh and Early Le dynasties (refer to the preceding chapter), only prayer books imported during Chinese control continued to be used, especially texts obtained during the Song dynasty. By 1007, King Le Ngoa Trieu had sent his brother Minh Xuong, accompanied by Hoang Thanh Nha, to ask the Song Emperor for a copy of the *Tripitaka* (known as *Dai Tang* in Vietnamese) prayers which were brought back to Vietnam only in 1009. This copy had been published in 983 but carved and printed since 972 on the order of Emperor Taizu of the Song dynasty.

After having transferred his capital to Thang Long, Ly Thai To ordered the construction of the Tran Phuc prayer repository. In 1018, once again, Ly Thai To sent Nguyen Dao Thanh¹⁵ and Pham Hac to ask the Song Emperor for the Tripitaka. Up to 1020, Nguyen Dao Thanh brought the prayers back to Guangzhou and was welcomed by the chief monk Phi Tri sent by Thai To. One year later, Thai To again ordered the construction of Bat Giac repository, to store the prayers obtained the year before. In 1023, the King ordered another Tripitaka copy to be kept in the Dai Hung repository. In 1027, Thai To again ordered a copy of the Tripitaka to be made.

In 1034, King Thai Tong ordered the construction of the Trung Hung prayer repository in the Trung Quang pagoda located on the Tien Du mountain. In the same year, Ha Thu and Do Khoan were sent as ambassadors to the Song Empire and were offered by the Song Emperor another Tripitaka prayer collection. Two years later, once again, Ly Thai Tong mandated another copy of the prayers to be kept in the newly built Trung Hung repository. Under King Ly Nhan Tong's reign, as historic records show, ambassadors Luong Dung Luat in 1081 and Nguyen Van Tin in 1098 made two trips to China seeking the Tripitaka from the Song Emperors.¹⁶

As a consequence of this activity, by the 11th century in Vietnam there were many printed or handwritten Tripitaka books. Those sutras were based on Song's first printed Tripitaka and not the second version completed in 1176 known as *Sung Ninh Van Tho Dai Tang*. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the sutras used under the Ly dynasty were variously called *Phap Hoa*, *Vien Giac*, *Hoa Nghiem*, *Duoc Su*, *Kim Cuong*, and etc. *Dai Viet Su Luoc* also related that in 1179, children of Buddhist dignitaries read the Prajna prayers.¹⁷ A certain number of Buddhist documents as *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc* were also propagated. A certain number of generally used sutras were also printed. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk Tin Hoc (died, 1190), born into a carver's family, also printed sutras. Under the Ly, many monks wrote many important texts on Buddhist ideology, which include:

- *Phap Su Trai Nghi* by Hue Sinh (died, 1063).
- *Chu Dao Trang Khanh Tan Van* by the same monk.
- *Tan Vien Giac Kinh* by Vien Chieu (died, 1090).
- *Duoc Su Thap Nhi Nguyen Van* by the same monk.
- *Thap Nhi Bo Tat Hanh Tu Chung Dao Trang* by the same monk.
- *Tham Do Hien Quyet* by the same monk.
- *Chieu Doi Luc* by Bien Tai.
- *Tang Gia Tap Luc*, containing more than 50 chapters, by the monk Vien Thong (died, 1151).
- *Chu Phat Tich Duyen Su*, containing more than 30 chapters by the same monk.
- *Nam Tong Tu Phap Do* by Thuong Chieu (died in 1203).

Unfortunately, all these primary works have been lost. Only a scattered collection of poems, litanies, speeches to the followers remain with us from monks that lived under the Ly. It is only on the basis of these few documents that historians can discern the ideology of various Buddhist sects during that period.

Below is a summary of the Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects which survived throughout the Ly dynasty, following which is an introduction to the Thao Duong sect which surfaced during the Ly period.

THE VINITARUCI CHAN SECT DURING THE LY DYNASTY

According to the genealogy given in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the Vinitaruci Buddhist sect's eleventh to nineteenth generations occurred during the Ly period:

- The Eleventh generation comprised four monks: Thien Ong (902-979), Sung Pham (1004-1078)¹⁸ and two unnamed monks; among them could have been Tri Huyen, the monk to whom Dao Hanh had paid a visit.

- The Twelfth generation comprised seven monks: Van Hanh (?-1018), Dinh Hue (?-?), Tu Dao Hanh (?-1117), Tri Bat (1049-1116), Thuan Chan (?-1101)¹⁹ and two others not mentioned in any book.

- The Thirteenth generation comprised six monks: Hue Sinh (?-1063), Thien Nham (1093-1163), Minh Khong (1066-1141), Ban Tich (?-1140) and two unrelated monks who were Phap Thong and Hue Sinh's disciples.

- The Fourteenth generation comprised four monks: Khanh Hy (1067-1140) and three others who could have been Tinh Nhan, Tinh Nhu, in addition to Khanh Hy's two disciples and Quang Phuc, Gioi Khongs master belonging to the following generation.

- The Fifteenth generation comprised three monks: Gioi Khong (?-?), Phap Dung (?-1174) another who could have been Thao Nhat, the monk Chan Khong's master belonging to the following generation.

- The Sixteenth generation was made up of three monks: Tri Thien (?-?), Chan Khong (1046-1100), and Dao Lam (?-1203).

- The Seventeenth generation comprised four monks and nuns: the nun Dieu Nhan (1042-1113), Vien Hoc (1050-1113), Tinh Thien (1121-1193) and possibly Tinh Khong, Tinh Thien's disciple.

- The Eighteenth generation comprised two monks: Vien Thong (1080-1151) and possibly Phap Ky, Tinh Thien's follower.

- The Nineteenth generation comprised two monks: Y Son (?-1213) and another.

If historians merely relied on the explanations of monastic training, speeches, and litanies that appear in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, they would find it difficult to isolate the particular characteristics of every Buddhist sect under the Ly. They are usually resigned to only speaking about dominant

tendencies due to the co-existence and reciprocal influence of the various sects over centuries.

In fact, until the Ly, Buddhist sects had no fixed centers. Wu Yantong sect monk Thuong Chieu (died 1203) was cloistered in the Luc To Pagoda located in Dich Bang (i.e. Dinh Bang today), which had been a center for the Vinitaruci sect. According to the *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, he was not unique in this respect.

By the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th centuries, both the twelfth generation Wu Yantong monk Thuong Chieu and the monk Bien Tai belonging to the Vinitaruci sect came to cloister in the Van Tue pagoda in Thang Long, although the latter had been in the palace where Hue Sinh, belonging to the Vinitaruci sect, was the resident monk. Moreover, Khanh Hy, a well-known Vinitaruci sect monk under the Ly, once came and paid a Buddhist consultation visit to Bien Tai in the Van Tue pagoda. In front of Khanh Hy, Bien Tai praised Ban Tich, Khanh Hy's master, as a proficient monk. Adding to the confusion, there were a number of similarities between the Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects in ideology and monastic training. Nevertheless, the former has a clearer propensity towards Tantrism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this tendency developed under the Dinh and Early Le dynasties. In fact, until the Ly period, many monks of this sect practiced Tantrism. The most representative was Bonze superior Tu Dao Hanh, a contemporary of Van Hanh.

Tu Dao Hanh's biography was full of a series of mystic and strange stories as “commanding the sylphs, dancing with magic sticks, being reincarnated, escaping from the body....” This monk often caught forest snakes and wild animals and ordered them to come and be around him. He burnt his fingers to pray for rain, used magic water to cure diseases, all his work was magical.²⁰ Similar to monk Ma Ha who lived during the Le period, Tu Dao Hanh's training methods bore the character of Tantrism: “The monk came and lived as an hermit in the Fu Son mountain, recited *Mahakarunahrdayadharani* prayers every day one hundred and eight thousand times.”²¹

Tu Dao Hanh's contemporary Tri Bat also practiced Tantrism. In his litany on life and death of the Buddhist character compiled before he died in 1117, Tri Bat ends with the following magical words: *um to ro to ro tat ri*. Tri Bat was monk Sung Pham's disciple in the Phap Van pagoda. Before coming to cloister in the Phap Van pagoda, Sung Pham studied in India for nine years. Tu Dao Hanh had also come to that pagoda to consult Sung Pham on religious problems. Perhaps due to the influence of Tantric monks such as monk Dao Hanh, Tri Bat's practices were nothing but the continuation of a tradition which existed long before. It is also very probable that Tantric tendencies were reinforced by Sung Pham, as Indian Buddhism contained a Tantric character during Sung Pham's visit there.

Bonze superior Minh Khong, Dao Hanh's disciple who also practiced Tantrism, was reputed for having cured King Than Tong with

magic methods. Likewise, Thien Nham, a Minh Khong contemporary, was a Tantrist who fully consecrated himself to studying the ‘*Tong Tri Dalani*’ prayers, learning them by heart without missing a word. Bonze superior Gioi Khong who belonged to the fifteenth Vinitaruci generation was reputed to have commanded angels and demons, to have tamed wild beasts, and to have used magic water to cure diseases.²² His disciple, a monk named Tri Thien, was recognized as a master by the high ranking dignitary To Hien Thanh, and once compelled a tiger to bow before him on the Tu Son mountain.

More so than other sects, Vinitaruci Buddhism seemed to cultivate Tantrism. Nevertheless, monks belonging to the Vinitaruci Buddhist sect were interested in dilemmas in Buddhist ideology, especially those in the whole Chan school. One of those problems was the issue of existence. Monks belonging to the Vinitaruci sect hoped to overcome this problem by examining the concepts of ‘to be’ and “not to be.” Bonze superior, Hue Sinh, presented this dilemma when answering King Ly Thai To's litany this way:

It is evident that the Prajna has no origin.
You are nothing, I am nothing, too.
In the past, in the present as well as in the future
All Buddhas have the same Buddhist nature.

In his litany, Ly Thai Tong had presented the conception of the void (*Sunyata*) according to the Madhyamika sect.²³ Hue Sinh's answer to the king with respect to this issue was:

To be religious is alike not to be religious
To have is also not to have
If the men are well aware of that truism
The living beings will resemble Buddha.
The Lang Gia moon is solitary and quiet.
The junk crosses the sea with nothing inside
To know not to have and to understand as to have,
One will understand everything.

Through his poem, the monk Hue Sinh wished to discredit this dilemma advising King Ly Thai Tong to detach himself from these concepts. A similar recommendation can be weaned from the Lang Gia prayers (*Lankavatara*). These prayers show the Samadhi helped to accurately prove the real character of magic without paying any attention to the surroundings and committing an error based on committing any one of the ontological extremes.

The conception “the evil living beings resemble Buddha” probably came from the explanation of equality (*samata*) already presented by the Lankavatara. But Hue Sinh had already expressed this idea in a concise

litany using the magnificent image: “an empty, junk, silently gliding under the quiet moonlight.” Even the Tantrist Tu Dao Hanh wrote a marvelous litany about the problem of ‘to be’ or ‘not to be’:

To be is a very little thing
Not to be, everything is nothing
The moon reflects its bright light on the river water
Do not say whether they exist or not.²⁴

The concluding sentence's counsel constitutes a clear principle: never begin as a premise with a conception of existence, for the relation between ‘to be’ and ‘not to be’ is equal to the Buddhist image of the moonlight on the river water.

In reality, this ‘existence’ dilemma was not limited to the Vinitaruci sect. It confronted all Buddhist sects under the Ly. The same thought was discovered in Queen Mother Y Lan's litany:

Existence means nothing, nothing means existence
Nothing is existence, existence means nothing
Existence, nothing, one must not mind it
That will conform to Buddhist truth.²⁵

Equipped with their view of being and nothingness, monks belonging to the Vinitaruci sect studied the problem of human life and death, an issue closely linked with the infinite that the living beings must overcome. Tri Bat expressed his conception in a short litany:

If there is death, there is life
If there is life, there is death
Death causes affliction to the living beings.
Life gives them joy
Affliction and joy are infinite
And oppose themselves to each other
Everything about life and death does not deserve our interest
Om! Suru, Suru, Sri!

Thuan Chan, a Tri Bat contemporary, before dying, read to his disciple, Ban Tich, the following litany on life and death:

The true nature often has no nature
It never lives nor ever dies;
The body is a ‘means’ for life or death,
The nature of that ‘means’ remains unchanged.

In his litany, Thuan Chan stressed that the body is nothing but a means among other means in the phenomenal world where there is life and

death; only the Invariable Truth (*tathata*) and *dharmata* are eternal, without life or death. Confronting the life and death dilemma, the nun, Dieu Nhan (1042-1113), expressed an original point of view in the following litany:

Life, aging, disease, death
Are natural laws.
The more one begs for an escape from all those things
The more he will be attached to them.
If one gets passions, he must petition Buddha;
If one gets bewitched, he must pray to religion;
If he does not beg Buddha or religion,
He must sit quiet and smiling.²⁶

Dieu Nhan considered life, aging, disease, and death as natural laws. The desire to escape them constitutes nothing but the desire to untie oneself and at the same time to fasten oneself down more. If one needs Buddha or religion, that means he needs his own force that will be nothing but his bewitchment, his ignorance. With respect to a certain number of other philosophical quandaries, the position of the Vinitaruci sect coincided with the Wu Yantong Buddhist sect.

THE WU YAN TONG SECT UNDER THE LY

According to the genealogy in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the Wu Yantong Buddhist sect developed under the Ly reign for its fifth to fifteenth generations:

- The Fifth generation comprised two monks, but only the Bonze superior Da Bao was mentioned. He was the great monk Khuong Viet's disciple. His lifetime remains unknown. We know only Da Bao's participation in political affairs during Ly Thai To's throne.

- The Sixth generation was made up of three monks: Dinh Huong (?-1051), Thien Lao (?-?) and an unnamed monk.

-The Seventh generation comprised seven monks: Vien Chieu (999-1090), Bonze superior Cuu Chi (died between 1059-1066), Bao Tinh (?-1034), Minh Tam (?-1034), Quang Tri (died between 1085-1092), King Ly Thai Tong (1000-1054) and an unmentioned monk.

- The Eighth generation comprised six monks: Thong Bien (?-1134), Man Giac (1052-1096), Ngo An (1020-1088) and three monks not described, among whom there was perhaps the monk of the Bao Phuc pagoda, the master of Bao Giam who belonged to the next generation.

- The Ninth generation comprised eight monks: Dao Hue (?-1172), Bien Tai (?-?), Bao Giam (?-1173), Khong Lo (?-1119), Ban Tinh (1100-1176) and three not mentioned monks among whom there was the monk Bao Giac, Tinh Gioi's master who belonging to the next generation and the

monk Vien Tri whose student Nguyen Hoc belonged to the following generation.

- The Tenth generation comprised 12 monks : Minh Tri (?-1196), Tin Hoc (?-1190), Tinh Khong (?-1170), Dai Xa (1120-1180), Tinh Luc (1112-1175), Tri Bao (?-1190), Truong Nguyen (1110-1165), Tinh Gioi (?-1207), Giac Hai (?-?), Nguyen Hoc (?-1175) and two others not mentioned.²⁷

- The Eleventh generation comprised nine monks but only one, the monk Quang Nghiem, was related (1122-1190) while the eight others were not.

- The Twelfth generation comprised seven monks but only one the monk Thuong Chieu (?-1203) was mentioned while the six others were not.

- The Thirteenth generation comprised five monks: Thong Su or Thong Thien (?-1228), Than Nghi (?-1216) and three others not named among whom was monk Tri Thong, master of Hien Quang who belonged to the next generation.

- The Fourteenth generation comprised five monks: Hien Quang (?-1220), Tuc Lu (?-?) and three others not related, among whom was the monk An Khong, Than Nghi's disciple.

- The Fifteenth generation comprised seven monks, but only one was related, that was Ung Vuong or Ung Thuan while the six others were not mentioned, among whom was Dao Vien, Hien Quang's disciple.²⁸

Based on historical evidence, the Wu Yantong Buddhist sect was founded in Vietnam in the ninth century. When he was in China, Wu Yantong was the monk Bach Truong Hoai Hai's (Bai Zhang Huaihai's) disciple and the monk Nguong Son Tue Tich's master.²⁹ The Wu Yantong Buddhist sect has its origins in Hui Neng's southern China sect (Linji).

In his lessons to his disciple Cam Thanh, Wu Yantong expressed his recognition of the history of Buddhism in China as presented by Hui Neng and his followers. According to them, Buddhism had 28 Indian ancestors from Mahakas'ypa to Bodhidharma, who is considered as the first ancestor of Buddhism in China. Buddhism from Bodhidharma was transmitted through four Chinese ancestors to Hui Neng who was the sixth ancestor. From that date on, Buddhism was divided into two sects - Northern and Southern.

According to Hui Neng's disciples, only the southern sect was orthodox. Hui Neng handed his mantle to Nam Nhac Hoai Nhuong who passed it to Ma To Dao Nhat. The latter did the same with Bach Truong Hoai Hai, who was Wu Yantong's master. Hoai Nhuong set up the Cao Qi sect and was the founder of Buddhism in the south.³⁰

Thus, Wu Yantong can be considered as belonging to the Cao Qi sect, as Buddhism in southern China had an obvious influence on this monk and his Wu Yantong sect. Up until the Ly dynasty, the Wu Yantong sect in Vietnam had an ideology similar to Buddhists in southern China. One of the important views of Buddhism in southern China was *don ngo* (immediate

enlightenment). The southern China Chan sect “promoted this point of view to oppose the *tiem ngo* promoted by the northern sect. *Tiem ngo* means progressive enlightenment obtained step-by-step through education, reciting prayers, listening to Buddhist lessons, etc., that is, needing the help of written documents. *Don ngo* is prompt enlightenment which comes in a minute, when the Intellect-Prajna light blazes, and so there is no need of languages and written documents. The name ‘Wu Yantong’ means “to understand without speech” (literally, “not through language”), and took its origin from this meaning.

Reflecting this sentiment, Thien Lao, a monk belonging to the Wu Yantong sect from the sixth generation once said to Ly Thai Tong: “Many words have no use.” Likewise denying the communicative capacity of languages, Tinh Gioi, a monk of the tenth generation of that sect, angrily uttered:

It is ridiculous for an ignoramus of Buddhism who uses languages to propagate the religious family!

Reading carefully stories on the monks in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, we can see the use by both the Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects under Ly's reign of a certain number of prayers such as *Dieu Phap Lien Hoa* and *Kim Cuong Bat Nha*. Only the *Vien Giac Prayers* learned by many monks of the Wu Yantong sect were ignored by the monks of the Vinitaruci sect. A series of monks of the Wu Yantong sect such as Vien Chieu, Ngo An, Minh Tri, Tin Hoc, and Tinh Luc, however, patiently used the *Vien Giac Prayers*.

Bonze superior, Vien Chieu, even wrote a book called the *Tan Vien Giac Prayers* in which he presented and analyzed the thoughts contained in the *Vien Giac Prayers*. The latter were the Mahayana prayers dealing with prompt enlightenment. It was written in those prayers: “These prayers contain the dogma on immediate enlightenment of Mahayana Buddhism. Living beings have a character which can be enlightened with the help of these prayers. Prompt character is the ‘intelligence-ability’ to lead the consciousness to prompt awakening.”

Thien Uyen Tap Anh mentions that Bonze superior Vien Chieu understood very well the three main magic penetrations in the *Vien Giac Prayers* which monk Tin Hoc also patiently studied. The three penetrations in the *Vien Giac Prayers* were *Samatha*, *Samapati*, *Dhyana*, three forms of meditation.

In fact, the monks under the Ly highly appreciated consciousness's prompt enlightenment without denying progressive enlightenment. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* recounts that the monk Ban Tich (died in 1140) who belonged to the thirteenth generation of the Vinitaruci Sect deeply understood the magic of prompt enlightenment and progressive enlightenment. Surely his position was not unique here. Even the stele of the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda erected in 1118 wrote: “Although there are prompt enlightenment and progressive enlightenment, all depends

on whether enlightenment is deep or superficial.” Towards the men who have no prompt character or prompt motive, we must educate them by other ways. As we see shall see in the next chapter, this view continued to hold sway under the Tran’s reign.

The point of view on prompt enlightenment was established on the basis of the southern China Sect and also was that of the Wu Yantong sect. After those sects, every *phap* (*Dharma*), i.e., the universe of phenomena, is by itself ‘nothing’: it appears in front of us like an illusion and is nothing but an ‘illusion’. This ontology was the *Sunyata* doctrine of the Madhyamika Indian Sect and the canon belongs to the Prajna system recalled repeatedly by many monks of the Wu Yantong sect. The monk Dinh Huong (? - 1051), belonging to the sixth generation, said the following:

From the old time, there is no country,
Country is the true family.
The true family is also an illusion.³¹
‘To be’ is illusion, so ‘not to be’ is ‘not to be’.

‘Not to be’ is ‘not to be’ was a concept developed in the Mahaprajnaranita - sastra, a fundamental work of the Madhyamika Sect.³² As is mentioned above, King Ly Thai Tong of the seventh generation of the Wu Yantong sect had once said: “You are nothing, I am nothing too”. The monk Dao Hue (died in 1172) of the ninth generation wrote a litany on the ‘nothingness’ point of view:

Soil water, fire, wind and conscience
All are nothing from the very first .
Like the clouds, they gather and disperse;
Only Buddha's Sun shines indefinitely.

Bonze superior Dai Xa (1120-1180) of the tenth generation, in presenting the same intention, the elements soil, water, fire, wind, “composing the heart of my body can be compared to four snakes put in the same basket, and in fact that’s nothing.”

The body is nothing and when it appears, it is nothing but an illusion. The monk Ban Tich (1100-1176) belonging to the ninth generation gave the image of a shadow in a looking glass to compare to the self-illusion:

The self illusion is originally born from nothing,
Like the images which appear on the looking glass;
If one knows all those images are nothing,
The self illusion will instantly prove their true physiognomy.

The essence of oneself is an illusion and originally has no shadow, no image. The monk Minh Tri (died 1196) belonging to the tenth generation described that character of the essence of oneself in the following litany:

The wind blows in the pine tree,
The moon shines on the water surface,
There is neither shadow nor image;
The essence of oneself is like that:
Looking for it is like looking for the echo in nothingness.

Speaking about the illusory character of the *phap* of the phenomenal universe, the monk Giac Hai belonging to the same generation with Minh Tri composed a beautiful poem:

Spring comes: flowers and butterflies know very well that season.
Butterflies, flowers smile: that happens in accurate time.
One must know that butterflies and flowers are illusory;
He must not bother about butterflies or flowers:
Why pay attention to them?³³

While the *phap* (*Dharma*) is regarded as nothing and illusion, the Wu Yantong sect as well as the others, paid particular interest to the Heart, considered as the source of any *phap*, of the phenomenal universe. The relation between the Heart and the *phap* was perfectly explained by the Bonze superior belonging to the seventh generation of the Wu Yantong sect:

All the *phap* take their origin from one's character, all the *phap* take their origin from the Heart. The Heart and the *phap* are one and not two. Ties and grief, all are nothing. Sin, happiness, right and wrong things, all are nothing. Nothing is not the effect, nothing is not the cause. One must not separate revenge from Karma or must not separate Karma from revenge. Any separation would mean no possibility of existence. Although he pretends to see all *phap*, he sees nothing. The origin is to know that all *phap* lie in the predestined affinities and the source is to know that all *phap* lie in real truth.³⁴

Although living among the genuine realities,³⁵ one must know that the universe is in perpetual evolution. Oneself as a living being belongs to a single religion and not two. One must not live away from Karma, for that is a master means for doing good things. In the universe of life and death evolution, using only the *phap* of that universe without any distinction from the 'no life no death' universe³⁶ would mean to break off with his conception of 'Oneself'. At the end, Bonze superior Cuu Chi summarized with the following litany:

To understand deeply one's inner heart means to remain quietly contemplative. To materialize all phap into real phenomena. The universe of life and death and that of no life no death, taking their origin from these phenomena, are as uncountable and numerous as the sand of the Ganges. Although they fill the Nothingness, they are in reality of no form. In the everlasting universe, nothing could be compared with that inner heart. And it always is bright everywhere.

Thus, according to Cuu Chi, despite its multiform aspect, the universe of phenomena comes from the evolution of the heart. That heart is full of nullity and has no form.

One hundred years after Cuu Chi,³⁷ the monk Nguyen Hoc (died in 1075) belonging to the tenth generation, composed also a litany about the heart which comprised some lines repeating many of Cuu Chi's thoughts:

Enlightens the heart and opens the 'intelligence-eyes',
 Transforms the soul, reveals the true physiognomy.
 Walking, standing, lying, sitting are naturally easy.
 No one can foresee its 'appearing or disappearing' evolution.
 Although it is full of nullity, in fact it does not have any
 physiognomy.
 Anything in this universe could be compared to it. The divine sense
 eternally appears and illuminates very brightly.
 Despite its daily and tireless speeches on the physiognomy
 It has no word to express, that satisfactory heart.³⁸

Bonze superior Thuong Chieu (died in 1203), belonging to the twelfth generation, wrote the following short litany on the Heart:

The human's body exists in this life
 While the Heart is of Buddha's nature
 It illuminates everywhere
 But no one can find it because of immensity and obscurity.

Regarding the Heart as Buddha's nature originates from Chinese Buddhism before Hui Neng with its basis on the *Lankavatara-sutra*. Those prayers asserted that the Heart, or *alayavijnana*, was *Tathagatagarbha* or 'The Buddha's nature'.³⁹

We know that seeking Buddha's nature in the heart is the fundamental principle of Buddhism. From the "all the Buddhist characters come from the heart" conception, as the Bonze superior Cuu Chi said, monks of the Wu Yantong sect, as well as a certain number of the monks of the Vinitaruci sect, paid particular attention to what was called *Tathata* (invariable truth). It was called by different names, such as *true*

physiognomy Buddhist nature, miraculous substance ... is considered as the universal inner substance, is hidden in every *phap* of the phenomenal universe and lasts forever unchanging.⁴⁰

Describing this inner substance, the monk, Truong Nguyen (1160-1165), wrote the beautiful litany:

It exists in the light, in a neck of dust,
But does not live in the light or the dust.
The heart and the mind are crystal-clear;
It has affinity with nothing,
It is the natural substance.
It penetrates in everything without any exception;
It is the clever worker who creates the universe,
It would be mankind's morality,
And creates Nature
And remains fresh as Nature;
It resembles a dancing iron girl
And a wooden drummer.

That 'invariable truth' appears in everything is the thought in monk Thien Lao's following poem:

The green bamboo, the yellow flower are not external things.
The white cloud, the bright moonlight appear clearly in that full truth.

This Invariable truth which remains fresh as spring in nature became the inspiration for many poet monks under the Ly. Bonze superior, Man Giac (1052-1096), belonging to the eighth generation of the Wu Yantong sect, had a well-known poem called "Proclamation on the living being's defects":

When Spring goes away, every flower falls.
When it comes, every flower smiles.
Before one's eyes, things pass forever,
And oldness arrives on our head.
Do not think all the flowers fall when Spring ends.
Last night, on the front courtyard,
An apricot branch stayed on.⁴¹

Even to this day we can still feel the beauty of this poem with an apricot branch image symbolizing the vitality of nature and the monks who regarded the invariable truth as the strength hidden in nature.

The monk Chan Khong (1016-1100) belonging to the Vinitaruci sect also wrote a litany bearing the thoughts of Man Giac's poem:

Spring comes, spring goes away, we doubt that spring ends;
Flowers fade, flowers blossom, it's always Spring.

So, despite its root in the Heart [the heart means Buddha's nature], "All the Buddhist natures come from the heart" after the explanation of the monks during the Ly's reign, it hides itself deeply in the nature or in today's terminology, it 'objectifies' itself. According to the monks of the Wu Yantong sect, enlightenment consists in the perception of the invariable truth, the miraculous substance. But how to perceive that invariable truth especially when all "*phap* are nullity after the point of view" of the nature of nullity that they had recognized?

Thus the nature of nullity or the invariable truth is also nullity. The monk Bao Giac (died 1173)⁴² deals with this problem in the following litany:

All the *phap* return to nullity, unable to lean against anything,
anywhere.
But returning to nullity, the invariable truth will become a 'plain-sight' opportunity for becoming enlightened.
But the perfect enlightenment of the heart cannot be shown externally.

Considering the heart as the moon upon the water surface would be a way to destroy it. Nevertheless, the last sentence of this litany is actually rather obscure. Did Bao Giac mean by the words "to destroy the heart" the sense "to lead the heart to nullity?" On that problem, the monk, Ngo An (1020-1088), belonging to the eighth generation provided a more lucid explanation:

Miraculous nature, i.e., the Invariable Truth is nullity, upon which we cannot rely. But with the nullity of the heart, we can easily awaken the miraculous nature. The pearls burnt in the mountain keep their brilliant colors. The lotus blossoming in the fire remains always wet, it never dries out.

Obviously, if we want to perceive the invariable truth of nullity, we must achieve the heart of nullity which also means the 'Heart nullity'. On the 'Heart nullity', the imperial preceptor, Vien Chieu (999-1090), belonging to the generation before Ngo An, had clearly said:

The human's body resembles a wall about to crumble.
All the living beings are in a hurry: who is not in sadness?
If one gets the 'Heart nullity' without a religious physiognomy,
Religion and nullity, sometimes appearing, sometimes
disappearing, no matter their change.

To achieve the heart awaked with the invariable heart, we cannot perceive it with [merely] our daily experience. That perception can only be

a super-experience, or intuition. Thus we have no need of written language, as was explained above. Language is an instrument which tends to prevent discernment. Any analysis dependent on reason would damage the awaking of religion (the 'heart awaking', the 'invariable truth').

The monks of the Wu Yantong sect during Ly's reign took precisely this point of view. For example, the monk Minh Tri (died in 1196) belonging to the tenth generation was against what was called arguing, i.e., analysis and distinction:

Educating about religion (Chan Buddhism) must be done in a special manner;
The Ancestor and Buddha's source is invisible and voiceless.⁴³
If anyone wants to argue (to analyze) on that matter,
He will be doing something like looking for the smoke of an illusory fire.

Before Minh Tri, the monk, Bao Giam (died in 1173), belonging to the ninth generation, had praised "the intelligence has no distinction" point of view, in the following litany:

The intelligence is like the moon that shines in the sky.
Its light covers the whole universe,
does not allow any corner to be in darkness .
If anyone wants to know, it will be nullity without distinction;
It resembles the vegetation which is ever green on the mountain,
with dispersing evening smoke.

In this context, nullity without distinction comprises many aspects: no distinction of opposite concepts, no distinction of object and subject perception, no partiality, no prejudice. To reach enlightenment is to wait for the appearance of the light of the Prajna. For this the Buddhist follower does not need any form of complicated training, nor any assistance from exterior forces such as Buddha or ancestors.

We are thus not surprised, in the Wu Yantong sect during the Ly period, to find ideas that seem to contradict habitual concepts:

Only a few people can get veritable enlightenment through cloistering,
for cloistering is nothing but imprisoning the intelligence for perfection.
When one gets the marvel of the invariable truth,
The sun appears brilliant in the sky.⁴⁴
The light of intelligence will appear like the sun, the sun of intelligence.

In his *Tham Do Hien Quyét* the monk, Vien Chieu (999-1090), quoted a part of the following dialogue.

An aspirant monk asked a monk about the idea of the two following questions:

Why not follow Buddha to open the stock of marvels?
 Why not ask one's Ancestors for fire to keep the lamp alit?
 The monk answered:
 'The oriole sings in the sky in autumn.
 Peonies blossom in the snow'.

This answer affirms the questioning of some practices. One should not petition the Buddha nor one's ancestors; one must rely on oneself and be firm in every instance and condition. "Peonies blossom in the snow" corresponds to "Lotus blossoms in the furnace," Ngo An's idea expressed in the above-mentioned poem.

Monk Giac Hai of the tenth generation likewise pointed out: If someone asks where the Buddha-land is, he will be like the carp in a jumping competition at Long Mon, being touched on the forehead [meaning he will fail to know where it is.]

Monk Quang Nghiem (1122-1190), a generation after Giac Hai, returned to the "not to follow Buddha" point of view:

The young men have in themselves a willful and raging spirit,
 They must not follow Buddha's way.

This resembles Vinitaruci nun Dieu Nhan's "Not to petition the Buddha" above.

The Wu Yantong was influenced by Tantrism during the Ly period, albeit not as deeply as the Vinitaruci sect was. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, monk Khong Lo (died 1119) devoted himself to studying Dalani [dharani], which allowed him "to fly in the air, to walk on the water so well that nobody could anticipate it." Khong Lo composed a marvelous poem in which he expressed his conceptions about geomantic omens and Taoist practices:

I have chosen a land full of dragons and snakes.
 But the feelings for my native village have never diminished.
 Sometimes I rush straight on the mountain.
 A sounding cry cools down the sky.⁴⁵

The monk Giac Hai, Khong Lo's disciple, was shown to have been influenced by Tantrism with the mention of his magical practices related in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*. This same book, however, reports that Khong Lo and Giac Hai both belonged to the Thao Duong sect.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the influence of Tantrism on the Wu Yantong sect during the Ly period. Again according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, monk Nguyen Hoc (died 1175) belonging to the tenth generation of this sect, “often used the Dalani magical words to cure diseases or to beg for rain, always getting immediate positive results. King Ly Anh Tong allowed him to enter the forbidden palace with the intention of using his magical words to overcome any eventuality.” Another monk, Tinh Gioi (died 1207) was dubbed the “Rain Monk” by Ly Cao Tong for his ability to pray for rain or good weather: The Tantric character of Wu Yantong became even more accentuated between the middle of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th, during the reigns of Ly Anh Tong and Ly Cao Tong.

The philosophies of Laozi and Zhuangzi also had some influence over the Wu Yantong sect under the Ly. The way of presenting the Invariable Truth or the marvelous nature of the monks of this sect closely resembled Zhuangzi's and Laozi's way of presenting the Tao. Even the words ‘*hy di*’ (meaning invisible) were borrowed from them. In Laozi, “The Tao is looked at but not seen--that is why it is called *di* (“invisible”); listened to but not heard--that is why it is called *hy* (“voiceless”).”⁴⁷

Laozi and Zhuangzi's language and spirit can be found in the poem by monk Hien Quang (died 1221):

The main thing is to get Hua Do morality.
One must not mind how many springs have passed in his life.
May he be free and untroubled in the countryside.
Idleness is the morality of the free.⁴⁸

Many monks of the Wu Yantong sect were keenly interested in elaborating the history of the various Buddhist sects in Vietnam. The originator of such work was monk Thong Bien (died 1134), belonging to the eighth generation of this sect. He originally had the name Tri Khong, and was imperial preceptor Vien Chieu's disciple. Thanks to his broad and in-depth knowledge of Buddhist history, he could answer the Queen Mother Linh Nhan's questions on the origins of different orders and sects and was thus bestowed with one of the ten titles of a Buddha, the ‘Great teacher Thong Bien’. Historic documents on the orders and sects elaborated by Thong Bien were later rewritten by his disciple Bien Tai as *Chieu Doi Luc*. This work was passed down to the twelfth generation monk Thuong Chieu (died 1203) who further elaborated the text in turn calling his version *Nam Tong Tu Phap Do*. This book contains diagrams⁴⁹ representing different generations of the various Buddhist sects in Vietnam.

Thien Uyen Tap Anh contains reference to Than Nghi (died 1216). This disciple of Chieu once said to his master: “I have served you for years but do not know who is the first propagator of this religion. Now I wish to be instructed on the propagating order of Buddhism to allow contemporary scholars to know the origin of its sects and orders.”

Praising Tham Nghi for his faithful dedication to him, Thuong Chieu gave his disciple Thong Bien's *Chieu Doi Luc* that explains the various *phap* (dharma) of all the Vietnamese Buddhist sects. After having read the text, Than Nghi wondered why the sects led by monks Nguyen (or Ly?) Dai Dien and Nguyen (or Ly?) Bat Nha did not appear. Thuong Chieu explained that Thong Bien must have omitted them on purpose. The reason may be that according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, monk Bat Nha's sect belonged to the Thao Duong sect. Some time later, Than Nghi himself passed various documents onto his student, monk An Khong, also known as great monk Na Ngan. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, which was largely compiled during the later Tran period,⁵⁰ is a valuable document for the study of Buddhism under the Ly. Its compilation was gradually completed by monks in the Wu Yantong sect above.

THE THAO DUONG CHAN SECT UNDER THE LY DYNASTY

In contrast to the already developed Vinitaruci and Wu Yantong sects, the Thao Duong was particular to the Ly. It is, however, unfortunate that only a handful of documents remain about this sect. In *Thien Uyen Tap Anh's* appendix there is a list of this sect's generations.

The monk Thao Duong, who was cloistered in Thang Long's Khai Quoc pagoda, inaugurated the sect that bears his name. This pagoda had been the place for Wu Yantong sect monks like Van Phong, Khuong Viet, and Thong Bien. Only a few references are made to Thao Duong in Le Trac's *An Nam Chi Luoc*. One of these:

Thao Duong followed his master in Champa. In the war against that country, Ly Thanh Vuong (i.e. Thanh Tong) captured that monk whom he made a slave to lesser monks.⁵¹

One day a lesser monk wrote a collection of aphorisms. He put them on the table and came out. Thao Duong stealthily entered and corrected them. Surprised by what the slave did, the lesser monk reported to the king who named the slave monk the state monk.⁵²

Cao Hung Trung's book *An Nam Chi* relates: "The monk Thao Duong was a very virtuous man who knew Buddhist classics perfectly. The Ly emperor honored him as a master. Afterward, he died in a quiet sitting position."⁵³

Thien Uyen Tap Anh notes that Thao Duong belonged to the Tuyet Dau Minh Giac sect. The monk Tuyet Dau (980-1052) belonged to the Yun Men (Cloud-gate) sect founded by the monk Van Yen and split from the Southern China Thanh Nguyen sect, cloistered in the Tu Khanh pagoda located in the Xuedou ("Snow bean") mountain of Zhejiang province. He was given by the Song Emperor the title of Minh Giac, the great monk; and

thus was often called Tuyet Dau Minh Giac. Thao Duong was a Han Chinese. Ly Thanh Tong came back from the war against Champa in 1069. And it evidently was that Thao Duong who arrived in Thang Long that year. The various generations of the Thao Duong sect as related in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* are:

- The First generation comprised three monks: King Ly Thanh Tong (1023-1072), the monk Bat Nha and the hermit Ngo Xa.
- The Second generation comprised four monks: the official Ngo Ich, the monk Hoang Minh (also known as Thieu Minh), the monk Khong Lo and the monk Giac Hai (also named Dinh Giac).
- The Third generation comprised four monks: Vice advisor Do Vu, the monk Pham Am, King Ly Anh Tong (1136-1175) and the monk Do Do.⁵⁴
- The Fourth generation comprised three monks: the monk Truong Tam Tang, the monk Chan Huyen and the vice advisor Do Thuong.
- The Fifth generation comprised four monks: The monk Hai Tinh, King Ly Cao Tong (1173-1210), Nguyen Thuc and the royal servant having the family name of Pham.

Through an examination of the various generations of the Thao Duong sect, it is evident that many of its members were in the same families as the Kings Thanh Tong, Anh Tong, and Cao Tong and many officials and dignitaries. It is safe to conclude that although this sect enjoyed great power under the Ly, its circle of followers remained small.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of documents, historians know little of the Buddhist ideology of this sect. They can, however, surmise that many monks in this sect practiced Tantrism. Two such monks, Khong Lo and Giac Hai, were discussed above. When investigating the Buddhist sects during the Ly period, the monk, Thong Bien of the Wu Yantong sect, omitted any reference to the sects led by monks Dai Dien and Bat Nha. Dai Dien was a monk specializing in magic. It is likely that the monk, Bat Nha ("Prajna"), also practiced Tantrism.

Some argue that the discussion of Avalokitesvara, Amitabha, The Land of Bliss, and Buddhist prayer methods found in his article "*Truy To Canh Sach*" suggests that Thao Duong was strongly influenced by the Pure Land sect. Unfortunately, lack of concrete evidence prevents us from firmly establishing whether Thao Duong actually authored the article. Nevertheless, the ideas of the Pure Land sect and the cults of Avalokitesvara and Amitabha were widespread during the Ly period and exerted an important influence on various Chan sects even before the establishment of the Thao Duong sect.

Others draw links between Thao Duong and the Chinese Tuyet Dau Minh Giac sect, pointing to ideological affinities between the two.

While a case can be made for such a hypothesis, it would certainly be wrong to claim that Thao Duong was actually a disciple of Tuyet Dau. As noted in the *An Nam Chi Luoc*, Thao Duong's master, whom he accompanied on a journey to Champa, was not Tuyet Dau. On the other hand, evidence that Tuyet Dau died in 1052 and that Thao Duong arrived in Thang Long in 1069 suggests that the two monks lived during roughly the same period.

As Bonze Superior, Tuyet Dau Minh Giac and his Yun Men (Cloud-gate) sect, supported a degree of reconciliation between Buddhism and Confucianism, his thought proved influential among Confucian circles. It is perhaps because of this that in Vietnam, the Thao Duong sect spread among the aristocratic bureaucratic classes who eschewed monastic life. Tuyet Dau's important work was the *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc*, a collection of poetic aphorisms. He is generally considered to be a poet of great talent. In the 12th century, the *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc* was a popular text among Ly Buddhist sects. For example, Bonze superior, Quang Nghiem (1122-1190) of the Wu Yantong, heard Bonze Superior Thien Tri preach from the *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc* at the Phuc Thanh pagoda. This perhaps suggests the influence of Thao Duong.

However, it is unlikely that dishonest and greedy luminaries such as King Ly Cao Tong or the influential aristocrat Do Anh Vu followed Buddhist precepts for reasons other than religious faddism, and certainly not as a genuine expression of religious devotion or as an earnest search for inner peace.

TOWERS AND PAGODAS UNDER THE LY

Any treatment of the religious and cultural dimensions of Ly Buddhism would be incomplete without a consideration of Buddhist towers and pagodas. Ancient history texts, from the *Dai Viet Su Luoc* to the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, note that Ly kings from virtually every reign built and patronized pagodas and towers. These histories record that while kings dipped into state revenues to finance pagoda and tower construction, countless smaller temples were built and supported by local officials and communities.

Immediately after transferring the royal capital to Thang Long, King Ly Thai To ordered the construction of the Hung Phuc pagoda within the walls of the citadel and the Thang Nghiem pagoda outside. In 1011, the Van Tue pagoda was also built inside the capital and other temples such as the Tu Dai Thien Vuong, the Cam Y, and the Long Hung Thanh Tho were erected in the neighboring countryside. In 1016 two pagodas, Thien Quang and Thien Duc were built. In 1024, another pagoda, the Chan Giao, was built within the royal citadel to allow the king to attend prayer recitals.

After succeeding to the throne in 1031, Ly Thai Tong financed the construction of 150 village pagodas. In 1041, he built the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery in Tien Du Mountain and in 1049, he erected the Dien Huu

pagoda, better known as the Chua Mot Cot or One-Pillar Pagoda, in Thang Long.⁵⁵ In 1056, during the reign of Ly Thai Tong, the Sung Khanh Bao Thien pagoda (known as the Bao Thien pagoda) was built on the site where the Hanoi Cathedral stands today. In 1057, the Thien Phuc and Thien Tho pagodas and the Dai Thang Tu Thien tower in Sung Khanh Bao Thien pagoda. In 1058, Do Son tower was built and at that time it was named Tuong Long. In 1059, the Sung Nghiem Bao Duc pagoda was built on the Tien Du mountain. In 1070, the Nhi Thien Vuong pagoda was built in Thang Long.

Under the reign of King Ly Nhan Tong, scores of pagodas and temples were erected throughout the country. The king's mother, Linh Nhan, is credited with ordering the construction of over 100 pagodas. In 1086, the construction of the Canh Long Dong Khanh pagoda began in Lam Son⁵⁶ mountain and was completed in 1094. The tower of this pagoda was finished in 1088. In 1099 a pagoda was built in the An Lao mountain, and in 1100 the Vinh Phuc pagoda was built on the Tien Du mountain. In 1105, the One Pillar Pagoda was enlarged and two towers were added. That same year, three more towers were built on to the Lam Son pagoda. In 1108, the Van Phong Thanh Thien tower came under construction on the Chuong Son mountain⁵⁷ and was finished in 1117.

Construction of the Thang Nghiem Pagoda began in 1114 and was completed in 1118. A chamber, called the Thien Phat, and containing one thousand statues of the Buddha, was added that same year. In 1115, the Sung Pham pagoda in Sieu Loai hamlet (Thuan Thanh- Ha Bac) was constructed. The erection of the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower at the Doi mountain (Duy Tien, Ha Nam Ninh) began in 1118 and was completed in 1121. The Tinh Lu pagoda was completed in 1119. In 1121, local authorities built the Bao Thien pagoda and began constructing the Quang Giao pagoda at the Tien Du mountain. It was finished in 1123. That same year saw the completion of Phung Tu pagoda and four years later the Trung Hung Dien Tho pagoda was also finished. In 1134, during the reign of King Than Tong, two pagodas, the Thien Ninh and Thien Tho were built.

While history does not record the construction of any pagodas during the reigns of Kings Anh Tong and Cao Tong, it is often argued that the Phap Van pagoda (In Thuan Thanh, Ha Bac) was completed during their era in 1161. As evidence suggests that the pagoda was actually built much earlier, it was perhaps only renovated in 1161. Another massive renovation occurred at the Chan Giao pagoda in 1179, where Ly Hue Tong, the last Ly king, entered the monkhood during the waning years of the dynasty.

The pagodas and towers mentioned above were erected by the state and thus recorded in official history books. Moreover, many local pagodas were also built. Based on steles which date from the Ly period, it is known that the construction of Bao An pagoda on An Hoach mountain (Nhoi mountain in Thanh Hoa) began in 1099 and was completed a year later. The Bao Ninh Sung Phuc pagoda in Chiem Hoa (Ha Tuyen) was built in 1107. The Linh Xung pagoda at the Nguong Son mountain (Ha Trung, Thanh

Hoa) was built on Ly Thuong Kiet's orders and finished in 1126. The Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda (Hau Loc, Thanh Hoa) was built in 1117. Work on the Dien Phuc pagoda (Xuan Thuy, Ha Nam Ninh) began in 1121 and ended in 1122. The Dien Phuc pagoda from Co Viet hamlet (My Van, Hai Hung) was built around 1156-57. The Tu Gia Bao An pagoda at Thap Mieu (Me Linh, Hanoi) was finished in 1209.

While the distinctive architecture of Ly pagodas and towers has been gradually destroyed over time, scattered ruins and epigraphical vestiges give us some sense of its scale and special characteristics. An archeological excavation carried out in 1972-73 at the Lang (Vien Giac) Pagoda in the Minh Hai commune, My Van district, Hai Hung province, uncovered a significant segment of the foundation of a pagoda built around 1115 during the Ly. Nearly square in shape, the foundation comprises three floors, the first 20.2 x 23.6 meters, the second 15.2 x 18.8 and the third 8.2 x 10.4 meters. The third floor served as an altar, the remains of which include Buddha statues and statues of lions holding aloft the Buddha's throne poised atop a stone platform.⁵⁸ The three story square pagoda had four doors each facing a cardinal direction, a special feature which seems characteristic of Ly architecture.

Many Ly pagodas such as the Phat Tich (Van Phuc) pagoda built in 1057 and the Giam pagoda built in 1086, were situated atop mountains. They were generally built on high stone platforms and embedded in the mountain sides. Many of the floors from these mountain pagodas are still visible today. The Dien Huu pagoda (i.e. the One-Pillar Pagoda) was also an original architectural feat of the Ly. According to the:

In winter, on the tenth month of the sixth year of Thien Cam Thanh Vu (1049), the Dien Huu pagoda was built. It was constructed following a dream of the King Ly Thai Tong. In the dream, the king had seen Buddha Avalokitesvara sitting on a lotus throne and had been invited to sit upon the throne with her. The king's officials interpreted the dream as a bad omen. One of them, the monk Thien Tue, advised the king to erect a pagoda atop a stone column and place within it a throne resembling the one he had seen in his dream. The monk then walked around the column reciting prayers and begging for longevity for the king. Thus, the pagoda was named Dien Huu, meaning long life.⁵⁹

In Autumn, in the ninth month of the fifth year of the Long Phu era (1105), two white pointed towers were added to the Dien Huu pagoda. King Ly Nhan Tong ordered the pagoda renovated, to make it more beautiful than before. He had a small lake dug around the pagoda called Linh Chieu Lake. The lake in turn was surrounded by an ornately carved and painted path. Another lake, Bich Tri, was dug around the path with a parabolic bridge linking the two sides. In the

courtyard in front of the pagoda, a tower was erected. On the first and fifteenth days of every month and the eighth day of the fourth month, the King prayed and carried out a Buddhist bathing rite at the pagoda. This ceremony became a routine over time.⁶⁰

The stele on the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower erected in 1122 atop the Doi mountain in Ha Nam Ninh contained a similar paragraph:

The Dien Huu pagoda was built in the Tay Cam garden in accordance with the ancient dimensions and based on both the requirements and patronage of the king at that time. After the Perfumed Linh Chieu lake had been dug, a stone column whose top was covered by a lotus with a thousand blossoming leaves emerged from its depths. A dark red temple was built on the lotus and a yellow statue was erected inside it. A painted path ran around the lake. And around the path, the Bich Tri lake was dug. A parabolic bridge linked the two sides. In a courtyard, to the right and left of the bridge, two towers inlaid with precious pearls were erected.⁶¹

Obviously, the architectural style of the Dien Huu pagoda during the Ly period was different and much more beautiful than the One-Pillar Pagoda as it exists today.

During the Ly dynasty, the pagoda and tower architecture was symmetrical and parallel, with all structures constructed around a central axis. Also popular were many-storied towers. For example, the Dai Thang Tu Thien Tower of the Bao Thien pagoda constructed in Thang Long was twelve stories high.⁶² The Sung Thien Dien Linh tower in the Doi pagoda (Ha Nam Ninh) was thirteen stories high. The Chieu An tower at the Linh Xung pagoda (Thanh Hoa) was nine stories high. The tower at the Phat Tich pagoda (Ha Bac) was ten stories high and 8.5 meters wide on each side. The Van Phong Thanh Thien tower in Chuong Son was built on a pedestal nineteen meters wide, and much higher than the Phat Tich tower.⁶³

Pagodas and towers during the Ly reign were decorated with spherical statues and beautiful bas-reliefs carved in stone. The statues include representations of elephants, lions, buffaloes, horses, rhinos (i.e., in the Phat Tich pagoda in Ha Bac), crocodiles (i.e., in the Lang Pagoda in Hai Hung and Hanoi's Ba Tam pagoda), and divine birds such as dancing and singing fays (i.e. at the Chuong Son and Phat Tich pagodas). Decorative designs of lotus leaves and waves are found carved in stone on the floor and the pagoda walls are often covered with pictures. For example, the walls of the Linh Xung pagoda were reputedly, "painted with beautiful scenery, Buddhist images, ever-changing forms and uncountable pictographic designs".⁶⁴ On the walls of the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda, "There

were paintings suggesting the principle of karma and laws of cause and effect, and depictions of thousands of fantastic and illusory transformations”.⁶⁵

Ly Dynasty art complemented the beauty of Buddhist architecture, and Ly Dynasty Buddhism in turn shaped the distinctive spirit of Ly Dynasty art. Statues erected within pagodas and towers can be analyzed to illuminate important aspects of art and Buddhism under the Ly. Three stone statues from the Ly period remain today. The first can be found in the Phat Tich pagoda in Ha Bac, the second at the Mot Mai pagoda⁶⁶ in Ha Son Binh, and the third at the Ngo Xa pagoda in Ha Nam Ninh. The Phat Tich Statue, the most beautiful, stands 1.87 meters high, 2.77 with the pedestal included. According to epigraphic evidence, the statue was completed in 1057. While some scholars identify the statue as a representation of the Buddha Amitabha, others disagree.

The Mot Mai's statue, on the other hand, based on an inscription carved into its lotus-crowned lion-shaped pedestal, is generally accepted to be Amitabha. According to the inscription, “A monk with the Buddhist name Tri Bat from Thach That mountain, upon recalling Amitabha in the 'Western Land of the Blessed', asked his followers to build a large ceremonial altar. He also planned to erect a large stone statue of Amitabha, but was unable to realize his aim.” Only in the eighth year of the Hoi Phong era (1099) did he manage to have the statue completed. Tri Bat, whose name was carved on the pedestal of the Mot Mai pagoda is almost certainly a member of the 12th generation of the Vinitaruci sect. As mentioned previously, Tri Bat (1049-1117) was a disciple of Bonze Superior Sung Pham in the Phap Van pagoda (i.e., Dau pagoda Ha Bac.) According to the *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, Tri Bat entered the monkhood in the To Phong pagoda atop Thach That mountain. Tri Bat was strongly influenced by Tantrism, as evidenced by the Tantric prophesy he repeated at the end of his sutra on the nature of life and death. But based on the inscription on the statue pedestal, it is clear that Tri Bat was also influenced by the Pure Land sect and believed in the 'Western Land of the Blessed' and in the Buddha Amitabha. This suggests that the Pure Land sect exerted influence within the Vinitaruci sect. At that time the Wu Yantong sect was also influenced by the Pure Land sect. According to the *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, Bonze Tinh Luc (1112-1175), a member of the tenth generation of the Wu Yantong sect, advocated reciting prayers with both one's heart and mouth. This suggested a combination of the Dhyana and the Pure Land beliefs.

The existence of Pure Land beliefs and a belief in Amitabha, can also be seen in the inscription on the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower at the Doi pagoda in Ha Nam Ninh. The inscription on the tower recalled the Amitabha statue erected during the Quang Chieu lantern festival in front of the Dai Hung gate of Thang Long. It also expresses hope that Queen Linh Nhan “will have a pure and contented soul after death.” The inscription on the stele of the Vien Quang pagoda (constructed in 1122) related that the statue of Amitabha could be found in the middle compartment beside the

statue of Bodhidharma. The final sentence of the inscription said, "Amitabha sits in the middle and Bodhidharma sits behind him."⁶⁷

Coupled with a belief in Amitabha, there was also a belief in Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva whose job it was to lead living beings to the Western Land of the Blessed. It is clear that a cult of Avalokitesvara was widespread during the Ly. The aforementioned excerpt from the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* concerning Ly Thai Tong's dream and the construction of the Dien Huu pagoda suggest the strength of the belief in Avalokitesvara that existed during this period. In Vietnam however, belief in Avalokitesvara could often occur independently of belief in Amitabha. According to an inscription found on a stele erected in 1157 in the Dien Phuc pagoda (Co Viet hamlet, Hai Hung) a statue of Avalokitesvara was positioned between two other statues, one of Manjusri and one of Samantabhadra. This positioning of statues differed from that found in other pagodas where statues of Sakyamuni, not Avalokitesvara typically sat between the other two statues.

Buddha Maitreya was also worshipped during the Ly. According to the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, in 1041, King Ly Thai Tong "went to the Tien Du mountain to watch the construction of the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery. Upon returning to the capital, he ordered 7,560 kilograms of copper to be used to sculpt statues of the Buddha Maitreya and two other Bodhisattvas (Hai Thanh and Cong Duc) and to cast a bell for use in the monastery."⁶⁸ As Tu Thi is often considered another name for Buddha Maitreya, the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery perhaps served as a pagoda to worship this Bodhisattva.⁶⁹ The inscription on the stele found at the Quynh Lam pagoda in Quang Ninh also told of the erection of a large Buddha Maitreya statue.

In Ly pagodas, Buddha Maitreya was worshipped as a future Buddha together with a past Buddha and a Buddha of the present, making a triad of three generations. The inscription on a stele erected in 1118 at the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda in Thanh Hoa described the statue in the pagoda as follows, "In the middle sits Sakyamuni,⁷⁰ the Buddha of the present, at one side sits Kasyapa,⁷¹ the Buddha of the solemn and glorious past and at the other sits Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha of the brilliant future."⁷² In the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda, three beautiful stone pedestals remain to this day. Resembling one another, they have the form of lions carrying Buddha thrones. They date from the Ly. It is possible that at one time, these pedestals held aloft the three generations of Buddhas, Sakyamuni, Kasyapa and Maitreya.

The statue of Sakyamuni was also worshipped individually, according to the inscription on the stele at the Bao An pagoda on An Hoach mountain (Thanh Hoa): "In between sits Sakyamuni and under him is Avalokitesvara."

Another Buddha, the Da Bao Nhu Lai, was also worshipped during the Ly. An inscription on a stele found at Sung Thien Dien Linh tower notes his name twice. It mentions that a Da Bao Nhu Lai statue was erected

atop a golden mountain before the Dai Hung gate of Thang Long. It also refers to a Da Bao Nhu Lai statue erected among statues of the eight “wise generals.” Da Bao Nhu Lai was often associated with the *Saddharmapudarika sutra*,⁷³ a sutra known to be popular at that time.⁷⁴

While the inscription on the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower notes the existence of eight statues of “wise generals,” only six of the statues remain today. The inscription on a stele found in Dien Phuc pagoda (Co Viet hamlet, Hai Hung) suggests that the pagoda at one time also contained a similar series of statues.

Other Ly steles note the existence of statues of Buddhist guardians such as the ones just mentioned above. Statues of arhats were also widespread during the Ly. One arhat, Pindola Bharadvaja, was worshipped at a separate altar in the Doi pagoda and was referred to in the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower inscription as the “Tan Dau chief monk”. Statues of the four Heavenly Kings, Brahma and Indra also seem to have been popular during the Ly.⁷⁵

In short, it appears that many different Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Heavenly Kings were worshipped in pagodas during the Ly. The quantity of Ly statuary however, seems small as compared with succeeding dynasties. Based on information culled from Ly steles, there were not many statues cast during this period and those that were tended to differ from one another in design, decoration, and positioning within the pagoda. Moreover, Ly pagodas did not contain altars embellished with ordered series of statues as found today.

Based on the names given to Ly pagodas such as the Four Great Heavenly Kings Pagoda, Two Heavenly Kings Pagoda, The Maitreya Heavenly Happiness Pagoda, it seems likely that some pagodas were built for the worship of a particular number of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Heavenly Kings. Other pagodas such as the Bao Thien pagoda in Thang Long, served as places to pray for good weather. During such prayers, a procession was organized and a statue of Phap Van was carried from the Dau pagoda to the Bao Thien pagoda. This suggests a certain overlapping of Buddhist and popular local beliefs.⁷⁶

In short, Ly pagodas and towers and their worship help us to understand the complex and varied character of Buddhism at that time.

NOTES

¹*Literature under Ly, Tran's Reigns*, Book 1, Hanoi, 1977, p.362.

²This pagoda is located at Ba Son mountain, i.e. Tien Son, Ha Bac.

³I.e., Doi pagoda, Duy Tien district, Ha Nam Ninh.

⁴I.e., Ly Nhat Trung, King Ly Thai Tong's son.

⁵Sentences in quotation marks are excerpts from *Thien Uyen Tap Anh (TUTA)*.

⁶In Nghi Xuan district, Nghe Tinh, archaeologists have found the vestiges of pagodas and towers built under the Ly, near the temple dedicated to Ly Nhat Quang.

⁷*Literature under Ly, Tran's Reigns*, op.cit., p. 545.

⁸*Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu (DVKSTT)*, ban ky, Bk.3, p. 39b; *TUTA*, lower book.

⁹Id., p. 12a.

¹⁰*DVKSTT* mentioned the chief monk Tham Van Uyen in 1014. *TUTA* related that the monk Hue Sinh (died 1063) had been promoted chief monk from an assistant chief monk; the monk Vien Thong being promoted assistant chief monk in 1130, then chief monk in 1143.

¹¹*TUTA*, lower book.

¹²According to *DVKSTT* and *Viet Su Luoc (VSL)* it was in 1122; according to the stele in Sung Thien Dien Linh tower, it was in 1121.

¹³*Literature under Ly, Tran's Reigns*, op.cit., p. 40.

¹⁴*DVKSTT*, book 2, p. 8b, says Nguyen Dao Thanh while *VSL* (book 2, p.3b) says Nguyen Thanh Dao.

¹⁵These two trips are recorded in *VSL*.

¹⁶*VSL*, bk. 3, p. 10.

¹⁷In this generation, Thien Ong did not survive until Ly's reign; meanwhile Sung Pham, whose birthday and death-day remained doubtful as mentioned in the previous chapter, did live under the Ly reign. He was a teacher of the monk Tri Bat; the latter was born only in 1049.

¹⁸According to *TUTA*, Thuan Chau was in the same generation with Tri Bat, and always *TUTA* recorded that Thuan Chau together with two others, namely Tinh Hanh and Phap Nhon, were disciples of Tri Bat.

¹⁹*TUTA*.

²⁰Id.

²¹Id.

²²Id.

²³I.e. Madhyamika.

²⁴Based on the Vietnamese translation reported to be by the monk Huyen Quang under the Tran dynasty. See *Literature under Ly, Tran's...*, op.cit., p. 345.

²⁵Based on the Vietnamese translation by Hoa Bang, id., p. 353.

²⁶Based on the Vietnamese translation by Nguyen Duc Van and Dao Phuong Binh, id., p. 340.

²⁷*TUTA* recorded that the monk Quang Nghiem (eleventh generation) is a disciple of the monk Tri Thien who cloistered in Phuc Thanh pagoda, but the name of Tri Thien did not appear in the tenth generation. It must be that Tri Thien mentioned here is not Tri Thien who belonged to the Vinitaruci sect and cloistered at Phu Mon pagoda. Maybe *TUTA* had wrongly recorded the monk Thien Tri instead of Tri Thien. Thien Tri is another name of the monk Minh Tri (tenth generation) also cloistering at Phuc Thanh pagoda.

²⁸In fact, Ung Vuong had been monk under the Tran reign. See next chapter.

²⁹Tue Tich would later be the founder of the Chan sect Qui Nguong.

³⁰Besides the Tao Khe sect, there was the Thanh Nguyen sect that began with the monk Hanh Tu. In the second half of ninth century, Tao Khe sect was split into Lam Te and Qui Nguong sects. By the end of ninth century, Lam Te sect was split into Hoang Long, Duong Ky sect. And Thanh Nguyen sect also split into Tao Dong, Van Mon and Phap Nhan sects.

³¹The Sino-Vietnamese word *ao* must be rightly pronounced as *huyen*. But in this text, we keep its traditional use as *ao*.

³²*Mahaprajnaparamita-sastra* explained the concept of “not to be is not to be” as follows: “Every *phap* is nothing” Thus the ‘not to be’ is also nothing, so not to be is not to be”.

³³Based on the Vietnamese translation by Ngo Tat To. See *Literature under Ly, Tran...*, op.cit, p. 445.

³⁴I.e., invariable truth.

³⁵“Reality” here is to be understood as “true physiognomy” [“true face”].

³⁶The opposition between the phenomenal universe on one side and the void universe on the other.

³⁷We do not know exactly the year when the monk Cuu Chi died, except only that he died around the Chuong Thanh Gia Khanh era (1059-1066).

³⁸Someone translated this sentence as “no speech could be compared with the Vo Dac”, considering Vo Dac as a method of meditation not aiming at enlightenment (Nguyen Lang, *Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan*, book 1, Ed. La Boi. Saigon, 1974, p. 7-168).

³⁹This point of view is that of the *Lankavatara-sutra* version by Gunabhadra, the 4-volume version. There is some difference in the ten-volume version. It is to be noted that the four-volume version was rather popular in Vietnam. The monk Phap Loa (Tran dynasty) wrote a book called *Explaining the four-volume Lankavatara-sutra*.

⁴⁰Thus the concept of ‘Tathata’ had its roots in the Yogacara sect. The Chinese book *Weishi Lun* (On Yogacara) explained: “Truth is not the wrong, it is the eternal. So it can be considered as invariable truth”.

⁴¹Based on the Vietnamese translation by Ngo Tat To, *Literature under Ly, Tran...*, op.cit., p. 299.

⁴²*TUTA* did not record the monk Bao Giac in a separate story. However, as he was the teacher of Tinh Gioi (tenth generation) belonging to the Wu Yantong sect, we can guess he belonged to the 9th generation.

⁴³See explication below in the text for the words “invisible” and “voiceless.”

⁴⁴I.e., the invariable truth.

⁴⁵Based on the Vietnamese translation by Kieu Thu Hoach, *Literature under Ly Tran...*, op.cit., p. 385.

⁴⁶According to *TUTA*, upper book, both Khong Lo and Giac Hai were the monk Ha Trach's disciples; but afterwards, Giac Hai became Khong Lo's disciple, so he belonged to the tenth generation. while Khong Lo to the 9th one. Surprisingly *TUTA*, lower book, recorded that Khong Lo and Giac Hai both belonged to the second generation of the Thao Duong sect and both were Ngo Xa's disciples.

⁴⁷Laozi, chapter 14.

⁴⁸Based on the Vietnamese translation by Pham Tu Chau and Hoang Le, *Literature under Ly, Tran...*, op.cit., p. 554.

⁴⁹We don't find the genealogy of Buddhist generations under the Ly reign, but the genealogy of the Tran reign ("Luoc dan thien phai do" in *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*) and the inscriptions on the stele in the Vien Thong tower at Thanh Mai allow us to figure out the genealogy of that time.

⁵⁰The taboo words under the Tran reign are still used in this text.

⁵¹Those monks looked after the Buddhist affairs under the chief monk's direction.

⁵²See *An Nam Chi Luoc*, bk.14, 'Phuong ngoai'.

⁵³*An Nam Chi*, Tien Thich.

⁵⁴Surely Do Anh Vu (1114 - 1159) as related in the *Viet Su Luoc* and *DVSKTT*.

⁵⁵According to the *DVKTT*, book 2,37a. But according to VSL (book 2, 19b) that pagoda was built in 1101, i.e., 52 years afterwards.

⁵⁶It's the Giam pagoda located in the Giam mountain, in Nam Son village, Que Vo district, today Ha Bac province.

⁵⁷That mountain is now called Ngo Xa mountain situated in Yen Loi village, Y Yen district, Ha Nam Ninh province.

⁵⁸Nguyen Duy Hinh: "Considering the architecture of the Lang pagoda (Hai Hung)," *Archaeology Review* No. 2, 1977, p. 76-87.

⁵⁹*DVSKTT*, book 2, p. 37a.

⁶⁰Id., book 3, p.15a

⁶¹*Literature under Ly, Tran's Reigns*, p.405.

⁶²Twelve-storeyed according to *DVSKTT*, while 20-storeyed according to VSL.

⁶³Cao Xuan Pho, "The Chuong Son tower during the Ly's reign", *Archaeology Review* No. 5, 1970. p. 48-63.

⁶⁴Epigraph on the stele Linh Xung, *Literature under Ly, Tran's Reigns*, op. cit, p.363.

⁶⁵Epigraph on the stele of the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda (Hau Loc, Thanh Hoa), *Literature under Ly Tran's Reign*, op.cit., p. 376.

⁶⁶That pagoda had another name: The Hoang Kim pagoda located in the Hoang Ngo commune, Quoc Oai district, Ha Son Binh province.

⁶⁷See the epigraph on the stele of the Vien Quang pagoda in *Literature under Ly Tran's Reign*, op.cit, p. 450-457.

⁶⁸*DVSKTT*, book 2, p 29h.

⁶⁹Di Lac is a transcription from the Sanscrit word 'Maitreya' while 'Tu Thi' is its meaning.

⁷⁰*Hien Kiep* means present life.

⁷¹Ca Diep (Kasyapa) refers here to one of seven Buddhas representing the Past and not to Sakyamuni's disciple (also named Kasyapa).

⁷²Tuong lai means future; Tu Thi means Maitreya

⁷³The "Kien Bao Thap Pham" in *Dieu Phap Lien Hoa* related that in the East, there was a country name Bao Tinh where the Buddha Da Bao lived. When he was just a Bodhisattva, he made a great vow. It was that after becoming Buddha and entering Nirvana, his tower would appear to hear the prayer anywhere the Lotus sutra was preached

⁷⁴ His name, Da Bao, was found carved on a broken piece of a prayers column erected at Hoa Lu since the Dinh's reign.

⁷⁵ According to the epigraph on the stele of the Dien Phuc pagoda in the Co Viet hamlet in Hai Hung written by 1157.

⁷⁶ The *DVSKTT* related that in 1057, "Two pagodas called Thien Phuc and Thien Tho were built and two statues of Brahma and Indra were moulded for worship," (book 3, p. 2a). And in 1134, two other pagodas, Thien Ninh and Thien Thanh, were constructed and Indra's statue was repainted (op.cit., book 3, page 13a).

CHAPTER IX

BUDDHISM UNDER THE TRAN DYNASTY

What happened in the palace on January 1226, bringing Tran Canh to the throne, did not only end the Ly dynasty but also ended an epoch troubled and confused by the fighting between central and local authorities. Centralized and unified powers were restored. Production increased. Agriculture developed owing to land clearing, dike building and transgression on the sea. Industry and trade scored new progress. Many handicraft villages appeared; trading economy prospered. Foreign trading ships came more and more into Van Don and other ports. The administrative apparatus was perfected from the center to the villages. A collection of books called "*Thong Che*" was elaborated confirming statutes, laws, rites of the State.

National spirit, already developed, was heightened after the victories over the Mongol invaders and had a strong impact on the whole literature and arts. Literature in Nom characters came into being. Myths and folk tales as well as stories about the nation's founders and defenders began to be collected and the elaboration of national history began.

At the same time, examinations for the choosing of public functionaries became regular affairs. Confucianist ideology attained step by step its important position in the spiritual life as well as in the social organizations. Under the Tran's reign, Buddhism maintained onto its prosperity until the middle of the 14th century. The Kings of the Tran dynasty clearly understood the role of Confucianism and Buddhism in the society.

In his litany "*Thien Tong Chi Nam*," King Tran Thai Tong wrote: "The means to overcome obscurity, the shortened way to understand life and death problems, was the great teaching of Buddha. To be the model for posterity, to be the example for the future, those are heavy responsibilities of the predecessors... Now why cannot I make mine the predecessor's responsibility, make mine the Buddha's teaching?"

Thus under the Tran reign, Buddhism developed in combination with Confucianism.

From Continuance to Unification

We can't speak of Buddhism under the Tran reign without paying attention to the Truc Lam Chan sect and the ending of the preceding Chan sects. The promoter of the Truc Lam sect was King Tran Nhan Tong. After having definitively left his family in 1299, that King became "the first founder of Truc Lam sect," i.e., its first 'ancestor'. The second ancestor was the monk Phap Loa and the third was the monk Huyen Quang.

But saying “to begin” doesn't mean continuation. Did the Truc Lam sect inherit anything from the preceding Buddhist sects? Before Tran Nhan Tong left his family, in 70 years of existence of the Tran dynasty, how had Buddhism developed itself? Existing historic documents are not sufficient to allow us to answer all these questions. Nevertheless we can today find something about the origin of the Truc Lam sect despite the lack of clarity in all its developing steps. According to the scheme in the article “*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*” printed in front page of the book *Truc Lam Tue Trung Thuong Sy Ngu Luc*,¹ we have a religion transmitting order from the generations under the Ly reign up to the Three Ancestors of the Truc Lam sect as follows:

- Thong Thien
- Tuc Lu
- Ung Thuan
- Tieu Dao
- Tue Trung
- Truc Lam
- Phap Loa
- Huyen Quang

That document is a credible one.² The Buddhist generations of Tuc Lu, Ung Thuan, Tieu Dao were related in *the Thien Uyen Tap Anh*.

Thong Thien was a lay Buddhist belonging to the thirteenth generation of the Wu Yantong sect and also called Thong Su (died in 1228). He was the monk Thuong Chieu (died in 1203).

Tuc Lu was the monk belonging to the fourteenth generation and the monk Thong Thien's disciple. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* didn't mention Tuc Lu's death-day, but at least, that monk lived in the Tran Thai Tong's lifetime for the reason that Ung Thuan, after having been a dignitary under that king's reign, came to have lessons with him.

Ung Thuan was a lay Buddhist. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* related his history under the name Ung Vuong (but in the story of ‘Tuc Lu’ he was called (Ung Thuan) belonging to the fifteenth generation of the Wu Yantong sect. His name was Do Van Tinh, born in the Hoa Thi quarter, (Ve market?), Thang Long. He served King Tran Thai Tong with the title of second degree royal official and was afterwards the monk Tuc Lu's disciple in the Thong Thanh pagoda, Chu Minh hamlet, Thien Duc district (Ha Bac). Ung Thuan was the master of many well-known monks under the Tran's reign. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, his disciples were Tieu Dao, state advisor Nhat Tong, Gioi Minh and Gioi Vien. And according to “*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*”, besides Tieu Dao, his two other disciples were Dao Si and Quoc Nhat.

The monk Tieu Dao was not mentioned by *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* in a particular paragraph but was only recalled among the monk Ung Thuan followers. Nevertheless, it's obvious that Tieu Dao played an important role

in the moulding of the ideology of the Truc Lam sect. He was Tue Trung's and Tran Tung's teacher; the latter was a brilliant Buddhist scholar under the Tran reign to whom we will come back in the following part. In the article "*Thuong Sy Hanh Trang*," King Tran Nhan Tong wrote: "At the age of nearly twenty, for having loved Buddhism, Tue Trung attended the lessons given by the monk Tieu Dao in Phuc Duong, and thus understood the meaning." Tue Trung always showed respect and admiration for Tieu Dao. In the book *Tue Trung Thuong Sy Ngu Luc*, we find a certain number of Tue Trung's poems relative to the monk Tieu Dao. These were the poems "Inquiring about the great monk Phuc Duongs health,"³ "Dedication to the monk Tieu Dao in Phuc Duong,"⁴ and "Nature in Phuc Duong."⁵ "Funeral oration to the master,"⁶ also written by Tue Trung, might be for Tieu Dao's funeral oration. According to "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*," the monk Tieu Dao had many disciples: besides Tue Trung, there were Ngu Ong, Thu Nhan, Dao Tiem, Vi Hai, Thach Dau (who immolated himself after having reached enlightenment), Than Tan, Lan Toan, Thach Lau, and Thon Tang.

We can say that Tue Trung was the most brilliant disciple of Tieu Dao. But Tue Trung was a lay Buddhist studying at home while Tieu Dao cloistered in Phuc Duong in a wild forest. But where was Phuc Duong? In the same time, another document related that the monk Tieu Dao's belonged to the generation which propagated religion in the Yen Tu mountain. As we can see, the Truc Lam sect's origin might be linked to Ung Thuan, Tuc Lu, and Thong Thien, who belonged to the last generation of the Wu Yantong sect. Thus we can say that the Truc Lam sect was the continuation of the Wu Yantong sect.

But although Tue Trung was Nhan Tong's master, he was but a lay Buddhist studying at home while Nhan Tong, after having definitively left his family, came to cloister in the Yen Tu mountain (Dong Trieu district, Quang Ninh province). That's why the Truc Lam sect was also called the Truc Lam Yen Tu sect. But before Nhan Tong's arrival at that mountain, many monks had successively cloistered there. It's clear that those monks had played an important role in the development of Buddhism under the Tran reign before the Truc Lam sect was founded, but it's very difficult to accurately identify them. We have now only one list of the various generations which cloistered in the Van Tieu Hoa Yen pagoda situated in the Yen Tu mountain. That list was rewritten by the chief monk Phuc Dien in *Dai Nam Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc* also called *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luc*, printed in about 1858.

According to this list, the successive generations of the monks having cloistered in Yen Tu are as follows:

1. Hien Quang
2. Vien Chuong
3. Dai Dang
4. Tieu Dao
5. Hue Tue

- 6 . Dieu Ngu, i.e., Tran Nhan Tong
7. Phap Loa
8. Huyen Quang
9. An Tam
10. Tinh Lu Phu Van
- 11 Vo Truoc
12. Quoc Nhat
13. Vien Minh
14. Dao Hue
15. Vien Ngo
16. Tong Tri
17. Tam Tang Khue Tham
18. Son Dang
19. Huong Son
20. Tri Dung
21. Tue Quang
22. Chan Tru
23. Vo Phien

The accuracy of this whole list is doubtful and the generations' sequence seems to be unreliable.⁷ Nevertheless the list of the generations before Nhan Tong, as related above, might have some consultative value. For example, to consider the monk Hien Quang as the founder of the Yen Tu mountain group proves itself perfectly accurate. This confirmation is supplied in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*. The monk Hien Quang - properly named Le Thuan - was born in Thang Long. He was Thuong Chieu's disciple and belonged to the twelfth generation of the Wu Yantong sect. But according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* Hien Quang didn't belong to the thirteenth but to the fourteenth generation of that sect. Although he was brought up by Thuong Chieu from the age of eleven and educated for ten years, he hadn't yet achieved his education in Buddhism when the monk master Thuong Chieu died in 1203. He had to pursue his education with the monk Tri Thong. Afterward, he had to come to Nghe An and receive education from the monk Phap Gioi in the Uyen Trung mountain. In the end, he returned and cloistered in Yen Tu mountain where he died in 1220.

Thien Uyen Tap Anh informs us that Hien Quang had a disciple named Dao Vien who buried him in a cavern that probably was in the Yen Tu mountain. According to Phuc Dien's list, it was Vien Chuong who came after Hien Quang. Thus, it was very probable that Dao Vien and Vien Chuong were one and the same man. According to the preface for the book *Thien Tong Chi Nam*, in 1236 King Tran Thai Tong escaped from the capital for the Yen Tu mountain where he met the state monk Truc Lam.⁸ Truc Lam, the state monk, might only be in this context Dao Vien or Vien Chuong. The book published afterwards as *Thanh Dang Luc*, *Yen Tu Son Truc Lam Tran Trieu Thien Tong Ban Hanh*, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luc*,

related that Thai Tong met the state monk, Vien Chuong, when he came to Yen Tu.

More than ten years after that meeting, the state monk, Truc Lam, came to the capital, resided in the Thang Nghiem pagoda and organized the prayers' printing. When Tran Thai Tong showed his newly written book *Thien Tong Chi Nam*, he proposed to get it carved and printed.

In the list established by Phuc Dien, Vien Chuong's successor in the Yen Tu mountain was the monk Dai Dang. About the latter, "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*" informs us a little more. According to this book, about the same period with Ung Thuan, i.e., under Tran Thai Tong's reign, the lay Buddhist Thien Phong belonging to the Lam Te sect on Chuong Tuyen (Fujian, China) came to Vietnam and propagated Buddhism to the state monk, Dai Dang, and the chief monk, Nan Tu. Thus, we can conclude that the state monk, Dai Dang, was at the same time the disciple of two people, the state monk, Vien Chuong in Yen Tu, and the lay Buddhist, Thien Phong. According to *Thanh Dang Luc*, when the latter came to Vietnam, King Tran Thai Tong invited him to lecture on Buddhism in Thang Long. Perhaps, Dai Dang followed those teaching courses in that period. If that is true, the state monk Dai Dang concentrated in himself two traditions, that of Wu Yantong in the country and that of Lam Te from China. As we will see, the influence of the ideology of the Lam Te sect on Buddhism during the Tran reign was manifest.

According to "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*," the state monk Dai Dang propagated Buddhism to King Tran Thanh Tong. This fact was confirmed by other books such as *Thanh Dang Luc*, *Ke Dang Luc*. "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*" also cited, besides Tran Thanh Tong, a certain number of Dai Dang's followers such as the state monks, Lieu Minh, Thuong Cung and Huyen Sach. This book didn't list Tieu Dao among the number of Dai Dang's disciples but only mentioned him as Ung Thuan's disciple, the same as *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* did. Only Phuc Dien mentioned Tieu Dao as Dai Dang's successor in propagating the Buddhist work in Yen Tu. If this be the case, Tieu Dao would be the converging point of the two branches Ung Thuan (Thang Long) and Hien Quang (Yen Tu) in the Wu Yantong sect.

These two branches originated in the monk Thuong Chieu under the Ly's reign - a monk belonging to the Wu Yantong sect but cloistering in the Luc To pagoda (Dinh Bang, Gia Lam) which was an ancient center of the Vinitaruci sect. After the scheme in "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*" as well as in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the Ung Thuan branch was the layman Thong Thien's successor and Thong Thien and Hien Quang were both the monk Thuong Chieu's disciples.

As said above, the monk Tieu Dao was surely Tue Trung's master and the latter was Nhan Tong's master. But in the list made by the chief monk Phuc Dien as mentioned above, another of Tieu Dao's successors in propagating Buddhist work in Yen Tu was Hue Tue. We don't know anything about this monk and we also have no other documents for accurately checking on him.

But we know that when Nhan Tong came to cloister in Yen Tu he realized a second converging point of the two branches Yen Tu and Thang Long (if we can call them so) of the Wu Yantong sect between the end of the Ly's reign and the beginning of the Tran's, that sect being split since Thuong Chieu, if it be the case that Tieu Dao had realized the first converging point before Nhan Tong. With the foundation of the Truc Lam sect, Nhan Tong achieved the unification of the Buddhist clergy under the Tran's reign. But that task began only in 1299. Thus during the 13th century, Buddhism had developed with many sects.

Except for the above mentioned Buddhist sects, in "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*" and at the beginning of *Tue Trung Thuong Sy Ngu Luc* were related some more sects having existed at the beginning of Tran's reign. For example, one of them was led by the monk Vuong Chi Nhan who transmitted to the chief monk Nham Tang who in his turn transmitted to the lay Nham Tuc. Another sect led by the chief monk Nhat Thien was transmitted to the Lord Chan Dao, a high ranking official of the Tran's dynasty. The lay Thien Phong's sect coming from the Song was transmitted to Huyen Sach through Dai Dang and the former transmitted to Pha Trac.

Among the sects having existed under the Ly's reign, as we have seen, there remained only the branches from the Wu Yantong sect. The Thao Duong sect that had developed among the royal and dignitary's circles under the Ly's reign had perished after the collapse of that dynasty. The Vinitaruci sect was also dispersed. As it was seen in the preceding chapter, since the Ly's reign, many pagodas of that sect became cloistering places for the monks of the Thao Duong or Wu Yantong sect. After the monk Y Son's death (1213), no further disciples of his were commemorated.

Buddhism's development in the 13th century differed from that at the end of Ly's reign. About the end of the 12th century, Buddhism clearly showed a declining character. In 1198, the vice governor Dam Di Mong reported to the King Ly Cao Tong as follows: "At present the number of apprentice monks equals that of service people. By themselves they gather, name indiscriminately their chiefs for gangs, and do many filthy actions. They publicly eat and drink in religious places or indulge in lewdness in the nuns' rooms. They hide themselves in the daytime, and go out in the night as fox and mice. They corrupt customs and deprave religion, all of this is becoming habitual. If their behavior isn't declared 'forbidden', it will grow worse."⁹ Having listened to Dam Di Mong's advice, Ly Cao Tong ordered many apprentice monks to return to worldly life.

In the 13th century, with the foundation of the Tran's dynastic Kingdom, Buddhism underwent new changes. The Tran Kings together with the royal circles went on supporting Buddhism. But this century was marked by difficult resistance against the Mongol empire. All the national forces were mobilized for the defence and the strengthening of the country. Even the royal family members and aristocrats had to lead the poor people and the servants in doing the land-clearing in peace time and to lead soldiers into battle in wartime. The erudite Buddhist scholars, such as Thai

Tong, Tue Trung, Thanh Tong, and Nhan Tong, when the country was in peril, became heroic defenders and performed brilliant exploits. This is why in the 13th century Buddhism became purer and entered more into life. We can say that under the Tran's reign, the national spirit gave a new vital force to Buddhism. Thoughts such as 'being cordial with the people', considering the people as the 'root', we find materialized in Nhan Tong's or Tran Hung Dao's speeches and had been already expressed in the state monk Truc Lam's advice given to Tran Thai Tong in 1236: "When one is King he must make his the people's will and must make his the people's heart."¹⁰

Although it was the continuation of the branches of the Wu Yantong sect, the Truc Lam sect was begun and built as a unified clergy, bearing a fully Vietnamese character, getting rid of ancient Buddhist traditions imported from abroad. It thus becomes a manifestation of the development of a 'national consciousness'.

TRAN THAI TONG AND THE KHOA HU LUC

Thai Tong Tran Canh (1218-1277) was enthroned at the age of eight. When he was eighteen, his uncle Tran Thu Do who concentrated all powers in his own hands at the time, compelled the nephew to divorce his wife Chieu Thanh (i.e., Ly Chieu Hoang) and to marry Thuan Thien, the wife of Tran Lien (Tran Lien was Tran Canh's brother). Very afflicted, he escaped from the citadel for the Yen Tu mountain where he wanted to cloister. But Tran Thu Do once more compelled him to come back to the throne. This was in 1236.

From that time on, he devoted himself to the study of Buddhism. More than ten years after, he finished writing the book *Thien Tong Chi Nam*. Afterwards, he wrote other books on Buddhism. The extant *Khoa Hu Luc* contains only a very few of his works. As we know, Tran Thai Tong was the author of the following books on Buddhism:

1. Thien Tong Chi Nam.
2. Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi
3. Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai
4. Binh Dang Le Sam Van
5. Khoa Hu Luc

Thien Tong Chi Nam was Thai Tong's earliest work on Buddhism. It was lost and there remains of it only the preface written for *Khoa Hu Luc*. *Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi* was a book presenting the repentance rites according to six moments of the day. The whole book, including the preface, remains complete in the *Khoa Hu Luc* collection. *Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai* (annotations for the sutra *Kim Cuong Tam Muoi*) was lost except the preface. Through that preface, we know that Thai Tong was delighted with this collection of sutra-prayers so that he "devoted spirit and soul to writing the annotations."

Binh Dang Le Sam Van was also a book on the repentance rites. It was lost and there remains only the preface, published in *Khoa Hu Luc*. *Khoa Hu Luc* might be a separate book written by Tran Thai Tong, but the extant *Khoa Hu Luc* is nothing but a collection of articles written by that King in different periods. The different copies of *Khoa Hu Luc* which are extant comprise three books (upper-middle-lower) or two books (upper and lower). In the most complete copies, the upper book comprises the following articles: 1- Tu Son, 2- Pho Thuyet Sac Than, 3- Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam, 4- Gioi Sat Sinh Van, 5- Gioi Thau Dao Van, 6- Gioi Sac Van, 7- Gioi Vong Ngu Van, 8- Gioi Tuu Van, 9- Gioi Dinh Tue Luan, 10- Thu Gioi Luan, 11- Niem Phat Luan, 12- Toa Thien Luan, 13- Tue Giao Giam Luan, 14- Thien Tong Chi Nam Tu, 15- Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Tu, 16- Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi Tu, 17- Binh Dang Le Sam Van Tu, 18- Pho Thuyet Huong Thuong Nhat Lo, 19- Ngu Luc Van Dap Mon Ha, 20- Niem Tung Ke.

The lower book (the middle and the lower book in the three book collection) consists of the litanies and texts on prayer-reciting for the incense and flowers festivities, and other rites in accordance with the six moments of the day: morning, midday, afternoon, sunset, midnight, daybreak. It is thus clear that all parts of the *Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi* comprise the lower book, and particularly its preface was written in the upper book.

With the help of the books in *Khoa Hu Luc* still extant, we know something about Tran Thai Tong's Buddhist ideology. Through his works, that king showed himself a realistic educator who tried to lead people to Buddhist practice, as well as a theoretician having deep knowledge of Buddhism.

Tran Thai Tong's point of view expressed in his dissertation on the Self was also the *sunyata* point of view that denied every thing [i.e., 'thingliness']. In the preface of *Khoa Hu Luc* he wrote: "The four Greats are originally Nothing. From Nothing, Falsity arises, and from Falsity, the Phenomena appear; the Phenomena appear from Nothing. Thus Falsity follows Nothing, Nothing makes Falsity to appear. And from Falsity, the Phenomena appear." 'Nothing' means no possession, no existence; opposing possession, that means presence, existence. 'Nothing' means emptiness, nullity, opposing phenomena, the phenomena that appear before us. Falsity means trouble, error. Thai Tong and other Buddhist scholars under the Tran's reign cherished the concept of Falsity. That concept was a concomitant of untruthfulness which is the nature of the phenomenal universe while Falsity was regarded as the cause originating it. Because of Falsity, Nothing becomes Phenomena or to say accurately, Nothing is erroneously perceived as Phenomena.

Tran Thai Tong often used the concept of "thinking". He sometimes spoke about that concept with various meanings,-- as reflection, thinking, and separated into good thinking, evil thinking, honest thinking, dishonest thinking...¹¹ Buddhist "thinking" was also used to show the

causes leading to the constitution of the human body. In the article “*Pho Thuyet Sac Than*” he wrote: “When a man’s body has not yet fused into a foetus, whence does it take form? From the affinities that concentrate the five ‘blindnesses’.” Conception arises and thus converge the affinities, i.e., the causes and affinities conciliate themselves, causing the beginning of the cause-effect relation. Expressing the same idea, in the article “*Tu Son*,” when speaking about “Life” he wrote: “An error of and on thinking leads to many causes, the embryos confided to the parents’ love become a body in mixing the male and female blood.” Thai Tong stressed once again that idea in the following litany:

Nature is moulded in a thousand forms,
Originally, it has no external signs, it also has no internal germ.
It’s only wrong when there arises “thinking,” and “no thinking” is
completely forgotten.
So it goes against no life and suffers “life.”

“Nature” in this context also involves the notion of “character”¹² which Thai Tong often called by several different names: character (‘*tin*h’), nature (‘*ban tin*h’), consciousness (‘*giac tin*h’), Buddhist character (‘*phap tin*h’), true heart (‘*chan tam*’), own heart (‘*ban tam*’), true origin (‘*chan nguyen*’).

In the preface for *Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh*, Tran Thai Tong described that “nature” or “true heart” as follows: “When nature ends, the true heart dies; there is no more concept of plentifulness or lack; if one is not an enlightened man, one cannot find out its genesis. There is no concentration, no dispersion, no lost, no remaining. The eyes and the ears have neither image, nor sound. Because there is no ‘To be’ or ‘Not to be’, there is neither ‘religious’, nor ‘profane’; it exists singly, there is no other thing except it, so that it is called *Kim Cuong* nature.” In the preface of *Binh Dang Le Sam Van*, Thai Tong also wrote: “Buddhist nature, the absolute truth, is not involved in the least with anxiety. The true heart remains quiet because it has gotten rid of defiled things for a long time already. Because the true heart is hidden, falsity originates, and illusory things appear.”

Such a “nature” or a “true heart” is also the “marvelous nature,” “the absolute truth” that the monks under the Ly’s reign had described. Thai Tong also often recalled the familiar principle of Buddhism, “to see into true nature means to become Buddha.” “Anyone who studies the Buddhist religion must only see its true nature.”¹³ “For having come back from light, one can see the Buddha-nature and become Buddha.”¹⁴ What deserves to be noted is that Tran Thai Tong, just as many of the scholars of Buddhism under the Tran’s reign, was very active in calling the believers to discover true nature through devotion to the heart. Despite the fact this approach was endorsed by a certain number of monks under the Ly’s reign, it wasn’t strongly stressed by the Buddhist scholars of that reign, whereas it was by the Buddhist scholars under the Tran’s reign.

To see the Buddhist nature, Thai Tong asked believers “to turn inside oneself.”¹⁵ And particularly, he always regarded seeking of one’s ‘own nature’ as a “return.” He insistently called everybody to realize that return. He deeply grieved that everybody stepped forwards unconsciously without thinking of returning.¹⁶ Being passionate for beauty, venturing on the way of life and death, man would go farther and farther from his own nature. Thai Tong compared men’s wandering to wandering on the wind or flying mindlessly like dust, in their exile:

Always wandering in life like a man full of vicissitude
He strays miles and miles further from his native village.¹⁷

But if he is determined to return, he is able to get to his native land, even:

No need to go a long way!
One can come home.¹⁸

Most of Tran Thai Tong's works aimed at achieving consciousness of one’s ‘own nature’. Perhaps the work of Tran Thai Tong which explained the Buddhist position the most clearly, indicating the most deeply the way of getting enlightenment, was the article “*Pho Thuyet Huong Thuong Nhat Lo*.” The title of this article means “speaking expansively about the way leading to the upper world.” That was the way leading to the enlightenment. It began with a sentence from the monk Ban Son’s sermon:¹⁹ “A thousand saints don’t transmit the way that leads upwards. The scholar has to toil hard as a gibbon trying to catch its shadow.” The problem is quite different: Why can neither a Saint nor an ancestor transmit the way for going upwards, for attaining enlightenment?

With strongly impressive images, audacious and original ideas, this Royal monk expressed his profound thoughts on this problem. He thought unfeasible the transmitting of the ‘sealed heart’ from generation to generation, about which men often spoke, saying “What is recommended in Linh Son,²⁰ it is nothing but a troublesome place; what is especially transmitted in Thieu That,²¹ it is nothing but a troubled cavern.” Through those sentences, he intended to indicate that if someone can’t find by himself his own nature but asks for the others’ help, no one can help him. No one can transmit to him the sealed heart. Tran Thanh Tong wrote “Laozi with a yellow face²² had a glance and turned away. The monk Ho with blue eyes²³ knitted his brows and turned aside. Ma To hung up his feather duster; Thu Son built a container with bamboo; Trieu Chau tore his cotton habit; Van Mon abandoned his rice cake; Duc Son threw his walking stick away, Lam Te swallowed his own voice. All Buddhas, all Ancestors have hidden their traces; all men without exception were stricken with a terrible fear.”²⁴

The ‘own nature’ in the invariable truth exists in everyone, everywhere: and each person has to find it himself!

Held in the hand, the pearl is blue with its blue colour, and bright with its yellow colour. In the old looking-glass on the toilette-table, Ho appears as Ho, Han appears as Han. Illusory things don't mind because everything is from the Buddha-body.... In the nostrils, the Buddhist wheel moves; under the eyebrows, valuable things appear. On the waves, the stone girl dances elegant tunes. Playing the flute, the wooden man sings joyful songs.²⁵ Yellow flowers bloom everywhere is the prajna heart. The bamboos are blue. Everything bears the signs of the invariable truth. Let's separate the grass to let the 'own life' appear. Let's dig up the soil to cut off life and death....

Thai Tong ended his article with the following verse:

Strap your horse everywhere you find blue poplar.
Every family has its way to Chang An.
The way back under the moon is frequented by few people;
A ray of moonlight brightens the cold earth.

There is everywhere a blue poplar to strap the horse, there is everywhere a way to the capital: this means one can find everywhere the Buddha-nature enabling enlightenment. The way to go upwards is no different from the way to go back. Few people accept to go back because of being infatuated by the obscurity, by the beauty. But the light always illuminates the way.²⁶ Once more, we hear Thai Tong calling for a 'return'.

Tran Thai Tong's Buddhist ideology was also expressed in old prayer-recitation articles in the *Niem Tung Ke* contained in the *Khoa Hu Luc*. In this article Thai Tong cited various stories or events, i. e., problems which arose in Buddhist history in general, and the Chan sect in particular, in which he presented his point of view. Every article was begun with a paragraph called 'Cu' (theme), i.e., the paragraph in which the problem is set forth. Usually that problem started from a story, a sentence. Then a remark followed and was called 'Niem' (rhyme) and the article ended with a reciting text composed by four seven-word sentences ('Tung'). Up to now, these remain Thai Tong's forty three texts. We are going to introduce two of them:

Text No 8:

- Cu (theme):

The second ancestor (Tue Kha) asked Dharma to be quiet in mind and heart. Dharma said: Give me your heart and I will make it quiet. "Tue Kha said: "I have been searching for the heart but I haven't found it": Dharma said: " I have made you quiet in mind and in heart".

Niem (rhyme): “The three year old boy holds old flowers,
an octogenarian catches embroidered balls.

- Tung (reciting text):

When your heart is no more your heart, whom are you
going to speak to?

The mute awakened from his dream and screwed up his
eyes,

The old monk is lying about his quietness,

He rocks with laughter, shows himself disinterested without
knowing himself.

Bodhidharma said to Tue Kha: “Give me your heart and I will
make it quiet.” Thai Tong said frankly that was a lie. Because the heart is
something one must search for himself, he must search himself in quietness,
nobody can transmit it to him. Nevertheless the outsiders believe in stories
about ‘transmitting’ the heart in order to attain quiet, what a laughable
belief! As we have seen, the thoughts of the recitation-text are expressed in
the above-mentioned text, “*Pho Thuyet Huong Thuong Nhat Lo.*”

Text No 17:

- Cu (theme): The monk Nam Tuyen²⁷ said: The normal heart is
Tao (religion).

- Niem (rhyme): Feeling cold one must say ‘cold’; feeling hot one
must say ‘hot’.

- Tung (reciting text):

The white pearl doesn't bear any trace from the hammer or the
chopper.

There's no need of polishing to renew it.

To come back to the native land, one need not go a long way.

It doesn't matter if someone climbs the high mountain.

According to Thai Tong, the “normal heart“ is the natural heart, not
abnormal: “if it's cold, say it's cold, if it's hot, say it's hot.” It resembles the
white pearl that has never borne the traces of hammer or axe. One mustn't
hack at the pearl, that is, he mustn't make his heart become abnormal.
Keeping one's heart normal, he masters his own nature; just as to go far, he
need not go but is straightaway in his native land. Once again, Thai Tong
recalled the way to ‘come back’.

Like the people belonging to the Chan sect, Tran Thai Tong
believed if one has enlightenment in his nature, he will succeed; he will
have good heart, everybody can be self-sufficient.²⁸ “He has only to reflect
returning light, and he will become Buddha.” But Thai Tong thought there
were many ways allowing realization of the way back to one's own nature,-
- in different degrees, different manners. He said: “The own-nature differs,
the intelligence is different. If we teach only one way, it will be difficult to
enter enlightenment. Thus Buddha largely opens the intelligence,

voluntarily offers measures and shows the way back, and gives medicine according to the disease.”²⁹

This was why Thai Tong devoted himself to leading everybody step by step on the way to the Buddhist religion. He paid particularly great attention to repentance, writing the *Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi*, which means formalities for repentance during six moments of the day; each in one moment, one repents of sins committed against the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind. He also wrote the *Binh Dang Le Sam Van*. Thai Tong was interested in repentance, as well as in observing the negative commandments. Even in the text *Thu Gioi Luan*, at the same time as he appreciated observing the negative commandments, he stressed repentance. He wrote five texts on the five negative commandments (forbidding animal killing, stealing, illicit sexuality, lying and alcohol drinking). He analyzed the relations between commandment, decision, and intelligence in the poem “*Gioi Dinh Tue Luan*.” He promoted in that poem that one must follow the commandment to make a decision; and there must be decisiveness to gain intelligence. “To resort to commandment is the preliminary good thing; to resort to decision is the medium good thing; to resort to intelligence is the ‘most’ good or ‘best’ thing.”³⁰ This means decision, comes first and intelligence after, whereas as we know, the Chinese Chan sect of Hui Neng asserted that decision and intelligence come at the same time. Decision is in intelligence, and intelligence is in decision like the lamp and its light. Perfecting decision first and intelligence after would be like washing and tidying up the mirror to make the light bright. The first way of doing things was called prompt enlightenment and the second progressive enlightenment.

Obviously, Tran Thai Tong wanted to conciliate the two modes, ‘prompt’ and ‘progressive’ enlightenment because the “own-nature distinguishes, the intelligence differs.” The conciliation between these two was clearly expressed in the text “*Luan Tue Giao Giam*” (‘Dissertation on the example of intelligence-enlightenment’). Beginning this treatise, Thai Tong wrote: “Originally intelligence originates from decision. If the heart is troubled, there will be no intelligence: like the copper mirror, it must be washed first and win its brightness; if one doesn’t washed the mirror, it will be covered with moss and lose its lustre. And once being covered over, how can it give off light?” This position was near that of progressive enlightenment, close to Than Tu’s point of view. But in the following part, Thai Tong wrote: “Remaining quiet and awake is right. Remaining quiet but without meditation is wrong. Remaining awake and quiet is right, but remaining awake in troubled thinking is wrong. Being awake and quiet, being quiet and awake constitutes a remedy, while being without meditation or in troubled thinking constitutes a wrong doing.”³¹ This paragraph was based on the monk Huyen Giac’s thought; Huyen Giac was Hui Neng’s³² disciple. And according to Huyen Giac, quietness means decision, awakening means intelligence, and quietness plus awakening means

decision plus intelligence simultaneously: thus it was like Hui Neng's point of view.

As was said in the previous chapter, the conciliating tendency between promptness and progressiveness had existed under the Ly's reign. With Tran Thai Tong, that tendency developed clearly. Was this conciliation a characteristic of the Vietnamese Chan sect?

This was, indeed, why Tran Nhan Tong attached a particular importance to prayer- recitation, Buddha-praying, meditative sitting. He didn't underestimate praying: "To follow Buddha's way, there is only one thing, i.e., prayer-recitation."³³ He also wrote the "*Toa Thien Luan*" to heighten the significance of meditative sitting. He wrote: "Although one admits all interdictions but doesn't practice meditative sitting, the power of his decision doesn't appear, and without the latter's appearance, falsity is not destroyed; in such a circumstance, to see the own nature is a difficult doing."

And particularly, he called for Buddha-praying [chanted prayer]. In the text "*Niem Phat Luan*" ('Dissertation on Buddha-praying'), he distinguished three kinds of people: those of upper intelligence, those of middle intelligence and those of lower intelligence: For the men of upper intelligence, Buddha is in their heart, they don't need any more training. The men of middle intelligence, surely with the help of praying Buddha, and paying attention to clever working, and incessantly praying, achieve a heart pure and honest. The men of lower intelligence, always reciting Buddha's words, with a heart willing to see Buddha's face, can indeed promise to themselves they shall be born in a Buddha Land. Those three levels, differing in depth or superficiality, still can have the same will for success. Thus, for the men of upper intelligence, it's easy to say but difficult to do. As for praying Buddha, one must get the lower intelligence men doing this first. As for building a three-storey tower, one always sees the ground floor being built first. In this context, once again, we see Tran Nhan Tong's conception of different forms of religious training because of "distinction in [individual] nature."

In his "*Niem Phat Luan*", Thai Tong affirmed the Buddha-praying for the people who wish to be born in the 'Buddha country', which means the people of the 'Pure Land'; at the same time he insists on the necessity of Buddha-praying among the people who believe that "the Heart is Buddha," i.e., the people of the Chan sect. Obviously Tran Thai Tong wanted to conciliate Chan and Amidism, or more clearly, he wanted to Chan-ize the Amidism. He wrote in the "Text on daybreak" at the end of the night: "Regard the Pure Land in front of you and accept Amitabha in your heart."

Tran Thai Tong's conciliating tendency between Chan and Amidism had also its root in his point of view combining 'own-force' and 'other-force'. In the preface of *Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi*, he wrote: "One must lean on two sides, Buddha and oneself." Combining Chan and Amidism was, as we have seen, a tendency that had existed in a certain

number of monks under the Ly's reign such as monk, Tinh Luc (1112 - 1175), who prayed to Buddha with both the mouth and the heart.

It might be that through his relations with the state monk Truc Lam, Tran Thai Tong acquired the tradition of the Wu Yantong sect and through the lay Buddhist Thien Phong acquired the influence of the Lam Te sect. Lam Te's influence on Tran Nhan Tong was very obvious: In his writings, Thai Tong recalled the theories that Lam Te Nghia Huyen had promoted as the "three important things,"³⁴ the "three mysteries."³⁵ Thai Tong wrote two litanies dealing with the topic "inactive true man," which was Lam Te's well-known story.³⁶ He also wrote a poem on the 'shout' of Lam Te:

When reaching the front door, and hearing a shout,
Children and grandchildren all exhausted their passions.
A spring thunderbolt had just roared,
Seeds germinate and vegetation sprouts.³⁷

But Lam Te's influence wasn't boundless. As we have seen, Tran Thai Tong's Chan theory had its particularities. He understood profound Buddhist theories but was patiently interested in the ordinary men and was able to lead most of them. He affirmed of himself "not to speak about the 'three mysteries' nor 'to look upwards' yet."³⁸

One more characteristic in Tran Thai Tong's Buddhist thought deserving attention was his combination of Buddhism with Confucianism and Taoism. We have seen Thai Tong's brilliant intellect in using various functions of Buddhism and Confucianism in social life. Moreover, he tried to demonstrate the propinquity of those three religions. For example, when discussing meditative sitting, after having related Sakyamuni's 'sitting six years' long under the Himalayas', Thai Tong also related Tu Ky's story, who "sat on his stool until his body resembled dried wood, his heart cooled down like ashes," as is reported in Zhuangzi's work,³⁹ and the story about Yan Hui, Confucius's disciple, who "sat until he forgot himself, his legs and arms utterly exhausted and all his intelligence lost"⁴⁰ in order to reach this conclusion: "Those are the sages and saints of the three religions in the old time who got success with the help of meditative sitting."⁴¹

Let's read another paragraph: "Despite the importance of life, life is not important as Tao. This was why Confucians said: 'I am willing to die in the evening if I could listen to Tao in the morning.'⁴² Laozi said: 'If I have a great anxiety, it's because I have a body'.⁴³ The Buddha devoted himself to saving a tiger for seeking religion. Didn't those three live despite their body and in order to venerate religion? Alas! Life is very important and yet one had to sacrifice it in order to reach enlightenment; worth so much less are gold and pearl and wealth which are very scornful things. Why miss them? Oh! If even in a ten-family hamlet, there is a loyal man,⁴⁴ why cannot there be intelligent people in the world! After listening to these words, one must be studious and must not be suspicious. The prayers⁴⁵ said: "Once life

is lost one doesn't get it back even in ten thousand rebirths". What a sorrowful thing! This was why Confucians said:⁴⁶ If you don't make your own effort, I don't know how to help you!"⁴⁷

That is enough to let us know Tran Thai Tong's tendency to combine the three doctrines. He even wrote: "When one doesn't understand yet, be must separate into three doctrines. After having understood, the three are in the heart."⁴⁸

In the Wu Yantong Buddhist sect under the Ly's reign, we have seen the tendency that conciliated the Buddhist thought with the Taoist one. In Tran Thai Tong, the combination with Confucianist thoughts was strongly stressed. Even among the sins enumerated in his repentance texts, we recognize those which damaged Confucian morality, or relations between father and his sons, the King and his citizens. Perhaps under the Tran's reign, Confucianism was more strongly developed and enjoyed a greater influence. This feature didn't surprise Tran Thai Tong because he was at the same time a Buddhist and a ruling King.

THE MONK TUE TRUNG, A GREAT BUDDHIST SCHOLAR DURING THE TRAN REIGN

The monk Tue Trung (original name Tran Tung) (1230-1291) was eldest son of An Sinh Vuong Tran Lieu, and eldest brother of Hung Dao Vuong Tran Quoc Tuan and Nguyen Thanh Thien Cam (King Tran Thanh Tong's wife and King Tran Nhan Tong's mother).⁴⁹ Tue Trung had the royal title Hung Ninh Vuong and scored victories in the two resistances against the Yuans in 1285 and in 1288.⁵⁰

Tue Trung didn't leave his family and was a lay Buddhist but had a high degree of knowledge of Buddhism. As is recounted above, he was the monk Tieu Dao's disciple, and Tran Nhan Tong's master. According to "*Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*" published before the *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*, besides Nhan Tong, Tue Trung still had other disciples such as An Nhien, Thien Nhien,⁵¹ Thach Kinh⁵² and Thoai Ba.⁵³ Tue Trung's Buddhist thoughts manifested themselves in his works that remain by chance in *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc* collection.

The extant copy of *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*⁵⁴ comprises four parts:

a/ In the first part, the Buddhist thoughts were presented under the conversational form between Tue Trung and his disciples. In this part, we find four litanies and fourteen prayer- recitation texts from Tue Trung.

b/ The second part contained forty nine poems by Tue Trung.

c/ The third part contained seven texts written by his disciples, Nhan Tong and Phap Loa included, for Tue Trung's memorial service.

d/ In the fourth part we read the text “*Thuong Si Hanh Trang*” without the mentioning of the author's name, but we surely know that it was written by Nhan Tong, and an Epilogue written by Do Khac Chung. To the text “*Thuong Si Hanh Trang*” we added six other litanies written by Tue Trung.

We can say that *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc* is a very precious document helping us to do research into Buddhism's thought under the Tran's reign in general but also into the thought of Tue Trung in particular. First of all, we see that Tue Trung's conception of one's own body was based on the *sunyata* point of view. The latter manifested itself in the following litany:

Everyday, we face nature, i.e., the phenomenal universe.
Nature is the reflection of the heart.
But both nature and heart are originally nothing.
Everywhere is paramita.

Such a point of view is very close to Nagarjuna's Madhyamika. So we can think the *paramita* of which Tue Trung spoke here is the *prajna-paramita*. According to Nagarjuna, when the *prajna*, i.e., [true] intelligence appears, it can return to *sunyata*. Tue Trung also recalled the *sunyata* point of view on many occasions: “The Four Greatnesses were originally nothing. Where did they emerge from?” (see text “*Sinh Tu Nhan Nhi Di*”). “The heart and the religion were originally nothing and silence, where can one search for them?” (text: “*Doi Co*”). “The afflictions are irregular, all are nothing” (text “*Phat Tam Ca*”). “Truth and Error are nothing” (text “*Van Su Quy Nhu*”), etc.

On the basis of such an ontological point of view of *sunyata*, Tue Trung set a particular view that was “not to see things separately in two”. Tue Trung asserted that “the nature of phenomena being nothing, every opposition between phenomena is artificial, having no basis. It is only due to the view separating things in two.” He said:

The body is formed from nothing, so it was originally nothing.
When discriminated, it is separated into two, that means to be separated into two aspects opposing each other.
The self and the other, we are separated in two but are linked like the dew and the frost.
The simple living being and the Saint have no difference and are like the thunder and the lightning.⁵⁵

Tue Trung categorically denied the “view in two.” He declared:

One only needs to abandon the “view in two” [dualistic view]
He can embrace everything in the Buddhist universe.⁵⁶

With that comprehension of that “view in two,” Tue Trung asserted the non-existence of opposition between various concepts, various categories which the people had opposed to each other.

He dealt once and again with this problem in many poems, many litanies. For example, in the text “*Me Ngo Bat Di*” (“no difference between unconsciousness and awakedness”), he rejected the opposition between non-being and being, between unconsciousness and awakedness:

Being and non-being, unconsciousness and awakedness,
Always they have had the same meaning.

In the text “*Pham Thanh Bat Di*” (“no difference between the layman and the Saint”), he rejected the opposition between those two creatures, between the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’, between the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’, between Buddha and the simple being, between the other and the self.

In the poem “*Van Su Quy Nhu*,” he rejected the opposition between ‘to be’ and ‘not to be’, between the sorrows and the bliss, between truth and falsity:

From non-being appears being.
Being and non-being will be equal in the end.
The sorrows and the Bodhi have no difference.
Truth and falsity both are nothing.
The body is illusory, life is as a shadow,
The heart resembles the light wind.
Don't speak of life and death, of demons and Buddhas.
All the stars turn to the North, all rivers flow to the East.⁵⁷

Tue Trung went on rejecting the opposition between truth and falsity in the text “*Thi Chung*.” He made his point of view clearer in the poem “*Phat Tam Ca*”:

To abandon falsity in the heart in order to guard the true nature,
That is like going to fetch the image while losing the mirror.
Not to see the image appearing in the mirror is like falsity
appearing in truth.
Falsity comes, it is neither true nor false.
Like the mirror, it is neither good nor evil.

From the point of view of the “view in two,” Tue Trung criticized adherence to concepts. Let us read a paragraph in the “*Doi Co*”:

A monk stepped forward and asked: “What is the clean Buddhist
body?”
Tue Trung said:

That body goes in and out stepping on the urine of buffalos.
And its feet trample on horse excrement.
The monk asked again: "How to attain enlightenment?"
Tue Trung answered: "The abandonment of the concept of dirtiness
makes the Buddhist body clean. Please listen to my litany:
At the origin, there is no dirtiness, no cleanliness;
Dirtiness, cleanliness, both are nothing.
The Buddhist body doesn't care
What is dirt and what is clean.

We can say that Tue Trung presented in a definite and strict manner his point of view on the "view in two". The thing deserving attention is that although bearing a character of relativism, his point of view did not lead Tue Trung to nihilist negation. On the contrary, owing to that point of view, he got rid of all constraints on his thinking and living.

Like other Buddhist followers, Tue Trung adopted the "Heart is Buddha" point of view, closely linking the Heart to Buddha. In the first part of his poem "*Phat Tam Ca*", he presented clearly this point of view:

Buddha, Buddha, Buddha, no one can see you
Heart, Heart, Heart, no one can speak of you!
Buddha appears when the Heart appears;
when Buddha passes away, the Heart also disappears.
Nowhere does the Heart disappear to, while Buddha exists;
never does Buddha pass away while the Heart still appears.

Loyal to his points of view on "non-being" and "the view in two" [dualism], Tue Trung clearly stated:

In the past, there was no heart, and now there is no Buddha. That assertion may be understood as "in the past, there was no Buddha, and now there is no Heart," because as we have seen above, according to Tue Trung, Buddha is nowhere and the Heart is nowhere too and vice versa. And if this be so, how will consciousness be awakened? Do the goal and the object of consciousness-awakening exist any more?

We can find Tue Trung's explanation in the following sentences in the poem, "*Phat Tam Ca*":

The heart of all Buddhists is Buddha's heart.
Buddha's heart is in concordance with mine.
That law has existed as such forever!

From this thought of Tue Trung, we can elaborate the following formula: All living beings' heart = Buddha's heart = self-heart. All beings are nature, the phenomenal universe surrounding us. According to Tue Trung's presentation, the heart of all living beings is the evident evolution of that nature. This is what he spoke about in his poem "*Phat Tam Ca*":

When spring comes, the spring flowers will naturally blossom.
And when autumn returns, clear-to-the-eye autumnal water flows.

He also recalled the natural law in other poems. For example in the poem "*An Dinh Thoi Tiet*":

Every year, the flowers blossom in the third month.
Every morning, the cocks crow in the middle watch.

In everyday language, that is a natural law. In this context, Tue Trung wanted to put forward the principle. Set our heart in accordance with all living beings' hearts, thus we reach Buddha's heart. And understanding this problem, we live in accordance with the natural law that means consciousness-awakening. Live in line with natural life, don't act against the law of the nature. That was Tue Trung's living principle. Tran Nhan Tong once wrote about him as follows: "He lived in the earthy life, mixed light with dust, didn't commit any offence against anything."⁵⁸ That remark from a disciple towards his master was very accurate. It's easy to understand that, from his principle of living conformable to the natural law, Tue Trung rejected an austere dietary regime and the strict observance of the Buddhist precepts. His litanies express clearly that point of view. The meaning of the litanies were so obvious: Eating vegetables or eating meat are attributes of different species of living beings. That is as natural as the vegetation blossoming in spring. Thus, why do we call sin the meat-eating and happiness the vegetable-eating? Observing the commandments and resigning oneself to this only lead to sin and not to happiness. One must know that sin and happiness don't reside in the observance of the precepts and resigning oneself to them. To preserve oneself, to resign oneself in such a manner is like a man who climbs a tree. Being in safety on the soil, he wants to go and seek danger: if he doesn't climb the tree, he will run no danger even if the wind blows!

Observance of the precepts and resignation are two important points in the six cardinal virtues of Buddhism. But Tue Trung rejected them in a rash manner.

Living in accordance with the [natural] laws, one isn't afraid of them and achieves freedom. On the problem of death and life, Tue Trung wrote the poem "*Sinh Tu Nhan Nhi Di*" (living or dying is only leisure). The title shows the author's attitude. Let's read the two last sentences:

Only the ignorant and confused man is afraid of life and death.

A lettered and knowledgeable man considers them as leisure.

In the text “*An Dinh Thoi Tiet*,” he also said:

Don't ask anymore about the origin of life and death.
They are natural results of the function of the cause and factors.

The text “*Phong Cuong Ngam*“ manifested fully the spirit of a free and disporting man:

Let's look at the universe, how immense it is!
With a plumb-rod in the hand, [we know]
Where we are wandering the water is very deep and then spreads
out.
The mountain is very high, the mountain is towering.
Being hungry we eat,--how sweet rice is !
Being tired, we sleep; a village, “where is one?”⁵⁹

The two last sentences showed his attitude towards life and death:

Whether I can realize my aspiration is what I wish to do.
If life and death pursue me, they don't matter to me.

Tue Trung's spirit of courage before the natural law approximated Van Hanh's “fearless” spirit, a monk under the Ly’s reign. The latter wrote:

The body is like lightning which appears, then disappears.
It is as nature blossoming in spring and fading in autumn.
So it is the change of destinies, don't be afraid.
Prosperity and recession are comparable to a dew-drop on a blade
of grass.

In the poem “*Truu Nguyen Ngam*.” Tue Trung expressed the same opinion:

In the life of a man, there happen prosperity and poverty.
Flowers are fresh and beautiful for a time but then dry and fade.
A country is sometimes prosperous, sometimes decadent.
Destiny knows sometimes prosperity, sometimes misfortunes,
The day has its evening and its morning.
The year ends when another begins.

Both Van Hanh and Tue Trung searched for natural law and began to perceive the dialectics of the movement of things. In the poem “*The Thai Hu Ao*,” Tue Trung wrote:

The moon sets in the West, its shadow doesn't come back.
Water flows to the East sea, its waves can't flow back.

Men not only have to live conformably with the laws of nature, but also in accordance with the law of the society. Thus Tue Trung wrote:

It would be happy to be nude, if one lives in a nude-custom country.
It isn't his fault not to observe etiquette, that is to submit to [the local custom].⁶⁰

Obeying destiny in accordance with the law of nature, submitting to the customs in accordance with the laws of life,-- here was the characteristic of Tue Trung's Chan thoughts. To live a full life, in accordance with nature, with men, with the heart, not to beg anywhere of anybody, that's Chan Buddhism. No need for meditative sitting. He said: "The monks sit in meditative position, while I do not."⁶¹ Then he expressed his conception of Chan Buddhism in two wonderful verses in the poem "*Phat Tam Ca*":

In walking meditation, in sitting meditation.
In the fire of the burning furnace, a lotus blossoms.

Even in a sitting position, in contemplating the beauty of nature, one feels quietness in the heart: then where is the need for ritual Chan Buddhist meditative sitting!

In the middle of the house, one sits in silence
And leisurely contemplates Con Lon with a trail of smoke.
When one is tired, his heart will automatically rest.
He needs neither recitation-prayers nor meditation.⁶²

It seems all Tue Trung's points of view on Buddhist meditation, on religion, on life were concisely expressed in the poem "*Thi Chung*":

I don't look any more for Thieu That and Tao Khe.
The nature of the body is so radiant that nothing can hide it.
I never mind that the moon sheds its light everywhere.
I also don't mind that the wind blows high or low in the air.
The colour of that autumn changes from white to black.
The dirty mud can't sully that perfume lotus.
The wonderful song is sung forever and ever.
Don't go to seek it in the East, the West, the North, the South!

That wonderful song is religion, and was resounding in the path of life on which Tue Trung has been eagerly walking with a stick in hand: I

can't find the three meters of the Song Lam, I look in vain for the six circles of Dia Tang; how thorny is the earthly road; Despite my old age, I don't hesitate to walk on it, not as I did before.⁶³

TRAN NHAN TONG, FOUNDER OF THE TRUC LAM SECT

The history of the cloistering of the Truc Lam sect's three founders was related in the book *Tam To Thuc Luc*. Despite its late publication about at the middle of the 18th century,⁶⁴ that book had copies of a certain number of ancient texts. The first part, speaking about Tran Nhan Tong, was an excerpt from the book *Thanh Dang Luc* (the earliest still extant was published by 1750) and we believe it contained many documents on the Tran's reign. The second part written on the monk Phap Loa, was a copy from an inscription on an ancient stele erected under that reign. At present, we have found that stele, i.e., the stele of the Vien Thong tower in Thanh Mai⁶⁵ erected in 1362 and confirming the value of what was related about the monk Phap Loa in the book *Tam To Thu Luc*. The third part, written about the monk Huyen Quang, was named "*To Gia Thuc Luc*." Despite many corrections undertaken under the Le's reign, it was surely constituted from an earlier document.

On the basis of those documents, we know something about the Buddhist activities of the Truc Lam sect's founders. The King Nhan Tong named Tran Kham (1258-1308), Thanh Tong Tran Hoang's son, was enthroned in 1278. He was the King hero who won the two wars against the Yuan in 1285 and 1288. In 1293, he abdicated in favour of Anh Tong and played the role of the King Father. When he still was an heir prince and a King, Nhan Tong adored Buddha and did research on Buddhism under the direction of his maternal uncle, Tue Trung. After his abdication, in 1295, he had the intention to leave definitively his family to Vu Lam.⁶⁶ But he came back home without giving any reason. Only in 1299 did he cut off from his family and come to cloister in the Yen Tu mountain.

After that he took the Buddhist name Truc Lam the great anchorite, being called Huong Van Dai Dau Da. He was also called Truc Lam Dieu Ngu. In this section, instead of calling him by his Buddhist title, we call him Nhan Tong for convenience's sake. Nhan Tong had the prudence to build and consolidate a unified Buddhist clergy. Despite his cloistering in Yen Tu, he often went to many other pagodas in the country, such as the Pho Minh pagoda in Thien Truong, Sung Nghiem pagoda in Chi Linh, Bao An pagoda in Sieu Loai, Vinh Nghiem pagoda in Lang Giang., where he organized courses and lectures on Buddhism for the monks coming from elsewhere; came up to the camp Bo Chinh⁶⁷ where he built the small temple Tri Kien; and in 1301, he came to Champa to meet the King of that country. In this meeting, Nhan Tong promised to marry princess Huyen Tran to Che Man, Champa's King. It was probable that through such a marriage, Nhan Tong hoped to build peaceful relations between the Dai Viet and the Champa.

According to *Tam To Thuc Luc*, in 1304 Nhan Tong “went to everywhere in the countryside, forbade lewd language, instructed the people to do the ten good things.”⁶⁸ Nhan Tong obviously wanted to make of the “ten good things” a morality of Buddhism serving as a basis for social morality. During his trip in 1304, Nhan Tong met Phap Loa in Nam Sach. Since then, he coached and educated that man to become his own Buddhist follower. In 1308, Phap Loa was officially entrusted with the role of the second founder of the Truc Lam sect. Phap Loa's succession was organized in a solemn ceremony. The inscription on the stele of Vien Thong tower in Thanh Mai as the *Tam To Thuc Luc* recounts the event as follows:

On the first day of the first month of the 16th year of Hung Long era, Mau Than (1308), the monk (i.e., Phap Loa) obeyed the destiny to be a voluntary Buddhist residing in the Cam Lo, Sieu Loai pagoda.⁶⁹ The inaugurating ceremony and the parade started before the founders' tablets, solemn music sounded, santal and incense were burnt. The King-Father (i.e., Nhan Tong) led the monk to kowtow before the founders' altar. After the song, Nhan Tong ordered playing music, beating the big drums, grouping everybody in the altar. Then King Anh Tong came in his imperial carriage. Each participant was at his place. In his quality as the Great Donator to Buddhism, he stood at his guest place in the temple. The Prince Prime Minister⁷⁰ stood with other dignitaries in the courtyard. Nhan Tong went up to the Sermon tribune to preach Buddhism. After having finished preaching, he got down, led the monk to the tribune, stood opposite to him, clasped his hands in regards. The monk rendered the kowtow. Nhan Tong handed him the Buddhist habit: Then Nhan Tong sat in the rattan chair,⁷¹ put sidelong so he could better listen to the monk's Buddhist lecture. In the end, Dieu Ngu named Phap Loa resident monk of the Sieu Loai pagoda in charge of the monastery Yen Tu and second successor of the Truc Lam sect.

Through that ceremony, we can see Nhan Tong's organizing talent. It was obvious that he wanted the Buddhist followers, as well as the King and the dignitaries, to assist at the ceremony of the Buddhist habit-transmitting to Phap Loa. Such a ceremony would consolidate the prestige of the Buddhist clergy leader into the future. The Buddhist propagation ceremony was opened on the first day of the lunar year Mau Than; on the eleventh month of that year, Nhan Tong died on the summit Ngoa Van.

Besides Phap Loa, the disciples of the Truc Lam sect were Bao Sat, Bao Phac, Phap Khong, Phap Co, Hue Nghiem, Phap Trang, Huong Trang, Huong Son, Mat Tang.

According to *Tam To Thuc Luc*, Nhan Tong wrote the following books:

1. Thien Lam Thiet Chu Y Ngu Luc
2. Truc Lam Hau Luc
3. Thach That Mi Ngu
4. Dai Huong Hai An Thi Tap
5. Tang Gia Toai Su.

We deeply regret that those books were lost. Only a certain number of his poems remain and are published in the *Viet Am Thi Tap* and *Toan Viet Thi Luc*. Particularly Nhan Tong wrote in Nom, and at present we fortunately find two poems, the *Cu Tran Lac Dao Phu* and the *Dac Thu Lam Tuyen Thanh Dao Ca*. Nhan Tong also wrote the article *Thuong Si Hanh Trang* that was Tue Trung's biography, at the end of the book *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*.

Thus, we don't have many documents allowing us to penetrate Tran Nhan Tong's thoughts on Buddhism. At present, there are two documents that express the main lines of those thoughts. Those documents related two consultations between Nhan Tong and his disciples, one in Sung Nghiem pagoda, in Chi Linh mountain and the other in the Ky Lan monastery, also situated in Chi Linh. The first part was related in *Thanh Dang Luc* and also in *Tam To Thuc Luc*, in the chapter on Nhan Tong. The second part was related in *Thien Dao Yeu Hoc*, after the chapter on Phap Loa in *Tam To Thuc Luc*. That part might be recorded by Phap Loa.

In the long enough consultation in the Sung Nghiem pagoda, Nhan Tong presented his point of view through short litany sentences on a series of problems as the Trinity (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), three bodies (three reincarnations of Buddha), the pure Buddhist body, and the way that leads upwards. The fundamental point of view in that context was the "non-engagement" of the Vajra-prajna that was developed as close to Tue Trung Thuong Si thoughts, and the rejection of any fastening to concepts.⁷²

At the end of that consultation, Nhan Tong read the litany "*Huu Cu Vo Cu*" dealing with 'to be and not to be'. The thoughts in the litany were very profound and rejected the engagement attitude of 'to be and not to be'. From that very long litany, we quote only some excerpts:

To be, to be! not to be, not to be!
 When the creepers dried, the tree fell down.
 The monks hit their heads and their skulls broke!
 To be, to be! not to be, not to be!
 The autumnal wind blows
 Many and twice-many sharp swords hit each other
 To be, to be! not to be, not to be!
 Defining principles, founding sects
 Drilling turtle shell, breaking tiles,

Escalating mountains, slashing through the water.
 To be, to be! not to be, not to be!
 There is nothing
 Carving a junk to find a sword,
 To buy a horse after the image.
 To be, to be, not to be, not to be.
 Misfortune, sadness, compassion.
 Cut off every kind of creeper [entanglement],
 Delight will come everywhere.⁷³

When presenting the problems raised by Buddhism, Nhan Tong also used cries and sticks, which proves he was influenced by the “raise the stick” method of the Lam Te’ sect. He often used images which manifested his spirit of the ‘poet’, similar to Tue Trung, but about the contents he wasn't as original and he didn't create as strong an impact as the latter.

In the consultation in the Ky Lan monastery in the ninth day of the first month of the year Binh Ngo (1306), Nhan Tong expressed in a paragraph, very clearly, his ontologic and cognitive view; it was at the same time the point of view of the Truc Lam sect that we had recognized in Tran Thai Tong and “*Tue Trung Thuong Si*”:

The great religion is all, it isn't attached to anything. Its nature is quiet, pure, not good, not evil. Because of distinction and choice, one is led to many ways. Thus one must know that sin and happiness are one thing, cause and effect are not real things. Everybody has his own nature, everybody enjoys success. The Buddhist nature and the Buddhist body are like the body and its shadow, sometimes disappearing sometimes appearing, they are neither close nor separated. They are under the nose, at the same line as the eyebrows, but it's difficult for the eyes to see them. One can't find Buddhism if he has the intention to go and search for it. Three thousand Buddhist methods are very near to you, innumerable wonderful uses exist already in my our heart. If you have got all the commandments, you have to look into yourself, your own heart. Your voice, your laugh, your face, a wink of your eyes, the holding of your hands, the walking with your feet: what is that Nature?

What Heart does that Nature belong to? The Heart and the Nature both are dear, which is true, which is untrue? Buddhist doctrine is Nature, Buddha is Heart, thus what Nature is not Buddhist doctrine and what Heart is not Buddha?

The Heart is Buddha and the Heart is Buddhist religion too. But because “Buddhist doctrine is originally

no-doctrine, it is the Heart that says “the Heart is no heart”
and “the Heart is Buddha’ (also means Buddha is not
Buddha)!

This Buddhist ideology might be received by Nhan Tong from the Tue
Trung Thuong Si.

On the ode written in Nom, “*Cu Tran Lac Dao*,”⁷⁴ Nhan Tong's
points of view were presented in a more comprehensive manner:

“Provided one gets confidence
There are no other magics.
Keeping silence, the nature will be assured.
The aspiration restrained, it doesn't want to die.
The ego destroyed, the truth comes out.
All ambitions wiped out,
Pure Land is the pureness of the Heart,
... Don't be suspicious and don't ask about the West Land;
Amitabha is the quietly illumines, no need to find the way
to the Land of Bliss.
... Knowing the absolute truth, believing the prajna, don't
find Buddha in the West or East:
Getting the Buddhahood, the way of “avoidness” not
worthy for seeking Buddhist prayers from the South or
North.
Buddha is in one's house.
No need to find him farther.
Because I have forgotten my own nature, I have to find
Buddha.
When my consciousness is awakened, Buddha is myself.
I do not mind that I have no heart.
And naturally I am suitable to the religion.
Stopping the three karmas, I get my heart quiet.
When I get a heart, I understand very well the founder's
doctrine.

Vietnamese word “long” used in the ode in Nom characters means
the “heart.” Returning to the Heart, I find “Buddha in the house,” no need to
search anywhere. It's clear that this ode was written for the masses. It ended
with the poem:

In this world enjoying religion depends on one's destiny.
Being hungry, I eat. Being tired, I sleep instantly.
The Precious is in my house, what do I look for?
In front of every phenomenon, if I have no heart, it will be
no use to ask about religion.⁷⁵

Nhan Tong learnt Buddhism and Chan ideology from Tue Trung. But in personal character, he differed from his master in many points. He was not only a poet; he also was a king. And when he cut off with his family, he was not only a monk, he was the leader of the clergy. He couldn't wander as he wanted like Tue Trung. He always had to be very busy with the works we call today organization, the education and training of cadres.

We can think that after having cut off from his family, Nhan Tong had a quiet look at Springtime passing:

When young, without understanding the issue of 'being and not being'
 The flowers blossoming in Spring troubled my heart.
 Now I have got familiar with the Spring Queen.
 On the meditation mat, I look at the pink petals falling.

But in fact, Nhan Tong always summoned everybody not to let springs pass but to do something for Buddhism as well as for life. He started the great visit to the Sung Nghiem pagoda in Chi Linh mountain with the following poem:

The body is as the air in and out of the nose when we breathe.
 Life is as clouds flying with the winds on the far mountain.
 The cuckoo sings incessantly for days and months.
 Don't let Spring pass by in a banal manner.

In his great visit to the Ky Lan monastery, Nhan Tong called once again: "Oh, men! Time passes quickly, life passes away with no stop! How can you eat soup or rice without seeking knowledge about the bowl, the spoon?" It seems that Nhan Tong showed himself very eager when he found he had not much time. Thus, we can understand why in the last moments of his life, he recommended to his two servants Tu Doanh and Hoan Trung, the men who helped him climbing up the Ngoa Van summit: "Come down and take care of your religious life. Don't think that the 'life and death' problem is an easy thing."

Did he differ from Tue Trung? Perhaps not. Life and death are easy things but don't waste your life! And understood with that meaning, life is not an easy thing. The integration into life in Tran Nhan Tong's thoughts on Buddhism was clearly manifested on this point.

PHAP LOA AND HUYEN QUANG

Phap Loa (1284-1330), originally named Dong Kien Cuong, was born in Dong Hoa hamlet, Cuu La village, Nam Sach district.

In 1304, he cut off from his family, followed Nhan Tong, and was named Thien Lai. At the beginning, he was sent to learn with the chief

monk Tinh Giac in Quynh Quan. Afterwards, he accompanied Nhan Tong to attend the latter's lectures. In 1305, Nhan Tong gave him the Buddhist titles of monk and Bodhisattva and the Buddhist name Phap Loa. In 1306, he was appointed chief lecturer in the Bao An pagoda in Sieu Loai. In 1307, Nhan Tong explained the book collection *Dai Tue Ngu Luc* to Phap Loa and a certain number of disciples. In the same year in the Ngoa Van summit, he was entrusted by Nhan Tong with preaching and chanting of litanies. On the first day of the year Mau Than (1308), he was officially given the Buddhist habit and named second founder of the Truc Lam sect, in the solemn ceremony mentioned in the previous part. So, after only four years from a person who had just cut off from his family, Phap Loa became the leader of the Buddhist clergy. He was then only twenty-four years old.

Surely Nhan Tong had so highly appreciated Phap Loa's capability that he promoted him so quickly while, as we have seen, among Nhan Tong's disciples, there were several men who had come earlier and had been very near to him, Bao Sat for example. In the epoch when Phap Loa assumed the leadership of the clergy, Buddhism began to develop intensively. It was the epoch that counted a great number of people who had cut off from their families. According to a stele of the Vien Thong tower as well as the book *Tam To Thuc Luc*, in the ninth month of the 21st year of Hung Long (1313), Phap Loa came to Vinh Nghiem Pagoda in Lang Giang⁷⁶ to define the functions of the monks in the whole country. Since then, all the latter were registered and were subjected to Phap Loa's authority. Doing so, he made progress in organizing a unified clergy. We can say that Vinh Nghiem pagoda became the central office of the Truc Lam clergy. At that time, he consecrated more than one thousand monks. After that, every three years, he did the same for not less than a thousand. Up to the first year of the Khai Huu era (1392), Phap Loa consecrated 15,000 monks and nuns.

A great number of pagodas and towers were built in Phap Loa's lifetime. Personally he built, up to 1329, two ensembles of big pagodas, i.e., Bao An and Quynh Lam, five towers and 200 monasteries. Particularly in the Bao An pagoda (Sieu Loai) in 1314, he ordered the construction of 33 installations comprising Buddha temples, prayer-keeping garrets, and monasteries. He also built the small pagodas, Ho Thien, Chan Lac, An Ma, Vinh Khe, Hac Lai and enlarged the pagoda ensembles, Thanh Mai and Con Son. His disciples also constructed pagodas and towers in many regions. For example, one of his disciples, named monk Tri Nhu, constructed the tower Linh Te in Duc Thuy mountain, i.e., the Non Nuoc mountain, in Ninh Binh⁷⁷ province, and the tower Hien Dieu in Tien Long mountain, Hoa Lu district, Ha Nam Ninh province.⁷⁸

Phap Loa enjoyed strong support from the royal and noble circles. It was at a time when the nobles vied one with another to renounce their families or at least to practice Buddhism full-time at home. On the list of Phap Loa's disciples in the scheme drawn at the end of the stele of the Vien Thong tower, we read the name of Kings Anh Tong and Minh Tong, Queen

Mother Tuyen Tu,⁷⁹ dignitary Van Hue Vuong,⁸⁰ Chuong Van, Eldest princess Thien Trinh.

Thanks to the help of noble circles, economic possibilities of the Truc Lam clergy's installations were very abundant. The pagodas had many rice fields. According to that stele, Phap Loa was given by King Anh Tong 100 acres of rice fields in Doi Gia hamlet, as well as ploughmen slaves to which were added 25 other acres in Dai Tu hamlet, originally imperial concubine Tu Chieu's properties. Afterwards Anh Tong gave him 80 more acres in An Dinh hamlet and ploughmen slaves. In 1312, the same king supplied the monk with 500 acres taken from the farm Niem Nhu to serve as "permanent property used for Buddha worship." The queen Mother Tuyen Tu gave to that monk 300 acres as permanent property of the Sieu Loai pagoda. In 1315, Anh Tong gave 30 more acres taken from imperial servant Pham as the monk's permanent property. In 1316, Phap Loa founded Quynh Lam monastery. In 1318, the layman Vu Hoa Luu offered 20 acres taken from his farm as permanent property of Quynh Lam Pagoda. In 1324, the layman Di Loan, princess Nhat Tran's son, offered 300 acres of rice field in Thanh Hoa district. Queen Mother Bao Tu⁸¹ offered 22 more acres in An Hoa district. The dignitary Van Hue Vuong also offered 300 acres in Gia Lam with the farm Dong Gia, the farm An Luu, which made altogether more than one thousand acres, plus more than one thousand ploughmen slaves; all these became Quynh Lam pagoda's permanent properties.

For every construction of pagodas, making up of statues, the King and the nobles offered a great deal of properties. For examples in the moulding of one thousand Buddha statues in 1322, Phap Loa enjoyed the help of many people as the Queen Mother Bao Tu, the State Mother Bao Hue, princess Bao Van, Van Hue Vuong, Uy Hue Vuong, Dai Quan Vuong, Chuong Nhan Hau, Hung Uy Hau, Hoai Ninh Hau, Trinh Trung Tu, Doan Nhu Hai, Dang Thanh. In his lifetime, Phap Loa moulded more than 1,300 big and small bronze statues, more than 100 earth statues and made two sets of Buddha images in painted material.

Beside the construction of pagodas, the making up of statues, an important activity undertaken by Phap Loa was to organize the prayer lecturing associations and the printing of documents on Buddhism. That monk lectured on Tue Trung's prayer books such as the *Truyen Dang Luc*, *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc*, *Dai Tue Ngu Luc*, Nhan Tong's *Thien Lam Thiet Chuy Ngu Luc* and other prayers as *Kim Cuong*, *Vien Giac*, *Thu Lang Nghiem*, *Duy Ma* especially the "*Hoa Nghiem*" prayers that constituted at that time an object for the public interest. Phap Loa himself lectured at nine "*Hoa Nghiem*" prayer associations and did the same afterward in various pagodas. More than one thousand people attended at each of his lectures, or at least 5 or 6 hundred.

In 1131, Phap Loa received the order to continue publishing the *Tripitaka*. This work had begun when Nhan Tong was still alive, about 1295, after Tran Khac Dung and Pham Thao brought back those prayers

from the Yuan (China). Phap Loa entrusted the monk Bao Sat, one of Nhan Tong's disciples, with the printing of the Tripitaka prayers. And perhaps that work was ended in 1319. In the same year, Phap Loa called the Buddhist people and the laymen to offer their blood to serve as the print for those prayers. And more than 5,000 prayer books printed in that manner were kept in Quynh Lam monastery.

In 1322, Phap Loa ordered the carving of wood blocks for printing of the book *Tu Phan Luat* (commandment-law for the Bonzes). He got more than 5,000 books printed in such a manner. Afterwards he invited the State monks, Tong Kinh living in Tien Du mountain and Bao Phac living in Vu Ninh mountain to come and lecture on that book in Sieu Loai pagoda. That monk got a certain number of documents written by himself done in that manner, as the *Kim Cuong Trang Da La Ni Kinh Khoa Chu*.

He wrote the following documents:

1. Tham Thien Chi Yeu.
2. Kim Cuong Trang Da La Ni Kinh Khoa Chu
3. Niet Ban Dai Kinh Khoa So
4. Phap Hoa Kinh Khoa So
5. Lang Gia Tu Quyen Khoa So
6. Bat Nha Tam Kinh Khoa So
7. Phap Su Khoa Van
8. Do Mon Tro Thanh Lap
9. Nhan Vuong Ho Quoc Nghi Quy

Besides these books, Phap Loa edited the *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*, and wrote the epilogue for the Tripitaka. Phap Loa's works were all lost. Thus we have trouble nowadays ascertaining this monk's thoughts on Buddhism.

Many people assumed that the text *Thien Dao Yeu Hoc*, produced after the story of Phap Loa published in *Tam To Thuc Luc*, was, indeed, that of Phap Loa. That opinion is highly probable. Perhaps the book *Tham Thien Chi Yeu* belonged to it. The book *Thien Dao Yeu Hoc* records Nhan Tong's lecture in his solemn visit to Ky Lan monastery in the year Binh Ngo (1306). That book quoted Tue Trung's litany sentences. In that work we can see the obvious influence of the Lam Te sect.

When speaking about Buddhism in Phap Loa's epoch we can't omit the influence of Tantrism. Compared with Buddhism under the Ly's reign, Buddhism at the beginning of the Tran's reign bore less influence of Tantrism. We can see clearly that view through Thai Tong's and Tue Trung Thuong Si's works. But in the Phap Loa epoch, the influence of that religion obviously was strengthened. One of the Tantrism rites, the *abhiseka* ceremony, i.e., the holy-water sprinkling, was undertaken in a generalized manner. In 1318, carrying the King's decree, Phap Loa went to search for the Indian monk named Panditausasri to translate the Tantrist prayers "*Mahasitatapatradharani*." Phap Loa himself wrote and published *Kim*

Cuong Trang Da La Ni Kinh Khoa Chu, the explicatory text for the Tantrist prayer, “*Vajramanda dharani*.” Even the book *Thien Dao Yeu Hoc* mentioned Buddha Vairocana, who was the highest-ranking Buddha in Tantrism.

The increase of Tantrist influence in that epoch was a natural development of Vietnamese Buddhism; the factors of that development were spread throughout all strata of the people and the probable impact of other elements. The first was the arrival in Vietnam of many Indian or Central Asian monks who had the Tantrist tendency: the monk Du Chi Ba Lam came for the first time under Nhan Tong's reign, and the second time under Anh Tong's reign; the monk Bodhisri came under Minh Tong's reign and the monk Ban De Da O Tra That Loi (Panditasasri) came, as related above. The second element was that in China, Buddhism under the Yuan's reign bore deeply the Tantrist character. It was probable that the Tripilaka printed under the Yuan's reign and brought back under the Tran's reign contained many Tantrist prayers. A certain number of monks living under the Yuan's reign also came to Vietnam. For example, in 1318, Phap Loa received the monk Wu Fang coming from Hunan.

Phap Loa died in 1330. The stele of the Vien Thong tower in Thanh Mai mountain where he was buried says that he had more than 30 disciples.⁸² Beside Huyen Quang, Phap Loa had several closest disciples as Canh Ngung, Canh Huy, Hue Nhien, Hue Chuc, Hai An.

Huyen Quang (1254-1334) was the third patriarch of the Truc Lam sect. Originally named Ly Tai Dao, he was born in the Van Tai hamlet, belonging to the lower Bac Giang district (renamed Van Tu commune under the Le's reign, Gia Dinh district, belonging now to the Gia Luong district, Ha Bac province). He was graduated and became a mandarin. In 1305, at the age of 51, he cut off from his family. At the beginning, he followed the monk Bao Phac's courses in Le Vinh pagoda. Afterwards, he followed Nhan Tong in some years and helped him to edit books such as: the *Chu Pham Kinh*, *Cong Van Tap*, *Thich Khoa Giao*. After Nhan Tong's death, he followed Phap Loa and became the nearest disciple of a master 30 years younger than he was. Afterwards, he came to reside in Van Yen pagoda on the Yen Tu mountain. But only a short time after, he came to cloister in Thanh Mai pagoda and then came to Con Son pagoda. When Phap Loa was ill and stayed in An Lac monastery, he came to look after him. When Phap Loa died in 1330, he was 77. Although he accepted to be the third patriarch of the Truc Lam Sect, he returned all the same to Con Son to live as a secluded monk. Hereafter is his intimate confidence after having become a self-cloistering (recluse) monk:

My virtues are frail and I am humbled to have succeeded to the founders.

Doing so, do I let Han and Thap⁸³ endure undeserved misfortune
The best thing for me is to follow my friends to the mountains.

The surrounding green mountains are high thousands and thousands of steps.

Despite his succession to the founder's role, Huyen Quang seemed to be not so eager to lead the clergy. And after only four years, he died in Con Son in 1334.

Huyen Quang was a great poet. Among the small number of poems written under the Tran's reign and remaining until today, we have the opportunity to read more than 20 of his. But we know little about his thoughts on Buddhism. Most of Huyen Quang's remaining poems glorified nature, the flowers... Perhaps Huyen Quang regarded nature, the universe, the vegetation with his Buddhist heart and spirit: thus we are in difficulty to know his views on Buddhism. We have found one poem about 'sentient beings', the "*Ai Phu Lo*" ("To pity the prisoner of war") that expressed the monk's compassion:

I would want to send you a letter written with my blood;
The lonely flying swallow rushes into dense clouds.
How many families will be waiting for the moon tonight?
Separated into two places, we both have the same pain.

Huyen Quang's thoughts on Buddhism were shown a bit in the two last sentences of his poem "*The Dien Huu pagoda*":

Thousands and thousands of causes don't trouble me any more
Because of a wall separating me from earthly sorrows and griefs.

When one has nothing to worry about, his eyesight will be broadened. When we penetrate into the equality of 'right' and 'wrong', then there is no difference between the Devil and Buddha, everywhere is Buddha's country and the Devil palace will also become Buddha's country. This 'equal' view or 'double' view was Thai Tong's and Tue Trung's Buddhist attitude that we met above. We can say that Huyen Quang was an artist as well as an erudite Buddhist scholar. But he wasn't the man suitable for the organization and the administration of the Truc Lam clergy. In any case, he was too old and the time he assumed the leadership of that clergy was too short.

But the decline of Buddhism since the middle of the 14th century wasn't Huyen Quang's fault. At that time, the circles that had strongly supported Buddhism, i.e., the nobles of the Tran dynasty, progressively lost their political and economic power. The regime of big property vested in rice fields, farms, fiefdoms, began to be broken up. The officials having gotten Confucianist studies, and representing the class of lower landlords, began to assume important positions in the State apparatus. With its examination system, Confucianism progressively gained strength. Many Confucianist scholars such as Truong Han Sieu and Le Quat raised their

voices to criticize Buddhism. But in fact, those criticisms⁸⁴ reflected a reality that there was a great number of people renouncing their families to become monks in pagodas. Only at the end of the 14th century, in 1396, with Ho Quy Ly's order to discharge apprentice monks, and compelling the monks under 40 years of age to give up their tonsure, was Buddhism inflicted a decisive blow. From that moment in time, Buddhism's brilliant period in Vietnam was finished.

NOTES

¹Published in 1683. p.6a.

²Certain people alleged that *Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do* was written by Tue Nguyen the editor of *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc*'s edition of 1683. Therefore it does not deserve credit. This is not true for the following reason: In *Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*, King Ly Thai Tong was called Nguyen Thai Tong (to observe the rule of tabooed names under the Tran dynasty) and King Tran Thanh Tong was called "our Emperor Thanh Tong" and written in bold strokes. Hence that must be surely a true reproduction of a document written since the Tran dynasty.

³*Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc* edition 1683. p.28a

⁴Id. p. 28a – 29ab.

⁵Id. p. 29a.

⁶Id. pp. 29h-30a.

⁷That list was summarily established without mention of the period in which the monk lived. That is why we can think that Phuc Dien had related here the successive generations in Yen Tu, even after the Tran dynasty. But it is not the case on a page (p.7b) prior to the page where this list appears. Phuc Dien also listed a number of high ranked monks under the Tran dynasty covering several monks included in the above list together with some other monks. That fact proves that the monks listed in the Yen Tu successive generation - according to Phuc Dien - were those living under the Tran dynasty. If that is true, we would hardly believe that after Huyen Quang, i.e., from 1334 until the end of the Tran dynasty, there were so many generations in Yen Tu. We are of the opinion that Phuc Dien had arranged the names of the monks under the Tran dynasty in an arbitrary manner. For instance, according to *Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do* which we think is reliable, Quoc Nhat is a disciple of Ung Thuan, the same generation with Tieu Dao, while in Phuc Dien's list, he was put in the 12th generation. In our opinion: Khue Tham must be Que Tham (maybe there was a confusion between the two similar characters "Khue" and "Que"), according to *Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*, this one was Quoc Nhat's disciple, and yet Phuc Dien put him in the 17th generation. Always according to *Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do*, Huong Son is Truc Lam (Nhan Tong)'s disciple, same generation with Phap Loa. He was put in 19th generation by Phuc Dien, while Phap Loa was in the 7th.

⁸*Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (ban Ky. vol.5.. p.9b) related this event one year later, that means in 1237, and the name of the state monk was Phu Van. But according to Phu Dien's list of monks, Phu Van was of the 10th generation of Yen Tu.

⁹*Viet Su Luoc*, Bk.3. p.13a-13b.

¹⁰See The Preface of “*Thien Tong Chi Nam*” in *Khoa Hu Luc*.

¹¹See *Niem Phat Luan*.

¹²See *Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*.

¹³*Toa Thien Luan*.

¹⁴*Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*.

¹⁵*Pho Thuyet Sac Than*.

¹⁶Id.

¹⁷Tu Son, the litany “*First Mountain*.”

¹⁸*Niem Tung Ke*, text No. 40.

¹⁹Ban Son is the alias of the monk Bao Tich (Bao Xi) under the Chinese Tang dynasty disciple of the patriarch Ma Daoyi. He was so called because he lived in a temple on Ban Son mountain (Ji district. Hebei province, China).

²⁰The place where Buddha preached religion.

²¹The cloistering place of Bodhidharma.

²²I.e. Buddha. According to legends, when Laozi came into Ho territory, he became Buddha.

²³I.e. Bodhidharma

²⁴The monks of Chan Sect often used cry, stick, feather duster... as instruments leading their followers to enlightenment. Here, Thai Tong wanted to say that all those instruments would be useless if one does not search for enlightenment by himself.

²⁵These two sentences recall the monk Truong Nguyen’s (1110 – 1165) litany under the Ly dynasty, mentioned in the previous chapter: “The iron girl dances, the wooden man beats the drum.”

²⁶In text No.15 of *Niem Tung Ke*, Tran Thai Tong also wrote a rhyme: “Let’s breathe all the sublime mysteries; and on the way back we walk under the moonlight.” Some people interpreted the way under “moonlight” as a sad and cold one. We think it is not true to Tran Thai Tong’s thought, which may be that the way under the moonlight is an illuminated one.

²⁷Nam Tuyen is an alias of the Pho Nguven (Pu Yuan in Chinese) under the Tang dynasty: he cloistered at Nam Tuyen mountain in Chizhou (China), as a disciple of Ma Daoyi.

²⁸*Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*.

²⁹*Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi Tu*.

³⁰*Gioi Dinh Tue Luan*.

³¹In *Khoa Hu Luc*, this sentence was written with some wrong characters, which made it nonsense. We can base ourselves on the explanation made by Huyen Giac to reproduce the original made by Tran Thai Tong.

³²Huyen Giac was a native of Vinh Gia, On Chau, so he was also called monk Vinh Gia.

³³*Gioi Dinh Tue Luan*.

³⁴The doctrine “three important things” of the monk Nghia Huyen, founder of Lam Te sect, consists of: starting from “reason,” one gets to “intellect” and at last to “means.”

³⁵According to the Lam Te sect, there are three mystiques: that in the body, that in language and that in itself.

³⁶One in *Pho Thuyet Sac Than* and the other in *Niem Trung Ke*.

³⁷*Niem Trung Ke*, text No.16.

³⁸*Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*.

³⁹The story of Tu Ky was related in chapter “Qiwu lun” of Zhuangzi.

⁴⁰Chapter “Da zongshi” of Zhuangzi.

⁴¹*Toa Thien Luan*.

⁴²In *Lun yu*.

⁴³In *Daode jing*.

⁴⁴In *Lun yu*.

⁴⁵I.e. the *Nhan Qua* prayer-book.

⁴⁶Confucius's words in chapter “Zi Han,” *Lun yu*.

⁴⁷In *Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*. Some versions are put in *Khuyen Phat Tam Van*.

⁴⁸*Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam*.

⁴⁹Someone thought Tue Trung Thuong Si was Tran Quoc Tang, the son of Tran Quoc Tuan. That was a mistake made by Bui Huy Bich, author of *Hoang Viet Van Tuyen*.

⁵⁰These events had been related in *Annan Zhilue* and *Yuanshi*. See Ha Van Tan and Phan Thi Tam, *Cuoc Khang Chien Chong Xam Luoc Nguyen Mong* the ky XIII, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi 1975, pp 228 and 277.

⁵¹Thien Nhien was a layman. One of his texts appeared in *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu*.

⁵²In *Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc* also appeared a text by Tong Kinh. We wonder whether Tong Kinh is Thach Kinh or not.

⁵³Probably a female disciple.

⁵⁴The earliest extant copy, called *Truc Lam Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu* was reproduced by the monk Tue Nguyen in the winter of the 4th year of Chinh Hoa era (1683).

⁵⁵In the text “*Pham Thanh Bat Di*” (“There is no difference between ordinary people and the Saints”).

⁵⁶Excerpt from the text “*Me Ngo Bat Di*” (“There is no difference between unconsciousness and awakening”).

⁵⁷Translated by Dao Duy Anh, in *Khoa Hu Luc*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi 1974, pp. 192 – 193.

⁵⁸In *Thuong Si Hanh Trang*.

⁵⁹Translated by Dao Duy Anh. op. cit, p.197.

⁶⁰In the text “*Vat Bat Nang Dung*.”

⁶¹In the text “*Sinh Tu Nhan Nhi Di*.”

⁶²In the text “*Ngau Tac*.”

⁶³In the text “*Tru Truong Tu*,” translated by Hue Chi.

⁶⁴The earliest extant copy was printed in the 16th year of the Canh Hung era (1765).

⁶⁵The stele was carved in the fifth year of Dai Tri era (1362), being extant at Thanh Mai pagoda, on Tam Ban mountain, Hoang Hoa Tham commune, Chi Linh district, Hai Hung province.

⁶⁶Vu Lam belonged to former Yen Khanh district, present day Hoa Lu district, Ha Nam Ninh province.

⁶⁷Present day Bo Trach, Quang Trach district, Binh Tri Thien province.

⁶⁸I.e.: 1. not to kill living beings, 2. not to steal, 3. not to commit adultery, 4. no to lie. 5. not to sow discord, 6. not to say wicked words, 7. not to say obscene words. 8. not to be greedy. 9. not to get angry, 10. not to have evil thoughts.

⁶⁹I.e. Bao An pagoda at Sieu Loai.

⁷⁰I.e. Hue Vu Vuong Tran Quoc Chan.

⁷¹“Khuc luc sang” or “khuc luc thang sang” (rattan chair or bed) in the original, often used by Buddhist circles.

⁷²For instance, when being asked what is a pure Buddhist body, Truc Lam answered: In the golden bottle of wine, there are the lion's feces. On the iron cup of wine there is the smell of francolin. This thought could be associated with that of Tue Trung on the same topic, as mentioned above.

⁷³This litany started from the following story-- Quy Son (i.e., the monk Linh Huu under the Tang dynasty in China) said: “Sometimes say yes, sometimes say no, like the bindweed climbing on the tree.” So Son asked: “When the tree falls, and the bindweed withers up, what would we say?” Note that Tran Thai Tong had also written a text on this problem.

⁷⁴Meaning “living in a dusty world, one still enjoys practicing religion.”

⁷⁵Translated by Dao Duy Anh, in *Chu Nom*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, 1975, p.174.

⁷⁶Vinh Nghiem pagoda also called Duc La. is located in present day Tri Yen commune, Yen Dung district, Ha Bac province.

⁷⁷According to *Linh Te Thap Ky* by Truong Han Sieu, written in 1343.

⁷⁸According to the stele in Thap mountain, Ninh Hoa commune, Hoa Lu district, Ha Nam Ninh province. The text of the inscription on the stele was written by Tran Nguyen Trac in 1367.

⁷⁹Nhan Tong's wife.

⁸⁰Alias of Tran Quang Trieu, Tran Quoc Tang's son, Tran Quoc Tuan's grandson.

⁸¹King Anh Tong's wife, King Minh Tong's mother.

⁸²On that stele was clearly carved, “more than thirty disciples.” In *Tam To Thuc Luc*, the character (+) meaning “ten” was wrongly written as (...) meaning “thousand.” The names of the disciples are listed on the stele in two groups. Among the names still legible, we find out 38 people.

⁸³Han is Han Son (Han Shan in Chinese) and Thap is Thap Bac (Shi Bei in Chinese) were two secluded monks under the Chinese Tang dynasty.

⁸⁴See inscription on the stele at Khai Nghiem pagoda and Linh Te Thap Ky by Truong Han Sieu in Duc Thuy mountain, and the stele inscription written by Le Quat at Thieu Phuc pagoda, Bai hamlet, Bac Giang province.

PART THREE

**BUDDHISM FROM THE LATER LE TO
TAY SON DYNASTIES
(15TH – 18TH CENTURIES)**

CHAPTER X

BUDDHISM IN PROSPERITY AND PEACE: THE LE DYNASTY (15TH CENTURY)

CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Le Loi, who pacified the country after a ten years war against the Ming Chinese invaders, proclaimed himself emperor, thereby establishing the Le dynasty. The Le dynasty marked the start of an important period in the history of Vietnam's independence. In many aspects this era was one of changes - in ideas, society, learning, as well as spirituality - which hold great significance for Buddhism.

Learning and Scholarship

From the Dinh to the end of the Tran dynasty, learning was the province of Bonzes, and Buddhism entirely dominated this area of the feudal monarchy. Dinh Tien Hoang, when he ascended to the throne, appointed the Bonze Ngo Chan Luu to the post of highest-ranking court mandarin of education. The earlier Le and Ly dynasties had sent dignitaries to the Chinese imperial court to seek Buddhist sutras (*Tripitaka*). Though known in Vietnam at the time, neither Confucianism nor Taoism was widely followed by the population. It was not until the fourth year of the Thai Binh era (1075) that King Ly Nhan Ton authorized the first three-class examination in order to select candidates for the mandarinship. This marked the entry of Confucianism into the domain of learning, and the beginning of its involvement in the feudal polity.

Buddhism did not, however, relinquish its role in scholarship. The court three-religion examination, held throughout the Tran dynasty, testifies to the fact that the influence of Buddhism did not entirely wane. But by the Le dynasty, Buddhism had clearly been forced to yield its place to Confucianism. The move by Le Loi and subsequent monarchs away from Buddhism and towards patronage of Confucianism can be understood as politically motivated, as it served to emphasize the transition of power to a new line. The extinction of the Truc Lam (Bamboo Forest) Ch'an sect, after a history spanning three consecutive generations, therefore comes as no surprise.

Moreover, the pragmatism of the Confucianism philosophy must have been a useful asset to the kingdom in building and consolidating the feudal system. King Le Thai To ordered the building of the "Temple of Literature" (Quoc Tu Giam or Van Mieu), a school dedicated to Confucianism; and in 1442 decreed the inception of the court examinations for the degree

of Doctor, whose laureates would receive appointments as high dignitaries in the monarchy.

Provincial authorities also organized competitive examinations for Bonzes and issued permits to those who passed the examination, allowing them to enter the priesthood permanently. Those who failed would be compelled to return to the world.

The Hong Duc code promulgated during the reign of King Le Thai Ton makes no mention of Buddhism. Indeed, this monarch sought by every means possible to remove Buddhist influences from every aspect of social and political life, considering it a harmful influence best eradicated from society. It is safe to say that by the reign of King Le Thanh Ton Confucianism had “completely replaced” Buddhism. It should, nevertheless, be emphasized that the preponderance of Confucianism extended mainly to the area of scholarship and competitive examinations and was not without negative consequences for Vietnamese letters. Throughout the centuries when Confucianism held sway over scholarship, many outstanding youths were drawn into the labyrinth of procedures necessary to obtain a pass into the examinations in an attempt to become a mandarin; their efforts meanwhile were of no tangible utility to the country as a whole. From the Le dynasty onward, countless doctor - first laureates in various court examinations - after becoming high-ranking mandarins did not formulate any ideas nor discover any principles which might bring progress to the country. The poetry and literature which they produced show no value of national importance, but rather reflect only their lack of self-confidence, their feelings of inferiority, to the point of slavish dependency upon the ancient scholars and the Chinese model.

In the Realm of Ideas

Learning and ideas are organically bound together. Thus Confucianism, after triumphing over Buddhism, held great significance for the world of ideas. Since the introduction of Buddhism, up to the Le dynasty, three sects, introduced at different points in time, held sway. These were namely the Vinitaruci, the Wu Yantong, and the Thao Duong sects, each with its own particular history and genealogy. Nor let us forget the Truc Lam sect of Yen Tu mountain, founded by King Tran Nhan Tong.

Throughout its long history, Buddhism dominated both scholarship and philosophy, and nurtured a non-negligible number of scholars and works. But it should be noted that the contributions of Vietnamese Buddhism were still too modest to warrant comparison with other cases in the history of Buddhism worldwide. Some claim that Chinese invasions destroyed a lot of books, which greatly reduced the number of works which once existed. Yet Vietnamese Buddhism undeniably lacked men of a considerable range of knowledge, and lacked works of some degree of importance until the late Le period and even contemporary and modern times. These deficiencies explain why Buddhism in Vietnam has never been

able to work out an adequate system of organization and training on a national scale.

The Vietnamese generally recognized the existence of three religions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Confucianism had, at several points, provided the opposition to Buddhism, but finally all three religions achieved harmony with each other through the doctrine of 'three religions sprung from a common source'. This was in no way a Vietnamese innovation, but simply the adoption of ideas born in China under similar conditions and circumstances. Within Buddhism itself, until the early Le and even up to the present, confusion reigned among its three constitutive elements, Ch'an, Amidism and Tantrism, each of which held a particular cultural significance.

Ch'an is essentially a method of self-awareness, self-recognition, and self-demonstration. This doctrine emphasizes man's individualistic, solitary and deeply philosophical relation to the universe. Self-recognition and self-demonstration should permit a man to know whether the water he drinks is cool or warm. Yet he is powerless to impart this knowledge to anyone else. This state is considered in Ch'an as analogous to a dream state.

The concept of the Pure Land can be understood and explained in several ways. According to the precepts of Amidism, the Pure Land is the calm and chaste land of Amida Buddha, inhabited by the Buddha of this sect and other deities [i.e., Bodhisattvas]. The Amidist method prescribes reliance on one's own powers as well as encouraging those of others. Amidism preaches that man should aspire to a most perfect human society.

Tantrism clearly differentiates itself from Amidism, both conceptually and in its view of society. Tantrism, in the deepest sense, is a conditional combination of doctrine and belief aiming at an understanding of the truth through a combination of sound and diagrams. This process leads from phenomenal study to ontology, based on a dual vision of the world, which corresponds to two ways of becoming involved in the religious life. To look at the horizontal plane means to analyze and to make a clear distinction between point of departure and point of arrival. On the vertical plane, point of departure and point of arrival converge.

Culturally, Tantrism bears a native Asian character which spread throughout a large area, starting from India, then reaching up across the Himalayas through the Western Mongolian plateaus and finally penetrating into China. Korea, Japan and Vietnam are only the "rippling tails" of this vast movement. In fact, in China, Buddhism first entertained close relations with the 16 northern countries, grouped into five nations, known collectively as the Ho, where it soon became the national religion. The process of contact between the Ho and the Han nationalities signified a mixing of Indian and Chinese cultures. Under the absolute monarchies which ruled the Ho nations, Buddhism was expected to spread its teachings, but do so by adapting to agree with native beliefs and with the social needs of the people. Therefore, incantations and healing constituted the largest portion of Buddhist practice. The monks who preached Buddhist ideas were

both intellectuals and mystics, occupying positions close to the throne. The three components of Vietnamese Buddhism, far from being original to it, constituted the baggage necessary for immigration into the “Western region“ (as the Chinese called it); but in China, these elements were modified after contact with Taoism and geomancy.

During the golden era of Buddhism in Vietnam, its activities in the cultural and spiritual realm were concentrated, as indicated by historical documents, on such practices as interpreting omens as good or bad, auspicious or inauspicious; praying to Buddha for a male heir; praying to Buddha for a long life; praying for rain; chanting incantations to heal someone of disease. Monks and nuns were completely dependent on the feudal system. On the big bells hung at every pagoda the following verses were usually inscribed:

If the Throne prospers,
Then the way of Buddhism will be eased.
If Buddhism and the King's right are strengthened,
Dharma Wheel moves on naturally.

This demonstrates the interdependency of Buddhism and the feudal monarchy. Up until the end of the feudal period in Vietnam, many altars in pagodas displayed golden inscriptions which read, “Long live the Emperor,” a feature which characterizes the stance of Buddhism towards the feudal regime. This indicates how Buddhism, while still strong, lowered itself to become a sort of tool, a second-rate ornament of the feudal system, and transformed itself into a simplistic popular belief, concerned only with offerings and incantation to the deities.

In Society

As mentioned above, Buddhism had dug the grave for its own decadence in the very time of its prosperity. Such was the sorry state of Buddhism when the Le monarchs demanded that it abandon its heterogeneous character for homogeneity, in other words, go “from imperfection to perfection.” Thus the replacement of Buddhism by Confucianism in the favor of the Le rulers was unavoidable. Confucian scholars were growing in number and strength, attaining an ever higher social status, while Buddhist priests were held in contempt. Monks were, in these scholars' opinion, capable only of chanting incantations while prostrating themselves before inanimate statues. During the very period of Buddhism's apogee, under the Tran, the scholar Truong Han Sieu wrote these critical words on the site of the Linh Te tower: “The old Buddha preached the three nihilities to finally enter into nirvana; the following generations, did not follow Buddhism as they should have, but instead only enchant living creatures. Pagodas occupy a fifth of the country's territory. Monks pay no heed to morality, wasting money in pleasure. Believers

naively put their faith in those monks. It would be a rare thing indeed that they should not turn into devils.”

In the reign of King Ly Cao Ton, following a report made by the mandarin Dam Di Mong, the monarch issued a decree by which a number of monks were dismissed from their posts. During the late Tran dynasty (under Kings like Tran Du Ton), the caliber of people seeking to enter the priesthood fell even lower: “At that time, following many years of consecutive crop failure, the population would do their best to make a living by becoming monks or hiring themselves out as servants.”¹

In addition, monks and Buddhist emissaries constituted a means for the Chinese Empire to the north to infiltrate our country. The propagation of Buddhism to Vietnam by the Ming could be seen as a most wicked strategy of invasion. The daughter of a monk from the Ho nations was selected as a royal concubine. This monk traveled to Vietnam often under the reign of King Nhan Ton. He claimed to be able to sit in the lotus position on the surface of the water for three hundred years. He also claimed that he could contract his stomach and bowels, pushing them up towards the diaphragm to make his abdomen completely vacant. And he ate only sulphur, cabbage and sweet leeks. This monk lived in our country for a few years, then returned to China. The next time he came to Vietnam he had the honor of seeing his daughter, Da-La-Thanh, selected as the King's concubine.”² Further: the Ming also sent an envoy to Vietnam with the aim of luring several Vietnamese monks into China. Of this episode it is reported: “The eunuchs Nguyen Dao and Nguyen Toan had previously been sent to the Ming emperors who used their services in the palace, and they were very well treated. On this occasion the eunuch Nguyen Dao had reported to the Ming emperors that Vietnamese monks practiced a magic much more effective than that of the Chinese. The King sent an envoy to Vietnam to recruit monks well-versed in magic, and recommended that about twenty of these highly qualified monks be brought to Jin Ling citadel.” After debriefing them, the Chinese sent these monks back to their native country.

This history further reports that “in former times, Ming Taizu of the Ming dynasty sent an envoy to search for monks who were qualified practitioners of male castration, as well as beautiful girls skilled at the art of massage. The Vietnamese King, Tran De Hien, ordered his eunuchs, Nguyen Toan, Nguyen Dao, Tru Ca and Ngo Tin, to bring them to the Ming court. Afterwards, the Ming emperor sent back to Vietnam only the monks and the beautiful girls but retained the eunuchs, whom he put in the service of the royal palace. As the Vietnamese eunuchs knew the local topography rather well they were also eventually handed back to the Vietnamese Kings to act as spies and report back on any developments.”

The opening of schools and the propagation of Buddhist sutras were also aimed at furthering the Ming's aggressive and expansionist plans through the medium of culture. “The Chinese dignitary Banh Dao Tuong demanded that he be authorized to open schools in districts and sub-districts

and searched for fortune-tellers, physicians and monks on whom he conferred the title of mandarin and to whom he assigned the task of teaching. Besides, he forbade both men and women to cut their hair short, and particularly compelled women to wear long robes as they did in China.” And further: “Now the supervisor of education, Duong Nghia, was sent to Vietnam to bestow grades on Confucian schools at the district and sub-district level, and then send monks to preach at Buddhist clergy services. As for books, and other writings dealing with the history and legends of our country from the Tran dynasty onward, he ordered their complete confiscation and sent them to Jin Ling citadel.”

What other option did King Le Loi and his successors have but to support Confucianism, in the face of such a situation in the pagodas, when the society was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the invaders from the North? The historical developments of the time are extremely significant in regard to both Vietnam’s territorial boundaries and the fate of Vietnamese Buddhism. Under the reign of Tran De Hien, rigid laws were promulgated, forcing monks and novices to enlist in the army and join the struggle against Champa. In the reign of King Tran Thuan Ton, all monks under 50 years of age were forced to return to secular life. In the second year of the Thuan Thien era, under King Le Thai To, all monks were examined on their knowledge of Buddhist texts and prayers, as well as their obedience to Buddhist law. The examinations were carried out in provincial town-halls. Those who passed were allowed to become monks, but those who failed were compelled to defrock. Besides, monks were still forbidden to have any contact with women in the royal palace, to build pagodas and to celebrate Buddhist funeral rites for families.

Interestingly enough, despite these interdictions, the Le still allowed the population to carry out religious activities which were essentially Buddhist in nature. For instance, organizing the procession to carry a Buddhist statue from Phap Van pagoda in a plea for rain; granting the mandarin's uniform to Bonze Hue Hong, repairing the Bao Thien and Thien Phuc pagodas; holding the Vu Lan Buddhist festival. Nevertheless, the Le Kings’ general policy towards Buddhism explains their destruction of Tran dynasty literature, as well as the extinction of the Truc Lam sect after only three generations. This sort of destruction of past literature is not unique in Vietnam's history: the same thing occurred when the Tran replaced the Ly, and when the Nguyen came to power they did the same to the Trinh lords and Tay Son Kings.

BUDDHISM IN THE WORKS OF CONFUCIAN SCHOLARS OF THE 15TH CENTURY

Within feudal Vietnam's system of ideas, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism were three inseparable constituents, which, though they wielded their influence sometimes strongly, sometimes weakly, maintained a sort of balance in the intellectual and spiritual life of the scholars.

Although from the beginning of the Le period Confucianism replaced Buddhism in the political sphere, it could not take the place of Buddhism in satisfying the spiritual needs of the population for a more mystical truth, clearly beyond the scope of Confucianism. Consequently, there were those scholars who eagerly and enthusiastically engaged in both writing about and in criticizing the achievements of Buddhism, and yet subsequently were converted to Buddhism. Truong Han Sieu, quoted above, is a case in point. In China, the cradle of Confucianism, many more similar examples are to be found. These circumstances nevertheless account for Buddhism's limited influence on the literature of the early Le dynasty. Nguyen Trai, Luong The Vinh and King Le Thanh Ton are generally considered to be the writers most representative of the period. Many of Nguyen Trai's verses are deeply impregnated with Buddhist philosophy, the following one for instance:

When free from trouble, the mind is light.
Buddha is in our heart, there is no need to pray. (Ngon Chi)

These lines from one of Nguyen Trai's poems are almost identical to a statement attributed to the Great Master of the Truc Lam sect. When King Tran Thai Ton left the court and entered monastic life with the intention of becoming a Buddha, the Great Master told him: "No, Buddha is not to be found in these remote mountains. He is right in our heart; a peaceful and lucid heart is Buddha. If your Majesty has an enlightened heart, you will immediately become Buddha. Why then seek elsewhere?" (from the "Preface" of *Thien Ton Chi Nam*).

The following verses by Nguyen Trai express the Buddhist doctrine of being and non-being:

A bunch of roses is reflected in the face of stream.
These flowers have no stain, and have a Buddha heart.
This afternoon they fall, but tomorrow blossom anew.
This strange thing is proof of the doctrine of being and non-being.
(Cay Moc Can)

The above poem illustrates a unique concept in Mahayana Buddhism, which Nguyen Trai adopted and exercised in the very thick of the arduous and dangerous struggle for national independence. This concept successfully overcomes all contradictions, being and non-being, right and wrong, to serve as a basis for action in secular life, as it had for the monks in the Tran and Ly dynasties.

The influence of Buddhism gave Nguyen Trai's poems a spirituality and feeling that Confucian pragmatism could never have inspired. As in the following lines:

The clouds part and so the Buddhist bed is cold and lonely.
Flowers falling from the tree leave their scent on the stream.
(Tieu Du Tu)

Moreover, the unlimited compassion preached by Buddhism inspired Nguyen Trai with an ardent love of his country and its people:

We are of one family and should love each other,
Northern branch and Southern, both sprung from the same trunk.
(Bao Kinh Canh Gioi)

Buddhist doctrine raises the benevolence advocated by Confucianism to a higher degree, encompassing all living creatures in the spirit of mercifulness and self-sacrifice preached by Buddha. In another poem, Nguyen Trai writes:

Sympathy for the fish who bites on the hook.
Feel for the fly who dies in a bowl of soapberries.
(Bao Kinh Canh Gioi)

Among the scholars of the early Le, Nguyen Trai's writing is without question the most deep and expressive.

Luong The Vinh was first laureate in the court examinations and so was appointed to the post of high dignitary of the court academy. A very talented writer, he produced only a few essays on Buddhism, mostly dealing with Buddhist rites. Nevertheless these few activities touching on Buddhism earned him his exclusion from the Temple of Literature and from the ranks of those venerated as great Confucian scholars, because he was seen as a pro-Buddhist element.

King Le Thanh Ton presents a somewhat different case. He was renowned for his benevolence and righteousness towards his subjects whom he loved like his children. He is the author of a work called *Thap Gioi Co Hon Quoc Ngu Van* which expressed his compassion and benevolence towards human suffering in society. This work deals with *Co Hon*, forsaken spirits. What kind of creatures are they? According to Vietnamese Buddhists, the forsaken spirits are the souls of people who in their lifetime were the victims of glaring injustices or died reluctantly. These souls could not be freed from their worldly sufferings and wandered aimlessly in hell, in darkness, with no relatives to perform rites for them. On the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, in the spirit of compassion and benevolence taught by Buddhism, people traditionally make offerings to those forsaken spirits. Among these unfortunates were people of every kind and class, differentiated into 10 categories.

Le Thanh Ton's work was not originally inspired, but the result of a combination of several subjective and objective factors, as well as the political and social situation of the time. The subjective element was the King's benevolence meeting the compassion of Buddhism. The objective factor was the influence of the Buddhist work *Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc* which deals with the rites for forsaken spirits carried out on the fifteenth

day of the seventh lunar month. Meanwhile, in the socio-political realm, Buddhism was facing many difficulties.

The *Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc* shows Ch'an, Amidist and Tantrist influences, and includes directives on how to put the doctrine into practice through meditation, and praying to Buddha with the use of talismans and magic. It is a work of deep feeling and great style, and served also as the inspiration for Nguyen Du's funeral oration, dedicated to the ten categories of living creatures, written centuries later.

In Le Thanh Ton's *Phap Gioi Co Hon Quoc Ngu Van*, the ten categories of forsaken spirits include:

1. Buddhist priests
2. Taoists
3. Mandarins
4. Confucian scholars
5. Astronomers and geomancers
6. Physicians
7. Officers and generals
8. Courtesans
9. Traders
10. Libertines

The 12 categories mentioned in the *Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc* are the following:

1. Kings and lords
2. Generals and officers
3. Mandarins
4. Confucian scholars
5. Buddhist priests
6. Taoists
7. Traders
8. Warriors
9. Women in childbirth
10. Barbarians; slaves; the deaf, dumb and blind.
11. Imperial concubines and beautiful women.
12. Prisoners, beggars.

Comparing the two lists, we notice that Le Thanh Ton's ten categories make no mention of kings and lords, warriors, women in childbirth and the whole class of 'barbarians, deaf, dumb and blind people', but add the class of astronomers and geomancers, and physicians. Le Thanh Ton equates courtesans with the category of beautiful women and concubines, and libertines with prisoners and beggars. For the rest, his list is similar to that in the *Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc*. Both works are made up of three similar parts, although they differ as to their length and style. The

Thap Gioi Co Hon Quoc Ngu Van is divided into three parts: a description of each category of forsaken spirits, a lament over their plight, and a poem dedicated as a tribute to them. The *Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc*'s three parts also consist of a request, a justification and a lament.

Though inspired by the latter work, King Le Thanh Ton deliberately excluded the categories of kings and lords, and warriors. He clearly did not intend to include those of his own class among the mass of hungry spirits forsaken by the population. He excluded warriors as well because of a similar reticence to damn the men who had laid down their lives in the defense of his family line.

Inspiring himself from the same source, Nguyen Du did not exclude anyone of the types, and strove to paint a true picture of the society of his time:

There were people filled with ambition to become famous, rich and powerful, who sought by all means possible to reign over the country, and struggled bravely, but when they failed in their attempt their disappointment was all the greater. When in power, wealth and fame brought them only resentment and hatred; in defeat, they left behind a mass of descendants, lost and unfavored, who were beheaded to become the prowling spirits that lament on rainy nights. Success or failure is a matter of predestination, but the souls of people who died victims of injustice will never find relief.³

As a matter of fact, when King Le Loi founded the new dynasty, the “descendants of the lost Tran Kingdom” suffered just such a fatal destiny. When the Le dynasty fell, their descendants met an equally cruel lot at the hands of the next dynasty. This pattern is repeated many times throughout the rise and fall of dynasties in Vietnamese history.

Nguyen Du depicts the warriors' lot as follows: “There were people who enlisted in the army and had to leave their home affairs in order to take charge of their country's affairs. They led a hard life, drinking water from the stream and eating dry rice balls. Their life was short, for Death did not spare them on the battlefields, where scenes of carnage were most frequent. Those who died would wander as ghosts, lamenting over their misfortunes.”⁴

Le Thanh Ton's *Thap Gioi Co Hon Quoc Ngu Van*, although it expresses a compassion for the suffering of his subjects which is identical to Buddhist compassion, does not directly refer to Buddhist ideas or doctrine, for reasons we have already made clear. On the other hand, Nguyen Du wrote:

Thanks to Buddha's supernatural power to free souls from their suffering, the living creatures in the four corners of

the globe shed their sorrows and griefs and harbour no resentment against one another. (...) Thanks to Buddha's power of conciliation, people harbour no resentment against one another. All ten categories of beings, male and female alike, went to listen to lectures on Buddha's teachings. Their short life was but a drifting scene. As the saying goes: a thousand scenes are only nothingness. All who believe in Buddha will shed life's sorrows.⁵

The two works quoted above deal with the same topic and were influenced by the same source but were written in different periods, the one during the golden age of the Le dynasty, the other during the decline of the same dynasty. Both are permeated with the spirit of their time. Both clearly demonstrate that, while Buddhism was excluded from the political scene and lost much of its influence on society, it still exerted a profound effect in the mind and feelings of the population, and found expression in many scholarly as well as popular writings.

NOTES

¹*Su Cuong Muc. Bk 9, p. 45b.*

²*Su Cuong Muc. Bk 9, pp. 3b-4a.*

³*Van Te Thap Loai Chung Sinh.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

CHAPTER XI

BUDDHISM IN THE PERIOD OF THE COUNTRY'S PARTITION BY DIFFERENT FEUDAL GROUPS (16TH-18TH CENTURY)

The last king of the Posterior Le dynasty was Chan Ton Cung Hoanh (1516-1527) whose throne was usurped by his highest-ranking mandarin of the Court named Mac Dang Dung. Though the Le dynasty no longer existed, the population still turned their thoughts toward Le Thai To and Le Thanh Ton -- the early kings of the Le dynasty-who particularly had won the minds and the hearts of their subjects by meritorious services rendered to society. For that reason, many persons supported and followed the descendants of the restored Le dynasty set up then in the Southern part of the country, notably in the regions of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, in order to oppose the rule by the Mac Kings: thus the country was divided into two parts reigned over by two different Kings who fought against each other for 50-60 years on end. Afterwards, relying upon the mandarins of the Trinh and Nguyen families, the Le Kings could annihilate the Mac Kings but when the Trinh mandarins were proclaimed Lords by the Le Kings, a great dissension and an acute conflict arose between the Trinh and Nguyen families. Hence, struggles frequently occurred between different feudal groups which lasted for about two centuries.

THE CONCEPTION OF BUDDHISM IN POPULAR WORKS

The prolonged war between the Trinh and Nguyen families, with its social disorders and endless sufferings caused to the population, constituted a good factor conducive to the people's sympathy for the ideas and sentiments of Buddhism, - which considers life something ephemeral, and full of hardships and misery. This is why the Buddhist ideas about the insecure and precarious life, the compassion for the sufferings of the living creatures, the relation between cause and effect, and last but not least, the Karma, had flourished and incessantly changed according to the popular imagination and conception of social morals. For this reason, so many works issuing from the popular masses bore those ideas and sentiments, which were spreading far and wide in society.

Popular creative works were not only literature based on oral tradition produced by the uneducated common people but also that created by Confucian scholars or Buddhist monks. These people did not participate in the political apparatus, they lived near to the population, took sides with the latter and reflected their ideas and sentiments in their works. Thanks to this allegiance, their writings responded to the spiritual needs of the

majority of the people, who enjoyed reading them and propagated those works in such a way that they became quite popular among them.

In this period, the story "*Quan Am Thi Kinh*" (*Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh*) and the story "*Quan Am Nam Hai*" (*Goddess of Southern Sea*) were two books bearing a deep ideological and doctrinal content of Buddhism. Both works reflected the period of disorders and upheavals and propagandized Buddhism as a method of action to provide a remedy for the actual state of society at the time. From this might be seen the surging influence of Buddhism in popular works. "*Quan Am Thi Kinh*" is a story written in verse, recounting the life of lady, Thi Kinh, who was accused falsely of having intended to kill her husband, and when she disguised herself as a man to lead a religious life in a Buddhist temple, she was again falsely blamed for having committed sexual intercourse with a girl and having made her pregnant, which was strictly forbidden by Buddhist law (anyway, how could a woman have sexual intercourse with another woman and make her pregnant?), but thanks to her endurance of all indignities and her spirit of self-sacrifice, she could enter into Nirvana and became Goddess of Mercy.

The story was written by an anonymous author in the six-eight word distich metre (rhythmic prose), comprising 186 lines and divided into five chapters as follows:

1. First chapter: Lady Thi Kinh falsely accused of intending to kill her husband (1- 224th lines). Lady Thi Kinh was a native of Korea, she had been a man in the preceding life. When entering into monkhood, the man had reached the peak of the way in the Buddhist religion and had been about to be proclaimed a Buddha, but the great Gautama Buddha wanted to put him once more to the test by reincarnating him as a daughter of the Mang family and making the girl suffer many tribulations and injustices in life. When growing up, Thi Kinh was beautiful, talented, and very well-mannered which won her sympathy and admiration from relatives and neighbours. She was married to a young student named Thien Si, who came from the Sung family. The married couple were getting on well with each other and living a happy life. One night, her husband was reading a book, and she was sitting near by sewing clothes. The husband, tired by reading, began to sleep. She saw on his chin a hair growing against the grain. With a small knife in her hand, she was going to cut it off, but the husband started up from his sleep. When seeing such a move from his wife, he thought she was attempting to kill him, and cried for help. The husband's parents came in. After listening to what was recounted by their son, they charged their daughter-in-law with an attempt to kill her husband. Then they right away sent for her own parents, and after severe reproaches, handed her back to her family.

2. Second chapter: Thi Kinh leading a religious life (125th-370th lines). Lady Thi Kinh returned to live with her parents. She could not make known her feeling and reveal the false accusation to anyone else. At first

she attempted to commit suicide, but thinking that she was the only child of the family, she refrained from doing so and decided to enter religion as a way to requite her parents' love and concern for her. She then disguised herself as a man, took the new name Kinh Tam, and ran away from the family to lead a religious life at a far distant pagoda named Van Tu.

3. Third chapter: Thi Kinh falsely accused of adultery (371st-584th lines). Kinh Tam (Thi Kinh's new name when she disguised herself as a man) lived at the Van Tu pagoda, assuaging her sorrow by reading prayers and worshipping Buddha. Suddenly an unfortunate event happened. The root cause was that near to the pagoda lived a young girl named Thi Mau, who intended to choose a husband for herself. She very often came worshipping at the pagoda in which lived Kinh Tam. When seeing Kinh Tam, and finding him smart and handsome, Thi Mau became enamored of Kinh Tam - who showed indifference at her approach - , but Thi Mau could not contain her passion and had sexual intercourse with a male servant in her family, hence she became pregnant. The council of notables in the village, when considering this case of pregnancy without being married, summoned Thi Mau for interrogation. She put all blame on Kinh Tam, who was then subjected to beating and a fine. So Thi Kinh was victim for the second time of a glaring injustice.

4. Fourth chapter: Thi Kinh, nurturing Thi Mau's child (585th-692nd lines). Some time later, Thi Mau gave birth to a boy; she brought her baby to the pagoda with the clear intention of handing it over to Kinh Tam, whom she said to be the real father. Kinh Tam, with her pity on the baby, accepted to nurture it, knowing by herself that she was never the author of such a birth. Hardly three years had elapsed when Kinh Tam caught a serious illness and passed away. Before her death, she wrote a letter explaining the case to her parents.

5. Fifth chapter: Thi Kinh, cleansed of injustices, becomes Goddess of Mercy (693rd-786th lines). When wrapping the corpse of Thi Kinh in a shroud, the monks and nuns at the pagoda became aware of the fact that Kinh Tam was a woman. The inhabitants of the village then learned with much regret that she had been victim of an injustice. Then the parents and relatives of her family, after reading the letter she had written to them before her last hour, came to know that she did not have any idea of murdering her husband. Her husband, since her leaving the family for an unknown place, felt much regret for his inconsiderate behavior toward her, and when knowing that his wife was victim of an utter injustice which had been hard for her to prove, he joined his parents in making arrangements for the funeral of his deceased wife and took the vow to lead a religious life until the last day of his life at the same pagoda. Afterwards, the Buddha, considering that lady Thi Kinh had reached the peak of the way in her Buddhist religion, proclaimed her Goddess of Mercy. The themes of the "Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh" story are steadfastness in the face of injustice, endurance of indignities, compassion for living creatures, and uprightness in life: by so doing all injustices can be eventually obliterated.

The injustices suffered by Thi Kinh were quite common among many women shackled by stern social conventions. But any injustice could not be easily brought to light, although the victim were to even swear by almighty God that he or she had never done it, because nobody would believe in such an oath. The pertaining verses run as follows:

I would never betray my husband,
 So I strongly request him to reconsider my first love with him;
 Should the dead be brought back to life again,
 I would have opened my chest and abdomen to show him my lungs
 and liver.

In the face of such circumstances, Buddhism offered a suitable way for liberation from prejudice, viz., endurance and renunciation, which happened to be in conformity with that historical juncture and mentality. Here, though showing an attitude of enduring indignities, the character in the story is no less an object of much praise and admiration by those who know about her situation: hence their strong condemnation of the wrong-doers. It should be recalled here that Thi Kinh was victim of two injustices. The first one was the false accusation that she attempted to kill her husband, but she was unable in any way to exculpate herself from the charge because she was unable to interpret the matter to others. The pertaining verses run as follows:

Glancing at his chin when he was sleep,
 I saw a hair growing against the grain;
 Heedlessly I took up a small knife;
 Hardly had I begun to cut that hair off
 When he started up from his sleep.

Her second injustice could be not only explained and brought to light but also used for denouncing the shameful slander, but Thi Kinh did not utter any word for self-defense and resigned herself to her fate because the endurance of indignities constitutes one of the six virtues of Buddhism:

Endurance of indignities is a virtue indeed;
 But a truly devout person knows how to endure the hardest one.

Buddhist Mahayana is characterized by its compassion, its idea of saving living creatures from suffering and unhappiness. Through the work "*Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh*," it spreads as a moral principle necessary for the epoch, an epoch which was beset with so many sufferings caused by a strait-laced society.

In the work "*Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh*," the real situation of society was shown to some extent, but not all-sidedly, and did not bring to the fore the most acute contradictions. The theme is injustice and endurance

of indignities, thereby leaving no room for a duly combative spirit in dealing with and excluding the wrong-doings of others.

“*Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh*“ shows an unlimited peaceful path and does not make use of the Buddhist ideology as a weapon for attacking the vicious customs and bad habits of society. “*Goddess of Mercy Nam Hai*” is another story, this one in Nom (Vietnamese demotic script), recounting another tale of Avalokitesvara in Buddhism. The story was written in rhythmic prose of six-word verse followed by an eight-word line metre. It has been handed down from one generation to another among the population under different appellations and in different copies. This demonstrates the strong popularity of the story.

In former times, literary researchers did not confirm the name of any author of the “*Nam Hai Quan Am*“ (*Goddess of Mercy of Southern Sea*) and considered this work to be written by an anonymous or unknown author. In a recent study, there was discovered a copy of the story entitled “*Nam Hai Quan Am*” with clear indication of the date of the reigning dynasty, and the name of the author as follows: “Written by Bonze Chinh Giac Chan Nguyen of the Truc Lam sect at Phap Quang pagoda, in Kim Co hamlet, Thuan My canton, Tho Xuong sub district, Hoai Duc district, Ha Noi province in the first month of the year Canh Tuat, third year of the reign of King Tu Duc and carved by Vu Tao alias Phap Khoan and his wife Vu Thi Nam alias Dieu Van. (See Le Manh That, *Chan Nguyen Thien Su Toan Tap* (Complete works of Bronze Chan Nguyen), bk2, Ho Chi Minh City, 1979). The author of this research affirmed that the story “*Nam Hai Quan Am*” was compiled by Bonze superior Ch’an Nguyen. This very recent discovery has not yet been brought widely to the attention of scholarly circles. If what it uncovers is truly so, people cannot help thinking with much surprise that a Bonze superior in the Buddhist Ch’an sect could have written a work in which it is mentioned that the King of Heaven conferred the title of Avalokitesvara on Dieu Thien.

It would be preferable to deal with the copy of “*Nam Hai Quan Am*“ which has had wide currency among the broad masses of the people and is usually known under the title “*Truyen Phat Ba Quan Am*“ (The story of the Goddess of Mercy) or “*Phat Ba Chua Huong*“ (The Goddess of the Perfume Pagoda). This story in verse comprises 1426 lines and divides into the following chapters:

An introductory chapter: Making known the story of princess Dieu Thien with the theme of filial piety and humaneness, and pointing out that the supernatural power of Buddhism is characterized by its one thousand eyes and one thousand hands (1st-10th lines).

The main story chapter: Depicting the life of Princess Dieu Thien, her determination to carry out both filial piety and humaneness and the completion of her wishes (11th-1394th lines). The summary account may be divided into the following parts:

(1) King Trang beseeching Buddha for a male heir at the Tay Nhac Buddhist temple (11th-62nd lines).

(2) The King of Heaven ordering the souls of the three sons of the Thi family to be reincarnated (63rd-120th lines).

(3) The Queen giving birth to three princesses (121st-174th).

(4) Differing from her two elder sisters, the third princess Dieu Thien showed a high devotion to Buddhism (175th-204th lines).

(5) When grown up, the two elder princesses were married to ill-natured Prince Consorts. So, Princess Dieu Thien made up her mind to lead a religious life, but the King did not agree with her wish and banished her from the royal palace to live in a garden. There she persisted in her intention to enter nunhood and refused to return to the royal palace, though earnestly entreated and even threatened (205th-420th lines).

(6) Princess Dieu Thien transferred to lead a religious life at the Bach Tuoc pagoda, thanks to her maids' stratagem. There also, she flatly turned down the offer to return to the palace; her obstinacy made the king feel much annoyed. Getting angry, he ordered the killing of Bonzes and nuns and the burning down of the pagoda (421st-542nd lines).

(7) The troops sent in to do the job ordered by the king could not fulfill their mission, -- as if they had been hindered by a magic power. This strange thing was reported to the king who ordered the troops to bring Dieu Thien back to the Court for execution. She was saved by a tiger, who carried her on his back into the jungle and made her pass out (543rd-598th lines). After Dieu Thien's soul visited the punishment section, i.e., hell, she came to her senses (599th-759th lines).

(8) Dieu Thien met Buddha Sakyamuni, who, after putting her to a test, authorized her to enter nunhood at the Huong Tich pagoda. There she reached the peak of the way in her religion and adopted Thien Tai and Long Nu as her disciples (760th-876th lines).

(9) King Trang caught a serious illness. Dieu Thien consented to sacrifice her arm and eye to cure her father's disease. The King recovered from his illness and knew that he had been saved by a fairy's magic power (877th-1094th lines).

(10) The King and the Queen went to the Buddhist temple to celebrate there a thanksgiving ceremony, but on their way to the place they met ghosts and demons. While at the court there happened a usurpation of power. Dieu Thien came to the rescue of her father, reestablishing order at the court and ensuring security for her family, not to mention her showing mercy to betrayers and wicked people (1095th-1358th lines).

(11) The King of Heaven conferred on Dieu Thien the title of Avalokitesvara, and her two elder sisters were awarded the title of Bodhisattva (1359th-1394th lines).

The concluding chapter: Reverting to the main theme praising Buddhism and advising people to lead a religious life. The content of “*Nam Hai Quan Am*” lays stress on the relation between man and man through the

theme of filial piety and humaneness. But the filial piety and humaneness must be understood within the Buddhist context. It finds expression in the following content: “Only when becoming Buddha, could people have means to save their country and protect their home. So there is no need to pay heed to one's particular filial piety. But dedication to the country is the best way to requite a favour”; or, “First gratitude must be shown to one's parents. Then all living creatures no matter they be good or bad should be freed from suffering and unhappiness.”

Prompted by filial piety and humaneness, Dieu Thien was determined to free herself from the degenerate Confucian morality which was not only binding her but also causing suffering to many people. In Buddhism, the moral principle which can free people from false beliefs or ignorance and help them to distinguish right from wrong and to take proper and effective action when the need arises, is the true value and legitimacy of their actions, as the “*Nam Hai Quan Am*” so beautifully says. Such is the guiding principle for intellectual cognition and merciful action. This finds expression in the following content: “Deities' supernatural powers, like having one thousand eyes and one thousand hands, come from their spiritual and intellectual cognition.” Therefore, although Dieu Thien lived an utterly peaceful life, she could be aware of the bad things happening in society and make up her mind to remove that falsely quiet life in order to replace it by a *genuinely* peaceful one for herself and for the population at large.

The chapter dealing with the main story describes Dieu Thien's life and her determination to realize her dream and this at the cost of many tests and trials which she finally could overcome, thereby attaining her will. This chapter is a brilliant condensation of the images and the mentality of the epoch, for example the scene of war and its destructions which took a heavy toll of human life, expressed in the following content: “In the course of military operations the lives of the common people were not even spared, no matter they proved to be either innocent or victims of injustice”; or the scene of greediness and cruelty expressed in the following rhythmic sentences:

Killing people for plundering property,
People whose decomposing corpses sent forth bad odour to the sky

or the act of holding in esteem males and slighting females:

Discontented with the birth of a daughter
the king furiously declared that she was completely worthless.

or the expression of contempt for the Buddhist clergy:

No child of mine would be permitted
To follow those ill- famed Bonzes.

The part relating Dieu Thien's soul going through the 18 punishment sections of the hell is reserved for denouncing bad action and crime of the epoch, of which the heaviest ones involve disloyalty:

Disloyal to heaven and earth, to deities,
to one's country and one's associates is the highest of crimes.

or "the destruction of human life":

Both are accused of committing adultery and
worse still they kill the foetus by means of abortion.

or practice of deceit of the population to extort money and property from them:

Inciting and deceiving the innocent people,
So as to extort from them personal belongings and real estate.

and many other things.

In the face of the dramatic situation in society, why should people fold their arms and take no action? Because they lack the will to act and are deprived of the sense of humaneness. Therefore the dream of mankind is to see no more crimes committed, and thus the scenes of punishment in the 18 sections of the hell ended forever.

The concluding chapters revert to the subject of advising people to strive for self-improvement, to follow the virtues of the Goddess of Mercy so as to bring welfare and happiness to society.

Nam Hai Quan Am is a story with a rather clear topic, and objective requirements. It contains many episodes with a series of events reflecting the particular traits of the epoch, and skillfully and logically incorporates the Buddhist morality into what was the contemporary man's way of thinking. In this work, the relation between man and man constitutes an idea on which reasoning is based, in order to give rise to good will. "*Nam Hai Quan Am*" bears a high combative spirit and hands over to the population a good method of action for achieving one's aim.

Generally speaking, the two works, as mentioned above, bear each of them a nuance of its own but both meet the popular mentality and ideology of the epoch thanks to the fact that they reflect the kind and virtuous character of Thi Kinh in "*Quan Am Thi Kinh*" and the undaunted spirit of fighting for what is right of Dieu Thien (in "*Nam Hai Quan Am*"); and both of these traits are inherent in the Vietnamese nation. Both "*Quan Am Thi Kinh*" and "*Nam Hai Quan Am*" make surely definite contributions to the national treasure of folk literature and ideological history.

THE RESTORATION OF THE TRUC LAM (BAMBOO FOREST) SECT TO ITS FORMER PROSPERITY IN THE NORTH*The Reason for the Restoration*

From the early 15th century to the middle of the 16th century under the Le dynasty Vietnam's Buddhism went through a period of serious decadence owing to the effect of various policies of the Le Kings in addition to the troubles inside Buddhist circles. The endless sufferings and hardships caused by the civil war between the Le and the Mac, and afterwards by the conflict between the Trinh and Nguyen had brought the people nearer to Buddhism which taught them that life was precarious, temporary and full of trials and tribulations and that the mind of peace was to be found only in the Buddhists' doctrine.

Buddhism regained its former prosperity both in the North and in the South where both the Trinh and the Nguyen lords showed much support and admiration for this religion. By so doing, they could draw the Buddhist believers onto their side. The activities of the Trinh Lords in the North centered around the construction and repair of pagodas and temples. In the fifteenth year of the Vinh Thinh era (1719) Lord Trinh Cuong ordered the restoration of the Phuc Long pagoda in Lang Ngam village, Gia Dinh district, which was built by the instructions of Lord Trinh Trang in the eighth year of the Phuc Thai era (1648). In the eighth year of Bao Thai era (1727) Lord Trinh Cuong gave orders for the building of the Thien Tay pagoda in Son Dinh village, Tam Duong district belonging to the region of Tam Dao mountain, and of the Doc Ton pagoda in Cat Ne village, Pho An district, Thai Nguyen province. In the second year of the Vinh Khanh era (1730), by order of Lord Trinh Giang, the work of restoring the Quynh Lam and the Sung Nghiem pagodas was started and completed in the same year. In the second year of the Vinh Huu era (1736), Lord Trinh Giang ordered the Ho Thien pagoda to be built on top of the mountain in Bao Loc district, Kinh Bac administrative division and the Huong Hai pagoda to be erected in Phu Ve village, Chi Linh district. It should be said that the pagodas ordered to be built and repaired usually lay in famous beauty spots destined for rest and recreation of the Lords themselves. In the third year of the Vinh Huu era (1737), Lord Trinh Giang for the first time ordered a big statue of Buddha to be built in Quynh Lam pagoda, and when the work was completed he gave instructions to the mandarins to hold ceremonies and religious services there in dedication to Buddha.

In the same Vinh Huu era (1735-1739), Bonze Tram Cong, obeying a royal ordinance, went on a mission to the Qing court. When arriving at the Dinh Ho mount, he visited Bonze superior Kim Quang, and from the latter he got many texts of the Buddhist scriptures to bring back to the Can An pagoda for safe deposit. It was known that after usurping the throne of the Tran, Ho Quy Ly sought by every means and way to annihilate the descendants of the Tran. Then the Ming court, taking

advantage of the critical situation in this country, sent its troops to invade Dai Viet under the banner of “wiping out the Ho in order to restore the Tran,” but in reality it attempted to occupy the land of Vietnam, destroy its culture and assimilate the nation. For that reason, so many classical works and historical books of the Vietnamese were seized and brought back to China for destruction. When Le Loi became King after driving away the Ming troops, he could search out Tran Cao, a descendant of the Tran, but instead of detaining him he had him put to death with a toxic substance and the King then sent his envoy to the Ming Court to demand investiture from the latter under the pretext that the descendants of the Tran no longer existed.

The Truc Lam sect instituted by the Tran Kings was also annihilated along with the Tran dynasty. The pillage of the people's property and destruction of the country's cultural values were really conducive to the removal of the vestiges left by the former dynasty. Therefore the Truc Lam sect rapidly disintegrated. In order to escape from danger, many Bonzes of the Truc Lam sect fled their pagodas to take refuge in the mountain regions south of Quang Tri and Thuan Hoa provinces or in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai. They secluded themselves from the world and led an unknown religious life in their hiding places. They kept secret their names and whereabouts until the reign of the Mac Kings (1527-1595) and the restored Le dynasty (1533-1588): among them should be cited several Bonze-superiors of the Truc Lam sect such as Chan Nghiem under the Mac dynasty, and Vien Canh and Vien Khoan whose origins remain so far unknown.

The restoration of the Truc Lam Chan sect reached its peak with the arrival of the great master Vien Van Chuyet Chuyet and his disciple Minh Hanh Tai Toai in the North and particularly with the presence of Bonze-superiors Minh Chau Huong Hai and Chinh Giac Chan Nguyen.

What is interesting in Vietnam's Buddhist history is that the Lam Te Ch'an sect was introduced into Vietnam from China by the Buddhist master Chuyet Chuyet and his disciple Minh Hanh, and afterwards that sect returned to the Vietnam Truc Lam tradition and completely lost its Chinese Lam Te tradition. Bonze superior Chan Nguyen was the very author of this change.

Typical Personalities

The Buddhist dignitaries typical of the period of restoration of Buddhism in the North include Chuyet Chuyet, Minh Hanh, Huong Hai and Chan Nguyen.

The Buddhist Dignitary Chuyet Chuyet

Bonze Chuyet Chuyet belonged to the Ly family line under the personal name Thien To and the religious name Hai Trung alias Vien Van.

He is usually called Bonze Chuyet Cong. He was born in 1590 in Qing Zhang administrative division, Fu Jian province in China. Since the time of childhood, he engaged in Confucian studies and when grown up, he left his home and became a Buddhist priest under the tutelage of Reverend Tiem Son. Afterwards he got an improved religious education with the assistance of the Buddhist monk Da Da in Nam Son. Da Da was a famous monk who was often invited by the Ming Emperor Shizong to come to the Imperial Palace to give advice on matters relating to the court and to impart information about the Buddhist doctrine. For that reason, the emperor conferred on him the honorary title of Great Master Khuong Quoc.

After completing his Buddhist studies with the assistance of monk Da Da, Chuyet Chuyet traveled in every quarter of China for the purpose of educating the people in Buddhist doctrine. In 1630, after the Qing had defeated the Ming and taken power in China, Chuyet Chuyet and some of his disciples left China for Vietnam by boat. Among Chuyet Chuyet's disciples, the monk Minh Hanh was the most outstanding. Chuyet Chuyet and his disciples landed at Chan Lap, a territory lying in the Dong Nai river delta, i.e. the actual Bien Hoa area. Then all of them left Chan Lap for Champa and resided in the Southern part of Vietnam.

The time of their residence in the southern part of the country is not now known, nor all the places where they stayed to preach religion. It is only known that when they came to the north, they stopped to preach religion at the Thien Tuong pagoda in Nghe An and at the Trach Lam pagoda in Thanh Hoa. In 1633, monk Chuyet Chuyet and his close disciples arrived in Thang Long capital city and resided at the Khan Son pagoda. They brought with them a number of prayer books and Buddhist sutras. Chuyet Chuyet and his disciples began their preaching of Buddhism at Khan Son pagoda. Many people, including the Vietnamese and the Chinese, attended lectures given by those eminent Bonzes. After a period of time, they moved to the Phat Tich pagoda, in Tieu Du district, Bac Ninh province. During their stay at that pagoda to accomplish their religious activities, lord Trinh Trang, who held at that time the supreme power in the north, greatly admired Chuyet Chuyet and raised him to the position of Master. Monk Chuyet Chuyet won high admiration and great esteem from the King Le Huyen Ton and the lord Trinh Trang, to say nothing about the deep respect from the mandarins. Indeed, a number of those mandarins expressed their belief in Chuyet Chuyet's preaching of Buddhism and undertook to practice it at home.

It should be mentioned here that Chuyet Chuyet had two eminent disciples, namely Minh Hanh Tai Toai, a Chinese national and Minh Luong, a Vietnamese. Monk Minh Luong then handed down his Buddhist ideology to Chan Nguyen, who in turn transmitted it to Nhu Trung Lan Giac. The latter became the founder of the Lien Tong Chan sect in the north, which was said to be the posterior personification of the resuscitated Ch'an sect of Truc Lam in the north.

The Buddhist Dignitary Minh Hanh Tai Toai

He was a native of Jianchang district, Jiangxi province in China. He was known to be the best disciple of Chuyet Chuyet and was selected by the latter for the mission to Vietnam. He stayed during a certain time to preach the Buddhist religion in Binh Dinh and Thuan Hoa in the south, and then proceeded to the north. He resided at the Nhan Thap pagoda and left the following lines of prayers to the Ch'an sect of Lam Te in the north:

The Truth illuminates all over horizons
 Like a vast ocean,
 To the enlightenment for those who wish
 To attain the meaning of Nothingness.

These lines of prayers were the genealogical records handed down by the Ch'an sect of the Buddhist dignitary Chuyet Chuyet to his disciples and not a composition by Minh Hanh himself. After that, Minh Luong and Minh Chau also handed down those lines of prayers to their followers. That would bring to light the relationship between the Lam Te sect and its Truc Lam counterpart, and from that connection, one might think that the Lam Te sect was the very Truc Lam sect which had concealed its name for the purpose of avoiding political complications. This was revealed only in the time of monk Huong Hai and monk Chan Nguyen.

According to the poem, we can compare the transmission of Truc Lam and Lam Te as follows:

Truc Lam sect: - Vien Canh to Minh Chau, and then to Chan Ly.
 Lam Te sect: - Vien Van to Minh Hanh, then to Chan Tru.
 - Vien Van to Minh Luong, then to Chan Nguyen.

The Buddhist Dignitary Huong Hai

The Buddhist priest Huong Hai came from a highly influential family whose ancestors had been permanently living in Ang Do village, Chan Phuc district. His ancestor five generations before him had been the general manager of craft builders for the Le court. He had had only two sons. The elder one appointed by the King as manager of a state workshop with 300 workers got the title of Duke. The younger one, a deputy-manager of that state workshop, got the title of Marquis. This one had been the ancestor by four generations before Huong Hai. During Chinh Tri era (1558-1571) of the reign of King Le Anh Ton, the Marquis followed the Duke Nguyen Hoang on a mission to defend and guard the territory of Quang Nam. He won the confidence of the latter, who promoted him to the rank of Chanh cai (general manager) whose task was to look after and supervise the work of craft builders. This is the brief account of the ancestors of monk Huong Hai. As for himself, he lived in Binh An village,

Thang Hoa administrative division. He was renowned for his cleverness and intelligence since the time of childhood. At the age of 18, he graduated as bachelor of letters and was appointed official in charge of literary works at the palace of the Lord Nguyen Phuc Lan (1635-1648). At the age of 25 (in the year 1652), he was nominated to the post of district chief of Trieu Phong administrative division. It should be said that Huong Hai greatly admired Buddhism. He engaged in Buddhist studies under the guidance of Bonze Vien Canh in Luc Ho and was given the religious name Huong Hai Minh Chau. Afterwards he continued his Buddhist studies with the assistance of Bonze Vien Khoan in Quang Tri province.

After working as a mandarin for three years, Huong Hai resigned his office in order to lead a religious life. Together with some disciples, he went by boat to the Southern Sea and landed at a small off-shore island where all of them joined forces in building a small pagoda on top of the Tiem But La mount, in order to enter the monkhood. But only eight months later, they moved to the Dai Lanh island in the Ngoc Long sea area to practice their religion. Many talks and stories about ghosts and demons and the monks' magic power were recounted by the population during the time of his residence on this island. He enjoyed a good name and won much confidence and admiration from the people in the country.

The Duke Thuan in charge of the defense of the Quang Nam citadel had a wife seriously taken ill for a rather long time. Hearing the good name of the monk, the duke sent his men to the island to earnestly invite him to come to his building to cure his wife's disease. Monk Huong Hai set up an altar where he said prayers, praying and meditating for seven days and nights on end, and finally the duke's wife completely recovered from her illness. Then the whole family put their faith in his supernatural power and were finally initiated into Buddhism.

More than half a year later the Marquis Hoa Le, who served at the Nguyen Lord's palace in Quang Nam was infected with tuberculosis which then continued on for three years. Hearing the reputation of the monk, he sent his men to go by boat to the island on which resided the famous monk to invite the latter to come to his home to cure the disease. Huong Hai set up the altar named Great Repentance where he carried out religious services for seven days and nights on end. The Marquis Hoa Le was completely cured of his tubercular infection. Then, he came to Thuan Hoa to do his job-assignment. There he recounted his misfortune and experience to Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan (1648-1687), who showed much admiration for the monk and sent an envoy to the island to request him to return to the mainland and reside somewhere around the Lord's palace in Phu Xuan. Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan ordered the mandarins to build right away Thien Tinh Vien (the Institute for Dhyana study) on the Quy Kinh mount and requested the Buddhist priest Huong Hai to reside there. The first lady of the principality (the wife of Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan) and her three princes named Phuc My, Hiep Duc and Phuc To together with many mandarins and generals at the

lord's palace came to the Institute to be initiated into Buddhism, where the number of those initiated reached as many as 1300 persons.

The Buddhist priest Huong Hai led his religious activities at the Dhyana Institute for a certain period of time when an incident occurred. At that time, there was the Duke Gia, a mandarin in charge of eunuchs, who was native of Thuy Bai village, Gia Dinh district in the North. He followed the army of the Trinh Lord in military operations against the troops of the Nguyen Lord in the South. He was captured by Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan and was pardoned by him. Afterwards, he was entrusted with the teaching work at the palace of the Nguyen Lord. This man came very often to the Dhyana institute to attend lectures given by monk Huong Hai. Some people reported to the Nguyen Lord that the monk and the Northern mandarin had been scheming to flee the South for the North. The lord ordered the case to be investigated but no evidence was made available to convict the men of attempting to escape from the South, so the Lord instructed the monk to return to Quang Nam to continue his religious activities.

In the face of such a situation Huong Hai made up his mind to preach his religion in the North. In the third month of the year Nham Tuat (1682), Huong Hai and his 50 disciples used a boat to go by sea to the North. Landing at the coast of Nghe An, he requested an audience with the governor Trinh Na of the Nghe An administrative division. The latter immediately reported the case back to the royal court in the North. Lord Trinh Tac sent the duke Duong to come to Nghe An to invite the monk and his disciples to Dong Do (the then capital of the Kingdom in the North). The Lord ordered the Duke Nhuong and the magistrate Le Hi to institute inquiries into the life story of the monk, with an identification by the inhabitants of the monk's native village. After having full knowledge of him, Lord Trinh Tac summoned the monk to the royal court. After some formal inquiries about his state of health and his actual situation, the lord conferred on the monk the title of "Vu su" and gave him a reward of the order of 300 strings of coins. He also gave instructions to the court treasurer to annually allocate to the monk 24 baskets of paddy, 36 strings of coins and a roll of white cloth. His disciples also received allocations. Lord Trinh Tac did not fail to ask the monk to draw the maps of the two regions of Thuan and Quang which the latter made with a rather good skin and in great details. The monk received as reward for this service 20 more strings of coins. In the eighth lunar month of that year, the Trinh lord gave order to temporarily accommodate the monk and his disciples in the public building of the Son Tay administrative division. After an 8-month stay there, all of them were transferred, by ordinance of Lord Trinh Can in 1686, to permanently reside in Son Nam administrative division. There, they got a pagoda for doing religious services built by the governor Le Dinh Kien according to the Lord's directions and still received 3 acres of public land for cultivation to cover religious expenses. At that time, the monk was aged 56. He was renowned for his strict adherence to the Buddhist commandments and for his high religious qualifications. He undertook to

translate as many as 30 volumes of sutras into Nom (Vietnamese demotic script), to say nothing of the printing of these works for distribution and circulation among the Buddhists.

In the year Canh Thin (1700), the monk Huong Hai came to reside at the Nguyet Duong pagoda with more than 70 disciples following his course of Buddhist study. All of them were finally proficient in Buddhist doctrine. Nguyet Duong later on underwent proper repairs to become a big and well decorated pagoda. Here, the monk educated his believers in how to further promote the Buddhist religion and thus restored the Truc Lam Ch'an sect.

In the reign of King Le Du Ton (1705-1729), the monk was summoned to the imperial palace to beseech Buddha to give to the King a male heir. At that time the monk reached the age of 78. One day, King Le Du Ton asked the monk: "I've heard that your reverend is a man of great learning, I would like you to help me to understand the law of Buddha and his doctrine." The monk said:

"I've only four sentences, please listen with an earnest will to the following:

Everyday you must carefully examine your conscience
and not gain knowledge vaguely as if you were dreaming.
By so doing, the future of yours
will be the manifestation of your actual doings."

The King put him another question: "What is the Buddha's thought like?" The monk answered: "Like the shadow of a swallow flying across the sky whose image is mirrored in the still water. No vestige of that swallow is left behind and the still water does not retain the bird's image either."

In the sixth month of the year Giap Ngo under the Vinh Thinh era (1714), the monk already reached the age of 87. Lord Trinh Cuong (1709-1729), on an inspection tour in various localities, dropped by to see him and donated 1,000 strings of coins to the pagoda at which the monk resided. At that time, the monk boasted a lot of disciples. He had to keep a register containing an official record of their religious names and could select among them more than 70 of the best followers.

In the morning of the thirteenth day of the fifth lunar month of the year At Mui (1715) in the reign of King Le Du Ton under the 11th year of Vinh Thinh era, the monk, after taking a bath, died at the age of 88 while chanting his prayers. In his lifetime he wrote the following works:

Giai Phap Hoa Kinh, 1 collection
Giai Kim Cang Kinh Ly Nghia, 2 books
Giai Sa Di Gioi Luat
Giai Phat To Tam Kinh, 3 books
Giai Di Da Kinh, 1 book

Giai Vo Luong Tho Kinh, 1 book
Giai Dia Tang Kinh, 3 books
Giai Tam Kinh Dai Dien, 1 book
Giai Tam Kinh Ngu Chi
Giai Tam Chau Nhat Quan, 1 book
Giai Chan Tam Truc Thuyet
Giai Phap Bao Kinh, 6 books
Giai Pho Khuyen Tu Hanh
Giai Bang Dieu Nhat Thien
Soan Co Duyen Van Dap Giai
Soan Ly Su Dung Thong
Soan Quan Vo Luong Tho Kinh Quoc Ngu
Soan Cung Phat Tam Khoa Cat
Soan Cung Duoc Su Nhat Khoa
*Soan Cung Cuu Pham Nhat Khoa*¹

The Ch'an thinking of monk Huong Hai might be clearly recognized through the following analyses. First of all, monk Huong Hai had been a disciple of the Buddhist dignitaries Vien Canh and Vien Khoan whose identity and whereabouts could not be clearly known. They might be Buddhist dignitaries of the Truc Lam Chan sect secluding themselves from the world. And if that was the case, the sect to which monk Huong Hai belonged ought to be the Truc Lam sect, that is to say the sect which summed up the three elements of Chan, Amidism and Tantrism. This found a clearer expression in the time of Huong Hai's sojourn on Tiem But La island. As recounted by the population there, monk Huong Hai used his magic power to exorcise demons and ghosts, he cured Duke Thuan's wife from disease and erected an altar of repentance to cure the Marquis Hoa Le of his illness, etc....The place where Huong Hai led his religious life was on the Quy Kinh mount in a monastery called the Dhyana institute and Huong Hai moved afterward to the Son Nam administrative division where he erected the Chuan De altar to make offerings to Buddha. His method of worshipping as such could never be found in the Ch'an sects in China or in Japan. This was a characteristic of the Truc Lam sect, no doubt a product of Vietnam's religious thought and behaviors.

Besides the elements of Amidism and Tantrism, the Ch'an thinking of monk Huong Hai originated from the thinking of Bonze superior Hui Neng which was derived from the thought contained in the *Sutra of Kim Cang Bat Nha* and that of *Phap Bao Dan*. Besides, monk Huong Hai still bore in his mind the thought that Confucianism and Buddhism had the same origin. In his leisure time, Huong Hai very often recited the two following lines of poetry:

The three religions have been considered as of the same origin,
So there should be no partiality towards either of them.

or:

We see the vineyard vast and extensive when entering into it,
But it would yield in immensity to the Buddhist ocean in our heart.

Through these two poems, Huong Hai did not forget that he had been a Confucian-turned-Buddhist, or, in other words, there still existed in him the personality of a Confucian. “Three religions having the same origin,” as uttered by the Buddhist dignitary Huong Hai, would make people question whether he had some misunderstanding about the ideological content of each religion or he really meant it because Buddhism at its stage of restoration was rather weak and intended to seek alliance with Confucianism, and at the same time, the latter wanted to have a prop to rely on when it was then exposed to critical circumstances.

However, in the final analysis Huong Hai remained a Buddhist dignitary, and to be more precise, together with the Buddhist dignitary Chan Nguyen he was a co-founder of the Ch’an sect of Truc Lam, a product of Vietnam's Buddhology, which was dying out and he was undertaking to restore it to its former prosperity.

The Buddhist Dignitary Chan Nguyen

The Buddhist dignitary Chan Nguyen was of the Nguyen family line. His name is Nghiem, alias Binh Lam. Born in 1647 he was a native of Tien Liet village, Thanh Ha district, Hai Duong province. Since childhood, he had wholeheartedly engaged in studying for a degree in literature. At the age of 19, when reading the life story of Bonze superior Huyen Quang, he found the following words: “The ancient scholars, though having resounding fame, finally became weary with their life as high dignitaries and tendered their resignation; why do poor learners still strive their best to go in that direction [toward fame],” and then he made up his mind to leave home to enter the monkhood.

First of all, he came to the Hoa Yen pagoda at which he resided to lead his religious life under the tutelage of the Bonze superior named Chan Tru Tue Nguyet who gave him the religious name of Tue Thong. As the Bonze superior died rather early, Chan Nguyen was obliged to come to the Con Cuong mount located at Phu Lang village to follow the Bonze superior Minh Luong at the Vinh Phuc pagoda to train for the monkhood. When reaching the peak of the way of Buddhism, he was renamed Chan Nguyen by his master. In the subsequent year, he erected a tower named Dieu Phap Lien Hoa and placed in it the statues of Sakyamuni, Amitabha and Maitreya for religious worship. On this occasion, he burned off two of his fingers as a token of embracing Bodhisattvic life. In 1648, he erected another tower named Cuu Pham Lien Hoa at the Quynh Lam pagoda. In 1692 King Le Hi Ton bestowed on him the honorary title of the Duke Vo Thuong. In 1722, King Le Du Ton promoted him to the rank of leader of the Buddhist clergy and conferred on him the honorary title of Bonze Superior Chinh Giac. He died in 1726 at the age of 80.

Chan Nguyen was born and grew up between 1647 and 1726 at the time when the motherland was the scene of fierce struggles between feudalist forces. He, who was then an intelligent and fervent youth, could not be without being deeply impressed by the sufferings of the population. When the Buddhist dignitary Huong Hai had been successful in getting both position and fame in life and afterwards made up his mind to resign in order to enter the monkhood, Chan Nguyen was only a young student of the Confucianism school and perplexed by the choice of the ideal he would pursue for all his life. That is why, people found in Huong Hai something stable in his mind, and in Chan Nguyen a state of constant worry and perplexity which remained his lot for the whole of his life. Chan Nguyen's state of mind was expressed in some verses with the main meaning: it was with tears in the eyes that I questioned myself whether to lead a religious life or to work for the interests of the people.

Starting from the same objective juncture, the case of Huong Hai was that of a Confucian scholar who having been successful in both position and fame, found himself not satisfied with his wishes when facing the real situation of his position and that of the country as a whole, so he was determined to devote his time and energy to the study of the Buddhist doctrine, so as to find out the truth, the reason for his existence and for that of his fellow-creatures. The works compiled by Huong Hai touched upon the most essential sutras of the Dhyana sect such as the *Phap Bao Dan*, the Tam Kinh and the most classical books of Buddhist education such as the *Phap Hoa (Lotus) sutra*, *Quan Vo Luong Tho*, etc.

As for Chan Nguyen, the decision to enter monkhood still remained a matter of perplexity and seemed to be not in full agreement with the mentality of this intelligent and fervent man. He was compelled to face the alternative of either entering monkhood or remaining in the worldly life, both of which options were both highly esteemed by himself. It was for this reason that Chan Nguyen's spiritual life seemed to be more agitated and lively than the routine religious life. The works written by Chan Nguyen (either confirmed or not) are the following:

- *Ton Su Phat Sach Dang Dan Thu Gioi*
- *Nghenh Su Duyet Dinh Khoa*
- *Long Thu Tinh Vo Van Tu*
- *Long Thu Tinh Do Luan Bat Hau Tu*
- *Tinh Do Yeu Nghia*
- *Ngo Dao Nhan Duyen*
- *Thien Tich Phu(?)*
- *Thien Ton Ban Hanh*
- *Nam Hai Quan Am Ban Hanh(?)*
- *Dat Na Thai Tu Hanh*
- *Hong Mong Hanh²*

Chan Nguyen's works took on an offensive and epochal character instead of a universal one, a social character instead of a religious one. In the story of "Nam Hai Quan Am" (*The Goddess of Southern Sea*) written by Chan Nguyen, one would hardly imagine a founder of the Ch'an sect such as himself saying that the God of Heaven had honoured Dieu Thien with the Buddhist title of Goddess of mercy! Should the above said work have been really written by Chan Nguyen himself it would have been regarded as written by a Confucian scholar under the cloak of Buddhism and not by a founder of a religious sect for the reason that a man could not be at the same time a scientist and a magician. In order to know better about Chan Nguyen's personality, more insight should be gained into this man. Apart from the literary works bearing a contemporary character there can be found in Chan Nguyen's work entitled *Hong Mong Hanh* a lot of erroneous concepts said to be derived from Buddhism which not only have no profound value in terms of thinking but also have caused much damage to the purity of the Buddhist philosophy!

Another work of his entitled *Ton Su Phat Sach Dang Dan Thu Gioi* speaks of the significance and the method of accepting Buddhist discipline. At that time, many other Bonze-superiors such as Nguyen Thieu, Lieu Quan, and Thach Liem had vigorously campaigned for abstinence from holding platforms for rituals in order to put right the state of degeneration among the Buddhist clergy and to restore and develop Buddhism. Therefore, in his work *Ton Su Phat Sach Dang Dan Thu Gioi* Chan Nguyen did not mean to ensure the purity of the Buddhist discipline of abstinence. He did not mention the rules for Buddhist clergy which were then an important discipline for those who left their home to enter monkhood. He could not in any way confuse the abstinence from sexual relations by those who lead their religious life at home and the abstinence from lust to be observed by the monks themselves. If this were not a confusion made by Chan Nguyen, he would be considered to be a monk unclear in his Buddhist behaviors and rather loose in his compliance with the Buddhist discipline of abstinence. What about the truth then? This is a point which demands that we excavate facts from books and other sources in order to gain knowledge of the real state of mind of this Bonze superior.

It could perhaps be interpreted that Chan Nguyen and his contemporary monks sought to apply the Buddhist discipline in a way most suitable to the real social situation of Vietnam at the time. Anyhow, in reality Chan Nguyen remained as he was, a Buddhist dignitary: he was the founder who undertook the restoration of the Truc Lam sect and succeeded in training such fervent disciples as Nhu Hien, Nhu Son, and Nhu Trung who continued the Ch'an tradition, perpetuating it in time and space. Nhu Trung, one of Chan Nguyen's outstanding disciples, left to posterity a number of works such as *Ngũ Gioi Quoc Am*, *Thập Gioi Quoc Am*, *Phat Tam Luan*, *Kien Dan Giai Ue Nghi* and *Man Tan Ta Qua Nghi*. He was also the originator of the Lien Tong Chan sect in the North.

THE LAM TE CHAN SECT AND THE RESTORATION OF BUDDHISM IN THE SOUTH*The Lam Te Chan Sect*

Great master Bodhidharma was the 13th son of the King of the so-called in Vietnamese Huong Chi country located in the southern part of India. Pessimistic about the decadence of the Kingdom in both politics and legislation, this prince left his homeland, crossed the sea and landed at the southern region of the province of Guangdong in China, thus bringing his form of Buddhism into that country in the year 470 A.D. Great master Bodhidharma preached religion to the second ancestor named Hui Ke, then to the third one named Zeng Can, who together with his only disciple went throughout the country to preach the Buddhist doctrine among the population. Both did not stay in any definite area and never slept twice in one place. For that reason the three first ancestors of Bodhidharma's Buddhism could not create a major influence upon the mind of the population. Then came the fourth ancestor named Huang Ren, the latter moving his headquarters to the Zhifeng mountain, Huang Mei district, Shaozhou province, now Hubei province. In the course of sixty years of dissemination of the Buddhist doctrine, he gathered around him more than 500 disciples. From that time, Buddhism in China took on a new face. When there were a large number of persons leading their religious life for a rather long time at a fixed place, it would be quite natural that they could not only enter into meditation but also had to make arrangements for the cooking of meals, the cleaning of the Buddhist temple and other premises and the growing of vegetables and food crops for their living. In order to make those jobs having the same value as sitting for meditation, all the things should be made with the mind and heart totally devoted to Buddha: thereby meditation could be gradually oriented toward the spiritual field and give strength to the daily work.

Thus, the Buddhist doctrine was not only centered in the pagoda, among the Buddhist clergy but it spread outside and played the role as an agitator in society. The Buddhist doctrine taught the believers that they should not be influenced by sacred books and that they must turn them into their persistent energy and vigor. They should not understand the sacred books by obeying to the letter of the writings but they had to apply in a lively manner their general meaning to the life's activities.

The fifth ancestor Huang Ren had about 700 disciples; among them the most outstanding ones were Shenxiu and Hui Neng. The latter reached the peak of the way and became the sixth ancestor of Buddhism. He advocated the line that all the people without exception had the natural quality of comprehension of Buddha's spirit and that intellectual awareness and religious meditation were a unified aspect inherent in them.

Hui Neng had 50 disciples; among them Nanyue Huairang and Qingyuan Xingsi were two outstanding ones. The former in his turn had

Ma Daoyi as his eminent disciple and the latter was proud of having Shitou Xishuan as his principal follower. From the Buddhist system headed by Ma Daoyi derived two lines of descent, namely Lam Te (Lin Ji) and Quy Nguong (Guiyang). From the Buddhist system headed by Shitou Xishuan derived three lines of descent, namely Tao Dong (Cao Dong), Yun Men and Fa Yan. Among those five Buddhist lines of descent, there are only the Lam Te and Tao Dong lines which have strongly developed and exist up to the present.

The originator of the Lam Te Chan sect was Lam Te Nghia Huyen (who died in 867). He came of the Jing family line and lived in Dong Ming district, Zhili province in China. Since the time of childhood, he was known to behave in a serious and dignified manner. When grown up, he was famous for his filial piety toward his parents. Later on, he left his family's house to enter monkhood. He specialized in the study of the Buddhist discipline of abstinence and became a man of great learning about the Buddhist sutras and other prayer-books. First of all, Lam Te began his Buddhist study under the guidance of Bonze superior Huang Bai for three years, which helped him get into the good graces of the Buddhist leader Chen Muzhou who praised him for his great assiduity in his studies and his excellent behaviors. Then he came to receive Buddhist instructions from the Bonze superior Gao An Da Yu who transmitted to him the doctrine "Hoat co luan" and advised him to return to the Bonze superior Huang Bai for furthering his knowledge of the Buddhist law and doctrine. Through many years of meditation under the guidance of his master, he found that he was mature enough in the religion. Lam Te then moved his headquarters to the south-eastern side of Zhoucheng administrative division where he established a small society called the Lam Te institute which was later on expanded and became a new religious sect in Hebei province. Because of successive revolts by the peasants and subsequent military operations for their suppression, Lam Te was obliged to move again to Henan province where, at the invitation of the Lord Wang Changshi, he came to reside at the Xinghua pagoda. Without any illness, Lam Te died in a sitting position at his pagoda. That was in the eighth year of the Han Tong era (867 A.D.). Emperor Yizong conferred on him the posthumous title of Bonze superior Suizhao. His disciples numbered 22 in all and among them Sancheng Suiran, Baoshou Yanzhao, Weifu Dajue, and Xinghua Cunxiang were the most outstanding.

The basic idea of Lam Te was similar to that of Huang Bai, that is to say both of them advocated the viewpoint, "all living creatures and Buddhas are actually one." All living creatures and Buddhas are not two separate things. What is important in them is the unintentional [uncalculated] and unoccupied character. The methods which the learners received from Lam Te have been still handed down to the present day. His disciple Suiran collected the teachings of Lam Te and arranged them in a list called "*Lam Te Luc*." The Lam Te Chan sect has been very thriving ideologically and embraced many of the Buddhist clergy in China.

Influence of the Lam Te Chan sect in the South of Vietnam

In the latter half of the seventeenth century when the Manchu Qing dynasty reigned over China in replacement of the Ming dynasty, many Chinese who showed no allegiance to the Qing Emperor fled the country and came to live in Vietnam as Chinese nationals. Among those Chinese emigrants, there were also Buddhist priests. The Lord Nguyen in the South did not miss this opportunity to win the support of the masses for his power. By this intention of: the Lord Nguyen, the Lam Te Chan sect was smoothly introduced into the southern part of the country of which the originator was the Buddhist priest Nguyen Thieu.

This Buddhist dignitary came of the Ta family line. His real name was Hoan Bich. He was native of Zhengxiang district, Chaozhou region, Guang Dong province in China. He was born in the lunar year of Mau Ti (1648): At the age of 19, he left his house to enter monkhood, residing then at the Bao Tu pagoda under the guidance of Bonze superior Bon Khao Khoang Vien. He proved to be very diligent in his learning of the Buddhist doctrine and very serious in his way of thought and behaviour.

He was said to have crossed the sea onboard a Chinese merchant boat to reach the Quy Ninh district in Binh Dinh province where he raised funds to build the Thap Thap Di Da pagoda; then he proceeded to Thuan Hoa province where he established the Ha Trung pagoda in Phu Loc district; and finally he moved up to Xuan Kinh in Hue imperial city, where he constructed the Quoc An pagoda and erected the Pho Dong tower. According to the inscriptions sculpted into the stele of the tower, the Buddhist priest was said to have lived in Vietnam for 51 years and died in the Mau Than lunar year (1728). So, he would have arrived in Vietnam in 1677 and not in the At Ti lunar year (1665) as indicated in some historical documents.

In the inscriptions on the stelae, he wrote the following sentences to eulogize the Buddhist thought and behaviour and its morality:

The light of His innermost feelings has been radiating far and wide. His teachings have contained complete notes and related quotations. In the dissertation on the Buddhist doctrine He touched upon the most delicate matters. He carefully recorded all that He had heard from his Master's instructions. He prevented erroneous interpretations of religious tenets and advocated only the truth. He was the originator who set a bright example for the posterity to follow. He trained a complete contingent of disciples whole-heartedly devoted to the cause of human beings.

On the 19th of the tenth lunar month of the year Mau Than, that is the 20th November, 1728, the Bonze fell seriously ill. He summoned all his disciples together in the pagoda and wrote a versified text before dying. The

gist of the text is: The virtuous life of the Buddhist is like the transparency of the mirror. It does not leave behind any impurity like a brilliant pearl without any flaw. Although all things have their errors and defects, they are not real and non-existent. As to the solitary religious life, it is so but not as empty as one would think.

After finishing his versified text, the Bonze died in a sitting position with his hand open before his breast as if he prayed under his breath to Buddha. He was the ancestor of the thirty-third generation of the Chinese Lam Te Ch'an sect and the first originator of the Lam Te Ch'an sect introduced into the South of Vietnam.

The Bonze superior Nguyen Thieu still had a religious name of Sieu Bach. The Bonze Van Phong (21st generation of Lam Te sect) at Thien Dong pagoda wrote a litany:

The dissemination of this doctrine
Is aimed to help everyone live empty-mindedness
In which realities truly exist
And one is aware of the untrue.

and the Bonze Dao Man (31st generation) at Thien Khai pagoda, another litany:

The essence of this Truth began with Buddha
Like the sun shining through the skies
So does the sacred continue to nurture compassion
That is the notion of space and time.

Among the successors of Nguyen Thieu at Thap Thap and Quoc An pagodas, all bore religious titles containing the words Minh or Thanh. Hence we can guess that Nguyen Thieu was the disciple of both Bonze Van Phong (and was given the name Sieu Bach, as we have seen this word "sieu" in the third line of Van Phong's litany) and Bonze Dao Man (and was given the name Nguyen Thieu as we have seen this word "nguyen" in the first line of Dao Man's litany). And to keep the continuity of the litanies, Nguyen Thieu gave his disciples in Quoc An pagoda (Hue) the word Thanh (from Dao Man's litany) and the word Minh (from Van Phong's litany) for those in Thap Thap pagoda (Binh Dinh).

Bonze Lieu Quan, who was a famous Buddhist priest of the Lam Te sect, was considered to be a personality ranking second after the Bonze superior Nguyen Thieu. He came of the Le family line; Thiet Dieu was his tabooed name. He was a native of Bach Ma village, Dong Xuan district, Phu Yen region, and born on the 18th of the eleventh lunar month of Dinh Mui year (1667). His mother died early when he was only six years old. Acting upon his son's personal wishes, his father sent him to the Hoi Ton pagoda where he received religious instructions from the Buddhist monk Te Vien (a Chinese national in Vietnam). Seven years later, this monk passed

away. Then Lieu Quan moved to Hue imperial city and entered monkhood at the Bao Quoc pagoda under the direction of the Great Master Giac Phong (a Chinese national in Vietnam).

In the year Tan Mui (1691), after acting as a novice in a Buddhist temple for one year, he had to return to his native village to care for his old and decrepit parents. His family being in straightened circumstances, he had to go about the woodlands to gather dry twigs as firewood to sell at the market in order to make a living and to buy medicine when his father or mother fell sick. The latter passed away four years later. It was in the year At Hoi (1695) that he returned to the Buddhist temple to continue his religious life and receive instructions in Buddhist doctrine from the Bonze superior Thach Liem (a Chinese national in Vietnam) and successfully passed the Buddhist monk examination that year. In the year Dinh Suu (1697), he took the vows of Buddhism and became a disciple of the Bonze superior Tu Lam (a Chinese national in Vietnam). In the year Ky Mao (1699) he went to visit pagodas and temples in many villages, and after that he made up his mind to completely devote himself to the religious cause. He secluded himself from the outside by sitting in deep meditation at his pagoda with the aim of becoming perfect. In the year Nham Ngo (1702) he came to Long Son mount to receive more instructions in Buddhist law and doctrine from the Bonze superior Tu Dung (a Chinese national) who was a renowned Buddhist scholar at that time.

Before accepting this man's request, Tu Dung put him to many tests of knowledge and asked him to explain the following sentence: "All the 'dharma' converge on one, and on what would this one converge?" The monk felt much disappointed and could not find an answer to this question even after 8, 9 years of strenuous efforts. One day, when reading a book entitled *Truyen Dang Luc*, his attention was caught by the sentence "man never knows about what is transmitted from heart to heart," but because of the distance separating him from his master, he could not present his thought to him. In the year Mau Ti (1708) he came to Long Son to present to his master what he discovered from the above sentence, the Bonze superior Tu Dung still made him explain another sentence: "Letting oneself fall down from a height by letting loose one's hand is a matter for which one is held responsible, so one should recover one's senses and come to life again if he does not want to be scoffed at by other people." He clapped his hands as an expression of his understanding of what his master had said. Both master and disciple exchanged many other parallel sentences with the one putting forward the first sentence and the other compiling the second one. The Bonze superior came to know all the better the high level of knowledge of his disciple and found a great admiration for him.

In the year Nham Dan (1722), Bonze Lieu Quan returned to Hue city where he attended four great Buddhist ceremonies organized by the mandarin establishment and the Buddhist believers respectively in the years Quy Suu (1733), Giap Dan (1734) and At Mao (1735). In the year Canh Than (1710), he attended the "Long hoa phong gioi" religious ceremony

and then afterwards returned to reside at his former pagoda. The Lord Hieu Minh Vuong, when gaining knowledge of his virtues and high religious faith, summoned him to his palace and asked him to stay there to preach religion but he declined the lord's offer because he would like to enjoy complete freedom to do as he wished. In the spring of the year Nham Tuat (1742) Lieu Quan came back again to Hue city to attend the great Buddhist ceremony held at the Vien Thong pagoda. In the fall of that lunar year (1742), he fell seriously ill and summoned his disciples to gather in the pagoda saying that he was about to depart from this life and advising them to keep up their religious tradition and faith. In the eleventh lunar month of the year, before leaving this world to enter into Nirvana, he sat up and wrote a farewell versified text as follows:

Living to the age beyond 70
I've been troubled by nothing in life;
today I'm departing from this world with full satisfaction.
So there is no question of asking ancestors for the reason why.

On the twenty second day of the eleventh month of the year Nham Tuat, i.e. in December 1742, the Bonze superior breathed his last after drinking his morning tea. The Nguyen Lord conferred on him the posthumous title of Chinh Giac Vien Ngo.

Lieu Quan was the Buddhist priest of the 35th generation of the Lam Te Chan sect. He opened the Thien Ton pagoda in Hue. Nowadays, the Buddhist clergy and believers from Hue city down to the southern provinces mostly belong to the Lam Te sect whose originator was Lieu Quan, and this has given rise to a big religious branch called the Lieu Quan school.

THE TAO DONG CH'AN SECT AND THE RENAISSANCE OF BUDDHISM IN THE SOUTH

The Tao Dong Chan Sect

In China this Ch'an sect had been handed down by the Great Master Shitou to his disciple named Yaoshan Weiyan. The latter transmitted it to his follower named Yunyan Tancheng whose only disciple named Dongshan Liangjie inherited this Ch'an sect. In his times, Dongshan Liangjie went into the Sunfeng mountains where he preached religion with a view to bringing it to the knowledge of the inhabitants there; then he came to the Dongshan area in Junzhou administrative division to give lectures on the Ch'an doctrine in order to instill further knowledge into the Buddhist believers. Usually several hundred people attended each lecture given by him. His devoted disciple named Caoshan Benji continued to preach Buddhism at the Jishui mount in Fuzhou administrative division, then he renamed it Caoshan mount. The Ch'an sect won much sympathy and

approval from believers. The people at that time generally called this school of thought of Buddhist priest Dongshan and Caoshan the Tao Dong (Cao Dong in Chinese) sect. Nevertheless, within the Tao Dong sect, the school of thought professed by Yunju Daoyong, a disciple of the Buddhist priest Dongshan, was most popular among the Buddhists. At first this sect was called Dong Tao, but later for euphony it was changed into Tao Dong. Some people attributed the name Tao Dong to the names of two Bonzes Tao Khe Hue Nang (Hui Neng in Chinese) and Dong Son Luong Gioi (Dongshan in Chinese). This is the point of view of people belonging to the Tao Dong sect. It is more based on their belief than on historical proof.

In China, the Tao Dong sect was small in size from the outset; not until the middle of the Song dynasty did it attain its full development. The specific tenets of the Tao Dong sect are the following:

- All human creatures are at heart born with a good nature like Buddhas and quite able to be conscious of the way of Buddha;
- Thanks to the efforts of sitting in deep meditation, men can be enlightened about Buddha's good nature;
- Reciprocal relations: practical work and understanding mind are one;
- Buddhist law must be strictly observed, and it finds its expression in daily life's deeds.

Influence of the Tao Dong Chan Sect in the North

In the reign of King Le The Ton (1575-1599), the Buddhist priest Thuy Nguyet, a disciple of the Great Master Tri Giao Nhat Cu, engaged in the propagation of the Tao Dong Chan sect in the North. A native of Thanh Trieu village, Tien Hung district, Thai Binh province, Thuy Nguyet left his home and led a religious life at the Nham Duong pagoda situated in Dong Trieu district, Quang Ninh province. The story goes that Bonze Thuy Nguyet went to China to carry out his Buddhist studies at the Phuong Hoang mountain and reached the peak of the Way in Buddhism under the instruction of the Great Master Tri Giao Nhat Cu who was the ancestor of the 35th generation of the Tao Dong Ch'an sect, counting from the generation of the ancestor Dongshan. After Thuy Nguyet reached the peak of the Way, the Great Master Tri Giao Nhat Cu transmitted to him a versified text for the purpose of propagation to the posterity, in which the first sentence (in Chinese) is:

The peaceful mind sees ocean of love and compassion
It practices humanity (benevolence) and fosters the intellect.
Thus, by its light the teachings transforms endlessly.

Thus, there was a change in the first name between the religious title of the Great Master and his disciples. Tri Giao Nhat Cu in the 35th generation bore the first name Tri while Thong Giao Thuy Nguyet in the 36th

generation of the Tao Dong sect bore the first name Thong which ushered in the period of activity of this religious sect in the North of Vietnam. The Buddhist priest Thuy Nguyet Thong Giao was the originator of the Tao Dong Chan sect in the North, residing at the then Hong Phuc pagoda, now the Hoe Nhai pagoda located in Ba Dinh district, Hanoi capital city. He imparted his knowledge of the religious sect to his disciple named Ton Dien and to other followers at the Hong Phuc pagoda, who in turn propagated this religious doctrine to their contemporaries.

Influence of the Tao Dong Chan Sect in the South

In the South prevailed the Lam Te Ch'an sect propagated by the Buddhist priest Nguyen Thieu. In the meantime the Tao Dong Ch'an sect was also introduced into the southern provinces by the Buddhist priest. The latter had the religious name Dai San, alias Han Ong and Thach Liem was generally called under the name of Thach Dau Da. His real name, his native land as well as his pursuit of Buddhist studies with what teacher remain unknown. Some people said that he was a native of Jiangyou, others affirmed that his native land was in Lingnan or Jiangnan or Zhejiang. But through a series of inquiries and reexaminations, Zhexi seems to be a more correct birthplace of this Buddhist priest. The story goes that he was a deeply learned scholar, knowing perfectly both classics and history, to say nothing of astronomy, geomancy and even fortune-telling. He had a very fine calligraphy, and was rather good at painting, not to mention his deep knowledge of literature and poetry.

Succeeding to the Ming dynasty then in decadence, the Manchu Qing Emperor reigned over China. The Bonze did not want to become a mandarin under the Qing dynasty, so he took leave of his old mother, and left his home to lead the religious life in a Buddhist monastery. He liked to go about the country for sightseeing and visiting the famed beauty spots. In the meantime, in the South of Vietnam, the Nguyen Lords usually invited Chinese Bonzes to come to their principality to gain more information about the Buddhist religion and the state of political affairs as well. According to *Hai Ngoai Ky Su* (a chronicle of the events when living abroad), written by himself on his visit to Vietnam, he recounted that he had been many a time invited by Lord Nguyen Phuc Tran and the last time besides a letter of invitation by Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu there was also a letter of recommendation by the imperial teacher named Hung Lien: thus, he made up his mind to come over to the principality under the administration of the Nguyen Lord. In the first lunar month of the year At Hoi, that is February 1695, he brought with him some fifty odd people to cross the sea by a sailing boat and finally landed in Hoang Pho on the 27th day of the first lunar month, that was then called the Tien Bich La island, now the Cham island lying off shore of Hoi An estuary; then he and his men moved onto a boat sent there by the Nguyen Lord to take them inland.

From the 28th day of the first lunar month of that year, all of them settled down and resided at the Thien Lam pagoda in An Cuu village.

He began his religious activity by first and foremost opening a course of study on the Buddhist law in order to reorganize the Buddhist clergy and bring them back to a life of devoted studies of the Buddhist doctrine and discipline of abstinence. In the meantime, he did not fail to play a role as advisor to the Lord Minh Vuong in the domains of politics, diplomacy and military strategy and tactics. He advised and recommended the Nguyen Lord to owe allegiance to the Qing Emperor in China and to send a formal application to the latter to ask for investiture. He also recommended the Nguyen Lord to build up fortifications, consolidate the defense of the borderline, establish the formal register of troops recruited, organize a military reserve force; and to use the Confucian classical books for the training of talented men and for enhancing the ethics among the population. After more than one year of residence in the South, the Buddhist priest left South Vietnam at the Hoi An estuary on the 24th of the sixth lunar month, that is in July 1696, en route to Guangdong, China. He made known that he was the main disciple in the 29th generation of the Tao Dong Ch'an sect and transmitted the seal to Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu with the religious title as Thien Tung Dao Nhan of the 30th generation. Due to this, he was criticized as falsely classifying his generation.

Thach Liem alias Dai San was a famous personality under the Qing dynasty in China. He was a Buddhist priest of great learning and unparalleled talent but he indulged in immoral behaviour because he was always wealthy and high-placed in society. That was a thing forbidden among the Buddhist clergy. Moreover, his life-story was unclear, and there were no few contradictions between his words and his deeds, which made him the object of heavy criticism by the Buddhists who called him a swindler, a tricky fellow, a heterodox person, a man who painted only beautiful girls and advocated secret sexual intercourse, and last but not least an international trafficker, etc. In his old age, he was ordered to be detained in prison by the feudal provincial mandarin in charge of criminal cases named Hua Trung Thua Tu Hung. The latter judged his evil acts and passed a verdict on his case. He was punished by beating with a cane and deported to Cong Chau. There he could still gather a lot of his disciples and followers for reviving the religion and making them involved in the propagation of his sect. Later on he was expelled from his last place of worship by the local mandarin, who ordered his men to escort him to his birth-place but he died in Thuong Son on the way back to his homeland. His works such as *Luc Ly Duong Tap*, *Hai Ngoai Ky Su* and *Kim Cang Truc So* are still extant.

It would be very difficult to define the ideology of the Buddhist priest Thach Liem because nobody knew about his life-story and even his personality. His thought could be confirmed solely through the statements made in his own works. Moreover, with such a man of great learning and wide culture as Thach Liem, he would be quite able to deceive the people if

he really wished to do it and he always enjoyed admiration and approbation from the people at large. If he was as such, how could the people believe what he had spoken or written would faithfully reflect his thinking?

The criticism of and negative comments on the personality of Thach Liem are still doubted as to their historical correctness. Likewise, even Thach Liem's own comments and criticism in his work entitled *Hai ngoai ky su* (a chronicle of events when living abroad) are suspect. But if Thach Liem's remarks and criticisms do reflect to some extent the real social situation in the South of Vietnam at that time, the criticism and comments of the contemporary writers condemning Thach Liem's immoral behaviour cannot be entirely without foundation. At present, data are not sufficiently available to define clearly Thach Liem's real attitude. So it would be preferable for the time being to read *Hai Ngoai Ky Su*, a work written by that man himself, so as to know about his true worth. This book has been valued as a masterpiece, with many aspects deserving utmost attention; nonetheless, the book by itself certainly cannot reveal the true nature of this extraordinary person.

In Vietnamese Buddhist circles, especially among the Buddhists in the South, Thach Liem has been regarded as the first founder of the Tao Dong Ch'an sect in the South and also the very man who contributed to the renaissance of Southern Buddhism in that historical period.

NOTES

¹*Huong Hai Thien Su Ngu Luc*, hand writing version VHv. 2379, at the Social Science Library, Hanoi, Vietnam.

²Le Manh That, *Chan Nguyen Thien Su Toan Tap*, Bk 1 and 2, Ho Chi Minh City, 1980).

CHAPTER XII

BUDDHISM IN THE PERIOD OF PEASANT INSURRECTIONS (THE LATTER HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY)

TOWARDS THE FUSION OF CONFUCIANISM AND BUDDHISM: NGO THI NHAM AND *TRUC LAM TON CHI NGUYEN THANH*

Vietnamese society in the late eighteenth century was characterized by fierce struggle and rapid transformation. Both the pace and degree of these changes exceeded that of any other historical era. Soldiers launched a major revolt in the palace of the Trinh lord. Tay Son troops routed the Nguyen regime in the south and the Trinh in the north. Chinese Qing troops invaded northern Vietnam and were swiftly defeated. King Quang Trung died suddenly; the Tay Son regime faltered and was vanquished by the armies of Nguyen Anh.

These sudden and unexpected events occurred too rapidly for people to adequately assess their origins or causes. Confucian scholars were likewise puzzled and disturbed. In the face of the violent and unpredictable realities of the era, conventional Confucian concepts of virtue, filial piety, peace, prosperity, and saintliness seemed irrelevant. Scholars began to question whether Confucian dogma had outlived its usefulness. Facing this imminent ideological crisis, the majority of scholars admirably chose to remain active. They did not sit idly by, nor did they simply attempt to protect themselves and their positions or attempt to escape in some way from their responsibilities. Although their reputations came under attack, concerned scholars from this period such as Ngo Thi Si, Le Quy Don, Ngo Thi Nham, Tran Van Ky and Nguyen Gia Phan tirelessly searched for ways to meet the new demands of the era. But events unfolded differently than they had hoped and the faith they had held in the correctness of their collective actions and ideas was slowly undermined. They remained divided and confused.

Given this situation, scholars could not continue to inflexibly follow their old beliefs. Instead, they reexamined their own history in hopes of discovering old answers to their new problems. As effective solutions were not immediately apparent, they decided to reassess the heritage bequeathed to them from preceding historical periods. One outcome of this search was a deeper understanding of how Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism had historically coexisted in Vietnam and how state policies recognizing the role and validity of all three religions in Vietnam's political ideological system had produced positive effects especially during the Ly and Tran period. Based on such historical evidence, they argued that the State should again support both Buddhism and Taoism, along with

Confucianism. Moreover, to develop a new ideology and a series of policies capable of solving society's current problems, they argued that two conditions had to be met. First, the relative importance of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism had to be naturally maintained in accordance with the older Vietnamese worldview. And second, a new policy, one more concrete and explicit than older religious policies, and one which unambiguously supported the co-existence of all three creeds, had to be enacted.

The idea that "the three religions shared a single origin" which had existed for many centuries, once again grew in prominence and popularity. Different scholars expressed and explained this sentiment in different ways, based on their own knowledge, intellect, and experience. The case of the scholar Ngo Thi Nham provides one interesting example. Ngo Thi Nham was born October 25, 1746 at Ta Thanh Oai village (also called To village at the time), in what was then the Son Nam administrative division (now Dai Thanh commune, Thuong Tin district, Ha Son Binh province). His pen name was Hy Doan, and he often used the further alias Dat Hien. His family boasted a long tradition of scholarship and bureaucratic service. His father, Ngo Thi Si (1726-1786) was an eminent Confucian scholar of the eighteenth century. At the age of 30, Ngo Thi Nham successfully earned his doctorate degree and received consecutive appointments as mandarin of the Kinh Bac and Thai Nguyen administrative divisions. He was later assigned to a high post in the Dong Cac Royal Library. In 1786, Nguyen Hue (also known as Quang Trung) first led his Tay Son insurgent troops to the northern part of the country. At that time, Ngo Thi Nham was holding an influential position on the Le Chieu Thong court's board of civil affairs. During Nguyen Hue's reign, Ngo Thi Nham continued to hold high office. He was first counsellor to the board of public works, served as minister on a special military advisory board and acted as Nguyen Hue's special envoy to the Chinese Qing court.

A man of vast learning and erudition, Ngo Thi Nham proposed many effective policies and proved an astute and skillful political operator. His acumen can be seen in the sudden decision he made to abandon the corrupt (and doomed) Le-Trinh clique and present his services instead to the future national hero Nguyen Hue. Moreover he is widely credited with masterminding Nguyen Hue's resistance to a massive Chinese invasion; his strategy consisting of ordering the initial withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops beyond Tam Diep to protect them against the initial Qing onslaught, thus creating the subsequent conditions for a resoundingly victorious counter-attack in 1789. Thereafter he was to engineer a particularly effective foreign policy strategy towards the Qing. Because of this string of successes, Ngo Thi Nham was highly decorated and respected by Nguyen Hue.

Ngo Thi Nham was one of a small handful of scholars from this period who wrote a considerable number of valuable works. Examples of these include *Hai Dong Chi Luoc* (1771), *Thanh Trieu Hoi Giam* (1783),

Xuan Thu Quan Kien (1786-1792), *Bang Giao Hao Thoai* (1789-1800), *Han Cac Anh Hoa* (1789-1801), and *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* (1796-1802). This final work, dealing specifically with Buddhism, was written at a time when the Tay Son court had grown weak. Quang Toan, who succeeded to the throne after Quang Trung's death, adopted a cooler and more distant posture towards Ngo Thi Nham and his proposals. The new king transferred him to a relatively unimportant position in charge of projects to revise the national history, and care for a Confucian temple in the northern wing of the citadel.

Evidence suggests that by this time, Ngo Thi Nham was already favorably inclined towards Buddhism. With several colleagues and close friends, he opened an institute for Thien (Ch'an) (Zen) (Dhyana) studies at his private home in the Bich Cau district of the capital: Here, Ngo Thi Nham organized lively discussions on Buddhism in general and on the Truc Lam Ch'an sect in particular. The work *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* (also called *Truc Lam Dai Chan Vien Giac Thanh* or *Nhi Thap Tu Thanh*) expresses the opinions of many people including Ngo Thi Nham, followed by commentary and discussion between himself and his friends. In all, the book contains 24 sections, each section consisting of a single 'thanh'. A 'thanh' is a spoken canto which expresses a religious tenet. 24 'thanh' represent simultaneously the 24 religious tenets of mankind which correspond to the 24 natural humors (elements); and simultaneously expresses the 24 natural laws of the universe.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one is a preface written by Phan Huy Ich. Second is the main part consisting of the 24 sections. And third is a summary of the main idea of each 'thanh' composed by Hai Dien (Nguen Huu Dam). Each 'thanh' in the main part is divided into three sub-sections: an introduction written by Hai Luong (Ngo Thi Hoanh), a statement of the 'thanh's vital idea composed by Bonze superior Hai Huyen (Ngo Thi Nham), and an annotation by Bonze Hai Au (Vu Trinh) and Bonze Hai Hoa (Nguyen Dang So) providing additional explanation and commentary on the text.

The book's contents suggest that the main objective of the authors was to promote a novel religion with traditions originating in the doctrine and practices of the Truc Lam Ch'an sect. Ngo Thi Nham selected the Truc Lam Ch'an sect because he felt that those who had been involved with this sect possessed views on life, karma, and national consciousness similar to those held by his friends and himself.

Ngo Thi Nham believed, for instance, that King Tran Nhan Tong, the first ancestor of the Truc Lam Ch'an sect, by leading a resistance war against the Mongols, displayed a spirit similar to his own when he led the Tay Son troops in resistance against the Qing invasion. He saw further parallels in the scholastic accomplishments of the ancestors of the Truc Lam sect (the second and third generation monks Phap Loa and Huyen Quang for example) and the rigorous Confucian training which he and colleagues had undergone. A connection was also drawn between the

creative impulse motivating the founders of the original Truc Lam and that of those spearheading the development of the new sect. Ngo Thi Nham thought that by following the Truc Lam Ch'an sect, he and his comrades would be able to put their ideas into practice and enhance their positions.

The aim of *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* was to combine Confucianism and Ch'an Buddhism. According to Ngo Thi Nham, both doctrines were equally vital for human spiritual life. He felt that Confucianism and Ch'an Buddhism only differed in their degree of usefulness in different circumstances but in terms of basic principles, they were ultimately similar. As the Bronze Hai Hoa stated, "Our masters behave towards other people according to Confucian tenets and enter the monkhood according to Ch'an Buddhist tenets. Our Master is not only comfortable with this way of life but he embraces its transcendent duality."

Despite Ngo Thi Nham's stated objective and claims for the parity of Confucianism and Ch'an Buddhism, it must be ultimately recognized that the ideology of *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* is overwhelmingly Confucian. This Confucian slant can be seen in a variety of areas. For example, the Buddhist concepts of 'Khong Thanh' (self-understanding) and 'Ngo Thanh' (the demonstration of one's self-understanding) are explained through the Confucian concepts 'ly' (reason) and 'duc' (passion). The qualities ideally possessed by a good Buddhist, 'minh tam' (pure soul) and 'kien tinh' (great knowledge) are likened to 'chinh tam' (good heart) and 'thanh tinh' (right action), those ideally possessed by a good Confucian. Moreover, good Buddhists and good Confucians are both expected to display a strange mixture of erudition and reserve. In his discussion of 'Thien', a sect defined by a devotee's understanding and way of concentrating different Buddhist ideals within himself, Ngo Thi Nham curiously likens it to 'thien vi', the Confucian concept of royal succession set out by the Chinese Emperors Yao and Shun. The discussion of Buddhist belief in metempsychosis (transmigration of the soul) through six worlds is compared to the cyclical Confucian concept of time circulating through days, weeks, and years. Ngo Thi Nham situated the origins of Sakyamuni's ideas with the Chinese Emperor Di Shun, despite the fact that it is unlikely that Sakyamuni knew even the location of China during his lifetime. Explaining why the Vietnamese King Tran Nhan Tong fled the royal palace to pursue a religious life on Yen Tu mountain, Ngo Thi Nham holds that the King was motivated by a kind of Confucian vigilance in the face of aggression by the Northern empire.

In short, all issues discussed in his work are explained in terms of Confucian concepts. Ngo Thi Nham's fundamental commitment to Confucianism is succinctly expressed in the following short poem:

Why I should become a spirit
Is not to become a Buddha
Only but to study the Book of Odes and Book of History
In order to avoid a wrong religious way (Phu Thien Thai)

It could be argued that Ngo Thi Nham's almost complete reliance on Confucian concepts to explain Buddhist ideas reflects an inadequate knowledge of Buddhism. This however, is unlikely. A scholar of Ngo Thi Nham's erudition would certainly have had no problems understanding the philosophical tenets of Buddhism. Moreover, Buddhist texts were readily available in Vietnam at that time and good conditions existed for Buddhist scholarship. What is more likely is that Ngo Thi Nham consciously wrote in this way, in order to infuse a dose of Confucian pragmatism into the loftier and more philosophical Buddhism, thus offering (what he would have considered) more practical guidance to his readership during what was a particularly chaotic historical era.

If we abandon a restrictive analysis predicated on the belief that every idea within an ideological system must belong to (or be consistent with) one and only one religious doctrine and committed to simply elucidating the doctrinal ancestry of each idea, then we can perhaps reach a clearer understanding of the ideology of Ngo Thi Nham, his colleagues and disciples. We can evaluate his social consciousness, his position on questions concerning the existence of the body and the soul's dependence on that body, and his views on the nature of human passion. An examination of Ngo Thi Nham's treatment of these issues will shed light on the positive aspects of his ideology. Instead of seeing his varied ideas as originating from one or another religious doctrine (Buddhism, Confucianism, or Taoism), Ngo Thi Nham's ideology should be understood as the product of his slightly unorthodox interpretation of all three. A similar ideological approach can be found in Ngo Thi Nham's other works and has come to represent a common thread running through his life and ideas.

But for a work claiming both to capture the essential character of Buddhism and to faithfully follow the Truc Lam Yen Tu sect, the *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* is ultimately unsuccessful. Although Ngo Thi Nham was considered by his disciples and himself as the fourth great ancestor of the Truc Lam sect, his ideology and actions had nothing in common with the three preceding Truc Lam generations. Compared with King Tran Nhan Tong (the first great ancestor), for example, Ngo Thi Nham lacked a proper attitude of denial or the ability to transcend the artificial worldly opposition of right and wrong, good and bad. Unlike Phap Loa (the second great ancestor), he was unable to conceive of a spirit of nothingness or of absolute freedom. Unlike Huyen Quang (the third great ancestor), he lacked the temperament to escape real life through religious devotion. Outside of a handful of his friends and students, no one (from that time up to the present) has recognized him as a true ancestor of the sect. That even his family did not accept his self-proclaimed relationship with the sect, is evidenced by the fact that the *Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh* is not even mentioned in *Ngo Gia Van Phai*, an extensive annotated bibliography of works by the Ngo family, produced by the clan itself.

It may be said that Ngo Thi Nham's flirtation with Buddhism simply represents an unusual but ultimately insignificant phenomenon in the national history. On the other hand, it seems that the interest which Ngo Thi Nham and his disciples showed in Buddhism reflected a search for new theories capable of explaining society's current predicament, suggesting a new and necessary public attitude, and pointing the correct direction towards which society should move. However, subjective and objective factors rendered him incapable of creating a theory appropriate for or acceptable to the society. Although the ancient theories of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism were different, they were generally supportive of each other. Yet still, any of the three was incapable of completely replacing one or all of the others. Thus Ngo Thi Nham's attempt to replace Buddhism and Taoism with Confucianism in the end must be considered as a failed experiment.

A NEW DEVELOPMENT: BONZE SUPERIOR TOAN NHAT AND *THE TALE OF HUA SU*

The Tay Son Rebellion broke out like a whirlwind. It swept away all the obstacles which the reactionary feudal system had placed in the way of the liberation of the life-force of the nation. The Tay Son Rebellion represented the rising of peasant forces bent on asserting their own and their nation's right to exist and put an end to the 200-year civil war between the Trinh and Nguyen. It also overthrew the unjust and absurd social structure which had existed up until then.

During this important period, the Tay Son troops entered market-places in broad daylight and seized money from the rich to give to the poor. They destroyed temples and pagodas, forced the monks to take up arms, and melted down bells and statues to make guns and bullets. Their penchant for violence grew from their ardor and enthusiasm. They bravely faced dangerous situations and met all demands placed upon them by the nation. Upon hearing that Ton Si Nghi, the Chinese General, was approaching Thang Long (Hanoi), Ngo Van So chided his kinsman Ngo Thi Nham: "Can you compose a poem which will drive away the enemy troops? If not, then I must take up arms." Not only were Confucian mandarins denigrated, but antiquated beliefs were denounced. The Tay Son were not afraid of ghosts, spirits, or other supernatural forces and tried to rid the public of their belief in these superstitions. For example, to convince people that the reputedly haunted Ghost Canal held nothing to fear, they burned a coffin and shot a cannon towards the bushes alongside the river. The well-known statement of the Governor General of Nghe An under the Tay Son regime: "Dogs are more useful than deities," provides a further example of the Tay Son fearless posture toward the supernatural. (*Magazine Dai Truong*, "The history of the civil war in Vietnam from 1771 to 1802," Saigon, 1973).

Despite its antipathy for popular superstitions, the Tay Son was prepared to tolerate practices based on complex but problematic cultural

beliefs because they had originated in ancient traditions. It was a similar pragmatism and flexibility which allowed Nguyen Hue to recruit and work with officials from the old regime such as Ngo Thi Nham, Phan Huy Ich, and Nguyen Thiep. The Tay Son revolution comprised military, cultural and diplomatic victories and brought pride and glory to the Vietnamese nation. King Quang Trung's varied achievements were directly related to his skill at enlisting the sympathy and support of talented people including the Buddhist dignitary Toan Nhat.

Toan Nhat was an important monk, writer, and poet from the Tay Son era who, up until now, has received inadequate attention in the official history of Vietnamese Buddhism. He was also a progressive thinker who expressed the ideas and sentiments of the popular majority. In his story, "*The Tale of Hua Su*," Toan Nhat presented a series of extremely bold ideas including novel conceptions of labor, labor value, struggle, humanitarianism, and anti-royalism (See Le Manh That, *Toan Nhat Thien Su*, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Ho Chi Minh City, 1979).

Than Nhat's real given name, clan name, native place, and date of entry into the monkhood remain unknown. What little information that exists about his life can be found in his book *Tam Giao Nguyen Luu Ky* (Records On the Origins of the Three Religions):

I once was a student of Confucius.
From the age of twelve to thirty
I followed a handful of teachers
But none could show me the path to enlightenment.
Then I became conscious of Buddhist law and doctrine
And I took monastic vows at the age of thirty.

According to *Tu Quang Tu Sa Mon Phap Chuyen Luat Truyen* it is recorded that Toan Nhat was one of twenty-eight disciples of the Bonze Superior Dieu Nghiem. Based on this text, Dieu Nghiem was born in 1726 and died in 1798 at the age of 73. If Toan Nhat entered the monkhood at the age of thirty and became an accomplished monk at the age of 43, these events must have occurred before the death of Dieu Nghiem. Thus, Toan Nhat must have been born between 1750 and 1755.

While Toan Nhat's motive for entering the monkhood remains obscure, a poem he penned for use by Buddhist nuns suggests that he previously had served in the Tay Son militia:

Before entering the monkhood
I already possessed faith in Buddha.
Now that I follow the way, my belief is unchanged
Only thoughts of the material world prompt me to serve illusory beliefs.
If I continue under my present karma, passion will take me;
Thus, I must abandon military life

And enter the monkhood.

Another poem relates that after the collapse of the Tay Son, Toan Nhat went through a particularly difficult period:

Entering the monkhood, my destiny remains impoverished and troubled.

My heart longs for religious study, but I have no place
To work or worship, no place to live.

His descriptions of religious life are bitter:

Rice is to be collected here and there.
Short of food, I haven't enough to eat.
Clothes are donated by kind people
And patched up when they become too ragged.
Sitting against a pillar like a washed-up fortune-teller
Preaching religion to beggars,
Sleeping on the beds of friendly merchants,
And striving to convert market thieves to Buddhism.

Although his life was unhappy, Toan Nhat appears to have exerted an important influence on the minds of the people. A contemporary of Toan Nhat, the high-ranking Bonze Tam Thien praised him in the following poem:

Acting for the common good,
Avoiding errors of discipline and behavior;
A man with loyalty and righteousness
Can easily become a Buddha.

Toan Nhat may have died in 1832. Toan Nhat's written works (as far as we know) include the following:

- *Hua Su Truyen Van* (The Tale of Hua Su)
- *Tam Giao Nguyen Luu Ky* (Records The Origins of the Three Religions)
- *Tong Vuong Truyen* (The Story of the Song Emperor)
- *Luc To Truyen Dien Ca* (The Chronicle in Verse of the Six Ancestors)
- *Bat Nha Dao Quoc Am Van* (The Prajna Doctrine Transcribed in National Language)
- *Xuat Gia Toi Lac Tinh The Tu Hanh Van*
- *Tham Thien Van* (Entry into Meditation)
- *Thien Co Yeu Ngu Van* (A Writing on Important Elements of Buddhism)

- *Hoan Tinh Tran Tam Khuyen Tu Tinh Do Van*
- *Xuat Gia Van*
- *Gioi Hanh Dong Tu*
- *Trung Khuyen Than So Quyen Thuoc Phu*
- *Khuyen Tu Hanh Quoc Ngu Phu*
- *Tho Ba Vai*
- *Pha Tho Bat Tong Van*
- *Van Dua Cay Bap*
- *Sa Di Oai Nghi Tang Chu Giai Nguy Tu Tieu Thien*
- *Thuy Sam Bat*
- *Nhan Qua Kinh Bat*
- *Vo Luong Nghia Kinh, Hau Bat*

This list is preliminary and incomplete and does not include other texts which Toan Nhat may have written. Moreover, Toan Nhat composed approximately thirty poems in Vietnamese demotic script and fourteen in classical Chinese which are not included in this list.

Among Toan Nhat's extensive works, *The Tale of Hua Su* is the most typical and thoroughly expressive of Toan Nhat's ideological outlook. Its theme is profoundly reflective of the age in which it was produced, and sheds light on the nature of popular reactions to the great crises of the age. Through the solutions to social problems which Toan Nhat offers in *The Tale of Hua Su*, we can see the progressive elements of his ideology. *The Tale of Hua Su* is a long poem composed of 4486 lines, which may be subdivided into the following parts:

Part 1: The origin and purpose of *The Tale of Hua Su* (lines 1 to 100).

Part 2: The life and achievements of Hua Su (lines 101 to 2534). The second part includes the following events:

1. The origin of Hua Su's family line and his entry into the monkhood (lines 101 to 560).
2. His master's death - Hua Su's journey to Tu Khoi pagoda (lines 561 to 648).
3. Hua Su's false arrest and banishment to Hell (lines 649 to 1858).
4. Hua Su's return to life and search for Thanh Son (lines 1859 to 2294).
5. The Journey of Hua Su and Thanh Son to the West where they become Arhats (lines 2295 to 2534).

Part 3: Thanh Son's return to life to give relief to the poor and to save mankind from unhappiness (lines 2535 to 4086). This part comprises the following events:

1. Thanh Son's return to worldly life and meeting with Dong Van (lines 2535 to 2716).

2. Dong Van entry into the monkhood (lines 2717 to 3496).
3. The Trieu Tan troops invade the Viet country and Dong Van commands the Viet army to fight off the enemy attack (lines 3497 to 3924).
4. Victory over the aggressors. The king and his closest subject enter the monkhood (lines 3925 to 4086).

Part 4: Final evaluation of each character in the story (lines 4087 to 4486). Besides dealing with themes reflecting Buddhist ideas, *The Tale of Hua Su* introduces three important non-religious themes for the first time in the history of Vietnamese literature and ideas. The first theme is anti-royalism. He saw the master as more important than the king and the parents. Toan Nhat expresses this idea through the voice of the King of Hell as he presides over a court of judgment:

Whose sin is as Hoan Tu Anh's?
Carrying on naturally after killing his own father
But beginning to fear for his afterlife
He looks toward Buddha and prays.
Xa Vuong killed his father the King,
Renewed faith in the Buddha could bring pardon.
But the crime of betraying one's teacher
Is pardoned neither by Buddha nor by ourselves.

Thereafter, Hua Su stood up and asked the King of Hell:

Our gratitude is vast.
First the king then father then teacher.
A subject disobeys his king.
A bad son murders his father.
How to pardon such sins?
Why does the Buddha forgive such cruelties?
If a student is ungrateful towards his teacher,
Neither Buddha nor the King of Hell will exonerate him.
Thus the teacher is more revered than the king and the father.
I do not understand your explanation.

Through the answer of the King of Hell, *The Tale of Hua Su* reasoned as follows:

Without the help of a teacher
How can anything be accomplished?
Indifference towards one's teacher
Will be severely punished in Hell.
Respect must be paid;
Student to teacher, subject to king, son to father.
How can a son without a teacher

Become a good man,
Or follow a virtuous and humane tradition?
He will instead follow an evil road.
How can one love such a son?
But if the son has a good teacher,
He will grow to be learned,
Become a great official
And make his king and parents proud.

Along these same lines, another section of *The Tale of Hua Su* brazenly asserts, "The teacher is more highly revered than the king or the father." Here for the first and only time in Ancient Vietnamese literary history (and in the history of Vietnamese feudalism) do we find a work which dares to commit both filial impiety and lese-majesty through a direct challenge to the conventional feudal social order. Toan Nhat's assault on the rigid hierarchy which Confucianism had bequeathed to the feudal regime was perhaps grounded in and supported by ideologically related popular sentiments such as that found in the following proverb: "Lacking a teacher, acclaim is impossible."

The second significant theme in *The Tale of Hua Su* concerns a new conception of labor. Toan Nhat rightly suggests that only through labor can people develop the ability to recognize the truth and cultivate the quality of mercy. Through *The tale of Hua Su*, Toan Nhat praises labor and includes it as an important prerequisite for sainthood. Dong Van smiles and says:

If joy now then misery later, if misery now then joy later;
Chau Cong and his disciple sat high atop the golden lotus throne,
Although in the past, they worked the fields.
Mr. and Mrs. Dao reached an equally high position,
Although in the past they gathered and sold firewood.
Because Buddha honors such people,
I need not worry any more.

According to this poem, it was the laborers, farmers, vegetable growers and woodcutters who either became Buddha or were held up for special praise by Buddha. Thus for Toan Nhat, labor comprises both the foundation of human ethics and the source of human dignity as expressed in the virtues of the Buddha.

The third theme found in *The Tale of Hua Su* concerns the relationship between compassion and struggle. It is often said that Buddhism is compassionate, but this compassion must be reinforced with intelligence and strength in order to be realized in practice: Compassion cannot be cowardly. Nor should a spirit of compassion prompt one to ignore the distinction between right and wrong or indifferently condone all

actions. In *The Tale of Hua Su*, Toan Nhat expresses this idea in the following way:

We cannot ignore cruelty in our midst,
Rather, we are obliged to resist it.
Force serves a purpose in our lives.
There's no shame in using our strength.
In extraordinary circumstances,
We needn't strictly follow the way.
Helping the nation and saving the people,
Is also work for the monkhood.

On the question of whether a good Buddhist may violate taboos against killing in service to the nation, Toan Nhat (through the character Mat Hanh) says the following:

Upon hearing the theory of compassion,
Mat Hanh says that Buddhist doctrine can be used in many ways.
Hell awaits those who
Kill with evil intentions.
But killing to help the nation, people, and king
Should not be avoided.
Buddhist law encourages its adherents
To respond flexibly to all situations.
The Bonzes Do Trung and An Phong
Preached for peace from within army ranks.
Quy Ton killed a snake with a good heart
As has been dearly recorded.

Using these well-known examples from antiquity, *The Tale of Hua Su* makes a case for justifying the use of violence. Toan Nhat contended that people from that time who had participated in long periods of struggle tended to support this position.

Buddhism cannot avoid a desire to save the nation
Especially when the country is poor and the people dying.
As the well-known proverb states,
Kill one cat to save millions of mice.
I beg you to remember the ancient gratitude.
We must now strive to help the country and save the people.

Toan Nhat's life spanned an extremely dangerous period in Vietnamese history. Rival reactionary feudal forces within the country struggled against each other and inflicted great suffering on the population. At the same time, foreign feudal forces perpetrated schemes against our country. There is no doubt that the writing of Toan Nhat, a monk deeply

concerned with the plight of his people and nation, bears the imprint of these troubled times.

The existence of the three important themes found in *The Tale of Hua Su* as noted above suggests that Toan Nhat was a particularly progressive thinker of his time. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the development of his thinking on these matters was relatively rudimentary and failed to bring out their most positive aspects. This is due to the fact that the world-view of Toan Nhat was overwhelmingly grounded in the Vietnamese idea “Tam giao dong nguyen” (the belief that Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism have the same origin.) Throughout the period in which Chinese scholarship held sway, the fusion of religions represented by “Tam giao dong nguyen” dominated the ideas of Vietnamese thinkers. Because of objective conditions such as mode and relations of production, the backwardness of agriculture, and the feudal structure of society, the progressive character of Toan Nhat's thought was necessarily limited.

PART FOUR

**BUDDHISM UNDER THE NGUYEN DYNASTY
(19TH CENTURY)**

CHAPTER XIII

BUDDHISM IN THE PERIOD OF DOMINANT CONFUCIANISM UNDER THE NGUYEN DYNASTY

Having wandered for a long time to avoid being killed and to reorganize his force, Nguyen Anh, backed by a western capitalist expansionist force, at last managed to overthrow the Tay Son dynasty, then ruled by Nguyen Quang Toan. Nguyen Anh, ascended the throne and founded the Nguyen dynasty in 1802. The first year of this dynasty was also the second year of the 19th century, a century full of historic convulsions.

Though as a dynasty, the Nguyen was not as advantageous as the preceding dynasties, whose advent to power was either the result (the Le) or the demand (the Ly, the Tran) of the national liberation wars against foreign invasion. The complete victory over foreign invaders made it possible for the former dynasties to win the national confidence and support, thus creating a relative stability in their early years. In contrast, the Nguyen dynasty, seeking help from an outside expansionist force to win power, had become unrelated to and isolated from the people right at birth. The Nguyen dynasty practiced its rule over a larger territory with a greater population from the North to the South than any previous dynasty. Nevertheless, subsequent trouble arose out of the underdevelopment of a commodity economy, traffic inconvenience, the local tendency to separate from the central government, and the different-mindedness among various factions,-- all of which could possibly lead to hostility.

Incapable of gaining a steadfast unity and for fear of the worst, the Nguyen had practiced an unprecedented arbitrariness in order to preserve its rule. In the socio-political field, the Nguyen dynasty established many policies characterized by a harsh despotism. The Nguyen Kings held the legislative, judiciary, executive and supervisory power. Nguyen Gia Long even made it a rule to practice "four no's" (no prime minister, no conferring the title of First doctor in metropolitan examination, no Queen, no outside-of-Royalty princes). Minh Mang abrogated such great administrative zones as Bac Thanh and Gia Dinh Thanh, and the governorship there, and divided the country into 29 provinces under the Court's direct rule. The Nguyen Kings massacred without mercy the hostile elements either evident or suspected, even courtiers with eminent records of service in the foundation of the Nguyen dynasty, etc.

In the field of culture, ideology and religion, the Nguyen dynasty sought for a doctrine, a religion favorable for its centralized arbitrariness. Confucianism with its theory of "Tam Cuong"¹ and "Ngu Thuong"² considering the king as the son of Heaven who symbolized power and reason, satisfied the Nguyen's demand. The Nguyen dynasty sought to make

Confucianism the ‘monolatry’ of the nation on the one hand, and lashed out at Buddhism, Taoism and Catholicism on the other. Under the Nguyen, Catholicism was at times prohibited. Churches were demolished and the Catholic population imprisoned. Buddhism, as a traditional religion with no relation to foreign invaders and no idea to vie for social domination, was not covered by the Court’s penal law. Nonetheless, because of its popularity which could make the population deflect from the Court’s principles, it presented a persistent awkward problem with which the Nguyen had to busy itself.

By and large, the Nguyen tried to limit Buddhist growth by further managing Buddhist monks and nuns, forcing them to join social work, restricting Buddhist influence on the population, minimizing the pagoda-building, statue-coloring, bell-casting of the Buddhist population. Gia Long “ordered courtiers to examine all the district pagodas and to register names of the Bonze Superiors down to servants for submission, then gave district clerks an instruction that clergies aged 50 and over were exempted from heavy manual work but no exemption was applied to those aged below 50. Any shirker should be punished.”³ Gia Long even banned the building of new pagodas, statue-coloring, bell-casting and ceremony organizing... “Recently some devotees to Buddhism have built terribly splendid many-storied pagodas, cast bells and colored sophisticated statues, organized ceremonies, held expensive festivals to worship the Buddha and to support Bonzes to such an extent that they themselves have become emaciated in order to pray for fantastic blessings. Consequently, from now on only ruined pagodas can be repaired; as to the building of new pagodas, statue-coloring, and Buddhist festivals, all these are banned. Village headmen are supposed to inform the county official of names and addresses of true Bonzes in order to know their number.”⁴

What Gia Long had done was repeated by Tu Duc who ordered that “pagodas to worship the Buddha be repaired only in case of being ruined; new building, bell-casting, statue-coloring, ceremonies, and preaching, all these are banned. The village headman is supposed to make a report to his superior of the list of true Bonzes among all the Bonzes living in pagodas, in order to record their numbers.”⁵ Tu Duc even went further by separating Buddhist activities from the Court’s activities. This was proved by the following story: “There had been no rain in Binh Dinh. The King’s representative of the province, Vuong Huu Quang, invited a monk to pray for rain in the provincial building. The rain having poured down, he told the story to the King. The latter said: ‘Prayer reciting should not be set as models for mandarins and population. I decide to fine you three months’ salary and from now on any prayer reciting or ceremony-organizing must be done at pagodas, not in the public building.’”⁶

Together with the promulgation of policies to control Buddhism, the Nguyen dynasty involved all the Court officials and many Confucian scholars in criticizing Buddhism with a view to toppling this religion in terms of religious doctrine. They attacked the Buddhist doctrine of

predestined affinity and retribution, claiming it to be useless and unrealisable. Gia Long's proclamation on the building of village regulations to the Northern population pointed out that "he who worships the Buddha only prays for blessings. The Buddhist book reads, 'It is predestined whom Buddha saves'. It is said (in books), 'It is of no use to practice abstinence and to pray to Buddha without reverent care of one's parents. It doesn't matter to be absolutely loyal to the king if you fail to worship Buddha'. Consequently, the auspicious need no Buddhist salvation whereas the inauspicious can by no means be saved by Buddha. Take some examples. Muc Lien, who had attained full *prajna* and became Buddha, failed to save his mother; one so devoted to Buddhism as Tieu Dien could not save himself, let alone the disloyal, the undutiful who don't know the king in the presence of the Buddha,... these latter desert their parents to pray to the invisible!⁷ [Buddhists say] 'Human life is predestined'. Thus misfortune cannot be relieved, nor can blessings be prayed for. Worshipping and praying all get nowhere..."⁸

In addition, Buddhism was considered as an evil damaging feudal ritualism and the practice of Confucian dogmas. Ngo Tong Chu, a high-ranking mandarin under the Gia Long reign, told the Crown prince Canh: "That the king opposes Buddhism is a wise measure; why are his representatives not wordier about this [grave matter]? ... I myself don't hate Buddhist monks, yet the danger of Buddhism, Taoism is far greater than Yang Zhou and Mozi, and I can't help talking about it."⁹

There was nothing new in the Nguyen rulers' theory, yet mouthed by the power-holders and supplemented by the policies to control Buddhism, it resulted in an occasional decline of Buddhism and a lack of due veneration for monks and nuns. That explained the remark that since the Nguyen dynasty, Vietnamese Buddhism had entered its decadent period. "Since the changes in the country's destiny, Buddhism had embarked upon its stagnancy, and then decadence."¹⁰ "From then onwards there had been no historical literature to prove a splendid period of Buddhist history."¹¹

Objectively speaking, Buddhism at the time remained in a steady position. The above-mentioned policies and critical words somehow lowered its charisma, yet failed to stop Buddhism's growing. Why did Buddhists neither petition the king to reconsider the royal unfair proclamations and ordinances, nor respond to the criticism against them? Could they not reason appropriately? Were they sure of themselves? Both are perhaps true. In fact, Buddhist doctrine kept influencing silently the spiritual life of many people from all walks of life. Buddhism managed to infiltrate into the places where Confucianism could not or even into the Royal palace where Confucius' and Mencius' doctrines represented the most important outlook on life. Queen mothers, Queens, princesses, and royal concubines in the palace were the greatest devotees to Buddhism. They worshipped Buddha for further blessings, for Buddhist salvation of their souls after their death. They themselves urged their husbands to build

altars in their houses. The then famous Bonze superior Phuc Dien wrote: "Princes built small pagodas in their homes."¹² They wanted to be close to Buddha, to recite their prayers regularly. Grand ladies demanded that kings organize ceremonies and pagoda festivals.

It was recorded that under the Gia Long reign "a great ceremony was organized in Thien Mu pagoda. Princess Ngoc Tu insisted on organizing a ceremony to offer for the deceased Monarch."¹³ While she was dying, she beseeched Ming Mang to "fulfill my unsatisfied desire of cutting my hair and entering Buddhist nunhood to worship Buddha."¹⁴

It was not that all Nguyen Kings opposed Buddha. Among them some like Gia Long, Tu Duc shunned and suspected Buddha but some believed in Buddha. Why? It was due to the circumstances. In the reign of Gia Long, the Buddhist opinion of royalty generated hostile elements whereas Tu Duc had to return to Buddhist orthodoxy to save the dynasty from retrogradation. Between the two-mentioned reigns, under the reigns of Minh Mang and Thieu Tri, the kings benefiting by the social stability were somehow able to pay attention to the spiritual with a view to showing their belief in generosity (and involving religion in consolidating their reigns).

Yet, the first obstacle facing Minh Mang and Thieu Tri was the long-established royal bias against Buddhism as "superstition" and "unaccepted rites," and the assessment of pagoda-building as "wastage of popular blood and effort." Next, Buddhist doctrine did not deal with "loyalty" and respect for the emperor's power. It took time to overcome these obstacles. The words of the Monarchy gradually changed. First they allowed the repairing of pagodas, and the organizing of offering-ceremonies in pagodas in order to "follow the predecessors," to "have full blessing," and to "pray for long-life blessing"; then they assumed that Confucianism and Buddhism "both teach people to do good," that "it is unfair to consider Buddhism superstitious."¹⁵ Minh Mang sometimes had to explain his deeds in favor of Buddhism, which is illustrated by his words on the decision to organize a ceremony at Phat Tich (Sai Son) pagoda: "It is not to flatter Buddha," he said;¹⁶ or on his visit to Thanh Duyen Pagoda he inscribed his poem, "My impartial attitude towards Buddhism is expressed in this poem."¹⁷ Thieu Tri considered all Buddhist activities inevitable. Thieu Tri even composed poems to admire the pagoda scenery. It was recorded that "In the third year of Thieu Tri reign, a booklet of poems was published as a tribute to twenty wonders. The poem entitled "Giac hoang phan ngu" was engraved in a stele that erected on the east of the pagoda."¹⁸ In the reigns of Minh Mang and Thieu Tri many pagodas were built, big sums spent repairing old pagodas, many Bonzes were provided "gioi dao" and "do diep," many ceremonies which lasted several days were held.¹⁹

Besides the king, to different degrees mandarins and scholars showed their belief in Buddhism. Some who were high-ranking mandarins claimed themselves to be Bodhisattvas attending upon pagoda-building, stele-carving and scriptures-engraving. Some often visited the pagoda scenery to live with nature and to show their sympathy for Buddhism and

for the clergy. Some were sympathetic towards some of Buddhism's theories on human plight and on the way to release from it. Those who were sympathetic towards Buddhism were demonstrating a common opinion of the times, representing the majority of the population and leaving in words a deep impression of their outlook on life.

Among the broad masses of the people, a dynastic change by no means resulted in a change of belief. The regulations against Buddhism defined by the Nguyen dynasty worked only temporarily and in a limited space. The practice of "King's law is inferior to village customs," the decentralized authority, and the backwardness of traditional society made the ordinances of the royal court rather ineffective and not well-known to the population. As under the preceding dynasties, the common people turned their thoughts toward Gautama Buddha and carried out their customary pilgrimages and worship. They put their faith in Buddha, who really became an idol in their mind and to whom they pledged eternal respect and veneration.

Every year, on the occasion of the first and fifteenth day of the lunar month, regardless whether in the South or in the North of Vietnam, in the lowland or in the highland, belonging to Lin Ji or Cao Dong sect, people went in great numbers to pagodas for worshipping. When there, they would pay their homage to Buddhas, present their sorrows and griefs, and pray to Buddhas for favors. When returning home, they would feel released from their worries and fully satisfied as if their wishes had been fulfilled. They were content with making such visits to pagodas all their lives. It seemed that such things could inspire people with renewed enthusiasm, more hope and confidence in life so as to have enough strength to tide them over difficulties and trials.

Completely devoted to the cult of Buddhas and placing all their faith in them, the people would consider the making of contributions to pagodas' funds as an obligation which they fulfilled voluntarily and joyfully. The Bonzes residing at pagodas would be held responsible for recording the names of donors on the bells, inscribing them on the stele or writing them in the genealogies, to say nothing of doing religious services for the donors when the donors happened to die. For these reasons, donations given by the inhabitants to pagodas kept increasing with time. With the good heart of the people, many pagodas and temples were built anew, and the damaged ones quickly restored. All these made Pham Quy Thich, a Confucian scholar living in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, to become jealous and testy. He wrote a literary composition and had it engraved on the surface of a new cast pagoda bell as follows: "You don't know what the villagers do! They accumulate money to enrich themselves. They do that not for the interest of anybody else: when they are requested to donate property and money to pagodas, they do it of their own free will. They fear to be outranked [in this] by others. Even the poor people, who can hardly make both ends meet, are quite happy to give some coins, some bowls of rice without hesitation!"²⁰ Under the Nguyen dynasty

pagodas and temples mushroomed and developed into a whole system comprising all types and dimensions and ranging from home and village to countrywide pagodas and temples. Particularly in Hue imperial city, the Thap pagoda was repaired and enlarged and became an architectural beauty in the city. The Thien Mu pagoda underwent many repairs and meliorations and was the place of frequent religious services and ceremonies attended even by the king and many high dignitaries of the Court. Other pagodas such as Giac Hoang, Dieu De, Thanh Duyen, were the objects of deep care from the king who usually came for the purpose of visit and worship. South Vietnam was then famous for its population's faith in Buddha. There was the saying: "People in Gia Dinh area are greatly devoted to the cult of Buddha" Pagodas and stupas had been built everywhere. The emigrants who came in big numbers from other localities in the country to South Vietnam for the purpose of changing wasteland into cultivated areas, undertook to build their own pagodas in order to pray to Buddha for blessings, for bringing them comfort and happiness and for helping them to make a good living there. The Buddhist clergy was particularly numerous in the reigns of the Nguyen Kings. Big pagodas had each as many as thirty persons. Small pagodas were staffed at least by some five to seven persons. Every day, the Bonzes said prayers three or four times, in the morning, afternoon, evening and at night. The prayer books they often used in religion services were *Chu Kinh Nhat Tung Vo Luong Tho*, *Quan Vo Luong Tho*, *A-Di-Da*, *Dieu Phap Lien Hoa*, etc. Among the Buddhist clergy, there were a number of persons who "shirked state duties" or escaped the military and other services imposed on them by the court but in general they were devoted to the cult of Buddha and played the role of intermediary between the common people and Buddhas. They enjoyed much confidence and respect from Buddhist believers.

The above-mentioned facts showed that Buddhism under the Nguyen dynasty constituted a particular stage with many traits different from those in the previous times. The difference affected many aspects, ranging from the system of pagodas and the way of organizing the Buddhist clergy to the forms of rituals, the relationship between the Court and the Buddhist clergy, the religious mentality, etc. That difference originated from the interaction between the policy of the Nguyen court and Buddhism at that time. On the one hand, the court attempted to bring Buddhism into the sphere of its ideological conception. On the other, endowed with a world outlook of its own and rather strong traditional belief, Buddhism strove its best to break from the court's bonds and sought for itself an independent way of development, and furthermore regulated the conception and attitude of the court. This is a stage which cannot be ignored.

In the course of its development, Buddhism under the Nguyen dynasty could do a lot of work, get much credit and play an important role in its long course of development. That role found expression in the following aspects:

Buddhism continued to be a thousand-year-old creed and thereby maintained a cultural tradition bearing the Buddhist character of the nation: pagodas and temples remained, as always, the very places where festivities and games, customs and practices in rural areas, were held and displayed. In those places, people would see not a few degenerate customs and practices but they would also remark not a few talents and skills among the participants. It could be said that numerous artists became mature as a result of their participation in festivities and games. It should be noted that the five commandments of Buddhism (against murder, theft, lust, lying and drunkenness) were advice and at the same time a moral teaching: if these five commandments of Buddhism are observed, then man's spiritual behavior and the relation between man and man becomes much finer. Notions of Buddhism such as "good finds good," "retribution," "good is repaid for good, evil for evil," though having a 'mystical' character, constitute nonetheless a good faith and a firm foundation for people to do good acts and avoid bad acts. And that should help create equilibrium in the relations between man and man in a society of agricultural inhabitants. By having a good faith in Buddhism, the inhabitants under the Nguyen dynasty could maintain and develop to a certain degree the fine traditions of the past, and moreover they could have confidence in themselves to overcome difficulties and sufferings caused by the harsh rule of the Court and by natural calamities.

Under the Nguyen, a network of pagodas and stupas was put 'under restoration'. In North Vietnam, the pagodas named Dau, But Thap, Phat Tich, Vinh Nghiem, Keo, Sai Son, Tay Phuong, etc., were either brought back to their original form or put 'under repair': if this were not the case, they would have been destroyed or ruined by the tropical climate and humidity. In central Vietnam, especially in the capital of the Nguyen feudal dynasty, a series of pagodas and stupas were built which bore both the colors of the ancient Viet culture, thus creating a rather new architectural style. In South Vietnam, the Thap pagoda put under reconstruction in this period received many particular traits of the Southeast Asian culture. The pagodas and temples left over by the Nguyen dynasty contribute an invaluable asset for our country. The people of today may see through them and know more about the talents and skills as well as the righteousness, the way of thinking, psychology and the general intellectual character of the past generations of the Vietnamese people.

A series of holy scriptures was then collected and printed. A number of persons were especially appointed to do this work and a number of pagodas were specializing in engraving and printing these books and in storing wooden printing plates (the Bo Da, Tu Quang, Lien Tong... pagodas in North Vietnam, and other pagodas in Hue imperial city). Buddhist prayers, commandments, genealogies and communications, stories... were published in rather big numbers, surpassing by far the number in the preceding dynasties. Such sutras as *Hoa Nghiem*, *Phap Hoa*, *Duoc Su*, *Dia Tang*, *Tam Thien*, *Phat Danh*, *Dai Du Da*... and such

“records” as *Thien Uyen Tap Anh Ngu Luc, Ke Dang Luc, Tam To Thap Luc*²¹ were printed in this period. With these publications, Buddhist believers had the conditions to gain an insight into the origin of the appearance of Buddhism as well as other Buddhist teachings and principles and to get rid of wrong thinking about this religion.

With a view to getting a contingent of Bonzes and nuns well trained in doctrinal know-how and in virtue and faith, the Court of Nguyen kings had many a time organized training courses for Bonzes and nuns and exerted repeated control over the latter's virtue and generosity, to say nothing of many campaigns of granting honorary titles and diplomas to the Buddhist clergy and organizing oath-taking ceremonies for the latter. That way of doing thing by the Nguyen kings aimed first and foremost to reduce the number of Bonzes and nuns in permanent service at pagodas and eliminate those who entered into the religion for the sole purpose of evading military service or hard work imposed on them by the authorities, and of leading activities in opposition to the royal court. But apparently, they said that these measures were taken for the purpose of reorganizing the Buddhist religion and bringing it into line with the policy of the court. The examinations conducted for the selection of good Bonzes and nuns, the conferment upon them of honorary titles and diplomas as well as their nominations to leading posts brought the pagodas to a rather good level of organization and made them fully meet the required standards. Bonzes and nuns were more qualified in doing religious services and other rituals. That was a situation different from under the Le-Trinh dynasty in the North or from that under the Nguyen and the Tay Son dynasties in the South of Vietnam.

Apart from that, Buddhism under the Nguyen dynasty still produced a deep effect on poetry and songs and on writers and poets who concerned themselves with the country's situation and human livelihood, and helped the latter to have a particular outlook and a special attitude toward the society and human life. The works written by them not only positively contributed to Vietnam's literary history but also added new pages to the history of Vietnam's Buddhism when interpreting Buddhist doctrine or taking Buddhism as an ideological basis for their poems and songs.

NOTES

¹ The three mainstays of social order (King and subject, father and son, husband and wife).

² The five basic virtues (benevolence, righteousness, civility, knowledge, loyalty).

³ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien* (DNTCB, a record of political convulsions of the Viet country), Vol.2, History Publisher, Hanoi, 1963, p. 289.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 167.

⁵Op. cit., Vol. XXVIII, Social Sciences Publishing House, 1973, p. 136.

⁶Op. cit., Vol. XXVII, p. 376.

⁷Op. cit., Vol. IV, History Publisher, Hanoi 1963, p. 166.

⁸Op. cit., Vol., IV, p. 167.

⁹Op. cit., Vol., II, p. 289.

¹⁰*A summary of Vietnamese Buddhist History* by Superior monk Thich Mat The was reprinted by Minh Duc, Publisher-Saigon 1960, pp. 215-216.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²*Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc* (A book of continuous stories about veteran Bonzes) by Bonze Superior Phuc Dien, Library of the Han-Nom institute. VH. Vol. 9. p. 45.

¹³*DNTLCB*, Vol. V, p.112.

¹⁴*DNTLCB*.Vol. VI., p. 234.

¹⁵*DNTLCB*, Vol. XVII., p. 54.

¹⁶*DNTLCB*, Vol. XXII., P.154.

¹⁷Op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁸*Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (The reunification of the Viet country), Vol. I, Social Sciences Publisher, Hanoi, 1969, p. 71.

¹⁹*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien*, Vol. V, XVII, XXVI.

²⁰Pham Qui Thich, *Pham Lap Trai Thi Van Lap* (Collection of poetry and literature of Pham Lap Trai). (Book in Chinese characters).

²¹See Bonze Phuc Dien, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc* (Text in Chinese characters and engraved in wooden planks), Library of the Han-Nom Institute. VH. Vol. 9. pp. 41-44.

CHAPTER XIV

BUDDHISM AS CHARACTERIZED BY GREAT POETS UNDER THE NGUYEN DYNASTY

The majority of noted poets in the first half of the nineteenth century were Confucian scholars. Their knowledge, their *raison d'être* and the orientation for their social activities depended for the most part upon this scholarly background. Five to six centuries ago, scholars already took Confucianism as their main subject of learning; Buddhism and Taoism were excluded from the educational system as far back as under the late Tran dynasty. The Nguyen court raised Confucianism to the position of a national doctrine so it should be said that scholars at the time were deeply penetrated with the knowledge of Confucius, Mencius, Cheng, Zhou. Confucianism is a doctrine concerned with the principles of true loyalty to friends, relatives, rules etc... and that one should treat others as one would wish to be treated. This doctrine points out the five moral obligations, namely between king and subject, father and son, husband and wife, in-between brothers and friends; and the five virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness, civility, knowledge, loyalty. That is the conception of man's ethics rooted in its origin from God. That is the ideology advocating that man's fate is determined by God and that human beings must abide by the laws of God. That means before entering into active life, those scholar-poets should have been equipped with a Confucian system of world outlook and outlook on life.

Entering into an active life means for any scholar the getting of a mandarin's official appointment because Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, had said: "A man who studies hard to gain a deep knowledge is expected to become a mandarin". Given the fact that only by becoming a mandarin could a scholar have the possibility of bringing into full play his talent and ability, be provided with the opportunity to enlighten the king on how best to govern the commoners and bring favors and benefits to the inhabitants so as to satisfy man's will to keep a well-arranged home and properly govern the country. One more important thing is that only by making oneself a mandarin can one have both "honors" and "privileges". Those scholar-poets at that time made no exception to this rule. The great poet Nguyen Du, after weighing the pros and cons, made up his mind to join the mandarin class. He enthusiastically depicted the characters of his long novel in verses titled "Kieu" from their passing examinations to their joining the mandarin class, saying that without passing examination, one never has the opportunity to become a mandarin. He wrote in the Kieu novel verses such as the following: "Successfully passing the examination, Vuong and Kim could figure in the list of laureates on the same day." The scholar Nguyen Cong Tru expressed his

sentiments in a rather clear manner in the following verses: “Once living in this world, one should gain a reputation to be worthy of the land of birth” (in his poem “Self-opinion while on the way to the examination”), “Once gaining favors and honors from the king one must take pride in them and have them shown on great national occasions” (in his poem “Self-opinion”). The scholar Cao Ba Quat considered getting a pass in court competition, examination and obtaining a mandarin's post to be a quite obvious philosophy. He said: “On entering into life with much literary knowledge, I don't appreciate such behavior as to escape from glory and honors...” Their ideal about entering into an active life differed greatly from the viewpoints on human life and on release from suffering, as preached by Buddhism.

Those scholars gained more or less the honors and privileges as they wished. They were appointed by the Nguyen court to hold different positions and were entrusted with heavy responsibilities. In order to show their gratitude to the king for the honors and privileges bestowed on them they deemed that it was their duty to do their utmost to serve the court and the dynasty, to strive for the fulfillment of the assignments given them and this in defiance of difficulties and trials. That is why, irrespective of the post held, either commanding troops for an expedition or going abroad on a mission as king's special envoy, they would make every effort to fulfill the tasks entrusted by the king to them as a mark of reciprocating the favors received. That sense of responsibility and that conduct of theirs demonstrated that they acted as world-engaging people of Confucianism.

However, in their poems and literary works, as well as in their ideas, they felt somewhat related to Buddhism. They drew much inspiration from Buddhism and took the themes for their works from pagodas, from Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and found that their way of thinking was much similar to Buddhist circles. This seemed to be difficult to understand and to be somewhat contradictory. But all things considered, there were far-reaching causes for such happenings and not a few ways necessarily leading to them.

There was no need to search for the cause because it was rather conspicuous... it found expression in their life and work. It was related to their work of creation in making poems and writing literary works, that is to say, related to their mood of entering the world and their devotion to life. It should be said that pagodas were at that time not only places of worship in which people put all their faith but also scenic spots which could meet the aesthetic sense of man. Pagodas were usually built in an environment of famous landscape where wonderful scenery of river and mountain, trees and forests was to be seen.

The air space itself offered many wonderful sights. Pagodas constituted architectural beauties made by man's creative labor. Pagoda's roof, its bell-tower, its statues of Buddha, ornamental plants, etc., were highly stylized, representing different things in artistic forms and embodying the conception of the outlook on life and the aesthetic sense and

the burning thirst for beauty of many talented artists. They could have great attraction for the visitors coming from every corner of the country who found in them the objects of their admiration and enjoyment. Writers, poets, irrespective of their ideological and artistic trends, came to visit the pagodas in ever growing numbers to admire their surrounding beautiful sights, their ornaments and architecture, and also to draw inspiration from them.

For that reason they felt more eager than commoners and even than Buddhist believers to frequently visit and keep a close contact with pagodas. Pagodas were usually built in places with peaceful scenery, and isolated from the noise and tumult of the city, which would make the visitors feel ease of body and mind. The feudal ethical behavior put man under too much constraint which caused him sometimes to feel it very hard to endure; he found it necessary for him to have some rest and recreation to 'let loose' the mind. In addition, a mandarin had a rather strained life coupled with moments of glory and shame, in the course of exercising his function and of promotion and demotion in his rank and grade, which made him disgusted with such an easy but too humdrum life and willing to escape from the profession he had chosen. He would regain a balance for his mind when visiting pagodas with beautiful natural sights, wonderful objects of cult and a good stylized architecture, which relieved his mind from his daily chores and worries.

Besides, it should be recognized that the Buddhist doctrine is better than Confucianism in terms of concern for man. Confucianism speaks only of hierarchy and order of precedence in society, whereas Buddhism deals with many aspects of life: existence and non-existence, having and having not, life and death, misfortune and luck... which are problems related to everyone's life and at times occupy one's thoughts and need a proper solution when the occasion arises. Buddhism still exhorts people to comply with the principles of compassion, benevolence, relieving one's fellow-creature from suffering and pain, which are the guidelines in conformity with the mentality of the majority of the people who are inclined to give relief to the poor and suffering. Entrusted with the mission of serving the cause of man, the majority of writers and poets at that time would consider Buddhism to be a good means, a philosophical basis for them to have a full cognition of man and to better comprehend him. For that reason, they took Buddhism as a mainstay for calling upon their fellow countrymen to act as saviors of human sufferings.

Those were the reasons leading writers and poets under the Nguyen dynasty and making them have form connections with this religion. But their attitude toward Buddhism was not the same: it differed according to their political stand, their experience in life, their knowledge, their sex and age group. This was evidenced by the following poets.

Nguyen Du (1766-1820) was a great poet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His works¹ either written in Han (Chinese character) or in Nom (Vietnamese demotic script), have several parts dealing with Buddhism, in which there were recorded stories of noble

hearts, and miserable lives and their denouement. These works deserve to be largely introduced to readers. A Confucian scholar like so many others, Nguyen Du fully recognized his feudal relations and knew too well the rulers' requirements to propagate the feudal order. He was fully aware of the function of poetry and songs as defined by original Confucianists: the function was to inculcate morals into the people's mind ("Van di tai dao"). But Nguyen Du did not pay proper heed to the above requirements. On the contrary, he was consciously using poetry to express the innermost feelings of those men whose fates had made a deep impression on his mind and thought.

Living in the period of rapid transition between the three dynasties of Le Trinh, Tay Son, Nguyen Gia Long, Nguyen Du continually witnessed many pitiful plights of the population, many changes from wealth to poverty, from luck to misfortune, from success to failure... He had the opportunity to keep in close touch with the people and to know about their ups and downs in life, and all these gave him much food for thought. Through what he had seen and heard, he could not look upon and judge things as the men of the past generations had done and thereby his thinking was not like his contemporaries.

In the many plights presented to his mind, Nguyen Du paid only attention to the miserable people, to those troubled by misfortune and unhappiness, - irrespective of their different destinies. In the past there had been people committing monstrous crimes against their fellow-countrymen, but with his immense humanitarianism, Nguyen Du forgave them their past criminal offenses and had no hard feelings toward them as others did. And more than that, he still felt sorrow for their actual trouble and sufferings, he had pity on those who lived alone in an out-of-the-way place and had no support whatsoever from their relatives and compatriots. He deemed it was the duty of the inhabitants to help those poor people in trouble and to bring them back to a life of happiness.

Among the miserable people Nguyen Du gave special attention to and was particularly impressed by the lot of talented and beautiful women predestined to live a miserable life. Those women, though coming of different family backgrounds, were similar to one another in terms of talent and beauty, but it was their lot to suffer great misery and to feel deep grief and sorrow in their heart. Among them, there were women who acted as a songstress in Thang Long (present-day Hanoi) or in the region of Guangling, who became concubines of a Tang emperor in China, and particularly noted was the case of Thuy Kieu, a girl famous for her talent and beauty, who, coming from a well-to-do family, was driven into a bawdy-house where she served both as songstress and prostitute. The misfortune and suffering of this girl which in any case should not have happened to her had deeply impressed Nguyen Du and made him thoughtful about her lot. Are such persons blamable or worthy of pity? Should they be neglected or be taken into consideration?

In Nguyen Du's opinion, the people at large seemed to show little interest in them and held them rather cheaply. He wrote the following sentences in the funeral oration addressed to the songstress of Thang Long: "In society, nobody feels pity for the people with bad destiny; in their tombs ill-fated women regret their having come into being." The talented woman in the Guangling region was victim of a glaring injustice, which she was disposed to suffer by herself ("*Doc Tieu Thanh Ky*"). Then, the royal concubine with a bewitching beauty finally suffered an unjust death before the court, "nobody daring to uphold her cause and redeem her bewitching beauty in place of a thousand years in the tomb."

Afterwards came the story of Thuy Kieu, a woman with both talent and beauty, which found expression in the following verses: "She is second to none in beauty and so is her talent"; but she had to drag on her life of prostitution and could not escape from it. Nguyen Du wrote the following sentence to depict Thuy Kieu's life of prostitution: "One incident succeeded to another which made Thuy Kieu enter two times into bawdy-houses and wear for two times a prostitute's dress." Nguyen Du found those women only worthy of pity but not deserving any blame, only worthy of public concern but not deserving any resentment. He saw that society displayed an unjust attitude toward them. He deemed it was his duty to search for the origins of those injustices. Nguyen Du put the blame on the "Creator," on God. By the words uttered from the mouths of various characters in the novel, he indirectly attributed the cause of ill-fate of those women to the Creator, which was proven in the following verses: "By boldly making a leap in the dark, shall we see how the Creator will arrange our lot?"

And more than that, he came to a generalization of his views as follows: "It is the Creator who decides upon everything in this world; when He has the power to give birth to a person, He can model him as He wishes; He may either involve him in the turmoil of life, or raise him to a high position in Society." But who is God? Where does He live? Nguyen Du could not explain and give answers to these questions. And for that reason he would not even believe in his explanations if he could give some. So he must ponder over it still more carefully. He searched through traditional ideas and found that the Buddhist philosophy proved to be a most sensible and convincing one, and it conquered his mind. Nguyen Du's works bore in many parts the color of Buddhism by referring a lot of the concepts and notions of the Buddhist doctrine for elucidating life. Such concepts as suffering, predestined affinity, predestined love, release from suffering, lusts of the flesh, good heart, etc., which were words coming from the Buddhist philosophy and were frequently used in his poems and verses. And in him appeared a clear-cut conception of Buddhism.

It should be said that the Buddha whom Nguyen Du referred to in his verses was Buddha of the Ch'an (Dhyana) sect. That Buddha could be found right in man's mind and in man's heart. He wrote the following verses in Kieu: "Kindness is in our mind; Good heart is much better than talent"; and in his funeral oration Nguyen Du addressed to the souls of the dead:

“He who takes Buddha as a guide for his action, will be without a twinge of remorse when going through rebirth.”

Like other persons following the precepts of the Ch’an sect, Nguyen Du considered that nothing was in existence in this world, and that what was called a thing was but a product of man's imagination. He said: “A mirror is not a polished surface reflecting images, nor is a bodhi tree a tree in itself.”

He still advocated the preaching of religion without recourse to writing and tongue. He said: “Finally it is found that a prayer-book without writing is a genuine one.” To be compared with other Ch’an sects in the Orient, Nguyen Du's view belonged to the “Enlightenment Dhyana” sect. However, the conception of Buddha held by Nguyen Du was not consistent because he did not fully grasp the ideas of the Ch’an sect. Believing the notion that Buddha is the mind, in reality there could be no possible explanation of man's life, and thereby this notion could not in any way meet the requirement of releasing man from his suffering. So in Nguyen Du's conception, there were the elements of Pure Land and Tantrayana. The following extract would suffice to demonstrate that fact: “Thanks to Buddha's supernatural power the souls of the dead are free from suffering, Buddha's aureole saves them from pains and worries, rallying them from the four corners of the universe; Buddha's aureole sets their minds at peace, without worry and hatred for one another.” These sentences were found in the “*Funeral Oration Addressed to the Souls of the Dead*” written by Nguyen Du. The upper part bears the nuance and tonality of Pure Land. The lower part contains the nuance and tonality of Tantrayana.

Apart from the above traits, Nguyen Du's ideas still bore the particular features of the traditional ideology, which consisted in conciliating the ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism: thus the author made a large use of concepts and notions of one religion to replace those in other religions. Here and there, in Nguyen Du's words and phraseology one finds “dang thien” (Confucianism) interchangeable with “dang Phat dai” (Buddhism), and words such as ‘nhan duyen’ and ‘tuc nhan’ (Buddhism) treated as equivalents of ‘tien dinh’ and ‘menh dinh’ (Confucianism); even the words ‘co duyen’ (Buddhism) in Nguyen's work come to mean ‘co troi’, ‘van troi’, etc. As a consequence, some people said that Nguyen Du had mistaken one religion for another. But in reality, Nguyen Du was making very ‘consciously chosen’ mistakes and expressing a notion fully shaped in his mind.

Though producing many arguments taken from Buddhism, Nguyen Du was unable to give explanation about man and his fate. He did not know that unfortunate fates were derived from the social regime, from the domination by the ruling forces at that time. That is why he could derive consolation when he said: “Kindness is in our mind” and “Good heart is far better than talent”. He expressed personal ideas which were harassing him for a long a time: “How painful is the fate of the woman, She is born to suffer and nobody knows the reason why.”

Nguyen Du passed away but he left such questions in his works as: “How to make man get rid of suffering?” “How to realize justice in society?” The generations succeeding him have found the proper answers to these questions.

Contemporary with Nguyen Du under the Nguyen dynasty was Nguyen Cong Tru (1778-1858), a poet with a particularly vigorous characteristic. He had a strong inclination to Confucianism but he had also a tendency toward Buddhism, that is to say, starting from Confucianism he oriented himself toward Buddhism. When entering into his active life, Nguyen Cong Tru was quite eager to attain both honors and fame. He did not conceal his thinking. He said: “When born in this world, it would be not worth living if one had neither honors nor fame,” or “A man's will to make his way in life is to contrive to attain honors and fame,” or “Fame is badly needed to stand in society.” In order to get honors and fame as he wished for, Nguyen Cong Tru pursued both civil and military careers in relation to promotion or demotion in rank and grade in the course of life. And he succeeded to some extent in carrying into effect his wish. But more than anyone else, Nguyen Cong Tru was affected by the seamy side of life. He felt deeply the changes to bad fortune when engaging on the path of fame and honors. He knew better about the fact that honor often went along with shame, that the character of the people living under the feudal regime was devious, greedy and lacking in benevolence and righteousness. This made him disgusted with life. A man with a dearly defined morality such as Nguyen Du finally uttered the following words: “Nobody can understand well the differences between the sweets and the bitters of life.”

He considered that Confucianism would help him attain honors and fame but this was really a string tying man down, preventing him from developing his own ideas and feelings and many a time making his life under the feudal regime very oppressive. On the other hand, he found that honors and fame would have very little significance if compared with the insecurity they bring at the same time. He often said: “Honors and fame are meaningless in this world,” “It is not yet known whether our body even exists or not, so why pay too much attention to honors and fame?” And then he made up his mind to come to Buddha which found expression in the following phrase: “It would be better to say greetings to Amitabha Buddha.”

But the Buddhist doctrine could not entirely win his heart and mind. He still had a deep attachment to worldly affairs and human life. Thus, he could not give up Confucianism which was a religion dealing chiefly with worldly affairs and human life. Finally, he placed his faith in both Confucianism and Buddhism and found out some unity between Confucianism and Buddhism in order to make it serve as a basis for his faith in both religions. He was of the opinion that both religions would last forever and supplement each other.

Another famous poet in the first half of the nineteenth century was Cao Ba Quat (1809-1855), many of whose poems dealt with pagodas and

Buddha. Through these poems, people would find out many particular traits in his impressions and feelings and in his mentality toward Buddhism. Those traits contributed to popularizing the spiritual aspects of Buddhism during that epoch. Unlike Nguyen Du, and even different from Nguyen Cong Tru, Cao Ba Quat viewed Buddhism with an atheistic and practical eye. He found that there were many absurdities in Buddhist rites. His poem titled “*Buddha with a Broken Arm*” was a piece of satirical writing by which he would like to express a simple and obvious reality: Buddha had a broken arm, he could not save even himself, how could he profess to save the living creatures; when he could not help himself, how could he profess to help others.

He was skeptical about the supernatural quality of Buddha and put a big question mark upon the people's faith in him. He made the following poem to describe Buddha satirically: “Believers say Buddha has a body made of diamond, but before my eyes Buddha has a broken arm. He cannot help himself, how can he help other people. The monk presents Him with fruits and other gifts which would make Him only indulge in more errors.” But by this poem Cao Ba Quat did not intend to negate Buddhism. It was not easy to deny a traditional religion and moreover this could not be done simply with the aid of a visual fact. To do this, many other facts were needed at that time, but they were not yet available. That is why he still showed much attachment to this religion. From the following aspects, people would be able to gain an insight into Cao Ba Quat's mentality.

From the aspect of worldly affairs and of human life, Cao Ba Quat found himself to be badly in need of visiting pagodas, and of keeping in close touch with the Buddhist religion. First and foremost, he made frequent visits to pagodas for the purpose of admiring the beauty of nature sights around them. For instance, when visiting Con Son pagoda, he felt deeply impressed by the beautiful scenery there and wrote the following verses:

In the fog the space seems to be dim and immense,
 Mountain succeeding mountain making a beautiful panorama;
 The visitor with a gourd of wine in hand strolling here and there
 under the vast sky

....

Beneath Thau Ngoc bridge hang numerous wild flowers;
 In Thanh Hu cave birds are twittering all the day.
 (Con Son Hanh)

Among the many principles of Buddhism, Cao Ba Quat sympathized with the principle of uncertainty and insecurity, but his view was not entirely like that of Buddhism. The Buddhist religion regards everything as uncertain, insecure and considers all things to be continually changing in the current of life and bearing the character of nihilism. As for Cao Ba Quat, he held the view that human life was uncertain and insecure

but the natural sights were something habitual. Maybe he found that natural sights were changing too, but slowly and if compared with the rapid change of human life, it seemed that natural sights did not change at all. Due to his perception of uncertainty and insecurity of life, Cao Ba Quat had the intention to select for himself another way to go ahead, different from the mandarin's career he has then pursuing. Cao Ba Quat only made up his mind to choose another way to go in his life but in reality he could not proceed further toward Buddhism: his personal traits were not in conformity with the Buddhist creed and also Buddhism had not yet enough power to convince him to follow it.

Different from the thinking of the above-mentioned poets, the poetess Ho Xuan Huong (in the early nineteenth century) who was famous for her poems written in Nom (Vietnamese demotic script), did not have any sympathy with Buddhism. Her poetry often touched upon the seamy side of Buddhism, and even lashed out against Buddhism... She scoffed at this religion in three aspects: religious life, pagodas and monks. She held that the religious life was a heavy one. She wrote a poem dedicated to the religious life as follows:

The religious life is as heavy as carrying a load of stones,
Why devote so much pain for so little favor?
Anyone who wishes to enter the Land of Buddhas
It would be better to deviate from that way.

She made fun of those monks who were slack in saying prayers but eager to court women. Her following verses denoted their character:

You are neither Chinese nor ours,
Your head is clean-shaven, your dress without clasps;
Before you, placed some glutinous rice cakes,
Behind you, found several voluptuous lay female believers.

Ho Xuan Huong's scoffing at monks was somewhat too excessive but it would be necessary to understand her because this poetess was a woman with a practical mind who was strongly desirous to have a conjugal happiness while Buddhism required Bonzes and nuns to lead a life of severe self-discipline and privation, let alone conjugal happiness. The phenomenon of Ho Xuan Huong was not typical in Vietnam's literary history as well as in Vietnam's Buddhist history. For the first time in history, a person used the form of literature to lash out at Buddhism. It should be said that she had been and remained the only person who criticized severely the religion. She constituted a particular phenomenon and apart from her, nobody else was to be found advocating such a viewpoint. So she did not symbolize the way of thinking of her contemporaries.

Through the above-mentioned poets, we realize that Buddhism under the Nguyen was not the object of full respect and veneration as it had

been under the previous dynasties. The Ho Xuan Huong phenomenon and to some extent Cao Ba Quat's way of thinking were the very few examples found in the literary works dealing with Buddhism. That was, indeed, a new point in literature at that time because some people dared look straight at the truth and had enough courage to criticize a religion actually dominating over the society. The behavior of both Ho Xuan Huong and Cao Ba Quat had more or less the character of an 'enlightenment'.

But on the other side, it was found that Buddhism was still deeply rooted in the mind of various strata of the population, that it still kept a close touch with man by its multiple relations and that it still served as an ideological basis for those men with much suffering and ambition. This fact is proven by the poems written by all those people who had much sympathy with Buddhism during that epoch.

NOTE

¹Nguyen Du's works: *Truyen Kieu* (The Tale of Kieu), *Thanh Hien Tien Hau Tap*, *Bac Hanh Thi Tap*, *Nam Trung Tap Ngam*, *Van Te Thap Loai Chung Sinh*.

CHAPTER XV

TYPICAL BONZES UNDER THE NGUYEN DYNASTY

The Nguyen dynasty was not a period in which powerful monks made influential doctrinal and institutional innovations or secured for themselves a heightened degree of social prestige. While evidence does not permit us to identify outstanding religious figures from the era, there certainly existed monks and nuns who were devoutly religious and worked hard organizing Buddhist forces and propagating the faith.

While some Bonzes were promoted to important positions or awarded special honors, less esteemed Bonzes contributed to the strength of the movement by vigilantly keeping the faith, improving their doctrinal erudition, and maintaining a lifestyle consistent with Buddhist tenets. Both officially recognized and anonymous devotees contributed significantly to the prestige and position of Buddhism during the era. Moreover, several common traits can be identified which suggest some distinctive characteristics shared by Buddhist supporters during the Nguyen, as opposed to during previous dynasties.

The following list includes a handful of Nguyen Bonze superiors who held court-appointed positions in various localities. In the North, Bonze Superior Phuc Dien from the Lien Tong and Thien Quang pagodas in Hanoi, Bonze Tich Truyen (Buddhist name: Kim Lien) from the Van Trai pagoda in Hanoi, Bonze Chieu Khoan (Buddhist name: Tuong Quang), from Van Trai pagoda in Hanoi, Bonze Pho Tich also from Van Trai pagoda and later transferred to Thien Quang pagoda in Hanoi, Bonze Thong Vinh from Ham Long pagoda in Hanoi, Bonze Thanh Dam (Buddhist name: Minh Chinh) from Bich Dong pagoda, Yen Khanh district, Ninh Binh province, Bonze Thanh Nguyen (Buddhist name: Minh Nam) in Ninh Binh province, Bonze An Thien from Dai Giac pagoda, in Bo Son village, Ha Bac province, etc.

In central Vietnam there were Bonze Nhat Dinh (Buddhist name Thanh Thien) at Thien Tho (named afterward Bao Quoc) pagoda, then removed to Linh Huu pagoda, Hue; Bonze Dieu Giac (Buddhist name Hai Thuan) at Dieu De pagoda, who had the merit of rehabilitating Hue Lam, Bao Quoc and Kim Tien pagodas in Hue; Bonze Giac Ngo at Bat Nha pagoda in Dong Xuan district Phu Yen province, later removed to Dieu De pagoda in Hue; Bonze Lieu Triet (Buddhist name: Tu Minh) at Quoc An, Linh Quang pagodas, being concurrently the Patriarch of Giac Hoang pagoda in Hue; Bonze Pho Tinh, alias Dao Minh at Thien Tho (Bao Quoc) pagoda in Hue; Bonze Mat Hoang residing at times in Gia Dinh, Quoc An (Hue) and Thap Thap Di Da pagoda (Binh Dinh province); Bonze Dieu Nghiem at Tu Quang pagoda in Song Cau district, Phu Yen province. In

South Vietnam, there were Bonze Lieu Thong alias Chan Giac, residing at Phuong Son pagoda in Cay Mai area, Gia Dinh; Bonze Vien Quang at Tap Phuoc pagoda, Gia Dinh; Bonze Vien Ngo at Lan Nha pagoda, Gia Dinh; Bonze Phuoc An at Hung Long pagoda, Binh Duong district, Gia Dinh; Bonze Dao Thong residing at the various pagodas at intervals in Go Cong and Gia Dinh province.

At that time transport facilities between regions were improved and the cultural life and religious adherence were almost at the same level. The need of having guidance in their spiritual life among Buddhist believers in the various regions, though slightly different in form, became very urgent. It served as a background for every region to create its religious leaders, who differed from very little in quality, virtue and prestige. Many of the above-mentioned Bonzes conducted their activities over a large area, not necessarily confined to their home village nor limited by their sect. They traveled everywhere, if required. In addition to those who traveled by the demand of the court, most traveled in the monastic tradition or at an area's request, consequently widening the scope of activity for the sake of learning and preaching Buddhism.

Some Bonzes journeyed far from their native places. For example Bonze Lieu Thong, of native of Thanh Hoa province, went a long way to the Cay Mai, Gia Dinh, an area near Saigon, where he built a pagoda and, preached Buddhism. Mat Hoang, another itinerant monk, started from Binh Dinh province to Gia Dinh in the south, then went north to Hue and finally returned to Binh Dinh. Some monks originated their journeys from Buddhist centers, traveling to the surrounding area and later returning, such as Bonze Phuc Dien. This Bonze left Hanoi to Bac Ninh, Son Tay, Nam Dinh, went south to Hue, then returned to Hanoi. His shuttling, and that of others, between different regions enhanced mutual understanding and solidarity between Buddhist believers of different localities, helping Buddhism develop faster within the framework of an already politically unified nation.

From their origin, the above-mentioned Bonzes were affiliated to different Buddhist sects. For example Bonze Pho Tinh, Quang Nam province, belonged to the Lieu Quan sect; Bonze Mat Hoang and Vien Quang belonged to Nguyen Thieu sect; and Bonze Thanh Dam, to the Ch'an Nguyen sect. Regarding the continuation of disciples, their Bonzes had successive generations of fame. Along the line of disciples initiated by Bonze Mat Hoang, the most famous in the first generation was Bonze Nhat Dinh; in the second, Dieu Giac and Cuong Ky; and in the third, Vien Giac and Hue Phap. Of Bonze Tich Truyen's sect, the famous disciples of the first generation were Bonze Chieu Khoan, and of the second, Pho Tinh (Hanoi). From the sect of disciples of Bonze Phuc Dien there were Thong Vinh and An Thien.

Despite the various names, these schools did not truly create significantly original tenets, rituals, or moral doctrines enabling their posterity. Pagoda annals list successions of Bonzes and their practices and

ideologies, but there were little differences between them. The most apparent reason for this lack in variety was the stifling control by the Court, impeding independent development and destroying all new thought for a whole generation.

Bonzes of high scholarship at that time, besides investigating and practicing rituals at pagodas, were also involved in studies and discussion on the nature of the Buddhist faith. This was required by their own religious life as well as by their aim of propagating Buddhism among disciples. Personal thoughts appeared in Buddhist lessons that summed up their religious lives, or in their notebooks on sacred books of prayers (*pitaka*), referring to such concepts as mind, nothingness, and such relations as mind-body, mind-outside world, existence-nonexistence. Though filled with concepts, these arguments are, however, far from unique, - all of them still considering spirit to be the source of all things, and nothingness the essence of nature and the phenomenal world. In sum, their philosophies were no more advanced than that of their predecessors.

But in the name of the clergy representing the prestige of their religion of their time, they had to make contributions to the enhancement of their need, to the treasure of Buddhism they inherited, and to create something new for their time. This task they knew well, and tried to materialize what was in their power and conditions. In reality, they made some contributions in the various fields.

Buddhist monks under the Nguyen dynasty built a big archive on Buddhism, to store the canon (the *pitaka* of three kinds) and other Buddhist documents. They worked on and through all steps of the processes, such as collecting, supplementing, systematizing, taking notes, explaining, printing, distributing and storing. Among the Buddhist monks participating in this work, the most distinguished were Bonzes Phuc Dien, An Thien, Thanh Dam and Dieu Nghiem. The Bonzes also systematized and compiled documents on their own work, and composed books of their own. Based on their rich collections, they managed to write a number of valuable books on the history of Buddhism, or on new approaches to ancient books. For example, Bonze Phuc Dien wrote *Thien Uyen Truyen Dang Luoc Luc*; Bonze An Thien wrote *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu*; Bonze Thanh Dam authored *Phap Hoa De Cuong* and *Tam Kinh Truc Giai*; Bonze Dieu Nghiem wrote *Su Nghia Luat Yeu Luoc* and *Su Nghia Quy Quyen* and others.

From *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu* by Bonze An Thien we know that in his time a big number of archives on the Buddhist literature were built.¹ In terms of the Sutra Pitaka, there were 84 books with at least a copy for each, and at most 120 copies (in the case of the *Bao Tich Kinh*). There were five sets of 40 copies or more of the *Hoa Nghiem*, *Phan Giap*: 82 copies; *Hoa Nghiem Phuong Sach*: 81 copies; *Phat Ban Hanh*: 60 copies.

As for the Vinaya Pitaka there were 26 books with a minimum of one copy and maximum of 40 copies (the *Dai Luat Tang*). There were 4 sets of Abhidharma and 61 research works with a maximum of 55 copies

for one book (*Phat To Thong Ky*). This number of Buddhist books was unknown in the past.

To manage to do this, these Bonzes had to rely upon efforts by pagodas. Some pagodas at that time became printing houses, housing the whole printing process: buying paper and wood, renting wood cutters, carving printing plates, etc. These pagodas also turned a number of their rooms into repositories for printing plates. Costs of the printing works were paid for by donations by Buddhist believers and sympathies. Here we should name some of these pagodas: Lien Tong (now called Lien Phai, in the southern part of Hanoi downtown); Dai Giac in Bo Son, Bac Ninh (now Ha Bac province); Thien Phuc in Dai Lam village, Yen Phong district, Bac Ninh province; and the various pagodas in Hue city.

Another achievement of Buddhist monks under the Nguyen dynasty was their presentation of Buddhism in the country as well as throughout the world. Foreign books on the history of Buddhism in the world were made available, although few in number and often unintelligible to Vietnamese monks and followers. Some books on the history of Buddhism in Vietnam were available, such as *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, *Thanh Dang Luc*, and *Chu To Luc*. However, these books only dealt with the pre-Tran dynasty period, leaving a big gap between the Tran dynasty to the Nguyen dynasty.

An urgent need was felt by some Buddhist monks to fill this gap. Thus numerous monks collected materials to compile their own books of Buddhist history to meet this demand. These books not only helped their contemporaries learn about the history of their religion, but also help us nowadays to know the level of knowledge of Vietnamese under the Nguyen dynasty. Bonze Phuc Dien and his disciple Bonze An Thien made a large contribution in this field as we shall see below.

Buddhists under the Nguyen dynasty followed these two courses of action: collecting documents and generalizing the history of their religion, partly to meet the demand of Buddhist believers of their time and partly to push the development of Buddhism itself. How far did this trend develop? In order to answer this one must examine all of history. Furthermore, such a trend did not exist unless through those men who were conscious of their mission. Objectively, the work done by these Bonzes constitutes a review of the course of development of Buddhism in Vietnam and a preparation for future developments. These Bonzes were unable to point out future prospects but their service helped their successors to strive for a new phase of development.

The achievements of Buddhism under the Nguyen dynasty resulted from big efforts by many Buddhist monks and a large number of Buddhist believers. But especially distinguished services were rendered by a certain number of people. It would be unjust if we were not to present the life and work of these men.

Bonze Thanh Dam (the dates of birth and death are unknown) had the merit of having an explanatory work on Buddha's teachings and of his

initiatives and thoughts on a number of Buddhist principles which serve as the basis of faith in Buddhism.

Thanh Dam, alias Minh Chinh, resided at Bich Dong pagoda in Dam Khe village, Yen Khanh district, Ninh Binh province. He was a disciple of Bonze Dao Nguyen, belonging to the Ch'an Nguyen sect which had its origin from the Truc Lam sect. He entered the religious life in 1807. In 1819 he wrote *Phap Hoa De Cuong* at Liem Khe pagoda. Twenty-four years later, in 1843, he completed another book: *Tam Kinh Bat Nha Ba La Mat Da Truc Giai* (Explanations on *Prajnaparamitahrdaya-Sutra*).²

Being a draft of fundamentals and a direct explanation these two books had fully enunciated his view on Ch'an and Buddha. Bonze Thanh Dam concentrated his study on the content of the mind (Heart), the central concept of Buddhism. He examined the mind's various aspects, its epistemological and ontological status. Although he did not speak directly of the mind's ontology, in reality he examined it on this plane. He thought the soul was the invariable, unchanged, but the very source of all things, the creation of all things. He said: "What is wonderful is that the mind is always pure. That the mind, from its timeless origin, remains unchanged under any circumstances: - unaided by a 'holy place' and not diminished by worldly life; in fact, not diminished by dirt, nor any need to get cleaner in cleaning; it [the soul] is naturally filled with dharma and prevails throughout the universe.

The mind is the origin of Buddha and also the Buddhist element in every creature. Originally, it is formless but develops into all forms; it comes from nothingness, but becomes the source of nothingness. It is like the transparent "Mani," which is colorless but diffuses all colors, like the sea of enlightenment, which mirrors the phenomenal world but receives no grain of dust. Like a painter who paints the world, it is the spiritual mother of all perceptible things. The *Hoa Nghiem Sutra* says:

If one likes to know
The Buddha of the three times,
Let him observe the phenomenal world:
All is created by the mind.
(Epilogue of *Phap Hoa De Cuong*).

Bonze Thanh Dam solved the relationship between the spirit (mind) and nature (Dharma), considering the mind to be the decisive factor. This is idealism, either objective or subjective, depending on the content of the mind in different contexts. How does the soul create the world? Bonze Thanh Dam presented a chain of metamorphoses, beginning at the mind and stopping at 'being' (the phenomenal world). This is mind-Dharma-being, in which Dharma plays an important bridge. He said: "Dharma is all creatures, the materializing of the pure mind. Pure mind is the sacred sources of all creatures. Dharma is the mind and vice versa. Dharma is the means of existence; when not being contaminated, it's pure Dharma. He

further examined the content and the role played by Dharma: “Although Dharma are innumerable, they can all together be reduced to the six senses (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, body, feeling) and the six ways of appearance (color, sound, smell, taste, touch, dharma) and consciousness. This three types are manifestations of the pure mind, as the saying: “Dharma takes roots from mind, mind is the source of Dharma.” An initial idea has caused innumerable rebirths, continually floating, revolving in the circle of life and death, pursuing up to the present time a false hope...” Clearly here is a picture of transformation founded on an ‘idealist’ philosophy.

But what is the mind? Can we understand it? In reply, Bonze Thanh Dam approached the theory of cognition. He thought one could not recognize the mind through language and explanation: “The mind goes beyond world and signs: the mind by nature is invisible, so how can we point it out? As I have mentioned above, words and signs fail to grasp the mind.” Then how can we understand the mind? He showed two ways:

First, to rely on senses: “Although the soul is invisible, the application of senses leave visible tracks which enable the learned person to decipher these tracks of application, and in this light find the way to the mind.” Second, to rely on intuition and self-learning: “Query: How can this mind be transmitted? Answer: Lord Buddha raised a branch of flowers and ‘Kasyapa smiled’. Later the masters of future generations preserved their story to hand it down. But because of different circumstances, only ‘awakened’ people are able to know it by themselves.” This explanation depends on a concept of using the mind to convey the soul. Bonze Thanh Dam gave a lot of explanations, but in the end he considered “the soul is Buddha, and vice versa.” This concept laid the foundation for the paths of seeking the mind and Buddha. He pointed to three directions: the first is to seek inside oneself, not the outside, because in seeking the outside, people become entangled with phenomena and involved in dharma [= composite characteristics], like a man riding on the back of a buffalo but still in search of that very animal, or like a man having a lighted lamp but still asking for fire; or like a man adding fog over snow. Such people are self-content, -- they think only the Masters and Buddha possess this marvelous power, and as common men they should go and seek the soul in the outside world.” The second is the attitude of ‘the soul is omnipresent, how should one go and find it?’ In this attitude, one relies on the two litanies enunciated by King Tran Nhan Tong about “The six senses and the seven elements. [The six ephemeral senses but every one constitutes the awareness of the pure mind. The seven elements represent Buddha's spirit“], and Bonze Thanh Dam composed³ 13 litanies of his own. The third is the attitude that ‘one needs not find it, because this will be futile work’:

Shining moon, fresh breeze are self-existent.
Failing to seek the mind, and stop looking for it!
Then say goodbye to it since we shall fail;
And if we think we have found it,

what we have found is a false mind.

The trouble is that we are carrying a lighted lamp and still asking for fire.

I'd rather stand on the river bank to chant a chant of mine.

(*Tam Kinh Bat Nha Truc Giai* - A literal explanation of the *Hrdaya Prajnaparamita Sutra*)

The Bonze pointed out the three directions to seek the soul, but he only meant the third one, i.e. the non-necessity of going to seek it. Treating the nature of the soul and the cognitive attitude toward it, Bonze Thanh Dam aimed at showing the way for clergymen to train themselves. This is an easy way to success because the mind is present everywhere; there is no necessity to go and seek it. This is the way of ignoring "senses" and "consciousness," because these are unreal: "Consciousness is a mirage, and senses are transient; both are of no use in the religious life." In other words, man should free himself from worldly affairs, and from the 'right and wrong', since all is nonsensical: "Don't speak about 'short and long'. Long or short, good or bad, all is wrong. Seeking the good is clumsy in the others' eyes. You hunt ravens but wolves are awaiting. A superhuman is like the morning fog. Richness and power, a long dream. They don't know the nature of things is nothingness. Thinking ignorantly, we squander the efforts of our life" (A lecture in *Tam Kinh Bat Nha Truc Giai*).

The sublime goal a Bonze wants to pursue is Prajna. Bonze Thanh Dam's way of approach to the soul proves contradictory. On the one hand, with his concept that Buddha lives in one's mind, and Buddhist character is present in everyone, he upholds human beings, and recognizes the independent value of every person, be he saintly or mundane, a sage or an idiot. It means an opposition to Confucianism's theory of predestination, a theory only recognizing the value of the ruling circles and people of transcendent genius. But on the other hand, with the proposal to seek a release within the spiritual life, setting aside the realistic life and the moral values accumulated in the social life, he is trapped in nihilism, considering human life but only to seek a release, and upholding human beings but only to devalue them.

The concept that Buddha is omnipresent in everyone and everywhere, and the way of approaching him is outside language and script,... has its origin in the Ch'an, the fundamentals of which are found in such canonical books as *Dieu Phap Lien Hoa*, *Tam Kinh Bat Nha La Mat*, etc. Previous Buddhist masters had already treated and explained this theme, so Thanh Dam only inherited this conception. He, however, did a good service in discovering the fundamentals of these canonical books, supporting them with details and heightening them further. This helped his reader better understand the supreme principles of Buddha, and hence materialize what he called "release."

The biggest contributions to the compiling of Buddhist texts during this era was made by the most venerable Phuc Dien (the date of

birth and death are unknown). His family name is Vo, a native of Son Minh, Hanoi. At 12 years old, he entered the religious life at Thinh Liet pagoda, in Dai Bi, Hanoi. At 20 years old, he went to reside at Phap Van, Phu Ninh district, Bac Ninh province. In the 21st year under King Minh Mang he inaugurated Bo Son pagoda in Bac Ninh. In the third year under King Thieu Tri, he inaugurated Phu Nhi pagoda in Son Tay province. In the sixth year under Thieu Tri, he opened Lien Tri pagoda in Hanoi. The next year he inaugurated Bao Thien pagoda, in Hanoi. In the 5th year under King Tu Duc, he returned to Lien Tong pagoda in Hanoi and organized the rebuilding of the pagoda. Under King Minh Mang he was summoned to the royal capital city of Hue to give an explanation of the Buddhist canonical books. The King bestowed on him the knife-shaped lance of abstinence and the royal passport. He stayed in Hue for a few months and had a chance to survey the pagodas in Hue, the royal city, and the nearby provinces.

Also in this period, he made a systematic investigation of the decrees on Buddhism issued by the Nguyen court, and compile information about the development of Buddhism in the Southern part of the country. All this was beneficial to his writings later on. He died on the 16th of the eleventh lunar month, at the age of 80. Many pagodas in the Northern part of Vietnam built altars for him: Lien Tong, Thien Quang and Ham Long (Hanoi); Phu Nhi (Son Tay), Bo Son (Bac Ninh) and some others in Nam Dinh province. Many of his disciples became famous, such as Bonzes Thong Vinh, An Thien, and Pho Tinh, ect.⁴

Bonze Phuc Dien was well aware of his religious service. In his religious life, which lasted for 70 years or so, he traveled a great deal, going to many places and pagodas. He set foot in almost every pagoda in the Red River Delta. Everywhere he went, he tried to reconstruct old pagodas and towers, distribute Buddhist canonical books, give lectures on Buddhism and train clergymen. He learned the Chinese characters by himself during his service at pagodas. His knowledge of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism was self-taught. He had a command of the Chinese characters as good as that of scholars of the first rank; his knowledge of religions was not as profound but was good enough for him to argue and compare the sameness and differences between these religions, and from this, he was able to affirm and uphold Buddhism. He was a rarity in his time.

His works are many and different in genre. As for creative works, these are *Phong Sinh Gioi Sat Van*, *Tam Giao Quang Khuy*, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc*. His compiled works include *Tam Bao Hoang Thong*, *Chu Kinh Nhat Tung Do*, *Thien Gia Kinh Chu Cac Khoan*, *Tieu Du Da*, *Tai Gia Tu Tri*, *Ngu Gioi*, *Thap Gioi Diep*, *Ky An Nhuong Tinh Diep*, *Am Hon Diep*, (12 chapters), and edited *Phat To Thong Ky*, *Ta Vi Phuong Sach* (12 volumes), *Cac Chu Su Tich*, etc.; and in translation he had: *Sa Di Luat Nghi Giai Nghia*. He was also in charge of the printing of *Kinh Hoa Nghiem* (80 volumes), *Dai Gioi Diep*, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, *Cuu Ban Phat To Ke Dan*, *Ho Phap Luan Quoc Am Ban*, *Truc Song Quoc Am Ban*, and

Thien Lam Bao Huan Quoc Am Ban. The word-carving plates of these books were stored at Bo Son pagoda, Bac Ninh province, and Lien Tong pagoda in Hanoi.

It is both unnecessary and impossible to present here the content of all his books, except a number of typical works for the reader to make some acquaintance with his treatment, his thoughts and his service rendered to Buddhism in Vietnam.

Phong Sinh Gioi Sat Van is a booklet, comprising 20 pages only, and written in Chinese characters.⁵ As is meant by the title, the book is aimed at recommending people to practice one of the five commandments (against murder, theft, lust, lying, drunkenness), the one against murder. This is a way to practice the “three initiations“ into Buddhism. Following Buddha, one will not go to Hell; following Dharma one will not go into the world of famine [i.e., of *preta* or ‘wandering ghosts’; and following the religious life one will not go into the bestial world]. This is also a way to go along with the morale of Confucianism, with the Creator's ethics on life-nurturing, and with human conscience; and when applied to politics, it will bring peace and prosperity for the country. The canonical books of Buddhism, and of Confucianism such as *The Book of Rites*, etc., served as the basis for his arguments and quotations. His style is simple, clear and convincing in relation to the Buddhist believers of his time.

Sa Di Luat Nghi Giai Nghia was written by the Chinese Bonze Chu Hoang, at Van The pagoda, China. It was translated into the Vietnamese language (the Nom), accompanied by explanatory notes. The book was comprised of two volumes, 372 pages in all, and was printed at Thien Phuc pagoda, Bac Ninh, in the 14th year under King Tu Duc (1861). Its content includes the ten commandments, and 24 ways of behaviors concerning learning, resting, washing and bathing and behaving with others. In summary, the book makes recommendations to Buddhist monks and believers on their way of life and behavior, ushering Buddhism in Vietnam into an orderly and disciplined life.

Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc is the most important work of Bonze Phuc Dien. The book has another title: *Dai Nam Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luc*. This one-volume work is comprised of 146 pages, printed by woodcarving plates, in Nom characters.⁶ Its genre is miscellaneous, embracing several topics: description of the history of Buddhism in Vietnam, a survey of the contemporary situation of Buddhism, the Bonze's service to the compilation and reservation of Buddhist texts (maybe written by his successors). In his introductory words, Bonze Phuc Dien explains his reasons, the documentary sources, the content and purpose of his book. His material includes: *Luoc Luc Thien Gia*, several *Ngu Luc Truyen Ky* (compiled into one volume). In addition there are: *Bao Cuc Truyen*, *Thanh Dang Luc*, *Co Chau Luc*, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, *Cung Dieu Ngu Khoa*, *Linh Nam Chich Quai*, *Chu To Luc*, etc. Finally there are supplements such as the Document of the Court, *Nam Bac Luong Ky*, *Luoc Luc Danh Son*, and *Danh Du Danh Hanh Cao Tang*. The last was aimed at serving the

continuation of the various Ch'an sects. Because of all these we can conclude that Bonze Phuc Dien was the authentic author of the book.

In his treatment of the history of Buddhism in Vietnam, he dealt with the early period of Buddhism up to various sects under the Tran and Le dynasties, and the history of the various pagodas in Hue. From legendary tales in *Linh Nam Chich Quai*, he concluded that Buddhism had penetrated into Vietnam since the era of King Hung. He cited the tale of Chu Dong Tu who was initiated into Buddhism by Bonze Phat Quang. Later Dong Tu and Tien Dung, "New to the heavens from the swamp," of Da Trach. From the earlier documents he concluded that two Buddhist sects were established in Vietnam in two different periods. The one was the Lam Te-Yen Tu sect which entered Vietnam under the Song dynasty of China, beginning with Bonze Dai Dang, and was followed by others famous monks: Ung Thuan, Thien Phong, Vien Chung, Tieu Dao, Tue Trung, Dieu Ngu (i.e., King Tran Nhan Tong), Phap Loa, and Huyen Quang. The second sect was Lam Te-Phat Tich, introduced into Vietnam by the most venerable Vien Mai under the Ming dynasty in China, with the following generations of disciples: Vien Mai, Minh Luong, Chan Nguyen, Nhu Trung, Tinh Tuyen, Hai Quynh, Tich Truyen, Chieu Khoan, and Pho Tinh. This Buddhist sect measured up to Bonze Vien Mai's thoughts, which were crystallized in 48 words in Chinese characters, meaning:

keeping one's mind pure and clear, one's virtues perfect and shining; trueness being immense like the sea; making peace and calmness prevail everywhere; bringing the soul to the world; enhancing this kind of awareness; practicing good deeds as the Saints did; habitually doing generous and benevolent things; keeping and handing down Dharma to prosperity; collecting enlightenment as much as possible spiritual proofs of awareness; preserving virtues; maintaining the sect forever.

Treating the various pagodas in Hue, Bonze Phuc Dien gave an account of the history of Thien Mu pagoda, the building of Linh Huu, Long Quang, Thuy Van, Giac Hoang pagodas in Hue and Hong Nhan pagoda in the Forbidden royal citadel under King Minh Mang. With this account, he gave a panorama of the network of pagodas in the royal capital city during his era.

On the situation of Buddhism, Bonze Phuc Dien took notes in detail on every royal decree ordering the building of pagodas; and he drew up a list of Bonzes in charge of each pagoda, and a list of Buddhist believers who made big contributions to the building or reconstruction of pagodas; also lists of canonical books printed and distributed, of examinations held for monks and believers, and of the various important Buddhist celebrations, etc. Because of all this documentation, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc* is valued as a history of Buddhism and it contributes a great deal to study in this field, particularly that of Buddhism during the Nguyen dynasty.

Bonze Phuc Dien spoke little of his thought, but through his works we can identify his own thinking. This thinking involves a sense of

reconciliation, of recognizing the outlook of the various doctrines, religions, sects, whatever their concern and matter is. His methodology is to start from an established postulate and later find proofs to testify. In particular, he tried to convince readers by means of proofs whose viewpoints are near and dear to him. This practice somewhat constrained his descriptions, because he emphasized the unanimity of various points of views while downplaying their differences. Not strictly scientific, his work resulted in creating a specific thought, a new point of view.

This 'reconciliation' as a hallmark of thinking and conception is nothing new. It remains an important element in the tradition of thinking and religious life in Vietnam. Late in the 18th century, many had the same tendency as Bonze Phuc Dien, first of all Bonze Tinh Hue. If Tinh Hue conciliated Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on a Confucian basis which is beneficial to the first, Phuc Dien did the same for the benefit of Buddhism. His conciliatory viewpoint was also expressed in his embracing differing Buddhist sects indiscriminately, and he made use of one or another sect according to how he deemed it beneficial to his own Buddhist creed. Only before his death, reviewing his life and work, did he come to this eventual conclusion: only Ch'an was acceptable. The following litany written by him in his later years expresses this thought:

All the various doctrines explain their ways of enlightenment,
Using them in pursuit of awareness.
Outside the path there is no path;
In emptiness there is no emptiness at all.
Now the genuine dharma is preached:
This is the prolongation of it from the ancient times.
The way to understand it is from nothingness, and
Not by means of language.

Finally, he considered the void to be the basis of all, the ideology of Ch'an. However, his sense of the reconciliation of Ch'an, Amidism and Tantrism was not blurred by this concept.

Another Bonze, An Thien, followed Bonze Phuc Dien's path and also rendered a good service in compiling and preserving the Buddhist literature. An Thien (the dates of birth and death are unknown) had the family name Nguyen. He resided at Dai Giac pagoda, Bo Son village, Bac Ninh province. He was the most intimate disciple of Bonze Phuc Dien. His works include *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu*, three volumes, printed in 1845 under King Thieu Tri. *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu* is a masterpiece comprised of 993 pages. It treats the various fields of activity of Buddhism, from history to explanation of Buddhist terms. It was also the biggest work of its time.

The first volume is comprised of 329 pages and 450 sub-titles. It deals with the genesis of Buddha, the essentials of Buddhism, the historical development of Buddhism, Buddhist literature and relics, and the various Buddhist sects in Vietnam. Noticeable are the following items: "*Dai Nam*

Thien Hoc So Khoi“ in which he noted down the legend of Phat Quang, an Indian Bonze who initiated Dong Tu into Buddhism in the legendary King Hung dynasty. Dong Tu afterwards initiated Tien Dung into the religion, and the story of marsh Da Trach (adapted from *Linh Nam Chich Quai*); “*Dai Nam Phat Thap*,” in which he describes the earliest Buddhist towers built in Vietnam by the Indian Bonze Vinitaruci and Bonze Phap Hien (adapted from *Bao Cuc Truyen*); “*Vo Ngon Truyen Phap*“ deals with the story of the Chinese Bonze Wu Yantong under the Song dynasty in China. He introduced Buddhism into Vietnam while residing at Kien So pagoda, Phu Dong village, now on the outskirts of Hanoi, and created a lineage of his Buddhist sect in this country: Cam Thanh, Thien Hoi, Van Phong, Khuong Viet, Da Bao, Dinh Huong, Vien Chieu, Thong Bien, Dao Tue, Minh Tri, Quang Nghiem, Thuong Chieu, Thong Thien, Tuc Lu, and Ung Vuong; “*Danh Chan Trieu Dinh*“ gives a list of famous Bonzes under successive dynasties, - Early Le, Ly, and Tran. They are: Bonzes Khuong Viet, Van Hanh, and Huyen Quang; “*Vinitaruci Preaching Dharma*“ relates that this Indian Bonze introduced Buddhism into Vietnam at the time contemporary to the Sui dynasty in China and created the earliest Buddhist sect in this country. The successive masters of the sect include: The first generation: Vinitaruci, the second: Phap Hien... the fifth: Thanh Bien... The ninth: Dinh Khong.... the eleventh: La Quy... The thirteenth: Van Hanh... The fifteenth: Khanh Hy, the sixteenth: Gioi Khong; “*Tuyet Dau Truyen Phap*” records the Tuyet Dau sect in Thang Long (now Hanoi). Its masters are: Tuyet Dau, Bat Nha, Hoang Minh, an unknown master of the fourth generation, Chan Huyen and Hai Tinh.

The second volume, 333 pages, 669 items. This is a miscellaneous work. The most outstanding topics are: the history of Confucianism, stories about Confucius and his disciples, stories about famous Buddhist nuns, and profane activities against Buddhism in history.

The third volume, 331 pages, 171 items. It is also a miscellaneous work, with such topics as: stories about Taoism, the life of Laozi, and a lexicon of Buddhist terms and legends.

The book aimed at several purposes. First, it provided the reader with knowledge of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. From this, he could draw out the similarity between these religions and recognize their co-existence. The author pointed out that the common cause of these religions was the pursuit of the good, and the person concerned with the ‘the soul’ and ‘character’ of human beings.

“There is only one path. One becomes three because there are comparisons. One path but three religions, why? No comparison, there is only one. But by comparing, there are three.” (Foreword to *Dao Giao Nguyen Lui*). All this is a result of reasoning and the state of things: “Depending on the circumstances, their power, their times and in suitable forms, the Saints created their doctrines.” Here is his personal opinion on the unique origin of the three religions.

Second, the book upholds the role of Buddhism in society. For this aim, he hailed the wonderful effectiveness of Buddha's doctrine: "Buddha remains outside the three worlds. He has neither beginning nor ending. He does not go and return. He is self-sufficient with regard to the five senses and six elements. His death or life is only metamorphosis." [From the above-mentioned foreword]. He pointed to the benefit of practicing Buddhism: "When Buddha is present in a country, the people will be endowed with a clear mind and a good nature, able to avoid bad things and do good things. Thus, it is greatly beneficial to the world. That is why the Kings of the Zhou dynasty tried to annihilate Buddhism but they failed. And when one fails to exterminate it, how can one despise it?" (Upper volume, pp. 18-19). He even upheld Buddhism by supplying myths: for example, - that Buddha Sakyamuni came into the world from the side of his mother; that on the birthday of Buddha, the sun bore two halos; that when Buddha passed away, fire appeared to consume his body and leave behind remains which are the former Karma of Laozi or Kasyapa; that even Confucius spoke fine words about Buddha, etc.

Third, he defended Buddhism by countering attempts to distort Buddhist figures in the past. He criticized such anecdotes as those which claimed that Ho monks' incantations could bring death to others; that Buddha failed with Pho Dich, because there was a halo on Buddha's forehead, but this halo disappeared before Trinh Hieu; or that Buddha's teeth were inflammable but crushed by Trieu Phuong; and that Buddha's teeth were sacred but destroyed by goat horns, etc. Bonze An Thien said: "These stories, telling false tales against Buddha, are sins against him." (Upper volume, p. 19). He reviewed the numerous campaigns against Buddhism, which the religion still always managed to survive, such as the ones launched by Wei Wudi, Zhou Wudi and Tang Wudi.

In his book, Bonze An Thien's style and language in some places are ambiguous, and some cited events are incorrect. He also fails to properly differentiate what is real or unreal, legendary or realistic, and his arguments are commonplace. This is unavoidable because he was self-taught, not having undergone formal education courses. This explains the fact that, no matter how big his efforts were, he still failed to establish a particular sect; and that no matter how devoted he was, he also failed to wield significant influence on his contemporaries and posterity.

His works, however, constitute an effort to supplement and systematize the knowledge of Buddhism of his times, to bring religion close to life, Buddha close to Confucius; and an endeavor to compile and collect documents facilitating the learning of Buddhism in Vietnam. His works, therefore, became indispensable for contemporary Buddhist believers and clergymen.

As Nguyen Dang Giai, a ranking mandarin at the Nguyen court who was influenced by Buddhism, put it: "The work, though somewhat incoherent in structure and commonplace in argument, is a real work of compiling a host of books and opinions. Together with his other books on

cause and effect, this book is so important that it has become a manual for both sects, Ch'anist as well as Amidist... This book is worth reading by clergymen in the Buddhist pagodas as well as those who practice Buddhism at home" (Foreword to *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu*).

Besides devoted monks, many ranking mandarins and scholars were also influenced by Buddhism, and were self-styled Buddhist practitioners at home. They were Trinh Hoai Duc, governor of Gia Dinh province (Saigon today), Lam Duy Nghia, governor of Hanoi; Nguyen Dang Giai, governor of Ha-Ninh province; and Nguyen Hang, doctor of literature. They were exceptions in a time when Confucianism exerted its monopoly, but due to this, they won greater merit in preserving and developing Buddhism in their era.

Among the above-mentioned personalities, Nguyen Dang Giai was the most shining example. Having the Buddhist name Dai Phuong, he was a native of Phu Chinh village, Le Thuy district, Quang Binh province. Having assumed important posts at the court and outside, such as minister of defense, governor of Son Tay, Hung Hoa, and Tuyen Quang provinces, and other posts as well, -- he styled himself a 'Bodhisattva' practicing at home, and made big efforts supporting the cause of Buddhist development. Bonze Phuc Dien described him as "a great man in enhancing Buddhism, a great man of the court whose virtues belong to the Buddhist church... a man who resorts to every means to develop his religion, whom we can only find once in a millennium."⁷ With his power and service, he became a firm prop for Buddhist monks in the Northern part of Vietnam.

He personally organized joint efforts to build numerous pagodas and towers, including the very expensive and elaborate works such as the eight-stories golden tower, in each of the seven upper stories of which was placed a golden statue of Buddha. Some pagodas were built in large scale, such as Dai Giac pagoda in Bo Son village, Tien Du district, Bac Ninh province, which provided housing for 30 monks and nuns and had a cultivatable land of 37 acres; or Dai Quang pagoda in Phu Nhi, Son Tay province, embracing 200 compartments, possessing 20 acres of rice fields, and staffed by 30 resident monks and nuns.

Another service rendered by him was his striving for the legal status of Buddhism. At that time the Court and a great number of Confucian scholars considered Buddhism to be superstitious and harmful, and that it should be wiped out. He opposed this prejudice by proving the similarity between the three religions, particularly between Buddhism and Confucianism. He stated that the three religions resembled each other in mind and character. Buddhism advocates "clarifying the soul and recognizing character," Taoism advocates "improving the soul and training character", and Confucianism advocates "self-improving and nurturing virtues." He considered "the five commandments of Buddhism to be similar to the five basics virtues of Confucianism."⁸ He also proved the similarity between the theory of cause and effect in Buddhism and the concept of retribution for one's good or bad deals in the *Book of Changes* and the *Book*

of *Rites* written by Confucius. His above-mentioned deeds are characterized by subjective and constrained characters, since he simplified the content of these concepts to seek the formal similarity between them. But this was quite acceptable for common men of his era.

He also, when needed, sided with Buddhism against Confucianism. He argued that Buddhism also upholds the principle of loyalty (by subject to the King), and concern over worldly affairs, and Sakyamuni was praised by Confucius as a saint who “did not rule the society yet there were no riots, did not speak but was self-confident, and did not do teaching as much as self-practice.” He said, regarding charity to relieve human sufferings, even the golden era under King Yao and Shun in China was helpless, but Buddhism had been prohibited by numerous dynasties but it is still survived. The two latter arguments of his are real and significant to his time, giving Buddhists a prop to maintain and develop their religion.

Through the thoughts and actions of the above-mentioned Bonzes and Buddhist sympathizers, we can recognize a trend to restore the role of Buddhism in society, to bring it to the same level as Confucianism, and to regulate the attitude of the Court towards it. We also find the emergence of a new tendency which considered the three religions to be of the same roots, based not on the foundation of Confucianism in the 18th century, but on Buddha's principles. At the same time, there were aspirations to bring religion nearer to the worldly life, Buddhism nearer to Confucianism. These points marked the characteristics of Buddhism under the Nguyen dynasty.

Bonzes of the Ch'an sect and Buddhist believers at that time were longing for the return of the golden time of Buddhism, but they failed to see this was their nostalgics motive; for during the Nguyen dynasty they did not assume any important role in the society and had little influence on the court, unlike the Buddhist monks under the Dinh, Le, Ly and Tran dynasties. On the other hand, they also did not enjoy a systematic training and were unable to elaborate on a higher level the doctrine of Buddha, a doctrine which is so utterly evasive and abstract.

These limitations made them unable to usher Buddhism into a new phase of development. Their contributions, therefore, were confined to the fields of collecting documents, presenting Buddhism through the course of history at a certain systematized level, and concretizing or designating some principles of Buddhism.

NOTES

¹An Thien, *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu*, Chapter “Ban Quoc Thien Mon Kinh Ban” in Chinese characters, printed in 1845, Han Nom Institute Library, code A 1825.

²For materials on the above-mentioned book, see Nguyen Lang, “*Vietnam Phat Giao Su luan*” (*Essays on the History of Buddhism in Vietnam*) volume II. La Boi Publishing House, Paris 1976.

³Seven elements: soil, water, fire, wind, nothingness, air, perception, consciousness.

⁴Phuc Dien, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc*, copy in wood-carved printing, library of Han-Nom Institute, code Hv. 9.

⁵*Phong Sinh Gioi Sat Van*, copy in Chinese characters, printed at Bo Son pagoda, Bac Ninh, dated the 5th year under King Tu Duc, library of Han-Nom Institute, code A.1963.

⁶Phuc Dien, *Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc*, Library of Han-Nom Institute code Hv 9.

⁷Phuc Dien, *Dai Nam Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc*, op.cit. pp. 45-46.

⁸Nguyen Dang Giai, Foreword of *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu* written by An Thien, op. cit., p. 4.

PART FIVE

BUDDHISM DURING FRENCH COLONIAL TIMES (SECOND HALF OF 19TH TO FIRST HALF OF 20TH CENTURY)

By the 19th century capitalism had become the decisive factor of development all over the world. It forced the other nations, although far from Europe and in feudal or pre-feudal stages, to become involved in its mechanisms. Almost every nation, if not renewing itself to conform with the general system of capitalism or if insisting on the maintenance of its own 'obsolete' mode of production, would finally go on to fall into the fate of slavery or become dependent on the capitalist system. Vietnam was not to be an exception.

After centuries of attempting, investigating and preparing, capitalist powers in the West, in the 19th century, reached the decision to annex Vietnam. Many Western countries were nurturing this ambition, including Britain, the biggest power whose mighty forces were present almost everywhere in the world, including the Far East. But in relation to Vietnam and the Indochinese peninsula, it turned out that the French imperialists were those who had greater advantages and better chances for conquest. That is why the French Navy opened fire at Da Nang port in September 1858, heralding the French time to conquer Vietnam. In February 1859 the French occupied Gia Dinh citadel and province; in June 1862 they occupied the three provinces in Eastern Cochin China; in June 1867 they invaded the three remaining provinces in Western Cochin China. In November 1873 the French attacked Hanoi citadel and reoccupied it in April 1882. In August 1883 they conquered the whole territory of Vietnam. In June 1884 the Nguyen dynasty was compelled to sign an agreement recognizing the French domination over Vietnam. From an independent country Vietnam became an enslaved country. From a feudal country, it became a colonial and semi-feudal country.

In the past, when Vietnam was independent and controlled by the feudal system, the main social contradiction was the one between the peasantry and the laboring people on the one hand, and the feudal class and the Nguyen court on the other. But under the colonial rule, the main contradiction was the one between the patriotic Vietnamese of the various social strata on the one hand, and the ruling colonialists and their feudalist hirelings on the other. It was this contradiction which determined all developments during that period of time.

In the field of politics and ideology, the sense of independence and freedom having taken root from the time of their early history was accumulated in every Vietnamese, and urged them to react violently against the colonial yoke. Several social strata and a large number of individuals, in

their hatred of the aggression, were active in joining the struggle against the enemy for national salvation. As a time-honoured religion in the country, the Buddhist circles thought they were also responsible for the fate of their nation, just like the other social groups.

History posed before the Buddhist circles, as well as every Buddhist believer, two problems to be solved: how to deal with the present situation of their country. And how to maintain Buddhism under circumstances when capitalism was imposing its rule over the whole world. As a matter of fact, there were differences in opinion and attitude among the Buddhist monks. Some were diffident in the face of things, clinging on the old dogma [of resignation and tolerance]. Others thought they should be concerned over the political and social problems, should conciliate their religious doctrine with reality, in correspondence with their time and nation, and should maintain their religion under the new circumstances.

History had proven that the way to bring the Buddhist religion into alignment with worldly life is a monkhood [*sangha*] close to its time: this is the appropriate way to conform to the historical requirements and the human needs. The effect of such a concept of adaptation at first was somewhat faint and incoherent, but later became dear, unavoidable and irreversible. In fact if Buddhism in this period differed most from the past, it was in this trend of potent engagement so as to contribute to the common cause of the nation; and accompanying this trend was the trend of Buddhism to rehabilitate itself and regain a place in history. All tendencies that went counter to the requirements of the nation and its time would become obsolete and play no significant role in history.

CHAPTER XVI

BUDDHISM'S TENDENCY TOWARDS WORLD ACCEPTANCE

If 'world acceptance' suggests the inclination of a religion to advocate political participation and to seek resolutions of sociopolitical problems, then Buddhism cannot be considered a 'world-accepting' religion. Buddhism is a religion characterized by aloofness from and pessimism toward mundane earthly matters. Due to the special privileges and advantages it enjoyed, the royal family of Siddhartha Gautama was plagued with murderous intrigues. As the family's eldest son (the crown prince), Siddhartha Gautama was destined to succeed to the throne. With the early death of his mother (seven days after his birth), he grew up under the care of his father's second wife, amid a bitter and conspiratorial atmosphere. The four walls of the Kapilavastu citadel teemed with beggars and poor people whom Siddhartha Gautama would encounter passing through the gate. Moreover society at that time suffered under the oppressive and ubiquitous traditional Hindu caste systems. It was in response to this, that we find the true origin of Gautama Siddhartha's decision to abandon his family, social position and go in search of a doctrine and religious way of life capable of bringing enlightenment to himself and his countrymen. The sense of mission and accomplishment embodied in his decision suggests his true compassion and greatness.

Even during periods when he predominantly concerned himself with describing the path towards and principles of enlightenment, Gautama Siddhartha continued to attack the caste system: "There are no castes in the streams of red blood. There are no castes in the streams of salty tears." But the theory which he championed was not aimed at overturning injustices or social inequalities. Because of the formidable power of the contemporary caste system and the stifling character of India's spiritual tradition, Gautama Siddhartha had to launch his attack indirectly.

According to Gautama Siddhartha, human life is so full of suffering and misery that the collective tears of humanity would far surpass the amount of water in the ocean. Man's misery is an unavoidable product of his natural life (birth, ageing, illness and death), in the transmigration of his soul, in the mistakes of his past lives and in his very existence itself. To escape this suffering, Gautama Siddhartha did not advise men to participate in social activities but to enter the monkhood and follow a prescribed monastic path as a means to reach nirvana, a world devoid of birth, death, joy or suffering. Buddhism thus preaches release from rather than participation in daily life.

No form of Buddhism is primarily concerned with solving sociopolitical problems. In South Asia, Buddhism chose to leave this work

for other religions such as Brahmanism and Hinduism. In East Asia, Confucianism and Taoism played this role. Such functional specialization has allowed Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism to peacefully coexist in Asian societies. While the content of these three religions has often been at odds with one another, they have rarely openly contested each other's position. However there have been times in its development when Buddhism, in response to concrete situations, has played a role in social affairs. While this participation has rarely led to the codification of a new principle or added new theoretical arguments to the existing doctrine, it has been motivated by a clear consciousness; by a certain sympathy accorded to collective action and has made Buddhist activity vibrant and relevant.

In Vietnamese history such situations have occurred under the Le-Ly-Tran dynasties. Under these dynasties many Buddhist monks played active political roles. For example, Bonze Ngo Chan Luu played a decisive role in the consolidation of the Dinh dynasty, and was awarded the honorary title of Bonze Superior Khuong Viet by King Dinh Tien Hoang. Due in large part to his legendary rhetorical talent, Bonze Phap Thuan was appointed by King Le Dai Hanh as the main escort for foreign envoys and ambassadors. Bonze Van Hanh put his skills as a strategist at the disposal of King Ly Cong Uan, thus helping him establish the Ly Dynasty. And Bonze Minh Thong offered crucial advice to King Ly Thanh Tong on aspects of national administration.

Moreover, many kings either sympathized with Buddhism, personally followed a Buddhist doctrine, or actually entered the monkhood. King Ly Thanh Tong for instance, entered the monkhood and patronized the Thao Duong sect. King Tran Thai Tong was a committed devotee to the religious life and wrote the famous religious work entitled *Khoa Hu Luc*. King Tran Nhan Tong founded the Truc Lam sect in Yen Tu mountain.

From the late 19th to the early 20th century Buddhism again established a close connection with socio-political life. The sociopolitical dimension (tendency toward 'world acceptance') of Buddhism in the late 19th and early 20th century differed significantly from that which had existed during the Le, Ly and Tran eras. During these dynasties, Buddhism was held in high esteem and regarded as a tool for social administration. As all Buddhists were automatically considered dynastic subjects, the status of 'Buddhist' and 'subject' became consonant with one another. People could participate in secular or religious activities according to their personal preference.

But at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century the position of Buddhism declined and the doctrine was subjected to harsh criticism. A chasm widened between the religious and secular spheres and it became accordingly difficult to vacillate between secular and religious life and even more so to move thoroughly from a Buddhist towards a patriotic or nationalist consciousness. Moreover Buddhists undertaking activities for the common good did so at great personal risk as they came into opposition with political leaders. As a result the tendency toward 'world acceptance'

during this period was expressed in dangerous ways such as through revolt and political subversion.

Buddhism's new concern with secular affairs did not come about by chance. During the late 19th century Vietnam began losing land to the French colonialists, and was eventually completely colonized. For the people, loss of country meant loss of life, loss of freedom, loss of independence, and a loss of the right to form their own value system.

Vietnamese Buddhists were Vietnamese first and foremost, and thus shared the national agony with their countrymen. Moreover, French rule created conditions for Christianity to develop at an inordinate pace and encroach upon and replace native religions. In response, intelligent Buddhist leaders attempted to fuse inherent Buddhist concepts of compassion and benevolence with new ideas capable of provoking the masses to resist the foreign invaders, and protect their nation and native religion.

Pagodas at that time exhibited a dual function, on the one hand by serving as local religious and spiritual centers and on the other by acting as safe-havens and secret meeting places where patriots could store secret documents and prepare for future uprisings. Pagodas in Northern Vietnam, in the provinces of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and in Southern Vietnam, were particularly active in this regard. Never before had Buddhist pagodas played such a role. The combination of patriotism and hatred for the enemy allowed people to accept the coexistence of these two functions.

Many pagodas became famous for the role they played in the movement against the colonialists. For example, in 1858 and 1859 Chau Quang pagoda of Mach Lung commune in Son Tay served as a storage site for secret documents and a safe-haven for patriotic monks who were organizing in opposition to Tu Duc's court. Between 1895 and 1898 the Ngoc Long Dong pagoda of Chuong My district in Ha Dong was used as a base for northern patriots launching resistance operations against the French and Nguyen feudal administrations. From a base at Nui Cam pagoda of That Son in An Giang province a powerful force was assembled and sent forth against the French regime in Sai Gon in 1916.

Throughout the 1940s Tam Bao pagoda of Rach Gia province served as a rallying point for southern patriots. During that same period, Dong Ky pagoda in Ha Bac province was an important base for the revolutionary activities of the central committee of the Communist party. Many research works have already noted the contribution made by the pagodas to the history of our nation's indomitable spirit.

Many Buddhist monks from the late 19th and early 20th century were formidable patriotic fighters. They organized numerous uprisings against the feudal colonial regime with other patriots. They also suffered arrest, torture, imprisonment and execution. While many of them remain anonymous, a number have achieved a level of historical distinction. A good example is Hoang Van Dong originally from Tam Buu hamlet in the Tu Liem district of Hanoi who resided at the Chau Quang pagoda in Son

Tay province. When arrested and interrogated before the Nguyen court, he refused to divulge important information about clandestine operations going on in the pagoda.¹ Another example is Vo Tru, a native of Binh Dinh, who between 1893-94 organized both Kinh and ethnic minority people in a patriotic campaign to oppose the feudal colonial regime in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen. Bonze Vuong Quoc Chinh (from Co Am village, Hai Duong province) lived at the Ngoc Long Dong pagoda in Chuong My district, Ha Dong province and organized an attack on Hanoi in 1898. Bonze Cao Van Long (from Ben Tre province), who lived in Nui Cam pagoda at That Son, spearheaded the attack on Saigon in 1916. According to French accounts, the revolt was led by “a prestigious, witty, steady and highly influential monk who enjoys much popularity and esteem among the population!”²

Bonze Hoang Van Dong also known under his religious name Tri Thien, lived at Tam Bao pagoda in Rach Gia province. Completely devoted to the fight against French domination, he was arrested and deported to Poulo Condore where he met his death. The Sai Gon monk Thien Chieu was also active in the struggle against French colonialists in the 30s and 40s. Though arrested and actually crippled by severe torture, his commitment never wavered before the French authorities. Bonze Thong Hoa of Dong Ky pagoda provided invaluable assistance to Vietnam's Communist Party members who were agitating prior to the August Revolution. The list goes on and on. Despite differences in origin and revolutionary strategy, these monks shared a sense of patriotism and devotion to their nation and religion. As a result, their names will remain vividly etched in the minds of people.

In addition to the personal contributions of the above-mentioned monks, we must mention the contributions of the anti-colonial and patriotic movements which they led. Amongst the myriad of such movements three stand out as particularly worthy of discussion: the 1898 attacks on Hanoi and Phu Yen and the 1916 uprising in Saigon.

The 1898 attack on Hanoi was spearheaded by the monk Vuong Quoc Chinh. Chinh, a Confucian scholar and intimate friend of the patriot Nguyen Thien Thuat, was active in the Can Vuong (anti - French loyalist movement) of the late 19th century. Despite his Confucian training, Chinh was also a devotee of Buddhism. After the failure of the Can Vuong movement, Chinh entered the monkhood and continued to agitate for national salvation under religious cover. Residing at a number of pagodas, he finally settled at Ngoc Long Dong pagoda of Chuong My district in Ha Dong province. In 1895, intending to mobilize patriotic forces, Chinh founded the Thuong Chi association at his pagoda. The association selected Chinh as its chief strategist and appointed Ly Thieu Quan or Nghe An to be its nominal leader. Concurrently, the group organized five army corps to prepare for military action during the revolt. The group planned to attack the Hanoi citadel first and then expand its military operations to neighbouring towns and cities. The association committed itself to three

guiding principles: to expel the French, reestablish independence, and restore the monarchy.

The insurrection broke out in Hanoi on December 5th 1898, when the insurgents infiltrated into the crowd attending a large fair. Apprised beforehand, the French took precautionary measures and successfully crushed the revolt. When news of this failure reached the Northern provinces, small uprisings broke out in Ha Son Binh, Hung Hoa, Vinh Phu, Hai Hung and Ha Nam Ninh. The colonial administration reestablished law only under after considerable effort.

In the same year another uprising, this one under the leadership of Bonze Vo Tru (also known as Vo Van Tru, Nguyen Tru, Vo Than), broke out in Phu Yen province. Born in Nhon An hamlet, Vo Tru settled in Quang Van hamlet, Tuy Phuoc district in Binh Dinh province. Tru served successively as a village headman and a master of village rituals. Dissatisfied with life under the feudal colonial administration he left his village to enter the monkhood and pursue patriotic activities. Village officials, fearing the intervention of the colonial state, leveled a false charge of embezzling public funds against him. In the provinces Binh Dinh and Phu Yen he agitated successfully both with the Kinh majority but also with highland minority people. Wherever he went, Tru expressed concern for the lives of the local inhabitants. He routinely enquired into their family situations and their health, distributed medicine to the sick and agricultural equipment to farmers. At the same time he was very successful organizing and converting Buddhist to the political cause. As admiration for him among the local population grew, political support for him swelled. When the local mandarins of Tuy Phuoc, Son Hoa, An Nhon, Dong Xuan, and Tuy An districts learned of this nascent movement they grew frightened and pressured the Governor of Binh Phu and the French resident in Quy Nhon to send urgent messages to the Province council and the French resident superior in Hue. The French organized raids to capture Tru alive but sheltered and protected by the people, he managed to escape. When the French royal troops were unable to locate his whereabouts, they rationalized their failure as follows: "It is rumoured that this Buddhist monk is an angel who flies on a bird during the night."³

Many pagodas in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces were turned into bases of activity for Vo Tru's organization. During a traditional Buddhist Festival on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month in 1897 (Dinh Dau year) Vo Tru met other insurgent leaders in Tuy An district to prepare for an insurrection. In 1898 (Mau Tuat lunar year), a year marked by a series of devastating natural calamities, the local French administration levied particularly onerous taxes on the population. Seizing this opportunity, Vo Tru called for a general insurrection. In the summer of that year, insurgents, lightly armed with bows, lances and a kind of knife used by highlanders, struck in Dong Xuan district in an attempt to occupy both military barracks and the French resident's office. Vo Tru received support from many wise Bonzes, but the French reacted to the attack in time and cut off the

insurgents five kilometers west of the district seat. The defeated monks fled in disorder and many including Tru himself were arrested, jailed and finally executed. Although the insurrection failed, it succeeded in shaking the administration foundation of the colonialist state in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Binh Thuan. The French grew frightened and only managed to reestablish law and order after a lengthy period.

In 1916 the monk Nguyen Huu Tri sparked an equally destabilizing attack on Sai Gon. Tri, a devout Buddhist, was born in the Can Giuoc area of Cho Lon. Hating the French with a deep passion equal to his love of religion and country, Tri led a band of devoted fellows into Cambodia where they consolidated their strength at Kampot province Ta Lon pagoda. While the patriotic forces looked to Tri as their main strategist, they considered Phan Phat Sanh (Phan Xich Long) their primary leader. In 1913 they launched an unsuccessful attack on Sai Gon, during which Phan Phat Sanh was arrested. Nguyen Huu Tri escaped and with the support of Bonze Cao Van Long, he began rebuilding his forces at the Cam Mount Pagoda in the That Son area of An Giang province. Waiting there for the arrival of another opportunity, Tri's forces grew in size and strength.

With the outbreak of World War One, France's ability to send military reinforcements to Indochina became severely curtailed. In recognition of this fortuitous situation, the insurgents decided to launch a two-pronged attack from their base in Cam Mount. While most insurgent forces headed for Sai Gon [Saigon], a second smaller force descended upon the central provinces of the Mekong Delta. Led by Nguyen Huu Tri, the attack on Sai Gon targeted the residence of the French Governor General of Indochina. After securing his capture, the insurgent planned to force the Governor General to open Kham Lon prison, freeing friendly insurgents detained from the 1913 uprising. They also hoped to seize arms and ammunition stored in the Sai Gon Arsenal.

During the night of February 12th 1916, the patriotic forces left the Cau Ong Lanh dock by boat and arrived at Sai Gon at 3:00 in the morning. 300 insurgent troops headed immediately for the prison and the French Governor General's residence. When their attempt to infiltrate these two targets was rebuffed, the insurgents fled in secret back to Cau Ong Lanh. Many, including Nguyen Huu Tri, were caught and the revolt ended in failure.

During the second leg of the revolt, attacks were launched in 13 out of the 20 provinces of southern Vietnam. While the insurgents initially proved effective, seizing village seats, hoisting their flags, and parading through major roadways, they were eventually defeated by French troops and fled in disorder.

Although the two attacks (1913, 1916) upon Saigon ended in defeat, they remained a testament to the patriotic and religious spirit of the people, particularly the Southern Buddhists. The attack also suggested that the security and control of the French regime was less than stable.

The anti-French revolts described above can be seen as continuation of the loyalist Can Vuong movement but under a different leadership. Whereas the Can Vuong movement was led by scholars and feudalist intellectuals, the revolts of 1898, 1913 and 1916 were sparked by Buddhist monks and their devoted followers. This change does not only reflect the different world outlook of different generations but a transformation in ideological orientation within the minds of patriotic leaders. Vuong Quoc Chinh, Vo Tru, and Nguyen Huu Tri, for example, originally followed a strain of Confucian patriotism, but as Confucianism revealed itself as increasingly impotent, they looked to Buddhism, a religion whose deep roots in national spiritual life allowed it to be used more effectively.

The insurrections launched after the defeat of the Can Vuong movement attest to the strength and courage of the insurgents. These qualities arose not only out of the people's patriotic spirit but from their religious commitment, because patriotism and religious devotion frequently expressed a unity of purpose; and because patriots and religious devotees both had experience in mobilization, it was easy for the two movements to join forces. As they shared a world outlook with the commoners, the leaders easily found ways to mobilize the courage of the masses. Because many of the leaders of the past Can Vuong movement were highly esteemed Buddhist monks or devotees, popular support was particularly forthcoming.

Although devout Buddhists late in life, Vuong Quoc Chinh, Vo Tru, Ly Thieu Quan, Nguyen Huu Tri, and Phan Phat Sanh began their careers as Confucian scholars only after running into severe difficulty along the path toward national salvation. These scholars took refuge in pagodas where they eventually attained high positions in the Buddhist hierarchy. With this in mind, it could be argued that these patriots simply used Buddhism as a convenient cover for their revolutionary activities.

Such a position however is undermined by the fact that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have historically co-existed harmoniously in Vietnam, each faith constituting a single component in the overall world outlook of the Vietnamese. Thus before they actually entered the monkhood, these patriots had already been exposed to and internalized many elements of Buddhist doctrine. Becoming a monk simply entailed the further development of existing Buddhist tendencies and the transformation of these tendencies into concrete principle. While it is difficult to generalize, patriotic converts were on the whole sincere. Their sincerity is evidenced by the extraordinary support and followings they enjoyed among the Buddhist masses.

As the insurrections discussed above originated out of and were continually supported by Buddhist pagodas, it is valid to ask whether this connection suggests a violation of the Buddhist principles of compassion, benevolence and prohibitions against killing. While it is true that these insurrections entailed violence, their ultimate purpose was to secure the rights of people to live and practice their religion freely. The insurrections

aimed to confer on the people the opportunity to realize Buddha's basic teachings. Thus the insurrections should be understood as an application of Buddhist principles in a unique situation. In response to the particular conditions brought on by foreign domination, the insurrections represented a slight transmutation of Buddhist principles in the interests of protecting both the nation and faith from extinction. These insurrections fueled the patriotic movement and represented a significant contribution by Vietnamese Buddhists towards securing the nation's destiny. Vietnamese Buddhists did not hesitate when faced with this situation and should take pride in their behavior and performance.

NOTES

¹“*Chau Phe under the Nguyen Dynasty*”, in document collected by Ly Kim Hoa.

²Tran Van Giau, *Su Phat Trien Cua Tu Tuong o Viet Nam Tu The Ky XIX Den Cach Mang Thang Tam (The Evolution of Thought in Vietnam from the 19th Century to the 1945 August Revolution)*, Vol.1, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 527.

³“*Chau Phe under the Nguyen Dynasty*”, in document collected by Ly Kim Hoa.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUDDHIST MOVEMENT IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

After the first phase of colonial exploitation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Vietnam's socio-economic features took on a new shape. Social production began to exhibit a capitalist character. Urban settlements grew and with them appeared the first strata of the national bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the urban petty-bourgeoisie. In terms of lifestyle, behaviors, and interpersonal attitudes, these new classes differed from previous generations. The influence of imported French, Japanese, and Chinese cultures as well as the social impact of the Dong Du movement, the Duy Tan movement, and the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc opened horizons for the members of these new classes. Transformations in elite thinking trickled down to peasants, craftsmen, and commoners, resulting in a more generalized rejection of antiquated concepts and beliefs. The new generations demanded changes not only in their material and political life but in their spiritual existence as well.

While Buddhism was originally a product of ancient India, it continually changed in response to novel temporal and geographic circumstances. At the turn of the century, Vietnamese Buddhism was different in many respects from the Buddhism introduced into Vietnam during the early Common Era. But despite the changes which Buddhism had undergone, the doctrine was still considered backward by many people of the early 20th century. This perception provoked a range of opinions among concerned Buddhist monks. According to lay Buddhist Khanh Van: "Some people pretend to be Buddhist monks. Although they claim to be devoted to the cult of Buddha, they believe in superstitions, practice witchcraft, use amulets and secret drugs, and chant incantations to cure diseases. In reality they are capitalizing on the blind beliefs of the ignorant masses in order to enrich themselves. What good can these devil-monks do for Buddhism? They will end up the laughing stock of the population." Lay Buddhist Thanh Quang expressed a similar concern: "It is painful for our country when there are monks who profess themselves to be wholeheartedly devoted to the cult of Buddha but pay no attention to learning their prayer books. They conduct religious services for the people in exchange for fat rewards. While they wear Buddhist robes, they behave like common people."

Changes in Vietnamese Buddhism are also evidenced by the proliferation of splinter groups or syncretist sects which split from Buddhist orthodoxy and mingled Buddhist beliefs with ideas from other creeds. This phenomenon was most pronounced in South Vietnam where groups such as

the Phat Duong sect, the Minh Su sect, and the Phat Thay sect sprouted and grew in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Cao Dai religion, combining elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Catholicism emerged several decades later around 1925-26. These new religious sects obviously posed a challenge and at some points even threatened to replace orthodox Buddhism.

Many Buddhists converted to the above-mentioned sects (the Cao Dai most dramatically) or embraced Catholicism or agnosticism. Unless Buddhism could find a way to adapt to its new circumstances, it risked losing its mass following. As national aspirations changed, the demands for a renovation became more pressing. If these new social currents were not taken into consideration, it would be impossible for Buddhism to participate in the popular movement, whose momentum was growing exponentially at that time. On the other hand, factors external to Vietnam's domestic situation also had transformative effects. In the 1920s, the impact of agitation for the reinvigoration of Buddhism in China and Japan began to be felt throughout Asia and Europe. Chinese slogans such as "Revolutionize religious doctrine, revolutionize religious systems, revolutionize the church," religious books and magazines such as *Hai Trieu Am*, and activist monks such as the Chinese Bonze superior Thai Hu became influential among Vietnamese Buddhists. New foreign currents provided Vietnamese Buddhists with encouragement, fresh knowledge, new interpretations of Buddhist texts, and opportunities to reevaluate their own force and vitality. From this clearer perspective, Vietnamese Buddhists could attempt to forge a new determination of unity and purpose and thus repopularize their creed as a newly invigorated and open movement.

This renovation was not led by traditional monks or sinicized scholars, but by devoted Buddhist doctors, teachers, and social activists. They traveled throughout the country and beyond to Europe. They spoke Chinese and French. The more ambitious supported renovation "in order to modernize the people's knowledge and logic, because although superstition had been eradicated, science was not powerful enough to ensure the welfare and happiness of mankind. There must be a firm morality to enhance and secure an ethic for humanity."

Some Buddhist intellectuals from this period claimed that Buddhism is a science. For example in 1936, Le Khanh Hoa asserted that "Buddhist law does not transcend science and science does not transcend Buddhist law." However the accuracy of this claim is suspect. Buddhist reformers of the early 20th century in general supported bourgeois democratic tendencies, understood the important role of experimental science, and appreciated the value of freedom and human rights. These positions provided a basis for a reevaluation of old ideas and an attempt to reform society by harmonizing the old with the new.

The movement in support of renovation did not rely on the antiquated Chinese language whose characters had previously been printed on wood blocks and stored in temples but instead used 'quoc ngu', the

intimate national language which enjoyed the advantage of being easy to read, easy to learn, and easy to print in newspapers and magazines. Buddhist reformers of this era did not simply present their ideas as religious propaganda, but as hypotheses to be debated and reexamined for accuracy and contradictions. While addressing doctrinal questions, these intellectuals also considered broader issues concerning the proper relationship between Buddhism and society, nation, and science. Due to the widening horizons of these Buddhist intellectuals, Buddhism developed the potential to develop in a variety of new directions.

Whereas previously, Buddhist centers had been typically established in scenic or mountainous areas (such as the Truc Lam sect in Yen Tu mountain) new centres began to spring up in large cities such as Saigon and Hanoi. Such new centers were composed of large pagodas, modern monastic schools, and printing facilities for the dissemination of books, magazines, and newspapers. Due to the urban location of these new Buddhist centers, the new movements could effect more people and facilitate communication more easily.

The origins of this movement are to be found in and around Saigon, the earliest and most profoundly exploited area of French Indo-China. Since the end of the 19th century, French and 'quoc ngu' publications with a distinctly bourgeois point of view had been steadily coming out of Saigon. As a result, relative intellectual freedom and sensitivity to modern global currents was heightened in Saigon. This atmosphere naturally fuelled the Saigonese attempts at religious reformation.

The Buddhist movement of this period was alternately referred to as a 'resurrection', 'renaissance', and a 'restructuring'. However as these terms suggest the revitalization of a dying doctrine, they are perhaps misleading. Buddhism at that time was still rather strong, it simply needed to be formally redirected away from some of its more glaring shortcomings. These shortcomings included questions of form, content, doctrine and ritual as well as monastic issues. The movement's central thrust therefore should be understood as a deep and comprehensive reform rather than as revitalization.

In 1920, Buddhist monks and their followers set up the Luc Hoa association in Southern Vietnam. The association's aim was to foster unity and cooperation both among Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese Buddhists in order to enhance the processes of worship and study. The association was particularly interested in forging links with Buddhist groups in northern neighboring countries. Two monks, Khanh Hoa and Thien Chieu, spearheaded the association's ideological organization projects. Khanh Hoa visited nearly all major pagodas in Cochinchina where he presented idea of renewal to the Buddhist circles there. Thien Chieu, accompanied by several colleagues, traveled around Annam and Tonkin spreading the association's new Buddhist vision and persuading sympatric listeners to support the cause. Moreover, each monk oversaw the publication of reformist Buddhist

magazines such as *Phap Am* by Khanh Hoa and *Phat Hoa Tan Thanh Nien* by Thien Chieu. The magazines were the first two Buddhist periodicals written exclusively in 'quoc ngu' in our country's history. Both circled rapidly among young Buddhists. At the same time *Dong Thap Thoi Bao* (the French Indochina Times), a political organ of the French State published out of Saigon, began printing articles on Buddhism. For example an article from the paper entitled "A Summary history of Buddhism," presented the origin, history and content of the Buddhist doctrine. The style of writing in this article differed profoundly from that found in the former 'Ngu Luc', reflecting a new spirit. Finding such articles harmless, the French did not censure them.

The urgent and passionate writing published in the periodicals of Thien Chieu and Khanh Hoa and the direct appeal made for the "reorganization of Buddhism" made by articles in *Dong Thap Thoi Bao* aroused much excitement within Buddhist circles at the time. The call for reorganization was far-reaching, comprising changes in method of perception, means of explanation and mode of worship. It also demanded that Buddhism take an active role in social life, a demand which was gradually met during this period.

During 1925 and 1926, young Buddhist monks attended *en masse* patriotic speeches given by Nguyen An Ninh and Phan Chau Trinh at Landaroste in Saigon or at the Tonkin friendship society. When Bui Quang Chieu returned from France, Buddhist monks were among those who gathered to welcome him. Likewise monks from throughout the country participated in the movement to demand amnesty for Phan Boi Chau, and in the highly politicized funeral of Phan Chau Trinh.

While the participation of Buddhist monks in social activities was a new and forceful development, it had yet to be sanctioned by Buddhist doctrine. When politicized monks were asked by French authorities what had provoked them to political action, they found themselves at a loss for a coherent answer. This doctrinal shortcoming however was soon addressed by Thien Chieu in an article published in the Saigon Press. In response to the question "Why are monks participating in politics?", Thien Chieu responded, "It is the compassion and the benevolence preached by Buddha (and none other) that incites Buddhists to involve themselves in patriot deeds."

In 1929, Thien Chieu continued his agitation for Buddhist reform by publishing *Phat Hoc Tong Yeu* (A General Summary of Buddhism). The work included new translations of Sutras and Abhidharmas, articles introducing *Hai Trieu Am* from the Chinese Association of Buddhist studies, and some essays by Thien Chieu himself. The monk introduced many novel ideas and took a strong critical stance. This tone can be sensed already on the first page:

"Those who are simple slaves to convention rely not on their own power, but on the power of others. Those who think that success and failure, happiness and sadness are not created by themselves but determined

by some divine force will never fully grasp Buddhist theory. They will become wicked, hurt the faith and contribute to its downfall. Alas.”

Between 1929 and 1932, the book was hotly debated in such newspapers as the *Dong Thap Thoi Bao*, *Trung Lap* (The Middle Path), *Than Chung* (Sacred Bell) and *Duoc Nha Nam* (Southern Torch). It would be argued that the writings of such vanguard monks, including Thien Chieu's *Phat Hoc Tong Yeu*, constituted the ideological prelude for the emergence of large, active and permanent Buddhist organizations in Vietnamese society. Conditions specific to the 1930's resulted in the formation of Buddhist study groups, first in the South and eventually in the Center and North. Between 1930 and 1933, four associations of Buddhist research were set up in the South. In 1931 the *Hoi Nam Ky Nghien Cuu Phat Hoc*, headed by eight influential Buddhist dignitaries including Khanh Hoa, Hue Quang and Tri Thien, was established at Saigon's Linh Son pagoda.

Tran Nguyen Chan also played a leadership role. Along with publishing the magazine *Tu Bi Am*, the association also consecrated amulets at various localities and sent envoys to collect texts of the Tripikata from China. In 1931, Bonze Hue Dang set up the Association of Ch'an Sects at Thien Thai pagoda in Ba Ria. To publicize its doctrine, the association published the magazine *Bat Nha Am*. In 1933, Buddhist monks from Long Hoa pagoda (Tra Vinh province), Thien Phuoc pagoda (Tra On province) and Vien Giac pagoda (Ben Tre province) joined forces to set up a boarding school for the study of Buddhism and the training of Buddhists. In 1934 the Luong Xuyen association of Buddhist study was founded in Tra Vinh province to preserve classical Buddhist texts, spread the faith and train the clergy. In 1935, this group opened a school for Buddhist study and published the magazine *Duy Tam Phat Hoc*.

In 1932, the Association for Buddhist Study in Annam was set up at Tu Quang pagoda. The Association was headed by Bonze Giac Tien and the ascetic Tam Minh - Le Dinh Tham. In 1933 the association began publishing *Vien Am*. It also founded groups committed to Buddhist ethical instruction such as “Popular Buddhist Families“ whose task was to guide the literary, moral, and physical education of adolescents. The society also opened a Buddhist secondary school to train monks and nuns. Afterwards, it opened a Buddhist school at Bao Quoc Pagoda, later transferred to Tung Lam Tu monastery in the Kim Son region. Bonze Thich Tri Do served as the head master. In 1934, the General Buddhism Association of Northern Vietnam was set up at the Quan Su pagoda in Hanoi. In 1935, the Association published the magazine *Duoc Tue* (Torch of Enlightenment). Moreover, there still existed in Northern Vietnam other magazines such as *Bo De Tan Thanh* and *Tieng Chuong Som* jointly written and edited by a number of Buddhists. The General Buddhist Association opened a school for monks at Quan Su pagoda and one for nuns at the Bo De pagoda.

Among the monks who contributed to the foundation of schools, Vinh Nghiem, Thich Thanh Hanh, Tue Tang, Mat Ung, Duc Nhuan, To

Lien, and Tri Hai deserve special mention. Buddhist laymen such as Nguyen Nang Quoc, Thieu Chuu, Bui Ky, Duong Ba Trac, Tran Trong Kim, Tran Van Giap, Phan Ke Binh, Nguyen Can Mong, Nguyen Trong Thuat, Le Toai, and Bui Thien Co also played important roles.

The establishment of associations and the publication of periodicals, the collection and preservation of Buddhist texts and the opening of religious schools contributed to an unprecedented degree of Buddhist development in all three regions of Vietnam. Membership in the branches of provincial Buddhist associations mushroomed. In 1935, only one year after its foundation, the Buddhist Association of Northern Vietnam boasted a membership of around 2000 monks and nuns and over 10,000 laymen. The group was led by a board of elected monks and nuns and led by Bonze Vinh Nghiem. In 1937, the Buddhist Association of Central Vietnam enjoyed a membership of 3000. Members typically had a broad range of knowledge both about Buddhist history and thought and about the contemporary social situation. As Buddhists became more interested in socio-political problems, many of them began to reconsider a number of theoretical questions concerning Buddhism's relationship with the real world. Although the French prevented the formation of a nation wide Buddhist association, the different regional Buddhist groups gradually developed relations with each other, cooperated, and shared information.

Nevertheless, the movement evolved in fits and starts and often lacked a definitive direction. When the movement was still at a nascent stage, it was driven primarily by Buddhist concerns, but as it developed into a large social movement, its momentum and focus were conditioned by a variety of social factors and ideological currents both from within and outside Buddhism.

French influence was, of course, preeminent. The French hoped to redirect the movement to serve their own interests. In South Vietnam, the French Governor ordered the collaborator, Tran Nguyen Chan, to found and chair the Association for the Study of Buddhism. While Chan was to supervise the group's daily activities, the Governor's office laid down the over-arching policy it was to follow. In Northern Vietnam, a branch of the association was opened, led by the retired Vietnamese Governor Nguyen Nang Quoc and under the supervision of the French resident superior (the provincial governor Hoang Trong Phu). A similar hierarchical pattern was imposed on the organization's central regional branch.

French influence in Buddhist associations was eventually challenged by the Vietnamese revolutionary movement. Beginning in 1925, the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League, a forerunner of the Communist party, introduced revolutionary methods into Vietnam which attracted patriotic youth. The formation of the Indochinese communist party and the eruption of the Nghe Tinh Soviet movement in 1930-31 stirred public opinion. During the 1936-39 Democratic Front period, and the 1941-45 period of Viet Minh-led struggle, the grip of French colonialists and Japanese fascists loosened and was replaced by the power of a patriotic

spirit of independence, freedom and national salvation. As members of the Vietnamese nation, Buddhists came to love the Communist party and follow its leadership. As a result, Buddhist leaders fell under the influence of the communist movement. Moreover, incisive arguments made by communists, such as Hai Trieu, during the public debates on Buddhist questions enhanced their reputation in the eyes of the Buddhist devotees.

Furthermore, we must mention the purely religious motives of many Buddhist monks and lay people. Many were simply motivated by a desire to save the world from its suffering through their own benevolence and compassion, in accord with the narrow strictures of Buddhist law. They focused their energies on reforming only what they considered the most backward aspects of Vietnamese society. Wishing to maintain a separation between religion and politics, they kept their distance both from the French administration and from the new revolutionary movement. Many members of the new Buddhist organizations were attracted by such a position.

The three forces mentioned above (French, Revolutionary, and Religious) competed for support among the Buddhist masses. As a result, although the Buddhist movement retained the potential to develop in a variety of different directions, it often lacked coherency or durability. While some periodicals such as *Phat Hoa Tan Thanh Nien*, *Tien Hoa*, and *Phap Am* exhibited progressive and patriotic tendencies, others vacillated between a French and a more classically Buddhist line. Some individuals became revolutionary pioneers like Nguyen An Ninh and Thien Chieu, while others, although supporting Buddhism and hating the French, dared not take action. Still other groups poured their energies into elaborate religious rituals and attempted to escape from what they saw as a painful reality. Due to their rapid proliferation and divergent views, relations between different Buddhist circles were fraught with doubts, conflicts and contradictions (the notorious feud between the Luong Xuyen association for Buddhist Study and the South Vietnamese association for Buddhist Study is a prime example). French repression also contributed to disarray among Buddhist groups. The French for instance crushed the Buddhist Mutual Aid Society of Tam Bao pagoda after finding a workshop for manufacturing grenades at their headquarters. Finally, simple exhaustion and defeatism led to the downfall of other groups such as the Luong Xuyen association of Buddhist Study.

The above-mentioned divisions became more acute as the prospects for national independence improved, and Buddhists were forced to take sides in an ever more politicized atmosphere. During the August Revolution, Buddhist devotees were suddenly forced to choose between liberated or French-controlled areas. A new period in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism was ushered in as those in the French or revolutionary camps began following divergent lines of development.

The Buddhist doctrine encompasses both ideological tenets and rituals. Buddhist rites are connected to ceremonies and ways to express respect and veneration for a Buddha. Buddhist ideology is concerned

primarily with perceptions that serve as a basis for belief. In recent reformations and the promotion of Buddhism, believers have primarily concerned themselves with the latter, changing their practices little. Over the current century, there has been heated debate in the press about the proper way of thinking and reasoning for Buddhists, the first public debate in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism and the first time Vietnamese Buddhists had to confront such fundamental issues. The debate has drawn many participants, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, who have closely scrutinized their values and their perceptions.

One such fundamental problem concerns moral actions. Traditional Buddhism points out that, for a man's release from pain and suffering in this world, he must be "compassionate and benevolent;" and he must not "kill any animals." *Tri Do Luan*, in an essay on virtue and generosity, maintains that the Buddhist clergy is to save living beings from pain and suffering. In order to bring about benevolence, the Buddhist scriptures contain five commandments and 12 provisions. But those who practice these must swallow a bitter pill to endure all indignities, and withstand sacrifices and hardships in order to convert other people through their example of righteousness and generosity. Hence, the Buddhist clergy still holds to the concepts of "compassion and endurance" and considers them to be the domain of Gautama Buddha.

The Buddhist scripture also exhorts man to abide by its "five commandments" (one shall not murder, steal, lust, lie, or drink in excess). The "murder prohibition" has a broad meaning: a Buddhist should not kill animals and it is strictly forbidden to murder men. However, the concepts of 'compassion' and 'no murder' should have been ignored in the face of criminal actions of the French during their rule over Vietnam. These Buddhist doctrines effectively lulled some people to sleep and prevented them from rising up to kill the enemy for the sake of national salvation. This was irresponsive to aspirations to save the country and to the majority of the Buddhist masses.

However, during the period of French control of Vietnam, Bonze Thien Chieu put the question another way in order to get followers involved in the struggle against the French to save their fatherland. He wrote these pair of verses on a two-sided banner which he placed at the main gate of Unh Son Pagoda, where he had been the teacher of religious affairs:

Buddhist Teachings enter the world seeking no pessimism
Compassion is meant to ignore Ahimsha but for human
salvation.

One can interpret these verses to mean true Buddhists should be involved in the cause of national salvation and that they should kill their aggressors in order to save the people. These iconoclastic verses caused a stir of public opinion not only because they were written on banners

stretching across the streets of Saigon, but also because they expressed such an untraditional conception.

In order to counter Thien Chieu's verses, the pro-French Buddhist Nguyen Nang Quoc affirmed that "a Buddhist should save mankind from misfortune and unhappiness, [but should] never be involved in political matters," essentially denying Buddhism a place as a worldly religion. In a speech he made on the occasion of Vinh Nghiem's appointment as the "leader of Buddhism" in 1936 in Hanoi, Mr. Quoc said:

Religion has never interfered in our country's political affairs, although it has exerted a rather great spiritual influence on the people, their customs and living situations. In order to maintain a steady position for religion, especially at this time of transition where there is much conflict between old and new and there is no standard yet for moral life, religion must play the role it has in being an excellent remedy to save mankind from misfortune and unhappiness.

Many other Buddhists, in the general press and Buddhist magazines, opposed Bonze Thien Chieu's interpretation of Buddhist compassion and the desire to save the world. The majority of the clergy at the time followed the traditional line because they could not think otherwise, as it had always been the gist of Buddhism. Nevertheless, from Bonze Thien Chieu's way of thinking, Buddhists pondered deeply whether it was right for them to cling to a literal interpretation of Buddha's teachings. Surely there are things that ought to be done differently from the Buddhist Bible. And Buddhists should get themselves involved in political matters without the least uneasiness or anxiety.

A second important question that has been faced by Vietnamese Buddhists is whether Buddhism is theistic or atheistic. Does Buddhism consider God to be the sole creator of all of nature? In former times, this question was not properly dealt with; it was only put forward when one wished to ponder Buddha's whereabouts. The different answers to this question throughout history have given rise to the foundation of different Buddhist sects.

The Ch'an sects (Thien in Vietnamese, Dhyana in Sanskrit, Zen in Japanese) hold that Buddha is in the mind and heart of Buddhists. The Pure Land (Sukhavati/Chingtu/Jodo) and Tantric (Vajrayana or Mantrayana) sects purport that Buddha lives in the West, in the Pure Land of Nirvana, implying that the Buddha Gautama is a deity having the power of deciding the destiny of man. However, during the 1930s the theistic nature of these beliefs did not match with reality.

Answers should have been given based on scientific advances and achievements made in Buddhist research. Thus, the question of whether Buddhism is theistic or atheistic remains to be answered. An answer to this

question should be direct, define the limits to man's knowledge and capacity, explain how man can master his own destiny, and should consider what man, or more concretely, the people, can do to transform their country's situation.

Buddhism's theological status has been of paramount concern. Many papers, magazines, and works were devoted to just this subject through the 1930s. There were clear and definite points of view, with little or few conflicting ideas exchanged between various Buddhist sects. On one side stood those who argued Buddhism was atheistic. Their leading proponents, along with Thien Chieu, were Le Dinh Tham, An Giang, Le Khanh Hoa, Nguyen An Ninh, Thich Don Hau, Truong To, and Nguyen Trong Thuat. On the other side of the issue stood the following leaders: the author of *Tu Bi Am* (The Voice of Compassion); Khue Lac Tu, the editor of a magazine titled *For Christ Sake*; and the writer of the *Thuong De Luan* ("A Dissertation about God").

Members of the first group based their opinions first and foremost on the Buddhist theory of causality: anything that happens is the result of what preceded it and the cause of what follows it, making all things seem without a beginning or an end. What is called 'God' is only the result of what preceded it. Thus, there is no beginning and thereby nothing is sacred. In addition, members of this group believe that a theory should be a reasoned supposition put forward to explain facts with proof and evidence which can be analyzed and tested. According to them, the theory put forward by advocates of theism has "neither proof nor evidence," and thus their reasoned supposition proves to be unconfirmed and "can in no way be tested." What they believe in is a fabrication by means of which they capitalize on the credulity of the people.

Proponents of atheism also argue that their opponent's position is full of contradictions. For instance, they question how Buddhist teachings on compassion and benevolence can be God-given when the world is full of human suffering and misfortune. Moreover, atheists criticize theists for the contradiction inherent in the religious opposition each founder of a sect establishes in relation to the other sects. As Bonze Thien Chieu put it: "The Heaven of Catholicism hates the Heaven of Protestantism. The God of Islam would like to kill the God of Brahmanism. Even the new God in Southern Vietnam [referring to the Cao Dai religion] is to be split into two. The latter God denounces the former God as not genuine. People would see this as a tragic comedy, making them laugh and putting tears in their eyes."¹

As a result of this reasoning, they have come to the conclusion: There is no God at all. Buddhism has no God. Buddhism is an atheistic religion. Bonze Thien Chieu arrived at a clear-cut conclusion: "No! Buddhism does not believe in [God-determined] rewards and punishments. There is no Creator of the Universe. There is no cult of whatever deity and no belief in whatever Buddha, besides our trust in our own will."²

Le Dinh Tham argued: "It would be an error to regard Buddha as the Indra of Brahmanism. That should be rejected as unfounded."³ Nguyen

An Ninh affirmed that the particular trait of Buddhism is not to say anything about heaven. “Born 2500 years ago, right after Brahmanism came into being, a religion which professes fabulous theories on heaven and the universe, Buddhism had the unique trait of never mentioning heaven”⁴

For people who lived in the 1930s, making a theoretical argument that Buddhism is an atheistic religion was rather strange, though the arguments sounded logical and compelling. On the one hand, the atheist's theoretical point inspired Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike to have greater cause to understand the Buddhist religion. On the other hand, it created anger and frustration in the minds of conservative Buddhists. These people were disconcerted for they had little reason with which to refute atheism. More importantly, pro-atheistic arguments offended believers in other religions such as Cao Daism and Catholicism.

Some theists who had no argument to refute the opposition resorted to the old allegations such as those found in *Thuong De Luan* by Khue Lac Tu, who was a famous writer of the Cao Daist religion. He wrote: “God is a pure and genuine spirit who exists in the chaotic and misty times of the beginnings of the universe. God was neither born nor died because he is the Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe: that is why He is not subject to the laws of birth and death.”

The Catholic priest J. M. Thich responded in kind: “The great error of this theory [referring to the atheist's argument] is that it speaks only of living creatures but not of the Creator of the universe... When negating the existence of the Creator, there would be no other way than to deal with living creatures and their vicious cycles... if people knew about the significance of Christ's coming into the world, these mistaken beliefs would not be held.”⁵

There also were thoughtless charges and groundless abuses made by some such as Khue Lac Tu's attack on Bonze Thien Chieu or the consideration by Catholic ideologues that the negation of the Creator would destroy the very base of morals and ethics. It should be recognized that the viewpoint of negating the existence of God and considering Buddhism to be an atheistic religion was not yet made clear to Buddhist believers and did not yet win their sympathy and approval. This inability was expressed differently by different persons. Bonze Thien Chieu held the opinion that atheism was also a religion although the two had been originally contradictory to each other. This led him to the assessment that Buddhism was an atheistic religion. Bonze Thien Chieu explained, “If we call Buddhism a religion, it remains forever an atheistic religion.”⁶ He also affirmed, “Buddhism as I call it is but an atheist religion which differs entirely from theistic religions.”⁷

Some other theorists tied Buddhism to an atheistic metaphysics. Truong To explained the origins of the universe by saying it was not created by God but by the “four elements,” namely earth, water, fire and wind.⁸ This was a primitive materialist concept originally from ancient India which was not helpful to human understanding of human perceptions.

Still, Le Khanh Hoa resorted to an esoteric explanation made by Manjusri in his time: “Ambition gives rise to chimera which gives rise to the four elements, the latter serving as the foundation of nature.”⁹ Their limited knowledge was primarily due to their base in ideals and their failure to link atheism to combatant materialism. Through the following words uttered by Bonze Thien Chieu, that “Someone may think that I’m not a materialist, but I’m only a Buddhist scholar,” people were able to see that he did not know yet about the origins of his limited knowledge.

In the meantime, Nguyen Trong Thuat's assessment, although incompletely developed, proved to be the most sensible: “Saying that Buddhism is purely philosophical and atheistic is not correct. And it would be erroneous to say that Buddhism is pantheistic. We must admit that Buddhism is a religion but it is a religion which takes Man's good heart as its main purpose.”¹⁰

A third issue that has faced Vietnamese Buddhists is the mind-body problem: Does man have a soul? If he does, what about the relationship of the soul to the body? Is the soul immortal? Bonze Thien Chieu was the first Vietnamese Buddhist recorded to raise this question. “The soul is a term that does not exist in the Buddhist Sutras,”¹¹ as Pham Huu Binh, a Buddhist at the time, wrote. The idea of a soul came originally from Europe and Catholicism and was translated and incorporated into Vietnamese ideology. This concept has given rise to many discussions, given the fact that the issue of a soul bears a clear significance to Buddhist theory. Solving this question means confirming a base for the *raison d'etre* and the conduct of worship. So what does a soul mean? What is its relationship to the body?

Bonze Thien Chieu affirmed, “There is no soul. If we admit that the soul does exist, that means we give man a nature separated from his other characteristics and also separated from the universe. Science today holds that the idea of such a separate nature proves to be an error of our perception” (*Questions and Answers About Buddhism*). Nevertheless, in the process of his discussion, he admitted a so-called soul really exists and should be made clear. In his opinion, it is the ‘mind’ of knowledge, the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, sound from unsound, yet which also disappears when the body no longer exists.

Thien Chieu also wrote, “It is quite obvious, as shown by evidence, that a man's spirit changes along with his body. Nevertheless, there are still people who believe in the immortality of the soul. They are reluctant to reject that way of thinking because they do not use their reason. So they are quite stubborn in their behavior” (*Why I Must Thank Buddhism*).

Buddhist, Le Dinh Tham, gave himself the task of clearly “defining the particular trait of the soul” as one of the two parts of a man. The soul must not be separated from the body. It is fully integrated into the body and finds expression in the existence of the body. There is no soul without body.”¹² Buddhist Pham Huu Binh asserted that the soul is dependent on the body and it would be a matter of imagination and superstition to say that

the soul is independent from the body and can remain in the world when the body is buried in the earth. Thien Chieu, Le Dinh Tham and Pham Huu Binh's ideas were similar and derived from the same standpoint.

These ideas created discontent and discomfort to opposing conservatives, forcing them to respond. The conservatives strove to find spiritual support in the Buddhist Sutras, and condemned the progressive Buddhists for having distorted them. Lien Tong, the Editor-in-Chief of *Tu Bi Am*, condemned Thien Chieu for "talking perversely." He said, "I would like to ask those who study Buddhism where they could find such in the Buddhist Sutras and where have they found someone who talked so perversely as Thien Chieu does?"¹³

An unknown author of an article in *Tu Bi Am*, with the initials of N.C.T., denounced Le Dinh Tham as a Buddhist who misunderstood the Buddhist Sutras. The anonymous author wrote:

By Le Dinh Tham's statement that the soul has no eyes, no nose, no limbs, I fear that it would run counter to the Buddhist, Sutras. If saying that the soul has neither eyes, nor nose nor limbs, when the soul passes to Hell, in case it commits an offence, how can it be punished if it has no body, no eyes, no nose and no limbs of its own? Why do the Buddhist Sutras speak of terrible torture and execution in Hell? Can we attribute all these things to pure fabrications by the Sutras?"

Conservatives strove to find similar concepts in the Buddhist doctrine for the purpose of explanation. Bonze Bich Lien, in his "Adaptation of the Souls,"¹⁴ pretended that the soul is one of the eight cognitions in the Buddhist Sutras, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, sense, *mana*, and *alaya* ("alaya Karma"). In the Buddhist Scriptures they were called "consciousness of Karma, but the people in this world called it 'soul', so consciousness of Karma and the soul are 'one and the same thing'."¹⁵ Consciousness was looked upon by the two above-mentioned Bonzes as an abstract spiritual entity, which exists independently, not depending upon the body.

The answer to whether the soul is immortal could remain unclear even if the relationship between the soul and body were resolved. Buddhists Thien Chieu, Le Dinh Tham, and Pham Huu Bich did not believe in an immortal soul. As to Bonzes Lien Tong, Bich Lien, and Le Khanh Hoa and various other authors in *Tu Bi Am*, they argued that the soul, under the name of "consciousness," is immortal.

The two separate views of the immortality of the soul have different further implications. The conservative Buddhists' views conformed more to the low educational standards of the Buddhist masses at that time. This strengthened the superstitious minds of the masses, promoting rigid dogmatic thinking, something inherent in the masses. The arguments of the progressives, though new and unprecedented, were convincing to educated Buddhists who did not believe in superstition. Their explanation indirectly presented an argument on perceptions in which there are a number of elements of the soul. The subject of perception is an entity

of the soul and body combined together. The sense of vision, hearing, and feeling have important roles to play in man's cognition which is a whole process with its limits and restrictions. If this line of argument is considered properly it could constitute a valuable theory of perception.

Nevertheless, this explanation by progressive intellectual Buddhists, despite its good points, was not yet fully convincing. On the one hand, they argued that the soul depended upon the body and would disappear with the body. On the other they admitted that there was a special soul, a special cognition which was immortal, and was believed to exist forever, and to serve as a basis for life. Buddhist Le Dinh Tham said, "I say there is no soul, that is to say there is no existence of that sort of soul according to the customary way of speaking,-- that is, a soul having eyes, nose, and limbs and knowing everything,... that which knows how to hate and to love, but I do not mean there is not the sort of thing which gives life to the people. That does not belong to any body, to any life, that is relevant everywhere, and according to circumstances and to its own action, it would give life to this or that body. And together with the body, it would exist or die."¹⁶

That thing with its all-purpose and sacred character is in effect the special immortal soul. Thien Chieu was inclined to distinguish the soul from cognition. The soul would die along with the body, but cognition would still be living when the body died. He argued that in the three time periods we are conscious of (the past, present, and future), none are the same though none are different (*The Truth of Theravada and That of Mahayana*).

Thus, the viewpoint of progressive Buddhists about the soul remained embryonic due to their lack of scientific knowledge and full understanding of the structure and function of a man's mind. Neither did they know about consciousness. Le Dinh Tham's medical doctor diploma as well as Thien Chieu's scientific know-how could not help these two men much. In addition, they were Buddhists and hence prone to believing the Buddhist doctrine. Their minds were influenced by the theories of metempsychosis, spiritualism, and reincarnation in this religion. They could not be cleansed of their mystical religious philosophy.

The fourth point of debate concerns the Land of Bliss (*Sukhavati*). This question is related to the concepts of Paradise, the "West," and the Pure Land. Commoners and a number of Buddhists considered these concepts to be one and the same and they used them interchangeably. But for Buddhists in the 1930s, these were different concepts with different meaning. By word of mouth or through images, Buddhists with older ideas presented worlds of either cheerful or sorrowful scenes, which they called Paradise and Hell, or Nirvana and the "sinister." Their propaganda was meant to induce superstitious beliefs in the vulgar and make them entertain illusions about their future life. Progressive Buddhists criticized this type of proselytizing and presented their own conception about Buddhism. This debate lasted dozens of years without end. What had the Buddhists debated

so ardently about? They wanted to answer the following questions: “What does the Land of Bliss really mean? If there is such a world, where does its lie? And how does one get to it?” in questions and answers about Buddhism and in articles published in *Duy Tam* and *Duoc Nha Nam* magazines, Buddhist Thien Chieu made every effort to answer the above questions in new ways. He held the opinion that Nirvana was quite different from paradise because it was a Buddhist concept while Paradise was a concept of Catholicism and other monotheistic religions. Nirvana is a mental state when a person's mind is at peace, when he feels carefree and light-hearted. To his way of thinking, the concept of Nirvana is close to that of the “West.” In order to get to Nirvana or to the West, he advised Buddhists not to pray to Amitabha to be sent there, neither should they demand for blessings from any deity or Buddha. But they should do their utmost to give up their reading of prayers and their demands of God's blessings, and instead, direct their minds and hearts toward a peaceful and quiet life. Thien Chieu wrote:

There is no contradiction between the West and Nirvana. It would be the West if one ceases, indirectly, the reading of prayers and demands for blessings; it would be Nirvana when ceasing, directly, one's reading of prayers and one's demand for blessings. There is no contradiction whatsoever when ceasing either directly or indirectly one's reading of prayers and one's demand for blessings! That is why I confirm: The West is Nirvana, Nirvana is the West.¹⁷

Another contemporary Buddhist, Chinh Tuc, had views very similar to those of Thien Chieu. He considered Nirvana to be quite different from Paradise. In Chinh Tuc's opinion, Nirvana is a “deserted” and “dead” spot. Nirvana has many meanings but can find no similar concept in the Chinese vocabulary. He went on, “In short, Nirvana has [at least] three meanings: No birth, release from pain, and no death; due to its numerous meanings, Nirvana could not be translated into Chinese characters.”¹⁸

Chinh Tuc's view was quite different from that of Thien Chieu. He held that in the Buddhist scriptures there are references to Paradise and Hell although these are not scenes outside the mind of man. He concluded that “we come to the understanding that Paradise and Hell are in our minds. Man's mind branches out in two directions, which one shall we take?”¹⁹ In his opinion, the method of reaching Paradise would be to put up with all things that happen in one's life and to feel ‘smug’ [resigned] about one's present circumstances. This viewpoint was also influenced by the ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi.

Buddhist Lien Tong and some others stood opposed to Thien Chieu's recommendation that one has not to resort to reading prayers and

making requests for blessings. Lien Tong argued that the West and the Pure Land were in the real world, so man must pray to Amitabha for the favor to go there. He said this was true because it was written in the Buddhist scriptures. He quoted a statement by Sakyamuni to Amitabha: "If any living creature keeps praying to Amitabha, Buddha will appear before his or her eyes." He quoted Mahastanaprapta in the Surangama Sutra as follows: "Now that I'm living in this world, I shall take those who pray to Buddha to the Pure Land." Questioning Thien Chieu, he wrote, "Was it that Amitabha wrongly vowed or that Mahastanaprapta was wrongly received here?" (Bien Chinh, *Tu Bi Am*). Lien Tong's viewpoint stemmed from what he read in old sutras written thousands of years ago.

Thien Chieu, Chinh Tuc and a number of young Buddhists at that same time advocated that man must create his own happiness and that any argument must be well-reasoned and proven through contemporary evidence, which can be easily scrutinized. This guideline was aimed at giving prominence to man eliminating his superstitious practices and conforming human thinking to science instead of dogmatism and empiricism. This guideline was heartily welcomed by educated and cultured people. For that reason, numerous people voiced their support of Thien Chieu's viewpoint and vigorously criticized the view of Lien Tong, Editor-in-Chief of *Tu Bi Am*, saying that he put forth a backward and conservative viewpoint. The affirmed "theory of heavenly authority [referring to Lien Tong's stand] can no longer be applied at this time to clear-cut science and philosophy. Everything must change with time and it is no good to stick to old fashion ideas."²⁰

It should be noted, however, that the viewpoint of Buddhists such as Thien Chieu was still limited: he did not recognize that popular dreams of another world (The "West," Paradise, and Nirvana) were really just a reflection of dreams for happiness in modern life. His ideas did not correspond to realistic conditions of men striving for welfare and happiness. He could only advise the populace to carry out abstract ideas such as ceasing "to pray to Buddha," quieting their minds and spending their life peacefully without desire or passion. Chinh Tuc's feeling was 'smug' about people's actual circumstances, keeping them from trying for anything better as advocated by the doctrine of Lao Zi and Zhuangzi (following Chinh Tuc's style), which proved to be out of conformity with the degree of knowledge of the masses at that time. For these reasons, up to the early 1940s, the masses still welcomed articles which gave publicity to the sights of joy and happiness in the "West" (Land of the Buddha) and those of the abominable Hell in *Duoc Tue* and *Tu Bi Am* magazines. They did not know that all these descriptions were works of fiction. They assumed them to be true and found them very attractive.

The fifth problem Vietnamese Buddhists dealt with during the 1930s and 1940s was the nature of all living beings and things in the universe, man and his behavior, and the question of "to be or not to be?" This question arose from the need to resolve the contradiction between

Buddhist theory and reality. Buddhist Sutras contain the principle of “not being, nothingness, non-existence of the self, of a person's nature,” but persons living at that time, especially the Buddhist masses, were drowning in passions and unlimited desires. They devoted their strength to earning a livelihood. As a result of their greed they also created dissension among themselves.

The Buddhists did not know how to explain life by recourse to its own nature and to lay down practical and effective measures for satisfying the needs of men and resolving their personal contradictions. They sought causes derived from their mental reflection, ignoring life itself and objective reality. Nevertheless, they did recognize that they were unable to understand the full nature of all living creatures and each man's self.

What might a person's nature be like? The Buddhists were not able to come to terms with all the aspects of this question. They only concentrated their efforts on studying the ontology of things, namely of nature and man and solving the question whether these do ‘exist’ or not. By asking “Was it that everything was just nothingness?”, they implied a conception and an attitude of life. The Buddhist classics say “Nature is derived from consciousness which means consciousness gives rise to the form of the thing.” Nevertheless, Buddhists wrote that all nature and phenomena were created by a predestined affinity, which had no character by itself, so it could be regarded as nothingness. These principles had for many successive generations dominated the mind-set and caution of Buddhists. But when the ideological currents from the West were introduced into the country, people obtained the necessary conditions to re-evaluate their traditional conceptions and principles, allowing them to be amended and promoted.

Living under such circumstances, the Buddhist ideologists at the time realized that they were held responsible for giving explanations and propagating the ideas of Gautama Buddha with a new spirit. As they found themselves able to do this, they felt more enthusiastic in fulfilling their jobs. They actively engaged themselves in creative work. Their writings were largely published in serial form in dozens of issues of *Vien Am*, the magazine of the time most inclined to receive articles of this kind. Most typical of them were by Le Dinh Tham and Thich Don Hau, two men who put forth well-reasoned arguments. They advanced the character of the so-called things or beings, then drawing conclusions from those things or beings after an elaborate comparison with the defined character, they proceeded to explain other people's perceptions and assessments of the things or beings in such a way as to make them conform to their own conceptions. Such was the general argument they followed, and the particular steps advanced in proving it proof.

Le Dinh Tham pointed out that the conditions for the so-called ‘to be’ were the “definite character,” the “self character” and the “private character.” He wrote, “A thing need only have a definite character of its own in order to be regarded as existing.”²¹ He had applied these

stipulations in his consideration of things. Seeing that nothing he found met these conditions, he concluded: "There is nothing that has a definite character by itself. Therefore, nothing exists."²² With respect to things other people found to really exist, he explained that these things were merely existent because they contrasted with their opposites. He asserted, "The things we can see with our own eyes, though they are numerous, constitute no more than four, namely bright and dark, having a form and having no form. Something bright can be perceived because of the darkness around it; something dark can easily be perceived when around it all things are bright. Something may have a form only because it contrasts with formless things. Therefore, in the last analysis, nothing can have a definite character of its own."²³

He added that things pretended to exist [i.e., their appearance is illusory] based on untrustworthy sensations:

In this world things are said to exist when they can be seen or heard. On the contrary; things which can be neither seen nor heard are said to be non-existent. Chairs and tables are considered to exist but the space and the air lying in between them does not exist. However, it is not true that space and the air do not exist. The things like chairs and tables which people regard as truly existing have only some shape or give some sensation or are hard or soft when they are touched. Apart from these, they have no other particulars. Why cannot other things which have no particular characteristics be considered to be 'in existence'?'²⁴

From the above arguments he affirmed: "What is called 'existing' is something seen in a dream, something seemingly found in the cognition of the mind. Cognition results from the process of perceiving things by the mind which makes one see as if one were seeing a sight much like that in a dream. Thus, such a thing is also an expression of the mind and only when one is awake does one realize that one has had a dream." He came to the conclusion that "All things are derived from the mind," meaning "all facts and all things are created by the mind's perceptive power." All things and beings are products of the mind's imagination.

Bonze, like Thich Don Hau, set for himself the task of proving that things said to exist really do not exist. He explained that if people recognized the existence of all living beings and things in the universe, it was because their being was either deceived or mistaken. First and foremost, people can be deceived by their senses. He said:

From what source do we know about the existence of living beings and things? When asked this question, everybody answers, 'Because we see, hear and sense that

there exist living beings and things'. But if this is based on people saying they see things with their own eyes, why, when they see images in the mirror do they not truly recognize that those images truly exist? We also cannot be so sure of our hearing, for after taking quinine pills one can hear noises in the ears. They do not recognize whether or not these noises truly exist. Lastly, if we say that people can sense things, then why when touching a chair or a table after holding their hand on a piece of ice do they feel that the chair or the table is rather warm? Inversely, when touching a chair or a table after plunging their hands into warm water, why do they feel as if the chair or the table is rather cold? The sensations of the nostrils and tongue are not quite the same. So how could we argue for the real existence of living beings and things in the universe?²⁵

Names too are highly deceptive. Bonze Thich Don Hau affirmed that things were made up of different components and names could not entirely reflect substances completely: "The name given to a thing is not that thing in itself. The word 'book' is a noun that has no real existence, so too the word 'cover'. The cover itself is made up of many component parts. If it is torn to pieces, the latter taken separately cannot be called a cover. It is the same for our and an animal's body. The body is made up of cells. It has a name but has no real existence. The 'cell' is also only a name. So is the case with a set of tables and armchairs; excluding tables and armchairs, this set has no real existence." From this reasoning, Bonze Thich Don Hau concluded that there were no 'real things', no 'real dharma', and no 'real self'.

These Buddhists proposed false arguments chiefly intended to deceive those people who listened to them. They used the subjective dialectics of Laozi and resorted to the subjective idealism of George Berkeley. Laozi pointed out the opposites of things such as long and short, high and low, beautiful and ugly. All opposites depend upon each other for their own existence. By this Laozi advised people to take into account both opposites and not to value only one and discard the other. That is to say, people should not negate things.

Le Dinh Tham also brought up opposites (bright and dark, having and not having form) and said that the two opposites must depend one upon the other for existence. But he proceeded from these opposites to advance towards the elimination of the existence of things. He made a mistake by confusing one or two characters of a thing with its essence, by taking the character of a thing to replace the thing with itself. Berkeley held that things depend upon the sensations and perceptions of man. Without the senses, things do not exist. Cognition-based theorists held the view that sense plays an important role in the cognition of things but they remarked that the senses are not reliable and true, so things have no real existence.

The conclusions drawn by both these Buddhists and consciousness-based theorists were similar to each other although their methodologies slightly diverged. Both theories bore the stamp of Berkeley, the Irish idealist philosopher of the eighteenth century.

Le Dinh Tham and his colleagues expressed their ideas concerning 'to be' and 'not to be' in 1934-1936, although their theoretical points on this problem were not further elucidated. Their arguments actually became more entangled and complicated. It was a matter of course that less-educated people could not understand their way of reasoning. Yet even the well-educated could not, based on their vague words, draw any conclusion.

Mr. Bui Ky, a Buddhist of that period, was one of these well-educated men. He exclaimed:

The phrase 'not to be' is too meaningful to understand. It seems to me that this word has too great a significance and that it finally becomes mystical. 'Not to be' has caused many doubts and suspicions for those people who wanted to ask but could not get an adequate answer. These people want to get more knowledge but cannot get enough material to enlighten them on this subject. So it is not yet known how much is need to complete this intricate job.²⁶

Those consciousness-based theorists, who raised the above arguments, aimed to make people believe that life is but an illusion, a dream, so as to make them unattached. But the masses did not recognize this theoretical point because it did not conform to their experience in life and ran counter to reality. The inhabitants in the course of their daily chores always consider that their persons and their lives do really exist and for that reason they always entreat deities to help them have a more plentiful and happier life. And in practice they have made every effort to realize their wishes.

Like many other debates, these five problems above that arose from the movement to develop Buddhism were not definitively settled. The participants in the debate firmly kept to their viewpoints. Although in the course of time there were some minor alterations in the modes of reasoning, neither of the two sides could convince their counterparts. It is also important to note that these debates had attracted the attention of the Buddhist masses, drawing into them many participants. Through these debates, the masses could hear, appreciate, and accept the views they thought to be most suited for them.

This was an opportunity for the Buddhist masses to raise their knowledge of religion and of Buddha as well, and to make their own choice. With regard to history, this was indeed a new period for helping the Buddhist masses to understand the Buddhist scriptures better, to overcome their suffering, and to select for themselves a suitable path for self-release from pain.

Though the matter was not settled, the tendency to heed reality, i.e. to take into consideration scientific achievements, proved to be vital in convincing young Buddhists. In this way they could be equipped with enough theory and knowledge about Buddhism. They became aware of human life and society and accustomed to the study of Buddhism and to its way of reasoning. Those who joined the debates knew better about how to put forth a well-reasoned argument, gaining insight into the essence of their religion. They followed and had the conditions to control their personality and thereby made steps forward in terms of their world outlook.

The above debate was also meant to help forward Vietnam's Buddhism in order to bring it into harmony with the world Buddhist movement, securing the conditions of its particular traits and viewpoints to that movement, and conversely, to inherit achievements from the world of Buddhism. From now on, there would be no passive isolation from the world of Buddhism. A new page of history of Vietnam's Buddhism was opened.

It was quite obvious that the movement for the development of Buddhism has had far-reaching repercussions. Such appreciation has come from Confucian scholars, believers of other religions, non-party members, non-religious people, Marxists, and even from Buddhists. They all estimated not only the importance of the movement but also the role played by Buddhism in society. Now that history has traversed a rather long path in the course of its development, there is a significantly large database of events to reconsider the ideas and arguments so far put forth in an objective manner, so as to classify and determine what is wrong, what is rational, what is irrational, what is perspicacious and what is not, and if there are valuable ideas, how are they are to be rated.

Confucian scholars were most stupefied in the face of the movement for Buddhist development. They did not know that in former times Confucianism and Buddhism had co-existed and now Confucianism was declining while Buddhism not only was maintained, but was still undergoing changes for the better through reorganization and renewal. But it was not for this reason that the Confucianists were unable to suppress their testiness and engage in criticizing Buddhism, as had happened in past history. On the contrary, it turns out that the Confucianists this time supported the movement in favor of Buddhism.

The function [social role] of Buddhism at that time was somewhat the same as that of Confucianism and that supporting what Buddhism aimed to do was tantamount to speaking in favor of Confucianism. Confucian scholars like Bui Ky, Nguyen Trong Thuat, and Tran Van Giap spoke in support of their counterpart Huynh Thuc Khang who was Editor-in-Chief of the *Tieng Dan* paper, for his article praising and stimulating the Buddhist movement, and welcoming the publication of Buddhist papers and magazines. One of his articles said in substance the following: "There has been a change in the course of the past decades, that is, Confucianism is declining toward its own annihilation while Buddhism has not only been

maintained but is also on the way to success because there are people who favor Buddhism and undertake to reorganize and promote it, such as those working at the *Tu Bi Am* magazine and those who follow the writers of *Vien Am*.²⁷

Among the Confucian scholars who remarked upon the movement of Buddhist development, mention must be made of Huynh Thuc Khang, who made remarkable comments on the movement. He argued:

People say that science and religion do not go hand-in-hand. This assertion applies only to far-distant civilized countries!. But in such backward countries where people are mostly dull-witted as in our own, religion still constitutes a good remedy for our compatriots.... The principles of compassion, benevolence, altruism and metempsychosis of Buddhism prove to be of much interest to living beings in the world. Buddhism, as practiced in this scientific life, though it is made out of date by the passing of time, still enjoys much popularity and proves to be of much utility in our country.²⁸

Through Mr. Khang's ideas, it was rightly assessed that Buddhism was still necessary for the nation; the principles of compassion and benevolence showed that the people's interests could be thereby enhanced. Under colonial and feudal rules, the above principles were the material equivalent of requests by the victims for concern, affection, relief, and aid, or they could be taken to represent the feelings of one's compatriots about their life full of hardship and misery. For that reason, those principles which still embody humanism and patriotism were badly needed at that time.

But Mr. Huynh Thuc Khang committed an error when he overly praised the role of Buddhism by attributing to it a task which it could not serve, that of being a remedy for others. Second, another error lay in the fact that Huynh Thuc Khang wanted to reconcile religion and science. However, the two were contradictory to each other both in aim and purpose. When science develops, it narrows down the sphere of activity of religion and by no means goes along with it.

A number of intellectuals strongly criticized the development of Buddhism. They thought little of and even held in contempt Sakyamuni's deeds, considering Gautama Buddha's profession of saving men from suffering and pain to be a fantastic hope, and the development of Buddhism to be an action stuffed with pro-French notions. One of those intellectuals spoke ironically about Buddhism in the following terms:

Sakyamuni differed from an ordinary laborer who is looking to lift himself and his family up, since Sakyamuni already had surplus material wealth and then strove a

transcendent happiness beyond life and death. ("Buddhism Seen with the Help of a Microscope,"²⁹

This viewpoint, however, was too extremist and does not reflect reality. In fact, the scenes as described by Buddhism and the principles as worked out by Buddhism at that time constituted a spiritual motivating force helping people to go forward in the search for better living conditions; they remained moral standards after which people should style themselves in order to secure an appropriate way of behavior in society. In addition, the movement for the development of Buddhism went beyond the boundary of subjugation by the French and later on became a part of the patriotic movement of the nation.

A noted Marxist scholar at the time named Hai Trieu also formed and gave his judgment about this movement. Under the pen name H.T. he wrote a series of articles titled "Revival of the Buddhist movement" published in successive issues of *Trang An* magazine in the imperial city of Hue. He was of the opinion that Buddhism could not save the people's life from suffering. Buddhism did not recognize the true things happening in life. Nor did it recognize the laws governing the evolution of mankind, so how could it save people from their suffering? He remarked that the great error committed by Buddhism was the elimination of man's desire, which constitutes the basis for his action in society: "The basis for all action in life is desire,-- which they [Buddhist believers] seek in every way to annihilate no matter whether the desire is legitimate or not." He advised people not to believe in the path shown by Buddhism. He advocated that Buddhists should be aware of *real* life in society. If not, the country would be involved in a dangerous and misery-ridden situation. He wrote: "We must get ourselves involved in the real life of the people and share with them wealth and woe. A race remaining indifferent to social occurrences is tantamount to a race putting itself to death."

H.T.'s assessment here is correct. Buddhism itself is not *sufficient* to play a role in national and social liberation. And it would be a treasonous doctrine if Buddhism's development were limited to purely religious activities and neglected or refused to participate in the campaign for national salvation launched at the time by progressive social organizations. If Buddhism were to reform to keep pace with the nation and the epoch, it would have to be in conformity with the general trend of the country. And in the course of this development, worldly affairs and the *raison d'etre* of the nation once introduced into the movement would become a part of the patriotic movement in order to keep pace with the progressive ideas of the epoch. In reality, the movement promoting Buddhism did turn out to follow this course.

Critics in the movement for development of Buddhism included Bonzes and lay Buddhists such as Bonze Thien Chieu and Buddhist Nguyen An Ninh. The first man here was second to none in his efforts at renovating Buddhism. Within a rather short time, he wrote dozens of books

(in addition to being the Editor-in-Chief of *Phat Hoa Tan Thanh Nien*, Thien Chieu compiled the monograph series “*Phat Hoc Tung Thu*” and published *Phat Giao Van Dap*, *Cai Thang Phat Hoc*, *Kinh Phap Cu*, *Kinh Lang Nghiem*, *Phat Giao Vo Than Luan*, *Phat Phap La Phat Phap*, *Phat Hoc Tong Yeu*, *Chan Ly Tieu Thua Va Chan Ly Dai Thua*), to say nothing of many articles dealing with the atheistic viewpoint and the line for releasing living beings from suffering advocated by Buddhism. About him, one newspaper wrote:

Bonze Thien Chieu is a man who speaks with utmost sincerity, that is why he deserves our attention. In the current religious campaigns, he is the man endowed with a high ideal; a stronger, more sincere and courageous man than Thien Chieu cannot be found among the intellectuals in Central Vietnam. It is quite seldom that one meets a man with such religious purpose and unparalleled ardor...³⁰

Nevertheless, Thien Chieu [surprisingly] gave up after over 20 years of propagating Buddhism. Nevertheless, his abandonment of Buddhism was not caused by outside pressure; it was chiefly due to his innermost feelings. This surprised many people, although he found it to be quite natural. He pointed out the restrictions imposed by Buddhism and its social role in a book entitled *Why should I Thank Buddhism?*, published in Saigon in 1936. It was easy for him to critique the restrictions of Buddhism because of its theory of causality which, in Thien Chieu's opinion, ran counter to science. He wrote: “Buddhism's theory of causality, though somewhat higher in content compared with the theories of a predestined-self and metempsychosis of Brahmanism, proves to be entirely contrary to the scientific relationship between cause and effects.” He still added that such a relationship between cause and effect did not agree with the reality in the shaping of man, because it is unacceptable that man's destiny is the effect of his former life. But is quite understandable that man's particular traits are the result of his education and milieu. He cited many examples to illustrate this question.

Another defect is the fictitious character and the illusory nature of Nirvana. Thien Chieu said there would be neither Nirvana without transformation or evolution, nor without pain or joy according to laws of change in the current of earthly birth and death. He indicated that nobody could reach Nirvana: “Among the living beings in the world, no matter what class or social stratum they belong to, and irrespective of their being a bourgeois, a wealthy man, petty-bourgeois, a proletarian, even a man who professes to be a Buddhist of sublime thinking, I dare say that not any of them can become a Buddha, nor can any of them enter Nirvana.” He insisted that nobody could overcome his own ambitions and hopes, and this kind of conquest constitutes the condition of prime importance for entering

Nirvana. Even Thai Hu, the famous Bonze of China and Vo Dang Tau Quan of Japan who always advised other people to annihilate their own ambitions and interests in order to be able to reach Nirvana, could not personally overcome their own ambitions and desires. For example, when in Paris, these two men had disputed with each other about which one of them had been the first to bring Buddhism to Europe!

In addition, Thien Chieu showed the shortcomings of Buddhism in the face of societal life. In his opinion, the doctrine was unable to help in the cause of saving living beings from hunger and misery. He said: "What is the cause of the hardships and misery suffered by the people when the economy enters a critical period? It is quite clear that Buddhism cannot help with its own method of saving living beings from pain and suffering." Buddhism has also been impotent in opposing heavenly and worldly authority. "The theory of no-self of Buddhism, no matter how powerful and effective, cannot do anything good in the elimination of heavenly authority and superstitions which are the ramparts protecting the current [French colonial] regime."

Finally, Thien Chieu left Buddhism in order to advance on another path. He could not yet expound his ideas unless the direction was rather clear for him: to head for and join the revolutionary movement of the masses. "I will take the path which is most convenient for me, and I should primarily be involved in the mass of people who are marching ahead in an orderly and disciplined manner." It was quite a natural thing for Thien Chieu to come to Buddhism in the early period and to leave it in the latter one. Living in the context of a country that had lost independence with people suffering from hardships and misery, he found himself duty-bound to save the country and the people from their station. Initially he believed Buddhism had the power to accomplish what he wished for. So, he entered the religion and did his utmost to secure this opportunity. But in the end, he found himself incapable to achieve his wishes, which led him to shift to another direction.

Like Thien Chieu, Nguyen An Ninh was very eager to renovate Buddhism. Nevertheless, when he left Buddhism, he took another path. This turning point in his life was marked in a book entitled *A Review of Buddhism* published in Saigon in 1937. In this book, he gave his judgments about the theory and the role of Buddhism in society. Nguyen An Ninh made clear that the way of saving mankind from suffering as preached by Sakyamuni proved to be ineffective and to some extent, harmful. In the above text he wrote: "Buddhism displays many idealistic ways which prove to be of no avail and still stuffs people's minds with wrong ideas and wrong assessments. Like many other idealistic theories, Buddhism does not provide living beings with any thing good and crams into their heads wrong ideas."

He considered that the Buddhist law of causality was not based on scientific knowledge. Likewise, he said Nirvana was created by the power of fancy. "Nirvana and Paradise are both created by the imagination of

man, they are strange shadows falling into this real world through the mind of man.” In addition, he indicated the absurdities of the Buddhist doctrine, namely, “Buddhism grasps the whole universe in its mind, then by the power of imagination detaches that shadow from its mind, which is only an imaginary victory.” Recalling a question put forth by Thien Chieu, he wrote, “If all mankind follows Buddhism, kills all desires and passions so as not to be subjected to the cycle of birth and death, what would come of this world? Is it true that Buddhism will remain only for animals?” In short, Buddhism had no attraction for him whatsoever.

Thien Chieu came very early to Buddhism. He venerated and worshipped this religion for over 20 years, finally leaving it to embark on revolutionary activities. Nguyen An Ninh came to Buddhism after abandoning his revolutionary activities. Nguyen An Ninh was at the time very famous. After his prison days in 1926- 1927 he withdrew into Buddhism to console himself. He had a wooden fish and bell on his table. His head was clean-shaven and he walked bare-footed. He studied Buddhism in French, English, German, and through Buddhist activities in Vietnam.³¹ Though these two men had different starting points their viewpoints converged similar to many others. This demonstrates that Buddhism can only foster a certain degree of patriotic sentiment, the love of the people and a respectful attitude toward man among its believers. Any person who desires to go beyond those limits must seek another doctrine. That also testifies to the fact that the revolutionary path led by the Communist Party of the Vietnamese working class drew great interest and attracted the nation.

Thien Chieu, Nguyen An Ninh and a lot of other people left Buddhism to embark upon the field of revolutionary activities after being involved in the movement for development of Buddhism. As indicated above, that movement was based on different tendencies and intentions. Many of the participants in the movement remained faithful Buddhists to the end. It should be admitted that owing to the complexities of life, people will pursue their own dreams and strive for their welfare and happiness by their own means. No theory can please all. Buddhism has every reason to continue to exist and its history will continue to unfold.

NOTES

¹See Thien Chieu, *Why I Must Thank Buddhism*.

²*Duoc Nha Nam*, January 15, 1931.

³*Vien Am*, July 8, 1934.

⁴*Critique of Buddhism*, Saigon, 1937.

⁵*For Christ's Sake*, Hue, June 11th 1937.

⁶*Duoc Nha Nam*, January 15, 1931.

⁷*Vo Than Luan* [A Dissertation on Atheism].

⁸*Duy Tam*, No. 24, September 1937.

⁹*Duy Tam*, No. 8, 1936.

- ¹⁰*Duoc Tue*, No. 71, 1937.
- ¹¹*Vien Am*, No. 50, June 1942.
- ¹²*Vien Am*, No. 4, March 1934.
- ¹³FN: *Tu Bi Am*, 15 September 1932.
- ¹⁴*Tu Bi Am* No. 104.
- ¹⁵*Duy Tam* 11 February 1936.
- ¹⁶*Vien Am* No. 4, March 1934
- ¹⁷*Supplement' to Duoc Nha Nam*, 25 June 1932.
- ¹⁸“Where is Paradise and Where is Hell?” *Vien Am* 12 July 1934.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*
- ²⁰Truc Vien, *Cong Luan*, 21 December 1932.
- ²¹*Vien Am*, No. 6, May 1934.
- ²²*Ibid.*
- ²³*Ibid.*
- ²⁴*Ibid.*
- ²⁵*Vien Am*, August 27, 1937.
- ²⁶*Duoc Tue*, No. 47, Nov. 1936.
- ²⁷“Our Country’s real situation apropos of Buddhist Study,” in *Vien Am*, No. 3, 1 Feb. 1934.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹*Anh Sang*, No. 36, 8 June 1935.
- ³⁰*Phu Nu Tan Van*, January 25, 1934.
- ³¹See Tran Van Giau, *Su Phat Trien Cua Tu Tuong o Viet Nam*.

GLOSSARY

A Man = A Man = Man Nuong
Ai = Ái
Ai Chau = Ái Châu
Ai Phu Lo = Ai Phù Lỗ
Am Hon Diep = Âm Hồn Điệp
An Ban Thu Ý = An Ban Thủ Ý (sutra) = 安般守意经
An Dinh = An Định
An Dinh Thoi Tiet = An Định Thời Tiết
An Giang = An Giang
An Hoa = An Hoa
An Hoa = An Hòa (pagoda)
An Hoach = An Hoạch (mount)
An Huyen = An Huyền = 安玄
An Lac = An Lạc (monastery)
An Lao = An Lão (mount)
An Luu Bao Hue = An Lưu Bảo Huệ
An Ma = An Mã (temple)
An Nam Chi Luoc = An Nam Chí Lược = 安南志摺
An Tam = An Tâm
An Thanh = An Thanh = 安清
An The Cao = An Thế Cao = 安世高
An Thien = An Thiên
An Tuc = An Tức (present-day Iran) = 安息
An Sinh Vuong Tran Lieu = An Sinh Vương Trần Liễu
Ang Do = Áng Độ
At Hoi = Ất Hợi (year)
At Mao = Ất Mão (year)
At Mui = Ất Mùi (year)
At Ti = Ất Tị (year)
Avalokitesvara = Quán Thế Âm
Ba Ngo = Bà Ngô (pagoda)
Ba Son = Ba Sơn (mount)
Bac Giang Ha = Bắc Giang Hạ
Bac Hanh Thi Tap = Bắc Hành Thi Tập
Bac Ninh = Bắc Ninh
Bac Thanh = Bắc Thành
Bach Dang = Bạch Đằng
Bach Ma = Bạch Mã
Bai Ma Si = Bạch Mã Tự = 白马寺
Bach Truong = Bách Trượng (Bai Zhang) = 白丈
Bach Truong Thanh Quy = Bách Trượng Thanh Quy = 百丈清规

- Bach Tuoc = Bạch Tước (pagoda)
 Ban De Da O Tra That Loi = Ban Đề Đa Ô Tra Thất Lợi
 Ban Son = Bàn Sơn
 Ban Tich = Bản Tích
 Bang Giao Hao Thoai = Bang Giao Hảo Thoại
 Banh Dao = Bánh Đạo
 Bao An = Báo Ân (pagoda)
 Bao Giac = Báo Giác
 Bao Giam = Báo Giám
 Bao Kinh Canh Gioi = Báo Kính Cảnh Giới
 Bao Loc = Báo Lộc
 Bao Ninh = Báo Ninh = Báo Ninh Sùng Phúc (pagoda)
 Bao Phac = Báo Phác
 Bao Phuc = Báo Phúc
 Bao Quoc = Báo Quốc (pagoda)
 Bao Sat = Báo Sát
 Bao Thai = Báo Thái (era)
 Bao Thien = Báo Thiên (pagoda) = 报天寺
 Bao Tich = Báo Tích
 Bao Tich Kinh = Báo Tích Kinh
 Bao Tinh = Báo Tinh
 Bao Trang = Báo Tràng (ratnadhavaja)
 Bao Tu = Báo Tư (pagoda)
 Bao Van = Báo Văn
 Bao Tho Dien Chieu = Baoshou Yanzhao = Báo Thọ Diên Chiêu
 Bat Giac = Bát Giác (repository)
 Bat Khong = Bất Không (Amoghavajra)
 Bat Nha = Bát Nhã (pagoda), (Prajna) = 般喏
 Bat Nha Am = Bát Nhã Âm
 Bat Nha Dao Quoc Am Van = Bát Nhã Đạo Quốc Âm Văn
 Bat Nha Tam Kinh Khoa So = Bát Nhã Tâm Kinh Khoa Số =
 般喏心经科疏
 Bat Thien Tung Bat Nha = Bát Thiên Tụng Bát Nhã (Astasahasrika) =
 八天讼般喏
 Ben Tre = Bến Tre
 Bich Dong = Bích Động (pagoda)
 Bich Tri = Bích Trì (lake)
 Bien Tai = Biện Tài
 Binh An = Bình An
 Binh Dan = Bính Dân (year)
 Binh Dang Le Sam Van = Bình Đăng Lễ Sám Văn
 Binh Dinh = Bình Định
 Binh Tri Thien = Bình Trị Thiên
 Bo Chinh = Bồ Chính (camp)
 Bo Da = Bồ Đà

- Bo De Tam = Bồ Đề Tâm
Bo De That Ly = Bồ Đề Thất Lý
Bo Son = Bồ Sơn
Bo Tat Hieu Sam Hoi Van = Bồ Tát Hiệu Sám Hối Văn
Bo Trach = Bồ Trạch
Boi Da = Bối Đà
Bon Khao Khoang Vien = Bôn Khao Khoáng Viên
Bu Yutong = Bất Ngữ Thông = 不语通
Bui Ky = Bùy Kỳ
Bui Quang Chieu = Bùy Quang Chiêu
Bui Thien Co = Bùy Thiên Cơ
Ca = Cả (river)
Cac Chu Su Tich = Các Chư Sự Tích
Cai Thang Phat Hoc = Cái Thang Phật học
Cam Thanh = Cầm Thành
Can Vương = Càn Vương
Canh = Cảnh
Canh Than = Canh Thân (year)
Canh Ty = Canh Tý = 庚子
Cao Ba Quat = Cao Bá Quát
Cao Minh Nhi Phap Su Dap Giao Chau Ly Mieu Nan Phat Bat Kien Hinh
Su = Cao Minh Nhị Pháp Sư Đáp Giao Châu Lý Miếu Nan Phật Bất
Kiến Hình Sư = 高明二法師答交州李淼难佛不见形事
Cao Tang = Thảo Đường = 草堂
Cao Tang Truyen = Cao Tăng Truyện = 高僧传
Cao Van Long = Cao Văn Long
Caoshan Benji = Tào Sơn Bản Tích
Cam Binh = Cầm Bình
Cam Thanh = Cầm Thành
Cam Truc = Cầm Trúc
Cam Ung = Cầm Ứng (pagoda)
Cam Y = Cầm Y (pagoda)
Can An = Càn An (pagoda)
Canh Huy = Cảnh Huy
Canh Long Dong = Cảnh Long Đông (pagoda)
Canh Ngung = Cảnh Ngung
Canh Thin = Canh Thìn (year)
Canh Tuat = Canh Tuất (year)
Cao An Da Yu = Cao An Đại Ngụ
Cat Ne = Cát Nê
Cat Tuong = Cát Tường (pagoda)
Cau Ong Lanh = Cầu Ông Lãnh
Cay Moc Can = Cây Mộc Cạn
Chan Dao = Chân Đạo
Chan Giac = Chân Giác

- Chan Giao = Chân Giáo (pagoda)
 Chan Huyen = Chân Huyền
 Chan Khong = Chân Không
 Chan Lac = Chân Lạc (temple)
 Chan Lap = Chân Lạp
 Chan Ly = Chân Lý
 Chan Ly Tieu Thua Va Chan Ly Dai Thua = Chân Lý Tiểu Thừa Và Chân Lý Đại Thừa
 Chan Nghiem = Chân Nghiêm
 Chan Nguyen = Chân Nguyên
 Chan Nguyen Thien Su Toan Tap = Chân Nguyên Thiên Sư Toàn Tập
 Chan Phuc = Chân Phúc
 Chan Ton Cung Hoanh = Chân Tôn Cung Hoàn
 Chan Tru = Chân Trụ
 Chan Tru Tue Nguyet = Chân Trụ Tuệ Nguyệt
 Chaozhou = Triều Châu
 Chau Phe = Châu Phê
 Chau Quang = Châu Quang (pagoda)
 Che Man = Chế Mân
 Chen Muzhou = Trần Mục Châu
 Chi Cuong Luong = Chi Cương Lương = 支强梁
 Chi Khiem = Chi Khiêm = 支谦
 Chiem Hoa = Chiêm Hóa
 Chieu An = Chiêu Ân (tower)
 Chieu Doi Luc = Chiêu Đồi Lục
 Chieu Hoang = Chiêu Hoàng
 Chieu Khoan = Chiêu Khoan
 Chieu Phung = Chiêu Phụng
 Chinh Giac = Chính Giác
 Chinh Giac Vien Ngo = Chính Giác Viên Ngô
 Chinh Giac Chan Nguyen = Chính Giác Chân Nguyên
 Chinh Tri = Chính Trị (era)
 Chinh Tuc = Chính Túc
 Chu Dao Trang Khanh Tan Van = Chư Đạo Trang Khánh Tấn Văn
 Chu Dien = Chu Diên
 Chu Dong Tu (Dong Tu) = Chử Đồng Tử (Đồng Tử)
 Chu Kinh Nhat Tung (Do) = Chư Kinh Nhật Tụng (Đồ)
 Chu Kinh Nhat Tung Vo Luong Tho = Chư Kinh Nhật Tụng Vô Lượng Thọ
 Chu Minh = Chu Minh
 Chu Pham Kinh = Chư Phạm Kinh
 Chu Phat Tich Duyen Su = Chư Phật Tích Duyên Sự
 Chuan De = Chuẩn Đề (altar)
 Chuan Deng Lui = Truyền Đăng Lục = 传灯录
 Chung Thien = Chúng Thiện (pagoda) = 众善
 Chuong My = Chương Mỹ

Chuong Nhan Hau = Chương Nhân Hâu
Chuong Son = Chương Sơn (mount or pagoda)
Chuong Tuyen = Chương Tuyên
Chuong Van = Chương Văn
Chuyet Cong = Chuyết Công
Co Am = Cổ Am
Co Chau Phap Van Phat Ban Hanh = Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Bản Hạnh
Co Chau Phap Van Bon Hanh Ngu Luc = Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Bản Hạnh Ngũ Lục
Co Duyen Van Dap Giai = Cơ Duyên Văn Đáp Giải
Co Loa = Cổ Loa
co troi = cơ trời
Co Phap = Cổ Pháp
Co Viet = Cổ Việt
Con Cuong = Côn Cương (mount)
Con Son = Côn Sơn (pagoda)
Cong Chau = Cống Châu
Cong Van Lap = Công Văn Lập
Cu Tran Lac Dao Phu = Cư Trần Lạc Đạo Phú
Cung Dieu Ngu Khoa = Cung Điều Ngự Khoa
Cuu Ban Phat To Ke Dang = Cựu Bản Phật Tổ Kế Đương
Cung Minh = Cung Minh
Cuu Chan = Cửu Chân = 九真
Cuu La = Cửu La
Cuu Pham Lien Hoa = Cửu Phẩm Liên Hoa (tower)
Da = Đà (river)
Da Bao = Đa Bảo
Da Bao Nhu Lai = Đa Bảo Như Lai
Da Da = Đà Đà
Da La Thanh = Đa La Thanh
Da Nang = Đà Nẵng
Dac Thu Lam Tuyen Thanh Dao Ca = Đặc Thủ Lâm Tuyên Thành Đạo Ca
Dai A Di Da Kinh = Đại A Di Đà Kinh = 大阿弥陀经
Dai Bi Tam = Đại Bi Tâm
Dai Chinh Tan Tu Dai Tang Kinh = Đại Chính Tân Tu Đại Tạng Kinh = 大政新修大藏经
Dai Du Da = Đại Du Đà
Dai Duong Hoi Dien Luc = Đại Đường Hội Điển Lục = 大堂会典录
Dai Giac = Đại Giác (pagoda)
Dai Gioi Diep = Đại Giới Diệp
Dai Han Tang = Đại Hán Tạng = 大汉藏
Dai Hung = Đại Hưng (repository)
Dai Huong Hai An Thi Tap = Đại Hương Hải Án Thi Tập
Dai Kien = Đại Kiến
Dai La = Đại La

- Dai Luat Tang = Đại Luật Tang
 Dai Nam Thiên Uyển Ke Dang Luoc Luc = Đại Nam Thiên Uyển Kế Đăng
 Lược Lục
 Dai Nhuc Chi = Đại Nhục Chi = 大肉支
 Dai Phuong = Đại Phương
 Dai Quan Vương = Đại Quan Vương
 Dai Quang = Đại Quang (pagoda)
 Dai San = Đại Sán
 Dai Thang Dang = Đại Thặng Đẳng = 大乘灯
 Dai Truong = Đại Trường
 Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu = Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư
 Dai Vo Luong Tho = Đại Vô Lượng Thọ = 大无量寿
 Dai Thang Tu Thien = Đại Thắng Tư Thiên (tower)
 Dai Tri = Đại Trị (era)
 Dai Tu = Đại Từ
 Dai Tue Ngu Luc = Đại Tuệ Ngữ Lục = 大慧语录
 Dai Viet = Đại Việt
 Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu = Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư
 Dai Xa = Đại Xá
 Dam Di Mong = Đàm Dĩ Mông
 Dam Hoang = Đàm Hoảng = 曇弘
 Dam Thien = Đàm Thiên (Tan Tian) = 谈天
 Dam Thuan = Đàm Thuận (Tan Run)
 Dan = Dàn (pagoda)
 Dang Dinh Van = Đăng Đĩnh Vân
 Dang Phat dai = Đăng Phật đài
 Dang Thien = Đăng Thiên
 Dang Thanh = Đăng Thành
 Danh Du Danh Hanh Cao Tang = Danh Dự Danh Hạnh Cao Tăng
 Dao Cao = Đạo Cao = 道高
 Dao Cao Phap Su Tap = Đạo Cao Pháp Sư Tập = 道高法師集
 Dao Giao Nguyen Luu = Đạo Giáo Nguyên Lưu
 Dao Hanh = Đạo Hạnh = 道行
 Dao Hue = Đạo Huệ
 Dao Lam = Đạo Lâm
 Dao Man = Đạo Mân
 Dao Thanh = Đạo Thanh = 道清
 Dao Thien = Đạo Thiên = 道禪
 Dao Thong = Đạo Thông
 Dao Tuyen = Đạo Tuyên = 道宣
 Dao Si = Đạo Sĩ
 Dao Su Trung = Đào Sư Trung
 Dao Tiem = Đạo Tiềm
 Dao Vien = Đạo Viên

Dao Xin = Đạo Tín = 道信
Daoyi = Đạo Nhất = 道一
Dau = Dâu (river/pagoda)
Dat Hien = Đạt Hiên
Dat Na Thai Tu Hanh = Đạt Na Thái Tử Hành
Dat Ma De Ba = Đạt Ma Đề Bà (Dharmadeva)
Di - Dich = Di - Địch (region) = 夷狄
Di Loan = Di Loan
Dich Bang = Dịch Bàng
Dien Huu = Diên Hựu (pagoda)
Dien Linh = Diên Linh (pagoda)
Dien Phuc = Diên Phúc (pagoda)
Dieu De = Diệu Đế (pagoda)
Dieu Nghiem = Diệu Nghiêm
Dieu Giac = Diệu Giác = 妙覺
Dieu Nhan = Diệu Nhân
Dieu Phap Lien Hoa = Diệu Pháp Liên Hoa = 妙法蓮花
Dieu Van = Diệu Vạn
Dinh = Đinh (dynasty)
Dinh Ho = Đinh Hồ (mount)
Dinh Hue = Định Huệ
Dinh Huong = Định Hương
Dinh Khong = Định Không = 定空
Dinh Khuong Lien = Đinh Khuông Liên
Dinh Mui = Đinh Mùi (year)
Dinh Noa Tang Noa = Đinh Nô Tăng Nô
Dinh Suu = Đinh Sửu (year)
Dinh Thien = Định Thiên (pagoda)
Dinh Tien Hoang = Đinh Tiên Hoàng
Do = Đỗ
Do Do = Đỗ Đô
Do Khắc Chung = Đỗ Khắc Chung
Do Khoan = Đỗ Khoan
Do Mon Tro Thanh Lap = Độ Môn Trợ Thành Lập
Do Phap Thuan = Đỗ Pháp Thuận
Do Thuong = Đỗ Thương
Do Son = Đỗ Sơn
Do Van Tinh = Đỗ Văn Tĩnh
Do Vu = Đỗ Vũ
Doan Nhu Hai = Đoàn Nhữ Hài
Doc Tieu Thanh Ky = Độc Tiểu Thanh Ký
Doc Ton = Độc Tôn (mount/pagoda)
Doi = Đới (pagoda)
Doi Co = Đới Cơ
Doi Gia = Đới Gia

- Doi Son = Đới Sơn (mount)
 Dong Cac = Đông Các
 Dong Do = Đông Đô
 Dong Du = Đông Du (movement)
 Dong Duong (statute)= Đông Dương
 Dong Gia = Đông Gia
 Dong Hoa = Đông Hòa
 Dong Kien Cuong = Đông Kiên Cường
 Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc = Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục (movement)
 Dong Ky = Đông Kỳ (pagoda)
 Dong Ming = Đông Minh
 Dong Nai = Đông Nai
 Dong Son Luong Gioi = Đông Sơn Lương Giới (Dongshan Liangjie)
 Dong Thap Thoi Bao = Đông Tháp Thời Báo
 Dong Trieu = Đông Triều
 Dong Van = Đông Vân
 Dong Xuan = Đông Xuân
 Du Chi Ba Lam = Du Chi Bà Lam
 Du Hy = Du Hý
 Duc Son = Đức Sơn = 德山
 Duc La = Đức La
 Duc Nhuan = Đức Nhuận
 Duc Thuy = Dục Thủy (mount)
 Duoc Nha Nam = Đước Nhà Nam
 Duoc Su = Dước Sứ
 Duoc Su Thap Nhi Nguyen Van = Dước Sứ Tháp Nhị Nguyễn Văn
 Duoc Tue = Đước Tuệ
 Duong = Dương
 Duong = Đuống (river)
 Duong Ba Trac = Dương Bá Trạch
 Duong Dao Gia = Dương Đạo Gia
 Duong Nghia = Đường Nghĩa
 Duong Tran Huyen Tong = Đường Trần Huyền Tôn
 Duy Ma = Duy Ma = 维麻
 Duy Tam Phat Hoc = Duy Tâm Phật Học
 Duy Tan = Duy Tân (movement)
 Duy Tien = Duy Tiên
 Duyen Hoi Nhi De Luan = Duyên Hội Nhị Đế Luận = 缘会二谛论
 Duyen Sinh Luan = Duyên Sinh Luận = 缘生论
 Fa Guo = Pháp Quả = 法果
 Fa Zhi = Pháp Trí
 Fozu Li Dai Tong Zai = Phật Tổ Lịch Đại Thống Tải = 佛祖历代统载
 Fa Yan = Pháp Nhân
 Fu Jian = Phúc Kiến
 Fuzhou = Phủ Châu

Gang Liang Lou Zhi = Cương Lương Lô Chi = 疆梁娄支
Gia Dinh = Gia Định
Gia La Do Le = Già La Đồ Lê
Gia Dinh Thanh = Gia Định Thành
Gia Lam = Gia Lâm
Gia Luong = Gia Lương
Giac Hai = Giác Hải (monk)
Giac Hien = Giác Hiền = 觉贤
Giac Hoang = Giác Hoàng (pagoda)
Giac Ngo = Giác Ngộ
Giac Phong = Giác Phong
Giac Tien = Giác Tiên
Giai Bang Dieu Nhat Thien = Giải Bàng Điều Nhất Thiên
Giai Chan Tam Truc Thuyet = Giải Chân Tâm Trục Thuyết
Giai Di Da Kinh = Giải Di Đà Kinh
Giai Dia Tang Kinh = Giải Đại Tang Kinh
Giai Kim Cang Kinh Ly Nghia = Giải Kim Cang Kinh Lý Nghĩa
Giai Phap Bao Dan Kinh = Giải Pháp Bảo Đàn Kinh
Giai Phap Hoa Kinh = Giải Pháp Hoa Kinh
Giai Phat To Tam Kinh = Giải Phật Tổ Tam Kinh
Giai Pho Khuyen Tu Hanh = Giải Phổ Khuyến Tu Hành
Giai Sa Di Gioi Luat = Giải Sa Di Giới Luật
Giai Tam Chau Nhat Quan = Giải Tâm Châu Nhất Quán
Giai Tam Kinh Dai Dien = Giải Tâm Kinh Đại Điện
Giai Tam Kinh Ngu Chi = Giải Tâm Kinh Ngũ Chi
Giai Vo Luong Tho Kinh = Giải Vô Lượng Thọ Kinh
Giam = Giạm (pagoda)
Giao Chau = Giao Châu = 交州
Giao Chi = Giao Chỉ = 交址
Giao Nguyen = Giáo Nguyên (pagoda)
Giap Dan = Giáp Dần (year) = 甲寅
Giap Ngo = Giáp Ngọ (year)
Gioi Chau = Giới Châu = 介州
Gioi Dinh Tue Luan = Giới Định Tuệ Luận = 戒定慧论
Gioi Hanh Dong Tu = Giới Hạnh Đồng Tu
Gioi Khong = Giới Không
Go Cong = Gò Công (pagoda)
Guang Dong = Quảng Đông
Guangling = Quảng Lăng
Guizhou = Quý Châu = 贵州
Guo Wenju = Quách Văn Cử = 郭文举
Ha Bac = Hà Bắc
Ha Dong = Hà Đông
Hai Hung = Hải Hưng
Ha Man = Hà Mãn (village)

Ha Nam Ninh = Hà Nam Ninh
 Hanoi = Hà Nội
 Ha Son Binh = Hà Sơn Bình
 Ha Thu = Hà Thụ
 Ha Thuc Minh = Hà Thúc Minh
 Ha Trung = Hà Trung (pagoda)
 Ha Tuyen = Hà Tuyên
 Hac Lai = Hạc Lai (temple)
 Hai An = Hải An
 Hai Au = Hải Âu
 Hai Dien = Hải Điền
 Hai Dong Chi Luoc = Hải Đông Chí Lược
 Hai Hoa = Hải Hòa
 Hai Hung = Hải Hưng
 Hai Huyen = Hải Huyền
 Hai Ngoai Ky Su = Hải Ngoại Ký Sự
 Hai Quynh = Hải Quỳnh
 Hai Thuan = Hải Thuận
 Hai Tinh = Hải Tinh
 Hai Trieu Am = Hải Triều Âm
 Hai Trung = Hải Trưng
 Ham Long = Hàm Long (pagoda)
 Han Cac Anh Hoa = Hàn Các Anh Hoa
 Han Ong = Hán Ông
 Han Son = Hàn Sơn
 Han Thong = Hàn Thông
 Hang Lang = Hạng Lang
 Hau Loc = Hậu Lộc
 Hi Tu = Hi Từ
 Hien Dieu = Hiền Diêu (tower)
 Hien Minh = Hiền Minh
 Hien Quang = Hiện Quang
 Hiep Duc = Hiệp Đức
 Ho Phap Luan Quoc Am Ban = Hộ Pháp Luận Quốc Âm Bản
 Ho Tang = Hồ Tăng
 Ho Thien = Hồ Thiên (pagoda or temple)
 Ho Xuan Huong = Hồ Xuân Hương
 Hoa An = Hòa An (pagoda)
 Hoa Lam = Hoa Lâm
 Hoa Le = Hoa Lê
 Hoa Lu = Hoa Lư
 Hoa Luu (Vu Hoa Luu) = Hoa Lưu (Vũ Hoa Lưu)
 Hoa Nghiem = Hoa Nghiêm = 華嚴
 Hoa Nghiem Phuong Sach = Hoa Nghiêm Phương Sách
 Hoa Thi = Hoa Thị (quarter)
 Hoai Ninh Hau = Hoài Ninh Hầu

Hoan = Hoan
Hoan Bich = Hoán Bích
Hoan Chau = Hoan Châu
Hoan Trung = Hoàn Trung
Hoan Tu Anh = Hoàn Từ Anh
Hoan Tinh Tran Tam Khuyen Tu Tinh Do Van = Hoán Tinh Trần Tâm
Khuyến Tu Tịnh Độ Văn
Hoang Hoa Tham = Hoàng Hoa Thám
Hoang Long = Hoàng Long (river)
Hoang Minh = Hoàng Minh = 弘明
Hoang Thanh Nha = Hoàng Thanh Nhã
Hoang Van Dong = Hoàng Văn Đồng
Hoang Van Lau = Hoàng Văn Lô
Hoanh Duong = Hoành Dương
Hoe Nhai = Hê Nhai (pagoda)
Hoi Nam Ky Nghien Cuu Phat Hoc = Hội Nam Kỳ Nghiên Cứu Phật Học
Hoi Phong = Hội Phong (year)
Hoi Thich Giao = Hội Thích Giáo
Hoi Ton = Hội Tôn (pagoda)
Hong Duc = Hồng Đức (code)
Hong Mong Hanh = Hồng Mông Hành
Hong Phuc = Hồng Phúc (pagoda)
Hou Han Ji = Hậu Hán Ký = 后汉纪
Hu Gong = Hộ Công
Hua Do = Hứa Do
Hua Su = Hứa Sử = 许史
Hua Su Truyen Van = Hứa Sử Truyện Văn
Hua Trung Thua Tu Hung = Hứa Trung Thừa Tự Hưng
Huang Bai = Hoàng Bách
Huang Mei = Hoàng Mai
Huang Ren = Hoàng Nhân = 黄忍
Hubei = Hồ Bắc
Hue Chuc = Huệ Chúc
Hue Dang = Huệ Đăng
Hue Diem = Huệ Diệm = 慧琰
Hue Hao = Huệ Hạo = 慧皎
Hue Hong = Huệ Hồng
Hue Lam = Huệ Lâm (pagoda) = 慧琳
Hue Nghiem = Huệ Nghiêm = 慧严
Hue Nhen = Huệ Nhiên
Hue Quang = Huệ Quang
Hue Sinh = Huệ Sinh = 慧生
Hue Thang = Huệ Thắng = 慧胜
Hue Vu Vương Tran Quoc Chan = Huệ Vũ Vương Trần Quốc Chân
Hui Ke = Huệ Khả

- Hui Neng = Huệ Năng = 慧能
 Hui Ning = Hội Ninh
 Hui Yuan = Huệ Viễn = 慧远
 Huidi = Huệ Đế = 慧帝
 Hung Dao Vương = Hưng Đạo Vương = Trần Quốc Tuấn
 Hung Long = Hung Long (pagoda)
 Hung Ninh Vương = Hưng Ninh Vương
 Hung Phuc = Hưng Phúc (pagoda)
 Hung Uy Hau = Hưng Uy Hầu
 Huong Hai = Hương Hải (pagoda)
 Huong Son = Hương Sơn
 Huong Tich = Hương Tích (pagoda)
 Huong Trang = Hương Trảng
 Huu Cu Vo Cu = Hữu Cú Vô Cú
 Huyen Quang = Huyền Quang
 Huyen Sach = Huyền Sách
 Hy Doan = Hy Doãn
 Jiangnan = Giang Nam
 Jiangyou = Giang Hữu
 Jishui = Cát Thủy (mount)
 Junzhou = Quận Châu
 Kai Huang = Khai Hoàng = 开皇
 Kalacarya = Khâu Đà La
 Kalaruci = Chi Cương Lương Lô (Zhi Gang Liang Lou)
 Zhen Xi = Chân Hỷ = 真喜
 Keo = Keo (pagoda)
 Ke Dang Luc = Kế Đăng Lục
 Ket tap = Kết tập (Council for Compiling Sutras) = 结集
 Khai Huu = Khai Hựu (era)
 Khai Nghiem = Khai Nghiêm
 Khai Quoc = Khai Quốc (pagoda)
 Kham Lon = Khám Lớn (prison)
 Khanh Hoa = Khánh Hòa
 Khanh Hy = Khánh Hỷ
 Khanh Son = Khánh Sơn (pagoda)
 Khanh Van = Khánh Vân
 Khoa Mong Son Thi Thuc = Khoa Mông Sơn Thi Thực
 Khong Lo = Không Lộ
 Khue Lac Tu = Khuê Lạc Tử
 Khuong Quoc = Khuông Quốc
 Khuong Viet = Khuông Việt
 Khuong Viet Ngo Chan Luu = Khuông Việt Ngô Chân Lưu
 Khuong Tang Hoi = Khương Tăng Hội = 姜僧会
 Khuong Tang Khai = Khương Tăng Khải
 Khuy Xung = Khuy Xung

Khuyen Tu Hanh Quoc Ngu Phu = Khuyến Tu Hành Quốc Ngũ Phú
Kien Van Tieu Luc = Kiến Văn Tiểu Lục
Kien Dan Giai Ue Nghi = Kiến Đàn Giải Uế Nghi
Kien Duong = Kiến Dương (pagoda)
Kien Ninh Vuong = Kiến Ninh Vương
Kien So = Kiến Sơ
Kieu Bong = Kiều Bồng
Kieu Thi Ca = Kiều Thi Ca
Kim Cang Truc So = Kim Cang Trục Sớ
Kim Co = Kim Cồ
Kim Cuong/Kim Kang = Kim Cương (Prajna Paramita) = 金剛
Kim Cuong Bat Nha = Kim Cương Bát Nhã = 金剛般若
Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai = Kim Cương Tam Muội Kinh Chú
Giải
Kim Cuong Trang Da La Ni Kinh Khoa Chu = Kim Cương Tràng Đà La Ni
Kinh Khoa Chủ
Kim Cuong Vien Giac = Kim Cương Viên Giác
Kim Lang = Kim Lăng
Kim Quang = Kim Quang
Kim Son = Kim Sơn
Kim Tien = Kim Tiên (pagoda)
Kinh Bac = Kinh Bắc
Ky An Nhuong Tinh Diep = Kỳ An Nhương Tinh Diệp
Ky Lan = Kỳ Lân (monastery)
Ky Mao = Kỳ Mão (year)
La Han = La Hán (festival)
La Quy An = La Quý An
Lam Duy Nghia = Lâm Duy Nghĩa
Lam Son = Lâm Sơn (pagoda or mount)
Lam Son = Lam Sơn (pagoda)
Lam Te = Lâm Tế (Lin Ji) = 臨濟
Lam Te Luc = Lâm Tế Lục
Lam Te Nghia Huyen = Lâm Tế Nghĩa Huyền
Lam Thao = Lâm Thao
Lam Tuong = Lâm Tương
Lan Cong = Lan Công
Lan Nha = Lan Nhã (pagoda)
Lan Toan = Lãn Toàn
Lang = Lạng (pagoda)
Lang Gia Tu Quyen Khoa So = Lăng Già Tứ Quyển Khoa Sớ =
楞伽四卷科疏
Lang Ngam = Lăng Ngâm
Lang Nghiem = Lăng Nghiêm (sutra) = 楞嚴
Lap Duc = Lập Đức
Le = Lê (dynasty)

- Le Chieu Thong = Lê Chiêu Thống
 Le Dai Hanh = Lê Đại Hành
 Le Dinh Kien = Lê Đình Kiên
 Le Du Ton = Lê Dụ Tôn
 Le Hi = Lê Hi
 Le Hi Ton = Lê Hi Tôn
 Le Hoan = Lê Hoàn
 Le Huyen Ton = Lê Huyền Tôn
 Le Khanh Hoa = Lê Khánh Hòa
 Le Manh That = Lê Mạnh Thát
 Le Ngoa Trieu = Lê Ngọa Triều
 Le Quat = Lê Quát
 Le Quy Don = Lê Quý Đôn
 Le Thanh Ton = Lê Thánh Tôn
 Le Thuan = Lê Thuần
 Le Thuy = Lê Thủy
 Le Toai = Lê Toại
 Le Trac = Lê Trắc = 黎側
 Le Vinh = Lê Vĩnh
 Li Daliang = Lý Đại Lương
 Li Miao = 李淼 = Lý Miểu
 Lich Dai Tam Bao Ky = Lịch Đại Tào Bảo Ký
 Lien Lau = Liên Lôu
 Lien Tong = Liên Tôn (sect)
 Lieu Minh = Liễu Minh
 Lieu Quan = Liễu Quán
 Lieu Thong = Liễu Thông
 Lieu Triet = Liễu Triệt
 Lingnan = Lĩnh Nam
 Linh Cam = Linh Cầm
 Linh Chieu = Linh Chiêu (lake)
 Linh Huu = Linh Hựu
 Linh Nam Chich Quai = Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái
 Linh Nhan = Linh Nhân
 Linh Quang = Linh Quang (pagoda)
 Linh Son = Linh Sơn (pagoda) = 灵山
 Linh Te = Linh Tế (tower)
 Linh Te Thap Ky = Linh Tế Tháp Ký
 Linh Xung = Linh Xương (pagoda)
 Liu Hui = Lưu Hội
 Lokasema = Chi Lôu Ca Sâm = 支娄迦讖
 Long Bien = Long Biên
 Long Hoa = Long Hòa (pagoda)
 Long hoa phong gioi = Long hoa phóng giới (festival)
 Long Hung Thanh Tho = Long Hưng Thánh Thọ (pagoda)

Long Nu = Long Nữ
Long Phu = Long Phù (era)
Long Thu/Long Tho) = Long Thụ/Long Thọ (master/pagoda) = 龙树
Long Thu Tinh Do Luan Bat Hau Tu = Long Thụ Tịnh Độ Luận Bát Hậu
Tự
Long Thu Tinh Do Van Tu = Long Thụ Tịnh Độ Văn Tự
Long Thuy Thai Binh = Long Thụ Thái Bình (era)
Long Tri = Long Trì (festival)
Long Tuyen = Long Tuyền
Lu Da = Lữ Đại
Lu Long = Lô Lăng
Lu Shan = Lư Sơn (mount) = 庐山
Luan Tue Giao Giam = Luận Tuệ Giáo Giám = 论慧教监
Luc Dau (river) = Lục Đầu
Luc Ho = Lục Hồ
Luc Hoa = Lục Hòa
Luc Ly Duong Tap = Lục Ly Đường Tập
Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi = Lục Thời Sám Hối Khoa Nghi
Luc To = Lục Tổ (patriarch/pagoda) = 六祖
Luc To Truyen Dien Ca = Lục Tổ Truyện Diễm Ca
Lui Fang = Lưu Phương
Lui Ling = Lưu Linh
Luoc Dan Thien Phai Do = Lược Dẫn Thiên Phái Đồ
Luoc Luc Danh Son = Lược Lục Danh Sơn
Luoc Luc Thien Gia = Lược Lục Thiên Gia
Luong Cao Tang Truyen = Lương Cao Tăng Truyện = 梁高僧
Luong Chau = Lương Châu
Luong Dung Luat = Lương Dụng Luật
Luong Nham Van = Lương Nhậm Văn
Luong The Vinh = Lương Thế Vinh
Luong Xuyen = Lương Xuyên (association)
Luu Hue Lam = Lưu Huệ Lâm = 刘慧琳
Luu Khanh Dam = Lưu Khánh Đàm
Luy Lau = Luy Lô
Ly = Lý (dynasty) = 李
Ly Anh Tong = Lý Anh Tông
Ly Cao Ton = Lý Cao Tôn
Ly Chieu Hoang = Lý Chiêu Hoàng
Ly Cong Uan = Lý Công Uân
Ly Giac = Lý Giác
Ly Hoac Luan (Li Huo Lun) = Lý Hoặc Luận = 理或论
Ly Hoai To = Lý Hoài Tố
Ly Kim Hoa = Lý Kim Hoa
Ly Hue Tong = Lý Huệ Tông
Ly Nam De = Lý Nam Đế

- Ly Nhan Tong = Lý Nhân Tông
 Ly Nhat Quang = Lý Nhật Quang
 Ly Nhat Trung = Lý Nhật Trung
 Ly Phat Tu = Lý Phật Tử = 李佛子
 Ly Tai Dao = Lý Tái Đạo
 Ly Thanh Tong = Lý Thánh Tông
 Ly Thieu Quan = Lý Thiệu Quân
 Ly Yuanxi = Lý Nguyên Hỷ
 Ma = Mã (Tổ) = 马祖
 Ma = Mã (river)
 Ma Daoyi = Ma To Dao Nhat = Mã Tổ Đạo Nhất = 马祖道一
 Ma Ha = Ma Ha
 Ma Mang = Mã Mang
 Mac = Mạc (dynasty)
 Mac Dang Dung = Mạc Đăng Dung
 Mach Lung = Mạch Lũng
 Mahajivaka (or Mahkyavuc) = Ma Ha Kỳ Vực = 麻诃奇域
 Man Giac = Mãn Giác
 Man Nuong = Man Nương
 Man Tan Ta Qua Nghi = Mãn Tán Tạ Quá Nghi
 Man Xa = Mãn Xá (hamlet)
 Mat Hanh = Mật Hạnh
 Mat Hoang = Mật Hoàng
 Mat Tang = Mật Tạng
 Mat Ung = Mật Ứng
 Mau Bac = Mâu Bác (Mou Bo) = 牟博
 Mau Ti = Mậu Tý (year)
 Mau Tu = Mâu Tử (Mouzi) = 牟子
 Mau Tuat = Mậu Tuất (year)
 Me Linh = Mê Linh
 Me Ngo Bat Di = Mê Ngô Bất Di
 Menh Dinh = Mệnh Định
 Ming Yuan = Minh Viễn
 Minh Chau Huong Hai = Minh Châu Hương Hải
 Minh Chi = Minh Chi
 Minh Chinh = Minh Chính
 Minh Hai = Minh Hải
 Minh Hanh = Minh Hành
 Minh Hanh Tai Toai = Minh Hành Tại Toại
 Minh Khong = Minh Không
 Minh Luong = Minh Lương
 Minh Nam = Minh Nam
 Minh Mang = Minh Mạng
 Minh Su = Minh Sư (sect)
 Minh Tam = Minh Tâm

Minh Tri = Minh Trí
Minh Xuong = Minh Xưởng
Mou Yong = Mau Dung = Mậu Dung = 牟融
Mot Mai = Một Mái (pagoda)
My Van = Mỹ Văn
Nagarjuna = Long Thọ/Long Thu
Nam Bac Luong Ky = Nam Bắc Lương Kỳ
Nam Duong = Nam Dương = 南洋
Nam Hai Quan Am Ban Hanh = Nam Hải Quan Âm Bản Hạnh
Nam Sach = Nam Sách
Nam Son = Nam Sơn
Nam Tong Tu Phap Do = Nam Tông Tự Pháp Đồ
Nam Trung Tap Ngam = Nam Trung Tập Ngâm
Nam Viet = Nam Việt = 南越
Nan Qi Shu = Man Tê Thư = 南齐书
Nan Tu = Nan Tu
Nanyue Huairang = Nam Nhạc Hoài Nhượng = 南岳怀让
Nele = Nê Lê
Ngau Tac = Ngẫu Tác
Nghe An = Nghệ An
Nghe Tinh = Nghệ Tĩnh
Nghenh Su Duyet Dinh Khoa = Nghênh Sư Duyệt Định Khoa
Nghenh Tien Duong = Nghênh Tiên Đường
Nghiem = Nghiêm
Nghiep Bao Sai Biet = Nghiệp Báo Sai Biệt
Ngo = Ngô (dynasty) = 吳
Ngo An = Ngô Ân
Ngo Chi = Ngô Chí = 吳志
Ngo Chan Luu = Ngô Chân Lưu
Ngo Dao Nhan Duyen = Ngô Đạo Nhân Duyên
Ngo Gia Van Phai = Ngô Gia Văn Phái
Ngo Hoa Nghia = Ngô Hòa Nghĩa
Ngo Ich = Ngô Ích
Ngo Thi Hoanh = Ngô Thi Hoành
Ngo Thi Nham = Ngô Thi Nhâm
Ngo Thi Si = Ngô Thi Sĩ
Ngo Tin = Ngô Tín
Ngo Ton Quyen = Ngô Tôn Quyền
Ngo Tong Chu = Ngô Tông Chu
Ngo Van So = Ngô Văn Sở
Ngo Xa = Ngô Xá (pagoda)
Ngoa Van = Ngọa Vân
Ngoc Long Dong = Ngọc Long Động (pagoda)
Ngoc Tu = Ngọc Tú
Ngon Chi = Ngô Tôn Chí

Ngu Gioi Quoc Am = Ngũ Giới Quốc Âm
 Ngu Gioi = Ngũ Giới
 Ngu Luc = Ngũ Lục
 Thap Gioi Diep = Thập Giới Điệp
 Ngu Luc Truyen Ky = Ngũ Lục Truyền Ký
 Ngu Ong = Ngũ Ông
 Ngu Thuong = Ngũ Thường
 Nguong Son = Ngưỡng Sơn (mount)
 Nguong Son Tue Tich = Ngưỡng Sơn Tuệ Tịch = 仰山慧寂
 Nguyen = Nguyễn (dynasty)
 Nguyen An Ninh = Nguyễn An Ninh
 Nguyen Anh = Nguyễn Anh
 Nguyen Can Mong = Nguyễn Can Mộng
 Nguyen Cong Tru = Nguyễn Công Trứ
 Nguyen Dai Dien = Nguyễn Đại Diện
 Nguyen Dang Giai = Nguyễn Đăng Giai
 Nguyen Dang So = Nguyễn Đăng Sở
 Nguyen Dao = Nguyễn Đạo
 Nguyen Dao Thanh = Nguyễn Đạo Thanh
 Nguyen Du = Nguyễn Du
 Nguyen Gia Long = Nguyễn Gia Long
 Nguyen Gia Phan = Nguyễn Gia Phan
 Nguyen Giac = Nguyễn Giác
 Nguyen Hang = Nguyễn Hằng
 Nguyen Hoang = Nguyễn Hoàng
 Nguyen Hoc = Nguyễn Học
 Nguyen Huu Dam = Nguyễn Hữu Đàm
 Nguyen Huu Tri = Nguyễn Hữu Trí
 Nguyen Lang = Nguyễn Lang
 Nguyen Nang Quoc = Nguyễn Năng Quốc
 Nguyen Phuc Chu = Nguyễn Phúc Chu
 Nguyen Phuc Lan = Nguyễn Phúc Lan
 Nguyen Phuc Tan = Nguyễn Phúc Tân
 Nguyen Quang Toan = Nguyễn Quang Toản
 Nguyen Tai Thu = Nguyễn Tài Thư
 Nguyen Thai Tong = Nguyễn Thái Tông
 Nguyen Thanh Thien Cam = Nguyễn Thánh Thiện Cảm
 Nguyen Thien Thuat = Nguyễn Thiện Thuật
 Nguyen Thiep = Nguyễn Thiếp
 Nguyen Thieu = Nguyễn Thiệu
 Nguyen Thuc = Nguyễn Thức
 Nguyen Toan = Nguyễn Toán
 Nguyen Trai = Nguyễn Trãi
 Nguyen Trong Thuat = Nguyễn Trọng Thuật
 Nguyen Tru = Nguyễn Trứ
 Nguyen Van Tin = Nguyễn Văn Tín

Nguyet Duong = Nguyệt Đường (pagoda)
Nhan Vuong Ho Quoc Nghi Quy = Nhân Vương Hộ Quốc Nghi Quy =
仁王护国议轨
Nham Dan = Nhâm Dân (year)
Nham Duong = Nhâm Dương (pagoda)
Nham Ngo = Nhâm Ngộ (year)
Nham Tang = Nhâm Tạng
Nham Thin = Nhâm Thìn (year)
Nham Tuat = Nhâm Tuất (year)
Nham Tuc = Nhâm Túc
Nhan Duyen = Nhân Duyên
Nhan Qua Kinh Bat = Nhân Quả Kinh Bát
Nhat Ban Quoc Kien Tai Thu Muc Luc = Nhân Bản Quốc Kiến Tại Thu
Mục Lục
Nhat Dinh = Nhất Định
Nhat Nam = Nhật Nam = 日南
Nhat Tran = Nhật Trần
Nhat Tru = Nhất Trụ (pagoda)
Nhi Thap Tu Thanh = Nhị Thập Tứ Thanh
Nhi Thien Vuong = Nhị Thiên Vương (pagoda)
Nhiên Dang = Nhiên Đăng (Buddha Dipankara)
Nhoi = Nôi (mount)
Nhon An = Nhơn Ân
Nhu Hien = Như Hiện
Nhu Lai = Như Lai
Nhu Trung = Như Trung
Nhu Trung = Như Trùng
Nhu Trung Lan Giac = Như Trùng Lân Giác
Niem Nhu = Niệm Như
Niem Phat Luan = Niệm Phật Luận = 念佛论
Niet Ban Dai Kinh Khoa So = Niết Bàn Đại Kinh Khoa Sở =
捏盘大经科疏
Niu Tou = Ngưu Đầu
Nom = Nôm
Nui Cam = Núi Cấm (pagoda)
Pha Hien = Phả Hiền (Pu-Xian)
Pha Lai = Phả Lại
Pha Tho Bat Tong Van = Phá Thổ Bát Tổng Văn
Pha Trac = Phả Trắc
Pham = Phạm
Pham An = Phạm Ân
Pham Hac = Phạm Hạc
Pham Hap = Phạm Hạp
Pham Quy Thich = Phạm Quý Thích
Pham Thanh Bat Di = Phàm Thánh Bất Di

- Phan Chau Trinh = Phan Châu Trinh
 Phan Giap = Phạn Giáp
 Phan Huy Ich = Phan Huy Ích
 Phan Ke Binh = Phan Kế Bính
 Phan Phat Sanh = Phan Phát Sanh
 Phan Xich Long = Phan Xích Long
 Phap Am = Pháp Âm
 Phap Bao Dan = Pháp Bảo Đàn
 Phap Co = Pháp Cổ
 Phap Dien = Pháp Điện
 Phap Dung = Pháp Dung
 Phap Hien = Fa Xian = Pháp Hiền
 Phap Hoa = Pháp Hoa
 Phap Hoa De Cuong = Pháp Hoa Đề Cương
 Phap Hoa Kinh Khoa So = Pháp Hoa Kinh Khoa Sớ = 法华金刚科疏
 Phap Hoa Kinh Phuong Tien Pham = Pháp Hoa Kinh Phương Tiện Phẩm
 Phap Hoa Tam Muoi = Pháp Hoa Tam Muội = 法华三昧
 Phap Khi = Pháp Khí = 法器
 Phap Khoan = Pháp Khoan (pagoda)
 Phap Khong = Pháp Không
 Phap Ky = Pháp Ký
 Phap Loa = Pháp Loa
 Phap Loi = Pháp Lôi
 Phap Minh = Pháp Minh
 Phap Quang = Pháp Quang
 Phap Su Khoa Van = Pháp Sự Khoa Văn = 法事科文
 Phap Su Trai Nghi = Pháp Sự Trai Nghi
 Phap Thuan = Pháp Thuận
 Phap Thong = Pháp Thông
 Phap Trang = Pháp Tràng
 Phap Van = Pháp Vân (pagoda)
 Phap Vu = Pháp Vũ
 Phat Ban Hanh = Phật Bản Hạnh
 Phat Da Ly = Phật Đà Lý
 Phat Danh = Phật Danh
 Phat Dinh Ton Thang Vương = Phật Đỉnh Tôn Thắng Vương
 (Usnisavijayadharani)
 Phat Duong = Phật Đường (sect)
 Phat Giao Van Dap = Phật Giáo Vấn Đáp
 Phat Giao Viet Nam Tu Nguyen Thuy Den The Ky XIII = Phật Giáo Việt
 Nam Từ Nguyên Thủy Đền thế Kỷ XIII
 Phat Giao Vo Than Luan = Phật Giáo Vô Thần Luận
 Phat Hoa Tan Thanh Nien = Phật Hóa Tân Thành Niên
 Phat Hoc Tong Yeu = Phật Học Tổng Yếu
 Phat Hoc Tung Thu = Phật Học Tùng Thư

Phat Phap La Phat Phap = Phật Pháp Là Phật Pháp
Phat Tam Ca = Phật Tâm Ca
Phat Tam Luan = Phật Tâm Luận
Phat Thay = Phật Thầy (sect)
Phat Tich = Phật Tích (pagoda/ tower/ village)
Phat To Thong Ky = Phật Tô Thống Kỳ
Phi Tri = Phí Trì (repository)
Phi Tuong = Phi Tướng (pagoda)
Pho Dich = Phó Dịch
Pho Dong = Phổ Đông (tower)
Pho Minh Thien Truong = Phổ Minh Thiên Trường
Pho Khuyen Phat Bo De Tam = Phổ Khuyến Phật Bồ Đề Tâm
Pho Thuyet Huong Thuong Nhat Lo = Phổ Khuyến Hướng Thượng Nhất
Lộ
Pho Tich = Phổ Tích
Phong = Phong
Phong Chau = Phong Châu
Phong Cuong Ngam = Phóng Cuồng Ngâm
Phong Sinh Gioi Sat Van = Phóng Sinh Giới Sát Văn
Phu Chinh = Phù Chính
Phu Dong = Phù Đồng
Phu Mon = Phù Môn
Phu Ninh = Phù Ninh
Phu Nu Tan Van = Phụ Nữ Tân Văn
Phu Tri = Phù Trì
Phu Van = Phù Vân
Phu Ve = Phụ Vệ
Phu Xuan = Phú Xuân
Phuc Dien = Phúc Điền
Phuc Dien Tu Thanh = Phúc Diên Tự Thánh (pagoda)
Phuc Long = Phúc Long (pagoda)
Phuc My = Phúc Mỹ
Phuc Thai = Phúc Thái (era)
Phuc To = Phúc Tô
Phung Can = Phụng Càn
Phung Giang Tuong = Phụng Giáng Tường
Phung Tu = Phụng Từ (pagoda)
Phuoc An = Phước An
Phuong Hoang = Phượng Hoàng (mount)
Phuong Quang = Phương Quang (pagoda)
Phuong Son = Phượng Sơn (pagoda)
Qing Zhang = Thanh Chương
Qingyuan Xingsi = Thanh Nguyên Hành Tự
Quan Am Nam Hai = Quan Âm Nam Hải
Quan Am Thi Kinh = Quan Âm Thị Kính
Quan Duyen = Quán Duyên

- Quan Thien Luan = Quán Thiên Luận
 Quan Song Wen = Toàn Tống Văn = 全宋文
 Quan Su = Quán Sứ (pagoda)
 Quan Vo Luong Tho = Quán Vô Lượng Thọ
 Quang Bao = Quảng Bào (pagoda)
 Quang Chieu = Quảng Chiếu (festival)
 Quang Giao = Quảng Giáo (pagoda)
 Quang Hoang Minh = Quảng Minh = 广弘明
 Quang Huu = Quang Hựu
 Quang Minh = Quang Minh (pagoda)
 Quang Nam = Quảng Nam
 Quang Ninh = Quảng Ninh
 Quang Ngai = Quảng Ngãi
 Quang Nghiem = Quảng Nghiêm
 Quang Toan = Quang Toàn
 Quang Trach = Quảng Trạch
 Quang Tri = Quảng Trí
 Quang Van = Quảng Vân
 Que Tham = Quế Tham
 Quoc Ngu = Quốc Ngự
 Quoc Nhat = Quốc Nhất
 Quoc Tu Giam = Quốc Tử Giám
 Quy Dau = Quý Dậu (year)
 Quy Kinh = Quy Kính (mount)
 Quy Nguong = Quy Ngưỡng (Guiyang) = 沕仰
 Quy Ninh = Quy Ninh
 Quy Son = Quy Sơn
 Quy Suu = Quý Sửu (year)
 Quy Ti = Quý Tị (year)
 Quynh Lam = Quỳnh Lâm (pagoda or monastery)
 Quynh Quan = Quỳnh Quán
 Quynh Vien = Quỳnh Viên
 Rach Gia = Rạch Giá
 Sa Dang = Sa Đăng
 Sa Di Luat Nghi Giai Nghia = Sa Di Luật Nghi Giải Nghĩa
 Sa Di Oai Nghi Tang Chu Giai Nguỵ Tu Tieu Thien = Sa Di Oai Nghi Tăng
 Chú Giải Nguỵ Tự Tiêu Thiên
 Sancheng Suiran = Tam Thánh Tuệ Nhiên
 Shaozhou = Thiệu Châu
 Sheng Tan = Thanh Đàm
 Shenxui = Thần Tú
 Shi Hui = Sĩ Huy
 Shish = Sĩ Nhiếp = Sĩ Nhiếp = 士燮
 Shitou = Thạch Đầu
 Shitou Xishuan = Thạch Đầu Hy Thiên

Shuanglin = Song Lâm
Shun = Thuần
Sieu Loai = Siêu Loại
Sinh Tu Nhan Nhi Di = Sinh Tử Nhân Nhi Dĩ
So Son = Sơ Sơn
Soan Co Duyen Van Dap Giai = Soạn Cơ Duyên Vấn Đáp Giải
Soan Cung Cuu Pham Nhat Khoa = Soạn Cúng Cửu Phẩm Nhất Khoa
Soan Cung Duc Su Nhat Khoa = Soạn Cúng Dược Sư Nhất Khoa
Soan Cung Phat Tam Khoa Cat = Soạn Cúng Phật Tam Khoa Cát
Soan Ly Su Dung Thong = Soạn Lý Sự Dung Thông
Soan Quan Vo Luong Tho Kinh Quoc Ngu = Soạn Quán Vô Lượng Thọ
Kinh Quốc Ngữ
Son Dang = Sơn Đẳng
Son Dinh = Sơn Đình
Son Nam = Sơn Nam
Son Tay = Sơn Tây
Song Cau = Sông Cầu (river)
Song Lam = Song Lâm (pagoda)
Su Nghia Luat Yeu Luoc = Sự Nghĩa Luật Yêu Lược
Su Nghia Quy Quyên = Sự Nghĩa Quy Quyên
Su Quan = Sứ Quán
Sui Gaozu = Tùy Cao Tổ = 隋高祖
Sui Ming = Huệ Mạng
Suiran = Tuệ Nhiên
Suizhao = Tuệ Chiếu
Sunfeng = Tôn Phong (mount)
Sung = Sùng
Sung Khanh Bao Thien = Sùng Khánh Báo Thiên (pagoda)
Sung Nghiem Bao Duc = Sùng Nghiêm Báo Đức (pagoda)
Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh = Sùng Nghiêm Diên Thánh (pagoda)
Sung Ninh Van Tho Dai Tang = Sùng Minh Vạn Thọ Đại Tạng
Sung Pham = Sùng Phạm
Sung Phuc = Sùng Phúc (pagoda)
Sung Thien Dien Linh = Sùng Thiện Diên Linh (pagoda or tower)
Ta Am = Tá Âm
Ta Am Tu = Tá Âm Tự
Ta Lon = Tà Lôn (pagoda)
Ta Thanh Oai = Tả Thanh Oai
Ta Vi Phuong Sach = Tả Vi Phương Sách
Tai Gia Tu Tri = Tại Gia Tu Trì
Tam Cam = Tầm Cầm (story)
Tam Bao Hoang Thong = Tam Bảo Hoàng Thông
Tam Ban = Tam Ban (mount)
Tam Bao = Tam Bảo (pagoda/mount)
Tam Buu = Tam Bửu
Tam Cuong = Tam Cương

Tam Duong = Tam Dượng
 Tam giao dong nguyên = Tam giáo đồng nguyên
 Tam Giao Nguyen Luu Ky = Tam Giáo Nguyên Lưu Ký
 Tam Giao Quang Khuy = Tam Giáo Quảng Khuy
 Tam Kinh Bát Nhã Ba La Mat Da Truc Giai = Tâm Kinh Bát Nhã Ba La
 Mật Đa Trục Giải
 Tam Kinh Truc Giai = Tâm Kinh Trục Giải
 Tam Minh (Le Dinh Tham) = Tâm Minh (Lê Đình Thám)
 Tam Tang Khue Tham = Tam Tạng Khuê Thám
 Tam Thien = Tâm Thiên
 Tam Thien = Tam Thiên
 Tam To Thuc Luc = Tam Tổ Thực Lục
 Tam To Thap Luc = Tam Tổ Thập Lục = 三祖实录
 Tan Chi = Tấn Chi
 Tan Dau = Tân Đầu
 Tan Mui = Tân Mùi (year)
 Tan Van Ky = Trần Văn Kỳ
 Tan Vien Giac Kinh = Tấn Viên Giác Kinh
 Tang Gia Tap Luc = Tăng Gia Tập Lục
 Tang Wudi = Đường Võ Đế
 Tao Dong = Cao Dong = Tào Động = 曹洞
 Tao Kan = Đào Khản
 Tao Khe Hue Nang = Tào Khê Huệ Năng = Hui Neng
 Tap Phuoc = Tập Phước (pagoda)
 Tay Cam = Tây Cầm (garden)
 Tay Nhạc = Tây Nhạc (temple)
 Tay Phien = Tây Phiên
 Tay Son = Tây Sơn (dynasty)
 Te Thap Loai Chung Sinh = Tế Thập Loại Chúng Sinh
 Te Vien = Tế Viên
 Thạch Dau = Thạch Đầu
 Thạch Lau = Thạch Lâu
 Thạch Liem = Thạch Liêm
 Thạch That = Thạch Thất
 Thạch Vien = Thạch Viên
 Thai Hu = Thái Hư
 Thai Nguyen = Thái Nguyên
 Tham Do Hien Quyet = Tham Đồ Hiện Quyết
 Tham Thien Van = Tham Thiên Văn
 Tham Van Uyen = Thâm Văn Uyển
 Than Chung = Thần Chung
 Than Nghi = Thần Nghi
 Than Quang = Thần Quang (pagoda)
 Than Tan = Thần Tấn
 Thang Hoa = Thăng Hoa
 Thang Nghiem = Thăng Nghiêm (pagoda)

Thang Nghiem Thanh Tho = Thảng Nghiễm Thá̃nh Thọ (pagoda)
Thanh Bien = Thanh Biệ̃n = 清办
Thanh Dam = Thanh Đạ̃m
Thanh Dao = Thà̃nh Đạ̃o (pagoda)
Thanh Dang Luc = Thá̃nh Đắ̃ng Lự̃c
Thanh Duyen = Thá̃nh Duyệt (pagoda)
Thanh Hien Tien Hau Tap = Thanh Hiễn Tiễn Hậ̃u Tậ̃p
Thanh Hoa = Thanh Hó̃a
Thanh Mai = Thanh Mạ̃i
Thanh Nguyen = Thanh Nguyễn
Thanh Quang = Thanh Quạ̃ng
Thanh Son = Thanh Sọ̃n
Thanh Thien = Thá̃nh Thiễn
Thanh Tong Tran Hoang = Thá̃nh Tỗng Trầ̃n Hoằ̃ng
Thanh Trieu = Thanh Triễu
Thanh Trieu Hoi Giam = Thá̃nh Triễu Hợ̃i Giá̃m
Thanh Tuoc = Thanh Tườ̃c (pagoda)
Thao Duong = Thả̃o Đườ̃ng (sect)
Thao Nhat = Thả̃o Nhấ̃t
Thap = Thá̃p (pagoda)
Thap Bac = Thậ̃p Bắ̃c
Thap Gioi Co Hon Quoc Ngu Van = Thậ̃p Giớ̃i Cỗ Hồn Quố̃c Ngữ̃ Vậ̃n
Thap Gioi Quoc Am = Thậ̃p Giớ̃i Quố̃c Ầ̃m
Thap Mieu = Thá̃p Miế̃u (tower)
Thap Nhi Bo Tat Hanh Tu Chung Dao Trang = Thậ̃p Nhị̃ Bồ̃ Tát Hằ̃nh Tu
 Chú̃ng Đạ̃o Trằ̃ng
Thap Nhi Du Kinh = Thậ̃p Nhị̃ Dụ̃ Kinh
Thap Thap Di Da = Thậ̃p Thá̃p Di Đạ̃ (pagoda)
That Son = Thấ̃t Sọ̃n
The Thai Hu Ao = Thế̃ Thá̃i Hữ Ầ̃o
Thi Chung = Thị̃ Chú̃ng
Thi Kinh = Thị̃ Kĩ̃nh
Thi Mau = Thị̃ Mầ̃u
Thich Don Hau = Thích Đôn Hậ̃u
Thich Khoa Giao = Thích Khoa Giá̃o
Thich Tri Do = Thích Trí Độ̃
Thich Dao Vien = Thích Đạ̃o Viễ̃n
Thich Mat The = Thích Mậ̃t Thễ̃
Thien Bac = Thiễn Bắ̃c
Thien Cam Thanh Vu = Thiễn Cằ̃m Thá̃nh Vữ̃ (year)
Thien Chieu = Thiệ̃n Chiế̃u
Thien Chu Thien = Thiệ̃n Chú̃ Thiễn
Thien Chung = Thiễn Chú̃ng (pagoda)
Thien Co Yeu Ngu Van = Thiễn Cờ̃ Yế̃u Ngữ̃ Vậ̃n
Thien Cuc = Thiễn Cự̃c
Thien Dao Yeu Hoc = Thiễn Đạ̃o Yế̃u Hợ̃c

- Thien Dinh = Thiên Định (pagoda)
 Thien Dong = Thiên Đông (pagoda)
 Thien Duc = Thiên Đức (pagoda)
 Thien Gia Kinh Chu Cac Khoan = Thiên Gia Kinh Chú Các Khoản
 Thien Hoi = Thiện Hội
 Thien Hue = Thiện Huệ
 Thien Khai = Thiên Khai (pagoda)
 Thien Lai Tinh Giac = Thiện Lai Tinh Giác
 Thien Lam Bao Huan Quoc Am Ban = Thiên Lâm Bảo Huấn Quốc Âm Bản
 Thien Lam Thiet Chuy Ngu Luc = Thiên Lâm Thiệt Chủy Ngữ Lục =
 禅林铁嘴语录
 Thien Lao = Thiên Lão
 Thien Nham = Thiên Nham
 Thien Ong = Thiên Ông
 Thien Phat = Thiên Phật (chamber)
 Thien Phuoc = Thiên Phước (pagoda)
 Thien Quang = Thiên Quang (pagoda)
 Thien Si = Thiện Sĩ
 Thien Tai = Thiện Tài
 Thien Tay = Thiên Tây (pagoda)
 Thien Tho = Thiên Thọ
 Thien Tich Phu = Thiên Tích Phú
 Thien Tinh Vien = Thiên Tích Viện
 Thien To = Thiên Tộ
 Thien Ton Ban Hanh = Thiên Tôn Bản Hạnh
 Thien Tong Chi Nam = Thiên Tông Chỉ Nam
 Thien Trinh = Thiên Trinh
 Thien Tru = Thiện Trú
 Thien Tru Thien = Thiện Trú Thiên
 Thien Truong = Thiên Trường
 Thien Tue = Thiên Tuệ
 Thien Tung Dao Nhan = Thiên Túng Đạo Nhân
 Thien Tuong = Thiên Tượng (pagoda)
 Thien Uyen Ke Dang Luoc Luc = Thiên Uyển Kế Đăng Lược Lục
 Thien Uyen Tap Anh Ngu Luc = Thiên Uyển Tập Anh Ngữ Lục
 Thien Uyen Truyen Dang Luoc Luc = Thiên Uyển Truyền Đăng Lược Lục
 Thieu Chuu = Thiệu Chử
 Thieu Phuc = Thiệu Phúc
 Thieu That = Thiệu Thất = 少室
 Thieu Tri = Thiệu Trị
 Thiet Dieu = Thiệt Diêu
 Tho Ba Vai = Thơ Bà Vãi
 Tho Phon = Thổ Phôn
 Tho Xuong = Thọ Xương
 Thon Tang = Thôn Tăng
 Thong Bien = Thông Biện

Thong Che = Thông Ché
Thong Giac = Thông Giác
Thong Hoa = Thông Hòa
Thong Thanh = Thông Thánh (pagoda)
Thong Thien = Thông Thiên
Thong Thien = Thông Thiện = 通善
Thong Su = Thông Sư
Thong Vinh = Thông Vinh
Thu Gioi Luan = Thụ Giới Luận = 受戒论
Thu Lang = Thu Lãng
Thu Lang Nghiem = Thủ Lãng Nghiêm = 首楞严
Thu Nhan = Thủ Nhân
Thu Son = Thủ Sơn = 首山
Thuan = Thuần
Thuan Chan = Thuần Chân
Thuan Hoa = Thuận Hóa
Thuan My = Thuận Mỹ
Thuan Thien = Thuận Thiên (year)
Thuan Thanh = Thuận Thành
Thuong Chi = Thượng Chí (association)
Thuong Chieu = Thường Chiếu
Thuong Cung = Thường Cung
Thuong De Luan = Thượng Đế Luận
Thuong Lac = Thường Lạc
Thuong Si Hanh Trang = Thượng Sĩ Hành Trạng
Thuy Kieu = Thủy Kiều
Thuy Nguyet = Thủy Nguyệt
Thuy Sam Bat = Thủy Sát Bạt
Tich Truyen = Tích Truyền
Tiem Son = Tiêm Sơn
Tien Chau Son = Tiên Châu Sơn (pagoda)
Tien Dinh = Tiên Định
Tien Du = Tiên Du
Tien Dung = Tiên Dung
Tien Hung = Tiên Hưng
Tien Liet = Tiên Liệt
Tien Long = Tiên Long (mount)
Tieg Chuong Som = Tiếng Chuông Sớm
Tieu Dao = Tiêu Dao
Tieu Dien = Tiêu Diển
Tieu Du Da = Tiểu Du Đà
Tieu Du Tu = Tiểu Du Tự
Tin Hoc = Tín Học
Tinh Do Truyen = Tịnh Độ Truyền
Tinh Do Yeu Nghia = Tịnh Độ Yêu Nghĩa

- Tinh Khong = Tịnh Không
 Tinh Lu = Tịnh Lự (pagoda)
 Tinh Lu Phu Van = Tĩnh Lự Phù Vân
 Tinh Luc = Tịnh Lục
 Tinh Nhan = Tĩnh Nhân
 Tinh Nhu = Tĩnh Như
 Tinh Qua = Tịnh Quả
 Tinh Thien = Tịnh Thiên
 Tinh Tuyen = Tĩnh Tuyên
 Tishi Tongjian = Thích Thị Thông Giám = 释氏通监
 To = Tô
 To Gia Thuc Luc = Tô Gia Thực Lục
 To Hien Thanh = Tô Hiến Thành
 To Lien = Tô Liên
 To Phong = Tô Phong (pagoda)
 Toa Thien Luan = Tọa Thiên Luận = 坐禅论
 Toan Nhat = Toàn Nhật
 Toan Nhat = Toàn Nhất
 Toan Nhat Thien Su = Toàn Nhất Thiên Sư
 Toan Viet Thi Luc = Toàn Việt Thi Lục
 Ton Dien = Tôn Diễn
 Ton Si Nghi = Tôn Sĩ Nghi
 Ton Su Phat Sach Dang Dan Thu Gioi = Tôn Sư Phát Sách Đăng Đàn Thụ
 Giới
 Tong Kinh = Tông Kính
 Tong Binh = Tống Bình = 宋平
 Tong Tri = Tông Trì = 总持
 Tong Vuong Truyen = Tống Vương Truyền
 Tra On = Trà Ôn
 Trach Lam = Trạch Lâm (pagoda)
 Tran = Trần (dynasty)
 Tran Canh = Trần Cảnh
 Tran Cao = Trần Cao
 Tran De Hien = Trần Đế Hiện
 Tran Du Ton = Trần Dự Tôn
 Tran Khắc Dung = Trần Khắc Dụng
 Tran Nguyen Chan = Trần Nguyên Chấn
 Tran Nhan Tong = Trần Nhân Tông
 Tran Phuc = Trần Phúc
 Tran Quang Trieu = Trần Quang Triều
 Tran Quoc = Trần Quốc (pagoda)
 Tran Thuan Ton = Trần Thuận Tôn
 Tran Trong Kim = Trần Trọng Kim
 Tran Van Giap = Trần Văn Giáp
 Tran Van Giau = Trần Văn Giàu

Trang = Trang (king)
Tri Bao = Trí Bảo
Tri Do Luan = Trí Độ Luận
Tri Giao Nhat Cu = Trí Giáo Nhất Cú
Tri Hai = Trí Hải
Tri Hanh = Trí Hành
Tri Huyen = Trí Huyền
Tri Kien = Trí Kiến (temple)
Tri Khong = Trí Không
Tri Thien = Trí Thiên
Tri Tue = Trí Tuệ
Tri Yen = Trí Yên
Trieu Chau = Triệu Châu = 赵州
Trieu Da = Triệu Đà (Zhao Tuo)
Trieu Phong = Triệu Phong
Trieu Phuong = Triệu Phương
Trieu Tan = Triệu Tân
Trinh Cuong = Trịnh Cương
Trinh Giang = Trịnh Giang
Trinh Hieu = Trịnh Hiệu
Trinh Hoai Duc = Trịnh Hoài Đức
Trinh Na = Trịnh Na
Trinh Tac = Trịnh Tạc
Trinh Trang = Trịnh Tráng
Trinh Trung Tu = Trịnh Trung Từ
Truc Lam = Trúc Lâm (founder/ sect)
Truc Lam Dieu Ngu = Trúc Lâm Điều Ngự
Truc Lam Dai Chan Vien Giac Thanh = Trúc Lâm Đại Chân Viên Giác Thanh
Truc Lam Tong Chi Nguyen Thanh = Trúc Lâm Tông Chi Nguyên Thanh
Truc Lam Tran Trieu Thien Tong Ban Hanh = Trúc Lâm Trần Triều Thiên Tông Bản Hạnh
Truc Lam Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc = Trúc Lâm Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ Ngũ Lục
Truc Lam Yen Tu = Trúc Lâm Yên Tử (sect)
Truc Phap Hanh = Trúc Pháp Hành
Truc Song Quoc Am Ban = Trúc Song Quốc Âm Bản
Trung Hung = Trùng Hưng (repository)
Trung Hung Dien Tho = Trùng Hưng Diên Thọ (pagoda)
Trung Lap = Trung Lập
Trung Minh = Trùng Minh (pagoda)
Trung Khuyen Than So Quyen Thuoc Phu = Trùng Khuyển Thân Sơ Quyền Thuộc Phú
Trung Luan = Trung Luận (Madhyamika) = 中论
Truong = Trường
Truong Chau = Trường Châu

- Truong Han Sieu = Trương Hán Siêu
 Truong Ma Ni = Trương Ma Ni
 Truong Ma Vi = Trương Mã Vi
 Truong Nguyen = Trường Nguyên
 Truong Tam Tang = Trương Tam Tạng
 Truong Son = Trường Sơn
 Truu Nguyen Ngam = Trừu Nguyễn Ngâm
 Truy To Canh Sach = Truy Tô Cảnh Sách
 Truyen Dang Luc = Truyền Đăng Lục
 Tu Bi Am = Từ Bi Âm
 Tu Chieu = Từ Chiêu
 Tu Dai Thien Vuong = Tứ Đại Thiên Vương (pagoda) = 四大天王
 Tu Dinh = Từ Định
 Tu Dao Hanh = Từ Đạo Hạnh
 Tu Doanh = Từ Doanh
 Tu Duc = Từ Đức
 Tu Gia Bao An = Từ Già Báo Ân (pagoda)
 Tu Khanh = Từ Khánh
 Tu Khoi = Từ Khôi
 Tu Ky = Từ Kỳ
 Tu Lam = Từ Lâm
 Tu Liem = Từ Liêm
 Tu Minh = Từ Minh
 Tu Phan Luat = Tứ Phần Luật = 四分律
 Tu Phap = Từ Pháp
 Tu Quang = Từ Quang (pagoda)
 Tu Quang Tu Sa Mon Phap Chuyen Luat Truyen = Từ Quang Tự Sa Môn
 Pháp chuyển Luật Truyền
 Tu Son = Từ Sơn
 Tu Son = Từ Sơn
 Tu Thi Thien Phuc = Từ Thị Thiên Phúc (monastery)
 Tuan Huc = Tuân Húc
 Tuc Lu = Tức Lự
 Tuc Nhan = tức nhân
 Tue Kha = Tuệ Khả = 慧可
 Tue Tang = Tuệ Tạng
 Tue Thong = Tuệ Thông
 Tue Trung Thuong Si Ngu Luc = Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ Ngũ Lục
 Tung Lam Tu = Tùng Lâm Tự (institute)
 Tuong Dau = Tượng Đầu = 象头
 Tuong Duong = Tương Dương
 Tuong Long = Tường Long (tower)
 Tuong Quang = Tường Quang
 Tuy An = Tuy An
 Tuy Phuoc = Tuy Phước

Tuyen Quang = Tuyên Quang
Tuyen Tu = Tuyên Từ
Tuyet Dau = Tuyết Đâu (monk/sect)
Tuyet Dau Minh Giac = Tuyết Đâu Minh Giác (sect) = 雪窠明觉
Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc = Tuyết Đâu Ngũ Lục = 雪窠语录
Tuyet Dau Truyen Phap = Tuyết Đâu Truyền Pháp
Tuyet Son = Tuyết Sơn = 雪山
Ty Sa Mon = Tỳ Sa Môn (Vaistramana)
U The = U Thê (pagoda) = 幽棲
Ung Thuan = Ứng Thuận
Ung Vương = Ứng Vương
Uy Hue Vương = Uy Huệ Vương
Uy Vu = Uy Vũ
Uyen Trung = Uyên Trưng
Van Cu Ha = Vân Cư Hạ (pagoda)
Van Don = Vân Đồn
Van Dua Cay Bap = Văn Đưa Cây Bắp
Van Hue Vương = Văn Huệ Vương
Van Lam = Văn Lâm
Van Mieu = Văn Miếu
Van Mon = Vân Môn = 云门
Van Phong = Vân Phong
Van Phong = Vạn Phong
Van Phong Thanh Thien = Vạn Phong Thành Thiện (tower)
Van Phuc = Vạn Phúc (pagoda)
Vang Sinh Tinh Do Truyen = Vãng Sinh Tịnh Độ Truyền = 往生淨度传
Van Su Quy Nhu = Vạn Sự Quy Như
Van Tai = Vạn Tải
Van Te Thap Loai Chung Sinh = Văn Tế Thập Loại Chúng Sinh
Van Tieu Hoa Yen = Văn Tiêu Hoa Yên (pagoda)
Van Trai = Vân Trai (pagoda)
van troi = vãn trời
Van Tu = Vạn Tự
Van Tu = Vân Tự (pagoda)
Van Tue = Vạn Tuế (pagoda)
Van Yen = Vân Yên (pagoda)
Vat Bat Nang Dung = Vật Bất Năng Dung
Ve = Vẽ (market)
Vi Hai = Vị Hải
Vien Huy = Viên Huy = 园辉
Vien Am = Viên Âm
Vien Canh = Viên Cảnh
Vien Chieu = Viên Chiêu
Vien Chung = Viên Chứng
Vien Giac = Viên Giác (monk/sutra/pagoda) = 园觉

Vien Hoc = Viên Học
 Vien Khoan = Viên Khoan
 Vien Mai = Viên Mai
 Vien Ngo = Viên Ngô
 Vien Quang = Viên Quang (pagoda)
 Vien Thong = Viên Thông (tower)
 Vien Tri = Viên Trí
 Vien Van = Viên Văn
 Vien Van Chuyet Chuyet = Viên Văn Chuyết Chuyết
 Viet Am Thi Tap = Việt Âm Thi Tập
 Viet Minh = Việt Minh
 Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan = Việt Nam Phật Giáo Sư Luận
 Viet Su Luoc = Việt Sử Lược
 Vinh Khanh = Vinh Khánh (era)
 Vinh Khe = Vĩnh Khê (temple)
 Vinh Nghiem (Tich Thanh Hanh) = Vĩnh Nghiêm (Thích Thanh Hạnh)
 Vinh Phu = Vĩnh Phú
 Vinh Phuc = Vĩnh Phúc (pagoda)
 Vinh Thinh = Vĩnh Thịnh (era)
 Vinh Tuong = Vĩnh Tường
 Vinh Minh = Vĩnh Minh (era)
 Vinitaruci = Tỳ Ni Đa Lưu Chi = 毘尼多流支
 Vo Luong Nghia Kinh = Vô Lượng Nghĩa Kinh
 Vo Ngai = Vô Ngại
 Vo Phien = Vô Phiền
 Vo Phuong = Vô Phương
 Vo Than = Vô Thân
 Vo Than Luan = Vô Thân Luận
 Vo Thuong = Vô Thượng
 Vo Tru = Vô Trú
 Vo Van Tru = Vô Văn Trú
 Vu Lam = Vũ Lâm
 Vu Lan = Vu Lan (festival)
 Vu Thi Nam = Vũ Thị Năm
 Vu Thu = Vũ Thư
 Vu Trinh = Vũ Trinh
 Vương Chi Nhan = Vương Chí Nhân
 Vương Huu Quang = Vương Hữu Quang
 Vương Quoc Chinh = Vương Quốc Chính
 Vương Tai = Vương Tại
 Wang Changshi = Vương Thường Thị
 Weichuan = Vị Xuyên
 Weifu Dajue = Ngụy Phủ Đại Giác
 Wei Wudi = Ngụy Vô Đế
 Wu Yantong = Vô Ngôn Thông = 无言通
 Wu Xing = Vô Hành

Xia = Hạ (region)
Xiao Buzhi = Tiêu Bộ Chi
Xinghua = Hưng Hóa
Xinghua Cunxiang = Hưng Hóa Tồn Trường
Xuan Kinh = Xuân Kinh
Xuan Thu Quan Kien = Xuân Thu Quán Kiến
Xuan Thuy = Xuân Thủy
Xuat Gia Toi Lac Tinh The Tu Hanh Van = Xuất Gia Tỏi Lạc Tinh Thế Tu
Hành Văn
Xuat Gia Van = Xuất Gia Văn
Xuat Tam Tang Ký Tập = Xuất Tam Tạng Ký Tập = 出三藏记集
Y Lan = Ý Lan
Y Sơn = Ý Sơn
Yao = Nghiêu
Yaoshan Weiyan = Dược Sơn Duy Nghiễm
Yen Dung = Yên Dũng
Yen Khanh = Yên Khánh (pagoda)
Yen Tu Sơn Trúc Lâm Trần Triều Thiên Tông Ban Hành = Yên Tử Sơn
Trúc Lâm Trần Triều Thiên Tông Bản Hạnh
Yi Jing (Yi –Ying) = Nghĩa Tịnh = 义净
Yi = Di (region)
Yizong = Ý Tôn
Yu Dao Cui = Vu Đạo Thuý = 于道遂
Yu Fa Lan = Vu Pháp Lan = 于道蘭
Yuan Heng = Viên Hoằng
Yuan Xian = Duyên Hiền (temple)
Yun Men = Vân Môn
Yunyan Tancheng = Vân Nham Đàm Thành
Yuzhou = Vũ Châu
Zeng Can = Tăng Xán = 曾繁
Zhejiang = Chiết Giang = 浙江
Zhengxiang = Trình Hương
Zhexi = Chiết Tây
Zhi Heng = Trí Hoằng
Zhi Zhi = Tế Chi (pagoda)
Zhifeng = Chích Phong (mount)
Zhili = Trục Lệ
Zhou Zhang = Chu Trương
Zhou Wuidi = Châu Vô Đề
Zi You = Tử Du

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

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4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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